

**School Presidents’ Forum**

**14th of October 2019, 5pm**

**Students’ Association Small Rehearsal Room**

**Minutes**

1. Welcome & Introductions
2. Apologies

Apologies from Medical Dean

1. Matters Arising
   1. Graduate attributes (JI)

Dean of Science: How do we link our curriculum to what we do next in our lives – one of the things that is most noticeable in the feedback is that there isn’t enough connection between our studies and the outside world. What sorts of things would we like to see happen in order to improve this disconnect?

Seamus, CS Pres: Vertically integrated projects seem very positive.

Proctor: VIPs have been run for 10-15 years in many institutions globally. These are credit bearing modules, which you’re allowed to join at any point during your studies. You gain credits as you work on the module, and you work with a group of students to answer a question concerning various topics, led by an academic. In your first year, you would learn the details of the project, and towards the end of your degree you’d take up a leadership role. The projects could have multiple applications to the real world, the scope of which involves many disciplines. Applications would be required for projects, which are not dissimilar to IGEM.

Morganne, Biology SP: The general impression of these projects is that they are very general. They should be at least Faculty specific, if not School specific.

Natalia, Psych/Neuro SP: Coding skills are particularly important. Feedback has already been given about these projects.

Lot, EarthSci SP: In Earth Science, industry specialists teach part of some modules, and mark some assignments. This is received well generally, but it is important that students are aware of the expectations of the industry when submitting assignments. It would be best to organise a scheme which explains this.

Postgrad SP: instead of a classic dissertation, they do a policy brief/portfolio shareable with future employers. This type of project can be worked on in conjunction with organisations around the world, and not limited to St Andrews. Could work in context with IR or similar.

Ross, Music Centre SP: In the Music Centre, external examiners come in for practical modules; they only mark work in Honours modules. They expect very high standards, students tend to get marked quite harshly, usually because the students in this School take music modules on top of their main degrees and are not professional musicians, which is the standard in other insitutions.

Rhiannon, Geo/SD SP: students are very keen on the idea of VIPs, but not sure about working with other students – being dependable on others isn’t always well received.

Proctor: Most of the time, students on the project would be selected based on module marks etc. Systems in other universities allow students to ‘mark’ other students based on their contribution.

Dean of Arts: Your contribution to the team is measured in terms of merit, so regardless of others you’d still get credit for work you do. Long term data analysis shows that students’ marks do not suffer and they perform as expected when working with other students. Even if your grade dips marginally, your employability/resume improves drastically from doing a VIP.

Dean of Science: Students can come in to work on the project for temporary periods of time (1 year) when your credits allow. These are real life projects and are linked to industry.

Elisa/Film Studies SP: In Film Studies, all lecturers actively research the topics they teach and send opportunities for students to collaborate on a specific project etc but there isn’t much guidance as to the skills needed for some of these projects.

Natalia/Psych SP: Psych has its own magazine which allows students to publish articles/gain experience with writing. In general, the School is good at teaching students transferable skills. They host the Science Fair every year and are in charge of coordinating the public engagement effort. Throughout the curriculum, you’re expected to give talks/seminars and some classes are student led. They have Friday seminars with industry/academic professionals.

General: Students enjoy the opportunity to work with staff.

Dean of Science: What are we not doing, that we could do? Could we have a Connected Curriculum, where students are able to connect with other students/lecturers not directly related to their degree, as well as businesses/industry contacts.

Joel, Classics SP: Schools are doing things independently, rather than collaborating with others as a whole. Perhaps making resources from other schools accessible to everyone – Faculty-wide journals rather than School specific.

Dean of Science: Students running Faculty-wide journals is definitely a good idea, can lookinto organising this.

**ACTION: DoEd to discuss the prospect of Faculty-based student journals with the School Presidents**

* 1. External Examiner Reports (CP)

Proctor: When you have SSCCs, please ask DoTs to provide the External Examiner reports for discussion. DoTs are required to do this.

* 1. Careers Centre guidance (AB)

Seamus, CS SP: There is a lack of knowledge about what the Career Centre does. It generally should not fall on SPs to be the core of Career events. Careers Centre resources should be used differently.

Maddie, History SP: Careers link – also some ambiguity in this role.

Proctor: Careers Centre has a new director, they are in process of writing a new strategy etc. Careers links within Schools are new, and the new director is working much more closely with them in order to confirm what their roles are within schools and how they can make themselves most useful. It’s important that SPs continue to give their input into what kind of career events are needed within each school.

Rhiannon, Geo/SD SP: Students in this School have established a Careers Committee.

General: SPs want to work together with the Careers Centre, not separately.

Music: Often have to piggyback other Schools’ careers events, which isn’t ideal because there are no music-specific Careers Centre contacts.

Dean of Arts: Those of you who do not have links should make contact with the new Director of the Careers Centre.

Morganne, Biology SP: Each Careers Centre employee is assigned to a School, but the reps don’t always have experience in their respective School. Advice they offered isn’t always tailored to the students because of this.

Sophia, ArtsDiv FP: Students are thankful for the Careers Centre, but the advice offered is too general sometimes and not detailed enough.

Valeria, Econ SP: There are concerns in Econ/Finance that 1st years get no support, in 2nd year Career Reps talk to them about opportunities, but this is quite stressful because students don’t know the Careers Centre exists until that point.

Amy, Physics SP: When you go to the Careers Centre, people tend to do their own background research beforehand, they come prepared and have ideas about what to do, but the Careers Centre doesn’t help because they don’t have the resources to do so.

Lot, Earthsci SP: It’s unclear what the Careers Centre can do to help students, which can be frustrating.

**ACTION: Iona to reach out to Careers Centre about careers resources available to Music**

: **DoEd to set up a meeting with Director of Careers Centre and School Presidents**

* 1. Wellbeing representatives in Schools (AB)

Maddie, History SP: If there’s no specific wellbeing rep, it falls on the DoT, who is already very busy – if the rep isn’t trained, then they don’t have the resources or the knowledge to help students.

Rhiannon, Geo/SD SP: In Geo/SD the rep is the ProDean, they have multiple reps (male, female) and have more of them trained.

Proctor: It’s a good idea for the entire institution. There’s a mental health strategy being written right now – this includes the role of wellbeing officers and the need to roll them out across all the Schools. It’s a challenge because some Schools are very small and staff hold multiple roles already. It is difficult to avoid conflicts of interest and providing reps of multiple genders may be an issue. The goal is to have a point of contact, but students should be comfortable going to any of their lecturers.

Dean of Arts: A full day course is available for lecturers, called the Mental Health Toolkit – there could be a number of staff within every School who attend this and a list kept of these staff which would be available to students. Having only one Wellbeing Rep can be a stressful job for only one person, a more casual approach to wellbeing (with training) may be more favourable.

Maddie, History SP: A tab could be included on the University website about mental health and the open door policy

Amy, DoEd: Wellbeing posters are being made as a general guide for who to contact in case of emergency

Charlotte, Chemistry SP: Will the Mental Health Strategy outline what the role of a wellbeing rep is? Can students contribute to defining this role?

Proctor: No – the strategy only goes over the installation of a wellbeing rep in every school who isn’t a DoT. DoT was typically doing a good job in the role, but it was a lot for them to handle. Student Services should be the first point of contact for anyone having a wellbeing issue.

**ACTION: DoEd to liaise with Student Services about the possibility of creating a list of staff members who have completed Mental Health Toolkit Training**

* 1. MEQs (AB)

Nathan, Medicine SP: Med students take one 60 credit module, compared to three 20 credit modules – the MEQs ask how much work students do per week, but this is capped at 20+ hours. This is nonsensical; students should be given a middle value at ~40 hours.

Morganne, Biology SP: More bands would be favourable, 0-10,10-20 etc. instead of 0-5, 5-10, etc.

Nathan: MEQ which asks about assessment of the module: do you think you’re assessed fairly? But most of the assignments in medicine are assessed after the MEQs are submitted. This is nonsensical.

Proctor: MEQs outside of teaching hours have much lower response rates, so this is not an option. Some Universities have got rid of MEQs completely, the general consensus is that this is not good.

Charlotte, Chem SP: A lot of the questions for Chemistry are not relevant until after the exam, e.g. how well prepared do you feel for assessments?

Morganne: It could be better to ask ‘Is the assessment program fair? Is the balance of coursework/exam fair?’ - Instead of ‘Has your marking on this module been fair?’

Dean of Arts: There has work been undertaken aimed at eliminating unconscious bias (e.g. women/minorities being given lower marks). If there is a specific point that can be made further on from a question, students should use the free text responses. Comparability is needed between subjects to see how departments are performing across University, which is the reason questions cannot be adjusted between Departments.

Sophia, ArtDiv FP: Make the part about free text much clearer, signposting it to remind students to expand on their answers if needed.

Maddie, History SP: In history, there’s an initiative to close the loop with MEQ feedback. Would appreciate if students knew that their feedback has been analysed and acted upon, as this encourages students to give feedback in the first place.

Dean of Arts: Responding to feedback should occur across the board.

Nathan: At the beginning of next semester, all feedback could be summarised and changes made known to students.

**ACTION: Dean of Arts to follow up on MEQ matter.**

1. AOCB

1. Seamus, CS SP: Resource constraints, CS lacks resources in some areas. Lab facilities, teaching areas etc. Noticeable decrease in the quality of the school (e.g. coursework marking). How is this being addressed given the planned increase in student numbers? The situation is the same with Biology, Physics.

Proctor: This is being addressed. There is planned development to expand the provision of accommodation and teaching space in the North Haugh. They are aware of this issue. The admissions process is difficult, in that targets have to be met by making a certain amount of offers, with the expectation that only a certain percent of students will be accept these. Schools such as psychology have made adjustments when struggling for space, such as doubling the number of PCs. The Younger Hall refurbishment to make it a 500 seat lecture theatre will lessen pressure on Physics lecture theatres. The Butts Wynd refurbishment will provide more teaching space.

Dean of Arts: St Andrews has no active growth target until resources have been built. Staff-student ratio has not dropped significantly. Lab space and library space are tight and the University is aware of this. The online tool ‘Findspace’ was made to target these issues.

Nathan, Med SP: Cafes in Physics and Medicine are packed too. Something like 500+ people trying to eat lunch in 1-2 spaces is not feasible.

Proctor: The cafe space issue is known and being addressed as well. A survey has recently been taken relating to student/study spaces ratio; St Andrews is one of the best in the sector at 6/1.

2. Proctor: Update on Enhancement Led Institutional Review is happening this year. The University has submitted a reflective analysis, a 100 page doc going to the QAA. Team of reviewers will be here in the Spring for two days then come back for another week – they will ask to meet with some SPs to gain opinions on the University and how it delivers its education etc. Just a warning that they’ll be here in the spring. This is a fantastic opportunity for more feedback – the University gets a detailed report at the end of the review with commendations where applicable and recommendations for improvement.