

Education Committee Meeting

12 October 2023, 6:00 PM | [Large Rehearsal Room](#)

Meeting called by	Education Executive Committee	Attendees: Cam, Hitanshi, Matthew, Daria, Phoebe, Michael, David, James, Mariana, Serena, Krish, Anna, Harry Burrows, Tom, River, Calum, Federica, Rohin, Anastasia, Christy, Harriet, Sydney, Harry Brett-Butcher, Shreya, Sadie, Syna, Olivia. Optional: n/a Apologies: Rebekah, Gemma, Chloe. Absences: Sairaa, Kiera.
Type of meeting	Education Committee Meeting	
Facilitator	Faculty Presidents	
Note taker(s)	Chase	
Timekeeper	Chase	

Agenda Item

Topic	Presenter	Time Allotted
Welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cam called the meeting to order. 	Faculty Presidents	5 minutes
Rector's Candidate Questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Candidates for the position of Rector came to meet School Presidents and Convenors and describe how they would work to support academic representatives if elected. - Cam welcomed the candidates and asked them to give brief introduction; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Stella began the introductions, giving an overview of her representative experience (including as EDI Rep in two schools) and her main goal of working towards an inclusive learning environment for all students. o Jonathan introduced his career as an Olympic triple jumper and as an Athlete Representative; he noted his family connections to St Andrews and enthusiasm to run for the role after being approached by representatives from the Athletic Union. o Mark (online) expressed his connection to St Andrews through his son and as a guest lecturer in the School of IR; two of his main goals were improving the student experience on housing and finding good jobs after graduation. - Cam introduced the role of the Rector as the Chair of the University of Court and ensuring that the student voice is 	Rector Candidates and DoEd	25 minutes

<p>heard on Court. Cam then opened the floor to the School Presidents and Convenor to ask questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maths & Stats President: How will each of you update students and be transparent and visible in your role? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Mark: Agreed to attending the Four on-campus Court meetings in person and will offer town halls both in-person and remote throughout the year; he also will commit to fully offset travel to the University and abide by travel policy and wants to serve as an example for the rest of the campus to follow in this regard. o Stella: Noted that previous Rector emails were made by her (around, for example, Union Black and solidarity movements and making people aware of how to be effective in their activism). Stella expressed that the role of Rector's Committee wasn't to be representatives, but to give information to the Rector & Assessor and to amplify the student voice. Over the previous term, the Rector's Assessor tried to be as visible as possible (for example, by attending 26 graduations in a row). The role of Rector's Assessor was done behind the scenes and did intervene on wide range of issues. o Jonathan: Views the role of Rector as being about relationships with other elected representatives and building a relationship with SRC, Sabbaticals, and School Presidents (rather than having a set agenda). He plans to focus on an annual Representatives Report and having a draft report for how the Rector fits in with the other student representative positions within his first 100 days. He asserted that the Rector isn't the leader of student representatives and that instead the views of students would be most important to him, if elected. - International Relations President: The issue of staff strikes has been relevant and high priority for several years; how would you address or approach this issue as Rector? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Jonathan: Did not know what the issue is, and would want to get the view of students and support that in the role of Rector. He emphasised again that he doesn't have a set list things he wished to change, but sought to amplify the existing student voice through their representatives. o Stella: As a former student herself, she has experienced the strikes since 2017. She expressed that the issue is about striking a delicate balance 		
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<p>between supporting striking staff and not being harmed. Having been personally affected by the marking boycott, she was vocal at the time about limiting the impact on industrial action on students and was frustrated by staff who unnecessarily pushed effects onto students. She expressed that the process that was established during the boycott provided necessary protection for students while allowing for industrial action to continue appropriately.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mark: Believes that the Rector is brought in to nudge the University to support student views. He said that the trouble with strikes is that there are two groups of adults who can't agree with students being held hostage in the middle. He expressed that it would be helpful to have the Rector act as an advocate for students in these kinds of disagreements. - Social Anthropology President (question specifically for Jonathan): A lot of resources and priority are given to the Athletic Union at St Andrews, what are your plans for uplifting other areas (e.g. arts and societies)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Jonathan: He felt he is approaching the role in support of all students rather than just athletes (although they too expressed that support wasn't sufficient). He noted that the Rector is not all-powerful but will work to find compromises to help with issues and uplift the experience for all students. He stated that he isn't running to exclusively support sport and student athletes. - PGR President: Do you have any ideas of how to engage with Postgraduates in the role? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Jonathan: Pledged to meet with Postgraduates specifically and prioritise those relationships, getting to know the issues they are experiencing there. (Jonathan left the meeting after giving this answer). ○ Stella: In her previous role as Rector's Assessor, she recruited numerous postgraduates on Rector's committee and made efforts to help get PGs involved in activism (acknowledging the differences for PGs and other students, such as student carers). She expressed that the University needed to be a lot more inclusive. A lot of work has been done on PG Representation, but she wants PGs to be included in every conversations until they are heard without having to push to be heard. ○ Mark: Expressed that he had once lived that journey by pursuing his masters at night, and knows that PGs 		
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<p>have to balance paying for school by taking on paid work as well. On a career and fellowship line, he would focus on how can we get students involved in organisations while doing coursework or involved in global think-tanks to do policy-work in their programmes of choice. He is eager to collaborate with postgraduates on those opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Music President: How would you work with marginalised minority communities to make sure your voices are heard? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Stella: Behind the scenes work can be done (for example, trans students being deadnamed in the Rector's Election email received an apology); As Rector's Assessor, she has crafted statements of solidarity for issues that have arisen in the past and ran forums and other events to rebuild trust with communities that have been marginalised (e.g. by hosting a trans and nonbinary roundtable). Continuing to push for the Race Equality Charter and preventative measures (such as the "Do No Harm" Framework) should be taken to prevent students ever from feeling unsupported. o Mark: With his committee, he reviewed thirteen goals for diversity and would offer his technological background to make statistics more transparent and accessible. He expressed that in his experience, when there are problems, it's difficult to solve them without data. He expressed that he prioritised diversity in hiring in his own company and to continue working toward increasing diversity there too. - The remaining candidates for Rector were thanked for their time and released from the meeting by the DoEd. 		
<p>Study Abroad Grade Conversions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Italian Convenor: Coming out of my year abroad, the grade conversion doesn't properly reflect the effort to achieving such marks. In Italy, for example a grade is based out of 30. 25/30 on that exam is then converted to a 15 at St Andrews, according to the official table. The effort required to get a 25 is nowhere near the effort that a 15 would be in exams at St Andrews. This leads to undue stress on the student studying abroad and there is a consensus in Italian that these grades are unfair. Staff changed this in 2017/18 because the University deemed that an Italian University was too lenient in its grading. In other programmes, other Universities receive our grades just as unfairly – the issue occurs on both sides. 	Italian LC	15 minutes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Italian Convenor (to the full committee): Have you have experienced any issues in your school related to grade conversions? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Music: Had a friend (studying German) who went abroad and got full marks in everything and then got a 17 when she came back. o Physics: This occurs as well in physics and one of the biggest problems is that students didn't get their grades in time. Agreed that action should be taken. o Social Anthropology: Noted that the process for challenging grade conversions was very short and coincides with moving back; all-around the process seems unfair. o International Relations: Questioned how grade conversion not proportional, and noted that students who have more lenient professors also tend to do better here at St Andrews. o Comp. Lit. Convenor: Most exams in Italian Universities are oral exams and this makes the process even harder. A 25/30 would equate to a 16.5. A lot of grades are presentation based which is not something St Andrews students are used to. o Computer Science: Each University has a specific agreement with the University. Some of the agreements signed are negligent in that the University signs problematic agreements with others. - Art/Div FP: How can we resolve this? Perhaps by opening this up through the Global Office? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o DoEd: Global Office, then Proctor would be a good route. o Comp. Sci: How are grade conversion agreements formed and moderated? o Mod. Langs Pres: Sometimes, St Andrews faculty sit in at lectures (especially new programmes) but for non-language departments that may not happen. Auditing the other universities may be a helpful step. o French Convenor: Modern Language Convenors discussed improving support for study abroad students with the Global Office. The resilience of students on study abroad is reported to have gone down over the last 10 years. There are additional short-term measures that can be taken as well to make the going-abroad process easier. They don't want to downplay study abroad at the Global Office and help students understand what they are experiencing prior to going (e.g. that your grades may go down). 		
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Russian Convenor: Personally decided not to go abroad and grades was a big factor. I didn't know enough to go and get a grade in another language's oral exam. If it's a language with a different alphabet and the starting level of students from St Andrews should also be considered. ○ PGR President: Can inquire if there's any kind of moderation of assessments into inter-institution agreements (mark top, middle, and worst essay to see if what a St Andrews staff member would mark it as to see if there's parity). ○ Physics: Italian students can retake exams as many times as they want. How do they work with completely different systems of learning? ○ Action for Hitanshi: has a list of three questions for the Global Office and will invite them to respond at EduCom or via email. If there are other questions to add, please email the Art/Div Faculty President. 		
<p>Library Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Due to a lack of time, this agenda item was tabled to the next meeting. 	International Relations SP	15 minutes
<p>AOCB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Art/Div Faculty President: Encouraged everyone to vote in the Rector's Election and asked the School Presidents and Convenors to please remind students in their schools to vote. 	Faculty Presidents	5 minutes

Observers and guests: Jonathan Edwards, Mark Brunner (online), and Stella Maris (2023 Candidates for Rector).

Calum Irvine (PGR President), Sam Gorman (DoSDA).