



Education Committee
St Andrews Students Association

Meeting date: EXTRAORDINARY MEETING
Thursday 14th January 2021 (3pm GMT) MS Teams

Chair	Joe Horsnell (AD FP)
Attending	Amy Gallacher (DoEd)
	Chloe Fielding (SM FP)
	Dan Marshall (SA President)
	Callum Irvine (English)
	Geraint Morgan (History)
	Rachel Neighbour (Philosophy)
	Elinor Layne (Social Anthropology)
	Maddie Lee (Comparative Literature)
	Helen Clinton (Italian)
	Erik Crnkovich (Classics)
	Lucy Matthews (Modern Languages)
	Elodie Phillips (Russian)
	George Watts (International Relations)
	Antonia Cahill (French)
	Rohan Date (Spanish)
	Lowell So (Divinity)
	Jeanne Adam (Management)
	Belinda Hawes (Earth Science)
	Sarah Johnston (Physics & Astronomy)
	Imaan Kotadia (Geography & Sustainable Development)
	Camiel Leake (Chemistry)
	Lindsay Nielsen (Psychology & Neuroscience)
	Brynne Stewart (Biology)
	Murry Whyte (Mathematics & Statistics)
	Ryan Gibb (Computer Science)
	Hannah Koegler (Art History)
	Teo Yarkova (Film Studies)
Apologies	Eva Halliday (German)
	Ursula Goldsmith (Music Centre)

Absent Sanjana Ramaswamy (Economics & Finance)
Orrin McAleer (Medicine)
Kushal Tansania (Graduate School)
Emma Johnston (Arabic & Persian)

MINUTES

1. Welcome, introduction

- JH – welcomed everyone and thanked Presidents/Convenors for spending part of their Winter break at an Educom meeting. Set out housekeeping for the meeting and explained time constraints

2. Update from Association President

- DM – return dates and accommodation refunds have been communicated. A lot of discussion with ScotGov about the rest of the semester – no changes to education guidance forthcoming. The University is attempting to push ScotGov to give more than just medics in-person

3. Update from Director of Education

- AG – appendix B is as close to an update as possible. Situation is shifting a lot. The discussion has expanded beyond the papers.
- AG – paper 1 has been passed by the Principals Office. Email will come out on 15th Jan detailing these measures. Students will get two weeks' notice for any changes regarding teaching mode. Students will not be penalised if they do not return.
- JH – has there been movement on including Arts students in paper 1?
 - AG – no, focus has been on mitigating measures for Semester 2. The plan is pretty set in stone for this now.
 - DM – ScotGov default is that everything should be online, then exceptions are added. Medics, then final year project students needing access to labs. No acknowledgement for exceptions for Arts students in terms of in-person teaching
 - JH – something needs to go in that communication. Arts students need to be mentioned in this email going out tomorrow. Half the university has not been acknowledged in this email presented to us.
- GW – Where is the uni's line for stopping pushing for in-person teaching and letting students know the situation? Financially, it will be easier for some students to book travel to St Andrews within two-week window – can the University provide a travel fund?
 - DM - Week 3 as decision point for most issues. This means most students will know for sure about the rest of the semester by this date. The Discretionary Fund is available for students for the second part of the question

- DM – schools have been told to condense essential learning into the last few weeks of semester
- AG – things which have to be done in person may be reserved until the last few weeks of semester. Rejigging the semester. University will make decisions early and student reps will be involved in the process.
- GM – will the Week 3 decision point be communicated to people considering cancelling leases/coming back to St Andrews?
 - DM – Week 3 date committed to by PO and given to the Comms team, so it will likely be in the communication.
- BS – question the feasibility of fitting essential skills into the last month of semester. Timetabling issues for this?
 - AG – Uni is trying to manage expectations on what they can deliver. There has been talk of things over the summer which students can engage with when the vaccine is rolled out and restrictions are eased.
- JH – is the moving around of timetables for lab-based subjects or for all subjects?
 - AG – at the discretion of the Schools. Less about concepts and more about practical elements you can only do in person.
 - DM – less about key skills for other engagement and more about things you'll need for accreditation bodies.
- SJ – Fourth years in Physics might not have covered everything – will students who haven't met accreditation still be allowed to graduate?
 - AG – mitigating working group looking at this, but the answer is yes. Accrediting bodies will look at this situation and understand, so I don't expect fourth years won't be able to graduate
 - DM – you might graduate but not have the accreditation
 - AG – discuss this with your DOTs

4. Discussion area 1 – teaching and learning in semester 2

- a. Student travel to St Andrews for learning
 - JH – this has already been discussed, included in Appendix A
- b. Teaching mode for Semester 2
 - JH – also covered in Appendix A, no more questions about this?
- c. Postgraduate study
 - JH – PGT students only in St Andrews for a year, so they are disproportionately affected by the situation. AG please introduce.
 - AG – Provost keen to protect this group. Mitigation measures which might be implemented might not apply to PGTs because they are only here for a year (official degree classification becomes incredibly challenging). They aren't lost in the discussion, but it depends on the School.
 - AG – if you do hear anything from PG students, please pass to Amy and Abi.

5. Discussion area 2 – mitigating measures for semester 2

(JH – We would like to find a consensus as a group on these issues)

- JH – coming to consensus is really useful to Amy when negotiating with the university and communicating the student view. Please do not share Appendix B more widely.

a. S-coding

- AG – since Appendix B was written, the discussion has changed on S-coding. Registry is concerned about grade inflation, degree classification and the manpower available. Do we offer normal or flexible or blanket S-coding policy? There is debate within the Proctors Office about this to find the best course for students. Appendix B represents the initial proposal, but this has not been agreed to or scrapped. What do School Presidents feel on this?
 - JH – I'd like to find our ultimate and then grades of this which might be negotiable
 - GW – JH probably best-placed to summarise the discussion in Arts. The Uni should be conscious of the reaction which Cardiff University received when anti-no detriment staff were exposed. It doesn't go down well when you assume students will take advantage of the situation
 - **JH – Arts Presidents have had a brief chat about this. 0X grades covered by normal S-coding due to significant extenuating circumstances; we then can lay on top of this normal policy, we could say if you attend 2/3 of lectures or submit 2/3 coursework then you also qualify for S-coding. This has an eye on quality assurance and grade inflation. This was position which emerged from our discussion.**
 - GM – there must be some form of option open, even with caveats/hoops if necessary. We must be able to balance reassuring students with quality assurance
 - **CI – all or nothing approach to S-coding is not particularly positive.** It doesn't give people as accurate results as possible – specific modules. If there are good extension policies, then S-coding won't be heavily relied upon.
 - MW – all or nothing approach is quite negative. Retrospective s-coding after results are out could lead to grade inflation. A lot of students probably don't want a blanket approach. Perhaps having a conversation with a member of staff to ensure S-coding is being used properly but sympathetically. Perhaps reduced potential abuse of the system?
 - JH – like an advising-style meeting?
 - MW – something like that?
 - Chat – meeting with Student Services?
 - GW – idea that this term is more similar to last term than the term before it is odd. There are so many unknowns – when will in-person learning start? Not fair for the university to be saying this term is similar to last term.
 - GW – there are lots of reasons why students might be doing better which aren't linked to S-coding. We are meant to be helping people whose time is

being made a lot worse. We need to be worrying more about people falling behind than those who might 'accidentally get a first'

- **JH – consensus – semester upcoming looks more like semester two of last year than semester one of this year**
 - BS – they still think last semester was nicer than it was!
 - JH – natural inference is that we need more mitigating measures than last semester
 - AG – this has been rebuffed with comment about students online all of last semester for whom this semester will be the same
 - CI – the sense that people online last semester were fine with it is not ridiculous. Continuing to learn online does not equal positive educational experience
 - GM – that point of view is quite discriminatory. People online more likely to be members of groups with protected characteristics.
- RG – against blanket S-coding policy but concerned about students having to defend themselves against advisors. Student Services could host this conversation? There has to be middle ground
- **IK – is the issue the retrospective nature of the S-coding scheme. Students could s-code specific bits of coursework instead of entire modules post-results. Removing people's ability to pick and choose which modules they like and don't. Would there be an allowance for people to go back on s-coding their grade?**
 - JH – s-coding within modules on a rolling basis?
- **JH – consensus – Education Committee does not accept there should be no policy introduced**
- **JH – consensus – Education Committee does not necessarily want a blanket policy like semester two and is in favour of a middle ground policy (qualifications to ensure quality control/remodelling s-coding for this situation)**
 - BS – some issues with coursework s-coding. Module-by-module basis is fairer than eliminating specific bits of coursework
 - SJ – Uni is doing everything they can not to support us. Why are they more concerned with degree classifications than student wellbeing? Divergence between Arts and Science modules and coursework percentages? Not offering anything is the worst possible thing they could do at this stage.
 - RG – argument against retrospective s-coding might help address concerns about quality assurance
- AG – Proctor is supportive and won't accept there being nothing. At the end of semester, there would be the option to submit a request to a Board which would calculate your degree classification with and without this semester's grades. This has been floated.
 - SJ – is that not what S-coding is anyway?

- AG – trying to find a possible compromise with Registry and tackling grade inflation.
- CI – Question on grade inflation. JH mentioned there were 17% more firsts from semester two last year?
- AG – this is true. Semester one this year looks similar to normal (students performing like normal?)
- **CI – just because students are doing the same doesn't mean there isn't a far greater cost to them**
- JH – anything else on this topic, please hang around after the meeting to have it minuted.

b. Extension policy

- AG – treating students with respect is really important and we want to avoid bartering on deadline extensions. There is no consistency across Schools. Where do SPs lay on this issue?
 - **SJ – SWAG proposal – introduction of self-certification style extensions. If the reason you need an extension falls under self-cert criteria, there is a normal standardised extension period. If you need longer than this, then you speak to a member of staff. Short-term issues can be sorted very quickly. Long-term issues can be dealt with over a longer period of time.**
 - LM – Uni gave staff an extension, so they cannot say students aren't able to get extensions
 - GM – centralised system for short-term extensions might work but staff may object. Potentially more achievable to have a clear policy document saying 'being lenient' in better language within existing system
 - CI – negotiations are extremely unfair, endorsed SJ's idea. Deadlines for coursework are completely arbitrary, it doesn't matter if people need a bit of extra time. Staff got an extension. Get rid of penalties for deadlines
 - BS – students should be made aware that staff have been told to be lenient. Encourage students to advocate for themselves.

c. Entry into honours

- JH – this looks like it will be similar to Appendix B.
- AG – this is true, devolved to a School level to be lenient.

d. Assessment deferral

- AG – almost certainly good to go. Associate Deans won't penalise anyone with termination of studies.
- JH – opportunity for questions presented, no questions

6. Question time/open forum discussion

7. AOCB

8. Meeting adjourned

- JH – thanked everyone for their thoughts and for spending their time at the meeting. EduCom starts up in week one of the semester. See you all soon!

Additional minuting:

- GM – ensuring that students who have had their video dissertation module in history cancelled are given some accommodation for this. Can s-coding be applied here?
 - JH to take forward to AG
- MW – can students be made more aware of deferral policy?
 - JH to take forward to AG
- GW – asking the Uni to be nice and well-assuming isn't too much to ask. Publicly identify the feedback loop for SPs and Educom – tracking of the points made at Educom
 - JH committed to bringing these issues back to Educom in Week 1
- GW – giving SPs more time before uni-wide communications are sent out please
 - JH to take forward to AG
- SJ – request for jargon-buster definitions for SPs?
 - JH mentioned the academic FAQs we are looking to put on the Union website, something can be developed for SPs
- BH – some mechanism to avoid deadlines being bunched up together at the end of the semester. Asking DOTs to move deadline dates before the semester begins due to their arbitrary nature.
- BH – self-cert needs to be monitored otherwise people may have pushed deadlines back and become more overwhelmed.
- JH – pressure on Student Services is quite great, so the Uni would overwhelm its own units if it doesn't do anything
- BH – a lot of students don't want blanket s-coding
- CF – advisors wouldn't have to ok the s-code but would check in to see if students applying for them are ok
- **ML – we should focus more on people who need the support than those who 'might' abuse loopholes**

Meeting ended 4.13pm.