



# University of St Andrews

## Students' Association Students' Representative Council

### AGENDA

21<sup>st</sup> February 2023 – StAge – 18:00

#### **Present**

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

#### **Position**

Juan Rodriguez

Association President

AK Schott

Association Director of Education

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

Alice Chapman

Charities Officer

Mashaim Bukhari

Community Relations Officer

Mathis Bourassa

Employability Officer

Rachel Nevinova

SRC Gender Equality 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
Chase Greenfield	Academic Representation Co-Ordinator

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

The agenda was adopted.

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

Lucy Brook

Raghav Kediya

Jasmin Zheng

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

The minutes were adopted.

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

There were no matters arising from the previous meeting.

#### **5. Open Forum**

There was no business raised in the open forum.

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

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

Juan Rodriguez (JR) described his recent work on numerous projects, including: finishing the new strategic plan for 2023-2027; recording two podcast episodes (one about the importance of student participation in the upcoming elections, the other discussing the upcoming strikes with UCU members); advocating for additional support for senior students with Student Services and the Proctor; resolving AstroSoc's concerns about light pollution; attending a

conference on student civics; meeting with the Quaestor, Vice-President of communications and authors of the open letter endorsed by motion [R-22-22](#) to discuss the university's environmental efforts and messaging, as well as the possibility of a bio-diversity library.

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

Ailsa Martin (AM) submitted a written report. AM invited feedback on accessibility in the gym, following the introduction of Accessibility Hour between 13:00-14:00 on Sundays. So far Saints Sport have turned music off, lowered gym capacity, and ensured staff members are always present to create a relaxed and supportive environment.

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

AK Schott (AKS) provided an update on the planned UCU strikes. Strike action has been paused for two weeks. There is some optimism a resolution may be reached before planned action resumes. AKS and JR met with representatives from both parties in the dispute. AKS reiterated that while the sabbatical officers are not part of the national negotiations, they are nevertheless doing their best to help, in accordance with motion [R-22-23](#). AKS announced that a proposal to lower the grade threshold for honours qualification will go before the University Senate. If approved, qualification to honours will require a 7, as was the case during the Covid-19 pandemic. AKS also reported meeting with the Proctor and others involved in the education sphere to discuss manageable workloads and effective support structures for future student officers. AKS also relayed that renovations to the library are almost finished, and that despite the temporary planned closure of some floors the building would remain open. AKS is working on getting integrated masters students access to postgraduate study spaces. Other matters AKS has been working included: management of students with no-contact orders; kinder assessment procedures; support for academic representatives; updating EDF guidelines; constructing safeguards to prevent issues for future officers; providing specific event guidance for student organisers; setting up for elections; setting up targeted careers events for academic reps and targeted advice on recognising transferable skills.

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

Lucy Brook (LB) was not present to provide an update.

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

Sam Gorman (SG) had no major updates.

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

**AKS left the meeting.**

Emma Craig (EC) submitted a written report. EC encouraged those interested in volunteering for Sexual Assault Awareness Month to contact her. EC noted recent student feedback suggesting estranged students feel unsupported by the university. EC will be attending various meetings and working groups to try and address this. Discussion as to whether there should be a student representative for estranged students is ongoing.

## **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**

Rache Nevinova (RN) expressed concern over the university's lack of support for working students. RN suggested the policy of not granting extensions to students struggling to balance academic and work commitments was elitist.

Francesca Lavelle (FL) stated that she was aware of the issue and exploring possible resolutions.

Iain Cupples (IC) stated that the lack of support for working students was a longstanding issue that goes beyond extensions. The university policy is that having to work 30 hours a week does not constitute extenuating circumstances. IC agreed that the concerns raised by RN were a significant issue.

Molly Wilson (MW) echoed the concerns of RN. RN expressed interest in discussing the issue further through the lens of disability advocacy.

## **8. Unfinished General Business**

## **9. New SRC Business**

### **9.1. Elections Discussion – Chase Greenfield**

The talented Chase Greenfield (CG) delivered a talk on appropriate procedure for SRC officers during the upcoming elections. CG covered relevant dates for nominations, campaigning, mandatory events, and voting. CG encouraged SRC members to promote the election and encourage others to run for office. The importance of offering equal support to all candidates was emphasised. CG directed SRC officers to send any queries to [SAElect@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:SAElect@st-andrews.ac.uk).

### **9.2. R-23-01 Motion to adopt the Students' Association Strategic Plan 2023-2027**

JR noted that the last strategic plan concluded in 2020. The new plan is important for various reasons outlined during the [24.1.23 meeting](#). Comments made in that session were used to improve the text. The document now contains new key performance indicators (KPIs) and commitments to structures of support for student representatives. The fundamental pillars of the plan remain the same.

Motion **passes without dissent**.

### **9.3. R-23-02 Motion to reform the Postgraduate Subcommittee**

SG stated that last year the Postgraduate Society Committee added multiple new members from several other subcommittees. The committee is now overcrowded. The motion would recategorise all positions added last September to invited members rather than mandatory participants, lessening the burden on student volunteers.

Motion **passes without dissent**.

### **9.4. R-23-03 Motion to revise the current tuition fee policy for students undertaking a placement year**

**AKS returned to the meeting.**

The motion was **tabled till next meeting**. The sponsors requested a discussion on how best to proceed with their motion, seeking support from other officers. Alasdair Richmond (AR) scheduled this for open discussion.

### **9.5. R-23-04 Motion to change Charities Campaign chosen charities nomination guide**

Sofia Johnson read out a motion from a student who was unable to nominate their chosen charity for the upcoming elections. The motion argued that small grassroots charities were often restricted from accessing larger campaign funds, facing significant backlash from the media and politicians. Support from the Association would be materially meaningful to the charity and its beneficiaries. The motion contended that the supposed ineligibility of their chosen charity was unconstitutional, and requested nominations be reopened.

SG and EC explained that reopening nominations at this point was not practical, as the charities campaign needs at least two weeks prior to the election to liaise with proposed organisations. Work on the charities campaign happens over the summer, necessitating the election of a chosen beneficiary in Spring.

Alice Chapman (AC) acknowledged that the guidelines for charity nomination as written are incorrect and will be changed for the coming year. AC requested the student pass along the name of their charity so that it can be nominated in next year's election.

SJ and RN asked whether it would be possible to hold the charity nominations after the upcoming elections but before the summer break. IC said that this was technically possible. AC and EC stated that it would create a huge workload for the student volunteers involved in implementing a special election. AM added that the university is currently calculating its budget for the coming year, and the added costs of a delayed charity nominations process could result in a budget shortfall for the incoming charities team.

After further discussion consensus was reached that part two of the motion would be struck. AR approved this amendment.

The amended motion **passes without dissent**.

#### **9.6. [For discussion] SRC Discussion: Student Event Aid**

SJ opened a discussion on how the SRC could help students experiencing financial hardship attend events. SJ noted that the cost of tickets to popular events frequently ranges from £30-100, a prohibitively expensive price for many students. SJ affirmed that students should not have to apply to the discretionary hardship fund multiple times a year just to have a social life. Further, the SRC should do more to reduce costs in perpetuity, given that the ongoing cost-of-living and housing crises show little sign of abating. SJ noted that the upfront cost of the Platinum Pass (a scheme marketed as the most financially prudent way of attending university events) was too high for many struggling students. SJ offered some initial suggestions for addressing affordability issues: fundraising on behalf of low-income students at events; a percentage of tickets to union events being subsidised for low-income students; raising awareness of the discretionary fund; offering low priced tickets but encouraging students to pay more for the sake of others; transferable tickets in the event of illness.

Ramsay Bader (RB) suggested spreading the cost of the Platinum Pass across the year. RB acknowledged that events had become more expensive for societies to host in the last year, with quoted prices for marquees and bus services doubling in some cases.

IC reminded those present that management of Student Association prices and payment plans is not in the remit of the SRC. Requests can be made to management, but the SRC does not have the authority to make specific commitments. RN asked whether it was within the SRC's remit to implement policies affecting societies' event pricing. IC responded that the relationship between the SRC and student societies is different to that between the SRC and the Association. SG stated that although in theory the SRC could mandate a price-structure commitment as part of societies' agreement with the Association, this would require a great deal of preparatory work. Such a policy would not be ready for implementation till next year, at least. FL noted that as sabbatical officers are trustees, the SRC could request they raise the issue of pricing during meetings with Association staff. Taking the Disabled Students' Network's (DSN) accessibility guide as a model, EC suggested advice on running affordable events should be compiled and offered to societies. EC acknowledged that such guidance is merely a starting point for those already interested in more equitable events and not yet enforceable. Jane Yarnell (JY) stated that the DSN guide had proved useful for groups that had not previously considered accessibility barriers to their events. SG cautioned that imposing price-related requirements on societies would require the support of the Association, without which such efforts would not be financially viable.

JR said that LB could raise the issue of Platinum Pass price structuring to the management committee and that such a change should be achievable. JR also supported investigating further uses of the discretionary fund, to ensure that those most in need receive help. JR noted that societies often aim to break even rather than make money on events. AM, FL, and AKS all raised the possibility of seeking sponsorship for events. AM queried whether student groups that have experience negotiating with event sponsors could offer guidance to interested societies. FL said

that businesses were often willing to work with societies, but societies needed to be bold and persistent in making initial connections.

RN asked whether anyone on the SRC helped societies budget. IC responded that the Association offers treasurer training. SG also assists. IC stressed that the Association has a small management team, and that there was not a lot of money available for extra projects. SG stated that the Director of Student Development & Activities (DosDA) does not currently sit down and discuss budgeting with societies, but that the SRC could mandate the introduction of this practice going forward. EC expressed interest in expanding training and guidance available to officers, additionally noting that the treasurer training co-ordinator encourages all committee members to attend.

AC asked whether societies and subcommittees budgets are publicly available. AR responded that they are not. SG added that subcommittees are directly funded by the Association and must submit a budget.

AR concluded the discussion by saying that personal experience setting up an accessibility fund suggested such initiatives were only possible through making cuts elsewhere. As a leading figure in a society that regularly runs expensive events, AR supported the creation of a guide on running events affordably.

## **10. Open Discussion**

The two students present to discuss **R-23-03** explained their rationale for bringing the motion. One of the requirements of the integrated biochemistry program is completion of a placement year of 7-12 months, hosted by another institution or company. Placements are also available to students on other programs, e.g., chemistry. Students on placement currently pay full tuition fees, despite working 36 hours or more a week somewhere other than St Andrews. The students bringing the motion believe tuition fees during placement years should be lowered in line with the university's reduced day-to-day involvement in their studies. The students also contended that charging those on placement full tuition fees constituted an accessibility issue. The funding received from student loans is reduced during placement years, meaning students must find a way to pay around half their fees themselves. During the cost-of-living crisis, this situation is incredibly difficult for lower-income students. While CEED, the careers office, and student services remain available to students on placement, students do not receive teaching from the university and therefore should not have to pay full tuition fees. The students also alleged that St Andrews is the only top university to charge full fees during placement years.

AKS responded by stating they had received a list of comparable programs from other top universities which also charge full tuition fees. AKS sought clarification as to what the students wanted from the SRC.

The students requested postponement of further discussion and additional time to revise the motion. They stated they were unaware of what the SRC could do to help them prior to today's meeting and would appreciate input from the Widening Access officer before the group next convenes. The students hoped the SRC would champion their cause and support them as they engage with university officials. The matter was tabled pending revision of the motion.

AKS encouraged anyone interested to run for Director of Education (DoEd).

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

No other competent business.

**Meeting closed.**