



University of St Andrews Students' Association School Presidents' Forum

MINUTES

Monday 4 April 2016 – Committee Room – 17:15

Present

Member's Name

Lily Barnes
Eleanor Mullin
Amelia Hunter
Claire Brodie
Marjan Magharehi
Prof Paul Hibbert
Joe Tantillo
Jack Carr
Tim Stackhouse
Sarah Alexander
Kirsty Mearns
Ilaria Gidoro
Jesse Galapia
Eilidh Reid
Kit Klaes
Megan Bruce
Louis Fearn
Hussain Raja
Verity Baynton
Sally Allmark
Tomi Baikie
Dr Graham Kirby
Deborah Moffett
Annie Newman
Louise McCaul
Imogen Hawley
Prof Lorna Milne

Position

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

Absent

Member's Name

Position

1. Apologies

Member's Name

Prof Alan Dearle

Position

Dean of Science

Maria Kustikova	Computer Science School President
Nicholas Wells	Geography & SD School President
Mira Boneva	International Relations School President
Raghav Mehra	Mathematics & Statistics School President
VACANT	PG Convenor
Catherine Stihler	Rector

The apologies were accepted without dissent.

2. Matters Arising

Joe asked all SPs to check if joint dissertations were happening in their Schools and to collate information.

Action Point: All SPs to investigate if joint dissertations are happening in their Schools.

3. Approval of Minutes

Minutes would be circulated and approved electronically.

4. Advising (Joe, Raghav, Eilidh)

Joe introduced this agenda item. The Education Committee wanted to advocate for a better advising system in the long run. In the short term, they were proposing to change the name of advising because this caused students' confusion. Some proposed names were scheduling and module registration.

Eilidh presented her paper on name-change. She had spoken with the Pro Dean Advising – Art & Divinity. It was clear that the students and the University had two different perspectives on what advising was. Students saw it as pastoral care, as a support system. It would be better to advertise more the other services where students can find this kind of support. There was a necessity for a clarification of the purpose of advising. The situation was made more difficult as it was hard to find information on advising on the University website, and there was not a clear definition. Only the School of Biology had a clear definition on their website.

Dr Kirby agreed that the University needed to publicise better what other support was available to students. He had tried to find a definition of advising and he had found a definition of the role of advisors, which was too general and needed to be made clearer, in his opinion. He stated that, in his opinion, the term 'scheduling' was inaccurate. His preference was for 'academic advisors' or 'advisors of studies'.

Joe stated that, after carrying out a research in most Schools, they had realised that academic advice was not provided during advising meetings. These meetings lasted only a few minutes and were mainly bureaucratic, especially in large Schools like IR. These meetings mainly focused on registration and scheduling. If the University agreed that academic guidance was supposed to be the main focus of these meetings, then the advising system needed to be changed. Eleanor stressed that, if the University retained the word 'advising', students would still have the expectation of receiving advice.

Dr Kirby replied that his preference to deal with this problem was to improve the role of advising. However, this would not perhaps be practical in all schools. Prof Hibbert stated that the University needed to work on a better role specification of advisors and use it to work with the Schools and clarify what advisors were expected to do.

Action point: The University to make a clear role specification for advisors and clarify this with the Schools and the advisers.

Prof. Hibbert also stressed the difficulty to find lecturers willing to be advisors. Calling this 'scheduling' could make it even more difficult. Eilidh replied that there was still a lack of connection between the name and what happened in advising meetings.

Joe asked the University how long it would take to get to the point where every student gets a 15, 20, or 30-minute meeting on academic advising. In the short term, a name change would be the most realistic solution.

Eilidh stressed that the University should capitalise on the services that already exist, and make sure that the information is readily available to students.

Prof. Milne stated that the Deans and she would find clarity on this and look for where students find information. She asked if SPs would be available for a further workshop on this later on. She proposed that, perhaps, the University could make a video clip to explain what advising was. She said that they would discuss this and then report back to the SPs before the end of their terms.

Action Point: The Deans and the Proctor to further discuss advising and report back to the School Presidents.

5. Class Reps Recognition (Megan)

Megan introduced this item and presented the paper that some members of the Education Committee wrote. The SPs were having issues with class representatives, as the majority did not fulfil their role description, with the consequence that SPs had even more workload. The few class reps that do fulfil their role, do not receive any recognition.

Prof. Milne asked how the process to get the recognition would work. Megan replied that all the stages were outlined in the paper. She stressed that there was a clear difference between the class reps who did enough as part of their role, and those who did not. In the current situation, not many class reps this year would have received the recognition. This would be only a small percentage of the about 330 reps.

Prof. Milne was concerned that, giving the recognition to class reps would create a lack of distinction between the role of class rep and of SP and, consequently, the SP recognition would have less value. Joe noticed that the PSC (Professional Skills Curriculum) appeared on the HEAR and it was easy to get (probably, it would take a student fewer hours than being a class rep.) Prof. Milne said that they were careful in putting on the HEAR only achievements that were verifiable. Joe replied that, with the process they were proposing and the requirements to get the recognition, class reps' work would also be easily verifiable.

Lily stressed that this was also a way to encourage class reps to do more. She stated that, as a School President, she had done almost everything by herself even though she had a team of 11 class reps. Eleanor also mentioned that the proposal had a revision date and, in the future, the criteria for the recognition could be made stricter.

Tomi asked if the Students' Association could create another award for class reps, like a certificate, or Honorary Life Membership, or entry to events for free. Kirsty said that, in her opinion, even if every School

had an internal award system, this would not encourage class reps to do their job more effectively. The recognition on the HEAR would do this because future employers would see it.

Ilaria stated that many Students' Association in Scotland give the recognition to class reps on the HEAR, and some do without even having criteria, apart from attending the training. Prof. Milne stressed that she thought that giving them a recognition would devalue the other awards. It should be an outstanding achievement. She supported Tomi's idea of creating an award within the Students' Association.

6. Mental Health and Confidentiality (Proctor)

In the recent article published by The Saint about a DoT, who told a student with mental health issues to leave the University, there were mistakes, which were not The Saint's fault. They referred to a policy on confidentiality that was outdated. The University website still had, by mistake, a link to this old policy. Prof. Milne wanted to clarify that, if a student had a disability or other issue, and they mentioned it to a member of staff, this member of staff would not have to maintain confidentiality. The details should not be passed, but the School should have a summary of the circumstances.

7. Joint Honours (Eleanor)

Eleanor presented her paper on Joint Honours and explained the various parts in detail. She also clarified that this was more of a long-term strategy and they were not asking for all this to be implemented immediately.

It was discussed that some JH students felt a lack of sense of community, as they did not feel part of any of the Schools in which they were graduating. Prof. Hibbert said that, perhaps, this could be partly solved by improving the advising system, and they would look at the advisors' role description in the near future, as discussed above.

Lily said that there were also other issues, including timetable clashes because the two Schools were not able to coordinate. Prof. Hibbert said that this issue had already been addressed in the past, and they had started an IT project that should solve it.

Prof. Hibber stated that they needed to gather more information from the DoTs to know what their policies were in treating JH students—e.g. if they prioritised single honours students and why. They needed to investigate this further before being able to reply. He also wanted to ask DoTs how they managed lectures' clashes.

Action Point: The Deans to investigate JHs further in each School.

Eleanor said that she had no evidence of single honours students being given priority and it was not the message she wanted to convey.

Eilidh stated that, for example, in Modern Languages, there were often clashes. Prof. Hibber would ask this question directly to the DoT of the School.

Action Point: Prof. Hibbert to investigate the situation in the School of Modern Languages.

About joint dissertations, Prof. Milne stated that every student needed to have enough supervision. Joe added that he was aware that, in some Schools, when students asked about joint dissertations, they were told that these did not exist. Kirsty said that the School of Economics was not allowing joint dissertations at all. Prof. Hibbert stated that he would ask the DoT.

Action point: Prof. Hibbert to talk with the Economics' DoT about joint dissertations.

Prof. Hibbert said that a good way to start moving towards better joint dissertation processes would be to start from the schools that are often connected in joint honours. He suggested the relevant SPs meet together with the HoSs.

Eleanor stated that she would like to see something concrete as a result of this paper, even next year with Sally. She asked if she or Sally could do anything in the meantime. Prof. Hibbert said that they first needed to get a lot of relevant information.

Action Point: the Deans (and Proctor?) to get information on the JHs situation.

8. AOCB

Joe thanked the Proctor and the Deans for attending these meetings over the year. He stressed that the School Presidents Forum was a great forum to communicate. Prof. Milne said that it had been a pleasure to work with such dedicated people, for ideas and feedback.

The meeting adjourned.