

Postgraduate Town Hall Minutes

Town Hall 1	1
Town Hall 2	3

Town Hall 1

Location: Ed Burke, Arts Building

Date & Time: Tuesday October 4th at 6pm

1. **Gabi outlined the background** within which the Town Halls were held, i.e. that the TCD Dean of Graduate Studies had emailed all postgraduates to communicate the University Board's decision to suspend funding from the Graduate Students' Union (GSU) and re-allocate it to TCDSU. This decision was made by the Capitations Committee, as the GSU has not complied with the mandated report of their finances and concerns with the constitutionality and transparency of EGMs and Elections. The last time the GSU has submitted audited financial statements to the Capitations Committee was for the year ended August 31 2020. The GSU is no longer a recognised body in Trinity College Dublin. On September 22 2022, the Board approved a mandate for Trinity College Dublin Students' Union (TCDSU) to nominate postgraduate students to attend relevant College committees at the invitation of the committee chair. TCDSU will facilitate postgraduate students in the interim — but the decisions regarding the future of postgraduate representation are in your hands.
2. **GSU EGM April 2021:** Lack of transparent voting
 - a. Visitors' decision: Rerun EGM, not upheld by GSU
3. **Explains Capitations Committee and its function**
 - a. [Capitation Committee - Senior Dean's Office - Trinity College Dublin](#)
4. **Elections Summer 2022:** Short timeline, 2 months after mandated time, constitutional issues
5. **TIMELINE:**
 - a. Capitations withheld funding 21st July 2021

- b. 7th September 2022: Capitations Committee open and agreeable to TCDSU receiving some of the GSU funding as they are providing additional services to PG students
 - c. 20th September- Capitations Committee, agree to give all funding to TCDSU due to lack of contact and cooperation from GSU
 - d. 22nd September- Board, agree to cut ties with GSU and TCDSU have full representative power
- 6. Question: What is happening with GSU reserves? Does TCDSU have access to them?**
- a. That money came from students.
 - b. PROPOSED by a postgraduate student in attendance: Petition to High Court, liquidation of the GSU to access reserves.
- 7. Question: Has there been any legal action taken by Capitations Committee?**
- a. Gabi Fullam: Not to date.
- 8. Question: Can PG students vote in a referendum to disband the GSU?**
- a. Liquidation would automatically disband GSU. In order for a referendum to be held, the GSU would have to run it but the GSU is not currently operational.
- 9. Question: Will any legal action be taken against the GSU as a whole entity, or the specific people involved in the misappropriation of funds?**
- a. TCDSU is not currently taking any legal action against the GSU or the specific people involved in the misappropriation of funds.
- 10. Question: When will any decisions or formal vote take place on the future of PG representation?**
- a. TCDSU will run elections for the interim period and facilitate further consultation with postgrads before running a referendum on the future of PG representation. [please refer to the "Interim Strategy" and "Long-term Strategy" sections of this email]
- 11. Question: Will one person sit on all College committees in the interim?**
- a. No, will be split thematically and a fair workload
- 12. Question: Will there be a process to examine structures long term? Disconnect between taught Masters and Research Masters/PhDs**
- a. PGWA suggested: Could be a Worker's Union for PhDs and Research Master's
 - b. Gabi Fullam: Yes 100%. TCDSU will ensure that all postgraduates can feed into the consultation on the future of PG representation structures before any formal vote is taken.

13. Question: Is there a way to ensure those who were Officers of GSU can not be representatives in the future?

- a. Gabi Fullam: In a fair & democratic election any postgraduate student can nominate themselves and it is up to the electorate to decide whether or not they are the best candidate.

14. Question: Will the election process happen in the next two weeks?

- a. [please refer to the "Interim Strategy" section of the email]

Town Hall 2

Location: Zoom

Date & Time: Wednesday October 5th at 1pm

1. **[START] Gabi welcomed everyone and reiterated the context** within which the Town Halls were held.

2. Q: What is the Capitations Committee?

[The Capitation Committee](#) is a sub-committee of the Student Life Committee, which brings together the five capitated bodies: Dublin University central Athletic Club (DUCAC), the Student Union, the Central Societies Committee, the Graduate Student Union (which no longer exists as a recognised College body hence does not sit on the Capitations Committee) and College Publications.

There are three meetings per year, excluding emergency meetings.

The Terms of Reference governing the workings and composition of the Capitation Committee also allow for emergency meetings.

The main functions of the Capitation Committee are to:

1. Apportion the capitation fund;
2. Formulate recommendations to Board on behalf of Student Life in regard to levies;
3. Ensure the observance of regulations pertaining to capitated bodies;
4. Carry out any other functions so delegated to it by the Student life Committee.

15. Q: Once postgrads are elected to College Committees by TCDSU, will they get a wage?

- a. No, for the interim period (this academic year) they will be elected on a volunteer, part-time basis like the existing members of TCDSU Union Forum.

16. **Q: What was the attendance like at yesterday's Town Hall?**
- About 30
17. **Q: Will TCDSU recover the 45k of student money that Capitations did not transfer to the GSU last year because their funding was suspended?**
- Gabi Fullam that TCDSU will look into recovering that for postgraduate services with the Capitation Committee.
18. **Q: How will reps be elected?**
- [please see the "Interim Strategy" section of the email]
19. **Q: How did the GSU work?**
- Gabi Fullam "I cannot comment on internal workings of the GSU as I was not involved with them, but their role was to facilitate postgraduate representation on College bodies. We had a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) which meant that we were distinct but collaborative bodies prior to the events earlier this Autumn."
20. **Q: Will TCDSU be running sabbatical elections for postgraduate students?**
- Electing students to a sabbatical role will be an issue mid-academic year given that some postgraduates are in the middle of their studies and may not be able to take a sabbatical. In the interim period we are looking at electing Class Reps and College Committee reps [as detailed in the email], any subsequent sabbatical elections will only be held if there is consensus in the postgraduate community on that. TCDSU will engage in further consultation with postgrads over the coming weeks and months on this issue.
21. **Q: Some schools are nominating Postgraduate Class Reps themselves?**
- Zöe Cummins "The Dean of Graduate Studies gave schools permission to nominate interim reps. Once the TCDSU election process is opened, they will have to re-run through that in order to be formally recognised as democratically elected Class Reps within College."
22. **Q: Not all PhDs are workers!**
- Gabi Fullam: Yes absolutely, the postgraduate community has diverse needs and that needs to be respected in any discussions about the future of postgraduate representation.
23. **Q: What happens to the salary this year?**
- The funding allocated to TCDSU by the Capitations Committee for postgraduate representation will not be used for a salary this academic year. Rather, it is being

allocated to the provision of postgraduate services within TCDSU. This has and will be tracked continuously, it will be audited and accounted for via TCDSU's financial reports.

24. Q: How soon could these elections take place?

- a. [please refer to the "Interim Strategy" section of the email]

25. Q: What is a Convenor?

- a. [please refer to [Section 3.2 of the TCDSU Constitution](#), the TCDSU Governance Structure here: www.tcdsu.org/your-union/about-us]

26. Q: Will it be done this week?

- a. We need to balance urgency with precision, Class Rep Elections will open as soon as we are able to run them correctly and fairly.

27. Q: Can we have another town hall with the Senior Dean or Dean of Graduate Studies?

- a. Gabi Fullam "Yes! I'll organise that for the next week or two."

28. Q: Can you circulate a doc with TCDSU structural definitions?

- a. [find the TCDSU Governance Structure here www.tcdsu.org/your-union/about-us or get detailed descriptions in the Constitution here: www.tcdsu.org/images/pdf/TCDSU_Constitution.pdf]

29. Q: It was always very frustrating as a postgrad student because I didn't feel like I could reach the GSU.

- a. Gabi Fullam: Yes that seems to be a common sentiment.

[End - Thank you for coming! We'll be in touch with further details on Class Rep Nominations and Elections]