

President of the School of Economics and Finance Semester 1 Report 2017-2018

1. Introduction

This report is intended to detail the work of the School President and Class Representatives alongside the School of Economics and Finance faculty during Semester 1 of the 2017-2018 academic year. Hopefully it will show that students' suggestions are being taken up and that the student representation system within the University is being fully utilised. We had a productive first semester and are looking forward to a great second semester!

Warmest wishes,

Alison Quinn

School President of Economics and Finance, 2017-2018

2. Freshers' week & welcome events

The School hosted social events during Freshers' week for each year to welcome students to, or back to, St Andrews. Each event was well attended and allowed students the opportunity to socialise with staff and fellow students. As the School of Economics is so large, creating a sense of community is a priority.

- Honours students had a Wine & Cheese on the Tuesday of Freshers' week.
- Sub-honours Economics and Finance students were welcomed to a Pizza Lunch on the Wednesday of Freshers' week. There were so many students that we ran out of pizza!
- Postgraduates had a Wine & Cheese on the Thursday of Freshers' week.

In the Thursday and Friday of Freshers' week, the School organised one-hour introductory lectures for Honours classes in first semester. These were very helpful for students to decide which modules they wished to take and gain insight into the material covered.

During the first week of classes, I visited the first and second year courses to introduce myself and encourage students to run for the Class Representative positions. I also encouraged students to join their class' Facebook page so that they can easily receive updates.

3. Elections

As suggested by the Director of Teaching, a postgraduate Class Rep position for MSc Finance and Economics was added. MSc Economics and MSc Finance positions existed but Finance and Economics is a popular degree programme so will be represented separately as well.

Upon consulting with the previous School President and the Director of Teaching, the Class Rep position for the William & Mary Joint degree programme was eliminated as it has a limited constituency.

Each election position was filled, with many candidates for first and second year positions. Voting was only open for two days and, despite many emails, quite a few students did not vote. Next year, perhaps in-class announcements to mark the beginning of the voting period would be helpful.

The available positions were as follows: EC1000 (2), EC2000 (2), EC3000 (Economics), EC3000 (Joint Economics), EC3000 (Financial Economics), EC4000 (Economics), EC4000 (Joint Economics), EC4000 (Financial Economics), MSc Economics, MSc Finance, MSc Money, Banking & Finance, PGR Rep.

4. Social media

As coordinated by the Director of Student Experience, the School of Economics began running social media pages including Instagram (@econstandrews) and Twitter (@econstandrews). Student volunteers now make contributions to these pages. The "School of Economics and Finance Events" Facebook page is also used to advertise upcoming events.

5. SSCC 06/10

Full minutes of the SSCC meetings are available on the Economics website. The following decisions or changes were made based on student feedback and professors' input.

Weekly quizzes

Weekly online quizzes were introduced for first years last year and will be continued into second-year modules. These were very popular in first year as it provided students with the opportunity to demonstrate learning and review lectures throughout the semester. Especially in subhonours, this is an important change to help students make a smooth transition into University-level courses.

Summer Undergraduate Research Assistantships

Undergraduate Research Assistantships will be made available to students during the summer. Previously, there were open application periods at the beginning of first and second semester and the term of the assistantship was one semester.

As many faculty members are doing research over the summer, there will be an application period for separate summer assistantships. These will be paid with the same scheme as the existing assistantship programme and professors may specify whether students can work remotely on these projects or must be in St Andrews. This programme will provide a greater number of students the opportunity to complete assistantships and professors help with their research.

Introduction to second-semester courses

The introductory courses in first semester were so popular that we sought to replicate this experience with second semester courses. We initially hoped to host introductory lectures for second semester courses in first semester, before advising, but schedules would not permit full lectures to be hosted.

At the beginning of second semester this year, there will be a Module Fayre during which students can speak to professors about their courses and briefly hear about the material covered. This suggestion was initially brought forward by a postgraduate class representative, but was taken up by undergraduates as well. Next year, professors will host 10-15 minute introductions to their courses so that students can briefly hear about the modules before advising.

Introduction to honours

As suggested by a second-year class representative, there will be an “Introduction to Honours” event talk held during a lecture in second semester. The topics covered will include the credit course-load in Honours, which is especially applicable to Joint Honours students. Also, this talk will address the suggested classes for Masters’ programmes and which courses compliment each-other.

6. Postgraduate SSCC 06/10

Consistent and detailed module outlines

According to PG class reps, there is great variety in the module outlines provided. As students have completed undergraduate studies, typically in economics, knowing the content covered during the module is especially important. There will be a standardised module outline that shows the texts used and topics covered so that students can ensure that they are choosing classes that do not greatly overlap with previous studies.

Funding for field research for dissertation

Postgraduate students complete their dissertations over the summer before graduation. One class rep suggested that a dissertation stipend be made available to postgraduate students who are seeking field research opportunities. A funding proposal has been provided to the Head of School, and will be discussed amongst the Teaching Committee.

7. SSCC 03/11

Audio recording lectures

Posting audio recordings of lectures was thoroughly discussed in this meeting. It is frequently requested by students and, when lectures are posted, greatly appreciated. Concerns were raised about student participation in classes that were recorded so the class representatives and I will talk to students during second semester to gather more information about student preferences. Additionally, professors were concerned that they had not received training on using Panopto, so opportunities for training will be better advertised.

Lectures & tests

The School was split between Professors who hosted lectures before or after one hour tests and those who did not. Students felt that hosting a lecture in the same hour as a test was not as productive as other lectures. After deferring the decision to the Teaching Committee, it was decided that lectures would not be held in the same two-hour block as tests and a 19 lecture hour schedule would be implemented in first semester.

8. Postgraduate SSCC 03/11

Community-building for postgraduates

Postgraduates suggested hosting a weekend event in second semester during which they could present their research thesis and socialise. The class reps and I will be working on coming up with events that would likely be popular and useful during this type of event. Hosting a trip, like one to the Burn, would be ideal but we will first come up with a suggested itinerary and proposal.

Tested material will first be covered in tutorials

There was a problem of material being tested that had yet to be covered in tutorials. It was decided that this would no longer be the case as students can benefit from the opportunity to ask questions before evaluations.

9. End of semester social events

To finish the semester, the School hosted events for each year. First years were invited to a pizza party, while other years and postgraduates were invited to a "Cocktails & Consumption Functions" themed party.

Senior honours students also attended a Maisha dinner with Economics staff members. Students had an excellent time and we were able to further facilitate community within the Economics department.

10. Semester 2

During second semester, we hope to emphasise careers opportunities more heavily. I have started a blog to update with careers news so that students' inboxes are not overwhelmed and relevant information is easily accessible. The careers' representative and I will also work on organising an event to host St Andrews alumni and discuss potential careers paths.

Additionally, we will be hosting a pub quiz night, scavenger hunt and the Bull & Bear Ball. We will also be continuing to host student-staff lunches that were quite popular in first semester.

We have had a great start and I am looking forward to continuing working to better the School of Economics and Finance into the following year!