

University of St Andrews
Students' Association
Students' Representative Council

MINUTES

Tuesday 26th October 2021 – Microsoft Teams – 5pm



Present

Member's Name	Position
Lottie Doherty	Association President
Leonie Malin	Association Director of Education
Bella Zeff	Association Director of Events and Services
Anna-Ruth Cockerham	Association Director of Wellbeing
Avery Kitchens	Association Director of Student Development and Activities
Maitreyi Tusharika	Association Chair
Jack Campbell	SRC Alumni Officer
AK Schott	SRC Accommodation Officer
Ananya Jain	SRC BAME Officer
Bhavya Palugudi	SRC Environment Officer
Lucia Guercio	SRC Arts & Divinity Faculty President
Sarah Johnston	SRC Science & Medicine Faculty President
Caroline McWilliams	SRC Postgraduate Academic Convenor
Emma Craig	SRC Student Health Officer
Caitlin Ridgway	SRC Gender Equality Officer
Capri Mancini	Secretary to the SRC
Sandra Mitchell	SRC Widening Access & Participation Officer

In Attendance

Iain Cupples	Student Advocate (Education)/HR Manager
Megan Dyson	
Claire Taylor	
Emily Jenkins	
Sky McMahaon	
Kian Cross	
Ellie King	
Tara King	
Nicole Cizauskas	

Absent

Jane Yarnell
Sophie Craig

1. Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was adopted without dissent.

2. Apologies for Absence.

Jess Smith	Athletic Union President	Apologies	Proxy: Lottie Doherty
Stella Maris	Rector's Assessor	Apologies	
Michael Logue	SRC LGBT+ Officer	Apologies	
Rosanna Johnston	SRC Community Relations Officer	Apologies	

3. Open Forum

No business.

4. Reports of the Sabbatical Officers

4.1. Report of the Association President

Lottie Doherty (LD) reported that they have been working the Green Impact SU program, which they have recently joined, including attending several introductory meetings. This will help the Association's sustainability. In preparation for Raisin Weekend, LD had been working with the Wellbeing Committee on communications, as well as providing bread and water to participating students. There are no questions for LD.

4.2. Report of the Athletic Union President

Not present.

4.3. Report of the Director of Education

Leonie Malin (LM) discussed their work on the postgraduate elections, including the recruitment of four new executing postgraduate academic representatives and a large team of postgraduate class representatives. LM is now planning the initial training for the postgraduate representatives, as well as their first in-person meeting. LM had also organized forums for the class representatives who have school roles, such as the disability and academic support forum, and a careers and employability forum. There are no questions for LM.

4.4. Report of the Director of Events & Services

Bella Zeff (BZ) reported that the Union now runs nightly events, noting that the weekly Jazz Night had been expanded to Club 601. BZ said they have organized an informal events team, who would now volunteer to set up large events such as Halloween. This team would also consult on student nightlife, and the kind of events students are interested in. BZ added that applications for this events

team could be open throughout the year. BZ noted that they have been working with the Barron and Byre Theatres, and will be having meetings to rectify the situation. There are no questions for BZ.

4.5. Report of the Director of Student Development and Activities

Avery Kitchens (AK) discussed the work they have been doing on the employability strategy, noting the recent survey completed, which will be discussed at the next SRC meeting. AK added that University Challenge trials will soon begin. AK noted that they have been working with the Societies Committee to adjust the affiliation process for new societies, adding that there is now a new portal for societies which will make the process less complicated. AK discussed their work alongside some trustees, sabbatical officers, and SRC officers to recruit a new societies and activities coordinator, which will increase support for student volunteers. There are no questions for AK.

4.6. Report of the Director of Wellbeing and Equality

Anna-Ruth Cockerham (AC) discussed their work on the SGBV charter that the university is piloting, as well as the Emily Test charter, adding that they had a site visit from representatives of the charity who met with students. AC noted that they have also been working on drink spiking safety, which will be discussed later in the meeting. AC also reported on their introductory meetings with individuals from the Equality Committee, introducing them to relevant members of university staff. AC had also been working on the elections review, as well as the job application for the Wellbeing and Equality Coordinator position. There are no questions for AC.

5. Questions for SRC Members

5.1. Questions for Accommodation Officer

AK Schott (AS) noted that Accommodation Week would be next week, which would include talks on how to rent, inviting other officers to hold stalls at the fayre if they were interested.

5.2. Questions for Alumni Officer

5.3. Questions for Arts/Divinity Faculty President

5.4. Questions for BAME Officer

Ananya Jain (AJ) noted that it was Multicultural Week, and that they had been organizing events such as a pub quiz and film screening. AJ has also restarted the community garden, which they are hoping will become an inclusive space.

5.5. Questions for Community Relations Officer

5.6. Questions for Disability Officer

5.7. Questions for Employability Officer

5.8. Questions for Environment Officer

5.9. Questions for Gender Equality Officer

5.10. Questions for LGBT+ Officer

5.11. Questions for Lifelong and Flexible Learners Officer

5.12. Questions for Postgraduate Academic Officer

5.13. Questions for Postgraduate Development Officer

5.14. Questions for Rector's Assessor

5.15. Questions for Science/Medicine Faculty President

5.16. Questions for Secretary to the SRC

5.17. Questions for Student Health Officer

5.18. Questions for Widening Access and Participation Officer

6. Any Other Competent Questions

7. New SRC Business

7.1. R-21-06 A Motion to tackle spiking and promote night out safety

AC introduced the motion. AC referred to the new coverage of national increases in incidents of spiking on nights out, as well as noting increased reports within St Andrews. AC described the motion as providing a mandate for the Students' Association to further support the Big Night In campaign and their demands, in particular promoting the Campus Safety society's St Andrews safety collective pledge, and working with the university and other community groups to introduce night safety initiatives to more local venues. There would also be added information on spiking prevention in They've Got Limits and Got Consent workshops, as well as distributing that information to societies via email. There would also be a campaign for the Scottish and UK governments to take further action on spiking and better support victims in medical responses and the reporting process, as well as providing better police resources. AK praised the work of AC and the those working on this issue, voicing their absolute support of the motion.

The motion was **passed without dissent**.

7.2. R-21-07 Motion to switch the university servers to use Ecosia as their default search engine

Ellie King (EK) introduced the motion. EK described Ecosia as a search engine that functions the same as Google and similarly make advertisement revenue, but the company uses 80% of their profits to plant trees. These tree planting initiatives are verified, helping both the environment and the local communities they work in. EK noted they are a certified B corporation, and have legal documentation that means they can never individually profit from the university. The motion responds to a global initiative called Ecosia on Campus, with many universities already having switched to Ecosia as a default search engine – including, in Scotland, Edinburgh and Glasgow universities. EK added that it was a worthwhile endeavor because the university would support worldwide tree-planting at no cost, as well as raise awareness about sustainability. It would fit into the university's net-zero strategy. EK noted that Edinburgh University, in the space of a month, funded the planting of roughly 1200 trees by switching to Ecosia.

AC noted that most university students would use personal laptops rather than the university software, asking whether there are any initiatives towards encouraging personal use of Ecosia. EK noted that they can record the trees planted by students through the engine as a part of a University of St Andrews Ecosia community, which any student can join, meaning that individual searches contribute to the university's overall tree-counter.

Sarah Johnston (SJ), the Science and Medicine Faculty President, noted that Ecosia and Chrome used together was safer than using Chrome alone, as Ecosia did not track and store your data but erases it, meaning that individuals are less susceptible to cookies. SJ added that universities that have switched to Ecosia have not had any data leaks. EK noted that Ecosia does not sell data like Google, and is therefore much more secure.

AC proposed an amendment to the motion, adding a mandate for the Students' Association and Environment Committee to advertise Ecosia for use on students' personal computers. There were no objections to this amendment. Emily Jenkins (EJ), on behalf of the Environment Subcommittee, voiced their support of the motion and the amendment.

The motion was **passed without dissent**.

7.3. R-21-08 Motion to lobby the university to substantially increase the maximum capacity for in person teaching and study spaces.

Kian Cross (KC) introduced the motion. KC noted the desire to increase the 35 person limit on in-person teaching, as well as remove some of the restrictions on study spaces. The motion seeks to achieve greater clarity on the Students' Association's position on this issue, and more consistency regarding social and academic provisions, and transparency with regular updates on discussions happening within the university on restrictions. KC said that removing the 35 person limit would give schools more flexibility with their teaching. Finally, the motion aims to increase the provision of study spaces around the university. KC added that their petition has received over 300 signatures from 21 schools on this issue, including support from 15 School Presidents and Modern Language Convenors.

Nicole Cizauskas (NC), a member of the Enhancement Team working under the Proctor's Office, noted research they have been undertaking regarding current student opinion on teaching formats and the needs of students regarding online teaching provisions. NC added that they have conducted a questionnaire with over 1000 responses, as well as several focus groups. NC suggested that elements of this motion did not reflect the entire student body. AK sought clarity on the aspect of the motion that referred to study spaces. KC deemed the capacity of study spaces to be the main issue, rather than the time limits, in order for more students to have access to the study spaces. AS noted that the university's restrictions were based on a safety perspective. To this, KC responded that the 35-person limit had not changed over the course of the pandemic, and that the reasons for this limit were not clear. KC added that these restrictions were intended to be a point of transition, and that there needed to be a greater amount of transition moving forward. Sandra Mitchell (SM) noted that vulnerable staff may be reluctant to remove these limits on teaching, so should be consulted on the matter. KC added that many staff had reported difficulties in online teaching, including restricting discussion and participation. LM noted that staff responsible for timetabling reported that it would take 6-8 weeks to transition away from online learning. KC cited confusion for students regarding the various rules for gatherings, regardless of the contexts. Lucia Guercio (LG), the Arts and Divinity Faculty President, questioned what the Union could do under its remit, which is limited regarding university operations. KC said that students sought clarity on the Association's position on the issue.

LD questioned the motion's reference to in-person limits at nightclubs and social spaces, as there are different legal restrictions on such venues. AK added that students could choose whether or not to attend a nightclub or social gathering, but that this choice did not extend to university teaching which has mandatory attendance. AK suggested that this motion was not currently necessary, but should be left to the university and the Proctor, and that places like the School Presidents Forum would be a more appropriate site of discussion. KC emphasized the motion's aim to provide transparency, suggesting that the Association could help bring clarity to students. AS criticized the wording of the motion – the suggestion that in-person teaching is more “pedagogically sound – noting that disabled students have called for a similar format of online teaching for years, and the Association should not endorse this sentiment. KC cited multiple disabled students' support of the motion, reading testimony that suggested that a return to in-person teaching would mitigate struggles faced with the online format. AS added that hybrid teaching can mean a greater workload for lecturers, which should not be promoted. NC, citing the Enhancement Team's questionnaire, suggested that the majority of students are not dissatisfied with online lectures, with approximately a third stating that they preferred the online format, but that the majority had said they prefer in-

person tutorials, seminars, and labs. AC wanted to clarify the university's reasoning behind the 35-person limit, as it ensured some stability for students over the semester while national restrictions were subject to change, noting that vulnerable students would retain access to teaching if they needed to stay home. AC also said that the Association should not support the motion as some students could suffer from a sudden shift to entirely in-person teaching, instead they should promote balance. LG noted that there are 16,000 cases of Covid in Fife currently, suggesting that student health should be prioritized. BZ criticized how the motion suggested that in-person gatherings run by the Union were akin to in-person teaching, stating that this did not mean the Association felt that all large gatherings were inherently safe. BZ also cited the government's Covid guidelines which state that universities should limit face-to-face contact. KC noted that the Association has supported motions in the past that disagreed with government policy or guidelines, suggesting that this did not limit the Association's stance.

SJ, in response to the motion's aim to increase library space for students, noted that the library had recently reopened drop-in services, and that many libraries have remained open during the pandemic, which have not been used to capacity. Similarly, SJ said that lecturers are reporting that not all students come in for in-person teaching. SJ suggested that this highlights that students are not universally aiming for a return to in-person teaching, and that students who are concerned about returning to face-to-face teaching should be appreciated. NC noted that many students had complained about the difficulty in switching between a preference for in-person or remote teaching, as declaring the former meant that students were not supposed to attend on Teams if they could not go in to a class. If more in-person teaching were introduced, then students would have less flexibility on attending a class on Teams under university guidelines.

With 12 votes against the motion, and 2 abstentions, the motion **does not pass**.

7.4. R-21-09 A motion for electoral reform

AC introduced the motion. AC said that this motion was a follow-up to the elections review, which included surveys and focus groups following the previous year's student elections. It also included research into how other student associations ran their elections. AC referred to negative feedback on the elections, including whether or not the Elections Committee was impartial, and the workload pressure the committee put on student volunteers. AC also noted the difficulty of the DoWell's position as Senior Elections Officer, which distracted from their primary duties as a sabbatical officer. There was also negative feedback regarding the rules, which were generally considered to limit candidates' campaigns, and were deemed to not focus on making the election fair but on prescribing a restrictive set of rules candidates. AC said that this motion aimed to abolish the Student Elections Committee in its entirety, and replace it with an independent returning officer that is not a member of the Students' Association or the University. This returning officer would decide on issues of conduct, and be supported by a team of Association staff who would support the administration of the election. The motion would also reform the rules into a guiding set of principles as far as possible, focused on making the election fair and ensuring accurate information.

AC added that the motion should also apply to the Student Representative Elections that take place earlier in the year, generally ensuring that the elections process is simple and fair for students. AK expressed support for the motion, noting that it would help with the pressures put on student volunteers. Emma Craig (EC), the Student Health Officer, referred to the previous election and noted that it was difficult for the DoWell and those they line-managed, as the role of Senior Elections Officer made it harder to get work done, adding that wellbeing and equality should not be put on hold for the duration of the elections. AC added that the motion would avoid the issue of the Student Elections Committee's impartiality, noting that it was difficult to recruit a team of

individuals that had no connection to any of the candidates, which has the potential for bias. Additionally, AC said that this would help ensure fair elections, and be visibly fairer and impartial to the student body.

The motion was **passed without dissent**.

7.5. R-21-10 Motion to remove the role of Graduate School President

LM introduced the motion. LM said that the Graduate School President was no longer fulfilling a role that was productive in the Association. The only resolution would be to remove the role, in accordance with the wishes of the staff at the Graduate School who would prefer to just have the class representatives and instead have an informal position that would help them support the SSCCs in their school. LM, noting their shared agreement with Caroline McWilliams (CM), the Postgraduate Academic Convenor, stated the role is essentially being filled by the PGT President.

AC proposed an amendment to Resolves 2: 'the SRC will refer J-21-09 alone to the SAF for approval to update the laws, which already removes references to the Graduate School President'.

The motion passes **without dissent**.

7.6. R-21-11 Motion for the PG Development Officer to be line managed by the Director of Student Development and Activities

AK introduced the motion. AK said that the role of PG Development Officer mirrors what the DoSDA should already be doing, not what the DoWell does. This motion would streamline operations, and update Appendix B to include their work on the Entrepreneurship Centre.

AC added that the concerns of the PG Development Officer, such as careers and CEED, did not align with the DoWell's, and that the DoWell's sub-committees already have dedicated postgraduate representatives, or are planning to introduce one. AK added that it would reduce confusion for the PG Development Officer, as they would be line-managed by someone with the same duties at an undergraduate level.

The motion was **passed without dissent**.

8. Any Other Compentent Business

- 8.1. AS said that university staff have been contacting them on their personal phone, suggesting that it seems they feel entitled to their time. Iain Cupples (IC) responded that this should not be happening, recommending that officers do not use their personal phone, email, or contact details. SRC officers should have secondary email accounts for this purpose, and enquiries should be directed there. Student data should not be accessed to provide personal phone numbers of students and officers. LD added that such a practice is against GDPR guidelines, stating that it is unacceptable and any officers should reject this behaviour. Ananya Jain (AJ), the BAME Officer, suggested that it is within officer's rights to say no to staff enquiries and requests for meetings. IC added that Union Reception staff would be able to contact staff with these rejections on an officer's behalf.

9. Collaborative Solutions