

## **Partnership Agreement between the University of St Andrews and the Students' Association**

Partnership and collaboration between students and staff at St Andrews has been an important institutional feature of the University at all levels for many years. Indeed, the relative closeness of staff and students that is possible in a small University, the mutual respect this closeness fosters, and the many productive outcomes of staff-student exchanges, are among the most positive aspects of our community.

This takes the form of the following arrangements.

### **Membership of committees, working groups, and business change initiatives**

- Sabbatical officers and other elected student representatives give voice to student interests on a wide range of University committees, including the most strategic and senior ones such as Court, Academic Council, and their committees. Three students are members of University Court and four students sit on Academic Council.
- In turn, the Students' Association Board and Athletic Union Board include a senior member of University staff nominated by the Principal's Office.
- Relevant student representatives frequently sit on University working groups and project boards.
- Staff from Student Services and the Students' Association collaborate to promote positive student wellbeing through their joint Stand Together Project and through awareness campaigns delivered by the Students' Representative Council's (SRC) Wellbeing Subcommittee.
- Other services, such as the University Library and the Sustainability division of Estates, have identified students who attend meetings, discuss policy, and advise on future projects.
- The Association President sits on the Community Council and attends the Town Group, alongside the Community Engagement and Environmental Responsibility Officer from the Principal's Office.

### **Sabbatical Officers**

- The Students' Association is run by a student-majority Board and five Sabbatical Officers, who are directly elected by the student body.
- Each Officer provides leadership in a specific area of student life at the University: the Director of Wellbeing oversees student welfare, equal opportunities, and democracy; the Director of Education is responsible for education, postgraduate studies, and employability; the Director of Student Development and Activities supports the many student societies and student activities including volunteering; the Director of Events and Services organises the major events of the year, such as Freshers' Week and the Graduation Ball; the Association President is responsible for the outward-facing side of the Association's activities, including image and strategic planning as well as accommodation and affordability concerns.
- The Athletic Union President is directly elected by the student body to represent them across all sporting platforms, including overseeing all club and recreational sport at the University. They sit on the Athletic Union Board and liaise closely with the Director of Sport to contribute to strategy and governance.

## **Academic representation**

- The University and the Students' Association jointly deliver training to School Presidents and Class Representatives. Staff inclusion allows student-led projects to have more consistency, and to be informed by the institution's history.
- There are two seats reserved for students at the Learning and Teaching Committee and Postgraduate Research Committee, both subcommittees of Academic Council: these are usually occupied by the Students' Association Director of Education (DoEd) and Postgraduate Academic Convenor.
- Two students (usually the DoEd and Postgraduate Academic Convenor) are full members of the University's Academic Monitoring Group; and students are regularly invited to be members of LTC and PGRC Working Groups as well as having a key role in University-led Reviews of Learning and Teaching.
- Students are represented on the Student Experience Committee, the Enhancement Themes Group and can bid for funding from that group and the Teaching Development Fund and Postgraduate Research Fund.
- The DoEd and Postgraduate Academic Convenor are supported by a further network of student representatives in the academic Schools. Each School has an elected School President, who represents its Undergraduate and Postgraduate student cohort. The School President leads a group of Class Representatives and chairs their School's Student-Staff Consultative Committee.
- The School Presidents liaise closely with the Director of Teaching in their School, as well as with the DoEd, who sets their central agenda and organises regular meetings of all Presidents.
- The DoEd also arranges the bi-semestrial School Presidents' Forum, chaired by the Rector and attended by the Proctor and Deans, for discussion and clarification of academic policy and processes.
- School Presidents also attend academic monitoring dialogues along with their Head of School and Director of Teaching.
- The Students' Association Teaching Awards recognise teachers and support staff who contribute significantly to students' learning and teaching experience.
- Module Evaluation Questionnaires allow students to provide direct feedback on various aspects of their modules.

## **Democracy**

- The University Rector is directly elected by the student body and appoints a Rector's Assessor to be a representative within the student body.
- The Senior Lay Member of the University Court is elected by students and staff.
- Members of the Students' Association Students Representative Council may have interactions with Senior University staff with regard to policy making.
- Where possible and where confidentiality and time scales allow, student opinion is canvassed more widely on significant strategic decisions such as major new capital projects and changes to the academic calendar.

## **Other collaborative arrangements**

- Student interns in various parts of the University are frequently appointed precisely for the student-centred focus they can bring to the role they occupy and are invited to offer opinions.
- Student focus groups are frequently consulted over specific projects (for example, regarding the new academic year or the taught postgraduate experience).
- The activities of student-led academic societies are often attended by lecturers and professors. Academic Schools often work collaboratively with these societies to host or financially contribute to their activities.

### **Collaboration Statement**

For the academic year 2020-21, the Vice-Principal Education (Proctor) and the Students' Association Sabbatical Officers have agreed that four main topics will form an additional, overarching focus for staff-student collaborations.

The topics are:

#### **Postgraduate student experience and engagement**

Staff and students will work together to better understand the differing needs of postgraduate taught and research students and the ways in which they would best like to interact with the Students' Association and the University and what support they need. This will be achieved through surveys and focus groups, with both staff and students, and will inform a review of PG representative positions within the Students' Association as well as the way in which both the University and Students' Association communicate with PG students. This will also identify areas of PGT and PGR student experience for improvement so that both parties can work to ensure that distinct PGT and PGR experiences are catered for rather than trying to fit them into UG structures, activities and support.

#### **Collaborative Communication**

The University regularly has messages and content that could best be communicated to the students body through the Students' Association. Similarly, work that the Students' Association does could be communicated better to a wider audience through the University. Both parties will work to identify areas where collaboration on communication could be mutually beneficial. Additionally, where there are issues that are likely to result in significant volumes of queries to the Students' Association that the University becomes aware of and vice versa, we will work together to ensure that advance notice and a briefing is given where possible so that students can be best supported. This will be achieved through a joint communications group that will meet regularly and by increasing awareness of the communication channels available within the student and staff bodies.

#### **Student Culture**

Both the Students' Association and the University are committed to fostering a student culture based on inclusion and mutual respect. To that end staff and students will collaborate to tackle less positive aspects of student life such as drinking culture, sexual violence and racial microaggressions. We will also work together to create opportunities that build a positive,

healthy and welcoming student experience. This will be achieved through clearly promoting the University's reporting system, normalising reporting of incidents no matter how small they seem, and expanding the work of StAnd Together student-staff initiatives such as Got Consent and Got Limits to include all aspects of student life. In addition, we will work to increase the representation of minority students in Students' Association and University decision making through both through our elected representative positions and wider efforts in collaboration with the University.

### **Affordability & Accessibility**

Both parties have made commitments to affordability and will tackle the issue using data such as that from the accommodation survey and focus groups to better understand the way financial means have an effect on student experience. Wherever possible, we will work to remove stigma and barriers to thriving in St Andrews regardless of financial background to make sure that the distinctive St Andrews experience is accessible to all. This will happen in both in a cultural sense (promoting inclusivity) and a practical one (promoting and simplifying information about bursaries and the money advice service and by considering all options to improve the affordability of accommodation). As part of this, the Students' Association is working with Student Services to better promote the Money Advice service and make it clearer how to access bursaries. Additionally, the Students' Association and the University will ensure that we find ways to retain and expand the use of the new technologies (such as those used for online teaching) to make our events and activities more accessible for students with low incomes or who are in part time employment.

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