

**STUDENTS' COUNCIL – TERM 2014-2016**  
**6<sup>th</sup> MEETING MARCH, 6<sup>th</sup> 2015**  
**MINUTES**

On Friday, March 6<sup>th</sup> 2015, at 16:15, in the (room) of SISSA (International School for Advanced Studies) in Trieste (IT), the Students' Council – summoned by electronic mail on Monday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> – gathers.

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	
	Riccardo CRISTOFERI		°		
	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

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

The President verifies that the legal number of participants is reached (15/21).  
The meeting is opened with the following agenda:

- 1 Presentation of the SISSA Summer Party project**
- 2 Communications by the President**
- 3 Report from Committee I (Didactics)**
- 4 Record book for students**
- 5 Report from the Board of Directors**
- 6 PhD Courses survey**
- 7 Any other business**

## **1. Presentation of the SISSA Summer Party project**

Riccardo CRISTOFERI, vice President of the SISSA Club, reports on projects concerning the planning of the next SISSA Summer Party, in the form of a SISSA Summer event. The proposal is as follows (see Annex 1).

The event will be in the SISSA garden, starting with the final part of SISSIADI (sports and games tournaments, with award ceremony) in the afternoon. Some exhibitions and final shows from the SISSA Club art courses will follow. In the evening, the actual SISSA Party will take place; upon many people's request, the theme for the party will be "Prom dance".

The (mandatory) date for this event will be Friday, July 3<sup>rd</sup>. For a tentative schedule, see Annex 1. Some food and drink will be offered by the SISSA Club. Other costs (SIAE fee, extra food and drinks) must be covered otherwise: either asking SISSA for additional funds, or asking directly to the attendees (especially for cocktails / super alcoholic drinks), in the form of a voluntary contribution.

Lorenzo DEL RE enters the meeting at 16:30.

A number of questions are addressed to Riccardo.

- 1) Can the SISSA cafeteria provide the catering for the event? (The cafeteria management has not been contacted yet.)
- 2) How was the cost for pasta/rice estimated? (A provisional budget that had been asked for the 2014 SISSA Summer Party, accounting for 40kg of pasta, has been used to estimate this expense.)
- 3) How many people have asked for the "Prom dance" theme for the party? (A lot, including first year students and Master students.)
- 4) How will people leave SISSA in the night, after the party? (On their own; also last year's party at Barcola had presented the same issue, and this solution worked out well.)
- 5) What happens after the party, with reference to tidying up the premises and cleaning? (This will be left up to volunteers, in particular Riccardo himself.)
- 6) Are attendees external to the School allowed to participate to the event? What about if they break or damage something? (The participation of external people is in principle allowed; who will take responsibility for any possible damage is to be determined).

Riccardo concludes asking the Councilors to look for volunteers to help with the organization and management of the SISSA Summer event.

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Riccardo CRISTOFERI leaves the meeting at 16:35.

The Council starts debating the proposal by Riccardo.

Matteo CASATI recalls that the Summer event is a responsibility of the Students' Representatives in the Council, in front of the School and of the students. SISSA Club has contributed heavily in the organization also last year, but the final responsibility of the Students' Council should be kept in mind. Students' representatives should also make their best effort to grant that the event be successful.

Claudia MANCUSO recalls that last year some people complained about the lack of music at the Barcola SISSA Summer Party. This is to be taken into account for this year's party, too. Also, the organization for this event is more complicated, and this is why the project was presented so early.

Giovanni PINAMONTI thinks that the provisional budget of 650€ for the pasta, proposed by Riccardo (see Annex 1), is too much, and that some food / drinks can be "self-provided" (i.e. some of the participants to the event may bring something to share). Also Matteo CASATI disagrees with the plan of expenses, deeming it over-estimated, especially in view of the need it causes to find extra funding from the School or from the participants.

Claudia MANCUSO remarks that the proposed schedule for a party in SISSA basically prevents people to eat a proper dinner, since the cafeteria will be closed at dinner time; as of yet, no one asked to the cafeteria management about the possibility to make an exception or to use a special catering service provided by them.

It is observed that the music will be provided by students playing, at least in the afternoon (e.g. music bands and groups composed by SISSA people).

Massimo LUMACA proposes a students' poll, to establish if SISSA students are in favor of a party at SISSA. Other Councilors disagree with this proposal, as they have already talked with their represented students and deem that the students' community accepts and approves the idea of having a party at SISSA.

The President asks if someone has arguments strictly against the project: no one raises any.

The debate ends, and the President decides that a formal electronic vote will follow when more details will be fixed, as was done for the 2014 SISSA Party.

## **2. Communications by the President**

The President reports an issue raised by Massimo LUMACA, concerning problems with the renewal of software licenses in the Neuroscience Area. The Presidents asks Massimo if the problem has been solved, or if there are any updates on the matter. Massimo LUMACA replies that he has ascertained who is responsible for the license renewal (and in general for managing electronic resources) for the Neuroscience Area, and that he will contact them, reporting to the Council as soon as possible on the outcome.

The President communicates that Paolo GIDONI asked for the introduction of glass and cans trash bins. Everyone agrees to ask the Acquisitions—Estate office. The President will take care of the request on behalf of the Students' Council.

## **3. Report from Committee I (Didactics)**

On behalf of Committee I (Didactics), Yamil VIDAL DOS SANTOS reports on the proposal to adopt a form for the evaluation report of the progress exams in all Areas. The Committee has elaborated a draft for the form and for a letter of request, to be presented to the Area Coordinators (Annexes 2

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and 3). The proposed form is extremely simple and minimal; other modifications can be made in each Area or even at the level of the single PhD curriculum.

The Council starts debating the proposed drafts.

Lorenzo DEL RE remarks that, at least in the Condensed Matter PhD curriculum, a student will be expelled from the School if he/she doesn't pass the progress exam. Other Councilors agree that this is indeed a policy of the whole School. Yamil replies that the purpose of this form is just to assess whether the student has passed or not the exam, regardless of the consequences.

Matteo CASATI observes that there are 12 PhD courses, and most of them work in different ways for what concerns education. Still, a general PhD regulation, sometimes supplemented by a PhD course regulation, exists. In particular, a progress examination is compulsory in order to get the extension of the fellowship to the fourth year of PhD. Matteo also remarks that some terminology in the drafted form should be changed: "Sector" → "PhD Course"; "Assessor" → "Supervisor" (compare Annex 2).

Giovanni PINAMONTI remarks that the form should be formulated according to the general regulation.

Piermarco FONDA asks whether progress examinations have already presented some problems in the past, and Matteo CASATI responds that indeed some issues were already raised in the past.

Domenico MONACO remarks that this form is just a minimal draft, and the final form of the evaluation report should be assessed by each Area Council. Claudia MANCUSO agrees. Also Matteo CASATI agrees on a bottom-up approach to present the matter under discussion, passing through the PhD Coordinators and Area Councils, observing that this is not a heavier bureaucracy on the side of the evaluation committee in the Area, but it is a matter of transparency towards the students examined.

Claudia MANCUSO, Matteo CASATI, and Giovanni PINAMONTI suggest to correct the drafted text of the request to the Area Councils, in order to make the petition "smoother".

The President calls a vote to pre-approve the documents, upon the modification mentioned above. The results of the vote are as follows:

14 approve the documents

0 do not approve the documents

1 (Lorenzo DEL RE) abstains, deeming that such evaluation report is not needed for the progress exams in his PhD Course.

The Council APPROVES the documents, upon the modification mentioned above.

The Presidents appoints Committee I (Didactics) to prepare the amended version of the request to the Area Council and of the form for the evaluation report, and then to circulate it among the Students' Council.

#### 4. Record book for students

On behalf of Committee I (Didactics), Giovanni PINAMONTI chooses not to put forward the issue of registration of exams for first year students in a record book.

#### 5. Report from the Board of Directors

Matteo CASATI reports on the Board of Directors meeting of Thursday, March 5<sup>th</sup>. Two issues are discussed.

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### *Institution of additional mission funds for final year students*

Upon a proposal by the ISAC committee, who visited SISSA in May 2014, additional funds for students attending their final year have been instituted to cover for their mission expenses. The amount per student has been established to be 1000€ (one-thousand euros) per student. These funds are in addition to the usual funds (of 500€ per student) assigned to the Areas to cover mission expenses. More specifically, these additional funds may be used to cover:

- 1) missions / scientific collaborations to institutions abroad with which SISSA has an international agreement, according to the usual rules of missions;
- 2) conference / School fees, at any institution;
- 3) publishing expenses;
- 4) non-standard poster that cannot be printed by the SISSA plotter service;
- 5) external electronic memory devices.

The above expenses will be reimbursed once in the final year, upon collection and presentation of the relevant receipts. The procedure to request this funds is similar to the one for *una tantum* refunds (like e.g. the laptop contribution by SISSA): a form must be filled in and handed out, together with all the relevant documentation, to the Area Secretary. The form to ask for this reimbursement will be available in a few days. There are two deadlines for the submission of the form: the standard one is by the end of August (expenses will be refunded by the end of September), another by end of June (refunded by the end of July).

When the student plans on using these funds to cover for mission expenses, he / she should still complete the M1 form; however, no refund should be asked in the form itself, but it should be specified in the notes that the expenses will be covered on these additional funds.

The availability of these new funds should be communicated as effectively and promptly as possible to all students.

### *Hiring project for 2015—2017*

The hiring project for the 3-year period 2015—2017 has been approved. In these three years, dr. Giuliano TACCOLA from the Neuroscience faculty, who recently won a grant, will spend two years in the US. The Neuroscience Area Council should guarantee that his two PhD students are not abandoned and can proceed with their projects. A similar situation may present also in the Mathematics Area, after the leave of dr. Claudio ALTAFINI, prof. Andrea MALCHIODI and dr. Fabio PERRONI.

## **6. PhD Courses survey**

A survey to assess the opinion of students on merging PhD courses was conducted last December, upon request by the Director. Matteo CASATI reports on the results of the survey (see Annex 4).

*Question 1.* The vast majority of the students who have participated to the survey has taken only one entrance exam. The presence of students attempting at other entrance exams are most common in the PhD courses in Astroparticle Physics and Statistical Physics. In general, the presence of students attending several entrance exams can be regarded as an indicator of conceptual vicinity between some PhD courses, at least as perceived from outside the School.

*Question 2.* In the Area of Physics, most students come to SISSA to attend a specific PhD course. In the Area of Mathematics, the main reason to come to SISSA is the School itself. What attracts students of the Area of Neuroscience to attend SISSA is instead the will to work with a specific professor.

*Question 3.* Most participants to the survey agree with the need of greater interaction between different PhD courses and think that this interaction can be beneficial. In particular, students from the PhD course in Astroparticle Physics express the will to collaborate with people from the PhD

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course in Theoretical Particle Physics; students in the PhD course in Condensed Matter with people in the PhD course in Statistical Physics (and vice versa); students in the PhD course in Functional and Structural Genomics with people in the PhD course in Neurobiology.

Giovanni PINAMONTI remarks that the negative answers should also be taken into account in the charts.

*Question 4.* In the PhD course in Astroparticle Physics, the large majority of students reports having an external supervisor (in another PhD course), as well as collaborating with people external to the School. On the other hand, in the PhD courses in Condensed Matter, Physics and Chemistry of Biological Systems, and Cognitive Neuroscience, all students have an internal supervisor. The data collected for the PhD course in Structural and Functional Genomics is unclear, since students participating to the JUMBO PhD programme may have mistakenly considered their supervisors as external to the School.

*Question 5.* Concerning the opportunity of merging PhD courses, the opinion of the students is split more or less in half and half. However, very different situations arise among different Areas: indeed, the response is mostly positive in the courses of the Neuroscience Area, while on the contrary there is a negative response in the Physics Area. In particular, the vast majority of students from the PhD course in Astroparticle Physics are against merging PhD courses, while, on the other hand, most students in the PhD course in Structural and Functional Genomics are in favor.

*General comments and considerations.* There are two main consequences that can be drawn from the analysis of the survey.

- In the Neuroscience Area, the PhD course in Structural and Functional Genomics and the JUMBO PhD programme share almost the same faculty. Merging the two PhD courses should be considered a viable option. Students have a similar opinion on the matter.

- Also in the Physics Area some PhD course could be merged, as e.g. Astroparticle Physics and Theoretical Particle Physics or Condensed Matter and Statistical Physics, since they are similar to each other in many respects. However, the opinion of the students is strongly against this merging.

The Council APPROVES that the Students' Council Board report these results to the Director, upon modification of the data concerning Question 3 in order to account for negative answer. A temporary committee will also be instituted to discuss more thoroughly how to interpret the data collected from the survey and present them to the Director.

## 7. Any other business

Gianluca ORLANDO presents an initiative to make SISSA a SIAM Student Chapter. SIAM stands for Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics and it's a worldwide institution for the promotion of mathematics. SIAM also organizes many important conferences and publishes some top-rated journals. The Area of Mathematics has decided to open a SIAM Students Chapter at SISSA. Among the benefits of being part of a SIAM Student Chapter are a fund of 500\$ per year to support guest speakers and refreshments for Chapter meetings, and also a free membership to SIAM to each SISSA student who is interested, providing discounts on the participation fees to SIAM conferences and events.

Giovanni PINAMONTI reports on the last ITCS meeting. In the meeting, the ITCS budget has been discussed. Moreover, the missions web service has been improved, to guarantee a faster workflow and implementing an autosave mode during the completion of the M2 closing procedure. The minutes to the ITCS meeting, provided by Giovanni, will be shared by the President to the Students' Council mailing list.

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Giovanni PINAMONTI and Lorenzo DEL RE leave the meeting at 18:15.

Yamil VIDAL DOS SANTOS prepared a draft for the proposal of the installation of speed bumps along via Bonomea, an issue discussed in the last Students' Council of January 26<sup>th</sup>. The President appoints the Students' Council Board to manage the proposal, and put it forward to the Director.

Having depleted the agenda, the meeting is dismissed at 18:30.

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