



# University of St Andrews

## Students' Association

### Students' Representative Council

#### AGENDA

15<sup>th</sup> November 2022 – Large Rehearsal Room – 18:00

#### Present

<b>Member's Name</b>	<b>Position</b>
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
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
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
Chase Greenfield	Academic Representation Co-Ordinator

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

Agenda adopted without dissent.

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

Marcelina Lekawaska	Environment Officer
Molly Wilson	Lifelong and Flexible Learners Officer
Laura Connies-Laing	Societies Officer

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

No minutes circulated to adopt.

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

No matters arising from the previous meeting.

### **5. Open Forum**

Rachel Nevinova (RN) asked whether anything could be done about the Caledonian Society's policy on dance couples, which mandates two partners of the opposite gender. Sam Gorman (SG) replied that the Caledonian Society not an affiliated society, and the SRC has no direct jurisdiction over them. Emma Craig (EC) suggested that if the policy negatively effects students in terms of wellbeing, equality, or gender inclusivity then a joint inquiry from RN and EC would be appropriate.

## **6. Elections Talk – Chase Greenfield**

Chase Greenfield (CG) was present to advocate on behalf of the electoral process and to discuss the Association-wide elections. CG discussed the roles and responsibilities of SRC officers in supporting the general election.

CG outlined the key election details, including nomination date (22 Feb – 7 March), voting date (14 and 15 March), the hustings process, information sessions etc. Nominations and voting are to take place online, with campaigning happening in person. Elections used to be run by the DoWell, but this is no longer the case as it placed too great a burden on the role-holder and student volunteers. CG has taken on most of that workload. CG emphasised the importance of officers having a passionate successor, ensuring continuity of positive work begun this academic year. CG explained that the responsibilities of SRC members include informing candidates about their position; encouraging candidates to run and vote; reviewing their role description. CG strongly recommended blocking out 3-6 hours a week during the nomination period to discuss role responsibilities with prospective candidates. CG explained their intention to break up the hustings from one meeting spanning several hours to several smaller sessions. CG would appreciate feedback on this new format. CG reminded SRC members to follow SA Elect on Facebook and share information about the election on social media during relevant periods.

CG is currently working on the following: a nudge tool like that used in the class representative elections; template emails; graphics packs; the previous year's stats and election report; position descriptions; guidance on running a rules-compliant campaign. CG received an applause break. Francesca Lavelle (FL) approved of separating the husting meeting into smaller sessions, citing her own lack of enthusiasm for protracted campaign events. Jane Yarnell expressed interest in discussing accessibility with CG.

## **7. Reports of Sabbatical Officers**

### **1. 6.1. Report of the Association President**

Juan Rodriguez (JR) spoke about the upcoming Senior Lay Member elections next week (Thursday 24 and Friday 25 November 2022). The Senior Lay Member is to be elected to Court and will preside over governing body in the Rector's absence. This election will not involve student campaigning; candidates will self-advocate by publishing a biography and election statement.

JR will have meeting with the development team to discuss fundraising campaign for increased hardship fund.

JR reminded members that the Students' Association's new strategic plan is currently being drafted, and that student input would be useful. The draft has five pillars (Role of the Association, Sustainability, PG Engagement, Volunteering, and Partnership) with corresponding goals. The form to sign up for focus group sessions can be found in the week 10 Sabbs email. Jr encouraged SRC members to sign up.

Accommodation week went quite well despite the Accommodation subcommittee being unfilled. JR thanked AK Schott (AKS) for their support.

JR described his enquiry to Stagecoach regarding their updated timetable. Some students have expressed concern over the last service to Couper departing earlier at night. JR intends to talk to Stagecoach about possible solutions.

JR has been speaking to the Lifelong and Flexible Learners Subcommittee, fostering ongoing dialogue.

JR also announced an upcoming event in Beacon Bar to provide support for students from Iran. Departments across the university (accommodation, student services etc.) will be present to offer appropriate guidance and assistance.

The Environment letter endorsed by the SRC during the 11.10.22 meeting passed 1000 signatures and was sent to the Principal's Office. It is currently awaiting response.

## **2. 6.2. Report of the Athletic Union President**

Ailsa Martin (AM) submitted a paper report prior to the meeting but delivered a verbal summary of their recent work. AM has been working on the introduction of a loan system to support students interested in joining a sports club. AM has also been focused on the volunteer strategy and handbook.

Movember fundraising is ongoing. AM encouraged committees to share sports club's charitable campaigns on social media.

AM noted that the Saints Sport for All group has been inactive, and stated her intent to explore reconvening it.

## **3. 6.3. Report of the Director of Education**

AKS has been focusing on good practice with the Education Committee (Educom), thinking specifically about good practice guidelines for schools. AKS and Educom are working on the following: outlining how schools should best interact with students and vice versa; defining good practice; offering fixed definitions for all Education role-holders. Following up on motion R-22-18 from the 20.09.22 SRC meeting, AKS described their ongoing efforts to support students and staff during upcoming strikes.

AKS is also seeking better, paid opportunities for student officers. Work on integrating academic education into other aspects of university life continues. AKS also attended a session on decolonising and decarbonising academia, held in partnership with the university. AKS affirmed their commitment to student-centred policies, describing efforts to ensure student consultations are scheduled appropriately (i.e. not during exam season) and offer remuneration. AKS is also trying to get student presidents into more university spaces and positions.

## **4. 6.4. Report of the Director of Events & Services**

Lucy Brook (LB) stated that the Rewind bop was moderately successful, but that the placement could have been better to avoid student deadlines. The all-building Halloween party was one of the most successful events ever, with more than 2000 people attending. Collectively, 140 hours of prep work went into planning the event. Winter Wonderland is upcoming. 62 days remain till Refreshers Week, for which planning is ongoing. LB is looking into making Platinum Passes more affordable, and increasing the benefits conveyed to purchasers. LB reported that the University has accepted liability for Union events. World Cup club night has been cancelled due to student concerns about Qatar's human rights violations. The football team's club night is to be rescheduled for next semester.

## **5. 6.5. Report of the Director of Student Development & Activities**

Sam Gorman (SG) recounted the recent merging of the volunteering and feedback portals, and the issues arising in consequence. SG is seeking feedback between now and the next meeting of the SRC. All officers can use the new portal, and SG encouraged members to do

so. Improvement of the new portal is an ongoing effort. SG congratulated the Debate Society for hosting their first ball last week. SG reminded members that the societies committee grant deadline is Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> of November. SG also informed meeting attendees that the society platform is being updated. The new platform will include details regarding separate income sources and an explanation of prices and events. Risk Assessment forms are being updated in line with university's risk assessment process. Feedback is ongoing. SG is working on creating a more structured handover process. All SRC officers should now be able to use the room booking system. Refreshers Fayre currently being planned.

## **6. 6.6. Report of the Director of Wellbeing**

EC also provided a written report. EC is seeking information from all student officers regarding their accomplishments and highlights from this semester, in preparation for an end of year celebration. Submissions must be sent by Friday 18<sup>th</sup>. Subcommittees are encouraged to help and offer input. Example accomplishments can include any of the following: events; themed-weeks; ongoing projects; policies. EC is collating content for the Revision and Exams Week webpage, which will detail all related events. The rest of EC's update can be found in her written report, covering work on the cost-of-living crisis, the gender based violence forum, and more.

## **8. Questions for SRC Members**

- 1. 7.1. Questions for Accommodation Officer**
- 2. 7.2. Questions for Alumni Officer**
- 3. 7.3. Questions for Arts/Divinity Faculty President**
- 4. 7.4. Questions for BAME Officer**
- 5. 7.5. Questions for Charities Officer**
- 6. 7.6. Questions for Community Relations Officer**
- 7. 7.7. Questions for Disability Officer**
- 8. 7.8. Questions for Employability Officer**
- 9. 7.9. Questions for Environment Officer**
- 10. 7.10. Questions for Gender Equality Officer**
- 11. 7.11. Questions for International Officer**
- 12. 7.12. Questions for LGBT+ Officer**
- 13. 7.13. Questions for Lifelong and Flexible Learners Officer**
- 14. 7.14. Questions for Postgraduate Academic Officer**
- 15. 7.15. Questions for Postgraduate Activities Officer**
- 16. 7.16. Questions for Postgraduate Development Officer**
- 17. 7.17. Questions for Rector's Assessor**
- 18. 7.18. Questions for Science/Medicine Faculty President**
- 19. 7.19. Questions for Secretary to the SRC**
- 20. 7.20. Questions for Societies Officer**
- 21. 7.21. Questions for Student Health Officer**
- 22. 7.22. Questions for Widening Access and Participation Officer**

## **9. Unfinished General Business**

### **10. New SRC Business**

- 10.1 R-22-23 Motion to respond to University of St Andrews staff taking industrial action.

AKS spoke about upcoming strikes. A UCU nominee for university court was present to speak, pending the approval of chair Alasdair Richmond (AR). AKS hoped the SRC would support full strike action, noting that some members would be participating. AKS noted that the SRC had previously passed motion R-22-18 in the 20.09.22 meeting and called for continued solidarity. A motion like R-22-23 is proposed every time a strike is called. AKS encouraged seeking localised solutions for St Andrews and spreading relevant information about the strike. AKS offered guidance on distributing information, in line with Association policy. Information about

strikes can be found on a webpage, including dates of pickets, places to study, and spaces within the Association to recover from strike action.

Ramsey Bader (RB) exited the meeting.

The motion advocates allowing officers to withhold their labour on university strike days and asks that the university not punish students who choose not to attend classes throughout industrial action.

UCU representative Malcolm (M) delivered some brief remarks. M said striking was not easy for staff or students and forces a lot of people to make difficult decisions. M articulated that staff pay has been slashed in real terms over a long period: 25% in real terms since 2009, when inflation was very low. Inflation is now high amid the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, compounding the real-term reduction in wages. The long-term dispute over pensions stems from a settlement imposed without consent, against the will of staff negotiating with the government. The pension of £20,000 p/a was cut to £13,000 p/a. M also described the casualisation of working conditions, pointing to PGR teaching assistants having their stipend slashed. M argued that the long-term future of academia as a profession open to all backgrounds is in danger. The UCU wants the university to honour commitments to working hours, as many staff currently exceed the 36 paid hours a week. M said he regularly works closer to 50 hours a week. The UCU also objects to the use of temporary, short-term contracts inimical to long term advancement in academia. PGR students are paid £15 an hour to teach but are only compensated for 3 paid hours of prep time. M expects undergraduates to do more preparation than this. £75 a week is insufficient for this work. Staff do not want to go on strike, but ongoing issues need to be addressed and there is no other avenue for collective bargaining. M acknowledged that this is a national dispute but stated that the university could do more to advocate for its employees on a national level.

RB re-entered the meeting.

AKS opened debate by noting that some SRC members planned on taking strike action. AKS summarised some key points from the motion. Over 80% of polled staff voted in favour of industrial action on paid working conditions and pensions. The hard work of staff is often acknowledged but not reflected in pay; this is a wellbeing issue, disproportionately impacting minority staff. A recent survey suggested staff work 51 hours a week on average but are only paid for 36 of them. Having to volunteer for your job is not a sustainable way to live. The university should not be encouraging unhealthy workloads. Workers have a human right to industrial action. AKS also acknowledged that strike action effects different students in different ways, and that disadvantaged students may be more inconvenienced. AKS nevertheless concluded that we must consider the short-term cost versus the long term impacts on our staff and student community. There is strength in solidarity, and staff and students deserve better.

FL reported speaking with the arts and divinity school presidents, who expressed full support for the motion. This means the students who are probably going to get the brunt of angry emails about the strike are in favour of it. Martyna Kemeklyte (MK) concurred on behalf of science and medicine school presidents. Sandro Eich (SE) added that the SRC represents the wellbeing of PGR students, whose labour is currently being exploited. SE noted that PGR students interested in a career in academia need to build a teaching portfolio, and therefore cannot realistically refuse tutoring. SE reminded the SRC that PGR tutors are also students and deserve to have their interests represented.

**Motion passes without dissent.**

## 10.2 R-22-24 Motion to Stand Against the Violation of Human Rights and Environmental Impact in Qatar in Association with the FIFA World Cup 2022.

Sofia Johnston (SJ) said that although the World Cup means a lot to many people, it is nonetheless being hosted by a country plagued with human rights issues. Students reached out

to SJ expressing concern that the Association was hosting World Cup themed events. Same sex marriage is illegal in Qatar\*, punishable by death. Qatari women face discrimination in law under the guardian system, severely restricting their ability to marry, work, drive, and receive healthcare independently. Construction in preparation for the event has been characterised by human rights violations inflicted upon migrant labour (approximately 6700 labourers have died in the runup to the event). 6 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> have been emitted despite claims the event is carbon neutral. Amnesty called on FIFA to implement remediation benefitting deceased workers' families but received no response. FIFA president Gianni Infantino wrote a letter to all 32 nations participating in the event, demanding focus on football instead of human rights. This motion demonstrates the Students Association's opposition to human rights violations in Qatar. The motion calls on Qatar and FIFA to compensate workers and suggests the Association consider boycotting any match in which Qatar is a participant. It also encourages any World Cup related events held at the Association to fundraise on behalf of relevant charities.

SJ stated that boycotting entire event is not ideal given the significance of the World Cup to so many students. A possible compromise is banning games Qatar plays in. Niya Dobrova (ND) opposed the idea of boycotting games involving Qatar, as Qatari students have no control over their nationality or the actions of their government. ND argued a boycott would wrongly signal Qatari students are unwelcome. SJ concurred and subsequently struck point four of her motion. Rachel Nevinova asked whether the SRC could bring attention to human rights abuses at world cup events, identifying an opportunity to raise awareness. SJ explained that the motion includes a provision suggesting raising money for charities at all relevant events. RN asked whether charity promotion could be added to event advertising.

Iain Cupples (IC) stated he was willing to talk to the design and marketing manager about RN's proposal. While not feasible with all forms of advertising, it would probably be possible with social media posts on Facebook and similar platforms.

AKS asked whether proceeds from World Cup events could be donated to charity. IC noted that the Association must stay in line with licensing law and charitable objectives. The Association must devote resources to its own beneficiaries first and foremost. Collective action regarding World Cup injustice could take place but staying in line with the charitable regulatory framework was crucial. Alice Chapman (AC) asked about handing out information booklets at related events. IC said it was more feasible with higher profile matches. ND asked whether it was possible to insert a QR code linking to more comprehensive information into existing advertising. IC stated that the management team have had discussions about how to promote matches without promoting Qatari branding/Qatar as a tourist destination. SE asked if the university had organised public viewings of matches. IC replied that this was not the case. If there was sufficient demand the games might be put on in Sandy's as well as in the Main Bar. RN asked if it would be beneficial to reach out to the football club to discuss the situation further. AM explained that the football club was aware of this discussion, as part of their sponsorship agreement with the union involved broadcasting World Cup matches. AC proposed the football club do some of the suggested fundraising. AM agreed to relay this feedback to the football club. AKS emphasised that the football club might be able to achieve greater engagement on these issues because of their size and active membership. AM concurred.

The motion **passes without dissent**.

\*Sana Aboobacker (SAb) pointed out that the correct pronunciation is 'kuh-ter', not 'ka-tah'.

## **11. Open Discussion**

No further discussion.

## **12. Any Other Competent Business**

No other competent business.

Meeting closed.