School Presidents' Forum
St Andrews Students' Association

Meeting date: Thursday 14th October 2021, 6:00-7:00pm (Microsoft Teams)

Attendees: School Presidents and Language Convenors, Faculty Presidents, PG Academic Convenor, Director of Education, Academic Representation Coordinator, Academic Representation Intern, Rector's Assessor, Associate Dean Education (Science), Associate Dean Education (Arts and Divinity)

Apologies: AVP Dean of Learning and Teaching, VP Education (Proctor)

AGENDA

Topic	Presenter /Lead	Time Allocated

Welcome and introductions
- Begins by all attendees introducing themselves
  o Gosia – The Associate Dean Education (Arts and Divinity)
  o Gerald – The Associate Dean Education (Science)
- All messages will be relayed back to the Proctor and the AVP Dean of Learning and Teaching
	DoEd	5 minutes

In person and online learning - Leonie invites any SPs to raise their hands and speak on in-person and online learning issues within their schools - Catherine Mullner – Sp for School of English o Catherine raises a point that the support for teachers to learn the tools for online teaching is lacking and that is affecting student's learning	SPs, LCs, FPs	15 minutes

- o Asking for increased transparency about how the staff are trained for online teaching/dual delivery
- o Asking for paid training for staff on the technology for online teaching/dual delivery
- o Catherine points out that offering more support to staff will help streamline the online learning experience for everyone
- o Catherine says this issue was brought up at her schools SSCC meeting
- o *Response*: Gerald responds that the Proctors office encouraged staff to teach in a dual mode instead of a hybrid mode where possible although some staff have been doing hybrid anyways.
- o *Response*: Over summer, IT services and the TELL team ran training sessions on all the technology for all staff who wanted to attend and also offered 1-1 sessions for all staff who wanted it.
- o *Conclusion*: Gerald will take back the feedback that academics do not feel that they are supported as there is support in place but the message may not be relayed well enough.
- o *Action Point*: SPs to relay back to their staff that there are resources available and to send them to the proper channels.
- o Catherine mentions that dual delivery mode is not possible for some courses so continuous support would be helpful throughout the year and also brings up the suggestion to increase transparency and communication about the situation.
- - Lucia Guercio – Arts and Divinity Faculty President
  - o Lucia raises a point that it can be difficult for students learning remotely as they can feel alienated during dual delivery – she has personal experience in this
  - o It was proposed at the LTC away day that there be a set number of classrooms that have things such as multiscreens. This would help the issue of alienation for those in hybrid learning.
  - o Lucia points out that especially in the Arts discussion is extremely important and that when in hybrid learning that aspect can be lost.
  - o *Response*: Gerald encourages anyone to tell the staff that are struggling to contact IT services with the issues (such as technology issues, camera placements, etc.)
  - o *Response:* Gerald reminds all SPs that all of the rooms had to be upgraded extremely fast and the feedback needs to be relayed back to IT services so they know what the issues are and can solve the problems.
  - o Leonie (DoEd) points out that this discussion is important as it was relevant at the LTC away day and that she is glad the hybrid learning process is being thought about by all meeting attendees.
- - Rhona McCracken – SP for School of Computer Science
  - o Rhona raises the point that it seems to be up to the staff themselves what sort of teaching they would like to do – whether it be hybrid or dual

- o Rhona raises the point from their mid-semester feedback that hybrid learning has increased frustration from students in CompSci and more guidance would be useful
  - o Asking for resources such as microphones for professors doing online learning
  - o Asking for professors to make sure that in recordings everything is captured whether that be voiceovers or text on whiteboards
  - o Asking for there to be a standardized way of online teaching so students know what to expect from each class
- Thomas Rintoul – SP for Physics & Astronomy
  - o Thomas echoes Rhona's idea on having a standardized way of teaching online classes (hybrid online classes)
  - o Thomas points out discussion-based courses struggle with hybrid learning
  - o *Action Point:* SPs to note specifics of what works well and what works poorly for online learning and send them to Gerald and Gosia
- Leonie asks Gerald and Gosia if there are any updates on plans for the future of teaching next semester
  - o *Response*: Hopes that by the end of ILW the aims for semester 2 will be shared with the student body. They would love to bring in more in person teaching if possible as the students have been fantastic so far in limiting Covid in St Andrews. There are no recorded transmissions within teaching spaces since the beginning of the pandemic which is a good sign.

Study Spaces	SPs, LCs, FPs	10 minutes

- Leonie invites anyone who has been involved in the Study Spaces discussion to contribute
- Lucia Guercio – Faculty President of Arts and Divinity
  o Lucia gives an update on the Library – The library will be open until midnight coming Monday of reading week and will also add 200 drop in seats instead of booking
  o Lucia brings up the issue with people sitting in booked seats
  o Lucia brings up the issue of students being confined to only being able to book 3 hours maximum a day in the library
  o Lucia points out an issue from Catherine (SP of English) that there is a frustration with not being able to cancel part of booked slots if they've already begun
  o Lucia brings up that the café hours is being reviewed each week which is important
  o Lucia brings up the importance of longer library hours being important for students
  o Asking for at least the ground floor to be open until at least 4 am at least during revision week
- Sarah Johnston – Faculty President of Science and Medicine		

- o Sarah points out that the loss of study spaces in the library has caused an overflow of students into smaller study spaces across the University which is causing pressure on already chronically overfull buildings - o Sarah gives an update on the Library mask exemption rules – Fiona from Disabilities is making sure all staff know that the line of questioning for mask exempt students ends when students say they are exempt - o Sarah points out that while it's great there will be drop-in spaces in the library, the capacity is not going up at all which means that some issues with lack of space will still stand - o *Question*: Gerald asks Sarah if students have been overly questioned on mask wearing rules. *Answer:* Sarah says that yes this has happened but it seems to be more of a lack of understanding from staff than any malicious intent. - o *Question*: Gerald follows up his last question and asks Sarah the extent of this issue. *Answer:* Enough that students have complained. - Thomas Rintoul – SP for Physics & Astronomy - o Thomas brings up that the P&A study spaces are limited as the JF Allen library is closed in the afternoon for teaching which has taken away a considerable number of study spaces for his students. - Sarah lets SPs know that the Union website has been updated with all relevant information on the current study spaces and will be continually updated throughout the year by the Union website intern. - *Question*: Gerald asks if there are any specific actions that need to be taken back to the Proctor and the AVP Dean of Learning and Teaching. - o *Action Point:* Increase the hours in study spaces during exam period - o *Action Point:* There is a lack of study spaces, would be nice to have an increase of study spaces this semester.		
Update on MEQ Review - Leonie asks the Deans if there is an update on the MEQ review - *Response*: There will be an extra question on MEQs this year asking students to identify graduate attributes they've obtained from the course - *Response*: The MEQ review is a large project and there is no official timeline on it currently. - *Response*: There are many questions that were proposed to add but the survey will only work as long as students fill it out - *Action Point*: SPs to promote the MEQs to their students as there are some schools with low response rates - Lucia Guercio – Faculty President for Arts & Divinity o Lucia suggests having tutors or lecturers give time during class to their students to fill out the MEQ	Associate Dean Education (Arts & Divinity)	5 minutes

Academic Representative Queries	Management SP, Physics SP, ArtDiv FP	20 minutes
- Increase transparency through 'town hall' - Francesca Lavelle – SP for School of Management - Refer to the additional information section for details *Response:* Gerald is in favor of this town hall and will take this back. Suggests even adding drop-in sessions held by the Deans. - Leonie (DoEd) adds that last academic year there was a town hall-esque session with members of the Principals office - Catherine (SP for English) supports this point as it will help with transparency and communication issues from the University - Review of accessibility - Thomas Rintoul – SP for Physics & Astronomy - Refer to the addition information section for details *Response:* There is a true desire in the University to improve accessibility *Action Point:* This point from Thomas will be taken back to student services. *Action Point*: Thomas to send more details to the Deans on what can be taken back. - Thomas points out that increasing accessibility is an easier task and it would be good for SPs to have support in increasing accessibility *Response:* Gerald points out that it is easy to add accessibility but harder to increase accessibility well and that is the challenge at hand *Response*: Gosia encourages Thomas to be proactive within his school as learning in his school will be different from others. - Leonie (DoEd) adds that these issues have come up in the Disabilities forum and it will be helpful to tackle these issues from both ends - Sarah (FP for SciMed) adds that the University of St Andrews has potential to be the world's leading accessible University if the proper time and effort is put into it and this is the time to work on it *Action Point:* This will be taken back to the Proctor and the AVP Dean of Learning and Teaching. *Action Point*: President's to gather feedback within their schools on specific issues *Action Point*: The feedback will be taken to the next SWAG meeting and then the Disabilities Forum		

- - - *Action Point*: Once the feedback has gone through SWAG and the Disabilities forum we will discuss again at the next SP Forum
- End of SP-Coding
  - o SP-Coding will no longer be an option this year
  - o Lucia Guercio – Faculty President of Arts and Divinity
    - Lucia points out that while SP-coding will be taken away, we are still currently in a pandemic
    - Lucia points out the current S-coding system is not entirely accessible and evidence in times of hardship can be hard to obtain during the pandemic
    - Asks for a more accessible S-coding system that acknowledges the fact we are still in unprecedented times
    - *Response*: SP-coding will not be running this year because we have had 4 semesters of learning how to do online learning, we are doing much more in-person teaching.
    - *Response*: Gerald responds that the University is aware that there are still pandemic affected circumstances for students, but the S-coding system is still there for those situations. S-coding does require evidence but the evidence is flexible.
    - *Response*: Gerald asks for students to let the University know about issues as early as possible as evidence can be difficult to come by when it is last minute.
    - *Response*: Gerald points out that at a cohort level module results this past year compared to the past few years are not substantially different which is another reason to keep S-coding but get rid of SP-coding
    - *Action Point:* Gerald will bring back the point of accessibility in obtaining evidence
    - *Conclusion*: Leonie, Lucia, Deans of Education, Proctor, and AVP Dean of Learning and Teaching to have a meeting to put together a clear statement on S-coding with a positive message

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Additional Information:

4. (a) For increased transparency, would it be possible to have a town hall with Sally Mapstone and/or the Proctor, to get on a Teams call and let students ask questions/have a dialogue (questions can be sent ahead of time and vetted) but I think many people feel disconnected from the governing body especially

after Covid. It could be a once a semester call just to check in and really hear student's thoughts/concerns.

5. (b) A large scale review of accessibility across university learning and teaching. It's all too common for accessibility to be treated as a tick-box exercise in meeting the minimum requirements that come from the disabilities team. However, before the disabilities team will acknowledge any additional support allowances for a student, they must have a diagnosis from a doctor. I'm sure I don't have to say that the NHS and health services across the world have massive backlogs as a result of the pandemic so those diagnoses are taking longer and students are the ones who suffer. I would support a university wide review of accessibility to speak to students from all departments to find out what preventable problems are causing students the most difficulty from an accessibility point of view. Something that was expressed by student in Physics and Astronomy last year was a desire for more dyslexia friendly, or screen reader compatible notes. This is something we're working on now. These problems are not isolated to the School of Physics and Astronomy though and I believe that, as the university moves out of the pandemic, we have a golden opportunity to make St Andrews a prime example of an accessible university, whether the NHS have got round to a diagnosis or not.