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Education Committee

St Andrews Students Association

**Meeting Date:** 31st October 2024 (18:00 – 19:00)

Large Rehearsal Room (Student Union Building)

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Meeting called by**: Education Executive Committee

**Type of Meeting**: Education Committee

**Chair**: Faculty Presidents

**Note Taker(s)**: Sharanya Gupta

**ATTENDANCE**

**Attendees:**

Oliver, Josie, Finn B, Hugo, Erin, Georgia, Alicia, Hayley, Jeremy, Ariane, Anisha, Millie, Nick, Cole, Sebastian, Donald, Jimin, Olivia, Tom, Fleur, Christy, Hitanshi, Emily, Phoebe, Sharanya

**Online**:

Tasha, Stephanie

**Apologies**:

Sydney, Paul, Finn S

**Absences**:

Shona, Kiera, Sara, Vic

**Guests**: x

**AGENDA ITEMS:**

**First Agenda Item:** **Clearer Exam and Marking Guidelines** (Arts/Div FP – 10 mins)

* Overview:
	+ Today’s meeting is based on trends seen across School Surveys. Recent discussion with DoTs highlighted that attendance is particularly low for Sub Honours lectures.
* Discussion:
	+ **History SP:** Exams and coursework in the school are often set later during the semester. They are briefly touched upon in the first week and then forgotten about till week 7 (hypothetical). Explanations and requirements for assignments are then given suddenly. Would help to have a set of criteria for assignments in school handbook.
	+ **Art History SP:** Professors don’t recognize that some of us haven’t sat an in-person exam at university ever. Would suggest giving students more information to prep for what to expect in exams.
	+ **DoEd:** I and the Proctor will be releasing a joint statement for exam guidance. Let me know if there any pointers for an all-student comm. related to exams.
	+ **Econ SP**: Lecturers are using the exact online exams (that are open book) in in-person exams (that are closed book.) This calls for more adjustment.
	+ E**mily:** Have your schools seen a discrepancy in grades?
	+ **Econ SP**: Lecturers had to increase exam scores by 3 points on the curve in one of the modules. A common excuse we hear is that they’ll change it for the next year – which isn’t fair on students who are currently taking that exam.
	+ **Sc/Med FP**: Has this come up in other schools before as well?
	+ **Philosophy SP**: It would be helpful for faculty to put more info in the module outline(s). More constructive information such as extra procedure for exam scripts in the module outline would make it easier to find closer to the exam.
	+ **Arts/ Div FP**: Outlines typically have the essay question.
	+ **Philosophy SP**: Are exam scripts written in week 1?
	+ **Art Hist SP:** Not in art history
	+ **History SP**: There is a lot of anxiety about what content will be examined, especially in sub honours, where the content it is very broad. For instance, sub honours history could cover most of human history – any clarity about relevant examinable material would be helpful.
	+ **Chem SP**: There was an adjustment some of our modules made where students were allowed an A4 sheet with information for in-person exams.
	+ **Philosophy SP**: The school typically conducts both in-person exams and take-home assessments. We’re now getting rid of take-home assessments since they require extensive backhand logistics on Moodle. Moreover, if there is a 5-day assignment and someone gets an extension, that is treated very separately than like fixed-date deadlines. There are also concerns with students using AI to “cheat.”
	+ **History SP**: History has the same issue especially with AI.
	+ **Biology SP**: how many schools have in-person? Biology seems to be the only school that is still completely online. They are now revamping the system to incorporate more in-person assessments.
	+ **Comp Sc** **SP**: Our school has the same perspective for coding class tests. In-person exams are unpopular in that case because students know and are tested on multiple languages. The school if switching to 40% coursework and 60% exam
	+ **Art Hist SP**: There isn’t enough coursework to evaluate students. There are a limited number of assignments which are 40% of our grade and we keep hearing that they’ll change it next year.
	+ **Arts/Div FP**: We could consider taking this up at UAF or other related committees.
	+ DoED: Do students read module handbooks? \*SPs shake heads\* There have been mixed reviews like this. Since staff keeps getting questions that are covered in the module handbook, they don’t feel compelled to edit the handbook.

**Second Agenda Item:** **Reviewing Credits: Weighting of Assessments Equating to Workload** (Arts/ DIv FP – 10 mins)

* Overview:
	+ This topic also came up in most SSCC meetings.
	+ Is there a way to standardize weighting credits? How should exams and coursework equate to module credits and where do they stand as of now?
* Discussion:
	+ **Comp Sc SP:** In our school, 15-credits should take up 12 hours per week, but it actually takes 30-40 hours, and this seen across all years.
	+ **Comp Lit LC:** Professors don’t seem to know what’s included in credit weightage and they don’t seem to be given guidance on how to construct a module according to weightage.
	+ **DoEd:** Any new module goes to a proposal approval group. It decides hours and they currently don’t have a student rep. They also don’t have a review process of say 2 years into the module to check if the credit weightage applies to the hours spent in the module itself. Could consider bringing this up at UAF.
	+ **IR SP:** My DoT said that in IR 1000 words =10% of credit and a 10 min presentation is worth 1000 words. The exam is then 5000 words.
	+ **Management SP:** Ours isn’t as defined. In the 3rd year mandatory one, students experience a lot of difficulty fitting everything into 1000 words. It is bizarre that so much weight is attributed to just 2 assignments. Sub honours modules in econ has weekly quizzes – which were a great way of keeping track of what’s taught in class and ensuring weekly effort.
	+ **Spanish LC:** We have 15 credit modules with 2 x 2500 word essays
	+ **DoEd:** From the staff’s perspective, they have to balance over and under assessment. Students aren’t going to lectures because they are working on assessments. There is no perfect answer but is there a sense that you’re being assessed too much or too little?
	+ **Psych SP:** Assignments don’t directly assess what it taught in lectures. We typically have to learn content on our own and conduct independent study. Weightage is very random across the school – In Neuro modules, exams is weighted more than the coursework, but coursework takes more time. Neuro is currently at a 40-60 split. Bio seems fairer with its 50-50 split.
	+ **Arts/Div FP:** Is there a difference in credit split across schools? \*SPs nod\*
	+ **Physics SP:** For coursework-only modules, students can simply put in a lot of time making score averages high. The next year they can’t let score averages remain so high, hence they adjust the module difficulty. The coursework feels unevenly weighted, however, when staff decreases difficulty then the exam board isn’t happy because everyone’s doing well. There is little clarity on what the problem really is.
	+ **Comp Sc. SP:** In our school, anything the lecturer says at any point will be examined even if it’s not on the slide. There is a lot of coursework, so people are overworked. There needs to be more clarity on how much work they’re actually giving us.
	+ **Art Hist SP:** In an academic monitoring meeting, I was asked why students don’t show up to lectures. To which my response was that since coursework is so heavily weighted at 40% of the module grade, students take it very seriously and so coursework takes priority over lectures, causing students to skip lectures.
	+ Arts/ Div SP: This is a good argument to bring up at UAF.
	+ **Management SP**: I was asked a similar question in one of my faculty meetings. In management modules, students are told to pick a topic across the weeks. So, students just pick and choose which week they want to attend. Some week-by-week activity or work could improve footfall at lectures.
	+ **English SP**: We have a similar issue; the lecture content isn’t consistent with staff. They often start discussing their favourite book (for instance) which isn’t often examined so there is no incentive to actually turn up to lecture. Digital quizzes were recommended some time back, but the staff referenced IT problems, the technicalities of which, they can’t cope with.
	+ **Sc/ Med FP**: This could be tackled as part of the IT project I’m working on.
	+ **Arts/ Div FP**: Would it help if, when these modules are being created, there is a student rep in attendance to add input?
	+ **Philosophy SP**: No, the assessment of hourly effort and credit weightage is too subjective.
	+ **Art Hist** **SP**: It could be useful from a student perspective, but staff could feel like their toes are being stepped on, intuitively speaking.
	+ **French LC**: This came up in our SLCC. Staff commented that they don’t see a difference in terms of prep between a 15- and 30-credit module. In a 30-credit module, 15-credits come from independent research, so it doesn’t necessarily have to be assessed.
	+ **Maths SP**: In week 5, when I attended a school teaching committee meeting, I felt like if I had said anything about curriculum I would’ve been dismissed.
	+ **Comp Lit** **SP**: Could have guidelines for each subject both with students and staff which can be amended if need be.
	+ **DoED**: Yeah, students don’t necessarily have to be in these meetings. Just staff speaking to students would be sufficient. These meetings can also be very boring and it’s unnecessary to have students attend them.

**Third Agenda Item:** **Sub-Honours workload** (Arts/ Div FP – 10 mins)

* Overview:
	+ Are second years being burnt out? Are they taking too many modules for credit requirements? Is this is a university wide issue?
* Discussion:
	+ **Art Hist SP:** In our SSCC, we discussed how the change in deadlines due the move in calendar is quite stressful for students. In subhonours, we have three modules, and each essay is 40% of your grade – which is understandably stressful – so yes.
	+ **Medicine SP:** We only have one module in second year but there is a big jump from first year. Exam questions are very clinical.
	+ **Arts/Div FP:** Is a bigger jump seen from 1st to 2nd year or Sub honours to Honours? \*Most SPs agreed that it was subhon to hon\*
	+ **Psych SP:** The school expects you to attend a lot of lectures and put in hours of independent study in subhonours. But in honours there are barely any contact hours.
	+ **English SP:** In hons, they throw you into the deep end with a text a week. The structure is the same in second year but the readings aren’t as demanding. It does help that the structure of lectures and assessment is similar across subhonours and hon.
	+ **Econ SP:** the actual coursework is not huge for econ in subhonours. However, in terms of lectures, you start with 3 per week for 1 hour. That’s different from honours modules which are once a week for 2 hours. More subhonours students might attend lectures if they aren’t so spread out. Do other schools have the same format? \*Yes\*
	+ **Hist SP:** I don’t think a longer class time would make them anymore appealing.
	+ **Philosophy SP:** 3 independent lectures develop good practice, so when you’re in hons then you have that initiative.
	+ **Management SP:** The stressfulness of the jump from subhons to hons has more to do with the pressure of being in hons and that grades actually matter but not so much in terms of work or assessments. People just start to care about their schoolwork.
	+ **Sc/ Med FP:** From my experience, a lot of people were taking 8-9 modules just to make up for credits in second year. People seem to be more relaxed in hons and the workload seems to tails off with the change in weightage.

**Fourth Agenda Item:** **Provisional timetable** (DoEd – 10 mins)

* Overview:
	+ A member of staff for an email from a student which discussed how since schedules and timetables aren’t released until week 1, she’s unable to submit a rota for her part-time job.
	+ We’re exploring the possibility of having timetables come out sooner. According to timetabling, since matriculation isn’t complete until week 1, they can’t estimate class size, hence they don’t know class location so the timetable might change from the previous year’s but there is no certainty.
* Discussion:
	1. Do you all think it would be helpful to have a provisional timetable based off of the previous year?
	+ **Comp Sc SP:** This would be very useful. You’re only told about module clashes during advising so you can’t ultimately study modules you actually want to do. Even if the timetable might change, it’s good to have a provisional one in place.
	+ **Maths SP:** Yes, we have provisional timetables for modules for the last 2 years. It’s useful to know. We make our module choices quite late, so you need to make sure they aren’t clashing.
	+ **Sc/ Med FP:** For most schools, you go to advising, begin classes, and then find out about the clash.
	+ **DoEd:** Might help to also have it centrally available for joint hons students.
	+ **Classics SP:** We have this provisional timetable within the module overview, but no one really cares.
	+ **DoEd:** How is it released/ made available to you?
	+ **Classics SP:** We receive an email from the school with a doc on next year’s modules and their provisional timetable.
	+ **Maths SP:** Ours is on the math website
	+ **Arts/Div SP:** Before moving on, does anyone think this is a bad idea?
	\*Resounding no\*

**Fifth Agenda Item:** **Academic Policy Document Review** (DoEd – 10 mins)

* Overview:
	+ The Academic Policy is being reviewed. It is university policy that formalizes that we have SSCCs chaired by SPs. Instead of renewing it, we’ll rewrite it.
* Discussion:
1. Apart from SSCC, does anyone has other items they want to see standardized in policy (Can’t promise but will try)
	* **Philosophy SP:** SSCC has been changed so module convenors don’t go, which defeats the purpose of reps going for these meetings. Can we have a policy on reps being notified ahead of time about changes like these?
	* **French LC:** Can LCs be invited to department meetings? I attend them but it would be helpful to have that in writing. LCs attended these pre-covid LCs but then it fell off.
	* **DoEd:** Technically SPs are meant to be on teaching committees.
	* **Philosophy PS:** is this TLA? – Teaching and Learning?
	* **DoEd**: Yes, It’s essentially ameeting with yourself, DoT, and other staff members
	* **IR SP:** Perhapsnew modules and weighting can be brought up through TLAs?
	* **Chem SP:** Yes, this would be helpful.A new module came up during chem teaching meeting and lecturers asked if the module would be helpful.
	* **DoEd:** are you and your reps invited toEDI committees?
	* **English SP:** I was invited but my rep wasn’t. Would be nice if reps could also be invited.
	* **Maths SP:** we should do the same for disability committee too
	* **Arts/ Div FP:** It would be helpful to outline which reps should be invited to which meeting.
	* **English SP:** Would help if school reps DO something (as in they have a defined role)
	* **Comp Sc. SP:** Our “committee meetings” areonline still, using a discussion form. Scared to message on it because it’s basically a forum and faculty isn’t open to changes. You post a comment/ suggestion for change, and everyone will comment on it.
	* **IR SP**: Separate representation for UG and PG reps in EDI representation. I can’t be representing women at the PG level.
	* **DoEd:** Data sharing clause, based on Classics SP information attainment. Would SPs like to have some base level data such as demographics? What kind of data would you like to see?
	* **Comp Lit LC:** Can we have access to Moodle pages, cause people keep asking about information across modules and it would make it easier to direct students better.
	* **DoEd:** I can’t promise that because what if an SP goes rogue??
	* **Spanish LC:** It would be good to be able to check how many students are taking a module, so I know how many people I’m emailing.
	* **Maths SP**: Also good to know how many students are actually in an academic school vs are taking a module to fill credits.
	* **Film Studies SP:** Helpful at subhonours level to know how many students take it as a degree pathway to improve content engagement.
	* **Art Hist SP:** Want to knowhow many students are doing single/ joint hons in my school.
	* **Hist SP:** Good to have an average grade people are getting on a module, someone should have oversight and see how grades are distributed.
	* **Arts/ Div SP:** you can see the chart on Moodle, so it’s technically released to students
	* **Econ SP:** Finding out people’s degree classification – if they’ve switched in, how many people came in, and when they switch out – to understand if people dropping out a lot.
	* **Medicine SP**: Are all schools able to review their exam papers?
	* **DoEd**: This could be a separate topic for Educom and perhaps UAF. Everyone’s entitled to see them, but they don’t know they are.
	* **Comp Sc. SP**: does any other school have optional modules that are pre-requisites for hons modules? Joint students can’t take these optional modules but then you can’t take certain modules in hons. Someone switched to straight CS in hons but now they can’t do some of the modules. There is one lecturer who did not budge when this problem was discusses.
	* **Phoebe**: Send in an email and loop me in. I will help facilitate the meeting (in my Halloween costume)

**Observers**

**Resources Requested**