****

Undergraduate Academic Forum

St Andrews Students Association

**Meeting Date:** 21st (Twenty First) November (17:00 – 19:00)

Large Rehearsal Room (Student Union Building)

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Meeting called by**: Education Committee

**Type of Meeting**: Undergraduate Academic Forum

**Chair**: Hitanshi Badani (Director of Education)

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

**ATTENDANCE**

**Attendees:**

Hitanshi Badani *(Director of Education)*, Emily Bannister *(Arts/Div Faculty President)*, Phoebe Rickards *(Sci/Med Faculty President)*, Oliver Righton *(Chemistry School President)*, Alicia Barnes (*Biology School President*), Georgia Chiswick *(Comp Sc School President)*, Vic Chua *(Divinity School President)*, Sara Whiteman *(Geography School President)*, Ariane O’Rourke *(Economics and Finance School President)*, Millie Chew *(Film Studies)*, Erin Hugo *(Comp Lit Language Convenor)*, Paul Chester *(German Language Convenor)*, Kiera Martin *(Modern Lang School President)*, Tasha Currie *(Music School President)*, Tom Rippon *(French Language Convenor)*, Olivia Griffin *(Philosophy School President)*, Hugo Decitre *(Physics School President)*, Hayley Stone *(Psychology School President)*, Finn Salisbury *(Social Anthropology School President)*, Sharanya Gupta *(Academic Representation Intern)*, Finn Bender *(Art History School President)*, Nick Townsend *(History School President)*, Donald Campbell *(Maths School President)*, Christie Forshaw *(Spanish Language Convenor)*, Stephanie Fotso *(Chinese Language Convenor)*, Sydney Ash *(Russian Language Convenor)*, Fleur Stevenson *(Italian Language Convenor)*

**Online**:

**Apologies**:

Anisha Minocha *(English School President*), Jeremy Limbert *(Classics School President)*, Josephine Grzeskowiak-Shipp *(Earth and Environment Science)*, Cole Schubert *(International Relations School President)*, Associate Dean Students (Science), Associate Dean Education (Science).

**Absences**:

Sebastien Chessé *(Management School President)*, Jimmin Lim *(Medicine School President)*, Shona McCallum *(Arabic and Persian Language Convenor)*,

**Guests**: Claire Peddie *(Proctor)*, Frank Muller *(AVP Dean of Learning and Teaching)*, Ros Claase *(Director of Student Experience)*, Shiona Chillas (*Associate Dean Students, Arts/Div)*, Lenia Kouneni (*Associate Dean Education Arts/Div)*, Emma Wisher (*Assistant Director (Academic Engagement and Student Experience)* *and Deputy Director of the Library*), Shruti Narayanswamy (*Head of Entrepreneurial Education)* Chase Greenfield *(Academic Representation Coordinator*), Iain Cupples (*Students’ Association Human Resources Manager)*, Thomas Carey *(Employability Officer)*, Molly Reade *(DSN Education Rep),* Celina Chen *(BSN Edu Rep),* Lola Chirico *(Student Health Officer)*

**MINUTES:**

# Welcome

* **Director of Education**: Welcomed the group to the Forum and requested that everyone introduce themselves as they speak for the first time. All attendees have received a background document in addition to the agenda regarding each topic that will be discussed today.

# Agenda item one: Curriculum Development (25 minutes)

## Reviewing Workload and Credit Weightage

* Overview
	+ **Director of Education**: Based on Education Committee (EduCom) discussions, module credits are not well weighted according to the hours required for the module; students are feeling overworked because of this imbalance in many instances. We’re trying to understand where this imbalance is coming from and how credit weightages are assigned.
	+ **Social Anthropology School President**: We received this sentiment from students especially in the research-based dissertation which is a 30-credit module. Students start working on it in early January, they conduct their research over summer, and then write out the dissertation over semester 1.
	+ **Geography and Sustainable Development School President**: We have to take three 10-credit modules to do a dissertation which causes students to over-credit. It results in 100 hours of work per module – the workload is too much for students and it’s also a wellbeing issue.
* Discussion
	1. How do staff calculate and balance the weightage of modules and the number of hours spent per module?
	+ **AVP Dean of Learning and Teaching**: The rule is that 1 credit = 10 hours of work based on the Scottish framework. This is tricky because people spend different amount of time for different things. This is a rough guide, so we use external measures such as setting the exams and coursework to an appropriate length. This should be consistent. 5000 words of history writing is different from philosophy or economics, so it’s very tricky to stick to that measure in practice. During the Geography and Sustainable Development URLT, we found modules in the same school which had similar formats, but the consensus was that one just takes more time. There is something wrong there which needs to be addressed so that module choices are equitable. Now, some students will spend more than the required hours set out for the module in pursuit of very good grades; that’s the student’s choice, and so is putting in work throughout the summer.
	+ **Art History School President**: (addressing School Presidents) Do you find that in terms of workload intensity, is it seen more during Subhonours or Honours? We’ve seen this more in Subhonours perhaps cause they’re taking modules across different schools with different module policies.
	+ **Director of Education**: This is an issue of assessment and coursework. Some modules feel over-assessed, and students prefer to work on coursework rather than engaging with the module.
	+ **Psychology School President**: Our modules don’t focus too much on coursework, so there is a balance there. Students do still tend to focus more on coursework, choosing to conduct independent study outside of class. Lectures are more relevant for end of semester exams rather than coursework. So, if students want to focus on coursework, lectures are the first to go as coursework doesn’t really measure what we learn in class.
	+ **Proctor**: People learn through assessments and it’s part of the curriculum. Lectures are one way to learn, so it wouldn’t be helpful for coursework and other forms of assessment to be a simple reiteration of what has been said in the lectures. A diversified assessment portfolio is actually something we’ve been trying to achieve.
	+ **Psychology School President**: Sometimes coursework is too far-fetched. For instance, in my first year, I took a module (Bio 1001) where I expected to write on Alzheimer’s disease – something that wasn’t covered at all, and as a first-time biology student, I would have no way of understanding. Similarly, a lot of the coursework is very far from the lectures.
	+ **Director of Education**: The intended learning outcomes are not necessarily being spelled out. Students are doing coursework because they’ve been told to but they don’t necessarily know how that’s contributing to the module’s learning outcomes. Has anyone had any different experiences?
	+ **Economics and Finance School President**: In Economics and Finance modules there is more engagement with content because assessments are spaced out. You can’t miss a single thing as everything that lectures cover is so important. IR coursework, on the other hand, is based on 1 week out of the entire semester. You can choose which week to write on from the beginning, so students are more likely to attend the lecture that is relevant to their coursework and skip the others.
	+ **Computer Science School President:** On the independent learning side, for every 15-credit module, we’re told to spend 3hrs on independent work per week but in reality, they actually take 12hrs a week. Telling students that 3hrs per week is sufficient is just not a good standard to set because it’s not realistic.
	+ **Associate Dean Students (Arts/ Div):** How many hours are students working every week?
	+ **Sci/Med Faculty President**: Personally, I work 9-5 including weekends, and this is just for independent study.
	+ **Art History School President:** I study 8 hours daily, which is 40hrs per week in addition to a part time job.
	+ **AVP Dean of Learning and Teaching**: So, if there’s coursework that assesses topics that aren’t covered by lectures, that’s bad cause the content must be linked. But say you have 12hrs of contact per week, then there is tension if students were to attend lectures that are assessment related. At the same time too much assessment causes wellbeing issues so we’re in a bit of a bind. We need to get to a point that learning takes place in areas that are unassessed.
	+ **Director of Education**: It’s not just about if students are engaging with assessed teaching hours, it’s more about how it’s being assessed. If you can pass the module by doing just one week worth of work, then that’s probably an assessment problem. A balance has to be struck between over-assessment and underassessment.
	+ **Sci/Med Faculty President**: With weightage, in my personal experience in my second year, I took 9 modules whose credits were lower, and it still felt like doing a 20-credit module. I know other students who were doing the same and I was just 10 credits over. It ends up being a lot of work and stress. With daily lectures and sometimes a part time job you really can’t get anything done.
	+ **AVP Dean of Learning and Teaching**: were these 9 modules over a semester or year?
	+ **Sci/Med Faculty President**: Over the year, and I was told that time spent will go down, but it actually went up.
	+ **Proctor:** The Quality Assurance Agency expects us to deliver a full work week worth of coursework. It is difficult for students that have to take a part time job on top of a full-time degree. However, we’re still required to set you enough work so that you have to spend a full 35-40hrs per week. In reviews, they look at our credits and assessment to make sure that we are delivering value for money in terms of assessment and work. This is a very important part of what we have to offer.
	+ **Proctor**: If two 15 credits modules significantly differ from 30 credits modules, then we can talk to DoTs about this at our next meeting with them. All modules go through a curriculum approval group and could look at making sure that the proportions are accurate.
	+ **Associate Dean Education (Arts/Div)**: Workload, prep for assessment, all these hours are published in the module catalogue. If your experience doesn’t match up, then it’s an issue.
	+ **AVP Dean of Learning and Teaching**: Some of these things are difficult - E.g. Spatial GIS (Geography and Sustainable Development) - where the work just can’t be done in the time suggested for it. We raise these issues with DoTs, talk to social teams, and help you push for modifications on individual modules.
	+ **Art History School President**: Do you think the difficulty of coursework has risen? More Honours students found that coursework was positively correlated with their contact hours. Whereas this becomes an issue in Subhonours because students are taking up various modules to meet prerequisites.
	+ **Computer Science School President**: Subhonours to Honours we go from 2- 30 credit modules to 4- 15 credit modules, and in terms of time, we go from 10-15hrs per week to 35-40hrs. it should technically be the same amount of time even if the coursework is harder.
	+ **Director of Education:** We need more proactive checks and balance on module proposals. Lecturers should be actively looking at if the hours they’ve suggested equal to the average amount of time students are putting in. If there is a large discrepancy, then this is something they should look into.

## Strategic Input\*

* Agenda item skipped due to time constraints

# Student Academic Support (30 minutes)

## Transitional Support

* Overview**:**
	+ **Director of Education:** Building on the last point on second to third year transition, we’ve discussed transition from first to second year and then second to third year. There is not a lot of support that spells out how expectations as well as academic time constraints will change. We’re looking for a universal way to signpost students - one way was including it in handbook.
* Discussion:
	+ **Proctor:** How many people have done the Transitions Toolkit? We found out that only 590 students engaged with transitions toolkit this year. These are toolkits by the International Education and Lifelong Learning Institute (IELLI) to help students transition into Honours. There is also one for transition into PG studies. Those who used it gave positive feedback. Could this issue perhaps be attributed to a lack of awareness?
	+ **Director of Education:** I think there is, that’s why we mentioned the student handbook. This toolkit isn’t specifically mentioned in handbooks.
	+ **Psychology School President:** Is this toolkit online? (Yes). A lot of students would appreciate something in-person.
	+ **Associate Dean Education (Arts/Div):** What kind of support would then be useful?
	+ **Chemistry School President:** The toolkit provided is brilliant. What we would appreciate is knowing what’s the aim of teaching, and what will be provided. Honours and Subhonours teaching and learning is very different. Could we perhaps have talks to help students to understand what to expect between differences in teaching?
	+ **Associate Dean Education (Arts/Div):** Yes, we have those, but how so we make it more efficient?
	+ **Chemistry School President:** We’d like to see what teaching style the school will be going for. Something that explicitly states that they will not teach everything. Talks like intro lectures and Honours briefing are good for learning about modules but we’d also like to know how teaching will be done differently.
	+ **Philosophy School President:** If schools or DoTs could arrange a way to access a PowerPoint that outlines how essays are different from Subhonours to Honours? I’m glad that we have those for Philosophy.
	+ **Employability Officer:** I take International Relations and Economics, and I attended both of their transition lectures. Professors often use terms which they know for themselves but for us they’re vague (such as a First-scoring essay needing to be “original”). Some clarity would be helpful about what the step up from 2:1 to a First looks like (for example, this isn’t always clear in marking rubrics). It could be different with different lecturers, and I appreciate that’s an aspect.
	+ **Arts/ Div Faculty President:** There is a lack of clarity and communication. Staff at the 3000-level should be encouraged to circulate this “welcome to Honours” guide at the start of the module.
	+ **Psychology School President:** I agree with the communication issue. Our reps found that lecturers thought that info about the talks they scheduled would be circulated by the university (for orientation). I didn’t even realise there was one till I was invited to talk at it. It would be helpful to have this info in advance.
	+ **Associate Dean Education (Arts/Div):** Does this not show up in your timetable?
	+ **Psychology School President:** No. People aren’t even matriculated at that point, so they probably won’t have updated timetables.
	+ **Maths School President:** The info about the talk would be on the orientation app but not on the MySaint timetable.
	+ **Sci/Med Faculty President:** The MySaint timetables are incorrect – they often show the wrong location and time.
	+ **Geography and Sustainable Development:** The second half of our intro lecture wasn’t publicized, it had been split up between different lecturers to look at assessments which got high marks and those that got low marks.
	+ **Russian Language Convenor:** The transition is tough. Especially for study abroad students and heritage students. Last year, I sent random third years from different tracks into second year lectures and they did a brief Q&A. It was informal and discussed how the transition is.
	+ **Economics and Finance School President:** The orientation week talks aren’t allowed to be on timetabling. This is because you aren’t allowed to have anything non-academic during that week. The messaging system simply won’t work.
	+ **Associate Dean Students (Arts/ Div):** we can definitely follow up on that and make sure intro lectures are published.
	+ **Director of Student Experience:** There are great resources for transition support, people just don’t know they are there. This is easier to resolve whether that’s orientation planning, or peer-to-peer support. We can check with lecturers if it’s a tech issues because the resources do exist. It’s also good to know that there is a desire for in-person resources, and there are practical action points we can take up with the Director of Education.

## Technological Failures

* **Overview**
	+ **Sci/Med Faculty President:** I’ve been working on an IT project after the Medicine School President raised concerns about tech failures in the classroom. We did a survey with School Presidents and found that most people have been affected by it. After speaking to IT, we further found out that most lecture spaces are in the process of an update. There is also the case of staff not knowing how to use resources and that staff are not engaging with training cause it’s not mandatory. We would like to see lecturers being encouraged to engage with this. They also haven’t been engaging with emergency lines or reporting systems. If staff used these systems correctly, this IT issue would not be as prevalent. Staff also believe that training is only available at the start of the year, but in reality, sessions are available all year round.
	+ **Sci/Med Faculty President:** This is turning into a regular issue where Panopto is not recording lectures causing issues for disabled, commuting students and other groups..
	+ **AVP Dean of Learning and Teaching:** Staff say that IT services never show up, whereas IT says staff never call. IT has had to start putting things into boxes that are “academic” proof to ensure that staff doesn’t go around pulling cables – this is indeed a disappointing issue.
	+ **Sci/Med Faculty President:** We got the same story when we spoke to Pauline from IT services – staff don’t file any reports with IT but then we hear about so many IT failures from students and staff.
	+ **AVP Dean of Learning and Teaching:** Chances are that students in the hall probably have better skills than lecturers in such issues, so perhaps they can help the lecturers.
	+ **Director of Education:** This project started as a request from staff to have an IT rep (within the Class Rep system) to help them with IT issues. This is not appropriate to have students taking time out of their studies to undertake a staff job.
	+ **AVP Dean of Learning and Teaching:** We do have IT technicians waiting for staff to reach out with issues.
	+ **Director of Education:** At the Disability Forum, we got some feedback that in Younger Hall, staff said that the phones they used to get in touch with IT services have been removed, so we don’t know where the cause of this breakdown begins.
	+ **Maths School President:** Perhaps staff aren’t using phones to call IT because they typically have a lecture to teach.
	+ **Sci/Med Faculty President:** That’s why we think staff needs to be encouraged to learn from the services IT already offers. Our goal was just to highlight that this is becoming a big issue and is very disruptive to the student learning experience.
	+ **Education Rep (Disabled Students’ Network):** Given how difficult it is to fix the actual recordings not working, what can be done in lieu of when these issues do happen? Can slides be provided so that students who couldn’t attend still have something to rely on for catching up?
	+ **AVP Dean of Learning and Teaching:** All the lecture recordings until last year were deleted automatically. We’ve changed that so now you must opt in to delete outdated content – so those recordings should be available. That’s obviously still not good enough and these failures should be minimized. Lecture notes and slides should be provided and please don’t be coy about giving us names. We’re happy to have a conversation with whoever you signal us to while maintaining anonymity.
	+ **Proctor:** If we get specific names of modules where this is a problem, it’ll help us focus and our efforts can add a halo effect. Some effort absolutely has to be made to replace IT failures and if it’s regular – that is unacceptable.

## Provisional Timetables

* Overview:
	+ **Director of Education:** This topic is based on EduCom feedback but also emails I received even before reps were elected. Essentially, students don’t receive personal timetables until week one, which is extremely inconvenient for those working part-time, commuting, or anyone who needs to have an idea of what their week looks like. Speaking to Timetabling, I’ve found lecture location tends to change based on class sizes but timings don’t change that frequently. If we provide provisional timetables based on historical timings saying (in bold) that these are subject to change, students will have at least a vague idea of what their schedule will look like, which will do more good than bad.
* Discussion:
	+ **Maths School President:** We have timetables up to three years in advance.
	+ **Proctor:** How do they do put these timetables out with certainty?
	+ **Maths School President:** they don’t indicate spaces -just timings- and it helps students decide over the summer and settle in early.
	+ **AVP Dean of Learning and Teaching:** When would it be helpful to release these provisional timetables?
	+ **Director of Education:** As early as possible, which shouldn’t be an issue because it is historical data based on previous year’s timings.
	+ **Associate Dean Education (Arts/Div):** In week 0, during advising, we can talk to Timetabling. When I was DoT, we made our timetable in May, but it had to be approved by the central team who don’t get back to us until early August. From the school’s perspective, I don’t see why it shouldn’t go out to you as well, so long as it is labelled as provisional.
	+ **Director of Education:** Ideally, there could be an individual timetable but if that’s impossible it would be good to have something similar to what Math has just so that students have an idea of what their week could look like early on.
	+ **Maths School President:** It really helps with scheduling and avoiding timetable clashes and has proven to be very useful in our school.
	+ **Associate Dean Education (Arts/Div):** In some schools, timetables won’t be the same cause the modules may vary. In the sense that if you have a module and it runs every year that doesn’t necessarily mean that it’ll be the same for every year.
	+ **Associate Dean Students (Arts/ Div):** There is also a concern of if/when class sizes get bigger.
	+ **Maths School President:** Are you saying it would be impossible for Subhonours modules?
	+ **Associate Dean Education (Arts/Div):** No, Subhonours is fine, for Honours it might vary depending on the year.
	+ **AVP Dean of Learning and Teaching:** What we can do is show provisional timetables, with a massive warning that they are subject to change.
	+ **Associate Dean Students (Arts/ Div):** Although, it is better to choose your modules based on your interest rather than timings.
	+ **Director of Education:** For Joint Honours students, there are lots of timetable clashes which would be helpful to avoid.
	+ **Psychology School President:** It could be included on the module catalogue, since historical data helps plan months in advance and other schools typically have “to be confirmed” in the place of timetabling
	+ **Associate Dean Education (Arts/Div):** Cataloguing happens in Feb/March but timetabling is confirmed later in August so most modules will have TBD in that space.
	+ **Psychology School President:** Even August would be a good time to have this info out
	+ **Italian Language Convenor:** Our department doesn’t have modules confirmed till the last minute because they don’t know which lecturer is taking up which module which is why we have trouble with timetables. This is something I discussed with my DoT, and it would just be for checking for clashes between different languages.
	+ **Art History School President:** Specifically for students with jobs, it’s frustrating to set up a work schedule without having access to what their class schedule looks like. These provisional timetables would be important for carers and commuters even if the timetable changes last minute.
	+ **Maths School President:** it would be good to have a conversation with our school to see how they do it.
	+ **Proctor:** I’m just looking at the module catalogue and it says clearly when all the classes are.
	+ **Modern Languages School President:** We’ve had two-three lectures at the same time within Chinese, esp. for joint Honours students who’ve faced significant timetable clashes.
	+ **Chinese Language Convenor:** The first group couldn’t attend tutorials because their timetable wasn’t finalised on time.
	+ **Director of Education:** Just more clarity around when classes will be in the next term (early on) would be helpful.

# Standardization of Learning and Teaching Provisions (30 minutes)

## Module Handbooks

* Overview**:**
	+ **Director of Education:** The content, size, and format for module handbooks can vary significantly. Especially for Subhonours, Joint Honours students, or for those who don’t know where to look, it can be quite difficult to navigate your relevant handbook. I spoke to Brian from the Academic Policy team, and I was told that currently there is no centralized guidance for module handbooks. Could we issue base requirements, that would include all the information listed out in the background *(tutor(s) contact info, required attendance expectations, marking criteria, learning objectives, transferable skills/graduate attributes, required readings, extensions and self-certification procedure, coursework and competencies, AI guidance and good academic practice, referencing style, and weekly lecture themes)* as well as accessibility requirements (the feedback from the Disabled Students Network, for instance indicates that handbooks can be very long)? What are your thoughts?
* Discussion:
	+ **Proctor:** We used to send out an email to schools to highlight what info should be included in these handbooks. We could start following up again.
	+ **Associate Dean Education (Arts/Div):** This is a very reasonable request
	+ **Associate Dean Students (Arts/ Div):** And this is once students have been enrolled in modules?
	+ **Director of Education:** Yes, and could we also have info on academic appeals policy included?
	+ **Proctor:** we’ll incorporate links to webpages because otherwise information can become outdated really fast.
	+ **Director of Student Experience:** if we’re looking at long- term option, we could perhaps look at wider web- content and standardize presenting information in an accessible format. Short term is just recirculating base requirements, which it’s shocking to see this discrepancy, but perhaps it gives us some long-term work too.
	+ **Education Rep (Bame Students’ Network):** It would also help to include who the key EDI contacts for the school are.
	+ **Proctor:** I thought there was a school handbook on every module’s Moodle page.
	+ **Associate Dean Education (Arts/Div):** It depends on the school level
	+ **Associate Dean Students (Arts/ Div):** Every summer, academics are asked to update their handbooks. This is very basic information we expect them to include.
	+ **Education Rep (Disabled Students’ Network):** I want to reaffirm the importance of school specific extensions information in these handbooks and the discussion of the language used around that. Students have told me about handbooks that said that you shouldn’t be applying for extensions in the module which is not very nice from an inclusivity standpoint.
	+ **Sci/Med Faculty President:** In some of our modules, we were told we can’t apply for extensions for a presentation which can be difficult in the face of unforeseen issues.

## Extensions Policy

* Overview**:**
	+ **Director of Education:** We did an informal survey of School Presidents on procedures to apply for extensions; we found that they vary a lot by school, and even within schools between the person you email and how such information is presented in school specific policy.
* Discussion
	+ **Associate Dean Education (Arts/Div):** Sharron did a big project last year to standardize extensions policy. All school have technically opted in on the project.
	+ **Director of Education:** I’m not entirely sure but it seems that some schools are using it for Sub honours but not Honours and that creates even more issues within schools
	+ **Associate Dean Education (Arts/Div):** Who looked into the various practices?
	+ **Director of Education:** I did.
	+ **Maths School President:** I thought all schools were supposed to adopt it, maths did it recently.
	+ **Associate Dean Students (Arts/ Div):** we just want to see which schools haven’t opted into a process they technically have agreed to.
	+ **Computer Science School President:** We currently haven’t opted in but just because we have a specific program that does all the admin work of managing extensions. We’ve not opted in because we don’t want to get rid of that program, but we basically do the same thing as mentioned in the policy.
	+ **Physics School President:** We have opted in. In our school, students get told about extension approval through external staff members and teachers don’t like it because they aren’t made aware about these extensions. The Computer Science system seems pretty good because it just skips these middlemen.
	+ **Associate Dean Education (Arts/Div):** Each school has been asked to assign a person for extension to process these requests on each level. This is done to take away variability, so we don’t have to rely on individual module coordinators.
	+ **Physics School President:** Some module coordinators want to be more involved, and they’ve complained about the new system.
	+ **Sci/Med Faculty President:** Just to go back to flexible deadlines, it would help to let lecturers know what that means. It doesn’t mean that you’re getting undue leeway with an assignment.
	+ **Director of Education:** As for the disability plan, students shouldn’t have to show evidence but there is ambiguity on this in the forms. In other words, the level of disclosure needed is ambiguous.
	+ **Associate Dean Education (Arts/Div):** There is a clear FAQ on what needs to be included.
	+ **Director of Education:** This is why maybe a centralized process is better because it’s not specific or clear. Our issue has more do to with the language.
	+ **Associate Dean Students (Arts/ Div):** So, you’re looking for refinements for questions so that students with a disability plan should be able to skip it?
	+ **Proctor:** But it’s clear in the guidance document on extensions.
	+ **Director of Education:** The problems we are raising are about the form and implementation of the guidance, not the guidance document itself.
	+ **Art History School President:** Have you heard about the Abrahart Bristol ruling? It was decided by the UK high court that when students ask for extension they must be granted if they have a disability.
	+ **Proctor:** No that’s not what it says. It says when students have a condition that could possibly be a disability (i.e., if they present something that can be expected to last a year or more), then we are meant to treat that as a disability.
	+ **Students’ Association Human Resource Manager):** There is no need for a formal diagnosis on what counts as a disability. You don’t need to have the assessment at hand, you just need evidence that you are affected in a way that impacts your studies.
	+ **Art History School President:** Can that information be disseminated to students and School Presidents because it is repeatedly brought up and I don’t know the full details just the repercussions.
	+ **Proctor:** Even a seminar could help here.
	+ **Students’ Association Human Resource Manager):** We could definitely put something on the Students’ Association’s website.
	+ **Associate Dean Students (Arts/ Div):** If School Presidents become aware of any circumstances, please sign post it to Student Services.
	+ **Proctor:** But it has to be something that is likely to be or become a disability.
	+ **Student Health Officer:** This issue has a significant impact on student wellbeing. Students are being bounced along to lots of different people - students services, ASK, module coordinators, CEED. There seems to be no singular approach to signposting, even wellbeing role in schools are not well defined or explained. With regards to the extension policy there are requests highlighting that students are struggling, and do not want to be bounced around like that.
	+ **Director of Student Experience:** Perhaps we could have a more focused discussion with EduCom and Students’ Association Human Resource Manager). We have someone in our legal team who has a good idea on what we’re doing about this and what it incorporates. We want to amplify the need for the existing roles to be better understood and supported. We also want to combine information, so that students don’t feel like they’re being bounced around different people. I could give some updates on an improved system to ensure we have the right info that is shared appropriately so students don’t have to retell the same story again and again. This project will go on for the next 9 months or so.
	+ **Director of Education:** We’ve got some feedback from DSN on tone and language on extensions policy
	+ **Education Rep (Disabled Students’ Network):** Essentially, the language in the extension forms doesn’t include disability, it instead says that “the circumstance should be certain.” This will not necessarily be the case with chronic disabilities. Then there are requirements of evidence which has been spoken about already – we don’t think it’s clear to students who have disabilities when to provide evidence. Technically, they should be allowed to say they have a flare up of the same issue that is known by the University’s Disability Services. However, they’re still being approached for proof.
	+ **Maths School President:** It should be up to the school again to do the assessment.
	+ **Associate Dean Education (Arts/Div):** The assessment and policy are very clear on this so just send them a link.
	+ **AVP Dean of Learning and Teaching:** The Extensions guidance is not for chronic disabilities; they are exempt from this policy, and adjustments should be made on an individual basis. As for the Abrahart Bristol case, the court said that recognitions and adjustments should be made even if the legal disability threshold isn’t yet met. Universities should pick up on impairments even if they haven’t’ yet been declared. The one thing I’m concerned about is if communication goes wrongly. The best way to minimize tragic cases is to encourage anyone with impairments to communicate. This doesn’t let us off the hook. The message shouldn’t be that “The university will pick up on the issue, so I don’t need to communicate.” We don’t want any tragic events which is why we need to get the communications right.
	+ **Music School President:** Can anything be included for grieving students who’ve lost family members? The support level around this seems very dismissive. It’s a grey area because that impact can last longer than months and can be impairing to education, so perhaps there can be a softer alternative.
	+ **Director of Student Experience:** This is exactly what we’re hoping to address with communications – specifically, how each school does it and what’s part of the scope.
	+ **Music School President:** I had to go to the Dean of Arts, but not all students would have the confidence to do that.
	+ **Modern Languages School President:** In joint Honours, I can send two extension forms and one department will allow it and then other will deny it, even though it’s the same circumstances submitted on both forms. It’s never the same across schools and perhaps there could be something that goes across all schools.
	+ **Proctor:** Did this happen this year? Because we did a lot of work last year to implement a uniform flexible deadline policy.
	+ **Modern Languages School President:** This was second semester last year.
	+ **Proctor:** The big piece of work around policy for flexible deadline has been done to ensure extension policy consistency. So, the feedback you give us, please give it to us from this year. Just to make sure we’re not acting on repeated data and can we concentrate on this year’s issues.
	+ **Director of Education:** I’ll make sure to gather information at EduCom from the relevant year.

# Any Other Competent Business [AOCB] (10 Minutes)

## Housekeeping

* **Arts/Div Faculty President**: We’re going to keep next week’s EduCom short. We’ll have a guest speaker, Connel – who will talk about the TQER.

## Semester 2 UAF Meeting Dates

* The Director of Education reminded attendees that the next Forum dates are Feb 27th and April 17th, 2025.

## Library Closures

* **Director of Education:** You may have seen the email from the Proctor that the library will close earlier on weekends starting this weekend. I just thought I’d put it in because a lot of reps are getting feedback, and I have been getting feedback from students. The timing of this isn’t great; it’s exam season and getting very cold, and Butts Wynd (the alternative) doesn’t have good lighting and heating. So, as School Presidents, this is just something to keep an eye out for.
* **Proctor:** Is Butts Wynd cold? (*Resounding yes*) We can feed that back to them.
* **Director of Education:** The commuter spaces are also very cold.
* **Deputy Director of the Library:** This wasn’t a decision the library took lightly. It was forced on us because of staffing shortages. We don’t want to be doing this, unfortunately, with piling sick leaves and vacancies it become clear in the last week that we can’t carry on given the current levels of staffing. We now have a post looking to fill the vacancy and we are looking at resuming with usual hours starting next semester. I just wanted to apologise as I know how important this is.

**The Forum concluded following the end of scheduled business.**