

# School Presidents' Forum

13 October 2014, 5.15pm, Lower College Lawn

## MINUTES

**Present:** Ondrej Hajda (Director of Representation), Darya Smironva (Education Officer), Tania Strützel (Postgraduate Convenor), Charlotte Potter (Arts/Divinity Faculty Presidents), Hannah Chinn (Art History), Louise Cameron (Biology), Rhiann Ferguson (Chemistry), Maxwell Fabiszewski (Classics), Alexey Sazonov (Computer Science), Alex Taylor (Divinity), Katy Relph (Earth & Environmental Sciences), Oliver Harrison (Economics & Finance), Hannah Smith (English), George King (Geography & Sustainable Development), Jack Carr (History), Ainikki Riikonen (International Relations), Yeung Cheung (Management), Kelly Johnston (Mathematics & Statistics), Dawnn Khoo (Medicine), Janine Gallagher (Modern Languages), Eleanor Mullin (Philosophy), Louise McCaul (Physics & Astronomy), Yuet So (ELT Society Representative), Professor Lorna Milne (Proctor), Professor Al Dearle (Dean of Science).

**Apologies:** Alistair Moffat (Rector), Katy Rae (Science/Medicine Faculty President), Danielle Polemeni-Hegarty (Social Anthropology), Professor Kristin De Troyer (Dean of Arts and Divinity)

### 1 WELCOME

Ondrej welcomed everyone at the first School Presidents' Forum of the academic year and explained he would chair the meeting in Alistair's absence.

### 2 JOINT HONOURS DISSERTATION

The Proctor explained that the working group on dissertations led by the Dean of Arts and Divinity was exploring the option of Joint Honours dissertations but were not sure about the student demand. School Presidents expressed interest in the project but agreed to ask students within their School. Some concerns were raised about the practicalities of having joint dissertations (credits, resources, joint supervision). It was suggested that joint dissertations within Schools were also explored (especially within the School of Modern Languages).

**Action: School Presidents to survey the demand for Joint Honours dissertations in their School.**

### 3 STUDY ABROAD

#### a) More Study Abroad opportunities

Oliver received several requests from students in the School of Economics & Finance for more Study Abroad programmes and enquired whether the University could increase the number of exchange programmes and provide more information to students. Some concerns were raised about the small number of non-language Erasmus+ places and the lack of options for Joint Honours students.

Some School Presidents mentioned that they had organized School-specific Study Abroad talks with students who had been on Study Abroad in previous years, which proved to be very successful. It was suggested that all School Presidents could organize talks like these in cooperation with the Study Abroad Coordinator.

The Proctor explained the process of creating new Study Abroad partnerships and suggested that School Presidents asked Sam Lister from the Registry to explain the situation in more detail.

**Action: Ondrej to invite Sam Lister to the next Education Committee meeting.**

#### **b) Financing for RUK students**

Louise McCaul explained that RUK students on a full-year non-Erasmus+ Study Abroad programmes were eligible for full £9,000 tuition fees but received only £4,500 from the Student Loan Company and thus creating shortfall in funding for some RUK students. It was enquired whether the University could support these students financially in the form of need-based bursaries.

The Proctor explained that this year the University clarified the funding situation for RUK students and promised to follow up on the issue of bursaries.

**Action: The Proctor to follow up on the issue of need-based bursaries for full-year RUK Study Abroad students.**

#### **4 HONOURS ENTRY**

Ondrej explained that the Education Committee had decided to continue advocating for all students having the option of qualified entry to Honours after the disagreement last semester.

The Proctor suggested that there was a particular role for Faculty Presidents who could analyse the different approaches of the two faculties and make the gap between the two faculties smaller.

The Dean of Science explained that there had been no agreement on Honours entry for integrated Masters programmes but a working group was working on this issue this year a proposal would be put forward at the University Learning & Teaching Committee.

**Action: Faculty Presidents to meet up with Dr Martyn Quick and Dr Iain Matthews to discuss Honours entry.**

#### **5 VALUE OF DEGREE FLEXIBILITY**

Ondrej explained there had been some concerns about the decreasing flexibility of the Scottish Honours degree, especially on the sub-Honours level in the Science faculty.

Overall, it was felt that flexibility was very important and beneficial for students but there was a fine line between flexibility and having enough knowledge for entering Honours. It was agreed that a discussion paper on the value of degree flexibility should be brought to Academic Council and any School President interested in the topic should get in touch with Ondrej.

**Action: Ondrej to draft a discussion paper for the Academic Council highlighting the value of degree flexibility on the sub-Honours level with focus on the Science faculty.**

## **6 STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Dean of Science explained that he had noticed students in lectures using their laptops not only for taking notes but also to access Facebook, Buzzfeed or Youtube videos unrelated to the lecture content. This behavior was deemed not only disrespectful but also disturbing to other students in the lecture.

After a discussion about the pros and cons of taking an action against such behavior (either by the University or the student body), it was agreed that a discussion about a student code of conduct would take place at the next Education Committee meeting.

**Action: Ondrej to include a discussion about the student code of conduct at the next Education Committee meeting.**

## **7 FEEDBACK**

Max explained that the first feedback focus groups would take place later in Week 5. The Feedback Working Group (led by Max) was working with CAPOD on producing machine-readable questionnaires that would be passed onto students at the beginning of the focus group.

## **8 AOCB**

The Dean of Science brought School Presidents' attention to private essay writing companies that encouraged students to commit academic misconduct. The Forum was informed that promotion material for these companies was found not only online but also on University premises.

It was discussed whether the Education Committee should run an awareness campaign about the fact that using these companies is in breach of the good academic practice and can result in severe penalties. School Presidents were asked to report all "100% plagiarism-free essay writing services" to the University.

## **NEXT MEETING**

School Presidents' Forum on 10 November 2014 at 5.15pm in the Students' Association Committee Room