



Précis and action points from the Scottish Student Sport Executive Council  
Meeting held on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2023  
Bells Conference Room, Edinburgh University Sport & Exercise  
Meeting 10:30 – 14:30

Present		In attendance		Apologies	
Stew Fowlie	(SF)	Chris Sellar - Z	(CS)	Alison Craig	(AG)
Jonny Pearson	(JP)	Eamonn Laird – Z	(EL)	Ian Gaunt	(IG)
Ross Simpson	(RS)	Julia Stenhouse – Z	(JS)	Katherine Corbett	(KC)
Peter Sawkins	(PS)	Neal Kington – Z	(NK)	Anna Wallace	(AW)
Molly McHugh	(MM)			Murray Bushell	(MB)
				Cathy Gallagher	(CG)

## Actions

### 1. Welcome, intro and scene setting

JP opened the meeting, thanking everyone for their attendance and RS for hosting. SSS Exec members present gave short introductions. SF noted an apology for a reduced committee for this meeting, and also hoped that MB is having a nice time in Spain and that he “has his collar up” to protect himself from the sun.

### 2. Homologation

#### 1. Apologies for absence

- Apologies were received from AG, IG, KC, AW, MB, CG

#### 2. Conflicts of interest

- No conflicts of interest were noted.

#### 3. Minutes of last meeting(s) & matters arising

- The minutes from the previous meeting in April 2023 were accepted as a true and accurate reflection.
- Actions were talked through and majority are in hand. Only outstanding action is Revisit and refine process for nominating Hon Life VPs which SF is to complete.

#### 4. Volunteer agreements reminder

- Reminder for all Executive Committee members to complete the Volunteer Agreement sent via email.

### 3. Context

#### 1. Exec Perspectives - Top level updates around the table

RS Edinburgh 8,5000 sports fair attendance which is the highest ever. Memberships are 1,000 ahead of last year at this point, although only suggests better communication rather than being 1,000 up on memberships. Intramural programme is also 800 up on memberships. Hoping details on Peffermill project in December. New tool for easier recruitment of very top athletes who have achieved required grades. University has also recognised using sport to recruit from other parts of the world. BUCS fixtures started now, and all looking good.

PS- Edinburgh - provided a club level update for Edinburgh with key themes from their feedback being funding, specifically finances being tight within all the clubs. Luckily the University has a participation fund that is being used for individual athletes, but clubs still feeling the pinch in their own club budgets. Trying to find innovative solutions to support clubs with growing income and cutting expenditure.

MM – Strathclyde - held their sports fair at different location which was successful. They have seen a downward trend in memberships due to a change to the membership website, but hopeful doesn't impact membership numbers. Started first intramural service, 5-a-side football, with first event this month. They have also noticed squeeze within club grants & budgets, having to balance more clubs without an increase in grant funding. Facilities capacity still struggling, but managed to get a new Boathouse at Glasgow Green, and hoping for more space for rugby & football. First BUCS fixtures also last week, and won more than lost.

SF – How easy is it to signpost students who didn't make the cut for teams to intramural? As it's such a growth area but limited by capacity & facilities. RS & PS - not necessarily easy but, new staff member at Edinburgh is linked into the academic schools and helps students move into intramural and also providing the tools for schools to become self-sustaining. Women's football has entered 3 new teams into intramural from the club, so the club social aspect is still there. Neil Rankin at Edinburgh also introduced good ideas using gift of kit to encourage international students to join intramural programme.

CS – Heriot Watt - 3 weeks into start of term. Memberships up 100 from this time last year. They introduced direct debit option (1 in 3 students) using this rather than annual membership. Squash club have become a squash community club, creating a Squash Oriam membership and new youth programme too. University is wanting to be considered as a one that invests in sport & wellbeing. HW are in the depth of creating a strategy which highlights ambition in that space, and hoping to get this passed at University Exec the end of this year.. Few delays, but 6-court Tennis centre to open in a couple of months' time. Also looking at how to link Open Days and general student retention into their sport & wellbeing strategy. JP & CS discussed sharing wellbeing strategies of their respective institutions.

EL – Dundee University, EL has moved to a new role as Senior Marketing Officer, and currently had a focus on Open days. The University has previously looked at international recruitment, but recently has been focussing on growing UK recruitment. EL suggests the message to focus generally for increased recruitment is just providing 'more support' and looking how sport can fit into this message.

JP & SF – Student experience has moved on just from qualifications, and external aspects such as sport now play a much bigger role in unlocking that support network. RS & PS – Note that across the sector, we aren't great at putting out these collective good stories. We seem to be missing a big collective data piece, as it is often hard to related NSS results to sporting experience. Cam Wright (SSS) is looking for those stories to, but need help from institutions to do this.

#### 4. Partner Updates

## 1. BUCS

NK gave Update as per BUCS paper

- EL asked about monitoring the BUCS live stats, making sure people don't add false information. NK stated it is something they have considered, and will monitor across the season.
- RS asked about whether staff were consulted on what they would have liked to have seen from a Chair & CEO. NK mentioned that if they had, it had not reached his level.

## 2. SFC

SF gave update as per SFC update.

- JP & SF to have meeting with Sharon Drysdale next week to start exploring wider influencing opportunities that might support the future funding discussions (from next summer onwards).
- SF talked through SFC Access Learning & Outcomes Directorate
- SF talked through SFC update paper
  - Funding for outside learning & teaching is diminishing, which is making it harder to secure funding so need to continue to show we are good value.
  - However, despite this we know the wellbeing agenda remains important to the SFC.
  - Winning students, happy this has returned, but slightly envious they have secured a multi-year deal, however agree with the rationale behind this decision.

## 3. Winning Students

RS gave update on Winning Students as sits on their management group. WS trying to influence governing bodies who directly fund into the student pathway. Now open for applications and numbers looking good. Management group to meet in October and will decide on applications. SF hopes a spread of applications will be received from Universities & Colleges across Scotland. RS mentioned a Governing Body Day was hosted by Winning students which was well attended.

## 4. Sportscotland

SF provided update:

- SF to catch up with sportscotland next week
- SS update is done in 6-month chunks via online portal, however is straight forward as spend majority of sportscotland on staffing.
- Craig Burn about to start as Director of Sport and is a well-known figure to SSS. Rachel Barrington has started as Director of Operations- and notable that she was Sports President at Glasgow Uni in 2001/02.
- Have been working with Malcom Dingwall-Smith who deals with strategic partnerships. Looking to help mobilise ministers over Scottish Women & Girls in Sport Week. SNP MSP Graham Day Minister for Higher and Further Education will hopefully be at Dundee & Angus College over the week. Sue Webber, an MSP who sits on Health & Sport Committee as well as the Children, Young People & Education Committee, will hopefully will also visit Livingston at some point during the week.
- Forbes Dunlop, Chief Exec has signalled that he is happy to support with Scottish Funding Council

conversations.

- Active Campus update as per paper
  - 8 or 9 active campus coordinators have started and we are coming close to having all the network in place.
  - People who have been identified for the roles are amazing and not coming from traditional sports development backgrounds.
  - However, we do need our own resources to catch up to support this project, and this is something we're working on.
  - Was initially a 500k project, but now nearly 750k per annum. Project has ambition of having a coordinator on all campus, regardless of being a University or College.

Questions:

RS mentioned to reach out if there is anything we can do to support to local coordinator.

PS asked where the funding sits. SF replied that this is from Lottery funding via sportscotland, however will be interesting to see where the funding moves to after year 2. JP mentioned that sportscotland have been great working with but do expect results, and know that this isn't a contract signed forever.

RS/SF

RS raised SRUC, and SF mentioned connections with SRUC started well and then went quiet. RS to support by connecting with SRUC given their presence at King's Buildings.

## 5. Strong Organisation

### 1. HR Matters

- SF presented SSS Staffing Update as per paper
- JP mentions that looking at the number of years individuals stay at SSS before leaving that provides a good message. But it is part of this committee's role to review movement in staff.
- Interviewing for Events Coordinator last week in October.

Questions:

- CS question regarding if office working has changed with the influx of new staff. SF general guidance is that people visit the office most weeks, but trying not to overmanipulate that. Chris Purdie enjoying being in Stirling University, and Julia Stenhouse works from ASV which are both creating good connections.

### 2. Finance

- To note 22-23 final accounts

SF Presented as per paper. Small operating deficit which has been taken out of special projects fund. Points around Executive Committee potential further discussion of special project fund. Accounts to be signed off.

- To approve revised 23-24 budget

Looking slightly better than AGM due to turnover of staff. Special project number is an estimate, which has been added to the P&L sheet rather than as a separate category. Nothing else has moved significantly. Grant funding down as per previous discussions re Health Body Healthy Mind. 125 SSS events this year and looking to make a small return on this.

Questions:

- PS asked how the special project fund works. SF the special project amount is up to exec to decide how much to spend & over what period of time. SF wants our money to work for us, and looking to potentially spend it over 4-5 years. SF explained history of special projects, with mainly 5-10k surplus added in per year.

RS asked about increase in National squads larger projected spend from 22-23 actuals to 23-24 budget. SF stated that he thinks the programme will be greater than it was last year, especially if a Home Nations does occur, but needs to be kept an eye on. To note SFC & **sportscotland** reporting commitments & SFC Investment SF stated that we have to report on this investment every year and we have to get sign off from colleagues at Edinburgh University. Special thanks to Mark Munro for his help and to colleagues in the finance team at the University of Edinburgh for their on-going support.

6 month reporting point for **sportscotland** comes in October and the next in April.

## 6. SSS Exec Projects 23-24

### 1. Governance Structure

CS gave intro into the governance restructure and provided context and processes used. The framework looks at the different levels of governance in the business. CS stated that they wanted to ensure that they were nimble in the structure and taking into account the change from a regional basis to more project-based work. Committees such as competitions and development would be removed in this structure, and decision making would be redistributed into other more area-focused groups. This structure would also introduce Portfolio roles at Exec level, such as 'Competitions Director'.

SF states that he wishes to come to a structure that best represents the business as it is now. Want to make sure we can report information in real time, so the flow of the business is dictated by the work, rather than the structure of meetings.

EL raised a point around how key decisions would be made in the new structure. e.g. National Squads, Events – who would make up these groups, and who makes the decisions? Questioning whether the leaders in each area-group would be equipped with enough knowledge to make these types of decisions. EL then suggested picking a few examples of decisions that would need to be made, and then working them through the new structure to seeing how process would work.

RS mentioned the importance of utilising the expertise of the SSS staff in this structure, and suggested tying in the Operational Plan to this. Also mentioned about including Officiating as a network and also adding in external expertise into some of the groups.

SF agreed with EL to ensure that each portfolio director is connected enough for the decision making at each level. SF also stated that the external expertise is already the case in the Audit & Risk committee, and do hope to bring in further expertise the committees & business support groups.

RS asked for a programme for support for up-and-coming staff, to provide additional CPD opportunities from across the network. Potential new mentoring scheme. SF comments that the SSS learning portfolio work comes alive within this structure and so open to these new ideas.

RS suggested that BUCS is included in the structure, at the moment we are lucky that we have volunteers on these groups who are linked to BUCS, but suggest to formalise BUCS connection in this framework. Should there

be a link to the Scotland representative on the Exec? Ideal world we would have the Scotland representative on BUCS sat from the exec committee. JP also suggested more college representative at Exec committee.

## **Advocacy**

PS gave an update on Sabb forum discussion regarding cost of living. RS praised current SSS advocacy work, but also suggests a story-telling role for SSS to do more advocacy work on performance sport pathway with Governing Bodies. RS suggested there is work to do with governing bodies in recognising student sport as clubs, and their eligibility within Awards / Affiliations etc. Discussions around ideas to further engrain student clubs into governing bodies. JP asked whether there is more SSS could do in partnership with winning students surrounding advocacy? Potential invite external funders/partner into exec meeting?

CS suggested power of sport work as both as an individual, but also as a group. At HW the annual 'Acceptors & Decliners' survey showed that students who took part sport have a higher sense of student belonging than students who don't. Important we show why sport is important in retention, wellbeing, academic achievement for institutions. JP suggested looking at drop-out data and how this would correlate with reduction in funding. Sport can play such a big role in helping to improve Scottish domiciled student numbers.

CS suggest the importance of looking at the secondary school transition, and whether we could create an online teaching resource to demonstrate the power of sport to school leavers before they leave. Also, some potential opportunity to work with DYW? JP suggested this could be an option, but the opportunity isn't quite there yet through DYW. SF to consider in more depth about the power of sport resource at secondary school.

RS asked if any possible influencing when UCAS hands over to institutions in transition period, or obvious points where we can influence the messaging that is going out to students. JP suggest adding in a survey question on enrolment whether they are interested in sport & activity, and if they are to be able to point them to resources/next steps.

### **1. Exec Meetings**

SF looking to be more deliberate with the content of exec meetings, looking specifically for input from the members on content for discussion.

### **2. AOCB**

- SF; Brit Challenge, January – March 2024, student mental health day 14<sup>th</sup>. SSS is interested to hear from members who are interested to take part in Brit activities in 2024
- SF; Scotland is hosting the Kabbadi World Cup (in India) next spring. There is to be a lot of coverage of the event, including visit & event Scotland, BBC documentary as well as global coverage. SSS are invited to take part in it if they wish to. SSS have opportunity to encourage students to travel to India to take part as volunteers. Potential education expo opportunity also.

Meeting closed 14:17

## ACTION LIST

Summary of Action	Initials
Revisit and refine process for nominating Hon Life VPs.	SF
Institutions to pass on opportunities for student volunteers to help lead the BUCS Creator Nation TikTok project.	ALL
RS to support SF by connecting with SRUC	RS / SF
Group to continue to consider structure and consider which other networks should our framework interact with? Suggest a column for linked networks to be added in to the 'Matrix July'	CS
Committee to also consider additional seats on Exec as appropriate (i.e. to fill gaps in skill, sex or representation)	JP & SF
Before next Exec Committee, smaller groups to meet to work through several examples of key decisions and how these would be made in the new governance structure. Groups to include Competitions meeting (CP,JB, EL, CS) Development meeting (EP, Dev Chair, etc).	CS
Hosts sought for November and May meetings of Exec	ALL
SSS is interested to hear from members who are interested to take part in Brit activities in 2024	ALL