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Education Committee

St Andrews Students Association

**Meeting Date:** 10th 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**: Phoebe Rickard

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

**ATTENDANCE**

**Attendees:**

Olivia, Cole, Fleur, Sara, Holly, Georgia, Erin, Jeremy, Hugo, Millie, Finn B, Sebastien, Ariane, Anisha, Oliver, Alicia, Kiera, Tom, Finn S, Sydney, Nick, Jimmin, Tasha, Donald, Christie, Josephine, Paul,

Hitanshi, Phoebe, Emily, Chase,

**Online**:

Stephanie

**Apologies**:

Vic, Shona

**Absences**:

**Guests**:

Catie (Societies Officer), Molly (DSN Education Officer)

**AGENDA ITEMS:**

**First Agenda Item:** **IT Update** (Sci/Med FP – 10 mins)

* Overview:
  + Quick update on the IT project. SPs to check which buildings and classrooms are particularly affected, and what exactly is failing (recordings, Panopto, equipment.) This project is not from a staff perspective for they have the option to attend training and will be shown around any teaching room where they will be teaching.
* Discussion:
  + **Chem SP:** Is it feasible to ask lecturers to learn about every room they will be teaching in?
  + **Phoebe:** They don’t have to go to every room, just the ones they’re unsure of. They are also given general training, which IT will explain further in their presentation in the next EduCom.

**Second Agenda Item:** **Society/School Collaboration** (Societies Officer – 10 mins)

* Overview:
  + The Societies subcommittee is concerned about the relationship that different schools have with their societies. Some schools have great relationships and communication, while others have not had less collaborative relationships leading some societies to financial ruins.
* Discussion:
  1. Do SPs notice this as an issue?
  2. What can the societies subcommittee do?
  + **Philosophy SP:** Is your question about finances or the state of relationships between school and their societies?
  + **Caitie:** Part of the issue is financial. The School and SPs organizes the ball but the societies have to fund it. In other cases, societies do all the footwork and then schools just put their name it.
  + **DoEd:** (show of hands) How many SPs are in-charge of balls this year: 4. How many are in some way involved: 6. It largely depends on how schools interact. Sometimes the ball comes out of the SPs budget causing them to get involved.
  + **Social Anthro SP:** The SP role is partially being an event organizer, but it’s difficult to be organizing events with day-to-day responsibilities. We don’t have that kind of role, and it needs to be redefined in terms of events.
  + **Art Hist SP:** It’s frustrating working with schools from a society perspective. It depends on the school if they have access or not to funds which they typically don’t which is why funding and organisation falls on the societies and SPs. (Eg.) Last year, Art Hist soc lost a lot of money because there was one person making decisions about the ball’s organization. They didn’t have access to the bank acc and didn’t leave any invoices. Event planning is often a sub-role every SP is expected to do, but not every SP wants to do it and the price typically falls on societies.
  + **Econ SP:** Societies have way more support for events like balls as they can apply for university and union grants. This year as SP, she collaborated with Women In Business where she organized most of the event but the soc was still chasing her to also fund it. Schools and SPs are automatically expected to put in the effort and societies need to change how they see schools in this role.
  + **Comp Sc. SP:** Balls are a lot of work and should be organized by university societies, because they can pay for such large-scale events. There should also be more information about the risks associated with organizing a Ball for whoever decides to do it since they might have to pay out of pocket if the ball isn’t successful. Typically, societies have more financial backing than SPs
  + **Medicine SP:** (in agreement with Econ SP) The school doesn’t have money to fund balls. The School of Medicine’s societies organizes the yearly Bute ball. The society hosts this large-scale ball so they organize it themselves. Grants need to be tailored to ball, so that societies who want to organize a ball can easily get the grant. They’re typically not sure if the grant will be approved which is why they turn to SPs for funding which they in any case don’t have. Maybe have a grant application template for societies to use
  + **Caitie:** We do have one
  + **Medicine SP:** Then maybe introduce a guide to organizing and funding balls.
  + **Catie:** That is currently in the works.
  + **Art/Div FP:** Societies have an income from the membership fee they charge whereas SPs don’t. Is there (maybe) a ball training that SPs could be invited to?
  + **Catie:** Not yet. However, there still is a weird lack of communication, where only subcommittees organizing balls have access to resources to host balls successfully. There is little support in this regard for both School societies and SPs.

**Third Agenda Item:** **Tuition fees for Students on Placement** (Biology SP – 10 mins)

* Overview:
  + The School of Biology offers three integrated masters programs, all of which require a compulsory placement in the students’ 4th year with an external charity. Students are required to pay the full tuition and accommodation fee when they’re not attending university. The support they receive only covers half of the associated cost with just tuition.
  + The School of Chemistry faces the same problem. However, In the School of Modern Languages, the university only asks students to pay half their tuition fee which makes it unreasonable for them to ask Bio students to pay the full amount.
  + We’re looking to raise this issue higher in the university and it has been continually raised for the past two years.
* Discussion:

a) Do other SPs support this notion?

* + **Art/Div FP:** This issue has been raised at lots of EduCom(s) in previous years. Last year, it was also raised at the Undergraduate Academic Forum. However, the University was unresponsive, and the Proctor was very against it. They said that tuition fees are based on student care; students still have access to all university infrastructure, and staff also visits these students on placement which is where the funds go. They believe it’s students’ personal choice to go on placement years.
  + **Chem SP:** Staff don’t visit students on placements. Why is there a discrepancy between Modern Languages and STEM placements? It is also mandatory for biology students not a personal choice.
  + **Russian LC:** In their school, the staff had to fly in and out of Russia pretty often to visit their students.
  + **Chem SP:** Could collect data from staff about how often they’re visiting these students (if at all)
  + **Arts/ Div FP:** Students wanted more transparency in terms of associated costs and use of tuition fees.
  + **French LC:** In the integrated year abroad program for languages, the year abroad module is only 16 credits and doesn’t count towards the degree.
  + **DoEd:** This argument was raised last year to which the uni said that the fees are based off of module weightage and not services. Therefore, students can’t excuse themselves of it. Highly recommend bringing it up at UAF again but with more evidence: What do these site visits look like? Are they really costing that much? Collect data from people who are currently on placements or those who’ve been on one before.
  + **Art Hist SP:** It is insane that the university calls these mandatory placement years a personal choice. Could involve the employability officer since the goal of these placement years is to make students more employable. Attaching a full fee (which the school support doesn’t even cover) makes good placements reduces their accessibility to those with financial restrictions.
  + **Chem SP:** Another angle could be that thisis a financial burden on international students who break even or pay out of pocket to attend these placement years.
  + **Bio SP:** Some placements are unpaid, and on top of that students are paying tuition. Also, Bio staff doesn’t visit students on placement.
  + **Arts/Div FP**: What are you looking for in terms of the working group for collecting data? Do you have any design for this focus group?
  + *Temporary Silence*
  + **Sc/Med FP**: We could have a potential chat after EduCom.
  + **Chem SP:** We want work to discuss this with LC to see the impact on student finances
  + **Arts/Div FP:** This could be a pre-EduCom discussion.
  + **DoEd:** Can I raise this issue with the Heads of School w/o bringing the project up? Just to put feelers out because they don’t like it when we blindside them at UAF

**Fourth Agenda Item:** **Assessment Policy Changes** (DoEd – 15 mins)

* Overview:
  + There have been changes to the assessment and feedback policy, and while it’s a huge document but there are some issues I want to raise. I’m not sure if this is new or not, but the policy essentially says that all coursework markings done on the 20-point scale should be in whole numbers. Decimals are only allowed when you’re averaging grades out, or when you’re marking on a different scale and then converting it. This is because with decimal-point marking it becomes a 40-point scale.
* Discussion:

a) Is that currently being practiced?

b) What would be the impact of this policy if it were to be practiced?

* + **History SP:** No that’s not currently practiced. Grades are given in 0.5 intervals too. It would be bad for the School of History to change this practice as it’s helpful to have a varied scale in essays. The difference between a 16 and 17 is way more than in an 11 and 13 so the decimal point is helpful in differentiating work.
  + **Comp Lit LC:** We have very varied essays, and it would be difficult to not have decimal marking scheme that differentiates those essays.
  + **Russian LC:** In Russian, assignments are marked quite mathematically. There are a lot of factors which influence grades - spellings, handwriting, tone – creating a lot of difference between a 16 and 17.
  + **Comp Sc SP:** There is a big difference in Comp Sci scoring where a 16 mean working competency and 16.5 is exceptional.
  + **DoEd:** If I bring your concerns up with the university, I anticipate being told that SPs are talking about qualitative stuff. If the marking scheme changes it works, cause according to lecturers, the differences between minor points are vibe based.
  + **Spanish LC:** If 16.5 is classified as a first, how will the marking scheme work?
  + **DoEd:** 16.5 is a first on a degree qualification. So, you can still get that when taking the average out of coursework.
  + **Spanish LC:** I’m surprised that humanities professors allowed that
  + **DoEd:** I’m not sure if they’ve been consulted
  + **Mod Lang SP:** Our work is marked on a point-by-point basis, so if you make a tonal error, you can’t just suddenly go from a 17 to a 16. Just having a 1-20 isn’t necessarily fair and loses a lot of the details in markings.
  + **Medicine SP:** School of Medicine only marks in whole numbers which the students actually don’t understand. We’re given feedback on a percentage scale. So if an exam is scored out of 100%, all scores anywhere between 61%-65% becomes 15s. Students aren’t given any clarification on how this scale is converted.

**Fifth Agenda Item:** **AI FAQs** (DoEd – 10 mins)

* Overview:
  + The assessment policy also has guidance on AI and how it translates to good academic practice. There seems to be a misunderstanding in how you can use AI in the classroom. The FAQ paper is kept in front of the SPs.
* Discussion:

a) Does anyone have any questions or feedback?

* + **Art Hist SP:** Do you have to use *Turnit* for AI checking?
  + **DoEd:** Lecturers may or may not have *Turnit* on, but they only have the plagiarism detector and not the AI one.
  + **Art Hist SP:** Which AI checking software does the university use? Is there any transparency around that?
  + **Sci/Med FP:** A new software is being trialed in some schools. The university wants to see if it’s a better interface to be using. Not sure about AI checks with that.
  + **Econ SP:** I’m concerned about Grammarly being added into list of AI tools to not use. It shouldn’t be included or classed in the same section. Grammarly is huge accessibility tool especially for those whose first language isn’t English.
  + **Art/Div FP:** Using AI to proofread your work is acceptable in the School of Art History.
  + **DoEd:** Grammarly in itself isn’t an AI tool, but it does have an AI function, so it creates this gray area.
  + **Econ SP:** But the university doesn’t clarify that here.
  + **Molly:** You’re meant to declare that you use Grammarly.
  + **Econ SP:** The policy says that using Grammarly isn’t academic misconduct, but bad practice and your score could be lowered.
  + **German LC:** Student services recommends that we use Grammarly although lecturers don’t like it when students use Grammarly.
  + **Bio SP:** Their school specific policy specifies generative Grammarly as the AI tool and not just Grammarly as a whole.
  + **Mod Lang SP:** When then, is it acceptable to use AI so you won’t be penalized?
  + **DoEd:** According to the policy, when using AI in assessed coursework, if you don’t declare its use that’s considered malpractice, but if you declare it then it’s considered poor practice and you might be marked down.
  + **IR SP:** More guidance is required on terminology. The policy is vague. What is the threshold for acknowledging use of AI and that coursework deserves to have a lower mark? It would also be nice to be taught about how we can use AI usefully in our education since it is the future. It’s a useful workplace skill so it would be good to learn how to use it ethically at university.
  + **DoEd:** Does the document read as if it’s trying to discourage the use of AI?
  + **Art Hist SP:** The document is vague. We can’t say if it’s asking us to use it or not.
  + **Comp Sc. SP:** Most workplaces are enforcing the use of AI so there should be some training on how students can use it properly.
  + **DoEd:** Just to note, this doc is irrelevant if your assignment asks you to use AI and it’s just addressing AI practice in traditional coursework.

**Sixth Agenda Item:** **Mid-Semester Survey Check-In** (Sci/Med FP – 5 mins)

* Overview:
  + Shout out to Jimmin and Donald - they closed their Mid-Sem feedback forms and got about 300 responses each. Medicine has already had their SLC meeting. Can we go over raise hands for student staff partnerships?
* Discussion:

a) Have your professors shown the lecture slides during class? 12 - Yes

b) Have profs mentioned the form to students but not circulated the slides? 4 - Yes

* 1. Have your members of staff ghosted you regarding survey distribution support? 5 – Yes (Mod Lang, Philosophy, Econ, Psych and Neuro, Earth and Environmental Sci.)

* + **DoEd:** There have been lots of issues this week regarding miscommunication between EduExec, DoTs, and SPs. Her email clearly said that staff should check with SPs before circulating survey but in some cases that hasn’t happened. If that happens, close the survey, reach out to them and us so we can fix it.
  + **English SP:** Is another survey currently active? Prof. refused to mention her survey because he said students will get confused about another survey the school is circulating.
  + **Arts/ Div FP:** Do they mean like the EDI Survey?
  + **DoEd:** Maybe profs think that this survey and last year’s MEQs are different surveys? But there are no other active surveys.
  + **Phys SP:** In your experience with Qualtrics, how do you distribute work between SPs and reps? It is a centralized form. Qualtrics is complex yet powerful. We’re forced to use section 1 and 2 even though they don’t gather actionable feedback. We can tailor section 3 to make a useful feedback collection questionnaire. However, because there is just one centralized survey, it’s hard to delegate tasks to reps.
  + **Maths SP:** suggested the filter option
  + **Phys SP:** That feature is not user friendly, making it hard to analyze the feedback
  + **Hist SP:** The role of class rep needs to be reevaluated in light of this form. I support this form, but it has left class reps with little to no responsibility. They’ve been made a bit redundant. It would be great if you could find a way to involve them in this process again.
  + **Phys SP:** Class reps were quite dynamic last year and so they did a lot and gathered a lot of feedback

**Observers**

**Resources Requested**