

**STUDENTS' COUNCIL – TERM 2014-2016**  
**4<sup>th</sup> MEETING NOVEMBER, 26<sup>th</sup> 2014**  
**MINUTES**

On Wednesday, November 26<sup>th</sup> 2014, at 10:00, in the Big Meeting Room of SISSA (International School for Advanced Studies) in Trieste (IT), the Students' Council – summoned by electronic mail on November, 18<sup>th</sup> – gathers.

There are present:

	<b>Components</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>A</b>
1	Claudia MANCUSO	President – School Council – Phys.	X		
2	Silvia CORSINI	Senate		X	
3	Cristiano DE NOBILI	Senate			X
4	Matteo CASATI	Board of Directors	X		
5	Massimo LUMACA	Board of Directors			X
6	Domenico MONACO	Evaluation Unit		X	
7	Piermarco FONDA	School Council			X
8	Paolo GIDONI	School Council – MA		X	
9	Yamil VIDAL DOS SANTOS	School Council – CNS - VP		X	
10	Federico ISEPPON	School Council - NB			X
11	Giuseppe PUGLISI	AP		X	
12	Mauro VALLI	APP			X
13	Lorenzo DEL RE	CM			X
14	Giovanni PINAMONTI	SBP			X
15	Alessio CHIOCCHETTA T.	SP			X
16	Pietro BARATELLA	TPP			X
17	Francesco BOAROTTO	AM		X	
18	Giorgio SCATTAREGGIA	GEOM		X	
19	Gianluca ORLANDO	MAMA		X	
20	Nicolò PIAZZALUNGA	MP		X	
21	Cristina FIMIANI	SFG			X
	Guillaume CASTEX	Postdoc - Senate			X
	Sandro BOTTARO	Postdoc - Physics			X
	Giuliano LAZZARONI	Postdoc - Mathematics			X
	Paolo VATTA	Postdoc - Neuroscience			X

Legend: P present, E excused, A absent. \* see in the minutes variations; ° participates for specific points of the agenda

Claudia MANCUSO, President of the Students' Council is the chairperson. Reporting secretary is

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Matteo CASATI.

The President verifies that the legal number of participants is not reached (2/21) and annotates that she had been informed by the representatives in the Mathematics Area that an extraordinary Area meeting had been summoned after the convocation of the Students' Council, and that the students would have been present to it. Since the lacking of legal number for the time of meeting had been known for two days, the President had sent an informal notice to the councillors informing that, as prescribed by the Regulation, the Council would have been adjourned.

Considering the schedule of the Mathematics Area Council and an informal survey about the availability of the other councillors held on November, 25th, the President **adjourns** the meeting to **11.30** in the same venue.

A notification has been sent to the Council mailing list.

At 11.30, there are present:

	Components	Role	P	E	A
1	Claudia MANCUSO	President – School Council – Phys.	X		
2	Silvia CORSINI	Senate	X		
3	Cristiano DE NOBILI	Senate		X	
4	Matteo CASATI	Board of Directors	X		
5	Massimo LUMACA	Board of Directors	X		
6	Domenico MONACO	Evaluation Unit		X	
7	Piermarco FONDA	School Council		X	
8	Paolo GIDONI	School Council – MA	X		
9	Yamil VIDAL DOS SANTOS	School Council – CNS - VP		X	
10	Federico ISEPPON	School Council - NB	X		
11	Giuseppe PUGLISI	AP		X	
12	Mauro VALLI	APP	X		
13	Lorenzo DEL RE	CM			X
14	Giovanni PINAMONTI	SBP	X*		
15	Alessio CHIOCCHETTA T.	SP		X	
16	Pietro BARATELLA	TPP	X		
17	Francesco BOAROTTO	AM		X	
18	Giorgio SCATTAREGGIA	GEOM	X*		
19	Gianluca ORLANDO	MAMA	X		
20	Nicolò PIAZZALUNGA	MP	X		
21	Cristina FIMIANI	SFG	X		
	Guillaume CASTEX	Postdoc - Senate		X	
	Sandro BOTTARO	Postdoc - Physics			X

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Components	Role	P	E	A
Giuliano LAZZARONI	Postdoc - Mathematics			X
Paolo VATTA	Postdoc - Neuroscience	X		

The President, after verifying the legal number of the participants (12/21) opens the meeting with the following agenda:

- 1 Communications by the President.**
- 2 Election of the new Director. Discussion.**
- 3 PhD courses questionnaire.**
- 4 Scientific trip/missions. Update.**
- 5 Room management. Current situation and perspectives.**
- 6 STANDING COMMITTEES. Integration and appointment.**
- 7 Any other business**

The President proposes to the Council that, given the tighter schedule, the topics will be discussed according to their priority, and hence the order of discussion shall be 2-5-3-4-6. The point 1 shall be dropped. In any case, the meeting should end by 1pm because of the different commitments of the councillors.

The Council APPROVES and the discussion is opened at 11.35

## **2. Election of the new Director. Discussion**

The President informs the Council that the candidature of prof. Maria Chiara Carrozza has been withdrawn. The Search Committee informed the members of the School Council – the electoral body – forwarding the letter by prof. Carrozza on November, 12<sup>th</sup>.

Consequently, prof. Carrozza's visit to the school has been cancelled and the School Council is meeting on Friday November, 28<sup>th</sup> to discuss which decisions we should take.

Giovanni PINAMONTI enters at 11.37

The President informs that her original reaction to the news was to consider the possibility to call back someone who was excluded in the first shortlist. Indeed, having only one candidate to vote seemed to put at stake the real meaning of the votation.

In the School Council one option may be to call back someone excluded from the shortlist; since the best ones among the excluded was prof. Bianchi, she should be the most natural choice.

It is pointed out that calling back a candidate that had already been excluded might raise problems, since it is extremely unlikely that she could get more votes, having already been outnumbered both by Carrozza and Ruffo.

Moreover, Paolo VATTA reports that prof. Treves of Search Committee has reported to Neuroscience Area Council that appointing prof. Bianchi as the new Director would take quite a long time since her role at John Hopkins University is not regarded as a full professorship by Italian laws.

Silvia CORSINI remarks that the Search Committee has been influencing the School Council since September, and wonders if they may have put pressure on prof. Carrozza to make her quit, since the general mood of the letter of surrender can seem to be quite forced; Massimo LUMACA asks

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the councillors whether this very point should be raised at the School Council, but the Council does not agree.

The President adds that another option for the School Council may be to ask for a vote on Ruffo's candidacy, and to look for an internal Director in case that Ruffo does not get enough support by the Council.

Gianluca ORLANDO asks why we are pondering to discharge Ruffo, given that he had already passed the first selection and he was meant to be among the two best options.

Claudia MANCUSO reminds that in the shortlist issued by the Council after the first round of visit, prof. Ruffo was not included because as students we preferred candidates with a more assertive attitude. After the private meeting with the electors we had when he visited SISSA for the second time, though, all the students' representatives in the School Council and she in particular agreed that the first impression was excessively harsh and that prof. Ruffo is – at least – fit for the role of Director.

Giovanni PINAMONTI argues that the most likely outcome will be that Ruffo is the only candidate, but that if he is not supported enough internal candidatures will be considered.

Matteo CASATI explains that for the first three ballots the quorum and the needed majority to elect the Director is of the 2/3, and that then – after a two weeks span to open the candidatures again – just a runoff ballot will be enough to elect the Director. A viable opportunity for an internal candidate to present himself would be that two weeks period. According to what the members of the Search Committee have often said, however, the Director should be selected by an informal vote even before the first official ballot.

Matteo CASATI adds, having been enquired about it, that the names of a couple of internal candidates have already started to circulate – but they still seem too weak to be considered and possibly just a smoke screen for who would really like to step into the contest.

Gianluca ORLANDO steps in expressing his opinion that Carrozza's surrender is genuine. Since the two names shortlist had already been voted by the School Council (regardless our different desiderata about the names themselves), the Council cannot argue that Ruffo is unfit to serve as the new Director.

MANCUSO and PINAMONTI agree that Ruffo got in fact more votes than Bianchi, and so that he is much more likely to prevail in a two-names ballot.

Paolo GIDONI points out that the choice of the new Director is not simply a democratic vote, but comes after a selection procedure: from several candidates the School voted for the two fittest ones – and if just one of them is still running, he should be regarded as the natural winner. Of course, if the Students Council deems that Ruffo is really a bad choice, the representatives in the School Council will act accordingly, but he thinks that should not be the case. Giorgio SCATTAREGGIA supports GIDONI's point of view.

Paolo VATTA adds that a reopening of the candidature would mean a serious mistrust towards Ruffo, who would surrender for sure: it would mean that he was selected but we think that anyone else would be better than him.

Federico ISEPPON asks whether Ruffo was simply worse than Carrozza and Bianchi or really the worst one.

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Claudia MANCUSO restates that after the second meeting he had improved, and Massimo LUMACA adds that he really expressed consideration towards the students – and that, as students' representatives, this is a fact we should take into account.

Claudia MANCUSO reminds that our original and firm opinion was that we want an external director, given the issues that an internal one could raise.

Silvia CORSINI remarks that her main concern with an internal Director is that, given the proportion of the electoral body, he or she would likely be a physicist, or however would be elected in particular thanks to them, and since in the Senate it has been made apparent that there are a lot of professors in Physics against the experimental groups at SISSA (mainly in Neuroscience, but also in Applied Mathematics), it is important that they are protected from the dictatorship of majority.

The President concludes that the real option should be between voting for Ruffo or accepting to have an internal Director and asks the Council to choose which option to pursuit.

The Council votes – 12/13 in favour, VALLI dissenting – to support prof. Ruffo at the School Council.

## **5. Room management. Current situation and perspectives.**

Matteo CASATI presents the statistics of space usage within the three Areas of the School, outcome of the 150-hours collaboration in the 2013-14 Academic Year together with Eolo Di Casola and Alessandro Di Filippo. The report submitted to the Director in October and the update statistics are attached (*All. 1 and All. 2*)

The Area that suffers the most from the shortage of available space is Neuroscience, but in the last two years their condition was slightly improved. In particular, between 2012-13 and 2013-14 Neuroscience got a new office at the first floor – left by Mathematics Area – and during 2014 a large empty room, albeit in the detached building A2, that can host up to 10 people.

According to the most recent data in possession of Space Committee, there are 12 persons in Neuroscience Area staying in overcrowded rooms, namely that there are more people than how many the Estate Office of the Administration states to be possible according to the laws and the permissions. On the other hand, there are up to 15 spare desks in rooms currently assigned to Neuroscience Area, without considering the possibility of adding – within the limits of the law – more desks to other offices in NS. Hence, the Space Committee has been put in charge to make the Area to comply with the prescriptions without asking for more space until the one available will be used. The Committee is meeting NS Area coordinator, prof. Diamond, on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> to present him these data and urge him to solve the situation within the Area, because otherwise it will be necessary to proceed *ex officio*.

There are two main problems with any attempt to solve the situation: the first is that there will be necessary an internal rearrangement of the rooms 'traditionally' assigned to the different groups within NS or however that different groups will end up to be mixed, the second is that – apart from three people working in the lab nearby and already moved, the Committee has not found more volunteers to move in the other building. A drawing might end up to be the only solution, since we cannot allow people to stay in overcrowded offices.

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The councillors afferent to NS Area are strongly against this option. They remark that all the people working in a lab should be accommodate in the main building, because having a far office means not using it at all, and then depriving the students from their right to a proper desk.

Silvia CORSINI notices that some desks (up to 6-7) are currently being used by people of the group of prof. Ballerini who are regarded as visitors, since their affiliation is the University of Trieste – Matteo CASATI explains that prof. Ballerini is a full professor at University but after an agreement she has to spend up to 80% of her working time at SISSA, running the former laboratory of prof. Cherubini. The agreement is only about supervising SISSA students as part of the faculty of Neurobiology PhD course, but the research she is carrying out at SISSA is currently done also by postdocs and PhD students of hers coming from the University, so that they are indeed working in the labs.

Cristina FIMIANI points out that, on the other hand, there are several people who do not use laboratories at all, the so-called 'computational' neuroscientists. There is a person in Gustincich's group (Genomics) and the whole group of prof. Treves (Cognitive Neuroscience) that should not suffer that much because of the moving in A2 building.

Matteo CASATI remarks that the spaces have been assigned to Neuroscience Area, and it is in their full right to dispose of them according to what the persons in charge (the Area coordinator above all, and then whom he may assign the task to) deem more suitable. The task of the Space Committee is just to point out the issues and the possible solution if any, without deciding anything by themselves. In any case, the only unacceptable outcome is to leave the situation unchanged, because both the administration and the Director are not going to allow it – and the Director explicitly told us to get rid of the overcrowding.

Giorgio SCATTAREGGIA leaves at 12.42

Giovanni PINAMONTI proposes that the official position of the Students' Council shall be that all the students must be put in condition to work and be granted their dignity as SISSA's workers. Hence, the priority for the room assignment should be such that people working in the laboratories are close to their ones – while people not running experiments may be put in A2 building.

Since nobody intervened against this position, Matteo CASATI acknowledges it as the stance of the Students' Council and will report it within the Space Committee so that it can be considered in the negotiations.

### **3. Phd Courses questionnaire.**

The President explains that, after the ISAC visit and report of last May, the School Council has been asked to think about the PhD courses that are offered at SISSA, to establish whether we could do something to improve or rationalise them.

The President reminds that in the previous years the PhD courses in Mathematical Analysis and in Applied Mathematics have been merged, as well as the courses in Mathematical Physics and Geometry – and the old separated ones are going to disappear when all the previously enrolled students will graduate. On the other hand, the PhD courses of Neurobiology and Cognitive Neuroscience have been separated after having been merged for a few years. Moreover, since this academic year the School, together with University of Trieste, University of Udine and ICGEB offers a PhD course in Molecular Biology (JuMBO), whose establishment had raised a lot of discussion in the governing bodies about the scope and its relation with the PhD in Genomics.

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As the ones who face the most the educational side of the life at SISSA, the Director proposes that we as students contribute to the debate, if we deem so.

Hence, Silvia CORSINI and Cristiano DE NOBILI have drafted a questionnaire for all the students, focussing on the interaction among different PhD courses and the motivations that make a student apply for a SISSA PhD.

The President asks the councillors if they prefer that the survey is sent and carried out online, as the usual survey among SISSA students, or to take personally charge of it, either with PhD course assemblies or directly contacting the students.

Giovanni PINAMONTI states that he rather likes to take personally charge of the survey, to explain his fellow colleagues the motivations and be sure that it is filled.

Massimo LUMACA and Cristina FIMIANI agree.

Gianluca ORLANDO and Mauro VALLI say that any decision of the Council will be fine for them.

The President proposes the Council to put the PhD course representatives in charge of dealing with the survey for their own course.

The Council APPROVES

#### **4. Scientific trips/mission. Update.**

At the last meeting of the Council, Matteo CASATI were put in charge to officially complain with the General Secretary about the delays in the approval and settling of the missions.

He reports that the Administration is aware of the difficulties, and the Secretary has expressed his favour to a simplification of the procedures, that now require a double check of every file – hence saving time, that means money.

The Secretary confirms that most of the problems faced in 2014 have been related to a series of sick and maternity leaves occurred in the Accounting Office. A new employee has started working at SISSA in November and another one – the new Head of the Office – will be hired at the beginning of 2015, after a competitive exam. The assignment of the office is to settle by the end of December all the missions until October.

Finally, the Secretary assured that the 2014 final year report of the Administration to the Evaluation Unit will suitably address the issue. Moreover, he undertook to ask the students' and postdocs' representatives a written judgment about the Administration efficiency.

Hence, Matteo CASATI proposes to acknowledge the explanations and not to undertake further moves, provided that such commitments will be respected.

Claudia MANCUSO recommends that the situation is kept under control even for the future.

Federico ISEPPON reports the discussion in the previous Neuroscience Area council about the FENS conference reimbursements, as put in charge in the previous meeting. A detailed survey of the mission budget allowed to pay the full reimbursement to the two students whose mission was approved with half the money than they would have right to. The problem happened because the date of the approval was exactly in the same weeks of the assignment of the second tranche of the budget, so that the money was not available yet. Raising the topic with the Area Secretariat and in the Area Council turned out to be effective and the students will be given the lacking money in the final settlement of the reimbursement..

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The Council acknowledges this.

The President informs the Council that it is 1pm and that the meeting, as previously agreed upon, should terminate. Hence, she proposes that the point 6 of the agenda will be postponed to the next meeting.

The Council agrees.

The meeting is dismissed at 1pm.

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