

University of St Andrews' Student Association
Meeting of the
Students Representative Council
Tuesday 21st November 2007, McIntosh Common Room, 7:30pm
Minutes

Present

Tom d'Ardenne	Association President
Jenny McKay	Director of Student Development and Activities (DOSDA)
Rachael Whitbread	Chair
Rob Fett	Education Officer
Sarah McCusker	SRC Environment and Ethics Officer
James Shield	SRC Accommodation Officer
Georgina Rannard	SRC Member for Equal Opportunities and Welfare
Matthew Guest	SRC Member for Community Relations
Sally Young	SRC Member for Private Accommodation
Shaun Atkinson	SRC Member for Private Accommodation
Emma Arenson	SRC Member for Students with Special Needs
Rebecca Austin	SRC Member for Library and Learning Resource Users
Matthew Bonnaud	SRC Member for Second Year Students
Sam Fowles	SRC Member for First Year Students
Lucas Ross	SRC Member for Ethnic Minorities
Amjad Al-Dajani	SRC Member for International Students
Molly Uzzell	SRC Member for Women's Issues
Scott Platton	SRC Member for Men's Issues
Marc Locherty	SRC Member for the Faculty of Medicine
Laura Wilkes	SRC Member for the Faculty of Arts
Marcus A Mayo	SRC Member for the School of Divinity
Rich Fenner	SRC Member for Sexualities and Gender
Terry Fulton	SRC Member for Postgraduate Accommodation
James Pollard	SRC Member for University Accommodation
Emma Foley	SRC Member for University Accommodation
Sanni Turunen	SRC Member for JYA and JSA Students
Harry Giles	SRC Member for Absent Students
Alex Hayes	SRC Member for Part Time Students
Martin Schmeiror	Member Without Portfolio
Kim Anderson	Fife Park Deputy
Nichlaus Wong	John Burnet Hall SRC Representative

Apologies

Steve Savage	Director of Representation (DOR)
Rich Robinson	Director of Events and Services (DOES)
Beth Conner	SRC Member for Fourth Year Students
Hannah-Jade Ormisher	SRC Member for Widening Access
Daniel Fisher	SRC Member for the Faculty of Science

Absent

Oli Markeson	Rector's Assessor
Sarah Lloyd-Thomas	SRC Member for Third Year Students
Larry Jennings	SRC Member for Mature Students

1.0 Adoption of Agenda
Agenda adopted

2.0 Chair's Business
2.1. Apologies for Absence
As stated above

- 2.2. Minutes of Previous Meeting
James Shield was present at the last meeting.
- 2.3 Matters Arising
Carve-ups:
Executive Board: James Shield, Rob Fett, Matthew Guest and Emma Arenson ran. James Shield was elected as Senior Officer, Rob Fett as Primary Nominee.
It was asked if the constitution required notice to be given of these elections. Nobody was aware of any stipulation in the constitution. The President put forward that the results be accepted but in future notice will be given and information sent out so that new members will be better informed about the positions. This was accepted.
Kate Kennedy Procession: Rob Fett and Georgina Rannard ran. Georgina Rannard was elected.
Environment and Ethics: Georgina Rannard, Scott Platton
St Andrews Day Festival Steering Group: Matthew Guest
Community Council: Sarah McCusker, Emma Arenson and James Pollard ran. Sarah McCusker was elected.
Carve-ups to the Religious Council were postponed because of a lack of information about its activities. Information will be sent out before the next meeting.
- 3.0 **Presidential Business**
- 3.1. Association President
- 3.1.1 The President welcomed new members and stressed that the Sabbatical Officers, etc., would like to help them achieve their goals. Showing success will encourage others to get involved.
- 3.1.2 Dave Whitton was appointed as General Manager today.
- 3.1.3 The President distributed documents explaining the funding of the Students' Association.
- 4.0 **Representation Business**
- 4.1 Director of Representation
None
- 5.0 **Services Business**
- 5.1 DOSDA on behalf of the Director of Events and Services
- 5.1.1 Members were reminded to adhere to the Bop duty schedule or to contact the relevant person to make changes. A new schedule will be sent out soon.
- 6.0 **Activities Business**
- 6.1 Director of Student Development and Activities
- 6.1.1 The DOSDA is currently working on getting the Postgraduate Committee running, working with the President to integrate the Chinese Scholars and Students' Association (CSSA) as they have had nothing to do with the Students' Association in their ten years of existence, and wider participation in activities. Email dosda@st-andrews.ac.uk for information or to make suggestions.
- 7.0 **Officers' Business**
- 7.1 SRC Accommodation Officer
- 7.1.1 The second consultation on new DRA and Fife Park buildings will take place around December 4th. There are clearer ideas about designs, prices, etc. that are being considered, which will be discussed at the consultation.

- 7.1.2 The DOR is going to request a per-hall breakdown of how accommodation fees are used.
- 7.1.3 A response is expected soon from Residential and Accommodation Services to the report on the University Hall repairs that was made by the President and the DOR.
- 7.1.4 The How to Rent booklet will be published by the end of November.
- 7.1.5 The letting agent survey will be live for two weeks from next week. This year good results will be published. Next year all results will be published.
- 7.1.6 The Students Association will help with publicity for the How to Rent tour, as there was a low turnout last year.
- 7.1.7 The Find a Flatmate feature will be reinstated on the website.
- 7.1.8 Committee members are contacting agents who signed up to the charter, asking them to change release dates for rental properties so that they do not fall in the exam period.
- 7.1.9 On November 19th St Andrews Student Leasing went under. The Students Association is trying to help students recover lost money. The best way would probably be to get the company liquidated, but this could be an expensive and lengthy process. The University has offered to share the cost.
- 7.1.10 There was no progress at the second meeting with Isobel Clifford as she refused to make concessions.

7.2 SRC Education Officer

7.2.1 Education Policy

The Officer wanted feedback on the draft of the Education Policy. He will bring a revised version before the next meeting. Points raised were as follows:

Point 2: It should be added that the SRC would like funding to be increased.

Point 4: The intent of this is to state that all UK students should pay the same tuition fees (or no tuition fees) so that cost will not be a factor in choice of degree of institution. This would mean that some students would subsidise others. It was asked if this would mean that international students would subsidise British students, as this would not be beneficial to the whole student body. The Officer responded that point 5.ii states that fees for postgraduates should be 'justifiable', and this policy should apply to international undergraduates. It was suggested that as medical students typically have a much higher income after graduation they should pay higher fees. The Officer recognised the point but said that the high fees could still discourage prospective students from applying. Another objection was that the point implies acceptance of tuition fees. It will be made clear that the Student's Association does not want tuition fees, but there should be a policy in place because they are likely to be introduced. The status of asylum seeker students should be specified, as until recently they had to pay international fees. The Policy will state that asylum seekers will be charged the same fees as UK students. The DOSDA clarified that Scottish Students are currently charged a tuition fee but it is paid by the Scottish Executive. It was suggested that the entire point be omitted from the Policy. It was countered that if the point were removed the SRC would be impotent in the face of tuition fees. The Chair asked for a vote on whether the point should stay in, with an amendment stating

that the SRC is against tuition fees. The majority were in favour of retaining the point.

Point 5: This implies that funding is the only reason postgraduate students are looking to study abroad. It will be reworded. Point 5.iv should be generalised to say that initiatives to reduce costs where possible for postgraduate students will be explored.

Point 6: 'Social Security' was a term left in from the last policy. It will be clarified to include things such as free prescriptions and subsidised travel costs. Email the Officer with any ideas.

Point 8.i: This means that there should be figures available for every university showing how much money students would need for all living costs, etc. This would help students plan for the future, and could be used as a lobby against universities where costs are high. This could discourage students from applying to some universities. Media already reports on the high costs of certain universities, so it would be better to have it regulated.

Point 8.ii: The SAS already offers a calculator. This is not the case in England.

Point 8.iv: The point should state that shortfall should be made up by the Government, not the University.

Point 9: The intent is to state that students shouldn't have to work excessively. It should be modified to include international students. The Member for International Students said that the point should state that the university should prioritise students whose visas do not allow them to work for anyone else in its employment policy. Some thought the point should say that the University supports students who work. Others thought it should say that students should be encouraged not to work, and find ways to make this possible. The Accommodation Officer suggested amending the point to state that some students are obliged to work and this can have a detrimental effect on their studies, which should be considered with regard to grants and bursaries.

Point 11: This should specify that it is the Government who should do more.

Point 13: 'The business sector' refers to the corporate world in general, e.g. the NHS, multinational companies. This is not a mechanism, just a general principle. The President said that companies should be encouraged to make a contribution to the high quality graduates they require. Direct contributions from companies could lead to them trying to dictate course content. Companies probably would not contribute financially if they were not obliged to do so. The University currently receives funding for research and ensures that researchers have free reign. If the point is not made more specific it could be open to interpretations that the Students Association would not support. The point could be modified to make it clear that companies would not be given undue influence. The Officer will discuss this with the Education Committee.

Point 14: 'Recruiting' will be replaced with 'encouraging'. The intent is to be attractive to people from all backgrounds.

Point 19: 'Realistically achievable' refers to the fact that many lecturers do not give grades of 18, 19 or 20 because they think it is a standard that cannot be reached by a student. The point should be reworded to say lecturers are encouraged to use the full spectrum of the marking scale. Students should also be given clear benchmarks to give them a better idea of what is expected and to enable them to better contest marks they feel to be unfair.

Point 21: The point should state that libraries should be maintained and improved in line with student expectations, and these expectations should be stated. Something should be said about departmental libraries as they are in danger of being closed.

Point 22: Many students graduate with a 2:1 degree and this is minimum most employers ask for. There is a large difference between an upper 2:1 and a lower 2:1, which is unfair to students whose marks are at the upper end of the scale. The point seems to imply that it is a First degree that should be split. The point seems to mean many students would get worse grades. The difficulty of exams could be adjusted so that more students end up with a 2:2. There was no agreement on whether or not to keep the point.

Point 23: It should be made clear that feedback should be available on all assessment, not just exams.

Point 26: 'Library' should be changed to 'University'. It should be made explicit that the service should be affordable.

Point 27: There was discussion about whether there should be no activities at all during Reading Week, or if there should be some activities but only ones which are non-obligatory and from which a student's absence would not be detrimental to their learning or mark. Departments that have many students doing joint degrees have no other time for field trips, etc. There could be specific field trip days.

Point 30: 'and fairly' should be added to the first clause. Students should be aware of the process, so procedures should be well publicised, not just available.

Suggestions of additional points to add were:

- A statement that the SRC resolves to take appropriate action
- Class sizes should be as small as possible
- Adequate tutor time should be available
- A statement about plagiarism
- There should be student representation at every level where education is discussed
- Guidelines on marked work
- A statement about the value of education other than academic education
- A statement about lecturer standards/quality of teaching

7.2.2 Don't Get It Wrong campaign bookmarks will be distributed in the library.

- 7.2.3 Raisin Weekend information and advice will be distributed soon.
- 7.2.4 The library has provisionally agreed to support the book sale next semester.
- 7.2.5 The SLUG meeting is planned for Wednesday November 21st but it has been hard to get hold of the representatives of the schools. There will be a meeting with the librarian in Week 11 that is open to anyone.
- 7.2.6 The University is considering eliminating the border zones in degree classifications. At present, if the number is in the border zones the department must make a case for the degree they wish to award. Eliminating the border zones would eliminate this discretion. If the border zones are removed, degree classifications will be automatically decided by a computer. The matter will be discussed at the Academic Council on November 23rd. The Officer wanted a rough poll of SRC opinion for this meeting. SRC was unanimously against eliminating the border zones. It was suggested that people in the border zones be interviewed as part of the process of classifying their degree.
- 7.2.7 SRC Member for Library and Learning Resource Users
The Member is putting together a book to answer questions received about the library. It should be emphasised that the library will not close during the refurbishment. Students should also be made aware that it is the academic schools who decide what books are in the library, so any complaints about lack of books should be addressed to departments, not the library.
- 7.2.8 IT Services meeting Thursday November 29th, 2:30pm, Committee Room.
- 7.2.9 The calendar appears to reduce May exams to six days instead of ten. Some members would agree to this if the revision period was extended. The dates may be a mistake.
- 7.2.10 The President asked for opinions about moving the entire first semester to before the Christmas vacation. The Accommodation Officer said that this would lead to residences being leased for less time, which would have significant financial implications. The Chair replied that it could have the opposite effect, as residences would be open for a longer period in January. The current situation is difficult for international students. It also means people make more journeys home, which is bad for the environment. Students might not perform well in exams after twelve weeks of class without a break. This is what happens in the second semester. Few other universities have the entire semester before Christmas. Those that do do not seem to suffer for it. It was suggested that a poll be created to see what student opinion is.

- 7.3 SRC Environmental and Ethics Officer
- 7.3.1 Meeting Wednesday November 21st 3:00pm

- 7.4 SRC Equal Opportunities and Welfare Officer
- 7.4.1 Minutes are online.
- 7.4.2 World Aids Day in two weeks – pledge to get tested.

- 8.0 **Sabbatical Question Time**
- 8.1 The Member for Absent Students noted that according to the document about funding (item 3.1.3) the Students' Association does not receive much funding. Everything that has been done so far has been through official channels, should there be protest? A

document was submitted to PARC. The recommendations are at the end of the document.

9.0 Officer Question Time

9.1 The Member for International Students asked what the process was for making a complaint about accommodation. Email the Accommodation Officer for advice.

9.2 It was asked why only positive reviews of estate agents are going to be published this year. There will be less chance of legal action if estate agents have a year to improve. Certain questions are designed to show if agents are acting illegally, and publishing results showing illegal practices could also have legal repercussions for the Students' Association. It will be clear which agents received bad reviews, as they will not be on the list.

9.3 The President said that it is likely that the University will try to increase the hall fees higher than inflation and recommended that the Accommodation Committee draw up a comparison of university residence fees compared to those of other universities and compared to private accommodation costs. PARC claims university halls are 86% cheaper than equivalent private accommodation.

10.0 Notices

10.1 Next meeting of the SRC

Tuesday 4th December, 7:30pm, St Salvator's Hall

10.2 Next meetings of sub-committees

Accommodation: Thursday 22nd November, 1:00pm, meet top floor of Union

Education: Monday 26th November, 4:00pm, Committee Room

Environment and Ethics: Wednesday 21st November, 3:00pm

Equal Opportunities: Tuesday 28th November, 12:00pm

11.0 A.O.C.B

11.1 Motion to the SRC on openness and communication.

It was asked if a twelfth point should be added saying disciplinary action will be taken if the policy is not adhered to. This is not necessary as it is in the constitution. The DOSDA welcomed the motion as it was dedicated to representation.

It was asked why SRC meetings are to be held in halls of residence (Point 8), as this takes up space that the residents use and could make the meetings inaccessible to students who live elsewhere. The intent is to encourage more students to come to meetings as few ever came to meetings in the Committee Room. The meetings are also going to be publicised more. It was suggested that it would be better to just publicise and have the same venue every week, as that would be easier for people to remember. A poll showed the majority were against meeting in halls of residence. The point will be removed from the motion. The SRC will continue to meet in halls of residence until the Christmas vacation when the matter will come under consideration again.

There are SRC positions that do not fit into the four sub-committees mentioned in Point 1.

Suggestions for involving more students were: using PDF format for all documents on the website to make it easier to use, an SRC Facebook group, an SRC parade. Posters will be in halls of residence as well as the library (Point 9).

The Accommodation Officer said that the DOR said that question

time for officers and sabbaticals (Point 10) should be the responsibility of the Association President, not the DOR. The SRC decided that it should be organised by the DOR.

The SRC voted unanimously in favour of the amended motion, therefore the motion passed.

- 11.2** LGBT and AOW are going to protest against the gay blood ban during the next blood donation. Email the Education Officer if you want to be involved.
- 11.3** The Member for Absent Students suggested setting up a working group to make sure the elections are better in March. The Chair said he should speak to the DOR. The President said he should make sure a sabbatical is involved.
- 11.4** The Accommodation Officer suggested the SRC look at what it does to help working students. The Member for Equal Opportunities and Welfare said that such a project already exists.
- 11.5** There will be a Rector's meeting Wednesday November 21st, 3:00pm, Venue 2. Anyone considering running someone for rector should attend this meeting.
- 11.6** Anyone interested in running for a position on the Community Council should speak to the Member for Community Relations soon.
- 12.0** **Close of Meeting**