



# University of St Andrews Students' Association Students' Representative Council

## AGENDA

20th September – Large Rehearsal Room– 18:00

### Present

<b>Member's Name</b>	<b>Position</b>
Juan Rodriguez	Association President
AK Schott	Association Director of Education
Lucy Brook	Association Director of Events and Services
Emma Craig	Association Director of Wellbeing & Equality
Sam Gorman	Association Director of Student Development & Activities
Ailsa Martin	Athletic Union President
Alasdair Richmond	Association Chair
Andrew Byrne-King	Accommodation Officer
Aditya Goel	SRC Alumni Officer
Francesca Lavelle	SRC Arts & Divinity Faculty President
Jasmin Zheng	BAME Officer
Alice Chapman	Charities Officer
Mashaim Bukhari	Community Relations Officer
Mathis Bourassa	Employability Officer
Marcelina Lekawska	Environment Officer
Rachel Nevinova	SRC Gender Equality Officer
Raghav Kediya	International Students' Officer
Sofia Johnson	LGBT+ Officer
Zaine Mansuralli	SRC Postgraduate Activities Officer

Abd Alsattar Ardati	SRC Postgraduate Development Officer
Martyna Kemeklyte	SRC Science & Medicine Faculty President
Lewis O'Neill	Secretary to the SRC
Laura Connies-Laing	Societies Officer
Sana Aboobacker	Student Health Officer
Ramsay Bader	Widening Access & Participation Officer
Stella Maris	Rector's Assessor
Anna-Ruth Cockerham	Student Trustee

### **In Attendance**

Iain Cupples	Student Advocate (Education) / HR Manager
Alex Purcell	Student Councils Intern

### **Absent**

Jane Yarnell  
Molly Wilson

### **1. Adoption of the Agenda**

The agenda was adopted without dissent.

### **2. Apologies for Absence**

Jane Yarnell	SRC Disability Officer	Apologies
Molly Wilson	Lifelong & Flexible Learners' Officer	Apologies

### **3. Adoption of the Minutes from the Previous SRC Meeting**

The minutes were adopted without dissent.

### **4. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

No matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

## **5. Open Forum**

No Business.

## **6. Reports of Sabbatical Officers**

### **6.1. Report of the Association President**

Juan Rodriguez (JR) detailed his collaborative efforts with university leadership to address the student housing crisis. Through many meetings JR and university leadership explored options to house all current students. 200 students are yet to find permanent accommodation. JR acknowledged that while the situation is not ideal, significant progress has been made since the beginning of August. Consultations with the university will continue, to ensure that this situation does not repeat itself next year. JR expressed his intention to survey students on their experience securing housing for the current academic year. Talks with town councillors, MSPs and MPs regarding the HMO ban are ongoing, with Fife Council suggesting that- provided enough supporting information is given- additional licenses could be granted to flats already inhabited by students. JR also described efforts to curb landlord abuse of short licenses, advocating on behalf of students to local representatives. JR worked alongside the rest of the Sabbs team on developing the new strategy plan for the students' association, in consultation with members of the union management team. Input from the SRC and wider student body is to be sought later. The sustainability policy is also being reviewed. JR recently signed an open letter to the Scottish Parliament requesting action on student opportunities in Europe now that the UK has left the Erasmus+ scheme. The letter urges alternative arrangements to be made before the projected date of 2024. JR is planning to launch a fundraising campaign with the university aimed at alumni, with the purpose of expanding the financial hardship fund. JR will soon visit student properties (both halls and private housing) to ensure students can directly raise concerns to their elected representatives.

JR was asked whether all university-run housing has been allocated, and whether there is a mechanism to give available rooms to students currently living in Dundee? JR answered that all halls accommodation has been allocated. In the event of rooms becoming available priority may be given to students with disabilities. JR was asked whether all first-year students have been housed? JR answered that yes, the university has housed all first-year students.

### **6.2. Report of the Athletic Union President**

Ailsa Martin (AM) described recent training delivered to sports club committee members. Recapping the recent sports and freshers' fayres, AM noted that Day 1 (Monday) went well. Day 2 (Tuesday) was more difficult due to inclement weather, but participants persevered. AM said that the decision to close the athletic track at the beginning of September for health and safety reasons, and the resulting fallout, has occupied much of her recent time. AM has been working on contingency plans for the effected clubs. There were no questions for AM.

### **6.3. Report of the Director of Education**

AK Schott (AKS) relayed that all school presidents and language convenors have been trained. Training consisted of small sessions focused on specific issues, culminating in a two-day training bootcamp at the end of summer. Topics covered included: signposting available resources and guidance; how to develop action plans; how to engage class representatives (class reps); conflict resolution. AKS outlined the new class rep positions (Sustainability; Careers; Equality, Diversity & Inclusion; Disability), also noting that a record breaking 629 nominations had been registered. AKS has been working on training materials for new class reps, focusing on delivering good feedback and being inclusive. Specific training for school role holders is upcoming, with sustainability reps also scheduled to have internal and external training. Former student volunteer support staff have been asked about what training they would have liked to receive, with their input shaping new training/guidelines. AKS will work collaboratively with other Sabbs to implement training of new reps. Efforts to build a student voice directory for future officers was mentioned. Postgraduate elections in October will ensure AKS is busy for the foreseeable future. AKS has also made efforts to achieve a fairer return to in-person teaching, advocating for lecture-recording to become a permanent feature of module delivery. AKS affirmed their commitment to promoting student voices, ensuring they have opportunities to speak on issues they are passionate about. AKS noted that

recently the library has had restricted opening hours (due to ongoing redevelopment), but that efforts are being made to make alternative study spaces available/raise awareness of underused spaces. AKS voiced support for new teaching assistant contracts, whereby tutors will receive sick pay and benefit from improved working conditions. Relatedly, AKS hopes the university will match 13% increase in PhD stipend seen in other parts of the country. AKS will work with JR on the university strategy, and is also organising a university court away day. Training of officers/student volunteers will continue.

#### **6.4. Report of the Director of Events & Services**

Lucy Brook (LB) reported that Fresher's Week went well. 98 society events were run across five days, with events on the other three days postponed due to the Queen's death. LB is looking at rescheduling BPM and has already rescheduled 'Let's Get Quizzical'. In line with university guidelines on the official mourning period for the Queen, Union events did not take place on Monday and Tuesday of last week or Monday of this week. 'Beats and Bargains' (the new cheap night) is to take place this coming week, providing students with an opportunity for an affordable night out. LB worked over the summer to finalise the weekly event calendar for the year. LB also announced that the Union technical crew will now be paid, reducing reliance on volunteer availability. In a continuation from the previous academic year, Beacon bar is to remain a study space during the day. LB informed the SRC that 'Decades Night' will now be an all-building event, partially as compensation for events cancelled due to the Queen's passing.

Ian Cupples (IC) intervenes to clarify that the Union has both paid technicians and volunteer Ents staff available. The former is responsible for more complex events while the latter deal with smaller events. The team assigned depends on how big/technically demanding your event is.

#### **6.5. Report of the Director of Student Development & Activities**

Sam Gorman (SG) announced that this year's Fresher's Fayre had more stalls than ever (283, an increase of 36 from last year) and was successful despite inclement weather on the second day. SG thanked volunteers for their vital contributions to the event. SG informed the council that the new combined volunteering and graduate attributes portal is planned to go live in week 6, although there may be a delay of one to three weeks. The health and safety assessment for societies is also being updated this year; SG will work to ensure future councils and subcommittees maintain focus on following health and safety procedure.

#### **6.6. Report of the Director of Wellbeing**

Emma Craig (EC) worked over the summer to relaunch the 'Got Limits' initiative, providing training to over 200 committee members/halls reps/ sports club reps on the topics of: drug and alcohol awareness; spiking prevention; how to run safe and inclusive events. A new 'Got Limits' coordinator has been recruited to convene a related committee, with EC hoping to run much more training throughout the year. EC has been reviewing the suicide prevention training materials available to students. The university currently provides one online training course that is tailored to the general adult population; EC intends to make the training more relevant to students before advertising its availability. EC has also been working on a joint EDI partnership agreement between university and union, with the intention of making extant EDI structures more efficient and helpful to students. EC underlined the importance of equitable EDI resource distribution amongst a plurality of relevant areas, as well as reducing strain on overworked EDI student volunteers. EC has been working with the previous DoWell on spiking prevention, meeting with local police officers to clarify how the relevant reporting procedure works. Information gathered from this meeting has been passed on to the Wellbeing and Equalities Coordinator (WEC). EC plans on working with the WEC to create graphics communicating how spiking should be reported to local authorities. EC praised the WEC's efforts researching spiking and drugs, which formed part of the recently delivered 'Got Limits' Training. EC also spoke to outgoing volunteer officers about their experience of the role, and whether they needed more support. EC highlighted their work on the Union strategy, affirming that the university should establish clear goals and strategy to guide them over the next three to five years. EC would like the new strategy to be in place by the end of next semester. EC alluded to their recent work on the cost-of-living crisis, as well as: study spaces (with AKS); arranging forthcoming training for SRC officers; work on 'Healthy Body Healthy Mind'(with AM); accessibility

issues related to the requirement to disclose disability and access needs; the new structure for discussing student experience (stemming from the creation of a new university position); condom training.

EC was asked about their recent work on the cost-of-living crisis. EC answers that she is working on putting together a guide on university and union resources available to students. These include: existing governmental schemes; free bus passes; student deals on food.

### **Questions for SRC Members**

Sabbs were asked about their respective action on the cost-of-living crisis. JR stated that he was working on opening warm spaces in the union to students, as well as allowing students access to the union kitchen. AM reported that the athletic union had allowed free access to the sports centre for the first three weeks of term, allowing students to assess whether they want to purchase a membership. AM reiterated her commitment to providing free and low-cost sport throughout the year. AKS described their work on updating library and computer spaces to ensure they are as accessible as possible. Additionally, AKS has made efforts to ensure funding is available for Schools that wish to run food distribution events. AKS followed the guidance put out by Higher Education Magazine and will continue working on supporting volunteers, so that they have manageable workloads and can afford to support the local community. LB echoed previous points about providing access to warm spaces, stating that a booking procedure for communal areas like Beacon and Sandy's would be avoided insofar as possible. Further to this, LB is working on extending food hours in Union venues and keeping consumer costs down through events like 'Cheap Night'. LB notes that Union costs have drastically increased due to the energy crisis, preventing a total freeze on prices. Nevertheless, LB has tried to prevent price rises wherever possible. Beacon will be kept open as a general study space, with LB investigating areas that can be designated exclusively for commuting students. EC notes that the Student Experience Strategic Management Group has spawned its own cost-of-living task force, which has been communicating and coordinating with university staff. Said groups are working on establishing accessible, warm spaces for various regular events. EC has inquired into whether opening hours for some university buildings could be extended as part of this venture. AKS relayed that the Principal's Office is putting plans in place for the coming year, taking an executive, long-term view.

#### **7.1. Questions for Accommodation Officer**

#### **7.2. Questions for Alumni Officer**

#### **7.3. Questions for Arts/Divinity Faculty President**

#### **7.4. Questions for BAME Officer**

#### **7.5. Questions for Community Relations Officer**

#### **7.6. Questions for Disability Officer**

#### **7.7. Questions for Employability Officer**

#### **7.8. Questions for Environment Officer**

#### **7.9. Questions for Gender Equality Officer**

#### **7.10. Questions for LGBT+ Officer**

#### **7.11. Questions for Lifelong and Flexible Learners Officer**

#### **7.12. Questions for Postgraduate Academic Officer**

#### **7.13. Questions for Postgraduate Development Officer**

**7.14. Questions for Rector's Assessor**

**7.15. Questions for Science/Medicine Faculty President**

**7.16. Questions for Secretary to the SRC**

**7.17. Questions for Student Health Officer**

**7.18. Questions for Widening Access and Participation Officer**

**Unfinished General Business**

**New SRC Business**

**9.1. R-22-12 Motion for the Conservation of the University of St Andrews Saints Sport Athletics Track**

Capri Mancini (CM) and Lilli Nadol (LN) introduced the motion.

CM and LN are the Safety and Wellbeing Officers for Athletics & Cross-Country Club (A&CC) and Triathlon Club respectively. CM began by outlining some key facts. Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> September saw the closure of the university running track after a failed health and safety inspection, preventing student use. Last year A&CC and Triathlon had over 270 combined members. Membership fees for the A&CC have gone up this year at the behest of the Sports Centre, who claimed the money was for maintenance of facilities. The average life of a running track is between eight and 15 years- St Andrews' running track is approximately 20 years old. More than 2700 people, including an MSP, Olympians, local community members, and the president & CEO of Scottish Athletics, have signed a petition requesting Saints Sport maintain the current running track.

CM submitted that the closest alternative running track was over 40 minutes away, making a change of training location unviable in the long-term. CM underlined the impracticality such a change would impose on club members, who already balance study with sport and other commitments, as well as local community groups that make use of the track. CM argued that removal of the track would negatively impact students' mental health; those that took up running during lockdown as a coping mechanism were offered as an example of beneficiaries of the track. The risk of turning away students passionate about running from choosing to study in St Andrews was also mentioned. CM also raised the potentially dangerous consequences- particularly to female runners- of removing a well-lit space for students to run at night or in low-light conditions. From a diversity and inclusivity perspective, CM noted that Triathlon has previously had members who could only participate in track training/events due to medical disabilities. According to CASH, sports fees at St Andrews are double that of 'Scottish Ancient Universities'. In the current cost-of-living crisis, this risks excluding poorer students. Despite running being a relatively inexpensive sport, students that wish to participate are not being provided for. CM encouraged the SRC to support the resolution, encouraging repair and maintenance of the running track.

CM and LN were asked by AM to elaborate on communications between the relevant clubs and Saints Sport since the resolution was drafted.

LN answered that the first conversation held between the clubs and Saints Sport occurred on the day they were informed the track was being closed for health and safety reasons. LN said there was a discussion between the Triathlon president, AM, and Duncan (Saints Sport Staff) about club training sessions. Discussions have been ongoing but have thus far resulted in a reduced number of training sessions for the club. An event held last Thursday to discuss the decision to remove the track was attended by A&CC, members of Fife Council, staff from the university, and locals, in which it was communicated to said groups that past track usage did not warrant the cost of redevelopment.

AM interjected to offer to provide the figures referenced by LN.

LN claimed it would cost around £300,000 to renovate the track, but close to £1,000,000 to expand the rugby pitch. LN questioned why the money was available for rugby, a sport that already receives a great deal of investment, but not athletics?

Lewis O'Neil left the meeting.

LN summarised that Triathlon are now training in Glenrothes, with Saints Sport providing a coach for two weeks. The reduction in scheduled track sessions has led to some members requesting a membership fee reduction. This has been denied by Saints Sport, who have already set membership rates for this year. Athletics training is now four hours instead of one, when factoring in travel, training, and return travel. CM adds that travelling by coach is impractical for A&CC, who do not have enough members qualified to drive.

AM asked LN whether Saints Sports will be covering travel costs for the year. LN confirmed that they will. Ramsay Bader (RB) spoke in support of the motion, objecting to Saints Sport raising membership fees despite not maintaining the track. RB encouraged Saints Sport to reduce fees, as requested by various effected clubs.

AM offered context for the decision from the perspective of Saints Sport. Prior to the closure, the track and enclosed pitch had been used concurrently. This can no longer go ahead, due to health and safety concerns. The pitch has a 90% usage rate at peak times, which will henceforth prevent simultaneous track usage. A 200m compact track has been proposed but would have to be approved by the council. AM reiterated that Saints Sport have provided the bookings that have been requested at no additional cost to club or club members.

Various association members expressed their displeasure at the perceived preferential treatment received by football and rugby. One association member asked why students- including football and rugby club members nominally benefitting from the decision- were not consulted prior to closure and requested greater transparency in the future.

AM clarifies that the track was closed due to a failed health and safety check, hence the sudden nature of the decision.

JR asked for more information about the viability of a 200m compact track. AM answered that last week they met with Scottish Athletics to discuss the option. Scottish Athletics were in support of the proposal. Questions about budget remain, with AM anticipating external funding and support being needed to carry out the development.

AM explained that the requirements for World Rugby compliant pitches have changed. Pitches now require a five-metre runoff instead of the current three-metres. The expanded rugby pitch will not accommodate a running track enclosing it. Prior to the failed health and safety check, Saints Sport intended to hold a yearlong consultation with clubs and the local community. The failed health and safety check expedited the planned pitch expansion.

EC proposed voting be conducted via secret ballot. AKS seconded.

The motion **passes 16-2-4**

Aditya Goel (AG) left the meeting.

## 9.2. R-22-13 Motion to recess the Societies Committee during vacations

Laura Connies-Laing (LCL) introduced the motion.

LCL explained that many emails received by the Societies Committee during recess periods concern reaffiliation. Reaffiliation, new society approval, and allocation of grant money require approval from the convenor committee, which does not meet during recess periods. This results in delays and confusion.

Dealing with these emails during recess periods, when students cannot convene, is a source of undue stress for societies and volunteers alike. LCL proposed recessing the Societies Committee during vacations to resolve this issue. LCL posited that societies will not feel ignored during recess periods if appropriate periods of communication are outlined and clearly signposted. This also solves the issues created by students operating in different time zones over the summer. In short, it is better for all parties if official communication periods are clearly defined and advertised.

Anna-Ruth Cockerham (ARC) asked LCL whether this motion precludes emergency meetings during recess periods. LCL confirmed this motion does not.

AR raised a point of order, stating that this motion is not strictly required but would formalise the proposed process.

The motion **passes without dissent**.

Laura Connies-Laing was excused and left the meeting.

#### 9.3. R-22-14 Motion to add the DoEd as a joint line manager of the Postgraduate Development Officer

SG explained that as the Postgraduate Development Officer sits on the Postgraduate Society Committee, they would benefit from the direct support of the DoEd. SG tabled an amendment, changing all references to 'line manage' and 'line manager' to 'oversee' and 'overseer'. AKS concurred with the motion, contending that as the DoEd already oversees about 100 academic postgraduate reps it would be helpful to have a tie-in to the postgraduate society. AKS stated they would appreciate the increased co-operation this motion would bring.

The motion **passes without dissent**.

#### 9.4. R-22-15 Motion to add the DoSDA as a joint line manager of the Environment Officer and Subcommittee

SG stated that the Environment Officer and Subcommittee is currently overseen by the Association President. The scope of the environment committee could be expanded. Students are interested in the environmental stance/impact of prospective employers, and the work of the environment committee involves organising direct action as well as representing the views of the students to university leadership. As such, it would be appropriate to add the DoSDA as joint overseer of said committee.

ARC noted that the environment subcommittee has expressed interest in issues including climate justice, climate change and mental health, and sustainability in the curriculum. ARC asked how oversight from the DoSDA specifically would enable the environment subcommittee to achieve those aims. Marcelina Lekawska (ML) responded by citing students' increasing interest in sustainability and careers, saying that extra supervision and support from the DoSDA in this area would be beneficial.

ARC cautioned against placing additional Sabbs on committees, noting that their presence creates an expectation of mentoring. Last year's SRC removed multiple Sabbs from committees they had previously overseen alongside another Sabb officer. An issue arose where each Sabb officer expected the other to deal with the respective committee. ARC argued that enshrining long-term joint oversight would probably see a return of these issues. ARC suggested SG attend the meetings this year, without making a long-term commitment. SG responded that the resolution includes a review date when the efficacy of the motion can be assessed. AKS, JR, and ML spoke in support of the motion, agreeing that it made sense for SG to have greater involvement with the environment subcommittee. ML reiterated the committee's focus on careers and employability as justification for SG's greater involvement. JR suggested that during role handover future Sabbs should be made aware that the current SRC believed DoSDA involvement with the Environment subcommittee is a good idea.

Stella Maris (SM) proposed that it should not matter whether a given Sabb officer is interested in involvement with a given committee; the most important thing is to specifically determine who is responsible for what. This would avoid the previous year-to-year fluctuation spoken of by ARC. EC suggested Sabbs should decide who oversees what at the beginning of each year, as well specifically



determining responsibilities. SM spoke in support of SG's proposed review process, suggesting the same mechanism could be adopted across the board in future.

The motion **passes without dissent**.

Ramsay Bader left the meeting.

#### 9.5. R-22-16 Motion to remove the DoSDA as the line manager of Music Fund

SG and LB spoke in support of the motion, arguing it would lead to greater organisational efficiency. Consultation has led SG and LB to believe the Music Fund does not benefit from DoSDA oversight. SG tabled an amendment, changing all references to 'line manage' and 'line manager' to 'oversee' and 'overseer'.

The motion **passes without dissent**.

#### 9.6. R-22-17 Motion to remove the DoSDA as line manager of On The Rocks

SG echoed the reasoning behind R-22-16, suggesting On The Rocks receives no benefit from DoSDA oversight. SG tabled an amendment, changing all references to 'line manage' and 'line manager' to 'oversee' and 'overseer'.

The motion **passes without dissent**.

#### 9.7. R-22-18 Motion to Oppose Tutor Pay Cuts in the School of International Relations (IR)

AKS explained that this motion originated in a petition put forward by graduate teaching assistants in the school of IR. Teaching assistants in the school of IR were informed at the beginning of the semester that billable preparatory hours would be cut from three to one for those that had previously taught the module. This is in line with university guidelines changed in the last few years, which the school of IR is only now implementing. AKS argued that to do this during a cost-of-living crisis is unacceptable. Teaching assistants require more than an hour to prepare, especially if the teaching material on a module has changed since they last taught it. The changes could result in a 40% pay cut, occurring alongside the real term cut to PhD stipends caused by inflation. Strike action has thus far been unsuccessful in resolving the issue. AKS tabled an amendment to alter the language of the motion, so that it reflected the SRC's support for teaching assistants across the university. The motion was retitled to 'Motion to advocate for improvements to GTA pay and working conditions'. AKS affirmed their position that teaching assistants should receive better sick-pay and broader support from the university and encouraged the SRC to show support for the postgraduate community by passing the amended motion.

AKS additionally noted that postgraduate students are giving so much time to unpaid work that it is difficult to recruit volunteers for student office. AKS attributed the current absence of a Postgraduate Officer for Graduate Teaching, Postgraduate Academic Convenor, or Postgraduate President to this dilemma.

The motion **passes without dissent**.

#### 9.8. R-22-19 Motion to add new Postgraduate Academic EDI Officers to support equality, diversity, and inclusion of Postgraduates

AKS noted that it is often difficult to fill volunteer positions for postgraduates for reasons outlined in R-22-18 discussion. Postgraduates have identified a gap in EDI representation of their community, notably lacking formal advocates for LGBT+ and Disability issues. AKS described designing the positions to create workable solutions for problems outlined above, without overburdening any volunteer.

ARC asked whether the motion would remove extant postgraduate reps on subcommittees. AKS clarified that the motion would not remove these reps, but create additional positions to deal with EDI issues.

The motion **passes without dissent**.

#### 9.9. SSG Carve-ups

Francesca Lavelle (FL) volunteered to join the SSG. FL described themselves as more involved with the academic side of student representation but expressed interest in assisting with student engagement.

Unopposed, **FL is welcomed to the SSG**.

#### 9.10. Postgraduate Academic Convenor

AR vacated the chair for the duration of this motion. AR explained that the role of Postgraduate Academic Convenor (PGAC) is currently vacant. The laws of the association suggest an executive committee should decide what happens to the role. As no such committee currently exists, precedence holds that the SRC should vote whether to Co-Opt the role, wait until postgraduate elections, or hold an immediate by-election.

EC stated that if the SRC waited until postgraduate elections to fill the role then the PGAC would not have been in post long enough to train the new officers. All training would be left to the DoEd, creating an unmanageable workload. Having the PGAC in post sooner would be optimal, allowing them to assist the postgraduate population as quickly as possible.

The possibility of holding an extraordinary meeting of the SRC was raised, whereby a new PGAC could be elected. AR and AKS underlined the importance of the new PGAC receiving some degree of training before the upcoming postgraduate elections. ARC voiced concern that not waiting for the upcoming election could result in an unpopular PGAC who is less able to represent the postgraduate community. ARC also reminded attendees that the previous PGAC resigned from the role due to the excessive workload and suggested that co-option was more likely to result in an unengaged candidate. AKS reiterated the importance of having ongoing postgraduate representation.

Motion to strike by-election option **passes without dissent**.

Voting proceeds with three options: co-option, wait till election, or abstention.

The Chair was returned to AR.

**Co-Option passes 19-1-0.**

### 10. Any Other Competent Business

No other competent business.

Meeting closed.