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Education Committee

St Andrews Students Association

**Meeting Date:** 13th March 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**: Phoebe Rickard (Science and Medicine Faculty President)

**Note Taker(s)**: Sharanya Gupta (Academic Representation Intern)

**ATTENDANCE**

**Attendees:** Alicia, Cole, Jeremy, Sara, Georgia, Erin, Fleur, Christie, Finn S, Hugo, Donald, Tom, Jimmin, Hayley, Phoebe, Hitanshi, Sharanya, Oliver

**Online**: Tasha

**Apologies**: Sydney, Emily

**Absences**:

**Guests**:

**AGENDA ITEMS:**

* Prayers for Emily’s final netball game!

**First Agenda Item:** **Internal University Communications** (IR SP – 15 mins)

* Overview:
	+ With regards to all student comms – incl student emails from SPs and admin, webpages – the events pages are unusable in their current form, e.g. It starts off with the past event unless you filter for upcoming. Spoke to Ros about this and don’t see quick fix. The alternative for my school is sending a lot of emails which often end up being unedited or not of high quality. Even if they have quality and admin does a good job, multiple reminders are sent before the day of the event. I think there is larger issue around the standard for messaging.
* Discussion:
	1. In your experience what are some best practices in student comms, what do you find most effective, and how can we distinguish between what goes in admin emails vs SP emails?
	+ **Maths SP:** Is this about the university’s events page or the Union’s?
	+ **IR SP:** the .st-andrews one
	+ **Maths SP:** there is just so much on there
	+ **DoEd:** We got some short-term ideas from PGR forum. The School of English got funding for PGR students to run a school newsletter advertising weekly events and school news. Perhaps that’s something your schools can explore.
	+ **Social Anthropology SP**: We have the same issue - the constant email blast, people reaching out to put irrelevant stuff in SP emails, and then the admin team having to repeat that information.
	+ **Classics SP**: How much of what you receive do you put in your email?
	+ **Sci/Med FP**: I also get a lot of jargon. I suggest put in what you want.
	+ **DoEd**: When y’all were students (before being SPs), what emails did you really read?
	+ **Physics SP**: Mainly academic alerts.
	+ **G&SD SP**: If it was from a class.
	+ **Maths SP**: I’ll skim everything generally.
	+ **Medicine SP**: I was most likely to read the admin emails. In our school, we would rather send news in repetitive emails since some read admin email some read SP.
	+ **Sci/Med SP**: I would read the Sabb ones a lot.
	+ **Comp Lit LC**: Even within Modern Languages, we get a lot of irrelevant emails and at some point, you just stop reading them.
	+ **Spanish LC**: Getting impersonal emails also discourages engagement.
	+ **Psych SP**: I don’t tend to read emails that have a ton of memo.
	+ **Sci/Med FP**: Do you think many students don’t read emails? [SPs respond yes in unison]. Do you think the newsletter would be worth it?
	+ **Medicine SP**: If the newsletter will be sent as an email, people still won’t read it.
	+ **Maths SP**: My DoT tends to discuss his important updates during his lecture as well since students don’t read emails.
	+ **DoEd**: Apparently, we aren’t going for lectures either [re: UAF].

**Second Agenda Item:** **Library Open Times** (DoEd – 10 mins)

* Overview:
	+ We got an email from Emma Wisher about the library’s opening times [context: the lib has been closing early on the weekends since late last semester due to staff shortage; read email out loud.]
	+ They say they haven’t received any negative feedback about the library closing early [*SPs laugh in unison*].
* Discussion:
	1. Let’s start with the negative feedback you all received.
	+ **Psych SP:** Did they receive positive feedback?
	+ **Medicine SP:** I don’t know what feedback they received but the medics weren’t happy with it. Is there any way they can recruit part time staff?
	+ **Sci/Med FP:** there was a job posting that they did hire for, but they haven’t hired anyone eels since so could be a budgeting issue.
	+ **DoEd:** how many of you have heard negative feedback [show of hands: 3]
	+ **Spanish SP:** What month is the email talking about – April?
	+ **DoEd:** The library has been closing at 10pm on the weekends since November. and they say they haven’t received negative feedback but I’m not sure how they’ve sought this feedback, if at all.
	+ **Medicine SP:** People in our schoolwork more on the weekends and a lot of medics couldn’t use the library last year. Some people didn’t see the notification and had their belongings locked in after 10pm when they left to get food. If they are continuing with these timings, there should be a notification on what the matter is and suggest a way of moving forward.
	+ **DoEd:** They can open until 2am on the 22nd/23rd March weekend but they’ll have to close at 10pm again for 2 weeks after and then go back to 2am after. They are worried about messaging and they know that it’s a pinch point between deadlines, dissertation submissions, etc. Is it worth going through mixed messaging?
	+ **IR SP:** I’d love to see some communication on when it’s returning to normal hours. However, for this in-between period, instead of sending a notification, what if they just don’t shut the lib? This way you don’t run the risk of miscommunication and people in the library can just stay there.
	+ **Georgia:** people won’t necessarily read their emails in detail.
	+ **Biology SP:** Could we just have a sign outside the library?
	+ **Medicine SP:** They have a sign, but it’s not very visible.
	+ **French LC:** Can’t they just rearrange the roster, for the next week? [clarify]
	+ **DoEd:** I agree mixed messaging is bad, but what’s more alarming is that they are under the impression that there is no negative feedback.
	+ **Psych SP:** What other university spaces are open longer than the library?
	+ **DoEd:** Butts Wynd and computer room in St Mary’s
	+ **Comp Sc SP:** and the comp sc. building with free coffee.
	+

**Third Agenda Item:** **TQER Reflections** (DoEd – 5 mins)

* Overview:
	+ Some of y’all attended the forum. What was discussed?
* Discussion:
	+ **Chemistry SP:** Basically, how did we come to be SPs? Placement fee came up, and how we feel about our role, if we’re effective, if the university listens.
	+ **Cole:** We talked about the vibe between UG and PG students. They touched on the lack of community for commuters, federalization between schools and universities, need for more support and accessibility, ASC, Student Support on placement**.**
	+ **DoEd:** Did timetables come up? When the Review team had a meeting with Frank (AVP Dean of Learning and Teaching) and I, they asked when the timetables were released to students?
	+ **Chemistry SP:** It came up as a positive step university is currently taking and we discussed provisional timetables.
	+ **Medicine SP:** Advising came up.
	+ **Maths SP**: Issues with Sub Honours advising was also discussed. For Joint Honours Sub Honours you only get someone from one of the schools. It was right at the end as well.
	+ **DoEd:** There will be another one in 6 weeks and then a recommendation in May
	+ **Medicine SP**: They were asking about AI and support students receive when they’re abroad. Mostly just overall student life and our roles.
	+ **IR SP:** They also asked about the Transition Toolkit.

**Fourth Agenda Item:** **UAF Reflections** (DoEd – 5 mins)

* Overview:
	+ Last to last UAF, we discussed academic advising. Did any of you do any feedbacking on that? I heard from Philosophy[show of hands: 1- French LC]
	+ Other talking points included timetabling and lecture capture. Is there anything anyone wants to raise?
* Discussion:
	+ **Chemistry SP:** The university’s online modules have human generated captions unless they are on Panopto.
	+ **DoEd:** In terms of timetabling, not sure if y’all have had a chance to look at the software Moira was talking about. Let me know if you have feedback, so I can email Moira about recommended improvements.

**Fifth Agenda Item:** **Elections** (DoEd – 5 mins)

* Overview:
	+ Someone might be stepping into your shoes soon

* Discussion:
	1. How’s everyone feeling about the transition, thoughts, concerns, queries?
	+ **Comp Sc SP:** Will we get email communications drafts?
	+ **DoEd**: Yes, but I suggest doing it yourself anyway.
	+ French LC: Do we have to approve the candidates?
	+ **DoEd**: That’s done by the election team.
	+ **Medicine SP**: On the portal, instead of manifesto, there is just a 250-word statement.
	+ **DoEd**: Not all candidates have to submit manifestos, to nominate yourself you just put in the 250 words.
	+ **French LC:** Last year, it was helpful to know if someone else was running for that role, do we still get backend access.
	+ **DoEd:** I will ask if we can grant backend access.
	+ **French LC:** It would be helpful to know so we can push the role. We did have it last year during Class Rep elections.
	+ **Physics SP:** Not sure if that was just on the election page or backend access though.
	+ **French LC:** They tell you which positions aren’t nominates or is there any way of knowing?
	+ **DoEd**: They will do that just not every day cause the nomination period is longer. I don’t think backend access would be granted because that would give incumbent SPs an unfair advantage.

**Sixth Agenda Item:** **Teaching Awards** (DoEd – 2 mins)

* Overview:
	+ Nominations close on the 25th of this month, groups of class reps and SPs will shortlist the winners and then EduExec will select. We will need 5-6 presidents. Those who help shortlist get invited to the ceremony.
* Discussion:
	1. Any volunteers?
	+ **Maths SP:** What does the workload look like?
	+ **DoEd:** Each SP volunteer will be assigned 1-2 categories. You then have a team of CRs you work with.
	+ **Maths SP:** Will I just be overseeing it?
	+ **DoEd:** You will also have a certain level of input in the decision making. You don’t have to commit yet.
	+ **Volunteers:** G&SD SP, Med SP, French LC, IR SP, Chemistry SP, Music SP

**Seventh Agenda Item:** **Academic Representation Governance** (DoEd – 10 mins)

* Overview:
	+ It was raised previously at EduCom that currently, the role of CR is vague, potentially with the new MEQ system that might also change.
	+ At this stage, we’re looking for feedback that we can relay to the next cohort.
* Discussion:
	1. What do you think CRs do, what they should do, how has your experience been?
	+ **Classics SP:** They don’t do that much. I asked them to send out a survey - half didn’t, other half didn’t bring anything useful to the table. They sit on meetings they don’t want to go to. They are most useful, as a selection of students who come to meetings and complain.
	+ **G&SD SP:** My class reps don’t do anything unless it is self-serving. Getting them to go to anything is hard but they are very sweet and enthusiastic.
	+ **Comp Sc SP:** My reps are pretty good actually. They cover inputs from their entire year’s cohort. I only go for first year meetings cause the man in-charge is terrifying. They collect all the mid-semester feedback, run python scripts, and respond to all my emails.
	+ **DoEd:** Can you tell what motivates them to do that much work?
	+ **Comp Sc SP:** In our school, it’s kind of just expected; it’s what I did as a CR and it’s what I expect from my reps. The CS lot is just quite dedicated.
	+ **Biology SP:** Some of my class reps just don’t know what they’re doing. Most of mine are good, one of them is taking over from me. They don’t really come to me with issues unless there is something specific that affects them. One of my issues is that at teaching committees, I’m the only student that the staff talks to about big decision they are making. I know that it’s my job, but it doesn’t feel right to be the only student being consulted on big changes, and I think reps should be involved.
	+ **Physics SP:** Their motivation level depends on their environment. Physics reps are quite involved, if CRs aren’t pro-active they won’t do much. My reps create surveys, compile feedback docs, come to SSCC, so I think it comes down to how involved people are in the school.
	+ **Maths SP:** We should keep as many as we can, so we have representation within the school. A lot of them just aren’t that involved. They make a lot of promises during election period that they don’t follow through with.
	+ **Medicine SP:** The main problem I see, (1) My class reps aren’t that bad; they do things I tell them to do. However, for me, that’s a baseline so I want them to go beyond the bare minimum and they don’t do that. It does depend on how pro-active they are but it’s not like I can delegate my responsibilities to them. In the SP training, there needs to be something about delegation so we can give them more structured work and then take on more projects on our own.
	+ **Spanish SP:** It can be a problem that goes both ways. You have one rep who does lots of things, and then others who don’t. I make my reps meet me in person and I think that helps. Stating your expectations at the beginning of the year works. I’ve seen that if you give them too many things, it can create more work for you.
	+ **Comp Sc SP:** Our staff would email their respective reps, cause then they have a direct relationship with the lecturers so that helps.
	+ **Comp Lit LC:** My reps do nothing. Many of them want to do a lot when they’re elected but they don’t necessarily know how to. We need to empower them to run things independently.
	+ **Italian LC:** Some of my reps want to do a lot of events. I have arranged them over the year, but then my reps don’t necessarily show up. I find that they don’t come to the things that they want to do.
	+ **IR SP:** It’s a low bar for what CRs should do, but a high ceiling for what they can do. I do try to encourage them at the beginning of the year to pursue their projects. I don’t mind the survey being the SP’s thing, I think it creates more buy-in from the staff.
	+ **Psych SP:** In my school, the best part about having CRs is that they are the people for their cohort, and they collect a lot of informal feedback. However, it’s hard for lecturers to take that data seriously cause it’s not in a survey format.
	+ **DoEd:** We can put this back into training, how to turn that informal feedback into formal feedback.
	+ **French LC:** Last year, I had my reps make individual surveys for each cohort, but the quality of the surveys varied. I would’ve rather had consistencies. I got them to talk to module coordinators, but I was happy to organise the form. We just get them to meet regularly and independently. They just have to keep me in the loop and meet the module co-ordinator 3-4 times a semester.
	+ **Social Anthro SP:** We struggle with the visibility of reps. All concerns come directly to me and reps don’t get contacted. I’ve told them to put themselves out there. My reps aren’t at the CS level, but they aren’t useless. They are more like an ideas team, but I’ll have to execute them. I also don’t trust most of them to go on their own and do things.
	+ **DoEd:** A lot of school specific issues come to me. Delegation and visibility are good themes to tackle.

**Eight Agenda Item:** **AOCB** (General - 5 mins)

* Overview:
	+ **DoEd**: on the two awards, for OUA, we’re low on Arts/Div Class Rep nominations, so please nominate your reps; nominations close tomorrow night. As for Teaching awards, please push for more nominations.
	+ **Comp Sc SP**: Do other schools have personal emails for their reps? [all other SPs: that’s wild.]
	+ **Sci/Med FP**: All the other schools have it to personal accounts. A lot of inactive reps won’t respond to emails whether it’s a personal account or official.
	+ **DoEd**: We found out that reps get access to email lists (at PG level), and it would be good to standardize stuff like that across UG and PG reps

**Observers**

**Resources Requested**