



University of St Andrews Students' Association School Presidents' Forum

MINUTES

Monday 16 November 2015 – Committee Room – 17:15

Present

Member's Name

Eleanor Mullin
Amelia Hunter
Claire Brodie
Prof Alan Dearle
Prof Paul Hibbert
Joe Tantillo
Sarah Alexander
Ilaria Gidoro
Kit Klaes
Megan Bruce
Raghav Mehra
Hussain Raja
Sally Allmark
Tomi Baikie
Deborah Moffett
Annie Newman
Louise McCaul
Imogen Hawley
Prof Lorna Milne

Position

Arts & Divinity Faculty President
Biology School President
Chemistry School President
Dean of Science
Dean of Arts and Divinity
Director of Representation
Earth & Environmental Science School President
Education and Representation Coordinator - Minutes
Film Studies & Music School President
History School President
Mathematics & Statistics School President
Medicine 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)

Absent

Member's Name

Kirsty Mearns
Jesse Galapia
Eilidh Reid
Mira Boneva

Position

Economics & Finance School President
ELT President
English School President
International Relations School President

1. Apologies

Member's Name

Lily Barnes
Marjan Magharehi
Maria Kustikova
Timothy Stackhouse
Nicholas Wells

Position

Art History School President
Classics School President
Computer Science School President
Divinity School President
Geography & SD School President

Louis Fearn	Management School President
Verity Baynton	Modern languages School President
Tania Struetzel	PG Convenor
Catherine Stihler	Rector

The apologies were accepted without dissent.

2. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

3. Approval of Minutes

Minutes had been circulated electronically and approved.

4. Budget for School Presidents within Schools (follow-up)

The School Presidents (SPs) in turns stated if there was funding available for events in their Schools. Several SPs said that their Schools are willing to provide funding on an ad-hoc basis. Imogen stated that Social Anthropology is open to low-cost events. Amelia said that funding for events in Biology is taken from the teaching budget, so the School is not keen on giving money. Ilaria noted that the SPs who had previously raised problems about getting funding for events were not present (e.g. Eilidh and Marjan) and repeated what they had said during an Education Committee meeting. The Proctor stated that she would try to persuade Schools to provide the SP with a £50-budget per year for small things—e.g. for printing costs, or occasional biscuits for meetings. She remarked that Schools can still refuse this.

Action: The Proctor to talk with the Schools about a £50-budget for SPs.

5. MEQs (end of semester) – will there be a mobile version?

The attendees discussed whether MEQs were mobile friendly. The Proctor said that a developer told her that they are mobile friendly and that, perhaps, what is difficult is getting into MMS. The attendees tested it and realised that MEQs were not online yet. The Proctor and the Dean of Science encouraged all to send them feedback on this when the MEQs would be available.

Action: All to send the Proctor and the Dean of Science feedback on MEQs.

Note added after the meeting: upon review, the mobile MEQs work well on mobile devices. The only issue found with mobile MEQs was the single sign on splash screen. To address this issue, ITS are rolling out a new splash screen that will be more mobile friendly. The new version should go live Thursday 4th Dec. This action point is, therefore, outdated. No action needed.

6. Student-staff ratio

Imogen stated that her HoD reported that the School of Social Anthropology had received negative NSS results and thought that this was a consequence of the poor student-staff ratio. Imogen understood that the University's ratio is very high on average. The Proctor confirmed that overall the University has a good ratio. However, there are at least five Schools whose ratio is poor. She noted that student satisfaction does not necessarily come from student-staff ratio. She also reminded that there was going to be a meeting to discuss NSS results on November 26 with the SPs. She was also going to discuss these results

with DoTs and the Deans on December 10, and she will bring up this issue with them. Tomi noted that more students are being admitted to the University year after year and asked if the University had a strategy to maintain the current average ratio.

7. Process for staff taking research leave and effects on module availability

Since this item had been brought up by Lily in a previous Education Committee meeting, but she was absent, Ilaria reported what had been said on the issue. In particular, students are concerned about the fact that staff can go on research leave at short notice and, as a consequence, the modules led by that person would be canceled.

Megan reported that, as a consequence of staff going on research leave, students of Medieval History and Archeology felt that they were not given the necessary skills that employers look for. She discussed this point with her DoT and understood that the School does not have enough staff to teach the Archeology element of the degree. Megan received a lot of negative feedback from the relevant students, who are now doing their dissertations. Usually, archeology skills are taught in the 3rd year, but students feel that this is too late, as it is a major part of their degree. Moreover, there is not enough staff who is able to supervise them on their particular interests. The Proctor and the Dean of Arts and Divinity replied that they need to look into this, as it is a very specific issue. Eleanor asked Megan to invite these students to her Joint Honours focus group.

Action: The Proctor and the Dean of Arts and Divinity to investigate the issue with Medieval History and Archeology and to report to Megan.

Joe asked what would happen if a module was supposed to run in the second semester and the relevant staff member went on research leave. The Proctor replied that, if this was a core module, it still needed to run. If this was an optional module, it would be canceled for that semester. She also informed that the Research Councils take a long time to reply to research grant applications and, for this reason, sometimes staff leave at the last minute. There is only a 14% possibility to get a grant. The Proctor stressed that it is better to cancel a module instead of letting a less prepared member of staff run that module instead of the person who designed it.

8. Laidlaw deadline

Louise asked why this deadline is so much earlier this year. She reported that some students feel that it is too early, and some members of staff are worried, too, because they cannot predict so far in advance what their research is going to focus on. The Proctor replied that the deadline is as late as last year. Students in the past said that it should have been earlier because, if they do not get it, they need to have the time to secure another internship. The Dean of Science highlighted that this should be the student's project, and staff should not give out projects. The Proctor agreed that Laidlaw is for self-starting students, and they have to propose their own projects. Moreover, the University is bound by the person who funds it.

9. AOCB

The Proctor reminded everyone that she will meet the SPs on November 26 at 5pm in the Large Rehearsal Room to discuss NSS results.

Joe stated that the Education Committee meeting of November 23 was cancelled and, instead, a shorter meeting would take place after the NSS meeting from 6-6.30pm.

The meeting adjourned.

Next meeting:

School Presidents' Forum, Monday 15 February, 17:15, Committee Room