

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2008

Present: Lady Catto (Convener), Professor GJA Burgess, Mr S Cannon, Mrs J Chalmers, Mr G Cox, Mr A Donaldson, Mr SV Duggan, Mr N Edwards, Ms L Ewen, Mr L Forsyth, Mr G Hunter, Mr J Keating, Mr A Kerr, Ms C Macaslan, Mr D McKay, Mr S McKinnon, Mr M Seed and Ms YS Gordon (Clerk)

Apologies for absence were received from Ms J Elliott, Professor WF Long and Mr RW Murray

23. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2008 were approved.
(copy filed as SAC/290908/01)

24. Matters arising from the Minutes

24.1 Audit Report for the Students' Association (Minute 17.4 refers)

24.1.1 Since the last meeting, the direction of discussions had changed significantly. The University Secretary had met with both the outgoing and incoming Students' Association (SA) administration with regard to the SA's budgets, and discussed how the situation could be resolved with support from the University. For example, the administration of the SA could come under the University's remit by means of a Service Level Agreement or similar in an effort to consolidate the SA's staffing costs and to try to answer some of the Audit Report's recommendations.

24.1.2 The President of the SA reported that the SA had met to discuss the proposals and agreed that this was the beginning of a process and that it would demonstrate good governance. All parties agreed that it would be advisable to resolve the issues soon following sufficient consultation.

24.1.3 The Convener requested an update on progress at the next meeting of the Committee in November.

Action: SC

24.2 Student Engagement Space (Minute 18.4 refers)

24.2.1 The President of the SA reported that the focus of discussions had changed slightly and highlighted the general issue of a lack of social space for students. After visiting a number of other institutions it was clear that the University of Aberdeen had much less dedicated space for students. He commented that if the University was to be a world class institution, it needed to have world class facilities for students.

- 24.2.2 It was noted that the SA were not keen to run commercial outlets themselves but would consider franchises instead. Feedback from Freshers' Week had noted that those events that were most popular were 'non-drinking' events, and it was felt that this reflected the changing student demographic.

25. Students' Association

Student Accommodation

- 25.1 The SA reported that they had been in discussions with Campus Services during the summer regarding student accommodation and were keen for the current issue of students in temporary accommodation to be resolved as soon as possible.
- 25.2 The Director of Campus Services noted that the lack of accommodation, like last year, was likely to be a short term issue and expressed confidence that the University would have a number of empty rooms in the coming months.
- 25.3 The Convener requested an update on progress at the next meeting of the Committee in November.

Action: LF

Pre-term Student Communication

- 25.4 This item was deferred until the next meeting.

Improving Student Transport

- 25.5 The SA Vice-President (Welfare & Equal Opportunities) reported that he was to enter discussions with First Bus regarding the current number 20 bus route extending beyond Marischal College/Littlejohn Street, perhaps on to the bus/train station, and to also discuss the provision of night services on this route, and from King's College to Hillhead, and Hillhead to Foresterhill.

Advising System Issues

- 25.6 Feedback on the Working Group considering the Advising system was requested by the SA.
- 25.7 The Vice-Principal (Learning & Teaching) advised that the Working Group in 2007/08 had a different remit from the new Working Group in 2008/09. The current Group would be convened by Professor Long. The Vice-Principal reinforced that the Adviser role was recognised as being pivotal to the support of students by both the University and by the Curriculum Reform Group.

National Student Survey Results

- 25.8 Whilst the SA welcomed the results from the latest National Student Survey, they expressed concern that feedback of assessment scored less than 60% satisfaction amongst University of Aberdeen students.

- 25.9 The Vice-Principal (Learning & Teaching) informed the Committee that feedback on assessment had scored poorly across the UK. The University had been looking to improve in this area by developing general rules on good practice.

26. Recognising Non-Academic Contribution

- 26.1 The Committee considered a paper on the outcome of the pilot exercise which was launched in January 2008.
(copy filed as SAC/290908/02)
- 26.2 The Vice-Principal (Learning & Teaching) gave a summary of the pilot: its success and strengths; areas for improvement; and issues to be resolved for rolling the scheme out into subsequent phases.
- 26.3 The SA Vice-President (Welfare & Equal Opportunities) noted that he was keen for students on the scheme to be able to articulate what skills they had developed and for the Careers Service to support students to achieve this.
- 26.4 The Equal Opportunities Officer noted that if the scheme was to be rolled out, it would require an Equality Impact Assessment to be completed.

27. Remit, Composition and Membership

- 27.1 The Committee noted the remit, composition and membership of the Committee in 2008/09.
(copy filed as SAC/290908/03)

28. Reports

- 28.1 The Committee noted the following reports:
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| (a) Students' Association | <i>(copy filed as SAC/290908/04)</i> |
| (b) Campus Services | <i>(copy filed as SAC/290908/05)</i> |
| (c) Student & Academic Services | <i>(copy filed as SAC/290908/06)</i> |
- 28.2 With regard to section 8 of the SA report from the Vice-President (Education & Employability) on postgraduate teaching, the President of the SA will seek clarification on this point and report back to the Committee.
Action: SA President

29. AOCB

Move-in Weekend

- 29.1 The Director of Campus Services congratulated the SA for a successful 'move-in' weekend and gave particular praise to sabbaticals and their volunteers for all their hard work.

New Sports Kits

- 29.2 The SA Vice-President (Sport) reported that the new kits distributed recently to University sports clubs had been very welcome, and that a photographer from the press was due to visit the University on 1 October.

30. Dates of future meetings

Monday 10 November 2008 at 2.00pm in Committee Room 2
Monday 23 February 2009 at 2.00 p.m. in Committee Room 2
Monday 1 June 2009 at 2.00 p.m. in Committee Room 2