



Education Committee
St Andrews Students Association

Meeting date: Thursday 4th February 2021 (6pm) MS Teams

Apologies: Kushal Tansania (Graduate SP), Orrin McAleer (Medicine SP)

Present: Amy Gallacher (DoEd), Chloe Fielding (Science and Medicine Faculty President), Joseph Horsnell (Arts and Divinity Faculty President), Iona Baillie (minuting)

Hannah Koegler (Art History SP), Pippa Koegler (Hannah's Cat), Kate Koegler (Hannah's Cat), Camiel Leake (Chemistry SP), Belinda Hawes (Earth Sciences SP), Callum Irvine (English SP), Teo Yarkova (Film Studies SP), Imaan Kotadia (Geography and SD SP), Geraint Morgan (History SP), Murray Whyte (Maths SP), Lucy Matthews (Modern Languages SP), Rachel Neighbour (Philosophy SP), Sarah Johnston (Physics and Astronomy SP), Lindsay Nielsen (Psychology and Neuroscience SP), Elinor Layne (Social Anthropology SP), Lowell So (Divinity SP), Emma Johnston (Arabic/Persian Convener), Maddie Lee (Comparative Literature Convener), Antonia Cahill (French Convener), Helen Clinton (Italian Convener), Elodie Phillips (Russian Convener), Rohan Date (Spanish Convener), Brynne Stewart (Biology SP), Eva Halliday (German Convener), George Watts (International Relations), Erwin Watts (George's Cat), Ursula Goldsmith (Music) Ryan Gibb (Computer Science SP), Erik Crnkovich (Classics SP)

AGENDA

1. Welcome (Chloe Fielding)

2. SWAG updates (Chloe Fielding)

GM: General frustration that it takes a long time to get an appointment with Student Services, and that long term issues only get a couple of appointments which also have long wait times.

- GW: Lots of students recognise that there are funding issues but there are negative comments. If you ask the University if your circumstances (wrt mental health, environment etc) are enough to come back to St Andrews, you need Student Services to sign off on it and this puts additional pressure on them.
- CI: Waiting times is the biggest issue and are quite long (up to 6 weeks) which can be make or break. Students know Student Services is important. Funding needs to increase to support long term issues and decrease wait times.

CF: Where would you put the funding, counselling etc.

- CI: More councillors, people who can do acute appointments and also long-term stuff, just to help deal with the volume.
- LM: If you have a mental health issue you need evidence of that from Student Services and you can't get that if you can't get an appointment. There are knock on effects of this. If you are in a flat with someone going through a mental health crisis, you have to help them and you have to take up the mantle and you can't get support from Student Services yourself for the same reasons.
- SJ: On demand services are the way to go if there are enough funds. The crisis line is not well advertised but is also not very developed, and the out of hours support is also poorly advertised. Most of the time when you need student services, you often need them immediately.
- CI: Agreed. Short term appointments would be very important. DoT also thinks academic alerts are a good way to check up on students. Support in another way would be good.
- AG: Academic alerts are becoming a pastoral tool but trying to come up with an alternative way of doing this which goes beyond tracking mood. It would help staff stay in touch with student and let students self-refer, as well as flag when students might be going downhill and when Student Services should get in touch.
- CF: What about the post-grad side? It seems there are no appointments until at least March.
- AW: Haven't heard this but this is bad. One good thing about Student Services is that unlike at other universities, you don't have a cap on the

number of appointments you can have. PGs might be less aware of what Student Services can offer.

- CL (chat): There is one appointment in the whole of February.

3. Study Spaces

(Rachel/Teo)

RN: St Mary's is open right now with 25 seats. A lot of the time, half of the people don't turn up so there are empty seats which have been booked and which others could use. You can only book up to an hour before. Could there be a change to the system so that you can cancel last minute or it gets automatically cancelled if you don't turn up?

TY: Maybe there could be an email system so that if you don't turn up you get an email so people are less likely to not turn up after they booked.

- MW: Why does there have to be appointments? Can't it work like the library so that there are some spaces that aren't booked?
- RN: The lockdown rules mandate booking.
- BS: When there wasn't a sign up at St James, people turned up an hour before it was open. Also, MySaint isn't up to date compared to the library website, as it says you can book spaces which the library says you can't.
- TY: When you go to the booking page, it says every space is unavailable for the next two weeks and you can't click on anything which is confusing.
- AC: Could we organise a meeting about this with Amina Shah? It might be more productive than brainstorming here.
- CF: Good idea

Action point: Teo/Rachel to set up a meeting with Amina as496 to discuss the Library issues mentioned here

- RN: Had to log on at midnight to book a spot which seems like a bad system. Also, there is no cap on how much you can book so people might be block booking just in case they want to use it, and then not going. This could explain how empty it can be.
- AG: All spaces had to be re-risk assessed in light of the new variants so hopefully in the future, spaces will be opening up, but booking will have to stay. They are thinking about making a cap on the hours you can book because it is supposed to be only essential study. Have a brainstorm before

you speak to Amina about what happens if you don't turn up, so that the meeting is productive.

- JH: Agreed. Also, students aren't really supposed to be using study spaces right now. It is supposed to be essential only, so we have to be careful about not confusing people in opening up the study spaces. It could make it seem that going to the library to study is a legitimate reason to leave your home which it is not. It is only meant for study you can't do anywhere else. Most people block booking probably do not know this.
- MW: What is essential study?
- CF: Eg if you have lots of people in the same house with children running around and chaos?
- JH: Study you can't do anywhere else, eg accessing manuscripts. The 'chaotic home' reason is probably what people used to get back to St Andrews so therefore doesn't really apply here.
- CF: Booking a space to sit with your laptop and study therefore wouldn't be within the rules?
- BS: This needs to be more clearly communicated eg on the Library website. Students really do not know about this so it has to be put as a disclaimer when you are booking spaces.
- CF: Do the Library check what you're doing?
- GM: It can't just be manuscripts as they cannot leave special collections (Martyrs Kirk). There are no collections at Mary's so there must be a reason St Mary's is open.
- JH: Manuscripts is just an example.
- CF: Goes to show we need clear advisement as to what counts as essential.

Action: TY and RN to contact the Library and find a way to make it clear as to what is a valid reason to come to as study space.

4. Open Forum

BH: Earth Science requires a lot of remote access to software which is problematic as the ratio of licences to people needing this resource is tight. If there is a class on, all of the licences can be taken up even if not all of the computers are in use. For dissertation students who need this but don't have timetabled times and would usually sit in the corner of the computer room during the class to work, it is

difficult to have access. Is there a better solution/is anyone else having the same issues?

- IK: Same issues, especially for using ArcMap and Mac users in particular. People are changing their dissertation topics for this.
- SJ: Also use remote access but using individual logins. There is a way for multiple people to use software off the same computer. (in chat:) Physics uses PuTTY to connect remotely to the actual workspaces which allows you to access a physical desktop remotely, but I don't know if you use that already.
- GM: A Dissertation module was cancelled because of remote access issues.

GW: General issue is that eg US students who have multiple phones have issues with two factor authentication.

- JA: Got kicked out of Outlook for a lot of Winter break because of a phone switch and IT not replying. Couldn't work on anything for that time.
- HK: Had a similar experience. Locked out of account as the sim card was at other parent's house and this was a time when she needed access to this for letters of recommendation. Have to switch sim and pay every time to dual authenticate because the message is a text not an imessage.
- AG: This needs to be addressed by IT quickly.
- (in chat:) CL: IT Services can change your phone number for authentication if you email them.
- (in chat:) ML: On a poll, 400 people said they'd been getting kicked out, people also mentioned the sim thing and also missing tutorials etc

Action: Bring this up with the Chief Information Officer

SJ: It could be great to have an app or webpage for students to track wellbeing and health which also allows Student Services to look at overall trends in student wellbeing (anonymised). This could enable them to know when to up the support. How do people feel about this?

- JH: Good idea. There is money the Union could access for this. There are plans for this in the long term. It is the Santander pot of money.
- GM: Good idea, as long as students clearly know (beyond basic GDPR) what their data will be used for.

JA: Is the Dean's list your grade with or without the SP code.

- AG: Don't know but probably with the SP code. This is being looked into.
- SJ: Confirmed from experience.
- BS: It said people who aren't eligible to graduate can't SP code but then got an email invitation to SP code. What changed?
- AG: It was simpler so the change was made. They said they'd email but they haven't yet updated the website

Action: BS to forward this email to AG

- (in chat:) RG: Somewhat relevant from my school is a discussion about whether SP and S coded modules should be included when calculating averages to award prizes. The consensus was to include SP coded modules but exclude S coded modules.

SJ: There's a science careers event (Diver-STEM). Is there a similar thing in ArtsDiv and when?

- JH: It doesn't have a confirmed date yet and is still in the fledgeling stage.
- TY: The proposed date is the 11th March but is not set in stone. It would be lots of different careers which are creative. It would have speakers from different industries, employers etc.
- SJ: That sounds suitably different from Diver-Stem. The context is that someone wants run a theatrical showcase as a STEM event which doesn't really fit into the Science event. The Arts version doesn't sound like it would fit either.
- CI: The creative industries event would be a panel event between schools and it was not pitched as a diversity event initially.
- TY: The career link and she added diversity to the remit so that they can have speakers from minority groups talking about their experiences.

(No science president spoke to disagree with separating the careers event and the showcase).

AC: Heard rumours about dance social for Educom?

- CF: Details pending, but SJ will lead a dance EduCom social! This will hopefully happen next week.

GW: The idea that the university would be able to view your screens when you were doing your exams – is this happening?

- CF: At the Learning and Teaching away day, their group was against it.
- AG: This is being taken forward by a project board for digital assessments. There are 270 recommendations and priorities to be taken into account when proceeding to choose a vendor. The process will directly take into account what SPs have said so far. It is in its early stages but there is so far no major student or staff desire to proctor exams in the way previously mentioned.
- BS: DOT brought up that some people pre-write their exam answers as it is predictable what will come up. Science is against it but Arts seems to be more for this.
- IK: This has been brought up. Staff were concerned about people copying and pasting exam answers and some staff were hinting at exam questions whereas others weren't, leading to discrepancies between students in terms of how 'favoured' or prepared students were. Maybe it could be that you can't copy or paste into the software exams would be on? Whoever is proctoring the exam wouldn't have control over your mouse it would just be a software thing. They were very against recording you/your room. Whose permission do you need to record these things as well?
- BH: Had a conversation about copying and pasting last year. Some members of staff had the same questions in the exam as in past papers. This led to the discussion that if you put the same question in the exam as in the past paper, it is your own fault as students will do practise essays. It was acknowledged that practise essays are a great way to study so this is the natural progression. If you don't prohibit copying and pasting, you have to realise people will reuse prewritten essays.
- CI: Agreed. If staff don't update their exam questions, it's their own fault. If a student pastes in an essay that doesn't quite fit the question, that is the student's fault. If copy/paste was banned, there is nothing to stop you having the practise essay open on another window and retyping it. There will be so many other work arounds. It comes down to being happy with replication, or staff remaking questions every year.

- IK: It is unfair that some staff hint at questions and others don't. It gives some students a leg up and can be frustrating for the other students. If staff members aren't changing questions and people copy/paste, that's one thing but the inequality between students who know the question beforehand and those that don't is another.
- BS: It also depends on the style of the course as to how easy it is to guess the question beforehand.
- GM: As long as it is fair within a module, does it matter if between the modules there is disparity? Different modules have different exam formats, different skills etc. In his dept, staff care more about writing coherent essay is more important than facts so knowing the vague question is a big part of that. As long as different tutorials within a module are treated fairly, it doesn't seem to be problematic. There is no way to make the exam experience between different schools the same, anyway.
- IK: Agreed that there are differences between schools, but if different modules in a school are treated differently, it is problematic, and it is happening. This should show that (at least in Arts) coursework should be prioritised over exams as they are a better way of testing your skills and don't have the issues being discussed with exam formatting and rules.
- CI: In subhonours, some tutors knew what was on the exam and some didn't. This leads to discrepancies within modules. This is a school issue and probably still happens.
- MW: What is the point of changing the past paper archive system. In maths, the past papers are on MMS. The new system doesn't seem very different to the current system other than being able to practise exams in the exam portal. Even this isn't that useful for Maths.
- AG: It is fairly similar especially to Maths as it already has a good system. The current system difficult to operate though and requires input from all levels of teaching staff. The Exams Office needs the changes to happen to centralise the exam paper holding and remove the burden from Schools. It also comes down to making it the same for all schools which it is not right now.
- (in chat:) AW: The problem with proctoring is that you either need ALL the power/ restrictions (see room/ control computer/ ID check etc) or none of

them because people will get around them. Changing exam style makes more sense

HK introduced her cats to the group and encouraged members to bring their pets to EduCom next week. All were in agreement.

5. Meeting adjourned: 7.10pm
