



# University of St Andrews Students' Association School Presidents' Forum

## MINUTES

Monday 12 October 2015 – Committee Room – 17:15

### Present

#### **Member's Name**

Eleanor Mullin  
Lily Barnes  
Amelia Hunter  
Claire Brodie  
Marjan Magharehi  
Maria Kustikova  
Prof Paul Hibbert  
Joe Tantillo  
Timothy Stackhouse  
Sarah Alexander  
Ilaria Gidoro  
Kirsty Mearns  
Jesse Galapia  
Eilidh Reid  
Kit Klaes  
Nicholas Wells  
Megan Bruce  
Louis Fearn  
Raghav Mehra  
Hussain Raja  
Verity Baynton  
Sally Allmark  
Tomi Baikie  
Deborah Moffett  
Annie Newman  
Louise McCaul  
Imogen Hawley  
Prof Lorna Milne

#### **Position**

Arts & Divinity Faculty President  
Art History School President  
Biology School President  
Chemistry School President  
Classics School President  
Computer Science School President  
Dean of Arts and Divinity  
Director of Representation  
Divinity School President  
Earth & Environmental Science School President  
Education and Representation Coordinator - Minutes  
Economics & Finance School President  
ELT President  
English School President  
Film Studies & Music School President  
Geography & SD School President  
History School President  
Management School President  
Mathematics & Statistics School President  
Medicine School President  
Modern Languages School President  
Philosophy School President  
Physics & Astronomy School President  
Psychology & Neuroscience School President  
Rector's Assessor - Chair  
Science & Medicine Faculty President  
Social Anthropology School President  
Vice Principal (Proctor)

### **1. Apologies**

#### **Member's Name**

Prof Alan Dearle  
Mira Boneva  
Tania Struetzel  
Catherine Stihler

#### **Position**

Dean of Science  
International Relations School President  
PG Convenor  
Rector

**The apologies were accepted without dissent.**

## **2. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

## **3. Module Evaluation Questionnaires**

Tomi explained that the School of Physics does not generally have a good response rate for MEQs and he would like to improve it. Currently, MEQs are completed online. Kirsty suggested students complete MEQs during the last five minutes of a tutorial. The Proctor pointed out that last year was the first time that MEQs were distributed online and that the response rate at the University of St Andrews was good compared to other Universities. She mentioned that the response rate was particularly good in the School of IR, where students were asked to bring laptops to classes.

Hussain explained another issue concerning MEQs: in the School of Medicine, there are so many members of staff that it is difficult for students to remember their names and rate them in the questionnaire. It would be useful to have lecturers' photos in the questionnaire. He stressed that Medicine students cannot bring laptops to lab classes (and there are no tutorials after week 7) and the questionnaire is not user-friendly on mobile phones.

The possibility of bringing laptops to classes in order to improve the response rate was discussed. Tomi was not in favour of this solution. The Proctor pointed out that, in IR, they decided to ask students to bring laptops only after doing a study on students' use of laptops, whose results showed that the student body largely uses laptops. She suggested Tomi pilot this solution in some modules. Eleanor stressed that students could share their laptops with their neighbours to complete the MEQ.

Louise argued that some questions in MEQs are not often relevant to interdisciplinary modules. The Proctor replied that she would look into this and stressed that module conveners can tell students not to answer certain questions, or they can create new ones.

Eilidh proposed that a link to the MEQ would be added on MMS.

**Action: The Proctor's Office to look into a mobile friendly version of MEQs as well slightly different MEQs for interdisciplinary modules.**

## **4. Reading/Consolidation Week Arrangements**

Joe introduced this point and said that they had conflated information about current reading week arrangements in all Schools. Some Schools have it in Week 7, some do it module-by-module, and some do not have it at all. The Dean of Arts and Divinity stated that the University does not have a reading week and Schools are encouraged to check whether there is too much pressure in some modules. He argued that, although this system is not consistent across all Schools, it works well. The Proctor stressed that having a reading week would mean that teaching would be more compressed. Moreover, she said that Semester 1 is already shorter than it used to be. Finally, having a reading week cannot be consolidated in the entire University. Eleanor encouraged SPs not to feel discouraged if School's plans do not look standardised; schools should be encouraged to seek solutions which fit with their module requirements. The Dean of Arts and Divinity encouraged SPs to conflate examples of good practice that the Forum could discuss.

**Action: SPs to find examples of good practice in their Schools regarding reading week arrangements.**

Some SPs argued that there seems to be a disparity between the two semesters, with semester 1 being perceived as harder than semester 2. The Proctor replied that they asked Registry to look at results and there is no data showing students underperforming in semester 1.

## **5. Budget for School Presidents in Schools/Departments**

Joe explained that, since the role of SP is becoming more and more important and, since they collaborate with the University, it would be useful to have a SP budget that comes from Schools. Sarah proposed that perhaps it would be better for Schools to take ad-hoc decisions about the money given for different events. Joe replied that, in the current situation, Schools can decide not to give funding at all. Eilidh remarked that SPs could feel reluctant about asking for money, and that they would feel more confident if they knew that there was an existing budget available. The Proctor said that we should provide examples of what the money can be used for. She pointed out that not all Schools might agree because some have less money than others. She stated that she would discuss this point with the DoTs.

**Action: The Proctor to discuss SPs' budgets with DoTs.**

## **6. Mental Health Training for Academic Staff**

Eleanor explained that wellbeing/mental health support had been chosen as a strategic goal for this year by the Education Committee. She asked what mental health training was available for academic staff and whether it was compulsory. The Proctor replied that there is no standard training for academic staff. There is an induction for new staff where they are also introduced to the role of Student Services, so they would know where to refer students to. She pointed out that only Student Services is specialised to offer this service. Eilidh informed that there was a brief event (30 minutes) for staff in the School of English to get an overview of what Student Services do. The Proctor replied that this is what Chris Lusk is considering doing. Some SPs proposed to make academic staff who are willing to be approached on these issues more visible.

## **7. AOCB**

The Proctor informed that NSS results saw St Andrews dropping 25 places in regards to students' satisfaction. She stressed that they want to ensure that students are happy and encouraged SPs (and all students) to give feedback quickly. Moreover, the Proctor invited SPs for a meeting on 26 November to discuss NSS results.

**The meeting adjourned.**

**Next meeting:**

**School Presidents' Forum, Monday 16 November, 17:15, Committee Room**