

Education Committee Meeting

Friday 27 September at 5pm in the Committee Room

Present:

- Ondrej Hajda, Education Officer (Convenor & Chair)
- Teddy Woodhouse, Director of Representation
- Scott Schorr, Postgraduate President
- Sophie Kelly, Arts & Divinity Senate Rep
- Peter DaBell, Science & Medicine Senate Rep
- Max Fabiszewski, Arts & Divinity Faculty President
- Mary Kempnich, Science & Medicine Faculty President
- Ben Anderson, Member for Widening Access

Agenda:

1. Introductions

2. Report from Academic Council

Sophie mentioned that she hadn't received much of a response from School Presidents regarding the Academic Council discussion items.

Ondrej asked what the opinion was regarding keeping the resit examinations. Sophie felt like there was a good balance between Schools that support this idea and those that don't. Scott added that a lot of School wanted to reserve the right to do them internally. Sophie gave an example that the Head of School of Medicine really wanted to keep resit examinations, whereas the Head of School of Chemistry was against the idea. Both Sophie and Peter felt like the debate was very heated.

Ondrej asked if deferred assessments were also mentioned. Peter said that yes and that some members of the Academic Council would like to see them all moved to the resit diet. Scott mentioned that like on many issues, there was a division between the College Gate and the Schools.

Ondrej asked if the Academic Council talked about giving the Director of Representation a membership of the Academic Council. Sophie replied in negative. Teddy added that Chloe was about to talk to the Principal in person about this switch rather than bringing it on the Academic Council itself.

Ondrej asked if the point on Students' Report to Academic Council was raised. Sophie replied that there was no space for it. Scott expressed that student input in the Academic Council was encouraged because the student voice calmed things in the meeting. Ondrej suggested that the student members could try to put up for discussion at the next Academic Council meeting in December.

Scott added that the College Gate proposed that the Academic Council meet in a more informal venue that would be more suitable for discussion.

Action points:

1) Chloe will talk to the Principal about having the Director of Representation sit on the Academic Council instead of the Association President.

2) Student members will push for having Students' Report to the Academic Council included on the regular Academic Council agenda.

3. 'Think Positive' Campaign

Ondrej explained that this campaign was a response to the Library poster campaign and the tone taken with students at the end of last academic year. Ondrej continued that the aim was to create positive working environment with encouraging and 'Good Luck' phrases. The focus of this campaign would be on study spaces around town (Library, 24-hour computer labs, hall libraries and outside exam venues).

Ondrej explained that this would be a joint project with Nightline and the SRC Wellbeing Officer. Ondrej asked if there were any member of the Education Committee that would like to help with the organization. Scott mentioned that the Postgraduate Committee would like to take part. Mary added that she would ask Student Minds and people from the Psychology Society.

Ondrej added that one of the additional ideas was to serve hot soup or beverage on one day. Scott mentioned that postgraduate students who don't have exams could help out on the day. Sophie wondered if this would create commercial competition for the Library Café. Ondrej replied that he was hoping to serve this for free with the help of sponsors. Mary added that a more time-saving solution could be a bowl of candy hearts outside the Library. Ben liked the idea because this would make people leave the Library for a while and get some fresh air.

Action point: Ondrej will work closely with the SRC Wellbeing Officer on the 'Think Positive Campaign' and update the Education Committee on its development.

(NB: After discussion with Avalon Borg, the new SRC Wellbeing Officer, the name of the campaign will most likely change to #TakeCare).

4. Giving Students Access to Past Module Evaluation

Ondrej explained that many American universities give students access to module evaluations to help them choose modules that would interest them. He further added that starting this year, module evaluation forms would be done on-line, which could make it easier to give students access to past module evaluation. Ondrej enquired how the Education Committee members felt about this issue.

Mary enquired if students would be able to see all of the results. Ondrej replied in negative and explained that students would see just the quantitative values. Max expressed his worry that module could have the same code and name but be taught by different professors, or that many modules are team-taught. Mary supported Max's worry and highlighted that many modules change every year.

Scott added that there would be a lot of criticism from lecturers. Max mentioned that there were very good professors who are hard graders and that this system could unfairly target them. Mary expressed doubt that many students would look at such system. Ben added that students cared more about what they got from University, especially because of the rise in tuition fees for RUK and international students. Peter opined that students would use this system if it was available.

Ondrej expressed that this system could empower students and make them want to fill in the evaluation forms responsibly which could in return help with improvement of the modules. Mary mentioned that students often addressed these problems too late in the NSS in their final year, rather than in the evaluation forms at the end of each semester.

Scott opined that there would be a number of postgraduate students who would like to opt-out of this system in their first year of teaching.

Sophie asked Teddy what he thought about the project. Teddy replied that it would require a lot of effort and time to establish something like this. Ondrej said that he wanted to pursue this project further and refer it to the next School Presidents' Meeting if there was backing for this project in the Education Committee. He expressed hopes that this could then move further to LTC and other University bodies for discussions.

Scott added that during the Academic Council meeting, one of the Professors felt like they had to meet various metrics (government, institutional marks etc.) and that this project could create more pressure.

Max noted that this could make St Andrews look bad if we were the only university using the system in the UK, because it could highlight the negatives. Sophie asked if we could do something that would highlight the positives of St Andrews because this would probably get more approval from the staff. Mary expressed that the system would need to be as easy as possible if the Education Committee decided to focus on positives instead.

Sophie expressed her worry that such a system could worsen the problem for over-subscribed modules.

Action point: Teddy will put 'Giving Students Access to Past Module Evaluation' for discussion on the agenda of the next School Presidents' Meeting.

5. TGAP Feedback Collection

Teddy explained that feedback collection for the compulsory *Training in Good Academic Practice* (TGAP) wouldn't happen until Semester Two to let the University evaluate its impact.

Teddy mentioned that the University would like the Education Committee to film a new video because the one previously used had to be taken down. Generally, there was no interest in taking a video from St Andrews students on the Committee.

Max noted that there should be a better summary at the end of the course with the points most relevant to students and that some extra clarity was needed.

6. Students' Association Scholarships & Bursaries

Ondrej skipped this item on the agenda due to time concerns and asked Ben to meet with him in person.

7. Education Working Groups

Teddy explained that the Education Working Groups were there to create a better connection between School Presidents and the Education Committee by working together on small projects. Teddy further added that the list of Working Groups included: AR21 Conference, Semester 2 Colloquium and Mental Health.

.AR21 Conference: Conference on Academic Representation for the 21st Century on Saturday 19 October. Teddy states that he would need help with preparing this conference from the Education Committee members.

Action point: Teddy will post a list of tasks he needs a help with on Facebook and the Education Committee members will sign-up.

Teddy asked if there were any other Working Groups the members would like to see. Max expressed that a group focused on blending research and teaching could be beneficial and that he wanted to set up a University-wide undergraduate journal. Ondrej replied that some Schools and Societies already have an on-line undergraduate journal and he should contact them. Peter added that many Science subjects had a dissertation that allowed students to take part in research alongside their lecturers. Mary added that this worked very well in the School of Psychology but that it could be a good discussion topic for SSCC meetings. Ben expressed that more student research could be promoted by introducing more 100% coursework modules.

8. Setting Education Committee Meeting Times – Semester One

Peter expressed that he could only make Education Committee meetings on Fridays at 5pm due to a busy class schedule. Ondrej enquired if anyone present had a major problem with scheduling the regular Education Committee meetings for Friday 5pm in Week 5, 7 and 9 in Semester One. No one replied in negative.

Action point: Education Committee will meet at 5pm in the Committee Room on October 18th, November 1st and November 15th in Semester One.

Meeting ended at 6.20pm

Next meeting: Friday 18 October at 5pm in the Committee Room