



University of St Andrews Students' Association Postgraduate Executive Forum

MINUTES

Tuesday 3 November 2015 – Committee Room, 5pm

Present

Name

Anja Ivic
Carla Freund
Irene Munao'
Matthew Shelton
Adeola Fabola
Professor Paul Hibbert
Professor Al Dearle
Joe Tantillo
Sebastian Fischer
Ishaan Bindal
Ilaria Gidoro
Mirte Keulen
Gillian Jack
Emil Archambault
Katrín Ganser
Kelly Rogers
Emily Feamster
Joe Slater
Claire Motion
Katie Dickerson
Sara Lenore Hellman

Position

Art History PG Exec Rep
Biology PG Exec Rep
Chemistry PG Exec Rep
Classics PG Exec Rep
Computer Science PG Exec Rep
Dean of Arts and Divinity
Dean of Science
Director of Representation
Earth & Environmental Sciences PG Exec Rep
Economics & Finance PG Exec Rep
Education and Representation Coordinator
English PG Exec Rep
History PG Exec Rep
IR PG Exec Rep
Management PG Exec Rep
Medicine PG Exec Rep
Postgraduate Administrative Officer (Proctor's Office)
Philosophy PG Exec Rep
Physics & Astronomy PG Exec Rep
Psychology & Neuroscience PG Exec Rep
Social Anthropology PG Exec Rep

Absent

Michael Stefan Luigi Mueller-Rust Geography & SD PG Exec Rep

1. Welcome

2. Apologies

Apologies

Connor McMorran	Film Studies PG Exec Rep
Charlotte Pearce-Slade	Modern Languages PG Exec Rep
Tania Struetzel	PG Convenor

The apologies were accepted without dissent.

3. Matters arising

3.1. Stats training

The Dean of Science explained that PG students from different Schools last year asked for more Stats training. Stats students would be happy to help. The Dean is working on this and there is early-stage negotiation with a company to develop and establish a Stats programme. He stated that this programme would start in the future, although it is progressing slowly.

Action: The Dean of Science to inform the Forum of the progress of this training module.

It was asked if this training would be only for PGR students. The Dean replied that it could also be for PGT students. PGR students especially requested it.

Emil asked if this training programme would be different from SS5104. The Dean of Science said that the programme was not defined yet.

3.2. Martyrs Kirk

Joe asked if the Forum had any issues to report around PGT students using the library during the evenings and weekends. Emil replied that there is a big improvement and much less noise disruption, but some PGT students are still not aware of the rules. For instance, some seminars are held in the building, and students passing by to get to the seminar make too much noise. Emil also reported that sometimes the library is very crowded and remarked that the library was originally created for PGR students and staff.

Mirte said that perhaps there should be clearer instructions inside the library, as students might not be aware that users of the library can hear noise from inside.

Emil argued that the Library seems to consider this a minor disruption, whereas it is a major disruption.

Action: Joe to inform the Library of the issues related to Martyrs Kirk (and about installing more posters or instructions for users).

4. Update on tutor pay

Emil reported that the School of IR had agreed to increase funding in order to increase the number of hours paid to tutors. He also argued that tutors would like to receive more training on tutoring to be able to reduce the workload.

The Dean of Arts and Divinity agreed that tutors should be trained more to be able to mark more quickly.

Action: The Deans to try to establish more training for tutors.

Joe S. complained that the School of Philosophy refused to reduce the amount of words to be marked per hour (currently 4500 words per hour). He stressed that marking and giving feedback for 4500 words per hour is impossible if they want to retain the quality of marking/feedback. Marking a 1500-word essay in 20 minutes will often result in inadequate feedback, as even members of staff take longer than this. Therefore, this is not to be regarded as a lack of experience. Gillian similarly stated that tutors in History cannot mark so quickly. Moreover, they do not get

paid for one-to-one meetings with students. Emil also reported that students asked for more feedback, which means that tutors should spend more time marking assignments.

5. Publication of articles prior to PhD Submission

Carla introduced this point saying that there is no clarity on why it is not allowed to publish articles under the student's name before the submission of a thesis/dissertation. Claire, too, stated that many students are worried about this because it is not clear. The Deans understood that this is a concern to students and agreed on the fact that the University needs to find a way to clarify this point.

Action: The Deans to find a way to clarify rules about the publication of articles before submission and to update the current policy.

6. Update on PG working groups

Length of study

The Dean of Science informed that last year a paper went to the Academic Council that stated that PhD studies should last no more than four years. This paper was rejected and a working group created to address this matter. Currently, PhD students are required to pay standard tuition fees for three years, and continuation and extension fees for their 4th and 5th year, respectively. They are expected to submit their thesis within four years. The new proposal suggests a smaller matriculation fee for the fourth year (continuation year) than currently in place. After the 4th year, there would be a fee of some hundred pounds per quarter, but the amount has not been decided yet. The Dean stressed that nothing on this point has been finalised yet and asked for the attendees' opinions. He also informed that, on average, students take 4.1 years to submit. From the fourth year onwards, there would be a much tighter report schedule (quarterly) to make sure that students are on track. He repeated that there could be variations on this procedure.

Progress review

The Dean of Arts and Divinity reported that Schools handle progress review differently and that the working group is currently looking at standardizing the practice across Schools regarding expectations, communication after the review and the possible outcomes of the review.

He asked all PG Reps to send him relevant feedback.

Action: All to send feedback to Emily Feamster at deansoffice@st-andrews.ac.uk.

Fieldwork

Emily informed that a survey had been circulated to find out how often Schools send their students on fieldwork. The Dean of Arts and Divinity expressed that he wants this point to be transparent. The working group is looking to review current provisions for fieldwork in Schools/Departments where it forms an important aspect of the PhD, which includes looking at arrangements for supervision, average load of engagement while on fieldwork and the fee status.

7. PTES/PRES satisfaction rates

Study/Office space & dedicated PG space

Joe T. stated that currently there is no dedicated PG space. However, there are plans to create such a space, but it will not be in the near future. He understood that some students are dissatisfied by this lack. Emil asked if there are any concrete ideas about this PG space. Joe T. replied that there will be a meeting at the end of January to decide which action to take. The Dean of Science highlighted that this space will not be ready this year. Nonetheless, Joe T. asked PG reps to continue advocating.

Services provided by the Students' Association

Joe T. stated that the surveys show that some PG students are not satisfied. Katie reported that there was discussion in the past about turning the Union Coffee Shop in a PG socialising space. This had been trialled and it proved good, but then everything stopped.

Some PG Exec reps asked if the Students' Association could make sure that the PG Society organise more events. It was also noticed that the PG Soc bus trips sold out quickly, and this suggests that they should organise more trips or offer more spaces.

Emil remarked that there is a PG space in the Bute building, but there is not much on offer there (a microwave and a few sofas). For this reason, students do not feel like going there on purpose and, consequently, it is not very well used. Other PG Exec reps were not aware of this space, which suggests that this space should be advertised more.

Joe T. said that he is aware that PG students (especially tutors) might not want to attend events in the Union together with UG students. He asked if PG students do not want to mingle with UG. He stated that the Union could try to do more. Some PG Exec reps said that they do not want a complete division from the UG body, while others confirmed they do not like to attend events with UG students.

Action: Joe T. to try to organise more PG specific events (with the other Sabbs).

Action: All PG students to email Chris MacRae at doserv@st-andrews.ac.uk with ideas for future events.

Joe T. also asked if the attendees read the PG newsletter, where events are advertised. Some replied that they do not read it and proposed to advertise things more on social media.

8. Collaboration Statements

Early Information

Joe T. asked attendees to send feedback to himself and Tania on this.

Action: All PG Exec reps to send feedback on early information to dorep@st-andrews.ac.uk and pgconven@st-andrews.ac.uk.

Supervision

Joe T. informed that supervision is the focus of this year's [collaboration statement](#) with the University. He clarified that this is not for PGR students. The School President of IR, Mira Boneva, is leading the working group on PGT supervision.

Action: All PGT Reps to get in touch with irpresident@st-andrews.ac.uk with any feedback/questions about PGT supervision.

9. Sharing best practice ideas

Claire thanked the Students' Association for funding Physics networking lunches with the [Education Discretionary Fund](#). She mentioned that she also received funding from CAPOD to fund lunches for Post-Docs.

Katie asked if other Schools have coffee spaces where it is possible to organise coffee morning events. Some replied that they do not have such spaces. Katie will contact these PG Exec reps.

Joe T. encouraged all to always email him with any feedback or questions.

The meeting adjourned.