

# Grey MCR Referendum – JCR vs DSO

## Background

A number of years ago both Grey JCR and Grey MCR had to decide how they wanted to run themselves – either as charities, independent from the university, reporting to the Charities Commission; or as Durham Student Organisations (DSOs).

Grey JCR, back in 2011, had a referendum and decided to become an independent charity, and voted to stay that way in two more referenda (2014 and 2017).

Grey MCR (us!) didn't have quite the same option – we weren't (and still aren't) large enough to be charity on our own, so either we affiliated to an existing charity (Grey JCR) or became a DSO. In 2015, we decided to merge with the JCR, which has been the status quo for the last two years.

At the time, the decision was made to rethink this issue every two years, in case of changes in circumstance (e.g. the JCR becoming a DSO). So we now have two options: **Stay affiliated to Grey JCR** or **go independent to become a DSO**.

## JCR vs DSO

### **Stay affiliated to Grey JCR as an independent charity:**

- Status quo – i.e. nothing would change
- Oversight of MCR Exec by JCR sabbatical officers
- Spending (in principle) restricted to “charitable aims” – but in practice this has not been an issue over the last two years since we merged with the JCR.
- Automatically access –
  - JCR events – IB, Grey Day, Phoenix Ball, ...
  - JCR organised formals
  - JCR welfare
- Pay full membership price for JCR – currently £55, of which the MCR receives £16 per member. Note that general upkeep of the MCR is paid for separately by the JCR, not out of our share of the fee.
- Mature / 4<sup>th</sup> year undergrads can join without any extra cost – we just get a share of their membership fee.

### **Go independent as a Durham Student Organisation (DSO):**

- MCR Exec (President + Treasurer) accountable to university
- There are fewer constraints on what we can spend our money on
- Likely more work for Treasurer, Social Secs, Secretary
  - Treasurer would have to write a financial report for college, and there would be monthly checks of the MCR account by the university.
  - Social secretaries would work with JCR on access to JCR events, etc (see below)
  - Secretary would have to follow the JCR mailing list, forward any relevant messages to MCR
- Membership fee would go down – previous fee was £30 for postgrads, £15 for 4<sup>th</sup> years and mature students.
- MCR members wouldn't be able to be involved in JCR committees, e.g. Arts Comm but would still be able to join college sports teams and societies
- Likely to be a long term decision – losing DSO status and re-affiliating to the JCR much harder to do than the other way around.

## What happens now?

1. OGM (14<sup>th</sup> June) to discuss the issue
2. Referendum to decide whether to start the process of becoming a DSO  
**If we vote to stay:**
3. We stay as we are, until Summer 2019 when we have this referendum again  
**If we vote to leave:**
3. Start negotiations with the JCR, to be done over the summer
4. Once negotiations with the JCR are done, hold a second referendum to confirm the decision
5. Spend next year organising the transition to DSO status
6. Be a DSO starting October 2018

## What needs to be negotiated?

The DSO framework is fixed, so there would basically just be paperwork and meetings for the MCR Exec to take care of. There is also likely to be a lot of paperwork on the college side, regarding the status of the relationship between Grey College, Grey JCR (as a charity), and Grey MCR (as a DSO). However many of the events we currently go to are organised by the JCR, nominally for JCR members only. In order for MCR members to still be able to access these, we would have to come to an agreement with the JCR on each of the following issues:

- **Access to formals**
  - Formals are college events, but most of the organisation is done by JCR.
  - Likely to revert to the pre-merger system – MCR gets one or two dedicated tables at around three formals a year.
  - Exact number of places to be decided.
  - The current ticket price covers all direct costs, but there may be some extra charge associated with use of the JCR website.
- **Access to events**
  - Informal Ball – meal tickets more limited than ents only, so meal tickets likely to be main discussion point.
  - Barfest – this is organised by bar, not JCR so should get the same access, but requires communication (via Social Sec / Secretary).
  - JCR Presidents' Guest Night – unlikely to get any seats, as this meant to celebrate JCR members.
  - Grey Day – there is no shortage of places, but costs would require negotiation. Currently funded by JCR membership fee, and t-shirt sales. Previously the MCR paid the JCR around £300 out of the MCR budget, so MCR members paid the same as JCR members.
  - Phoenix Ball – this is similar to IB in that there are limited spaces at meal, but ents only is slow to sell out. Last 3 years, we've had about 10 – 15 at meal.
  - Bops – these generally sell out, but only right at the end so likely not to be an issue to get access.
- **Access to college sports and societies**
  - These are paid for by the university from tuition fees, so no issues about joining – just making sure that MCR members know what is available (work for Secretary).
- **DSU representation**
  - Currently Grey Union rep represents all Grey students to the DSU, but is elected through the JCR – if we left we'd have to arrange a joint election process.