

Minutes



Committee: Annual General Meeting

Location: Zoom

Date: 30 May 2022

Time: 8:00 pm

Chair: Yige Peng

Minutes: Frona Wan

Attendance: Arash Araghi, Amy Davidson, Akriti Dubey, Bright Amenkhienan, Chen Liu, Clara Ma, Chuye Shi, Chris Wang, Di Wang, Denis Xu, Daniel Young, Eva Midtgaard, Elma Song, Eileen Yang, Evelyn Xu, Esther Zeng, Frona Wan, Guangwen Fu, Gemma Smart, Hailey Sin, Huizi Wang, Haoyang Xie, Isabella Chen, Jade Barclay, Joseph Black, Jinghong Chen, Jinjing Mao, Jiayang Qin, Jo Tran, Janice Zhang, Kexin (Elle) Du, Kejia Feng, Ke Liu, Lindsay McCabe, Le Wei, Liqian Yang, Marguerite Biasatti, Moxuan Chang, Matthew Compton, Margaret Cunningham, Maggie Lan, Minran Liu, Mingshu Wang, Maria Rosa Ortiz Paciello, Nicholas Dean, Penny Li, Peiyue Xu, Rachel Cheng, Roman Bu, Ruipeng Duan, Sihan Liu, Shihui Li, Shaun Luo, Shuting Su, Su Ye, Tian (Sky) Xie, Tianyu Luo, Vivian Bai, Victoria Lui, Wei Cai, Wrenna Li, Weihong Liang, Wei Lyu, Xu Han, Xingyu Liu, Xinyang Pei, Xinxin Wan, Xuotong (Jessy) Tao, Yi Guo, Yige Peng, Yang Wu, Yao Yao, Yichen Yin, Yuning Zhang, Yun Zheng, Zheqi Ding, Zhaojun Qian, Ziqing Xu, Zekun Yang

Staff: Louise Corney

Guests: Charles, Rafael Mazzoldi

1. Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation as the traditional custodians of the land. We acknowledge that the land upon which we meet is stolen land, and that sovereignty was never ceded. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and extend those respects to all First Nations persons here. This always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

2. Governance & Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

2.1 Declaration of Conflicts of Interest (if any)

2.2 Starring of Items

Members of the Association are invited to star any agenda items they would like to discuss.

3. Supplementary Elections

The returning officer announced the participants in meeting that the only nominee is Gemma Lucy Smart, so elected by default to SUPRA Council.

4. Minutes and Reports of Meetings

4.1 Minutes of AGM 2021, 31st May 2021

The chair invited attendees to ask questions (if they have) regarding the previous year's minutes.

No one raised any questions or concerns.

[220530-4]: To accept minute as a true reflection of the AGM 2021

Moved: Yige Peng **Seconded:** Xuetong (Jessy) Tao

34 in favour, 1 against, 6 abstentions

Motion carried.

5. Annual Report of the Association

Although SUPRA has experienced challenges and difficulties in 2022 due to the unprecedented global pandemic, we have been an active representation body at the university by voicing out for postgraduate students on campus. Our hard-working councillors, excellent staff members, and volunteers demonstrated their remarkable determination to fulfil SUPRA's missions and build a better community for our fellow postgraduate students at the university of Sydney. Every step of the way was supported by our fellow organisations.

Advocacy and representation:

During this year, the pandemic continues to impact every aspect of students' life. SUPRA has made every effort to represent the interests of all our postgraduate students, and to help have their voices heard within the University and also the wider community. Along with the SRC, we successfully defeated the University's 12-week teaching semester proposal on behalf of our fellow students – the semester calendar will retain 13 contact weeks! In our campaign to bring international students back to Australia, SUPRA published three open statements and letters and actively engaged in conversations with the University and NSW government. Thanks to everyone's efforts, the NSW International Arrivals Pilot Program launched at the end of 2021. The first charter flight of international students arrived on 6 December 2021 and all returning international students are eligible

for the NSW government Dine & Discover NSW Vouchers. We were also the pioneers fighting for equal access to the COVID-19 vaccinations on university campuses for all students and staff members. Eventually, the NSW Health pop-up vaccination clinics became available on campus and open to everyone, including those without Medicare cards.

To further improve the representation of postgraduate students, SUPRA has reactivated the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Postgraduates' Network by successfully filling the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Officer position with the election of a dedicated and proud Aboriginal student, Lindsay McCabe.

Moreover, SUPRA has established a new equity officer position for Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students as they face unique challenges in their degrees, from progress assessment policies to scholarships and research funding applications, etc. SUPRA is committed to ensuring that academic, practical, and social support to HDR students will be provided within the equity network, to help make the HDR journey as enjoyable as possible. Additionally, SUPRA worked with the University to remove all gendering of parental leave provisions for HDR students who receive stipends (RTP, UPA, SISS), and to remove 'primary parent' and 'partner' statuses, ensuring that all new parents can now access 12 weeks of paid parental leave throughout their HDR candidatures. This is a great step towards gender and parenting equality.

Community engagement:

During the pandemic in 2021, a large number of students were still studying remotely with limited access to University services and resources. To better support those students, we held online welcome sessions for international and HDR students, and migration webinars at the beginning of every semester. These online events served more than 500 postgraduate students in total. SUPRA also introduced online escape room events and online study rooms for postgraduate students for the first time to enrich students' online study and social lives. We also held online yoga classes for students' wellbeing. Furthermore, SUPRA also ran online peer support mental health workshops for coursework and HDR students, which received very positive feedback. SUPRA also held several webinars focusing on HDR-related issues, including authorship, research commercialisation, etc. These webinars were great successes and served more than 300 HDR students.

SUPRA has continued to host in-person social and fitness activities, including Wine & Cheese events, HDR nights, Free Lunch, fitness classes, and hiking events whenever the NSW public health orders allowed. Although there were fewer in-person events than pre-pandemic times, all students enjoyed the opportunities to gather.

SUPRA also established collaboration with St Paul's College and introduced the College Formal Dinner for all the postgraduate students for the first time as a great opportunity to learn about college culture and engage with the college community. SUPRA also worked closely with our student societies on satellite campuses (e.g. Westmead and CBD campus) to provide better support to postgraduate students there. In 2021, we funded and hosted several social events (e.g. Free Lunch) on those campuses.

SUPRA membership and growth

During semester 1 Welcome Week, we welcomed more than 1000 new postgraduate students on campus by distributing SUPRA welcome packs and having SUPRA representatives present at various University and faculty inductions. The campus closure made developing new memberships extremely difficult as we lost the chance to meet students face-to-face. Nevertheless, thanks to the countless efforts made by our staff members, as well as representation work, workshops, and online activities by our fellow councillors and volunteers, we still achieved a huge increase in followers and better engagement with students across all our social media platforms throughout the whole year.

[220530-5]: To accept minute as a true reflection of the AGM 2021

Moved: Yige Peng **Seconded:** Weihong Liang

37 in favour, 0 against, 2 abstentions

Motion carried.

6. Financial Statement and Auditor's Report

The Treasurer of SUPRA has provided a brief report:

In 2021 SUPRA stood together to help Usyd postgrads to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic and the SUPRA Treasurer plays a crucial role in this process. The work not only included budgets, figures and approvals but also principles – understanding how SUPRA operates and ensuring every cent spends as it should.

This year, we once again made a high-quality SSAF application. The budget left this year will be carried forward to 2022 as this year most events were held online. As the treasurer, I worked closely with the SUPRA President, staff and councillors throughout the process. With the detailed figures kept by our various event organisers and documents maintained by SUPRA staff and council, we once again convinced the University that SUPRA is a vital organisation to our postgraduate students. Despite the pandemic and the border closure, our SSAF funding increased again. It allowed us to maintain the smooth operation of our services and projects that have been promoted by us and outlined in our budget. Thanks especially to SUPRA Operations Manager Louise Corney, Finance Manager John Fell, Postgraduate Advocacy Coordinators Francine Seeto and Hank Whan and our Solicitor Ingrid Van Tongeren.

The Auditor has provided a brief report:

The total funding from the university is just short of 2 billion dollars which came through during the year. SUPRA has to find its expenses. The major expenses are: 1). employment expenses, 2). stipend to office bearers. Around 75% of its funding was applied to staff cost and stipend paid to office bearers. The next expense is the administrative expenses, which is just short of 250,000 dollars. Following that there were 34,022 dollars used for to student actives (e.g., campaigns, Outreach and Grad ball, Supervisor of the year, and Welcome week) and 7,930 for publications. Other special contestable funding (99,630) was applied to dedicated projects of SUPRA.

The Chair made thanks to both the Treasurer and auditor.

[210531-6]: To approve the Financial Statement and Auditor's Report

Moved: Yige Peng **Seconded:** Weihong Liu
33 in favour, 1 against, 3 abstentions
Motion carried.

7. Appointment of the Auditor

Louise Corney showed thanks to Charles's work during the past year. After which, the chair welcomed questions from the participants. No one indicated any questions.

[210531-7]: To appoint Charles Pitt to be the Auditor of the following year
Moved: Weihong Liang **Seconded:** Frona Wan
35 in favour, 0 against, 0 abstention
Motion carried.

8. General Election Report

The returning officer Rafael Mazzoldi made a presentation on SUPRA 2022 election report.

Electronic Voting

The e-voting provider BigPulse was contracted to provide the e-voting infrastructure for the election. They were used as the University of Sydney has entered into a contract with them to provide all electronic voting services on-campus. This significantly reduced the costs for SUPRA.

The total number of votes cast in this year's general election was 816. This is down on last year's number of 838, however, there were also fewer eligible voters this year. 17.9% of eligible voters (4557 in total) voted this year, compared with 15.7% (from 5331 voters) last year. This is in line with historic turnouts for the general election of between 700-1000. Possible factors for the lower number of voters could include: • Lower numbers of new postgraduates joining SUPRA • Lower absolute student numbers due to covid • Possibly less student engagement with traditionally on-campus entities such as SUPRA The new council may wish to consider strategies to increase engagement with the election process as it may indicate a drop in involvement in SUPRA itself. I was very pleased with the online voting system this year. It generally ran smoothly, and I was able to release a result sooner than if I had had to undertake a count by hand.

Electronic voting worked smoothly and continues to facilitate access to SUPRA's election process for its members. Voting numbers were down on last year and SUPRA may wish to consider strategies for increasing membership numbers. There were some criticisms received regarding the process for ballot distribution. I will talk about them later in my report. Overall, I am satisfied electronic voting allows votes to be delivered far more reliably to eligible voters and increases accessibility to the voting process over the previous postal method.

As Returning Officer for the General Election I am not directly involved in running the Equity Officer elections save for two basic roles:

- Giving general advice on SUPRA election rules
- Acting as the arbiter for Equity elections

As the arbiter for Equity Officer elections, I hear protests and complaints about specific elections and have the power to order the election recalled if it was not held in accordance with SUPRA rules.

Discrimination and Accessibility

Concerns I received several complaints regarding the process for nomination as a candidate and the process for accessing electronic voting links. Complaints regarding the nomination process focused on the accessibility of the online nomination forms. These forms need to gather quite a lot of information in order to comply with SUPRA's rules and regulations. There is little time to review and prepare these forms before the start of the general election. It would be prudent for the Council to review all the written material used in the general election along with developing standardized formats for various election matters. Ideally this process should be led by councilors with expertise in accessibility.

Recommendation 1: The Council review all written material associated with the General Election and ensure it is accessible for SUPRA members. This review should look at developing standard formats for: • Membership forms • Nomination forms (Online and offline) • Announcements (Call for nominations and results)

Electronic vote distribution

A complaint was received regarding the process for electronic vote distribution. This protest regarded distribution for new members. Currently, when a new member signs up for SUPRA, the electoral officer manually checks that new member's eligibility to vote and then issues a voting link to the member. While we check for new memberships daily, there can be a delay of 1-2 days before a voting link can be issued. There are several reasons why this occurs, but in essence: 1. We do not have direct access to university systems (to check enrolment) 2. The voting platform we use is a third-party provider and needs new accounts to be manually added 3. Any errors or omissions in enrolment need to be manually checked and reviewed 4. We need to do a manual check as there is a risk of errors that could lead to invalid votes being issued.

Weihong Liang expressed thanks to Rafael. No questions came from the audience so that the chair asked if anyone would like to move the motion.

[210531-8]: To appoint Charles Pitt to be the Auditor of the following year

Moved: Elma Song **Seconded:** Frona Wan

34 in favour, 2 against, 0 abstention

Motion carried.

9. Other Business