

Present: Gavin Lee (Chair, GUSRC), Jamie Wightwick (GUSRC), Bob Hay (GUSRC), Joy Elliott (AUSA) David MacLeod (DUSA), Andrew Keenan (USASA), Carole Brooks (OUSU), Ruth Tudor (OUSA), Colin McKean (GSA) Cameron Ritchie (DUSA),

Apologies: Duncan McKay (AUSA), Filippo Trevisan (NPC)

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Ruth Tudor advised that she had attended the previous meeting and not Susan Scott as the minute had stated.

The minutes were otherwise accepted.

2. Matters Arising

2.1 Tenancy Deposit Protection Scheme

GL circulated 2 letters to the committee. The review of the private rented sector had been disappointing and concluded with a recommendation for the creation of an arbitration scheme despite the £1.5 million of deposits unfairly withheld by landlords each year. CHES responded to the proposals with a press release condemning arbitration schemes as ineffective.

It was agreed that CHES would continue to push for a tenancy deposit scheme as no firm decision had yet been reached. GL will contact Liam Burns and Alex Neil to discuss the way forward.

**Action: GL to contact Liam Burns and Alex Neil.**

2.2 Immigration Legislation

CR completed his letter to UKBA asking for clarification of the rule but had met with an indefinite response. It was suggested that CHES might need to pursue the government directly on the issue.

A discussion of the requirements as they currently stand followed. Progress has been made with UKBA over the past few months in several areas:

Requirement to prove funding for course: Students were now expected to prove they had funding for the period of their entire course (for 1 year PGT) or the first year of study for course of longer duration. This was felt to be reasonable.

Duration of Visa: This was now expressed as (duration of course) + 6 months; students would also no longer be required to return to their home country to apply for visa extensions where necessary. However, this continues to have cost implications for PGR / MRes students whose courses are often extended by additional writing up periods (and so must pay for a visa extension request). JW reported the issue was being explored by GU staff.

However, JW reported that UKBA continued to require a full photocopy of the passport of any student subject to tier 4 requirements be kept on file by each

institution and updated at registry each year; it was felt that this could be construed as an attempt by UKBA to track the movement of students.

JW also reported that UKBA had volunteered to set up mobile ID card creation units at university registration events; while this may prove convenient for students it was felt that this might create a bad first impression of university life for new students.

Concern was expressed that university policies have tended towards being overly harsh as a named member of staff in each institution will hold personal liability for any breach of visa conditions. JW felt that the GU Attendance Monitoring draft policy was fairly reasonable and therefore offered to forward the policy to other CHESS members.

**Action: JW to forward GU Attendance Monitoring Policy to CHESS members**

### 3. Institutional Updates

#### Dundee

DMcL updated on the situation at Dundee. The retention rate of the Nursing School is of some concern and Dundee had investigated the national picture, which had shown a sector wide drop out rate of 11-30%. The issues related to nursing retention seem to be:

- Expectations - the course is more academic than expected by most students.
- Commitment – courses are often perceived as part time but actually require full time hours.
- Average student profile – nursing students tend to be older and have dependents to care for; this can lead them to feel alienated from the general student populace and leave them with many commitments to juggle.
- Placements – are a mandatory part of the qualification but students may be sent to any part of Scotland, causing logistical difficulties.

DMcL explained that the nursing qualification would be moving to a no-diploma exit situation over the next few years which could lead to further problems. Glasgow were not aware of any unusual trend at their Nursing School but agreed to investigate.

**Action: JW to investigate Glasgow Nursing School Retention Rates**

#### Glasgow

GUSRC updated on their efforts to increase the level of PG representation. They reported that they had had success this year in securing membership of all levels of the research committees of the university, mirroring the structures of the learning and teaching side. The postgraduates open forum held just before the PRES had been very successful in raising awareness of the survey and in helping to target institution-specific questions, with the response rate rising over 10% this year and the institutional questions eliciting the most open comments of all questions.

Glasgow also informed the committee that they would be holding a similar open forum for Polish students later in the week in response to them having the lowest level of satisfaction with the university according to the International Student

Barometer; this meeting would hopefully further explore some of their issues and suggest some lines of action to take up with the university.

#### St. Andrews

AK updated that St.Andrews had passed their '5 principles of access' – in future admissions would no longer be entirely grade-based.

#### 4. Smarter Scotland Consultation

GL updated on the CHESS consultation response. The consultation presents a rare opportunity in that the opposition parties, NUS and the CHESS are all in agreement on the key principles which should underpin the response: this should send a strong message to the Scottish Government. GL asked for comments on the circulated draft.

A discussion surrounding the request for removal of the parental contribution followed. DMcL felt it wasn't necessarily bad, but that the methodology for assessing parental ability to contribute was flawed; those who can pay should do so. GL agreed, but felt that a minimum income for students could never be guaranteed while it was tied to a non-obligatory parental contribution. GL agreed to look into the current methodology and expand upon the flawed nature of the system in the consultation response.

**Action: GL to look into parental contribution methodology and expand upon this in the consultation response.**

#### 5. Alcohol Framework Conference

CHESS has been approached to participate in an alcohol framework conference which would seek to reach a consensus on the legal age of purchase. Discussion followed but there was no great desire on the part of the committee to attend; it was felt that this was no longer an issue which would specifically affect students and that CHESS' focus should remain on academic policy issues. GL agreed to forward the email on to the committee in case individual delegates wanted to attend on their institution's behalf.

**Action: GL to forward conference email to CHESS members.**

#### 6. ELIR (standing item)

##### Glasgow School of Art

CmK has had one meeting about ELIR so far; a PG student representative has been included on the steering committee.

##### St Andrews

St. Andrews have had no meetings about this yet. The new principal has extensively reorganised university structures and it seems this is the current focus.

##### Glasgow

Glasgow has had several meetings with the university regarding the draft of the reflective analysis and would shortly be holding some focus group sessions to discuss the draft with their student reps and faculty convenors.

#### 7. CHESS: The Way Forward

The minutes of the planning discussion from the last meeting were circulated for comment. The discussion divided into 6 broad areas of work and GL asked for delegates to volunteer to take responsibility for carrying out initial investigations in these 6 areas and reporting back to the committee.

**Action:** Plagiarism and International Students – **Joy**, Aberdeen  
Induction – **Jamie**, Glasgow  
Retention & Success – **Colin**, Glasgow School of Art  
Tuition Fees – **Gavin**, Glasgow  
Recognition of Extra-curricular activity – **Andrew**, St. Andrews  
Equality & Diversity – **Gavin**, Glasgow

**Meeting Closes.**

**Next Meeting: 16<sup>th</sup> June 2009, Dundee University Students' Association**