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Education Committee

St Andrews Students Association

**Meeting Date:** 20th February 2025 (18:00 – 19:00)

Large Rehearsal Room (Student Union Building)

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Meeting called by**: Education Executive Committee

**Type of Meeting**: Education Committee

**Chair**: Faculty Presidents

**Note Taker(s)**: Sharanya Gupta

**ATTENDANCE**

**Attendees:**

Oliver, Alicia, Jeremy, Georgia, Ariane, Nick, Stephanie, Kiera, Cole, Olivia, Christie, Tom, Millie, Erin, Finn S, Sydney, Josephine, Fleur, Haley, Tasha, Donald, Hugo, Anisha

Hitanshi, Phoebe, Emily, Sharanya

**Online**:

**Apologies**: (?)

**Absences**: (?)

**Guests**:

Molly, Shona, Connel,

**AGENDA ITEMS:**

* **Welcome – week 4**

**First Agenda Item:** **Disability Student Survey** (Molly Reade)

* Overview:
  + All School Presidents were sent an email about the Disability Student Survey. We want the survey to reach more people and we’ll only be able to share data with the different schools if we collect enough responses.

**Second Agenda Item:** **Advising Students** (Shona)

* Overview:
  + The advising role will undergo a review since we routinely look at service roles within the university and your participation as students is crucial in that process. Could you all, in your school emails, include some question about student’s experience with advisors and particularly the signposting role in advising. Advisors are often included in emails regarding misconduct, eg. Say a student is on probation. We want to understand how students perceive their engagement with their advisors after these difficult conversations.
* Discussion:
  + **History SP:** Would you like us to distribute the same questions you have or personalised questions for each school?
  + **Shona:** That’s for you to discuss. We want this to reach as many students as possible to see what’s going well and what isn’t. It’s to help us move forward with the shape and depth of the review and what we should be focusing on. The mechanics of it, you know a lot more about how you engage with students in your respective schools so I’ll leave that to you
  + **DoEd:** Are you focusing on just undergraduate advising or postgraduates as well?
  + **Shona:** Yes. We’re looking at the role of advisors from all student’s perspectives. Such as, do students see advisors as just counsellors at the uni whom they interact with at the beginning of Semester 1, or do they see that person a point of contact throughout their time at university?When we’re training them in August, we encourage them to signpost. They are experts in credits, module requirements, etc. not accommodation and mental health but they should know whom to refer students to if asked.
  + **Spanish LC:** Are students supposed to have the same advisor all 4 years?
  + **Shona:** Ideally, they should have the same one throughout subhonours. Service roles are allocated according to workload. People who advise in first year, don’t necessarily carry on in that role in the next (same for honours) Those advisors should know the whole sweep of modules available to students and the requirements.
  + **IR SP:** Would you be able to give some prompts and wording just so we can communicate it in the language you want to hear from students?
  + **Shona:** I could summarise what they say with the DoEd. Whether that’s a series of questions in a survey oryou may want to raise it as teaching and learning committees. There are various options for you to gather this information. I can summarise what I’ve offered this evening to give you something to work on. If we could have feedback by the end of this semester that would really help us. The intention is to substantial work on this over the summer. We will be advertising an intern role as well.
  + **Doed:** Might be worth adding an angle for joint honours students. It’s particularly challenging for them especially if their advisor is in one of their schools only.
  + **Shona:** Great point. One of the questions could be if students receive a consistent answer for a joint hons program.
  + **Math SP:** My joint honours rep mentioned that their 2nd year module choices influence what modules they can do in honours. They often don’t get enough guidance at subhonours if you’re balancing modules across different subjects. This student had an advisor from Biology who couldn’t advise them properly on Maths modules.
  + **Shona:** Subhonours advisors should have knowledge across faculties. They will know their own subjects more but if you’ve got 2 subjects in your degree intention then you’ve only got one advisor during subhonours. If there is something that the advisor isn’t sure about then they should liaise with the DoT or advisors in the other school. That might be an outcome of a general question (i.e. how are you experiencing advising?) That would suggest that you want open questions so that useful information emerges rather than yes-no answers. Subhonours should be advised about the prerequisites for both degrees. Apart from the review, we’re working with colleagues in IT to update advising information pages on our webpages.
  + **IR SP**: Are you looking to standardize the process across faculties or are you just trying to make sure individual schools are better equipped at handling advising?
  + **Shona**: Neither. We want to evaluate if we need to make any changes to the status quo. There isn’t necessarily going to be any change unless we see it from the advisor perspective and it’s good practice to review these things. The advisor role hasn’t been reviewed in a number of years. One of the questions could also be, “what do you think your advisor of studies does?”
  + **Sci/Med FP**: I know some people with two advisors for joint degrees in honours.
  + **Shona**: Yes, that should be the case.
  + **Sci/Med FP**: I’ve had instances where they haven’t known what to do with my questions. They’re great at the beginning of the year but not as much after.
  + **Shona**: Students’ studies don’t always go according to plan which is when they need further guidance. If that is the case and if any students in your school are unaware of the course of action and if they’re getting unsatisfactory answers from advisors, then they should come to Paul and I.
  + **Maths SP**: The process is complex at honours. I do my own research;if I know my combo is bad and ask my advisor, they say you need to have passed this module to take the one next semester. Like yes, I’ll hopefully pass it this semester to take the next one in second sem. So I don’t think they look at it properly and factor in matters of chance.
  + **Shona**: We do assume that students who are advised into modules will pass them. That again raises a good point about how much research should students should do on their program requirements as opposed to going to their advisor. We would like students to understand that they have degree flexibility but every path they go down on can’t necessarily be easily reversed.

**Third Agenda Item:** **Strategic Impact Analysis** (Connel)

* Overview:
  + Ros Campbell brought the Review doc to EduCom to get your feedback and it was submitted as part of TQER in November. If anyone wants to see the document, I’m happy to share it.
* Discussion:
  1. Point 1: We are seeking general consensus and consent on the document at this committee.
  + **Speaker:** Talking points
  + **DoEd:** I know a lot of you are involved in the review in two weeks time. We’re taking a different approach and want to identify some topics of concern. We’ll share the briefing dates, please try to make them. If you won’t be at review but have ideas, get in touch with me so we can ensure it’s raised.

**Fourth Agenda Item:** **Reading list** (Speaker – Time)tom

* Overview:
  + I brought up the reading list software during the previous EduCom. Based on our meeting with the library last week, the project is scheduled to be delivered in June. Resourcing issues within IT, means that we can’t integrate it with Moodle etc. There is also no available data on how students use reading lists.
* Discussion:
  1. Point 1: How do you (students in general) access your reading lists (Moodle, MySaint, others?)
  + **Chemistry SP:** MMS is not something I use to access my reading list. I access mine from MySaint.
  + **Sci/Med FP:** [show of hands] Moodle: 8; MySaint:16; MMS- 1

**Fifth Agenda Item:** **UAF Agenda** (Speaker – Time)

* Overview:
  + UAF is fast approaching so we should discuss some points we will be bringing up. We send out the agenda and background before the meeting to prepare staff.
* Discussion:
  1. Point 1
  2. Point 2
  + **Speaker:** Talking points
  + **Art Hist SP:** Will there be food?
  + **ARI:** Yes.
  + **Chem SP:** For the industry placement fee issue, we did a student survey. *What effect did tuition have on your placement:* some dropped out, many placements are unpaid. The university’s scene is very good, placement is good for work experience and references. We’re framing this to the university as a slight advantage depending on fee status. I was being paid 20K per yearand the uni said I’ve to pay 5K that too for a UK student. We’re interested in hearing from LCs who’ve been on placement to see what services did they use, since we want to make that a point too.
  + **Sci/Med FP:** Based on my research, the university’s direct competitors reduce fee up to 50-75% while StA still asks for 100%.
  + **DoEd:** [historical context] This has been raised at UAF at least twice since I have been involved, and it hasn’t been very productive. The decanal team suggests that students can still use university resources, and the fee covers site visit costs. I don’t think that justifies a full fee. Can we have a level of agreement and a singular front that might help us make a strong argument?
  + **Chem SP:** Last time we were told that the placement is a student’s “personal choice” which I think is academically unfair.
  + **Arts/Div FP:** For this discussion, can I borrow the LCs and ML SP at the end of EduCom?
  + **Physics SP:** Can we estimate how much a student costs the university?
  + **Sci/Med FP:** We could probably figure that out, however, we shouldn’t go down the stance that the university doesn’t need the money. The university is a business, and so the argument of cutting down their money is not productive.
  + **Physics SP:** But we are customers in a way.
  + **DoEd:** That is true butgiven the university’s financial situation this argument is not conducive.
  + **Chemistry SP:** That’s why we’re focusing on the student experience side of it.
  + **Philosophy SP:** Do we have a breakdown of what’s been said in the last 3 years so we can come prepared.
  + **Arts/Div FP:** I can send UAF notes later.
  + **Chinese LC**: We receive reduced fee for study abroad but we paid full fee for placements as well.
  + **French LC**: Does the university offer any financial assistance?
  + **Chemistry SP**: None beyond what is already offered to students plus immigration status often limits that.
  + **Sci/Med FP**: If you’re doing an internship you’re more likely to get funding from the university but if you say placement, then it’s harder to get financial backing. The two are recognized differently, not sure why.
  + **Art Hist SP**: Do we have any relevant school policy that pertains to this? Anything about grants, how’re they applied, what the decision-making process looks like?
  + **Sci/Med FP**: Yes, most definitely.
  + **DoEd**: I’ve sent a link to the minutes from the last UAF where this was discussed (Page 2 has a breakdown.)
  + **History SP**: Can you use student services if you’re outside of the UK?Because I was told by a friend that you can’t use students services on study abroad and there are some issues with the global office as well.
  + **DoEd**: SS offers counsellors and therapists. They aren’t allowed to give therapeutic support because of national regulations surrounding medical advice, but you can schedule meetings with counsellors.
  + **Chemistry SP**: Many students in Europe can’t access SS and they are on their own.
  + **DoEd**: I’m happy to speak to SS about this.
  + **Spanish LC**: You hear a lot of horror stories about study abroad and event though people have bad experiences,they don’t push it once it’s done. Students on these programs, often don’t receive prompt replies to their emails so we could find some evidence there.
  + **ML SP**: Someone I knew went to Kazakistan, and found it challenging to find someone who speaks Russian. They soon realized that they couldn’t communicate with their host family. They had to relocate and didn’t receive much support from the university to do that.
  + **DoEd**: To summarise the main argument, they calculate student fee centrally on a credit system.
  + **English SP**: When I was in Spain, we were getting module credits but we were paying half the fee. So, I was wondering if your credits looks similar?
  + **Chemistry SP**: We get 90 credits for the work you’re being paid to do at an industry not for educational purposes.
  + **Biology SP**: I received emails from students who hadn’t received introductory module that they were meant to do while they were abroad.
  + **DoEd:** Okay, for the other agenda items, someone from timetabling will be there and we will continue the conversation on when that information is released. On MEQs, the thing about questions being about specific people, those were never centrally put in, it was on a opt-in basis. I want to push on the graduate attributes question not being there. Do we want to bring up extensions again, since they said our information wasn’t up to date. Finally, some schools got rid of self certs.
  + **Philosophy SP**: No one cares really because if you miss over 4 classes you get a 0X, it doesn’t matter if you self certify or not. If you have an extenuating service, email the DoT.
  + **DoEd**: Isn’t this going backwards?
  + **Sci/Med FP**PHOEB: I like self certify because it’s a bit more anonymous.
  + **Social Anthro SP:** There was this understanding amongst students that self certs don’t count towards absences recorded. So, they are just not actively approving them but they keep doing it in case the school needs to support you.
  + **DSN Rep**: We’ve had people reach out, the wording is bad and caused a lot of anxiety.
  + **Social Anthro SP**: They’ve tried to tell students they aren’t disadvantaging them through my emails.
  + **History SP**: They say you still have to email the tutor so self certicates are redundant.
  + **Econ SP:**: How does it make it different for the admin team?If they’re still monitoring it, how does it cut down on their time? They might as well just approve it.
  + **Philosophy SP**: From my understanding, it’s the same issue they have with timetabling i.e. they can monitor who’s signing up but because they also have book that and email everyone about it, there is more to do at the time of finalizing plans.
  + **Econ SP**: but DoT have to log that in?
  + **Philosophy SP**: I’m not sure how the DoT is involved there.
  + **DoEd:** I think it’s worth discussing why this has happened.

**Chemistry SP:** We mainly have self-certificates for visa purposes – so the school can say that they’ve been in contact with the students.

**Observers**

**Resources Requested**