

PGF Town Hall Minutes (14th December 2021)

Attendees: Avgi Andreou (PGF President/Department of Medical Genetics), Rachel Foreman (PGF Website manager/Institute of Metabolic Science), Alberto Echevarria Poza (PGF Outreach coordinator/Biochemistry), Leah Rosen (EBI), Juliane Weller (Sanger Institute), Andrew Smith (Veterinary Medicine), Farahnoz Khojayori (Plant Sciences), Lori Dolores Kregar (Sanger Institute), Megan Gozzard (Sanger Institute), May Kakkar (Plant Sciences), Emily Servanté (Plant Sciences), Hillary Elrick (EBI), Henry Barrow (Pathology – Virology), Angalee Nadesalingham (Veterinary Medicine), Aramish Fatime (Zoology), Satish Viswanathan (Plant Sciences)

Opening Discussion: Introduction of all participants and their departments, and current PGF members describe what the meeting is about (rebrand of GRASP and increasing visibility of PGF as an open communication for post graduate students within School of Life Sciences).

Aims of Meeting: Raising awareness of PGF as a platform for student discussion, collecting ideas from department representatives of what they want from PGF, plans for future events and recruitment of PGF committee members for the next academic year.

Also, this meeting was an opportunity to hear any immediate concerns to take to the next PSLs Strategic Meeting.

Feedback/Discussion: Most representatives were positive about having more cross-department socialising, especially those in more isolated institutes (e.g. Sanger and EBI). Some departments already have established post graduate committees (e.g. Plants) who meet regularly to deal with internal student concerns, so feel there is less of a requirement for PGF.

There were many queries on what occurs at the PSLs Strategic Meeting and how raising concerns at PGF can help outside of department committees. Query whether PGF can be a 'shortcut' to reaching higher management if issues are not resolved internally, and whether this is fair on efforts of department graduate committees?

Clarification that the main aim of having PGF meetings is to open communication across PSLs and ensure students in all departments are treated the same. Majority of reps are happy with how their department committees are working but willing to join PGF meetings to plan social events. Agreement that termly PGF Town Halls will be a great way of discussing the pros/cons of how things are done across the Life Science departments.

As the current PGF committee are in their final year of study a new committee will need to be elected to continue. Additionally, it would be beneficial if more roles can be filled next year (i.e. Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer). All representatives were invited to apply for the roles, and regardless of being on the committee it was decided one rep from each department should try and come to Town Hall meetings.

A well-received idea of an annual PGF Symposium event could be a great networking event, and PGF President will raise this point at the next Strategic Meeting (as well as a query about event funding). Some concerns that students no longer enjoy online events and participation could be low if held virtually. Some ideas for smaller outdoor social networking events next term, if possible.

A discussion about working from home guidelines made it clear that there is some confusion about what students should follow. Some departments have completely enforced the rule, with a retaliation from students, while others have said lab work is still essential. Within departments it is also unclear

what the lab capacity is, and some meetings are still being held on site. PGF President has asked for feedback emails from all reps to take to Strategic Meeting.

Actions: PGF President to raise queries about safety of Spring event, and funding for a Symposium. They will also raise the following points of concern brought to the meeting:

- What is the best route to follow for Government WFH procedure? As departments have given difference views on what counts as 'essential work'
- Is there a database of student age diversity within the School and is this information readily available for analysis? (Specifically, for Lori Dolores Kregar)

Emails will be sent to all department representatives to apply for PGF committee roles, and reminders for future meetings.

Representatives will raise awareness of PGF website and anonymous feedback form for students in their department and will represent PGF at their next internal committee meetings.

Close of meeting.