



Undergraduate Academic Forum

St Andrews Students' Association

Thursday 6th November 2025

17:00-19:00

Large Rehearsal Room, Students' Association Building

GENERAL INFORMATION

Meeting called by: Education Council Committee

Type of Meeting: Undergraduate Academic Forum

Chair: Emily Bannister (President of Education)

Note Taker(s): Nick Townsend (Academic Representation Intern)

ATTENDANCE

SA Attendees: Faculty Presidents, President of Education, Academic Representation Intern, Academic Representation Coordinator, School Presidents and Language Convenors.

University Attendees: Professor Shiona Chillas, Associate Dean for Students (Arts and Divinity), Dr Sharon Leahy, Associate Dean for Education (Science and Medicine), Bronagh Masterson, Student Mobility Officer (Outbound) on behalf of the Global Office, Dr Steven Tyre, Dean of Learning and Teaching, Dr Lenia Kouneni, Associate Dean of Education (Arts and Divinity), Dr Paul A. S. Cruickshank, Associate Dean for Students (Science), Professor Clare Peddie, Vice Principal Education (The Proctor), Ros Claase, Director of Student Experience.

MINUTES:

1. Welcome and Introduction- 5 minutes (President of Education)

PresED: (Overview)

- Welcome all to the Semester 1 UAF. Please ensure all discussions and contributions are constructive and respectful.
- *Introductions made.*

2. Fee Discrepancies for Russian Industry Placement- 20 minutes

Russian Convenor: (Overview)

- Expands on *Appendix Item 2* (see end of document)
 - “Currently, the Russian language placement year is inaccessible to all students. Through paying additional fees- not paid by any other language industry placements- students can essentially buy their way to future jobs and better grades. Although the Russian department set assessments with the assumption that students do not go abroad, students who do are greatly advantaged by this opportunity. Therefore, for students a year in industry placement creates a “pay to win” environment. Going abroad will significantly increase your language skills. This was brought to the global office a few years ago by student representatives and the department, but momentum was lost.”
- Furthermore, student feedback demonstrates that the financial cost is a direct inhibitor to decisions to go abroad
- We would like to explore the feasibility of waiving these fees

Discussion:

- Student Mobility Officer (Outbound) on behalf of the Global Office
 - We appreciate that the situation with the Russian study abroad programme is unique. We currently have two options offered through Russian Language Undergraduate Studies (RLUS), one in Kazakhstan and one in Estonia. RLUS provides intensive language courses and on the ground support.
 - In contrast to our other bilateral exchange programmes, where tuition is paid to St Andrews as normal, the RLUS programme includes an additional fee. As such, students pay a half tuition fee to St Andrews while on an RLUS programme.
 - We are aware that the RLUS programme fee has risen significantly in recent years.
 - The Global Office has explored alternative options and produced a paper on how this could work for the Russian department.
 - We continue to explore several potential opportunities, such as a university exchange, which does not entail additional fees.
 - Regarding funding, we have a generous portfolio of scholarships, Saints Abroad, which students undertaking RLUS programmes are eligible to apply for.
 - We apply for Turing Scheme funding annually, but this is not guaranteed in any given year and the amount awarded by the UK Government can vary.
 - Furthermore, there is the possibility that the UK will re-enter the ERASMUS+ programme in the near future, which would further complicate the funding landscape.
 - We have a very generous scholarship portfolio through Saints Abroad, which we advertise well. All students who receive an offer to study or work abroad receive information regarding this scholarship via email.
 - We try our best to help students who want to go abroad and we do have financial need-based scholarships

- We have started a review previously on the finances behind the RLUS program, and I am happy to continue with this
- PresED:
 - Suggestion and agreement reached to continue to review by the Global Office, and for further dialogue between the Global Office and the Students' Association

3. Biology and Chemistry Placement Programmes- 10 minutes

School President of Biology: (Overview)

- Expanded of *Appendix Point 3*
 - “An industrial placement is a mandatory component of any Integrated Masters programme within the School of Biology, with students unable to go for a year on placement changed onto the BSc track. Even for students in the School of Chemistry, where the 4000 level credits are taken at St Andrews, a placement is seen as an invaluable experience akin to ‘a golden ticket’ by both staff and students alike. Students unable to afford accommodation and other living costs alongside these tuition fees are therefore disadvantaged simply on the basis of their personal financial situation. For students with loans from either the SLC or SAAS, the respective agencies only cover 50% of the maximum fees, with students being left to cover the shortfall from their own pockets (for RUK students in AY 2023-24, this amounted to £4,625).”
- Nearly three-quarters (3 in 4) of students who start an Integrated Master's program don't complete them, choosing to drop to a BSc or leave the course entirely.
- On average, data from 2014-2024 reveals that IM experiences more student drop offs than any other programme in biology- particularly concerning when we consider many Biology BSc students switch to more specialised pathways like Animal Behaviour or Cell Biology rather than leaving the school entirely.
- This means IM have more than double the attrition rate of the standard BSc. The primary structural difference between these degrees is the financial cost of the mandatory placement year. When students face the reality of paying full tuition for a year of work, alongside living costs many, like myself, are forced to abandon the Masters pathway as it is not a viable financial option for most and are priced out of what is considered vital industrial experience.
- Of course, there are many reasons there is a drop in integrated masters students but through the School Presidents of Biology and Chemistry 2024/25 carried out a student feedback exercise (online Microsoft form) which revealed the financial implications are the main catalyst for student drop off. Current academic representatives have gathered similar student testimonies
- We're recruiting excellent students into the Integrated Masters programs, but then pushing them out by the financial structure of the placement years and filtering for wealth rather than talent or potential (or grade attainment). This isn't bad for just students, it's bad for the universities' reputation and completion rates and ultimately a mission to provide accessible education.

Discussion:

- Student Mobility Officer (Outbound) on behalf of the Global Office:
 - We are aware of the tuition fee situation as regards Biology and Chemistry placements, and I should acknowledge that fees are not set by the Global Office. The University operates a credit-based tuition fee policy which is consistent across all programmes, and thus also applies to external placements.
 - I have sought and received approval to expand the current Global Office Tuition Fee Support Scholarship for this coming academic year, allowing SAAS as well as SLC funded students to apply for the scholarship. The maximum scholarship amount will also increase to £4500.
 - Furthermore, a lot of UK based placements are paid and while this is not universal, it should be recognised
 - Following the TQER review, a significant amount of work is being put into reviewing the situation. For example, I have been working with the Associate Dean Science (Students) to produce standardised guidance for Placement Advisers which will be issued to all students considering a work placement, clearing outlining tuition fees and funding opportunities. This will remain a needs based scholarship.
- PresED:
 - Recognises that to resolve the issue of fees charged by the university, we should take the issue beyond UAF
 - Suggests establishing a working group to take the concerns forward and find potential solutions
- Associate Dean for Students (Science)
 - Agrees with the point that financial considerations will play a part in students' decisions to switch from the integrated masters to the Bsc track.
 - Acknowledges and explores available data that there are other factors involved in that decision, such as academic entry
- The Proctor
 - There are two places in which this would need to be taken forward, the Scholarships Board which we would need to create a working group for and the Fee Setting Board, which is chaired by the COO
 - There would need to be a significant business case put forward for this to succeed
 - We should also recognise how much the university does, both financially and academically, for students who are on placement or abroad
 - The university pays for a significant and extensive insurance policy, which ensures student safety around the world
 - Furthermore, we do a significant amount of work behind the scenes to ensure student safety and academic integrity when they are not at St Andrews. This includes a fair and proper grade translation system from their time abroad, allowing students to receive credits for their efforts at other institutions
 - The Global Office works hard behind the scenes to ensure students have the information they need for their time abroad and provide support
- Associate Dean of Education (Arts and Divinity)
 - *(Returning to previous comments made by Associate Dean for Students (Science))*

- May we suggest we look at the data regarding reasons for students leaving the integrated masters program
- It would be helpful to monitor the data closely over the next academic year and try to address the specific number of students who, for purely financial reasons, drop out of the integrated masters We need to see to what extent we ensure that those who need it are financially covered with the scholarship funding already available.
- This should be done before we consider broader and more significant reforms
- Faculty President (Science and Medicine)
 - Could we attempt to quantify the amount of money and resources that is spent by the University on supporting students on placements in order to increase transparency
- The Proctor and Student Mobility Officer (Outbound) on behalf of the Global Office
 - This would be very difficult to quantify, as there are a lot of different services and activities which go into the financial and practical assistance of students on placement
 - The Student Mobility Officer (Outbound) also noted that the structure of study and work placements at St Andrews is different from other Scottish and UK HEIs so like for like comparison can be challenging. For example, study abroad and placement years in England normally involve an additional year and are not for credit. The Proctor
 - What we could do to improve transparency is to list the support we provide more publicly and work to promote this
- Associate Dean for Students (Arts and Divinity)
 - We should also recognise that whether or not students access the support available to them, it is still there for them if they need it
 - Those who do access the support are often very grateful for it
 - Perhaps we could write some text about this to further increase transparency and awareness
- Student Mobility Officer (Outbound) on behalf of the Global Office
 - We do provide a lot of support for students both in the UK and abroad and we can outline this fully
- The Proctor
 - Despite all of this, I am very keen that we please investigate if there are students who are falling through the gaps on the integrated masters due to financial reasons
- Dean of Learning and Teaching
 - I agree (*with the Proctor*) and I would also like to know the extent of the issue
 - We should also work to address the stigma of financial constraints and I would be happy to pick this up
- PresED:
 - Moving forward, then, we have an agreement that:
 - We shall talk to the COO about the issue of fees
 - Work to address and understand the number of students who cannot afford to continue on the integrated masters and understand if scholarships do plug any accessibility gaps.

- Improve transparency on all the support for students available when on placement to justify costs

4. Work Abroad Support- 20 minutes

PresED: (Overview)

- The School President of Modern Languages could not be here today, so I shall present their point
- Expands on *Appendix Point 4*
- Language students can undertake a work placement abroad with clear benefits to their language skills and career progression
- Following data that has been gathered by the School Presidents, it would be helpful to provide greater support, including a comprehensive list of student placements abroad that can be recommended and greater CV-building support in foreign countries

Comparative Literature Convenor: (Overview)

- To add to the point, there is a further problem for students who do not qualify for the British Council, which is all international students.
- While some countries have alternatives, others do not, which leaves international students essentially on their own to find a placement

Russian Convenor: (Overview)

- In regard to Russian study specifically, we have just introduced the ability to work abroad
- However, there is little support available for choosing work placements. This leaves students essentially going in blind for their placements, which could place the student at risk

French Convenor: (Overview)

- It would be good to demonstrate the support available for students who cannot access support through the British Council but might be able to through institution that they are a citizen of

Spanish Convenor: (Overview)

- It would be very helpful to have a reliable list of places to go
- There are lots of people who might not want to teach during their time abroad, but do not have any recommendations of where they could go

Discussion:

- Associate Dean for Education (Science and Medicine)
 - There are significant issues that come with giving recommendations for placements from an institutional perspective
 - The placement might be reliable this year and have positive feedback, but in 2 years, it might no longer be reliable, and therefore, we would have supported students attending a work placement that was inadequate or worse
 - This would put us in a risky and potentially liable position

- Student Mobility Officer (Outbound) on behalf of the Global Office
 - Statement on behalf of the Careers Centre: ***We have general advice on CVs on our website: [CV - Careers - University of St Andrews](#) and much of the advice is applicable across different countries. However, we do also link to GoinGlobal, which is a resource we pay for students to have access to, where there are country guides and a student can click on the Germany guide for example, and get specific advice on what a CV in Germany should include. We also provide students with access to CareerSet which is a tool that offers AI generated feedback on their CV, and students can also book an appointment with one of our CV advisers for more personal support on their CV specifically, or they can book a more general Careers Appointment if they have wider questions. Appointments are booked through Career Connect.***
 - Modern Languages used to have informal connections with employers across Europe; however, ensuring the integrity and suitability of these placements without regularly site visits is challenging. Funding site visits is not always possible.
 - We are looking at work placements across the University to see if we could formalise some of these relationships as part of Employability Strategy Implementation Group. Sharon Cant (Careers Centre) and I are co-leading on this review.
 - We are very open to trying to help and support students with this
 - However, we are a small team, and demand for work and study placements has grown significantly. A strategic review of outbound opportunities at St Andrews is currently underway.
- Spanish Convenor
 - It would be good to get some greater transparency and expansion of marketing so that we can tell people about platforms such as GoinGlobal, and we would like to help with this
- Associate Dean for Education (Science and Medicine)
 - Would it be useful for staff in Schools to get a more information of what support is already available as part of the problem seems to be knowledge of the resources already in place?
 - *Agreement from EduExec*
- Faculty President (Science and Medicine)
 - Is there an information pack that goes to anyone going abroad?
- Student Mobility Officer (Outbound) on behalf of the Global Office
 - Yes, and there is an information session that students can attend, organised by the Careers Centre and Global Office, specifically targeted at Modern Languages students seeking a work placement for their WIYA programme.
 - We could expand our email which goes out to all second years outlining study and work abroad opportunities, highlighting the support already available from the Careers Centre.
- Associate Dean of Education (Arts and Divinity)
 - We could make a more comprehensive information pack that goes out to modern language students specifically
- Russian Convenor
 - *(Returning to the point regarding staff awareness and involvement)*

- In the case of Russian, it is not a lack of staff knowing about opportunities; it is a case of a lack of overall resources
- The Russian staff are overstretched, supporting both students at St Andrews as well as the ones abroad
- PresED:
 - To conclude this section of the agenda, we can agree that more promotional resources will go towards GoinGlobal and informing students of the resources already in place.
 - Global office and careers centre to give work abroad coordinators more information to inform placement advice.

5. Visa Support for Outbound Students– 20 minutes

Spanish Convenor: (Overview)

- Expands on *Appendix Point 5*
 - The University of St Andrews website provides rich visa information by country, summarising visa related information for students and staff traveling on university business to specific countries. However, student feedback has revealed a lack of awareness of these resources- even within our own circles, we struggled for some time to find the resources linked below. Whilst we do not wish to alter the information provided by the Global Office, student representatives would appreciate greater dissemination of existing resources, and consideration into new practices.
- We found that students had little information about the resources available to them in regard to visas. When we held an informal modern languages study abroad drop-in session, the majority of our questions were regarding visas
- It would be good to have more awareness of visa information

Discussion:

- Student Mobility Officer (Outbound) on behalf of the Global Office
 - All students studying or working abroad must attend the mandatory pre-departure session held in April where we note that students are responsible for securing their own visa but that we have guidance on the Global Office webpages.
 - We are always happy to help and open to new suggestions
 - Spain is particularly challenging at the moment and this is the case across the Scottish sector.
 - The visa application process for European destinations has become increasingly difficult post-Brexit
 - Legally, we are not permitted to provide visa advice or to become involved in individual visa applications. Doing so could have serious consequences for the University if incorrect guidance were given. I engage regularly with colleagues across the Scottish HE sector – students at other institutions would also like more support but universities are bound by the legal implications noted above.
- Comparative Literature Convenor:
 - Could we have a situation where students from the same nationalities who have previously been abroad could be linked to provide support?

- Student Mobility Officer (Outbound) on behalf of the Global Office
 - Students can volunteer for the Global Office on return to St Andrews as part of our Global Ambassador prize. If they do this, they can chat informally to students going to the same destination, provided all parties consent in the context of UK Data Protection Legislation.
- Associate Dean for Students (Arts and Divinity)
 - There are so many factors that could intervene, it would be a mistake for us to say, if you are a US citizen applying to X country, here is what to do. It would be a mistake for us to do so
 - Visa applications rules change very quickly
 - We appreciate the concern and do want to support you, but we cannot do so in this instance
 - You have to deal with this issue yourself to some degree

PresED:

- From this discussion, moving forward we can work together to improve transparency on existing resources. EduExec will present the Global Office with a list of vital information to include in study abroad 'congratulatory' emails.

6. Curriculum Delivery Reviews– 20 minutes (The Proctor)

The Proctor: (Overview)

- Expands of *Appendix Point 6* to explain the universities Curriculum Delivery Review
 - “The Curriculum Delivery Review project will be worked on over the coming year(s). The intention is to help Schools reduce complexity and respond to the challenges posed to both staff and students by increasing workloads, especially where this relates to assessment and delivery of the curriculum.”
- It is absolutely not about the subjects or content of our curriculum; it is about how we deliver it
- There is no plan for the university to change any of the subjects on offer
- 5 strands, each of which I shall briefly explain
- Expansion of teaching spaces and AI timetabling solutions:
 - New College and the Digital Nexus Building will give us significantly more teaching space, but that is probably 3 years away
 - We are using AI to see if we can reform our timetable to utilise our space much better
 - Timetabling and Planning are working with the School of Computer Science to do so
- Undergraduate degree program portfolio
 - There are currently more than 900 degree options from its 18 schools. About 600 never attract students, but all of those have possible future constraints on our timetabling
 - We want to remove these potential future constraints

- We have asked each of your schools if they would miss degree paths if they were no longer offered
- The School of Modern Languages have a huge portfolio of degrees, and they have been given preference over what is kept in regards to joint honours degrees
- Teaching work and guidance: (largely impacting staff)
 - Each school currently has a different workload model, which we are trying to unify
- Credit framework
 - Our current credit framework is very complicated
 - There were several degrees which have unequal semester credits with strange credit portfolios
 - We are one of the few institutions that does not have a standard credit framework
 - We want to try to make sure this is unified and simple to administer, and for students to navigate
 - All our PGT programs are 15 or divisible by 15, and so they come together well. This took 10 years to implement; we hope to do this faster for the UG portfolio
- Assessment volumes
 - We are concerned and students have raised concerns about the amount of assessment students are doing
 - In response to student feedback, the amount of assessment you get in some modules is disproportionate and does not align with the credits given
 - We would like to try and standardise this to some degree
 - We would also like to provide opportunity to integrate or embrace AI into teaching and assessment

Discussion:

- Spanish Convenor:
 - We are aware that cuts are being made to programs which affect modern languages
 - We think that people should be able to study a modern language if they wish
- The Proctor:
 - There is no intention of stopping people from studying any of the currently offered modern languages
- Dean of Learning and Teaching:
 - We are not cutting or removing any program that any student has taken in the last 5 years
 - I am concerned about this being seen as cuts, in line with the media. This is a readjustment, and no current student shall miss out as a result of this
- Associate Dean of Education (Arts and Divinity)
 - These are largely joint degrees that attract nobody, and therefore, there is no reason for us to have them
- Dean of Learning and Teaching
 - We are also not cutting or changing overall student numbers. There will be the same number of students in the Schools and we are not cutting School funding
- Faculty President (Science and Medicine)

- What would be the process of reintroducing a joint honours degree, should it become popular in the future?
- Dean of Learning and Teaching
 - We do not add degrees on the basis of student requests
 - But we will consider and adjust depending on student demand and market research
 - For example, many students ask for Art History and Economics, as well as Management combinations
 - These are pathways that we would like to be able to provide, that we currently cannot because of the timetable constraints
- Associate Dean of Education (Arts and Divinity)
 - There is an established process for building a new joint honours degree program
 - The schools can work together, and there is a process to create and reinstate a new degree program
 - The programs need to reflect the reality of student demand
- School President of Biology
 - Is there a requirement for how much notice shall be given for the removal of a degree pathway?
- The Proctor:
 - If the school decides to remove a degree pathway, it takes about 1.5 years to remove it
 - We cannot remove a degree title once we have offered places
- Arabic and Persian Convenor
 - Currently, in Arabic and Persian, the limitations in the school mean that there are two cultural modules a semester and this is capped. On top of the core modules we do not have much choice
- Dean of Learning and Teaching
 - This is not a decision that has come from us
- Associate Dean of Education (Arts and Divinity)
 - You can bring this up at the SSCC with the Director of Teaching. This is a school-specific school based decision
- Dean of Learning and Teaching
 - We do not tell staff/heads of school which modules they can or should offer
 - These are school-specific decisions; they are not made by us
 - Every Head of School is autonomous in deciding how to resource teaching
- Russian Convenor:
 - What happens if the Russian department wants to keep a degree program that the University wishes to cut
- The Proctor:
 - The Dean of Learning and Teaching has a discussion with the department to understand their reasoning
 - We then work to work out why they want that offering, both from a student and staff position and try to ensure that it is a proper experience

- For example, how do you make a joint honours degree truly joint? Rather than two separate subjects, you study at the same time
- There is a question however, of why the School would want to keep any of these degree titles. Why would this be strategically important to the school? Given it does not attract any students?
- School President of Art History
 - Do you have a number of degree pathways you are aiming to remove?
- The Proctor
 - No, but hopefully all the ones that do not attract applicants, enrolments or graduates
 - There is an institutional cost to all of these. They deliver nothing to students because nobody takes them, but they constrain our timetabling ability
- Associate Dean for Students (Arts and Divinity)
 - This is something that you might be able to help us with
 - What about the current joint degrees that we have, do you like and why do you like them? That would be very valuable feedback for us to get a sense of what students choose from specific joint degrees
 - We want to make sure this is a good experience for all students and it is not always clear why they are doing the degrees that they are
- School President of Psychology and Neuroscience:
 - Will it be communicated which degree path will not be offered?
 - Furthermore, students do not always come into university knowing they want to do a joint degree, and then they do when they get to the second year. The wide variety of available pathways can be very advantageous
- Dean of Learning and Teaching
 - The advisors would be able to see what's available and recommend on that basis
 - Sometimes, too much choice promotes indecisiveness, and we need to make sure we are offering joint honours with a clear rationale
 - Lots of students take the chance to take a wide variety of sub honours modules, but joint degrees need to make pedagogical sense
- School President of Physics
 - In regard to credit weighting changes, will there be an elimination of required over-crediting during some semesters?
 - What are you going to do about the Guinea pig years, or rather the in-between years? How are you going to bridge the gap?
- Dean of Learning and Teaching
 - It is too early to say how this will be rolled out
 - As mentioned before, we are not going to remove any content
 - We are just rearranging the content into different credit weightings
 - The ideal would be to introduce this to a first-year cohort – current students would all get what they are advertised. This would then be implemented over 4 years
- Associate Dean for Students (Science)
 - Some degrees will be harder than others to solve

- Physics has some very good joint honours degrees with maths
- There will be some other important joint honours students with that sort of synergy
- It will take a lot more effort
- In these cases, schools will have to move together

PresED:

- This can be an action from us to gather feedback on what joint honours students look for in their degrees

7. Increased Undergraduate Cohort Implications- 20 minutes

School President of IR: (Overview)

- Expanding on *Appendix Point 7*
- We had SSCC concerns regarding the increase in size in tutorials from 1st to 2nd years
- From the teaching perspective, it's hard for students to contribute equally and successfully with the increase in size
- Teaching staff are struggling with the marking and moderation of these students, given the size

Discussion:

- Dean of Learning and Teaching:
 - Thank you – that's very helpful feedback
 - It's important to note that how the Schools' budgets are distributed is down to the Head of School
 - The point regarding staff struggling with marking speaks to our suggestion of reforms over over-assessment
 - It may well be that Schools are still trying to moderate and assess on the basis of what they did when they had far fewer students
 - To some degree, this is a School issue and is down to how the school decides to distribute its resources
 - It may be that IR have not had time to work out how to handle their increased size
 - The unique problem for your School VoiceOver is that the IR degree is like gold dust, and that means it retains all of its students when they come in.
- School President of IR:
 - There are proposed solutions, such as having joint module coordinators but there are not enough graduate teachers
 - In regard to Launching of the online master's program in January, a lot of Professors feel this is very rushed, and they would rather this happened in September
- Associate Dean for Students (Arts and Divinity)
 - That is good to know about and that we can take forward together, but probably not in this forum
 - IR is big school that has a lot of classes. Having the large size is in part accommodating all the people who want to do IR

- What do we actually mean by flexibility? The school is doing as much as it can to deliver the education to as many people who want it. Flexibility can mean a number of different things
- School President of IR:
 - I would like to note that the School is doing a good job, and overall, we are happy with the experience
- The Proctor
 - We do measure staff-student ratios, and we do monitor them. If an online master's recruits, then we can hire more staff
- School President of Economics and Finance
 - We have also just had Teaching and SSCC committee meetings
 - From a teaching perspective, it is going fine
 - However, students can't seem to hear their lecture
 - The administration of class tests is becoming a lot harder – they have to be done within the time frame of the timetable. It currently takes a long time to do the set-up and take-down, so there are talks of reducing the length of the test
- Dean of Learning and Teaching
 - These are Schools that were hit with a massive increase of students, and its helpful to know how they are adjusting to that
 - Thanks for keeping us posted about this
- School President of Philosophy
 - We have had a cut in the student teaching budget. As a result, there was a reallocation of casual teaching budget
 - There has been a cut from 10 to 7 tutorials
 - We are talking to the DOT, and he is not happy with the decision and believes it should be based on the subject
- The Proctor
 - This links to our current work, we currently do not have a way of knowing how teaching/research balance is going
 - 40% of the time of staff should be spent teaching. At the moment, every School has a different way of calculating this and cutting the pie
 - We cannot yet know if they need more casual teaching budget or if there is something else going on
 - We need to make sure there is a successful allocation of resources
 - We currently do not have the ability to work out this out successfully
- School President of Philosophy:
 - Is the strain going to increase?
 - I understand the current issue is due to fewer postgrads and more undergrads, but some great transparency would be really useful
- The Proctor
 - We are managing the financial situation of our university very well
 - We have to demonstrate a surplus so we can create more space
 - If we do not have a surplus, we cannot borrow so easily, and we cannot build and expand for both our financial security and the student experience
- School President of Chemistry

- We see the financial strain in chemistry as well, where the lack of lab demonstrators means that resources run out quickly
- Dean of Teaching and Learning
 - It would be lovely to have more space and more resources. We cannot, at the moment, afford this
 - In Philosophy, I'm surprised to hear that they have taken that decision to reduce the number of tutorials
 - We do understand, but we do have to leave it to departments to decide how to allocate their resources
 - We are in a transition year where we have a bigger group of students and a financial strategy that requires careful management
 - If we take a comparative approach to other Scottish Universities, those classes of 12 or 15 in St Andrews are 30 in Glasgow or 20/25 in Edinburgh
- The Proctor
 - This will be passed up to the Principal's office as evidence of what the effect of financial restrictions is on students
 - What you are saying is going right to the top
- Faculty President (Science and Medicine)
 - There are two concerns. Firstly, should we be watering down our flagship courses? If the IR undergraduate is our most attractive course, why are we making it less attractive?
 - Secondly, we should compare ourselves to Oxbridge which we match in the League Tables, where the tutorial sizes are 1-3, rather than other universities nearby geographically
- Dean of Learning and Teaching
 - This is a good point
 - But I think some standard practices in Schools are not necessary according to the Assessment policy. For example, total double marking
 - Furthermore, we have never had a 2 or 3-person tutorial in comparison to Oxford/Cambridge. At the same time, we are way above Oxbridge in student satisfaction
 - I have heard arguments from postgraduate students who attended Oxbridge who say that tutorials of 1 or 2 are not actually good
- School President of Medicine
 - In the School of Medicine, the lecture theatre does not fit everyone anymore. That is because we expect students to fail out each year
 - I appreciate the transparency that you have provided
 - Are there any other reasons why we are trying to have an increased students?
- Dean of Learning and Teaching
 - We have a target of 10,000, and we don't try to grow our overall student numbers
 - The balance has shifted between PGT and undergraduate courses this year
 - Perhaps we could share more of the financial rationale behind these decisions
- School President of Medicine
 - It would be good to highlight this to students and I think it is well appreciated
- The Proctor

- Let's try and make this more transparent
- We can feed this back to the Principals Office
- PresED:
 - The Union is also trying to do this – increase its financial transparency
 - I would like to echo this as a good idea
- School President of Art History
 - There is a mutual benefit to this
 - At the moment, if you do not know why these financial decisions are happening, you are more likely to criticise the University
 - With more transparency, there would be a benefit to you with students' understanding of your decisions
- The Proctor
 - Because we work in this sector in this role, we assume everyone reads the same news that we do regarding universities, and they do not
- School President of Medicine
 - It would also be good to hear this from official channels
- School President of Physics
 - St Andrews is a special place to study. Do you have a cap for our maximum willingness to change things while still maintaining the integrity of our degree?
- The Proctor
 - We are nearly there with a few modules
 - We believed we would have to cap 4 modules, but instead, it has only been 2
- Associate Dean for Students (Arts and Divinity)
 - There is just not enough space around the town and we agree with the issues you have identified
- School President of Philosophy
 - The transparency has gone down really well with the philosophy student body from the DOT
 - Official communications would alleviate a lot of concerns
- The Proctor
 - Thank you, and thank you for allowing the university to use the Students' Association's spaces as teaching rooms
- PresED:
 - Moving forward, then, the University could be more transparent – we can take this forward
 - There is a difficult and continued balance to be found between student experience and finances

8. Any Other Competent Business- 5 minutes (President of Education)

9. Meeting Adjourned (President of Education)

APPENDIX

1. **Welcome and Introduction- 5 minutes** (President of Education)
2. **Fee Discrepancies for Russian Industry Placement- 20 minutes** (Russian Language Convenor)

The Global Office currently offers two options if students studying Russian wish to go abroad: Tallinn (Estonia) and Astana (Kazakhstan).

If students chose to undertake a year abroad in either of these destinations, they are expected to pay fees to the University of St Andrews and fees to RLUS (the language school). This is before any other additional costs - flights, accommodation etc which can also reach into the £1000s. There is Turing funding available, but this is offered to students with the assumption that you are not using it to cover course fees, and thus it should support the cost of flights etc.

“If you participate in an undergraduate Study Abroad programme you will be charged your normal tuition fee for a full academic year, whether you spend a full year abroad or one semester in St Andrews and one semester abroad.”

“If you participate in a 60 credit Modern Languages WIYA (Integrated Year Abroad) programme you will be charged half your normal tuition fee for the academic year.

- If you apply for tuition fees from the Student Loans Company (SLC) and are undertaking a **full integrated year abroad**, a half tuition fee loan is available from SLC.
- If you apply for tuition fees from the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) and are undertaking a **full integrated year abroad**, a half tuition fee grant is available from SAAS.
- If you intend to spend you the full academic year in Russia, you will be charged a half tuition fee by the University of St Andrews. You will also be liable for RLUS fees.”

“Russian language undergraduate studies (RLUS)

If you participate in an RLUS Programme for **one semester**, you will be charged half your normal fee for that semester and full fee for your other semester. You will also be liable for RLUS fees for the semester you spend in Estonia or Kazakhstan.”

For more information, please use the following link: <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/students/study-abroad/finance/tuition/>

The funding model referenced above demonstrates that students on a year in industry are expected to pay fees only to the University of St Andrews. However, there is a discrepancy for Russian students who must pay the same fees to the University of St Andrews alongside additional fees paid to the host institution.

The credit-based fee system works on the assumption that a students credits will count towards their degree. Whilst this remains true for Russian language students, the grades awarded during

their industry placement do not count towards their degree outcome- students must then repeat these credits elsewhere to ensure grades are awarded.

Currently, the Russian language placement year is inaccessible to all students. Through paying additional fees- not paid by any other language industry placements- students can essentially buy their way to future jobs and better grades. Although the Russian department set assessments with the assumption that students do not go abroad, students who do are greatly advantaged by this opportunity. Therefore, for students a year in industry placement creates a “pay to win” environment. going abroad will significantly increase your language skills. This was brought to the global office a few years ago by student representatives and the department but momentum was lost.

Benchmarking within the sector:

The Students’ Association has observed that the University of St Andrews is an outlier in sector-trends and expectations. From our research, we have concluded that our institution must reshape its funding model to support Russian language students as other institutions do.

Institution	Tuition Fees
Birmingham	Does not charge institutional tuition fees for the Russian Year Abroad; covers Russian language tuition fees abroad in full.
Edinburgh	Covers Russian-language tuition fees for Year Abroad language courses.
Glasgow	Doesn’t charge RUK students institutional tuition fees for the Year Abroad; has historically covered Russian-language tuition fees abroad, but these are going up, which is why establishing a student mobility exchange is now more attractive.
Nottingham	Charges 15% institutional tuition fees for the year abroad; covers tuition fees for all placements (but not accommodation or travel).
Oxford	Charges 15% institutional tuition fees for the Russian Year Abroad.
QMUL	Covers Russian-language tuition fees abroad up to the amount received in institutional YA tuition fees (15% of the normal fee for home students; 50% of the normal fee for international students).
UCL	Covers all Russian-language tuition fees abroad, but notes that costs are going up so will need to make adjustments at some point in the future.
St Andrews	Charges 50% institutional tuition fees for the semester or semesters Russian students spend abroad, but students may apply for RUK Tuition Fee scholarships; does not cover Russian language tuition fees abroad, but students may apply for Saints Abroad scholarships (although these are mainly linked to other subjects, not Modern Languages).

Results of student feedback:

At the beginning of Semester 1 AY2025/26, the Russian Language Convenor circulated a feedback form to their constituents. The results are conclusive: the placement year is inaccessible to all students, and that fee discrepancies cause a great barrier. Moreover, there is general feeling that the university does not enable student success through the existing funding model.

Were you aware that students studying abroad through RLUS or similar programmes are required to pay both St Andrews tuition fees and additional language school fees?	To what extent does this doublefee requirement affect your willingness or ability to study abroad?	If you chose not to study abroad (or are considering not doing so), how much did the cost of dual fees influence that decision?	Please share any thoughts, experiences, or suggestions regarding the cost of studying abroad (e.g., how it influenced your plans, what support would help, or ideas for change..)
Yes	It makes studying abroad less appealing		I just don't really understand why part of my fees towards the university cannot be redirected to the language program... It doe feel like I paid nine grand just to stay enrolled at St Andrews. but I was actually educated elsewhere so it doesn't make much sense...
No	It makes studying abroad less appealing	Dual fees strongly influenced my decision not to study abroad.	
Only recently aware	It makes studying abroad less appealing		
Yes	It has prevented me from applying	Dual fees were the main reason to	I had to fully find my own study abroad option for my year in kazakhstan because it was not financially possible for me to pay the RLUS fees at all.

		not study abroad.	
Only recently aware	It has prevented me from applying	Dual fees were the main reason to not study abroad.	
Yes	It creates serious financial concerns for me		Every other university studying at Astana did not have to pay anything for their course. If the university really cared about accessibility/affordability or ensuring students can become conversationally fluent in Russian then the St Andrews ought to pay for the RLUS tuition fee. My time in Kazakhstan was critical in improving my confidence and proficiency so I do not want students in the future to be deterred from studying abroad due to financial concerns
Yes	It makes studying abroad less appealing		
Yes	It creates serious financial concerns for me		I think it is unacceptable that out of all of the other UK universities sending students to RLUS, we were the only ones who had to pay the RLUS fees. Every other student only had to pay the small deposit/administration fee. St Andrews is supposed be one of the best universities to study languages at in the UK, so for it to be the worst for Russian students studying abroad does not seem to reflect the kind of institution St Andrews portrays itself to be. Secondly (this is more an issue for RLUS rather than the

			university), to expect 100% of the fees (over £2600 for me) in a lump sum payment from students during the summer is also a colossal barrier to entry. A payment plan of some kind would make the programme much more accessible. If RLUS is not willing to do this, perhaps the University could provide it, which would not constitute much a cost at all. Overall, however, I do believe that there should be some kind of bursary or scholarship funding available to students to be able to access a study abroad. I was lucky enough to be granted Turing funding and the Saints Abroad funding, however that did not help me to pay the tuition fees in July, as no funding had been given yet.
No	It creates serious financial concerns for me		Although the RLUS fees were taken off the total tuition for the year, SFE still only provides half loan for year abroad students' tuition fees, with the assumption that the home uni does not charge as much (as is the case for many other unis). It is annoying and doesn't seem fair that other universities pay for their students to do this course, but this university doesn't, even though half the uni is paying almost £30,000 a year for their tuition. Furthermore, the RLUS course in Estonia was not nearly worth the money it cost me, and that is a huge amount of money to go to waste.
No	It has prevented me from applying	It's the main reason I decided not to	
Only recently	It creates serious financial concerns for me		It affected my decision because I can't afford fees to two separate entities. Some support like scholarships or bursaries could help ease financial anxiety for other students that also can't afford to study abroad.

Expectations from student representatives:

A) A full waiver of the fees to either institution during this placement year.

B) The grades awarded on a placement year count towards students' final degree to justify the additional costs.

Discussion: Possible next steps to action the financial inaccessibility impact of this programme (all attendees).

3) Biology and Chemistry Placement Programmes- 10 minutes (School President of Biology)

Context:

An industrial placement is a mandatory component of any Integrated Masters programme within the School of Biology, with students unable to go for a year on placement changed onto the BSc track. Even for students in the School of Chemistry, where the 4000 level credits are taken at St Andrews, a placement is seen as an invaluable experience akin to 'a golden ticket' by both staff and students alike. Students unable to afford accommodation and other living costs alongside these tuition fees are therefore disadvantaged simply on the basis of their personal financial situation. For students with loans from either the SLC or SAAS, the respective agencies only cover 50% of the maximum fees, with students being left to cover the shortfall from their own pockets (for RUK students in AY 2023-24, this amounted to £4,625).

Many express frustration at the costs charged despite their loss of access to physical university infrastructure and services available only on campus while paying out of their savings, and some are taking up a part-time job in addition to their 40hr/week placement just to stay afloat. The University justifies the tuition fee cost of a placement through access to some services, 30 credits of online taught content for the School of Biology and site visitations by supervisors.

In the School of Chemistry, content is taught asynchronously with assessments spaced periodically throughout the year but there is no scheduled contact time; the School of Biology sets coursework to be completed remotely and provides only limited contact time over four hour-long tutorial sessions via Teams. Both Schools have significantly reduced contact time and students are, for the most part, left to work in isolation.

Other universities in the sector have recognised the accessibility issue that these fees pose to students without the income to cover the fees and are not charging full tuition fees in years where students are working in the private sector. Many of these placements are creditweighted equivalently to programmes at St Andrews and include distance learning modules as a part of the assessment, mirroring the provision here (see table below).

Benchmarking within the sector

Scottish Unis

Edinburgh (replaces final year project)
Glasgow (credited)
Aberdeen
Robert Gordon
Napier
Dundee

English Unis

Leeds (credited)
Manchester (credited)
Bristol (credited)
York (credited)
Newcastle
Reading
Sheffield (credited)
Oxford

*Oxford has up to a third of the fees returned – Students pay in full whilst on a placement and then can claim it back

Expectations from student representatives:

- A) A commitment from staff attendees that our concerns will be raised in all relevant discussions about the fee issues.**
- B) A working group will be established to discuss the ongoing fee troubles.**
 - a Students' Association membership: President of Education (chair), Science and Medicine Faculty President, School President of Biology, School President of Chemistry, and Head of Student Engagement.
 - b University faculty membership: Vice-Principal Education (Proctor), Director of Student Experience, Dean of Learning and Teaching, a representative from the Global Office, Assistant Vice-Principal (Strategy and Planning).
 - c The Education Executive seeks the universities advice on who best to invite to this working group.
 - d The working group will meet on an adhoc basis until all members are satisfied with how these fees work. Satisfaction will be measured on student feedback.

Discussion: Possible next steps to action the financial inaccessibility impact of this programme (all attendees).

4.Work Abroad Support- 20 minutes (School President of Modern Languages)

Context:

Students on specific degree programmes in Biology, Chemistry and Modern Languages may apply to undertake a work placement abroad as an integral part of their degree programme. Completing a work placement abroad is a good opportunity to gain work experience in another culture or language and to acquire valuable skill sets. The benefits of completing a work placement abroad extend beyond graduation- language skills are drastically enhanced, grades are improved, and career prospects are widened.

The guidance for students undertaking a Work Placement for credit inside/ outside the European Union states: "You are responsible for finding your own Work Placement. Each School has a Work Placement Coordinator who will be able to support this process. Modern Languages students may also wish to consult with the Careers Centre."

The university has a specific webpage dedicated to Jobs outside the UK and signposts students to "GoinGlobal". However, students would benefit from knowing established partnerships and reliable placement opportunities. This would be alongside our access to "GoinGlobal".

- Current Work Placements Policy (currently undergoing review and changes): <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/policy/academic-policies-learning-and-teachingwork-placements/work-placements.pdf>

- Guidance for students undertaking a Work Placement for credit inside the European Union: [https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/media/registry/csa/2022-23/guidance for students undertaking a work placement for credit inside the european union.pdf](https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/media/registry/csa/2022-23/guidance%20for%20students%20undertaking%20a%20work%20placement%20for%20credit%20inside%20the%20european%20union.pdf)
- Guidance for students undertaking a Work Placement for credit outside the European Union: [https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/media/registry/csa/202223/guidance for students undertaking a work placement for credit outside the european union.pdf](https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/media/registry/csa/202223/guidance%20for%20students%20undertaking%20a%20work%20placement%20for%20credit%20outside%20the%20european%20union.pdf)
- Guidance for finding jobs abroad: <https://www.standrews.ac.uk/careers/jobs/outside-the-uk/>

Student feedback:

The following points are summaries of informal qualitative feedback gathered by Language Convenors and School Presidents:

- There is consensus amongst students that if the university would like to offer this as a pathway to students, then they should help them to find a trustworthy placement.
- Students feel that for WEA there is no support to find a work placement even though it is sold to them as though they would receive support on their applications.
- Students have expressed that they often feel forgotten when they go looking for support.
- Students observe that faculty members are reluctant to provide placement recommendations because they would then be liable if something went wrong.
- There is no support for how to make a CVs or cover letters in other countries.

Expectations from student representatives:

- A) Global Office and Careers Centre work in partnership to make a comprehensive list of trusted student work placement options for students wishing to go abroad. This would be provided to all prospective outbound students to support them find a suitable placement.**
- B) Global Office to work with each language departments on bespoke CV and cover letter support to accommodate the expectations of different countries.**

Discussion: Possible next steps to action the student need for increased support with finding placements abroad (all attendees).

5. Visa Support for Outbound Students– 20 minutes (Spanish Language Convenor)

Context:

The University of St Andrews website provides rich visa information by country, summarising visa related information for students and staff traveling on university business to specific countries. However, student feedback has revealed a lack of awareness of these resources- even within our own circles, we struggled for some time to find the resources linked below. Whilst we do not wish to

alter the information provided by the Global Office, student representatives would appreciate greater dissemination of existing resources, and consideration into new practices.

Visa information by country: <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/study-abroad/travel/visas/> Passports and visas: <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/students/study-abroad/before-yougo/passport-visas/>

Results from student feedback:

The following points are summaries of informal qualitative feedback gathered by Language Convenors and School Presidents:

- Figuring out visas and support for studying abroad is an intense burden for students, the primary cause of this is information often scattered all over the place. There are different websites for each country's embassy, plus the Global Office website, and additional third-party programs. It is easy to get lost in the maze of requirements, and what's true for one student might not be for another.
- Another challenge is that visa rules can change without much warning. One day a student may think that they have got everything sorted, and the next, there's a new form or fee. This can be stressful, especially when also trying to keep up with classes and plan your move. Plus, not all departments offer the same level of support. Some have helpful advisors who walk you through every step, while others leave you more on your own.
- Language barriers further increase complexity. If a student is going to a country where they don't speak the language fluently, trying to understand complex legal documents is even harder. And sometimes, the fear of making a mistake can be paralysing. It's no wonder students feel overwhelmed when trying to navigate the visa process and find the right support for studying abroad.

Students' Association action:

The School President of Modern Languages and Language Convenors hosted a study abroad drop-in during Week 5. There were a lot of visa questions demonstrating student concern. The event was ultimately reviewed positively. However, the Students' Association accepts that student advice is limited, thus future events may be attended by a member of the Global Office to answer complex visa questions.

The French Department have established a mentoring scheme for students abroad. The department shares the information (email) of students who have been on the previous year abroad (with consent). Students view this as a good system. Student representatives across departments will begin pushing for their departments to adopt similar mentoring programmes, and we encourage all UAF attendees (staff and students) to support this initiative wherever possible in their roles.

Expectations from student representatives:

- A) Improved transparency of the visa information pages on the university website** - Link included in any 'congratulatory' emails, or pre-departure checklists.
 - a. All information made into physical leaflets for distribution at Global Office talks with students.

- b. The Global Office to ensure that department coordinators know of this webpage and have a general grasp of the information.

- B) Global Office to provide talks and Q&A visa sessions for students.**
- C) Global Office to increase the awareness of 1:1 visa information appointments.**
- D) UAF attendees to support the establishment of departmental mentoring programmes wherever possible in their roles.**

Discussion: Possible next steps to action the student need for increased visa application support (all attendees).

6.Credit and Resource Discrepancies– 20 minutes (Vice-Principal of Education (Proctor))

Context:

The Curriculum Delivery Review project will be worked on over the coming year(s). The intention is to help Schools reduce complexity and respond to the challenges posed to both staff and students by increasing workloads, especially where this relates to assessment and delivery of the curriculum.

The four elements of the project:

1. Undergraduate degree programme portfolio: this involves a proposal to withdraw the joint programmes that haven't attracted any applications, entrants, or graduating students for the last five years. This is intended as an enabler exercise- through removing programmes not in demand, the university can consider offering highly requested joint degree programmes.
2. Assessment: help Schools reduce the assessment where appropriate that currently takes place in the curriculum, whilst maintaining the quality of the educational standards and experience, to address concerns about workload from both staff and students. Alongside this piece of work, and to complement the workshops available to all staff we are also working on preparing further guidelines and support for staff and students on the question of the impact of AI on teaching and assessment.
3. Credit framework: reduce the complexity in the delivery of our curriculum and timetable by working towards a unified streamlined credit framework for undergraduate provision, as recently achieved at PGT level. Moving towards a more consistent credit framework will also reduce complexity for our students and address some of the problems that students and Advisers of Study currently face when combining different subjects.
4. AI solutions for accommodating the curriculum: working with colleagues from Planning, the School of Computer Science, Registry and Timetabling to utilise AI and Machine Learning to create a model which will look at our spaces, timetabling, student numbers and curriculum, with a goal to help us deliver the curriculum in a more efficient way.

Expectations from student representatives:

- A) Feedback has demonstrated to us that there is little student desire to standardise dissertation word count. However, there is consensus to standardise the time allowed with supervisors.**

- B) The standardisation of contact hours should not look to drastically decrease in schools, instead it should look to increase the contact hours wherever possible. C) Any further feedback provided by student representatives.**

Discussion: a discussion into student views on the Curriculum Delivery Review and its workstreams (all attendees).

7. Increased Undergraduate Cohort Implications- 20 minutes (School President of International Relations)

Context:

For the 2025/26 academic year, the University of St Andrews underrecruited students for postgraduate taught degrees. In response a decision was made to overrecruit undergraduate student numbers, balancing this out.

Student representatives are hearing consistent feedback about the negative implications of the increased undergraduate cohort. Whilst the cohort is limited to students intending to graduate in just a few schools, the university must acknowledge that students can study a range of subjects at the sub honours level, some students are likely to change their degree path, and most of our resources/ infrastructure are not school specific (eg. Main Library).

Results from student feedback:

The following points are summaries of informal qualitative feedback gathered by all academic representatives:

- **Class sizes:** At a sub honours level, students in most schools have the option to take 1000 or 2000 level modules. Our second-year students have noticed a difference in student-staff ratios, making it harder for professors to give personalised attention. There is a concern about receiving feedback on time- not just sub honours, but the potential backlog on honours feedback too.
- **Study and teaching spaces:** Increased enrolment puts a strain on all campus resources. Our libraries have become crowded, making it difficult to find a place to focus. Teaching spaces are in higher demand causing timetabling frustrations across the student body.
- **Exam Timetables:** Students have expressed dissatisfaction at this year's timetable. Many exams appear to be later in the diet and there is less time in-between most exams in comparison to previous years.

Ultimately, while increased undergraduate numbers can bring more diversity and funding to a university, they also pose significant challenges. Overcrowded classrooms, delayed feedback, and limited access to study and teaching spaces can all impact the quality of the student experience. It's a balancing act for universities to manage growth while maintaining a supportive and effective learning environment.

Expectations from student representatives:

- A) A commitment from all staff attendees that our concerns will be raised in relevant discussions about current and future student numbers.**

Discussion: a discussion into student feedback about undergraduate numbers (all attendees).