



# University of St Andrews Students' Association Postgraduate Executive Forum

## MINUTES

Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2015 – Students' Association

Committee Room, 5pm

### Present

#### **Name**

Ondrej Hajda  
Joe Tantillo  
Ilaria Gidoro  
Professor Lorna Milne  
Emily Feamster  
Vicki Cormie  
Adam Pope  
Jonas Kollmann  
Xu Zhu  
Murillo Pagnotta  
Simon Kay  
Sebastian Fischer  
Susan Garrard  
Dawn Jackson-Williams  
Joe Slater  
Chris Peys  
Matthew Shelton  
Tomi Bartole

#### **Position**

Director of Representation (Acting Convenor & Chair)  
Director-elect of Representation  
Education and Representation Coordinator (Minutes Secretary)  
Vice Principal (Proctor)  
Postgraduate Administrative Officer (Proctor's Office)  
Academic Liaison Librarian  
MLitt ISS  
MLitt Management  
MSc Computer Science  
PhD Biology  
PhD Comparative Literature  
PhD Earth & Environmental Sciences  
PhD English  
PhD History  
PhD Philosophy  
PhD 2<sup>nd</sup> year IR  
PhD Classics  
Post-field PhD Social Anthropology

### Absent

Cassice Last  
Zoe Ingram  
Tadas Balsys  
Spencer Bentley  
Liam O'Brien  
Oliver Allanson  
Monika Gostic  
Lizzie Bradford

MLitt Film Studies  
MLitt Museum and Gallery Studies  
MSc Finance  
PhD Divinity  
PhD Geography  
PhD Mathematics & Statistics  
PhD Medicine  
PhD Psychology & Neuroscience

### Apologies

Professor Kristin De Troyer  
Professor Al Dearle  
Claire Motion  
Ying Ge

Dean of Arts & Divinity  
Dean of Science  
PhD Physics & Astronomy  
PhD 1<sup>st</sup> year Chemistry

## **1. Matters Arising**

Ondrej Hajda informed he was covering the Postgraduate Convener's role, as Tania Strützel was on leave.

### **a. Martyrs Kirk trial**

Vickie Cormie informed of the outcome of the trial that allowed PGTs to access the Martyrs Kirk Research Library during evenings and weekends. A fault in the system allowed some PGTs to also visit the library during the day, and some of them took advantage of the situation. The problem was fixed. Vickie also reported that PGRs complained about the inappropriate behaviour of some PGTs. Jonas Kollmann stated that he and his PGT colleagues were happy to use Martyrs Kirk and they now knew that their behaviour has to adapt. Dawn Jackson-Williams also stressed the importance for PGTs to visit the Library, as they do not have their own office. It was also reported that some PGTs used it as a study space instead of a research space. Ondrej encouraged everyone to pass on positive and negative feedback about Martyrs Kirk trial for PGT students to library@.

### **b. Tutor pay workshop**

Professor Lorna Milne informed that Tania had raised the issue of postgraduate research tutor pay and training at a meeting of the Learning & Teaching Business Committee. According to the survey Tania conducted, the practise differed among Schools, and the University policies do not seem to be clear. It was also the case that some Schools were not following the guidelines correctly. Lorna advised that this topic would be discussed further at the Postgraduate Research Tutor Workshop on 6 May with the aim to identify the gaps in the University policy that raised confusion and to find out cases of good practice in Schools. Ondrej reminded everyone that an invitation had been sent to all Postgraduate Executive Reps for this workshop, and RSVP were expected. Chris Peys asked whether these policies were real policies or simply guidelines that each School could apply differently. He also asked staff members in his School to meet twice a Semester, but his request got some pushback. Lorna replied that the University policy clearly states the grade to which tutors are employed. She added that lecturers should advice tutors what to read in advance, and this should be within reason. Susan Garrard stated, on the contrary, that the guidelines seem clear in her School, but the problem was that there was not a big request for tutors. Lorna stated that there should be more support and training to PGR tutors in certain Schools and she promised they would work to solve the situation.

### **c. Stats module**

Murillo Pagnotta informed that a short 4-question survey was open to investigate the need for modules of Statistics, as several students reported to struggle with this subject. For the moment, at least 200 students stated they need more support with Statistics, and these are especially in the Schools of Biology and Psychology. Murillo stated that these modules should be delivered by the School of Mathematics. Lorna informed Murillo that the Deans' approval should be sought in this case. Adam Pope informed that also many IR students would be interested in basic Statistics modules, because a great part of their research includes data and they need to know how to read statistics. For the moment, IR students do not get support with Statistics.

**Action: Murillo to get in touch with the Dean of Science regarding the provision of statistics training.**

## **2. Library**

### **a. Summer provision**

Vickie informed of the summer opening hours of the Main Library (Mon-Fri: 0800-2200, Sat-Sun: 1000-1900) and of Martyrs Kirk (Mon-Fri: 0800-2100, Sat-Sun: 1000-1800). The Library will be closed for four days during The Open. Opening hours will be extended during the last three weeks of August, including weekends. They will add new sockets in the Main Library, but it is still unsure whether a floor at a time will need to be closed for this instalment. Ondrej informed that they were trying to extend opening hours for the café.

### **b. Redevelopment**

Postgraduate Executive Reps urged the Library to maintain summer provision during possible redevelopment of the Main Library to increase the quality and quantity of study space.

## **3. Funding**

Adam reported that there was great confusion about the funding that Schools should give to students. Each School seemed to decide differently how to distribute this fund. Students in Adam's School wanted to organise a trip, but they discovered that this fund had already been spent by the School, who did not inform them. Adam stated that in the School of History, this fund can be applied for individually, whereas in IR, the entire class has to apply for it and cannot be used by individuals. Lorna replied that this fund depended on the financial availability of each School and she was not aware of a set rule for this fund. Some Reps were not aware of the existence of this fund. Adam stressed that they wanted more transparency. Lorna promised she would investigate this matter.

**Action: Lorna to investigate the administration of funds available to students in Schools for their projects and initiatives and increase transparency.**

## **4. PTES & PRES**

Ondrej informed of the deadlines of these surveys (PRES: 14 May, PTES: 18 June). Lorna highlighted the importance of these surveys and encouraged all Postgraduate Reps to spread the word. It was mentioned that students receive too many emails requesting to complete different surveys, or too many emails to remind about the same survey, and students lose track of the surveys they have already completed.

**Action: All Postgraduate Reps to promote PTES/PRES.**

## **5. Postgraduate Rep Handover**

Ondrej stressed the importance of this 2-page handover not to lose the knowledge of former Postgraduate Reps that leave the University. These handovers will be very useful to their successors.

**Action: All Postgraduate Reps to email the handover document to academicreps@ by 8 May.**

## **6. Discussion: Summer plans - best practice examples**

Dawn informed about a Writers' Group Event that will take place between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> June. She also wants to set up a group once a week during the summer. Sebastian Fischer wants to hold an informal event with his colleagues to discuss the progression of their researches. He is also seeking collaboration with Maths students for a symposium because Earth Scientists have difficulties with producing data. Adam would like to organise an ISS field trip and is looking into costs. Ondrej reminded that the Students' Association still has some Education Discretionary Fund available.

## **7. AOCB**

Lorna asked what they thought of the structure of meetings for Postgraduate Reps. Jonas pointed out that in this forum they discuss a lot of points that are not relevant to Master's degree students. Susan, instead, answered that there are meetings in which the points discussed are mainly relevant to either the Faculty of Arts or of Science. Tomi Bartole suggested that for next year a detailed role description for Postgraduate Reps was created, to clarify how many meetings class reps would need to attend. Ondrej said that he would make sure there will be better guidelines next year.

**Action: Ondrej to draft a role description for Postgraduate Reps.**

**Action: Ondrej to consider splitting the Postgraduate Executive Forum into two separate forums for PGTs and PGRs Reps.**

**The meeting adjourned.**