



# University of St Andrews

## Students' Association

### Students' Representative Council

#### AGENDA

24<sup>th</sup> January 2023 – 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

Sam Gorman

Association Director of Student Development & Activities

Ailsa Martin

Athletic Union President

Alasdair Richmond

Association Chair

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

Rachel Nevinova

SRC Gender Equality Officer

Raghav Kediya

International Students' Officer

Sofia Johnson

LGBT+ Officer

Zaine Mansuralli

SRC Postgraduate Activities Officer

Abd Alsattar Ardati

SRC Postgraduate Development Officer

Niya Dobрева	Postgraduate Activities Officer
Sandro Eich	Postgraduate Academic Convenor
Samuel Woodall	Postgraduate Development Officer
Martyna Kemeklyte	SRC Science & Medicine Faculty President
Lewis O'Neill	Secretary to the SRC
Sana Aboobacker	Student Health 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

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

The agenda was adopted without dissent.

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

Marcelina Lekawaska – SRC Environment Officer

Laura Connies-Lang – Societies Officer

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

The minutes were adopted.

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

No matters arising from the previous meeting.

### **5. Open Forum**

AK Schott (AKS) announced new [UCU strike dates](#), beginning 1 February. The official SRC position on strikes was covered in motion [R-22-23](#) from the 15.11.22 meeting. AKS was uncertain as to how the upcoming strikes would specifically affect teaching. AKS reminded attendees to check the relevant university webpage for more information on the strikes. Postgraduate students were encouraged to contact Sandro Eich (SE) to discuss any related concerns.

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

6.1. Report of the Association President

Juan Rodriguez (JR) recently met with representatives from the music centre and music fund to discuss strategies for supporting university music groups. JR reported that the discounted stagecoach bus service will continue to the end of the semester. JR announced that the university intends to track the progress of students seeking accommodation through MySaint. This is to gain a fuller understanding of the local housing situation and to avoid a repeat of last year's shortage. JR has also been working on the new Association Strategy. JR has an upcoming meeting with the Quaestor and the Vice Principle of Communications about an open letter the SRC endorsed last semester. The HMO ban survey took place last week, and Fife Council has pledged to share its results with the Association. JR is hopeful student opinion will be taken into greater consideration in future local housing policy and that the HMO ban will be overturned. The president of Astro-soc has expressed concerns over a new local lighting project adversely affecting the James Gregory telescope's performance, which would have negative consequences for both academic staff and students. JR will be seeking a resolution to this issue in the coming weeks. JR will also be liaising with *The Saint* about responsibly covering the upcoming elections, ensuring they receive adequate support in analysing and publishing comment on campaign manifestoes. Next week JR will be meeting with MPs from Westminster to discuss the position of Scotland in the world and the role higher education plays in its global standing. JR also met with student services to discuss support for students in halls.

## 6.2. Report of the Athletic Union President

Ailsa Martin (AM) conducted an end-of-semester survey, gathered information from clubs about their experience thus far. AM will be following up on potential concerns raised by respondents. AM is working on the upcoming handover, AGMs, and standardising risk assessment procedure. 49 of 52 clubs returned updated risk assessments last semester. AM hopes that the overhaul will be completed before new committees are elected. AM has also been working on oversight of higher risk sports with equipment that needs servicing. AM has migrated community resources useful to club committees from several websites over to a SharePoint page. AM continues to answer queries from clubs as they arise.

## 6.3. Report of the Director of Education

AKS ran the Undergraduate Economic Forum (UEF), in which education officers and selected members of staff discussed the decline of student wellbeing. Discussion suggested that academic wellbeing and support officer were not being properly resourced or trained. Help available to students was not always advertised or supported, and access to student services proved less straightforward than one might think. The issue of study spaces was also discussed, with AKS noting that the find-a-space service on MySaint, tool does not say if you can access a building or if a given space is occupied. Swipe card readers were raised as a potential solution. AKS requested that posters advertising less used study areas be put up in high-traffic revision spaces. Post-covid challenges for new entrants were also raised, particularly issues faced by those sitting exams for the first time. The Students' Association sent out an email seeking feedback on student exam perception, the responses to which will inform university strategy for next year. Tuition fees for students studying abroad was a further topic of discussion. AKS stated that for students spending most of the year abroad it seems unfair to pay the University of St Andrews for tuition. Extension policy was another topic discussed, with AKS noting that the lack of uniformity across schools. AKS acknowledged that work on this issue is ongoing, relaying that the subject was productively debated during the Learning and Teaching Committee away day. Student representatives called for greater leniency in extensions. The education committee examining differences between school extension policies.

University Senate recently convened, announcing a university business school. AKS stated that staff members and students alike were taken by surprise, and not consulted beforehand. AKS promised that strongly worded emails would be forthcoming. AKS will attempt to gather student input on this new announcement. The university strategy talks about student experience, but AKS does not feel the university respects it. Work on the upcoming handover is ongoing. The Senior Lay Member election took place, with poor turnout. AKS provided feedback on how to improve future participation. AKS contended that greater student awareness of the Senior Lay Member's important function prior to the next election would be beneficial.

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

Lucy Brook (LB) relayed that Winter Wonderland sold 1000 tickets. Refreshers Week saw 7 nights of events, selling over 4000 tickets in total. The Association saw its highest ticketed attendance since Halloween, bucking a precipitous decline. Semester 2 will be very busy: between this meeting and the beginning of revision only 13 days without a scheduled major event remain. Guidance on what is required from student groups holding external events is not entirely clear. LB is working on a checklist to address this, and to ensure compliance with liability insurance. LB is attempting to simplify the procedure. LB hopes to incorporate this into the training of the next year's officers. Last semester LB worked on the new pricing structure for the Union, which reflects value added by Ents and other staff/services the Association offers. LB outlined her plan to release information on the new price structure in time for societies to calculate next year's budget with accurate information. LB is working on setting up a system for tracking charges so that everyone only pays what is owed. LB reminded attendees that 144 days remained till graduation ball. Planning is ongoing.

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

Sam Gorman (SG) reported that Refreshers Fayre took place on Sunday, noting that the lack of signage was challenging for students. A lot of stalls upstairs did not get much traffic. SG is working with Saints Award Board to review awards bestowed by the university. SG reached out to GotConsent and AM about consent training for sports club committees to take place this semester and over the summer. SG also sent a reminder to societies and subcommittees about the accessibility pledge on behalf of DSM. The checklist for societies continues to be developed. SG has been working with the Mermaids subcommittee over a debate about constitutional changes. SG will be liaising between university management and Race2 this semester. SG continues to work on volunteering portal.

#### 6.6. Report of the Director of Wellbeing and Equality

Emma Craig (EC) submitted a [written report](#). Sexual Assault Awareness Month is in April for which EC is planning a big campaign. Participation from all students is encouraged. EC has noticed several different ways student feedback is collected from the university's end, and the varying degrees of effectiveness these strategies achieve. EC contended that the Race and Equality Charter student survey received minimal responses because it was sent out during revision and exam season last semester. An in-person consultation is to take place in the Association tomorrow (25.1.23) between 10:30-14:30. EC would welcome input on encouraging student engagement and feedback.

### 7. Questions for SRC Members

- 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 Charities Officer
- 7.6. Questions for Community Relations Officer
- 7.7. Questions for Disability Officer
- 7.8. Questions for Employability Officer

- 7.9. Questions for Environment Officer
- 7.10. Questions for Gender Equality Officer
- 7.11. Questions for International Officer
- 7.12. Questions for LGBT+ Officer
- 7.13. Questions for Lifelong and Flexible Learners Officer
- 7.14. Questions for Postgraduate Academic Officer
- 7.15. Questions for Postgraduate Activities Officer
- 7.16. Questions for Postgraduate Development Officer
- 7.17. Questions for Rector's Assessor
- 7.18. Questions for Science/Medicine Faculty President
- 7.19. Questions for Secretary to the SRC
- 7.20. Questions for Societies Officer
- 7.21. Questions for Student Health Officer
- 7.22. Questions for Widening Access and Participation Officer

## **8. Unfinished General Business**

No unfinished general business.

## **9. New SRC Business**

- 9.1. Draft of the new strategy for the University of St Andrews' Students' Association

JR outlined the key points of the proposed [strategic plan](#). The plan determines the direction of the organisation in the medium to long term. This plan is designed to last for 3-4 years. JR has been working with governing bodies to determine key areas the Association could improve/evolve. The five pillars the document is based on are as follows: Student Experience; Partnership; Sustainability; PG Engagement; Volunteer Development. The version of the document offered for public perusal will be simplified for the sake of clarity.

Iain Cupples (IC) explained that the document is about strategic priorities, and just because something is not mentioned within it does not follow that the Association will cease to be involved in said matter. The plan is about allocating the limited time and resources of the Association and focusing on accomplishing key targets and goals. It reflects the priorities of trustees/other stakeholders and will be updated by future role holders.

AKS explained that the Sabbatical team are trying to develop something every student can see themselves in. The document is intended to reflect the priorities of the student body. For the sake of consistent student engagement, the strategic plan needs to represent the priorities of the student body. AKS clarified that the document is a list of strategic priorities rather than an action plan, providing a list of ideal outcomes that may not be attained in one term, but are worth working towards. The board continues to discuss how best to achieve these long-term goals, but input from SRC would be very useful.

SE asked if there be any more focus groups to discuss the strategic plan. IC explained there would not, due to time constraints.

SRC members were encouraged to offer suggestions on areas the Association could improve.

Francesca Lavelle (FL) suggested student presidents to get some compensation for their generally unrecognised work, giving the example of free coffee.

Stella Maris (SM) advocated for a more robust complaints procedure to protect student representatives. SM suggested prospective officers are put off by the lack of institutional safeguarding from hostile constituents.

Niya Dobрева (ND) argued that food sold by the Association is too expensive, and that ceasing to serve food at 2pm [sic] constitutes an accessibility issue. ND expressed the view that the current food prices do not support students, noting that other student unions have introduced £1-2 lunches.

SE said that the Association should subsidise food costs for representatives.

Aditya Goel (AG) suggested the Association should do more to promote student engagement with guest speakers/lecturers. Students do not attend events in great numbers as things stand.

SM stated that the Association needs to adapt to a post-covid world, in which engagement strategies that used to work well are no longer as effective. Students continue to face barriers to participation in university life. SM argued the Association should push for its own approach to student engagement, and conduct a review for the purpose of widening access and participation.

AKS talked about the difficulties subcommittees face in advertising their work. The limited pool of candidates qualified to serve effectively makes advertising both extremely important and very challenging. The Association used to have a volunteer design team, and could consider expanding design department to help address engagement issues. AKS also noted that it is difficult to be active on social media and publicise accomplishments between meetings. This obscures the accomplishments and relevance of subcommittee work to the wider student body.

IC stated that further comments and feedback via email would be welcome.

## 9.2. Referendum Questions

AKS raised the idea of bringing back referendum questions as part of student elections. AKS argued these non-binding, advisory resolutions would help guide the SRC while also fostering wider student engagement. AKS envisions referendum questions as helping determine goals that last beyond a single manifesto or election cycle, and effect the entire student community. AKS gave the recent changes to the academic calendar as an example of an important issue that students could have been consulted upon through a referendum question. AKS suggested the question would be accompanied by half a page of information like NUS motions. Easily digestible facts relevant to the question could also be incorporated into the ballot. Students could form campaign teams to advocate for or against the motion.

IC offered the example of STAR (St Andrews Radio), which was created by referendum years ago and has been well received. Prior referendum votes have also related to the academic calendar.

AKS stated that proposed referendum questions should be sent to the SRC Teams channel or Chase Greenfield.

## 10. Open Discussion

SM noted that the Rector had recently received an irate email from the Water Polo club about being downgraded from performance sport status. SM requested comment from AM.

AM stated that the Principal had received several letters on the subject from Water Polo club members, who are starting a campaign to maintain their performance sport status. AM explained that Water Polo is a small club that is currently unable to sustain itself as a performance sport. Misallocation of additional performance sport resources to the club would only have a detrimental effect on its long-term viability. This has been an ongoing discussion amongst the Athletic Union (AU) since July. The decision is being appealed and will be further discussed with the AU Board on Thursday. Discussion with Saints Sport leadership and the Proctor is ongoing.

SM announced that she will be visiting Parliament at the end of February to discuss the cost-of-living crisis and is looking to gather student feedback on the subject. SM will collaborate on two surveys (for undergraduate and postgraduate students respectively). SM wants to know how the cost-of-living crisis is impacting students, including PGTs. Any feedback on how constituents are affected by said crisis would be welcome.

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

SM stated that the Rector's Committee is working on project to bring awareness to the university strategy, and how it intersects with student representation. SM welcomed any input and feedback from SRC members. Giving the example of a potential upcoming collaboration with the Environment subcommittee, SM invited anyone interested in working together to contact her.

AR moved the upcoming meeting to February 21.

No other competent business.

**Meeting closed.**