

School of Divinity



School President's Semester One Report

2020-21

Produced on 31 January 2021

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# Introduction



Hello! Welcome to my Semester One Report for the Divinity School!

It is an absolute honour to be one of the student representatives, and I thank everyone who has trusted me with the responsibilities that come with the position. As a School President, I help foster a community where students feel supported and valued. In a small community such as Divinity, I make sure that people feel included in a class or social events. I ensure students are confident that their feedback helps make real changes to the student experience and class quality.

This report will walk you through everything I have achieved in Semester One (2021-21) as School President. It has been an incredible journey for me, and I hope you share my excitement as you continue to read this report.

**Lowell So**

President of the School of Divinity (2020-21)

# Semester Recap Timeline



|                 |   |   |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Week 1          | ● | Launching official social media                 |
| Week 2          | ● | Class Rep nomination week                       |
| Week 3          | ● | Class Rep election                              |
| Week 4          | ● | Equality & Diversity Committee meeting          |
| Week 5          | ● | Student panellist recruitment for Event 1       |
| Week 7          | ● | Event 1: Joint-school Student Internship Panel  |
| Week 8          | ● | Teaching Learning Committee Meeting #1          |
| Week 9          | ● | Event 2: Professors Without Gowns   Ep.1        |
| Week 10         | ● | Among Us social channel                         |
| Week 11         | ● | SSCC and Teaching Learning Committee Meeting #2 |
| Revision Week 1 | ● | Event 3: Professors Without Gowns   Ep.2        |

# Communication

## **Innovative communication - Use of social media**

When I was elected as School President for this academic year, I had the goal to make Divinity School's activities more visible and accessible to students. I believed that creating social media profiles and improving publicity would help our communication with the student body. I launched social media profiles for Divinity School, and I decided to be intentional about the way we present ourselves in email, event posters, or announcement. I used Facebook and Instagram to make information easily accessible and appealing. The content ranges from survey reminder, event announcement, class representative introduction, and more. Social media has also acted as a quicker way for students to reach me directly regarding simple questions. I have had good conversations on Facebook messenger and Instagram inbox with students. After evaluation, I believe it has been the right decision to adopt social media as a tool.

## **Communication with students - Newsletter**

While social media has been fun, the essential and regular communication with the student body was done by a weekly email titled "Divinity School Newsletter". I maintained the consistency of delivery every Monday and of the format of email. To make it more legible and efficient, I always start the email with a greeting message followed by the topics that I am going to cover in the email. This feature in the newsletter email has enabled students to locate the information that they are interested in. I would also always bring an encouraging message at the end of the newsletter and reassure students of my always-available help.

## **Communication with Class reps**

I created a WhatsApp group for the class reps cohort where we can update each other on anything that we are working on. We had two meeting in Semester One - one for goal setting and the other for SSCC briefing.

## **Communication with Head of School (HoS) and Director of Teaching (DoT)**

My HoS and DoT have been very supportive of my work. We communicate by email, and I get to meet them (virtually) at our TLC meetings. I also forward my newsletter email to DoT to keep her informed of what students are getting from me.

## **Support from the Director of Education and Faculty Presidents**

I visited Chloe and Joe's office hour at the start of the semester to ask questions, and I would email them for specific questions throughout the semester. While I directly report to Joe, I have also gotten the chance to talk to Amy, who has helped direct my work and make me feel encouraged and appreciated.

# Class Representatives

This year, both the nomination and election process of class reps were conducted on the Union's online portal. It was a smooth process, and it was pleasing to see that we had nominations in every year level. Class reps are the student community's pillars who work with me closely, and their primary role is to collect feedback from class or report if anything in class is worth bringing attention to. These class reps also take on different expansion roles on top of representing their year level divisions.

## Divinity 2020-21 Class Reps

Final version

| Year        | Division                | Name   | School-wide role                              |
|-------------|-------------------------|--|---|
| First year  | Theology                | <b>Zoe Hemming-Clark</b><br>zhc1@st-andrews.ac.uk          | <i>Social Rep</i>                             |
|             | Biblical & Languages    | <b>Katherine Barnett</b><br>krb8@st-andrews.ac.uk          | <i>Library Rep</i>                            |
| Second year | Theology                | <b>Maria Kovacova</b><br>mk313@st-andrews.ac.uk            | <i>Disabilities Rep</i>                       |
|             | Biblical & Languages    | <b>Winfield Hart Benko</b><br>whb1@st-andrews.ac.uk        | <i>EDI Rep</i>                                |
| Third year  | Theology                | <b>Joel Nathan Butcher</b><br>jnb4@st-andrews.ac.uk        | <i>Online Rep</i>                             |
|             | Biblical & Languages    |  |   |
| Fourth year | Theology                | <b>Amy Beatrice Helen Jordan</b><br>abhj2@st-andrews.ac.uk | <i>Career Rep</i>                             |
|             | Biblical & Languages    |  |   |
|             | Dissertation            | <b>Hugh Halsey</b><br>hsmh@st-andrews.ac.uk                | <i>Social Rep</i>                             |
| PGT         | MLitt                   | <b>Elizabeth Dunbar</b><br>ced23@st-andrews.ac.uk          | <i>Library Rep</i><br><i>PG Executive Rep</i> |
|             | MLitt Distance Learning | <b>Misty Krasawski</b><br>mk328@st-andrews.ac.uk           |   |

CAA: 31-01-2021

# Education Committee

## **Education Committee**

The Education Committee (EduCom) consists of all School Presidents, two Faculty Presidents, and the Director of Education. We convene once a week to as a checkpoint for everybody. Before the meeting every week, I would submit a weekly summary to Joe, the Arts Faculty President, which details my biggest success and challenge in that week. Attending EduCom meeting, as we call it, makes up a large part of our dedication to the role. These meetings have helped all presidents get clarification on school policy and carry discussion that surrounds students' lives.

## **School President's Forum**

The Forum is twice a semester with the same meeting time and attendees as EduCom meetings. The Forum differs from our weekly meeting in that it has the addition of University Deans, the Procter and the Rector. This Forum is a place where we can bring issues to them directly for discussion. This year, it has been imperative since dual delivery teaching is continuously under review for optimal outcomes. The collective effort of all School President at this Forum has shown results and improved student satisfaction.

## **Student Advisory Panel (Museums)**

As a co-option position, I also sit on the Museums Student Advisory Panel. The panel is composed of School Presidents and the University Museums staff. There were two meetings in Semester One, in October and November separately. While I had difficulty to join the live meeting due to technical issues, I read the meeting minutes to know what has been discussed, in which reviewing the Strategy Plan has been the main focus.

# Equality and Diversity Committee

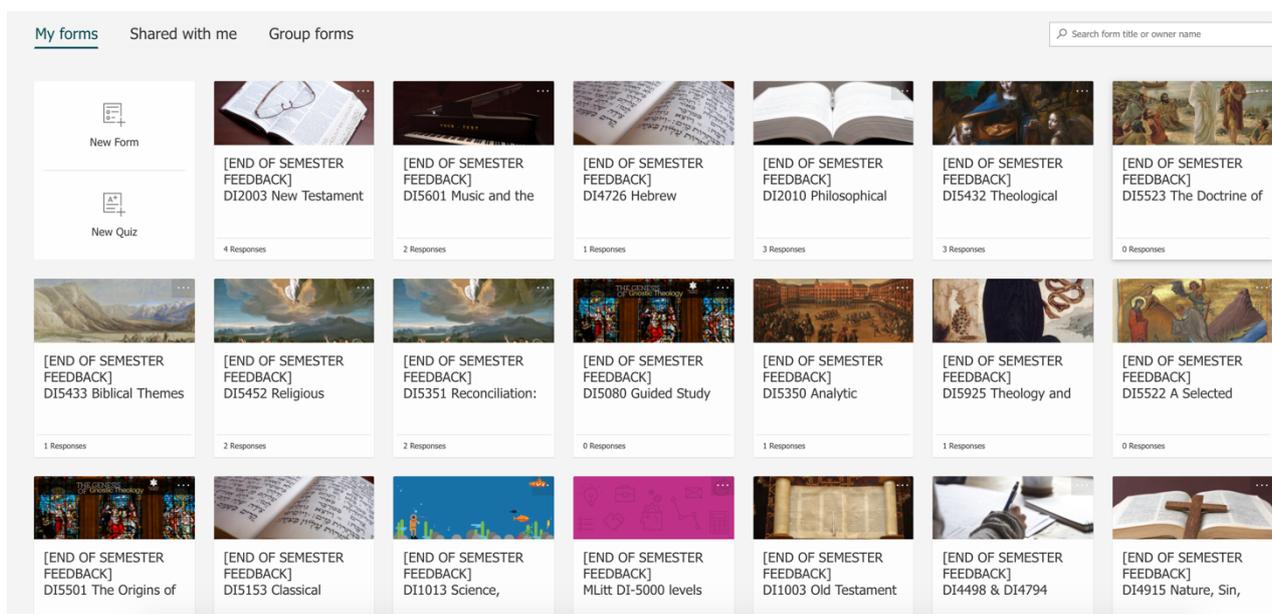
This committee is dedicated to working on the equality and diversity issues within the School of Divinity, with main members including Head of School, the Equality and Diversity School Convener, Assistant School Administrator and myself. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of October 2020, we had a meeting to discuss the composition of the Self-Assessment Team for Athena Swan Award, which aims to improve gender equality. After this meeting, I had a separate meeting with Dr Nevader, the Equality and Diversity School Convener, to discuss how we may collaborate across the staff-student level.

# Student Staff Consultative Committee

Student Staff Consultative Committee (SSCC) is one of the most important meetings in all schools. It is a meeting where staff and all class reps come into one place to exchange feedback, particularly for staff to know the feedback from each module. To prepare for this meeting under the circumstances, I designed surveys using Microsoft Forms to collect student feedback. The class reps are expected to play a key role in making SSCC as successful as possible because they are the direct contact point for the modules they are responsible for.

## Feedback collection - Microsoft Forms

As we are doing feedback form digitally for the first time, I decided to take a “personalised” approach that encouraged students to give feedback. I made one electronic form *per module* to give students the feeling that their feedback is important and specific. It is pleasing to see that this method did show a positive effect.



*Feedback Forms for Divinity School modules offered in 2020/21 Semester One*

## Reminder email

I am aware of the struggle of my predecessors in collecting student feedback – student apathy. Before the pandemic, School Presidents could visit every class in person throughout the feedback-collection week, which guaranteed response. Due to being in a very different situation now, I decided to send a reminder email to every module class with the specific feedback form linked in that email. I made convenience the priority.

## Feedback report

As we adopted a digital way of collecting feedback, I also introduced a new change in making the report - I created a template to help class reps produce their reports.

Report elements in order:

- One-line highlight comment
- Report figure
- Quantitative feedback average score table
- Highest and lowest satisfaction item
- Positive feedback summary
- Improvement summary
- Student suggestion for the module in the future

I designed the template in view of the kinds of question I put in the survey. It is also an improvement that we could produce a report with useful elements and consistency in style. In the report template, I made space for class reps to report figures such as class size and response rate that give the reader a sense of the representation of survey results.

I want to highlight that the **one-line highlight comment** has been a new initiative. I encouraged class reps to extract one line that they think are most encouraging for the module coordinator/lecturer to see when they read our report. As difficult as it is for students, we know that the teaching cohort is also trying very hard. For this reason, I believe reading the highlight comment would be a way to show appreciation.

One highlight comment from the class:

*"I have really enjoyed this module and feel that both the lecturers and tutors have made sure we have gotten as much out of it as possible, thank you!"*

*Highlight of student comments in DI1001 feedback survey*

One highlight comment from the class:

*"Great module, good teaching. Best module I have done."*

*Highlight of student comments in DI1013 feedback survey*

## SSCC meeting

We conducted the SSCC meeting on 23 November 2020 (last teaching week of S1). Before the meeting, I held a pre-SSCC meeting with class reps to brief the agenda in advance. In the meeting, each class rep gave a summary of their represented module(s) and raised issues in student feedback. For the PGT module that was a joint module with the Music Centre, we invited a student from that class to our SSCC meeting to provide feedback. The meeting was efficient and under time control. Overall, it was a success, and I owe it to the team of class reps.

# Teaching Learning Committee

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Teaching Learning Committee is essentially the leadership team of every individual school which consists of core members including School President, Head of School, Director of Teaching, Examinations Officer, Director of Postgraduate Studies Taught, Undergraduate recruitment, admissions, careers liaison officer, Study Abroad Co-Ordinator, Academic Misconduct Officer, and Assistant School Administrator. I attended two meetings in October and November 2020 separately. My role in the meeting was to get updates from various departments, assist staff members on specific projects if needed, or report my work's progress in general. This committee acts as the platform where I work closely with the staff to understand how to support students in Divinity. While my work takes support from the staff, it is also vital for me, as the student representative, to show support for the staff's hard work. By being part of the committee, I witnessed that all Divinity staff members worked extremely hard in the past semester to monitor teaching quality amid of a global pandemic.

## Events

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The year 2020 posed a significant challenge to doing traditional events. However, it didn't stop the community from bonding. The first event was a **joint school internship panel** co-hosted with the School of Philosophy, Film Studies, and Social Anthropology. To organise this event, we recruited student panellists before Independent Learning Week and held the event as students came back in Week 7. The event was a great success, and it gave Arts students more insights into the potential career paths that are open for them.

It was a proud moment for Divinity School to launch a new initiative - **Professors Without Gowns**. With the help of two event reps, we designed this event to be one that pioneers in bringing professors and students together for informal conversations outside the classroom. We had two episodes on Microsoft Teams in Semester One - For episode one, we had the honour to invite Professor Aguilar and Professor Schwoebel; For episode two, we had a great time with two female professors, Professor Wolfe and Professor Sabine. Both episodes had a great turn out in attendance and received compliments in its initiative. While we are satisfied with the results, we are still learning to enhance interaction between professors and attendees, especially in a virtual setting.

# Looking Forward



Semester Two is still facing the same amount of uncertainty that Semester One did, if not more. In times like this, it is a challenge and a blessing to be one of the School Presidents who continue to strive for what is best for the student body.

As a start, I will keep everything I have established in Semester One - regular newsletter, social media channels, virtual events, and the constant support for all students. In addition to that, I will work on the Heretic Journal started by the last president. I hope some fourth-year students who have completed their dissertations in Semester One could publish their work for peer review. On a collaborative level, I will remain in contact with the President of St Mary College Society and all the other School Presidents to journey through the semester together.

I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped me with enquiries big and small, with patience, guidance, and appreciation. I am also thankful for all who have given me trust and word of encouragement. I look forward to welcoming the next president in March, who will continue to serve the student body with passion and dedication. Before that happens, I will do my best in my position for the rest of this semester.

Thank you for reading.

31 January 2021