



# University of St Andrews Students' Association Students' Representative Council

## AGENDA

11<sup>th</sup> October 2022 – Large Rehearsal Room– 18:00

### Present

#### **Member's Name**

#### **Position**

Juan Rodriguez

Association President

AK Schott

Association Director of Education

Lucy Brook

Association Director of Events and Services

Emma Craig

Association Director of Wellbeing & Equality

Ailsa Martin

Athletic Union President

Alasdair Richmond

Association Chair

Andrew Byrne-King

Accommodation Officer

Aditya Goel

SRC Alumni Officer

Francesca Lavelle

SRC Arts & Divinity Faculty President

Jasmin Zheng

BAME Officer

Alice Chapman

Charities Officer

Mashaim Bukhari

Community Relations Officer

Mathis Bourassa

Employability Officer

Marcelina Lekawska

Environment Officer

Rachel Nevinova

SRC Gender Equality Officer

Raghav Kediya

International Students' Officer

Sofia Johnson

LGBT+ Officer

Molly Wilson

Lifelong and Flexible Learners Officer

Zaine Mansuralli

SRC Postgraduate Activities Officer

Abd Alsattar Ardati	SRC Postgraduate Development Officer
Niya Dobрева	Postgraduate Activities Officer
Sandro Eich	Postgraduate Academic Convenor
Martyna Kemeklyte	SRC Science & Medicine Faculty President
Lewis O'Neill	Secretary to the SRC
Laura Connies-Laing	Societies Officer
Ramsay Bader	Widening Access & Participation Officer
Stella Maris	Rector's Assessor

### **In Attendance**

Iain Cupples	Student Advocate (Education) / HR Manager
Alex Purcell	Student Councils Intern

### **Absent**

Sam Gorman  
Sana Aboobacker

### **1. Adoption of the Agenda**

The agenda was adopted without dissent.

### **2. Apologies for Absence**

Sam Gorman	Association Director of Student Development & Activities
Sana Aboobacker	Student Health Officer

### **3. Adoption of the Minutes from the Previous SRC Meeting**

It was decided the minutes would be re-circulated after minor corrections.

### **4. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

No matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting. Raghav Kediya (RK) requested that 'Questions for International Students' Officer' be added to the 'Questions for SRC Members' section of future minutes. Alice Chapman (AC) requested an equivalent 'Questions for the Charities Officer'. Alasdair Richmond (AR) and Iain Cupples (IC) confirmed these would be added to the minutes template.

## **5. Open Forum**

No Business.

## **6. Reports of Sabbatical Officers**

### **6.1. Report of the Association President**

Juan Rodriguez (JR) spoke about the upcoming rally and vigil for Iranian protestors, linking it to motion '**R-22-20**' from the 29.09.22 emergency meeting. JR requested SRC members share details of the rally and encourage attendance. JR recounted his recent visits to several halls of residence (St. Regulus, Dundee, David Russell Apartments, St Salvator's) to promote ongoing dialogue with the student community. JR also attended meetings with the town council, continuing to advocate for regulation of short-term lets in the St Andrews housing market. Short-term lets will now require a license like HMOs, providing greater security for students. Local letting agents communicated with JR that some additional properties may soon become available, which could conceivably see commuter students moving into town. JR held catchups with overseeing Officers, including the Environment Officer. Together they have been working on the sustainability policy. JR recently met with catering to discuss sustainability and plans to meet the bar manager for a similar discussion soon. JR reported that the alumni subcommittee is now mostly filled, with its first meeting taking place two weeks ago. JR still needs to conduct interviews for the community relations subcommittee.

### **6.2. Report of the Athletic Union President**

Ailsa Martin (AM) has continued to work on resolving disruption caused by the running track failing a health and safety check in September. AM has also been busy responding to a lot of questions from different sports clubs regarding finances and internal operations. There have also been discussions regarding making the sports membership structure more accessible, with monthly or quarterly payment options under consideration. AM reminded the SRC that Movember is coming up, noting that last year the Rugby club managed to raise approximately £20,000. AM is encouraging clubs to make a concerted effort this year.

### **6.3. Report of the Director of Education**

AK Schott (AKS) welcomed Sandro Eich (SE) to his first meeting as Postgraduate Academic Convenor. AKS has continued to advocate for education Officers, seeking a manageable workload for role-holders now and in the future. AKS has also been working on Postgraduate week, as well as the Association Strategy. AKS attended the North Haugh Development Framework meeting, ensuring student needs are factored in as the project progresses. AKS additionally attended the Academic Senate meeting, as well as a roundtable with Directors of postgraduate research and Deans of graduate teaching. The roundtable included a review of current policies and discussions about supporting postgraduate students financially over the coming months. AKS engaged in academic monitoring, evaluating teaching in various Schools to ensure best practices. Other bodies AKS met with included: Enhancement Themes, a Scottish initiative encouraging excellence in higher education; a university Learning and Teaching Committee; the National Education Officer Conference in Dunfermline. AKS also reviewed the university's equality processes, and the ways in which they involve students. Class representative and postgraduate elections have concluded. Training sessions have been held for general class representatives, school-wide representatives, and postgraduate representatives. The first externally delivered sustainability representative training session has also taken place. More training is forthcoming. Arts & Divinity President Francesca Lavelle (FL) co-opted a Philosophy President and an interim Chinese convenor.

#### **6.4. Report of the Director of Events & Services**

Lucy Brook (LB) has been processing discipline cases, as well as preparing for the upcoming Rewind Bop and Halloween events. LB encouraged anyone involved in booking a semester two event held in the Association to do so as soon as possible, as the calendar is filling up fast. LB has also been trying to reinvigorate the Design Team, tendering an open invitation for applicants.

#### **6.5. Report of the Director of Student Development & Activities**

Sam Gorman (SG) was not present to issue a report.

#### **6.6. Report of the Director of Wellbeing**

Emma Craig (EC) has been preparing for Raisin Weekend, ordering 1000 bread rolls and water bottles (amongst other logistical work). EC issued an open invitation for prospective volunteers interested in helping at the foam fight. EC commended the graphics team for their work on Raisin weekend content (promoting safety, accessibility, sustainability, respect, and community conscientiousness throughout the weekend). A web page with this information will be going live shortly. EC has also been working on the upcoming Postgraduate Week, publishing a webpage directing students to various events. EC suggested any subcommittees planning on running events during Postgraduate Week could easily have their event added to this schedule. A form to submit your event can be found in last week's Sabbatical newsletter. EC has additionally been working on SHAG week and will be collaborating with the Wellbeing subcommittee and Saints Sport on Movember. EC has been liaising with Student Services regarding students that opted out of the matriculation consent module, ensuring a watered-down presentation not containing potential triggers is offered. EC continued her efforts to updating available suicide prevention training, tailoring it to student volunteers. EC worked with Jasmine Zheng (JZ) to conduct interviews for the BAME Students' Network, also contributing to the cost-of-living guide alongside the Wellbeing and Equality Co-ordinator. EC is currently arranging financial training from the CASH office, as well as risk-assessment training from the Association building manager. Attendance with relevant committee members is strongly encouraged.

IC stressed the importance of student volunteers to the ongoing allowance of the Raisin foam fight in the quad. IC suggested some members of College Gate would happily see the foam fight cancelled.

Stella Maris (SM) asked EC whether free period products would continue to be available in halls like last year, noting confusion among some students.

EC responded that the union receives normal hygiene products through the Estates team (disposable period products, etc.), suggesting SM contact them if those were not being supplied. EC noted that the Association has a budget for reusable period products (menstrual cups, washable pads, etc.). The Wellbeing and Got Consent subcommittees need to train their volunteers to distribute them, as some *Hey Girls* (the brand used by the Association) products require specific instructions/information. EC raised the possibility of pop-up stalls outside the Association building and in halls to hand out reusable products once said volunteers are trained. The current standstill will hopefully be rectified soon.

SM replied that the confusion arose from a lot of period products being given to halls committees last year, asking whether Sexual Health representatives could be trained to hand out the reusable products referenced by EC. EC confirmed that volunteers not on the subcommittees could be trained as qualified distributors.

LB asked whether training was available to the Activities subcommittees as well. EC confirmed the training was open to all interested parties.

#### **Questions for SRC Members**

Rachel Nevinova (RN) asked how the SRC was responding to recent discoveries by the CASH office.

JR responded that he and EC met with CASH to discuss this, with CASH requesting training so that they handle similar situations better. The situation was not entirely described to JR, and he was unsure if it happened recently or in January 2021. JR has met with CASH office about carrying out a wellbeing survey to check on students.

EC stated that the Director of CASH reached out to the Association about suicide prevention training, and addressing specific issues raised by students in Dundee who are feeling isolated. Ideas for combating this loneliness include a monthly event for students in Dundee, AM spreading awareness about which clubs train in Dundee, nudging halls coordinators to make sure commuting students feel included. EC emphasised that the issue has not gone unnoticed, and that students clearly felt the university did not understand the concern of those living in Dundee. EC concluded by stating that more information was needed about what students in Dundee are facing, so that better help can be offered.

SM said that a larger conversation was needed about the experience of students living in Dundee. SM expressed scepticism regarding the degree to which student-consultation has been factored into recent management-level decisions. SM posited that student-run committees tend to be more effective at running events, and that the level of communication regarding the situation in Dundee was insufficient. SM suggested the hall-committee model be replicated in Dundee, and that the university empower them to offer events and build better connections. SM acknowledged it was important to keep Dundee as an affordable option, but stated it clearly was not for everyone. The isolation commuting students face was only magnified by pandemic restrictions. SM concluded by affirming that a wider focus on ensuring Dundee-based students do not feel excluded from the St Andrews community was needed going forward.

Molly Wilson (MW) acknowledged that there has not been a recent student survey, but pointed to a commuter survey conducted last year. Its respondents suggested similar problems, specifically a lack of community, and lack of communication with the university. MW endorsed the idea of an expanded survey, noting that the number of respondents to the last one was approximately 300, whereas the number of commuting students is now closer to 1500. MW said they would welcome a new survey now that the university has halls of residence in Dundee, as students across the Tay bridge have a very different experience to students living in St Andrews.

FL noted that school presidents are also working on raising funds and supporting students who are commuting.

Jane Yarnell (JY) requested anyone working on housing issues contact her, as she is likewise trying to resolve housing issues specifically affecting the disabled student community.

**7.1. Questions for Accommodation Officer**

**7.2. Questions for Alumni Officer**

**7.3. Questions for Arts/Divinity Faculty President**

**7.4. Questions for BAME Officer**

**7.5. Questions for Community Relations Officer**

**7.6. Questions for Disability Officer**

**7.7. Questions for Employability Officer**

**7.8. Questions for Environment Officer**

**7.9. Questions for Gender Equality Officer**

- 7.10. **Questions for LGBT+ Officer**
- 7.11. **Questions for Lifelong and Flexible Learners Officer**
- 7.12. **Questions for Postgraduate Academic Officer**
- 7.13. **Questions for Postgraduate Development Officer**
- 7.14. **Questions for Rector's Assessor**
- 7.15. **Questions for Science/Medicine Faculty President**
- 7.16. **Questions for Secretary to the SRC**
- 7.17. **Questions for Student Health Officer**
- 7.18. **Questions for Widening Access and Participation Officer**

## **8. Unfinished General Business**

No unfinished general business.

## **9. New SRC Business**

9.1. R-22-21 Motion for the University-funded Implementation of Sanitary Product Provisions in the Men's, Gender-Neutral and Accessible Students' Association Bathrooms

RN introduced the motion.

EC proposed an amendment whereby 'sanitary products' would be replaced with 'period products'. EC stressed the importance of not treating 'period' as an impolite or indecorous word.

RN stated that women's bathrooms managed by the Estates team include free period products. Neither disabled nor accessible toilets currently have them, making it difficult for disabled students to access menstrual care. RN noted that period products can be prohibitively expensive, especially during the current cost-of-living crisis. Wider distribution would help all members of the student community that experience periods. RN said that period products should be available in all Association bathrooms, ensuring accessibility.

During debate RN reiterated that providing menstrual care products in all university-managed bathrooms should be the norm. Conversations regarding period product availability at the university have been going on for a long time, with RN expressing surprise that the issue remains unresolved. RN stated that freely available period products are an essential component of addressing the cost-of-living crisis.

Ramsay Bader (RB) asked how refilling of period products in university-managed buildings would be organised.

RN responded that staff are responsible for refilling sanitary products supplies and acknowledged reports that this has not always been done consistently. RN noted that they were unable to enforce distribution but affirmed that staff had been provided with free period products.

The motion **passes without dissent**.

9.2. R-22-22 Motion to Endorse the 'Open Letter to the University of St Andrews – a student call for Resource and Action Towards our Sustainability Goals'

Marcelina Lekawska (ML) introduced the motion. ML was joined by Eva Neil (EN) and Heather Fortune (HF), members of the Environment subcommittee responsible for drafting the open letter.

ML explained that the open letter calls on the university to dedicate more resources to achieving its sustainability goals. ML suggested SRC endorsement would show student support for the requested measures and encourage the university to act. ML noted that last year's 'Line in the Sand' protest drew attention to the urgent need for action on sustainability. The university's pledge to be a net-zero emitter by 2035, establishment of the environment strategy subcommittee, and addition of sustainability to the university strategy's core pillars are welcome steps, but implementation has been sluggish. ML reported that the open letter had garnered 275 signatures as of 17:00, October 11<sup>th</sup>. The letter recognises that the university has put resources into its sustainability objectives but says management must go further if said goals are to be achieved in the desired timeframe. ML highlighted the lack of an implementation plan for the 2035 net-zero target, with the absence of specifics causing concern amongst students. The lack of full-time staff members dedicated to supporting the university's climate strategy was also remarked upon; the current head of the environment strategy group spends only 30% of their working time on these issues. ML argued that if sustainability is truly a key goal for the university more resources are needed. The letter's strength is its specificity, making actionable requests rather than vague demands. ML encouraged the SRC to endorse the letter.

RK asked ML to elaborate on the specific resources requested in the letter.

ML cited St Andrews Forest as a project where university support is required. Despite being a flagstone university project, the forest is a student idea and initiative, and currently receives very little funding. Student-run initiatives frequently lack funds, something the university could conceivably rectify. ML repeated their point about a lack of full-time employees dedicated to sustainability, giving the biodiversity staff an example. HF explained that the letter has five demands, primarily related to more funding and appointing of permanent staff.

During debate ML once again encouraged the SRC to endorse the letter, noting its quality and the opportunity to support student-led initiatives.

RB asked whether there was precedent for the SRC endorsing an open letter. IC replied that there was, and that doing so was within the SRCs competence.

RK asked whether the endorsement was primarily symbolic. ML noted the symbolic aspect of the motion but suggested a demonstration of SRC support for student-led climate initiatives could have positive material outcomes.

SM asked EC whether the open letter's focus on the problems caused by lack of full-time staff could be linked to the overworking of student volunteers across the university. EC replied in the affirmative. EC echoed ML in saying that while passing the motion would be largely symbolic, the SRC taking a stance on a given issue effects its future remit. The SRC has an obligation to advocate for causes it has endorsed, including in other university forums. Passing the motion would further legitimise the SRC's climate action advocacy.

The motion **passes without dissent**.

End of new business, move to open discussion.

## **10. Open Discussion**

Regarding earlier discussion of CASH, EC voiced concern about CASH committee members receiving disclosures about suicide and other traumatic issues. EC is arranging training in the following areas to ensure the CASH committee are equipped to do their job: mental health awareness; finance; risk assessment; responding to crisis. The training will also be offered to the SRC.

SM asked EC about the status of proposed active listening training. EC said they had not heard about it, but would be happy to work with SM to resolve the issue.

RN asked RM what they were doing to address the cost-of-living crisis and its impact on St Andrews students. RB explained that there had been some handover issues inhibiting progress on the issue. RB has been setting up meetings to discuss programs that support students facing financial difficulties. RB is also working on making cost-of-living related guidance readily accessible. RB voiced concern about St Andrews events being too expensive and has been in consultation with event-organisers and the Association on how to ensure accessibility for working class students.

On the topic of gathering useful information for students, SM cited the access scholarship initiative as a successful example. In centralising the means of applying for financial assistance, it saved students from having to glean information from disparate sources. SM observed that the accommodation bursary has not increased since her first year at the university (she is now in her sixth), suggesting it should be increased. While offering praise for access scholarship, SM stated that more action was needed on expanding access to financial support. The Rector's Committee has been working on a cultural inclusivity fund, exploring potential funding avenues. The fund would provide extra support to PoC and minority students who would otherwise be unable to attend balls/other ticketed events. It would also subsidise access to culture/cultural activities unavailable in St Andrews (e.g. transport costs for students getting braids, purchasing halal or kosher food etc.). A more general widening access fund would also be welcomed by SM, who offered to discuss the matter further with RB. RB concurred.

RN asked what societies RB is working with. RB said he had primarily been working with student ambassadors but wants to create partnerships with societies. RB expressed support for SM's proposed cultural fund, agreeing that logistical issues remain a barrier to cultural expression for too many students.

SM noted feedback from students from widening-access backgrounds suggested they did not want to be patronised or singled out; measures to address inequality must be respectful and GDPR compliant. SM stressed the importance of not reducing people to their backgrounds.

EC encouraged the SRC to be mindful that volunteering requires people to have free time, precluding the participation of working student. Some of the Ents crew are now paid, which will allow students to facilitate events without compromising on other work or facing financial stress. Regarding the prohibitive cost of events, EC offered the access guide written by the Disabled Student's Network (DSN) as a possible model for work on widening access. The guide offered an accessibility badge to compliant societies (those offering alt text on social media posts, listing accessibility requirements etc.). This type of accreditation could be replicated for societies offering widening-access and gender equality initiatives, for instance. EC envisions this as helping make events affordable and reducing the burden on presently overworked volunteers. EC encouraged people interested in this area to reach out for further discussions.

AKS said the new volunteering portal opens next Tuesday (18 October 2022), which will make logging hours easier.

On the topic of working students, LB reported that the Association was looking into creating more student jobs. The Association is a good and reliable employer and wants to provide new opportunities for students in need of work. IC concurred, explaining that the new HR strategy (introduced last year) encouraged considering students for roles that would not previously have been open to them. This would provide more interesting, stimulating opportunities. This is an ongoing process, and not a substitute for volunteering or social opportunities. Financial, cultural, and physical barriers to these things unfortunately remain. RN asked whether people could focus on making commitments to accessibility so that roles are available for working students. IC agreed that this was an important aspect of the new strategy, and that more work was needed to address the issue. IC stated that more support from the university and long-term strategising were required.

SE briefly introduced himself, requesting that events to be included in Postgraduate Week be sent to him. SE also stated that some university-wide postgraduate Officer roles are still available,



namely LGBT Officers for the Arts & Divinity and Science & Medicine faculties, and Disability Officer for Science & Medicine, requesting that interested parties get in touch. SE and Sofia Johnson (SJ) agreed to discuss the issue further, with the latter offering to distribute role descriptions amongst the LGBT cohort.

SE asked whether the lack of Accommodation Officer was being addressed. AR replied, explaining that after the previous role-holder resigned the SRC agreed to co-opt the position. Publicity about this process will be coming out soon.

Alice Chapman (AC) stated that Raising and Giving (RAG) week was coming up, and that she was open to collaboration with interested parties.

AR offered a formal welcome to Postgraduate Development Officer Samuel Woodall (SW) and Postgraduate Activities Officer Niya Dobрева (ND), recently appointed following the postgraduate elections.

SJ announced that St Andrews Pride returns this academic year, and asked any subcommittees interested in participating to contact her, encouraging collaboration.

#### **11. Any Other Competent Business**

No other competent business.

Meeting Closed.