University of St Andrews Students' Association
School Presidents' Forum

MINUTES

Monday 15 February 2015 – Committee Room – 17:15

Present

Member's Name	Position
Lily Barnes	Art History School President
Eleanor Mullin	Arts & Divinity Faculty President
Amelia Hunter	Biology School President
Claire Brodie	Chemistry School President
Marjan Magharehi	Classics School President
Maria Kustikova	Computer Science School President
Prof Alan Dearle	Dean of Science
Prof Paul Hibbert	Dean of Arts and Divinity
Joe Tantillo	Director of Representation
Timothy Stackhouse	Divinity School President
Sarah Alexander	Earth & Environmental Science School President
Ilaria Gidoro	Education and Representation Coordinator - Minutes
Kit Klaes	Film Studies & Music School President
Jesse Galapia	ELT President
Eilidh Reid	English School President
Nicholas Wells	Geography & SD School President
Megan Bruce	History School President
Mira Boneva	International Relations School President
Louis Fearn	Management School President
Raghav Mehra	Mathematics & Statistics School President
Hussain Raja	Medicine School President
Sally Allmark	Philosophy School President
Tomi Baikie	Physics & Astronomy School President
Deborah Moffett	Psychology & Neuroscience School President
Annie Newman	Rector's Assessor - Chair
Louise McCaul	Science & Medicine Faculty President
Imogen Hawley	Social Anthropology School President
Prof Lorna Milne	Vice Principal (Proctor)

Absent

Member's Name	Position
Kirsty Mearns	Economics & Finance School President
Verity Baynton	Modern languages School President
VACANT	PG Convenor

DRAFT

1. Apologies

Member's Name	Position
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. Advising

Joe introduced this agenda item. The Education Committee wrote two separate proposals: 1) enhancement of the advising system; 2) changing the name of the advising system.

Raghav introduced the first paper. He had talked with students to gather feedback. He had also collected examples of best practices from some of the schools and was proposing to adapt these to other schools. He argued that academic tutors know the content of modules and would, therefore, be more able that the Careers Centre' staff to advise students about modules that are oriented to a specific postgraduate path.

In this paper, Raghav was also proposing a cross-departmental advising system in sub-honours. Sub-honour students would be given the contact details of a member of academic staff in the other Schools in which they are taking modules.

Eilidh introduced the second paper. She had talked with students about what they normally expect from their advisor. She had also met with the pro-dean advising (Arts and Divinity) and came to the conclusion that students are happy with the system, but they do not understand what it is there for. Students seem to think that it is there for pastoral purposes, whereas they should refer to other University services specialised in this area. Eilidh stated that they needed a clearer concept of advising, while advertising better the other support systems of the University. The fact that students think of "advising" as "advice" shows that the term is ambiguous, with the consequences of advisers feeling uncomfortable because they are asked things that are outside their remit, and students feeling they are not getting what they expected. For these reasons, she presented her paper on name-change. She also stressed that there is not a lot of information online—or it is not easily accessible.

Prof. Milne replied that they needed to investigate on this and asked for electronic copies of the papers. About the suggestion of personal tutors for students, she said that it would only be possibile in Schools like Medicine, where there is one cohort of staff and one of students. She stated that, in the other faculties, students move frequently and staff might go on research leave at some point during a students' degree. This would lead to a student's personal tutor changing during the course of their degree, and would lead to disappointment. She stated that they had already considered this in the past and decided that it would not work in St Andrews.

Joe suggested some possible names to substitute the term "advising", including "registering", "scheduling", and "matriculation".

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Prof. Hibber stated that they should make sure that the other relevant University services (Careers Centre, Student Services) are adequately signposted.

Prof. Dearle said that he had worked on an advising project in the past and he was in favour of using the time students have with their avisors to do more. He asked if Eilidh and Raghav had some data of students' feedback. Eilidh replied that she mainly spoke with students in person, but she could look back in her email inbox to find names.

Annie asked attendees to send feedback to Joe or the Deans, as well as sending electronic copies to the Deans and the Proctor. **Action point.**

5. Undergraduate Research Conferences

Prof. Hibbert said that he had heard that students in Glasgow had organised an UG conference in History. He asked how common these conferences are, and whether he should enourage them in St Andrews?

Megan replied that the History society organised one in St Andrews and it was successful. There should be another in the second half of semester 2 for 4th-year students. Other attendees made examples of other conferences happening in St Andrews and in other Universities.

Prof. Milne asked if there was interest in an interdisciplinary conference for UG, featuring students from more than one school, potentially with a competition. She asked for feedback.

Action: All to send Prof. Milne ideas and feedback on the topic of UG conferences.

6. Joint Honours

Eleanor reported that she run a focus group on JHs and wrote a paper on the outcome of the meetings. She identified seven areas, where the JH experience could be improved. She covered the points that she made in her paper, including her suggestions. She reported that many students were positive about the JH experience.

Prof. Milne and the Deans replied that they needed time to read the paper and wanted to get feedback also from other Education Committee members.

Tomi explained how things worked in Physics and agreed with some of the points Eleanor made, including study abroad and representation, but he agreed less with points like information and workload.

Megan stressed that creating JH handbooks would really have a positive impact. She was concerned about giving JH students priority in modules because this could make other students unhappy. Eleanor replied that, often, JH students are given their 4th ot 5th choice out of 6. She proposed that JH students would at least be garantueed one of their first three choices because some JH students in her working group felt they had less flexibility, and they felt they belonged less to a certain school than their single honour peers.

Annie asked all to send feedback to Eleanor by email. **Action point.**

7. Joint Dissertations

Eleanor stated that, despite the fact that joint dissertations were now allowed, students got very little support in schools. Some schools were putting a ban on joint dissertations without even letting students try.

Prof. Dearle stated that progress on joint dissertation had been slow, but he was not aware of these bans. He said that there might be some technical reasons. For instance, the School of Management has a two-part dissertation, which makes it difficult to split it with another school. He said that, ideally, more work should be done in standardising how dissertations work in the University.

8. Students' Association Elections

Joe encouraged members of the Education Committee to stand for DoRep, and to talk with him, if interested.

He also reminded that SPs were responsible for organising SPs' hustings in their school. Some SPs reported that they are used to doing paper hustings.

9. iSaint

Prof. Milne asked for feedback on iSaint and whether it is user friendly. Louise replied that she did not know what to use it for. Eilidh reported that the library link was occasionally offline. Joe said that he had used it to get into MMS and into eVision. Eilidh said that students need it, whether they like it or not. Sally said that it is a really useful portal because everything is there in one place. Tomi agreed with Sally. Raghav said that he used it in sub-honours, but he found it a bit slow and crashing. Prof. Dearle asked from which devices students used it (e.g. laptops, phones, tablets). SPs replied that they access it from all devices.

10. AOCB

Somebody raised the issue of MEQs getting a low response rate—below 30% in some modules. Prof. Dearle stated to email Stella Simpson (sjs25@) about this issue. Mira said that, in IR, they had the same issue last year, but it had now been solved thanks to the tutors asking students to complete the MEQs in class.

The meeting adjourned.

Next meeting:

School Presidents' Forum, Monday 4 April, 17:15, Committee Room