



University of St Andrews Students' Association Education Committee

MINUTES

Monday 29 February 2016 – Committee Room – 6pm

Present

Member's Name

Lily Barnes
Eleanor Mullin
Amelia Hunter
Claire Brodie
Marjan Magharehi
Tim Stackhouse
Sarah Alexander
Kirsty Mearns
Ilaria Gidoro
Kit Klaes
Nic Wells
Megan Bruce
Raghav Mehra
Hussain Raja
Verity Baynton
Sally Allmark
Tomi Baikie
Deborah Moffett
Louise McCaul
Imogen Hawley

Position

Art History School President
Arts & Divinity Faculty President
Biology School President
Chemistry School President
Classics School President
Divinity School President
Earth & Environmental Science School President
Economics & Finance School President
Education and Representation Coordinator (Minutes)
Film Studies & Music School President
Geography & SD School President
History School President
Mathematics & Statistics School President
Medicine School President
Modern Languages School President
Philosophy School President
Physics & Astronomy School President
Psychology & Neuroscience School President
Science & Medicine Faculty President
Social Anthropology School President

Absent

Jesse Galapia
VACANT

ELT President
Postgraduate Convenor

1. Apologies

Maria Kustikova
Joe Tantillo
Eilidh Reid
Mira Boneva
Louis Fearn

Computer Science School President
Director of Representation
English School President
International Relations School President
Management School President

2. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

3. Approval of Minutes

Minutes would be circulated and approved electronically.

4. Reports/Catch up

Every SP gave a short report. Upcoming and/or recent events/meetings included: focus groups, a book binding workshop in the School of Art History, career conferences, SSCCs, class reps forums, an open forum on diversity in the School of Maths, student-staff dinners, balls, a dissertation briefing, a finalist's reception in the School of Modern Languages, burns trips, a Learning and Teaching reviews and an external review in the School of Chemistry, fundraising events, football tournaments, a pizza party, wine & cheese nights, a red carpet event in Film Studies, and a review for the Music department.

Eleanor was designing a survey about diversity of assessment.

Raghav informed that the School of Maths was piloting mid-semester MEQs. Physics and Maths wanted to make joint honours reps sit in both SSCCs (in both Schools). Raghav asked if any Arts SP was interested in doing a session for Maths students on how to write an essay. Eleanor suggested Raghav looked into CAPOD courses organised for this purpose.

Megan had set up a mentoring scheme and it had been taken on as one of the University's case studies for the transition themes. She recommended every SP looked into the possibility of organising a mentoring scheme in their schools. She had written a handbook and she was willing to share it. *(Later note: Ilaria has this handbook and can circulate it to those who are interested.)*

Imogen was working on helping staff to get Athena swan accreditation.

5. Working group updates

5.1. Early Information

Louise was writing a report to be circulated. However, only three SPs seemed to have problems about early information. Verity was concerned that students in Modern Languages found it difficult to find information online. Sally reported that her MLitt Rep was complaining that they had not received a lot of information. This was the case in History, too.

5.2. Feedback

Sally said that the working group was moving slowly. She had circulated a survey and asked all to complete it. **Action Point: All SPs to circulate Sally's survey among their students.** In general, people seemed happy enough about feedback.

5.3. Supervision

The working group needed to follow up on whether people were still happy about the level of dissertation supervision, especially in the Humanites. Megan stated that students in History complained about the relative amount of supervision they got for Honours projects compared to the amount that other students got for dissertations and noted that there was a disparity.

Deborah said that there was an issue in her School with Masters' students when switchin topics because there was little or no flexibility from staff.

Kirsty reported that, in Economics and Finance, there had been little dissertation supervision this year and some people were unhappy.

Eleanor stated that every student should have at least 5 hours of supervision per semester. They asked if it was supposed to be 5 hours per 30 credits. Nobody remembered for sure.

Action Point: Joe to find this information.

Imogen said that the amount of supervision had also been a problem in Social Anthropology last year. The School believed that solving this problem would help improve NSS results.

5.4. Diversity of Assessment

Eleanor was designing a survey, which she would circulate. She withdrew this item from the agenda for all the following meetings.

5.5. Joint Honours

Eleanor asked all to email her their opinions on the final report she had written and that she would circulate soon.

5.6. Advising

Raghav was finishing a draft of his paper on changing the advising system, to be taken to the next School Presidents' Forum. The deadline for the final paper was set to be two weeks before the SPF.

6. Class Reps Recognition on HEAR

Megan stated that they had been working on this proposal to try to solve the problem of non-functioning class reps. They had set criteria for class reps to get the recognition. She asked for feedback. Megan stresses that working towards this recognition was not mandatory for a class rep.

Sally said that reading all the reports from class reps seemed a lot of work for the SP. Megan replied that the report is very short (300 words). If more class reps were engaged and worked towards the recognitions, SPs would be able to delegate tasks to them and this would still reduce the SPs' time commitment, even though they had to read reports at the end of each semester.

Kirsty said that, in her opinion, having these criteria also helped class reps better understand their role.

Some more feedback was collected.

7. Urkund

Megan said that the University had switched from Turnitin to Urkund. She thought that Urkund was not as effective as Turnitin. St Andrews was the only University in Scotland to use Urkund. It was only used by high schools. This item was shortly discussed. It was proposed to ask more about this choice at the next SPF as a clarification.

8. Privileges of School Societies

Hussain said that, sometimes, societies have more privileges than the SP, which even extend beyond their remit, e.g. the Medical Society has their own room. The School sponsored the society. He was going to raise this point with the Dean. Eleanor said that, if the Dean would not collaborate, Hussain could discuss it with the Proctor and, failing this, with the Rector.

Deborah asked if Hussain was aware of discontent about this? Hussain replied that, yes, he was aware of student discontent. Some students also thought that the Society was not very inclusive.

9. PG Business

Ilaria announced that two new positions had been created, at last: the PG Academic Convenor and the PG Development Officer and asked all SPs to advertise these as much as possible for the elections.

Some SPs said that PG students tended to solve problems themselves or they do not think to reach out to the SP when having problems. A SP said that PG reps were not passing any feedback before meetings but, when meeting them, it turned out that they were experiencing a lot of problems.

Claire stated that one of her PG reps said that, in Chemistry, only a small percentage of students goes into academia and, for this reason, they were proposing to start a system for PhD students to develop professional skills. Louise said that CAPOD offer courses, but people do not tend to attend them much. The PG rep was also asking to get more career advice (not related to academia). However, their supervisors were usually only able to advice on academia because they had no personal experience of other jobs. Louise suggested Claire or her PG reps talked with the HoS.

10. AOCB

Ilaria stated that the Teaching Awards had already received many nominations (340+), but not many in the categories of Postgraduate Research Thesis Supervisor, Commitment by a Support Staff Member and Innovating in Teaching. Ilaria had received one nomination for the Proctor's Award.

The meeting adjourned.

Next meetings:

Education Committee Meeting, Monday 28 March, 6 pm, Committee Room.