

**UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN  
STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**Minute of the meeting held on 12 May 2014**  
(confirmed)

Present: Mr B Amponsah, Ms E Beever, Ms E Carlen, Ms J Chalmers, Ms K Christie (Clerk), Ms G Clarke, Dr L Foley, Mr R Henthorn, Ms V Hofmann, Mr G Hunter, Mrs C Inglis, Dr G Mackintosh, Mr M McCorkell, Ms E Nohe, Professor P McGeorge, Mrs J Shirreffs (Convener), Ms J Waters, Professor R Wells, Mr A Wight

Apologies: Mr L Bebbington, Ms M Dunn, Mr L Forsyth, Dr M Mackie, Rev E Smart

*The Committee welcomed the incoming Sabbatical Officers for academic year 2014-15.*

**1. Approval of Minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2014**

1.1 The minutes of the meeting of 17 February 2014 were approved.

*(copy filed as SAC/120514/01)*

**2. Matters Arising from the Minutes**

Absence Reporting and Self-Certification for Sports Events (Minute 6.6 refers)

2.1 The Committee noted that the Sports President had met separately with the Academic Registrar and Student President regarding a formal absence reporting process for students who had to miss Wednesday morning classes to attend 'away' fixtures in central Scotland and beyond. A formal proposal would be submitted to the next cycle of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning and its undergraduate and postgraduate sub groups.

Cargo Bike (Minute 6.14 refers)

2.2 The Committee noted that a storage facility for the Aberdeen University Student's Association's (AUSA) Cargo Bike had been identified.

Medical Absences and Return of Library Books (Minute 9.2 refers)

2.3 The Committee noted discussions regarding possible linkage between students who are absent for medical or other mitigating circumstances, and their consequent inability to return Library materials on time, had been deferred until the new Librarian was in post.

**3. Health and Safety**

3.1 No Health and Safety issues were raised.

**4. Corporate Risk Register**

4.1 The Committee received the Corporate Risk Register 'Failure to Meet Student Expectations' which is managed by the Director of Academic Affairs and the Director of Student Life. No amendments were proposed.

*(copy filed as SAC/120514/02)*

**5. Widening Participation**

5.1 The Committee noted that as part of the University's Widening Participation activities the University is a partner in the development of a Children's University (CU) Centre for Aberdeen City and Shire. The aim of the CU is to promote social mobility by providing high quality out-of-school-hours activities to children aged 7 to 14 and engaging the wider communities as learning partners in this process.

*(copy filed as SAC/120514/03)*

5.2 The Committee was informed that the range of Schools already involved in CU Aberdeen include several which fall in the most deprived category of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. The Committee observed that whilst the University already provides a range of activities that could contribute to the CU pupil learner passports, it would be useful to consider additional activities and

also individuals who could be trained to accredit activities. It was noted that input to these activities by AUSA would be particularly welcome.

5.3 The Committee also noted that the University had committed, as part of its 2014-15 SFC outcome agreement, to seek the Buttle Trust Quality Mark for care-leavers. It further noted that it has recently been announced that after 2015 the Buttle Trust will no longer maintain the Quality Mark, the intention being that the activities associated with the qualifying criteria are mainstreamed in institutions. The Committee supported the University's position that as the Trust will, for the coming year, continue to evaluate submissions, Aberdeen will still submit a project plan in order to receive an external verification on the activities being undertaken and to get feedback on any areas for development.

## **6. Student Participation in the Scottish Independence Referendum**

6.1 The Committee noted that the Electoral Commission is seeking assistance from universities in raising awareness amongst the student body about registration and voting in the Referendum. Given the timing of the referendum, it will be important for students to plan ahead to ensure they have appropriate voting arrangements in place ahead of the start of term on 9 September 2014.

*(copy filed as SAC/120514/04)*

6.2 The Committee briefly discussed options that could be used to increase awareness amongst students including use of email and social media; template messages produced by the Electoral Commission; information in communication to new entrants; information in returning student communications; and AUSA routes of communication. It was noted that AUSA had recently organised a 2-week mock referendum, and would be running trips to polling stations on the day of the Referendum.

6.3 The Committee noted that the Director of Student Life would liaise with the local Electoral Registration Officer to ensure awareness of planned activities is shared.

**Action: Director of Student Life**

## **7. Open Campus, Open Community Campaign**

7.1 The Committee noted that the National Union of Students (NUS) was seeking to raise awareness of the May 2014 European Elections via its Open Campus, Open Community Campaign. The strictly non-party political Campaign asked students in the UK to take action to oppose xenophobia in British politics and to recognise the value of foreign students to UK universities and culture. Specifically, the NUS was looking for campus and community based, student-focused projects for which a small sum of money would be available. The Committee noted that the Campaign had earlier been brought to the attention of AUSA and AUSA supported activities in this regard would take place.

*(copy filed as SAC/120514/05)*

## **8. Student Parents, Pregnancy and Maternity**

8.1 The Committee received an update from the Student Parents, Pregnancy and Maternity Working Group. It was noted that the Group had taken the AUSA draft Maternity Policy (previously considered at SAC) as the starting point of its review.

*(copy filed as SAC/120514/06)*

8.2 The Committee noted that the Group planned to (i) discuss with Registry the possibility of using eRegistration data to proactively identify students with dependents who might require support; (ii) develop a policy statement which sets out the commitment of the University to create a positive learning environment for students who are pregnant or who are parents; and (iii) create a student-friendly guidance document to support the policy statement which would provide basic advice to students and provide a checklist of issues which students should consider. The guidance document would also explicitly highlight on campus nursery provision and the need to secure a place on the waiting list as early as possible.

8.3 The Committee further noted that the Working Group would seek feedback on the draft policy and guidance from appropriate individuals and committees before presenting the final draft to the University Committee on Teaching and Learning.

**Action: Head of Student Support**

## 9. University of Aberdeen Sports Advisory Body

9.1 The Committee endorsed the draft remit and membership of the new Sports Advisory Body which was being established to provide a forum within which the bodies responsible for university sport – the Sports and Exercise Team, the Aberdeen Sports Village and the Aberdeen University Sports Union - could meet to discuss common issues.

*(copy filed as SAC/120514/07)*

9.2 The Committee noted that a Vice-Principal to act as Chair of the Board, and a representative from the Development Trust, had yet to be identified.

**Action: Director of Student Life**

9.3 The Committee congratulated all individuals who had contributed to the Aberdeen Game Changer activities, which had scooped gold and bronze at the ceremony celebrating the contributions academic institutions had made to the Commonwealth Games.

## 10. AUSA Structure and Disbursement

10.1 The Committee received a short report from AUSA outlining (i) its current staffing structure; (ii) progress at this juncture of its governance redesign; and (iii) its 2013-14 expenditure breakdown to date with respect to administrative costs and expenditures associated with direct student activity. The Committee noted that a more detailed expenditure breakdown had been submitted to the University Secretary.

*(copy filed as SAC/120514/08)*

10.2 The Committee also noted that AUSA was seeking to streamline its staffing structure from 2014-15, and to clarify job titles in line with the AUSA Strategic Plan. It also noted that 5 candidates had been shortlisted to interview for the AUSA Chief Executive vacancy.

10.3 The Committee identified a substantial fall in AUSA's expenditure on administrative costs. AUSA clarified that in part this was due to efficiency savings, but also to a re-categorisation of administrative costs, particularly with regard to sabbatical officer salaries. The Committee also noted that AUSA had made strategic and planned use of its reserves during its recent period of transition in the management of the organisation and governance review.

10.4 As the Committee was intending to place a greater emphasis on advising AUSA with regard to disbursement expenditure, AUSA sought clarification as to how future submissions should be presented; it was agreed that this would be discussed outwith the meeting.

**Action: University Secretary/Student President elect**

## 11. Aberdeen University Students' Association (AUSA)

### Report from AUSA and the Sabbatical Officers

11.1 The Committee noted the report from AUSA together with a written response thereto from the University Secretary.

*(copies filed as SAC/120514/09 and SAC/120514/10)*

11.2 In so doing, the Committee noted that:

- The University had pledged an extra £37,000 to the £120,000 already set aside for the University's sports clubs use of the new Aquatics Centre at the Aberdeen Sports Village;
- With the closure of the 'Walled Garden' area of Balgownie Playing Fields there would be limited access to floodlit training areas for sports clubs before the start of the 2014-15;
- The sports facilities currently located at the King's Pavilion will remain unaffected whilst the swimming pool is closed down;
- The new fixed fee structure for International Students was announced as part of the press release on 11 April 2014 on international initiatives ([www.abdn.ac.uk/news/6113/](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/6113/)). It has been communicated to applicants currently holding offers. A statement on fixed fees is on the website at: [www.abdn.ac.uk/study/international/tuition-fees-and-living-costs-287.php](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/study/international/tuition-fees-and-living-costs-287.php);
- All email communications to staff can be accessed by AUSA staff via the StaffNet pages at [www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/news-events.php](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/news-events.php). Additionally, the Communications Team has been asked to ensure that AUSA staff are included in the circulation list of the weekly StaffNet E-zine;

- The Honorary Degrees Committee considers nominations for honorary degrees and makes recommendations to the Senate, with which ultimate approval of decisions on whether to offer honorary degrees to a particular candidate rests. The AUSA Student President has been a member of the Honorary Degrees Committee from the start of academic year 2013-14.

## **12. Directorate of Student Life**

12.1 The Committee noted the report from the Director of Student Life on recent activities within Campus Services, Student Support, Sport and Exercise Team, Chaplaincy, Infohub, University Sport, Student Recruitment and Admissions Service and the Careers Service.

*(copy filed as SAC/120514/01)*

12.2 The Committee noted in particular:

- The Career Service was supporting the Santander Internship initiative in which the bank provides funds to help SME's take on summer students; 25 internships have been sourced.
- 180 applications were received for 13 internships as part of the Aberdeen Internship Programme where University Sections recruit an intern for the summer; shortlisting is now in progress.

12.3 The Committee noted that the Religion and Belief Working Group had identified a need for more information to be made available regarding campus food that is available for differing faiths.

**Action: Director of Student Life**

## **13. Directorate of Academic Affairs**

13.1. The Committee noted the report from the Director of Academic Affairs on recent activities within the Registry and the Centre for Academic Development.

*(copy filed as SAC/150214/012)*

13.2 The Director highlighted in particular that:

- A survey of the Personal Tutoring System had been conducted with views of both tutors and tutees being sought, with the outcome of the survey to be considered by the Personal Tutor Steering Group in May.
- Work on OneSource *MyCurriculum* continues in preparation for its roll-out from August. Work to build the curriculum rules is almost complete and work will be moving into testing and training.
- Work is also being undertaken to develop (i) an enhanced Course Catalogue to support students making their curriculum choices; and (ii) a system to manage tutorial and lab bookings to enable students, having made their curriculum choices, to be able to get a personal timetable.

13.3 The Committee noted that work to support the new academic year in 2014-15 has included a number of IT changes to the student record system and messages to communicate the timing of the new academic year being sent to students, staff and a range of external stakeholders. AUSA informed the Committee that it will be reviewing its Student Advice Centre activities to ensure that timings best support students in the new academic year structure.

## **14. AOCB**

14.1 The Committee congratulated AUSA on its very successful Student Show and Torch Parade.