



## Education Committee

St Andrews Students Association

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**Meeting date:** Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021 (6pm) MS Teams

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

Hannah Koegler (Art History SP), 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), 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), Orrin McAleer (Medicine 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 Convenor), Kushal Tansania (Graduate SP), George Watts (International Relations), Ursula Goldsmith (Music) Ryan Gibb (Computer Science SP), Erik Crnkovich (Classics SP), Jeanne Adam (Management SP)

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### AGENDA

1. Welcome **5 mins**

(Art Div FP)

JH welcomed participants to week 6 Educom (the halfway point!) and wished that the meeting could be over in less than the hour.

2. Trigger Warning Survey **5 mins**

(Arabic Conv)

**EJ:** As a member of the committee of the Campus Safety Society more than a SP for this point. Been working on survey (see documents attached) about trigger warnings and classes. Will send a list of the questions. They were hoping to get SP support and then send out the survey, which would then lead to the results being passed onto Educom in case any SPs want to work on this type of thing. It is going out on March 8<sup>th</sup> unless anyone wants changes?

*EJ to send a list of questions for the survey*

- **AG:** Has this been run by staff that are working on this (AVP, diversity etc)?
- **EJ:** In discussions with Rectors Committee but not Heads of Schools or anything.
- **AG:** Will send some emails address to put in the loop on this.

*AG to send EJ some email contacts to loop in*

- **JH:** Thank you Emma for doing this.

### 3. Staff Wellbeing **5 mins**

(Art His SP)

**HK:** Was in an EDI meeting recently and it raised this issue. Staff on precarious contracts are not feeling supported by the covid maxim of the University (the 'do what you can, when you can'). It is hard for them to weigh important vs not important work, and they are scared for their careers if they don't do enough. Could SPs bring this up in Learning and Teaching Committee or Teaching Councils etc to see if this is a universal concern in other subjects. Please email HK with what your school's response if you manage to gather any information on this.

- **GW:** How is the best way to gather opinions on this? Don't want to bring it up in a setting where staff would be scared to speak up for fear of impacts on their jobs. Maybe it should be anonymous?
- **HK:** An anonymous survey could be good, although in their meeting staff felt comfortable speaking up. For staff in this type of situation, at least let them know we are aware of this issue. An anonymous survey could be helpful though!
- **JH:** Speak to AG, CF, JH before actioning any of this to take it through central pathways.

*SPs to gather information on this (by meeting, anonymous survey etc depending case by case), pass it onto HK*

*HK to discuss this with AG, CF and JH (and anyone else interested) before actioning*

- **SJ:** This brings up the question of how much students should be involved in staff lives in terms of wellbeing. Staff know students are concerned about them but they often don't want students to know if they are having a bad time, some staff more than others. This could make information gathering or tackling this problem more difficult. Also, some staff overshare and this puts pressure on students. This has to be done in a way that doesn't put a burden on any students or reps. Balance is key.
- **JH:** Agreed. This is why anyone interested plus AG, CF, JH should speak before actioning this.
- **HK:** Agreed. It is unfortunate that staff can feel closed off from students – it means students forget they also have wellbeing concerns. While it is not our job to deal with, this necessarily, the reach of Educom across schools make it a useful tool to work on this. We are the messenger not the one who should fix the problem, necessarily.
- **GW:** Understand needing to go through proper channels. As it is related to EDI, and all their surveys are going on now, we would have to do this really quickly if we want to add onto this. Is this relevant? We don't want too many surveys going out.
- **JH:** Probably too late to join onto this. Will have to be separate. We are only at the information gathering stage, not at actioning yet.

### 4. NSS/Teaching Awards/Proctors Award **10 mins**

(DoEd)

**AG: Teaching awards** are running right now. 124 nominations within the first 7 days which is huge (last year made it into the 500s but most of this came at the end). We would like to get up to around 500 so AG will share a link to a dashboard which shows the spread of the results across schools. Please don't forward this on. Please can you promote this in your schools in the next week. Closes on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March. Email out to ask students to nominate staff – this is a great way to thank them for their work, especially

given how much harder delivery has been due to covid. Towards the end, it would be helpful to help with emailing out a specific email. Progress is good so far though!

The **Proctors Award** is run between the University and Students Association to highlight the commitment of student representatives to enhancing learning and teaching at the University of St Andrews. You should all consider putting yourselves forward for this as you have done so much this year. There are no nominations for this so far, but all you need to do is download the form and draft a small piece of text with a staff and a student nominator. The student nominator can be yourself or another rep or any other student. Please put yourself forward!

A report for the **NSS** survey was shared which shows recent response rates. We're 4% ahead of last year but most schools are under the 50% threshold to get an NSS ranking. Will share PDF so you can see where your school sits. The survey is open until the 30th April, please promote it to increase the response rate past that crucial 50%.

*SPs to promote teaching awards, Proctors awards (and out yourselves forward!) and NSS survey.*

*AG to share NSS pdf, share text and graphics for NSS promotion*

- **CI:** Some students got 10 emails and a phone call from the NSS and a lot of them are so annoyed they won't do the survey now.
- **AG:** We can't do anything about this. The University only gets response a breakdown by school and doesn't coordinate or have a say in how the NSS communicates with students. This is a great way to highlight issues and share best practice. The NSS survey is particularly important as it is our strongest recruiter for attracting students. It is a great way to make student voices heard however we'll take care with our own messaging not to barrage students like this.

## 5. Handovers to your successor **10 mins**

(Art Div FP /DoEd)

**JH:** Start thinking about handovers, it is getting to that time of year. If you have questions about handovers or want ideas, get in touch with CF, JH, AG.

**AG:** In the past, handovers have been inconsistent, with some SPs not providing support. We met with you all in the summer to make sure you had support and had received an appropriate handover document. This year will be collecting your handover documents to store so that in the future, if a SP forgets, their successor has access to a bank of information and staff/alumni contacts that they can fall back on as required.

**JH:** Anything that is more informal information on interacting with staff members that needs passed on should be in a separate, unofficial document so it's not held centrally by the Students' Association.

## 6. AOCB

**GW:** Is there an update on the Outlook privacy issue from previous weeks?

- **AG:** That's with IT Services now. They were surprised about this issue and are now working on it.

**SR:** When you're voting, does anyone know what it means when people appear above and below in the order they appear on?

- **JH:** It is random, and is reordered randomly each time.

**IK:** Received feedback around booking study spaces. **she has been told of different times you have to book spaces at.** People are concerned about lab spaces as well. Why are these not open if they are also ventilated etc. It is taking ages to get a response from the University or School on this matter.

- **AG:** Been in discussion with University's study space working group and will be meeting now on Fridays at 9:30am. If you have issues or feedback related to study space, you can come along tomorrow (and any following Friday) to fast track these issues up the chain. They are aware of the issue relating to booking slots opening up at midnight however this is set by an external vendor who they are currently working with to change this.

*IK and BH to come to meeting tomorrow.*

*Anyone else wanting to come to this meeting to email AG.*

**CF:** At SWAG this week, Ruth Unsworth asked SPs to promote a Thriving Learners survey which was sent out by the University this week. It has some strange questions in it and there have been concerns raised about it being circulated as the SP with these contained. Wanted to flag this as a possible issue and get feedback on what EduCom thinks?

- **CL:** Did the survey. It asks for your postcode and lots of personal details, as well as lots of triggering questions e.g. asking if a household member has been mentally ill or attempted suicide. It is yes no with no room for nuance as well.
- **JH:** It seems to identify you as much as possible and then asks questions about yours and others' wellbeing, with questions also covering assault. It seems problematic and something that should not be shared.
- **CF:** There are reasons for asking postcodes for a reason (as it targets only Scottish University students) but it is very intrusive.
- **JH:** Postcodes aren't the main issues, but it remains very intrusive and identifying.
- **CL:** Asking for societies is really weird too.
- **BS:** Agreed. It is not anonymous at all, eg how many Canadian BioSoc members are there on a her course??

*CF and AG to talk to RU tomorrow to go through this*

- **BH:** Has it not already been sent out?
- **AG:** Yes, but it has been asked for it to be sent specifically through SP channels and what we do with this request is what we are trying to decide. Overall the consensus seems to be that the group isn't happy with how identifying it is.
- **CF:** Glad we're agreeing that this is a problem.

**JA:** Keep getting called out in classes by staff and students asking when they'll find out about the exam diet.

- **AG:** Planning communications soon but usually it is around spring break. It shouldn't be the case that your lecturer puts you on the spot in front of your peers for information that they should more readily have to hand. Will ask exam office to query this but this situation should be addressed quietly with the staff members involved.
- **BS:** It says 12<sup>th</sup> march if you google it (on the University website).
- **JH:** Bad that you're being called out in class for this type of thing.

**LN:** It has been brought up in EDI and SSCC meetings that in science classes with jargon, lecture capture is bad but staff don't have time to correct this. Was working to compile a list of video translators. Are there any other resources that are useful that can be compiled? Also, another point is that during Educom when we talked about graduation and student input, the next morning we got the email saying graduation would be cancelled. It was weird we were told they didn't know. Was there transparency issue here or did they genuinely not know at that time?

**CF:** Discussed this before at SWAG. If a student is disabled and CaptionEd isn't good enough, they can email Student Services and access support. But this is a different issue. This is something extra and LN is wanting to know if anyone wants to join in.

- **AG:** Can you share that with SWAG when this is done as it sounds like an excellent idea?
- **RG:** No solutions but same issues in their school. Don't have money to pay PhD students to do this though this was an idea floated.
- **AG:** They are looking at these issues right now. Regarding your second point, I don't know whether they were aware that the decision had been taken or that the communication was due to come out the following day. The Proctor's office is separate from the team that coordinates the University's communications so it is likely this is an example of poor internal communication rather than transparency. I think that it is highly unlikely that CP or FM lied to the group however as it has been my experience that they speak openly on matters and are keen to get involvement from the wider student body.
- **LN:** There is currently also a survey about graduation going around the 4<sup>th</sup> years with lots of responses which could turn into a petition if enough people do it.
- **JH:** The team are aware of this.
- **AG:** It is difficult. Unfortunately 200 responses isn't enough to action but we can consider this when speaking to University staff in future.

**BH:** People in their class understood the cancellation of graduation and were not surprised. They are actually excited about doing it next year with 3 year's worth of geologists. They want it to be done by school in morning/afternoons slots etc so that they can all graduate together. It would be fun and something to really look forward to, but maybe it would be difficult.

- **JH:** Amazing idea but probably hard to do logistically as the University aims to do it by weeks.
- **AG:** No harm in asking, it is a good idea. Maybe it should go through Dan though.

*BH to reach out to Dan and run this by the relevant people as an idea.*

**AG:** An update about online proctoring. We are currently in the process of vendor selection and have had 5 demos so far, all very similar in terms of scope and options. The plan is shaping up to be purchasing a subscription and then deciding what functions we want to use it and how to advise staff to use it. A member of the Digital Assessment Project Board will come in a few weeks and present you with a series of options regarding online proctoring and walk you through the current considerations. The University is aware online proctoring isn't a popular option with staff or students but it has to be considered by LTC to be captured in policy.

- **SJ:** At what stage are students going to find out about all of this. It sounds like exams will be online next year. When will students know? Students will either be very for or very against this with little between so we have to prepare for potential backlash and lots of questions and feedback.

- **AG:** No decision has been taken as of yet and the options have not been laid out for studentst to consider. We are looking to progress the discussion past the point of the LTC Away Day which many of you attended. Next year we will probably have both in-person and online exams, though this isn't confirmed, however the discussion as been high level so far rather than actual outcomes or decisions. I'm not sure when the wider student body will be made fully aware of the project however your role is to speak to their views in the absence of wider involvement. Until there is something to speak to we can't put anything out. Hold off for now but when the staff members presents in two weeks you are more than welcome to ask about all of this.
- **GW:** If we all oppose it, can it still happen / will they do it anyway?
- **AG:** It depends on what *it* is. If everyone opposed, say the situation where we would monitor eye movements, it could theoretically be pushed through but only if there was staff and student support and I doubt the staff would be for this. Schools will have the opportunity to request specific system requirement to accommodate their mode of assessments (ie Modern Languages might want to record students sitting oral examinations whereas this wouldn't be appropriate in Physics).
- **JH:** We can say all this when the staff member presents.
- **CL:** Why do they want online proctoring if it is all open book?
- **AG:** Exams are open book for now but given we will likely be in this new normal for many years and require the ability to deliver exams remotely they are considering all alternatives. Whatever vendor is selected will have a version of remote proctoring so there needs to be a University level policy and staff guidance. We also have to ensure that student's privacy is protected and everyone receives the same treatment.
- **JH:** We'll have a paper beforehand for foresight and will talk about this in 2 weeks.

7. Meeting adjourned 6.45pm

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## **Papers**

### **2. Trigger Warning Survey**

The Campus Safety Society is launching a survey on the addition of trigger warnings to relevant courses, to be used in the future to help advocacy work. The questions ask about support for the addition of trigger warnings as well as have questions about experiences students have had in their respective classes. We have support from the Wellbeing Subcommittee, Got Limits, the 93% Club, and are in discussions with other relevant groups to create action on the issue of trigger warnings.

Here's the link <https://s.surveypal.com/P-RO2-ucg>

### **3. Staff Wellbeing**

In my EDI Committee Meeting today, one of the members of staff discussed how staff on precarious contracts are not feeling wellbeing support right now. The language from the university is "do what you can when you can," but staff on fixed term contracts and/or hourly pay are not feeling that to be true. It was expressed that this language implies that not all of their work is a priority, and that if they were to follow this sort of "maxim," that their contracts would not be renewed. Many of them have heavy teaching loads, and are asked to come up with new material, which is an incredibly time-consuming task, while also doing research and writing. I am emailing about this because I would like to bring it up in EduCom for other SP's to bring back to their school and speak about in the appropriate forum, whether it be school council or the Learning and Teaching Committee. Staff on precarious contracts feel that if this feeling of lack of support was expressed from different schools to the university, that there may be some sort of tangible promise that would allow them to support their wellbeing without risking their career.