



University of St Andrews Students' Association
 meeting of the Students' Representative Council
 Tuesday 14th April 2009, Committee Room, 7:30pm

Minutes

Present

Andrew Keenan
 Philippa Dunn
 James Shield
 Emma Foley
 Kat Stevens
 Luke Woollen
 Libby Parker
 Holly West
 Ben Bridgman
 Amit Mander
 Nick Roxburgh
 Freddie Fforde
 Alex Bennett
 Brittany Dunstan
 Alastair Holmes
 Joely Denkinger
 John Skelton
 Fiona Kingston
 Lukas Ross
 Daniel Fisher
 Georgina Rannard
 Matthew Guest
 Hari Kumar
 Thomas Kadri

Association President
 Director of Student Development & Activities (DoSDA)
 Director of Representation (DoR)
 Association Chair
 SRC Accommodation Officer
 SRC Education Officer
 SRC Equal Opportunities and Welfare (EOW) Officer
 Association Community Relations Officer
 Association Sustainability Officer
 SRC Member for Ethnic Minorities
 SRC Member for External Campaigns
 SRC Member for First Years
 SRC Member for Library and Learning Resource Users
 SRC Member for Mature Students
 SRC Member for Private Accommodation
 SRC Member for Sub-Honours Academic Issues
 SRC Member for University Accommodation
 SRC Member for Widening Access
 Arts/Divinity Senate Representative
 Science/Medical Senate Representative
 Rector's Assessor/DoR Elect
 DoSDA Elect
 John Burnet Hall Representative
 Kate Kennedy Club

Apologies

Stacy Lee
 Kit Garcin
 Hervé Lemahieu
 Miranda Myrberg
 Beverly Macklin
 Oliverier Lewis
 Phil Pass

Director of Events and Services (DoES)
 SRC Member for Honours Academic Issues
 SRC Member for International Students
 SRC Member for Sexualities and Gender
 SRC Member for Students with Disabilities
 Postgraduate Senate Representative
 DoES Elect

Absent

Caroline Grima

SRC Member for Postgraduate Taught Students

- 1.0 Adoption of Agenda**
Agenda adopted
- 2.0 Chair's Business**
- 2.1 Apologies for Absence**
As above
- 2.2 Minutes of Previous Meeting**
None
- 2.3 Matters Arising**

None

3.0 Presidential Business

3.1 *President*

3.1.1 The President welcomed the new members of the SRC and said that he wished to meet everyone individually to discuss their plans for their coming time in office. The Rector's Assessor added that all members would receive training on running campaigns, talking to the press, effective communication and similar topics, and asked for suggestions as to a suitable time.

3.1.2 Recently the President has been discussing with Ron Piper a move from WebMail to Google Mail. This will hopefully happen in the summer and can be done in as little as six weeks.

4.0 Representation Business

4.1 *Director of Representation*

4.1.1 The Proctor has called an emergency meeting this Friday with librarians from various other institutions. They will discuss the redevelopment of the library, as the Principal has demonstrated some doubts over the plans.

4.1.2 There has some reshuffling in the Principal's office.

4.1.3 There is an internal review of Physics and Astronomy approaching. This involves going into the department to talk to students and members of staff and writing a follow-up report.

4.1.4 A new Rector's Assessor is required; anyone who is interested in the role should speak to Georgina Rannard.

4.1.5 Teaching Awards

The DoR introduced the Teaching Awards programme he is designing. The scheme is based on the premise that students believe lecturers are more interested in research than teaching, and would allow students to nominate members of staff for awards for teaching in various categories. It needs to be discussed by the university's Quality Enhancement Group, and the university will hopefully have ideas for the naming and handing out of the awards. The DoR invited comments and questions, which were offered and answered as follows:

Could an award be given for an entire school? The DoR suggested one could be offered for a course.

Why would winners of awards be ineligible to receive another award for four years? This was to reward the talents of a wide range of people, but it was agreed that a winner would be ineligible for the same award for four years.

Why does the panel contain the Deans of Art and Science but not Divinity and Medicine? These titles are a holdover from a time past; now Art speaks also for Divinity and Science for Medicine.

How would the winners be selected? Nominations would be read carefully and judged against 'standard' service. This would take precedence over the number of nominations – although this would also be taken into account – as some members of staff might teach or supervise only a small number of people.

Could more information be offered on how the practicalities of the scheme would work? Edinburgh has just introduced an awards scheme which has worked very well, so our scheme would most likely follow their lead. The DoR is planning to attend their awards ceremony next week. Details still need to be worked out – for example, the sample nomination form might evolve to include some 1-5 rankings. Nominations would most likely be open throughout the year, with selection taking place in April.

Would students nominate lecturers for particular awards? Most likely not, so that the panel could identify which members of staff were most suited to which awards.

Would students be able to nominate lecturers from previous years? Nominations should be for teaching from the current academic year; retrospective nomination even in the first year of the awards running might cause confusion.

Support was shown for the award for first year teaching, as it forms part of new students' first impressions of the university but has the potential to be of the least importance to lecturers.

4.1.6 Access to Higher Education and the University of St Andrews

The DoR has discovered that the university does not actually have an access policy. The university is noticeably weak in this area, and so it seems odd that they do not have a plan for how to develop in the future. The DoR has created five principles of access which he would like the SRC to adopt as their position in future lobbying of the university and the government. The DoR invited comments and questions, which were offered and answered as follows:

Can some mention be made of the high cost of everyday living in St Andrews? Figures are difficult to specify in this area but some are available from Push and the DoR will include them for emphasis.

Should we push for a diversity figure to be included in league tables? Diversity figures are already published by the Sutton Trust, and might be worth mentioning here. However, emphasising a figure in league tables might discourage potential students who perceived themselves as not fitting in from applying, and end up being self-perpetuating. The Member for Widening Access said that despite our poor performance in this area, we should emphasise the positives of a St Andrews education. The reality is not the same as our image - for example, we have the best diversity in Scotland in terms of student societies. The Rector's Assessor also suggested that the Students' Association (SA) encourage the university to include directions to The Book in information sent to potential students. Sending a paper copy to prospective students has been deemed too expensive, but we should push forward with plans to have an online copy of The Book advertised in the prospectus. The Member for First Years also has plans to set up an 'alternative prospectus' style website and would appreciate any suggestions regarding content.

Does the university really accept higher numbers of non-EU students because they pay more in tuition fees? Years ago the government decided how many students it would fund at each university (rather than deciding to fund each student, regardless of where they chose to go). St Andrews therefore receives funding for a fixed number of Scottish and EU students (the Scottish government receives funding from the EU to pay for the latter); if they take fewer students they are fined, and if they take more they do not receive further funding. This antiquated system means there is no encouragement for the university to take more Scottish students. It was asked whether this policy formed an insurmountable barrier in our goals for widening access; the DoR said that we can still lobby for a change in policy, which the Principal supports, so that funding follows the students. We can also look at increasing diversity within the current numbers. The DoR should meet the Principal this year to ask further questions regarding the state of the university's finances. The EOW Officer added that she has spoken to Christopher Smith regarding the funding situation and there are people talking about fundraising for scholarships.

The Science/Medical Senate Representative said that point two should be made stronger, and that the university should not artificially inflate the cost of everyday living, especially in the area of accommodation. The DoR replied that the huge raises in the past decade were not down to artificial inflation; the university was making an annual loss of £500,000. The Senate Representative said that he would like to see the university set aside a percentage of their anniversary fundraising not for scholarships, which has already been organised, but for decreasing the cost of living for students in general. The DoR replied that targeted scholarships were more important because we had students here who did not struggle financially with the current cost of living. The Principal wishes to increase scholarships to at least one hundred a year, and from next year people will know whether they have been awarded a scholarship before they accept their place. Ultimately it was decided to include a comment on the university having a commitment to reducing costs.

It was noted that Oxford and Cambridge, who have similar access issues, have taken to sending ambassadors round the whole country rather than just the immediate area.

4.1.7 Motion to the SRC endorsing Louise Richardson's stance towards the Kate Kennedy Club

The motion was introduced by the Arts/Divinity Senate Representative. He emphasised that the motion was not saying that the Kate Kennedy Club (KKC) could or should not exist. It was saying that the university has decided not to associate with the KKC in an official capacity, and that the SA should follow suit and support them in this.

Discussion on separate points can be summarised as follows:

1.1 The DoR said the Principal's decision was aimed at an external audience and we should be seen to support it. The EOW Officer said she thought it ridiculous that any member of the SRC, especially an EOW Officer, would consider taking part in a procession organised by a group which went against one of our fundamental policies. However, whilst there has been vocal support for the Principal's decision from some quarters, a significant number of students do not agree with it. The SRC has to represent all students, and claiming majority support here is difficult to prove. The point was removed.

1.4 This point was removed.

1.5 There was some debate over exactly what was encompassed by the term 'elitism'; the KKC representative asked if it also referred to sexism or to rumours about the club's social make-up, which he said were not true. The Arts/Divinity Senate Representative said the point was more about image than the KKC's policies, and the Rector's Assessor said the tiered cost of some KKC events contributed to the image of elitism. The DoSDA added that the Principal's decision was motivated by sexism, not elitism. The word was removed.

2.1 It was asked what 'popular legitimacy meant'; it underlines the point that a large number of students do support the decision.

2.2 The John Burnet Hall Representative said the KKC added something 'cool' to the university's image, but the DoR said he thought more people were put off by the university's association with the KKC. It was asked whether the point was not irrelevant, as once the KKC had been disassociated from the university it was really not the concern of the SA, but the DoR said the SA should reflect the Principal's hope for a more inclusive KKC in the future. The Rector's Assessor said the SA was not required to actually do anything as the KKC is a private club, but including the sentiment helps the tone of the motion. The Member for First Years asked if we were also going to rally against other exclusive groups, as the point expressed a desire to change the KKC even though it was now on the same footing as any other unaffiliated group. It was repeated that the KKC was unique in its special relationship with the university.

2.3 It was pointed out that the SA does not currently 'associate with the KK in any official capacity', and as it is single-sex it never will. This point was removed.

2.4 There was some debate regarding whether the SA was indeed in a better position to organise the Opening Ball and May Ball. Incoming sabbaticals were generally keen on the idea, citing the poor reviews normally garnered by the Opening Ball and pointing out that the first big event targeted at first years being run by a highly selective group did nothing for the university's image. Too many students feel excluded from the balls because they do not agree with them being run by the KKC. The President and DoSDA did not think sabbaticals would have the time to take on these extras tasks, especially an Opening Ball so soon after Orientation Week. Having spoken to commercial staff the DoSDA was particularly concerned about the financial implications for the SA. The EOW Officer said that two years ago the DRA ball was organised by four people for 2000, but the DoSDA said the SA does not have the same financial security as DRA does.

The Member for First Years said this was a separate issue irrelevant to the initial email, but the DoR justified it by saying that the email had implications for KKC events which made use of university property. The Rector's Assessor said the motion was concerned more generally with the Principal's stance, not just what was explicitly mentioned in the email. The Member for First Years countered that this was taking a further step which should be a separate motion. It also came from a divisive reaction rather than a good place, even though it would be good if the SA ran its own balls. The DoSDA agreed with this point and said there was a

difference between supporting the Principal and being against the KKC; the motion only needs to do the former. The DoR disagreed, saying that if we disagreed with the Principal we were supporting the KKC's principals. The DoSDA said she saw a fundamental difference and that we should treat the KKC as we would any other unaffiliated group, remembering that we also represent current students who are members of the KKC. Furthermore, there were bureaucratic ramifications in that including the DoES meant this exact motion would have to also be passed by the SSC.

As a SA Opening Ball has already been discussed with the Principal, the DoES elect suggested and is considering organising an Opening Ball anyway and the issue is really a separate one, this point was removed from the motion.

3.2 The DoR initially said he thought this point should be dropped as it would be a step backwards after the efforts made in 2002 to set up the Procession Committee, but after discussion changed his mind. The KKC representative said the Association President was invited to sit on the committee but had not attended for years; the current President said he had not received any information about this. The Rector's Assessor added that she was carved up to the committee when an SRC member two years ago, but received no information about how to participate. The Community Relations Officer said she felt uncomfortable sitting on the committee as she did not think the SA should have such a close link with the KKC. It was pointed out that it was called the 'Kate Kennedy Procession' for historical reasons, and it was not the 'Kate Kennedy Club's Procession', but it was argued that many people associate the two because of their name. After a vote the point was kept in.

3.3 This point was kept in the motion, but it was the subject of great discussion. It was asked whether SRC/SSC members who had accepted places in the procession offered because of their previous positions would be forced to withdraw a week before the procession went ahead. The President said the SA can only recommend what people do; the DoSDA asked what the point of including the comment was if it could not be enforced. Where do we draw the line between public roles and personal choices? The DoR said it applied more to sabbaticals, as people cannot simply switch off their positions – it would look very odd if the President or DoR participated in the procession after endorsing the Principal's stance. The KKC representative then asked if that meant anybody who was in the KKC could not be on the SRC; the current DoES will be attending on Saturday as a member of the KKC, not in his SA role, even though he may be recognised as the current DoES. It was also pointed out that despite the potential for recognition, members of SRC are not asked to participate in their SA role, only in recognition of their contribution to that role.

3.4 As this point related to the Opening and May Balls it was also removed.

The following was added as an additional point under section two: 'This SRC believes: That the SRC should support any member of the university who speaks up for equality for all students'.

After these amendments, voting was as follows: 18 in favour, 2 against, 1 abstention. The motion passed.

5.0 Services Business

5.1 *Director of Events and Services*
Absent

6.0 Activities Business

6.1 *Director of Student Development and Activities*

6.1.1 On The Rocks is approaching – the launch party is on Sunday evening and some 70 events will follow over the next week. Get in touch if you want to volunteer for anything.

7.0 Officers' Business

7.1 *Accommodation Officer*

7.1.1 The first meeting of the new committee will be next week, with discussion focusing on cheaper accommodation and bringing forward applications for university accommodation.

7.2 *Education Officer*

- 7.2.1** Issues the new committee hope to look at include more time in tutorials, more feedback from lecturers, more regular student feedback opportunities and improvement of the advising system. In terms of the library, issues include the upcoming redevelopment, better online resources and increasing awareness of class libraries. Sharing access to journals within the Scottish Higher Education Digital Library has greatly increased the number of journals to which students have online access, and the Member for Library and Learning Resource Users would like to promote something similar in England. The Member for First Years discussed his plans for a website and again asked anyone with comments or suggestions to get in contact.
- 7.3** *Equal Opportunities and Welfare Officer*
- 7.3.1** Tomorrow's event is going to be rescheduled, and an event will be held in a couple of weeks' time for international students.
- 7.4** *Association Community Relations Officer*
No business
- 7.5** *Association Sustainability Officer*
- 7.5.1** The Officer plans to look at the extensive Environment and Ethics document he has found on the SA website, alongside the sustainability policy which was passed last year. The President members of staff wish to speak to him about water provision around the university.
- 8.0** **Sabbatical Question Time**
None
- 9.0** **Officers' Question Time**
None
- 10.0** **Notices**
- 10.1** Next meeting of the SRC:

Tuesday 28th April, 7:30pm, Committee Room.
- 10.2** Next meetings of sub-committees:

Accommodation – Monday, 1pm, Committee Room
Education – TBC
EOW – Wednesday, 3pm, Committee Room
Community Relations – Friday, 4pm, Committee Room
Sustainability – TBC
- 11.0** **AOCB**
- 11.1** None
- 12.0** **Close of Meeting**