



SSS Competitions Committee Meeting (86)

25th August 2022

1000-1300

MINUTES

Attendees:

- Eamonn Laird (Chair, Dundee Staff) - EL
- Chris Purdie (SSS Head of Competitions) - CP
- Jess Barrows (SSS Event Coordinator) – JB
- Polly Pearce (Fixture Administrator Representative, Edinburgh Staff) - PP
- Sophie Charlton (Staff Representative, Stirling Staff) - SC
- Murray Bushell (Sabbatical Officer Representative, Stirling Sabb) - MB
- Joel Adebanjo (Sabbatical Officer Representative, RGU Sabb) - JA
- Gregor MacIolm (Sports Chair Representative, Cross Country Chair) - GM
- Johnathan Macleod (Staff Representative, UWS Staff) - JM (*joined during policy discussion*)

Apologies:

None

1. Welcome, Apologies and Introductions

EL thanked everyone for joining the call (noting JM would join later after a Staff Training Session).

The Committee has a strong representation of the sector with participants from RGU, Stirling, UWS and Edinburgh (all 4 regions) and specific groups within the sector (Sports Sabbaticals, Staff, Sports Chairs, Fixture Admins). There is an optimistic feeling about the year ahead and we all look forward to working together as a Committee.

The purpose of the meeting was to establish the main areas the Committee will support the SSS Staff with over the coming season, so questions were encouraged.

2. SSS Competitions

a. Events

JB provided an overview of the SSS Events Programme to explain the strategy and format:

- i. Working Calendar – Event planning underway for the 22-23 season and a calendar of events will be released to the members w/b 29th August so they can ensure clubs have the dates in their diaries and avoid fixture clashes. SSS website is in the process of being updated with all of this information too, so recommend checking that for the latest information
- ii. Tiers – Each event is allocated a number between 1 and 3. Tier 1 events require the most amount of staffing hours due to them being higher level events which are multi-sport. Tier 3 events require the least staff time as they are primarily driven by the Sports Development Groups and Sports Chairs in their delivery. Tier 2 balances between those two ends of the spectrum

- iii. New Event Policy – The Competitions Committee will be asked to approve new event proposals which are submitted towards the end of each academic year, to ascertain their suitability for inclusion in the following year's programme
- iv. Event Numbers – In 21-22 115 events were delivered. The aim is to increase this number in 22-23 to bring back events which were hampered by the COVID-19 restrictions and wider pandemic impact
- v. Participation Numbers – We track participation numbers in our events and have a goal to improve those numbers overall, specifically female participation numbers, in the coming year

The Committee thanks JB for her update and raised a few discussion points:

- vi. Event Reviews
 - The Committee will need to ensure we aren't continuously adding more events annually via the New Sports Policy as this will run the risk of and dropping the quality of events already in the calendar
 - JB ensures each Chair conducts an Event Review after each event takes place to ensure the quality remains at a good level and time is allocated to resolving any issues which arose, which provides a consistent 'quality check'
 - A wider 'Overall Event Review' may be something the Committee wants to explore further and build in to their review processes, to ensure the overall programme is sustainable
- vii. Regionalising Events – The biggest barrier for students entering events will likely be travel therefore hosting events regionally wherever possible will help them be accessible for all, e.g. the 4v4 Volleyball Tournaments. This should be a consideration on new event proposals, with the balance of venue availability as well
- viii. Multi-sport Event – JA suggested students may enjoy being able to participate in a multi-sport event that gave them capacity to play more than one sport in a day, like a 'Sports Day' at school. This would require further consideration

b. Centralised Fixtures

CP provided background information on the Centralised Fixtures programme, its historical place in the calendar and the recent work to review it.

The concept of Centralised Fixtures is to bring teams involved in certain BUCS Leagues together over a few weekends, to play multiple fixtures in a day and maximise their travel time. Traditionally there are four indoor sports involved in this format of delivery (Fencing, Futsal Squash and Table Tennis) and one outdoor sport (Ultimate Frisbee).

Towards the conclusion of the 21-22 season, the members were asked to review the Centralised Fixtures format to ascertain whether the indoor sports could be hosted in the more common 'home and away' format, seen in most other BUCS Leagues. This review was instigated partially in response to the impact of the pandemic and also due to the preferences of certain teams raised to the relevant Sports Development Groups.

The majority of institutions voted to retain the Centralised Fixture format for the indoor sports, noting the difficulty they would have in seeking venue space and officials in a home and away format. SSS are also happy to retain this format as a service to the members, who deliver thousands of other BUCS fixtures each year.

In the past it has been difficult for SSS to host the Centralised League Fixtures in a manner which enabled the costs to break even, however SSS staff will ensure all attempts are made to minimise discrepancies this year.

c. National Squad

CP provided an overview of the SSS standpoint on National Squads – representative teams made up of students from across the country who typically play either domestic (e.g. Scotland Junior Teams) or international (e.g. English University student) teams.

The first year after pandemic (21-22) retained the approach that the BUCS Fixture and SSS Event delivery should be the main focus, to ensure as many students could get back to playing sport as possible. Four National Squads were therefore run in 21-22 (Cross Country, Cricket, Volleyball and Sailing), all of which had a simple programme.

This year (22-23) the goal is to bring more National Squads in to the programme. Over the summer months 2022, the Sports Development Groups were asked to write a proposal for a National Squad programme if they wanted to run one this season. The proposal needed to cover key areas to manage risk:

- SGB Support (e.g. if there is a pathway in place to help students get in to Scottish National Squads)
- Team Manager availability (e.g. if there is suitable experience in the sector to cater for the programme in its current design)
- Availability and Location of Opposition (e.g. Junior or Senior Teams, UK-based or wider afield)

These criteria were established in 2019 to ensure the National Squad experience is as good as it can be at the student level, at a reasonable cost per student and also sustainable.

A Sub-Group has been created to review the proposals we have received and opportunities are available to join this. If Committee Members are interested in joining this sub-group, they are to contact EL and CP by Monday 29th August 2022.

Action: Anyone interested in joining the National Squad Sub-Group should contact EL and CP by Monday 29th August

Home Nations is an ongoing discussion between England, Wales, Northern Ireland, BUCS and SSS as to whether the multi-sport National competition can be brought back in a sustainable manner (possibly returning to be more frequently run e.g. every 2 years). This is framing the ongoing National Squad conversation and the Committee will be updated as conversations continue.

3. Policies

The Committee were asked to review two recently amended policies for the Competitions Programme in advance of their release to the members and use during the 22-23 season.

- a. Terms and Conditions
 - Main change involves the *removal* of a section indicating SSS will provide refunds should a participant not be able to participate in an event due to contracting COVID-19, due to the approach taken by wider governments
 - Approved by Competitions Committee

Action: JB to finalise Terms and Conditions document and ensure policy is accessible to everyone (SSS website and event entrants)

- b. Trophies
 - The Committee were happy with this adjusted policy with a few further amendments:
 - Engraving Consistency - Addition of a request to use a good quality engraver so the engravings are consistent in terms of size, font and neatness

- Trophy Longevity – Addition of a point to say that SSS will review the plan of action for trophies which become 'full' over time, in due course
- Commemoration – Addition of a note to say that institutions are welcome to purchase their own commemorative replicas/plaques of SSS trophies won so they remember their achievements, on the understanding that the cost of this would be the responsibility of the institution to cover and that they should contact SSS Office for guidance on the best way to do this

Action: JB to amend the wording of the Trophy Policy with suggestions from Competitions Committee before release to Members

4. Playwaze Update

JB explained that SSS use the same technology company as BUCS for competition entries and competition management, called Playwaze. The benefit of this similarity is that students and staff can have one account for Playwaze as a whole, which grants them access to SSS Playwaze and BUCSPlay all through the handy app.

The data provided by each student having a separate profile on the system provides opportunity to evaluate and dissect the demographics of the students entering SSS competitions in a way which hasn't been possible before. This crosses over with the work of the Development Staff at SSS, as they aim to break down barriers to participation by improving the inclusion and diversity of our offering.

As this is a system which directly influences the experience of the students and staff in the sector, the Competitions Committee are asked to challenge it to be the best it can be – offering suggestions for its improvement and identifying any feedback which may support SSS staff as they improve it. Additionally, the Committee Members are asked to be advocates for the system, ensuring students are aware it exists and get them signed up at the start of the season so they have access to the full year's competition.

5. Operational Plan 22/23

CP talked the Committee through the Operational Plan for 2022-23 as it currently stands, with the caveat that the current Competitions Assistant (Louise Harrison) will be leaving SSS in September 2022 so the scope of the role (and its impact on the Operational Plan) is under discussion before recruitment begins.

The Operational Plan is divided in to four key areas: Fixtures, Events, Member Engagement and National Squads. Each area has a number of targets set against it, with the initials of the staff member responsible for each allocated accordingly. The Competitions Committee will be provided updates on this plan during the season, with each area 'RAG-rated' (red=to be started, amber=underway and green=completed) for ease of review.

The Committee were happy with the Operational Plan proposed, commenting that it will be particularly useful to establish the impact hosting a full Cheer and full Trampoline programme (traditionally having more female than male participants) will have on the gender split in Participation Numbers.

6. How Do We Want To Work?

EL provided an outline of the way the Committee will be run in the coming year.

- a. Standing Items – Items on every agenda
 - Chair Representative Update – GM will be asked to speak to the Chairs and ask them for topics they want to raise at Committee
 - Sabbatical Officers – JA and MB are asked to take a proactive approach to check in with fellow Sabbatical Officers in advance of meetings to ask if there is anything they would like to be discussed
 - Fixture Admins Representative – PP will be asked to check in with the Fixture Administrator network in advance of meetings too
 - Competitions Update – CP will provide context on overall workings such as budgets, ops plan and other pertinent areas of the work by Competitions staff at SSS
 - Development Committee Update – EL found updates from the Development Committee useful in 21-22, specifically Sports Development Group updates which help provide the Competitions Committee an understanding of the broader ask of the Chairs and Volunteers beyond competition delivery.

Action: CP and JB to ask Ian Lowe (SSS Head of Development) to join us at the next meeting

- b. In person vs Zoom
 - The Committee agreed to meet over Zoom for all meetings, barring the final meeting (1st June), which will be hosted by EL at University of Dundee
- c. Sub Groups for the 22/23 season
 - National Squad sub-group will continue – any Sabbatical Officers interested in joining the Sub-Group should contact Chris and Eamonn by Monday 29th August
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Action: Any Sabbatical Officers interested in joining the National Squad Sub-Group should contact Chris and Eamonn by Monday 29th August

- Centralised Fixtures sub-group will be closed unless it needs to return to support new work
- Other sub-groups will be considered as we go along

7. Next Meeting and Topics

- a. 3rd November, 1000-1300 on Zoom

8. AOB

9. Actions

- Event Terms and Conditions – JB to finalise Terms and Conditions document and ensure policy is accessible to everyone (SSS website and event entrants)
- Trophy Policy – JB to amend the wording of the Trophy Policy with suggestions from Competitions Committee before release to Members
- Standing Items – JB and CP to ensure the agendas include space for updates from all representatives on the Committee
- Development Committee Update – Ian Lowe to be invited to the Committee Meeting in November by JP and CP
- National Squad Sub-Group – Anyone interested in joining the National Squad Sub-Group should contact EL and CP by **Monday 29th August**