

Student Opinion on Academic Council (SOAC) Advisory Group

Monday 2 December at 5pm in the Committee Room

Present:

- Ondrej Hajda, Education Officer (Convenor & Chair)
- Chloe Hill, President
- Teddy Woodhouse, Director of Representation
- Scott Schorr, Postgraduate President
- Sophie Kelly, Arts/Divinity Senate Rep
- Peter DaBell, Science/Medicine Senate Rep
- Ben Anderson, Member for Widening Access
- Tania Strützel, Postgraduate Committee Representative

Apologies:

- Max Fabiszewski, Arts & Divinity Faculty President
- Mary Kempnich, Science & Medicine Faculty President

Minutes:

1. Matters Arising

1.1 Academic Council Membership

Ondrej asked Chloe if there had been any progress regarding the membership of the Academic Council for the Director of Representation and the Faculty Presidents.

Chloe informed members that she would bring up this issue at a meeting with the Principal. Chloe added that student Senate Reps needed to be voted in by the whole student body and suggested redefinition of the Senate Reps role so they would become the Faculty Presidents for the following years.

Action Point: Chloe to bring up the membership of the AC at a meeting with the Principal and refer back to the Education Committee.

1.2 Students' Oral/Written Report

Ondrej asked if the members wanted to bring up the issue of adding Student Oral Report on a regular agenda of the Academic Council.

Chloe informed that this idea had been originally intended for the University Court but was rejected by the Principal. Chloe explained that as an alternative, it had been suggested that the regular Students' Association Report was presented before the University Court more often than every 3 years.

Action Point: Chloe to get in touch with the Principal about adding Student Report on the regular agenda of the Academic Council.

2. Starring Items

Members did not ask for starring new items on the AC agenda.

3. Discussion Items

3.1 Research Applications & Awards

Ondrej asked if the members had any ideas how to offset the shortfall in research funding the University is experiencing this year.

Chloe informed that relatively to its size, the University was not doing badly in terms of research funding, but there still had been a major drop in comparison to previous years. Chloe added that REF traditionally gave preference to bigger institutions.

Teddy suggested more support for PGRs (different than the Martyr's Kirk Research Library) because students could also highly contribute to research and bring funding resources.

Scott asked about UG opinion. Chloe replied that UGs were more focused on teaching and put less emphasis on research. Peter explained that this was School-dependent issue because for example Science students tended to be more research-oriented.

3.2 Marking Schemes vs. Professional Judgement

Discussion was held on the advantages and disadvantages of more objective but rigorous matrix system, and subjective but more flexible professional judgement.

Teddy explained that approach differed between Schools and added that students mainly care if the system was fair.

Tania added that guidelines in form of marking schemes were helpful for PG tutors who just started teaching.

Ben mentioned that that the use of a matrix provided a ground for appealing coursework grades.

Teddy recommended highlighting the benefits of using a marking matrix with a space for flexibility and professional judgement.

4. PGT Progression Threshold

Tania explained that on its last meeting the LTC had agreed to remove the 13.5 threshold for progression to PGT dissertation.

5. Rectorial Elections 2014: Procedures & Rules

Chloe explained that in consultation with her, the rules for 2014 Rectorial Elections were drafted on rules for Students' Association March elections. Chloe added that the Elections Committee would deal with day-to-day problems and major complaints would be referred to a special subcommittee of the AC. Chloe mentioned that unlike in the previous Rectorial Elections, the University would provide its support and pay for the expenses.

Ondrej pointed out that under the new rules, no student sabbaticals could be involved in campaigning for a candidate.

6. AOCB

Chloe informed that the University was considering recommendations for Honorary Graduates and asked members to email her with any suggestions for the upcoming Graduation Ceremonies, especially of female academics.

Next Student Opinion on Academic Council (SOAC) Meeting on Friday 7 March 2014