

Scottish Universities Sport

Active~ Competitive ~ Innovative

Précis and action points from the Executive Council meeting held on Tuesday 6 September'05 at the University of Edinburgh's Peffermill Playing Fields.

Present

Jim Aitken (JCA), In the Chair
Filippo Antoniazzi (FA)
Juliette Balfour (JB)
Osla Dougal (OD)
Mike Fitchett (MH)
Raleigh Gowrie (RG)
Lawrie Randak (LK)
Jamie Watson (JWat)
James Williamson (JWil)

In attendance

Graham Shaw (GS)

WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND SCENE SETTING

1. Everyone was welcomed and the importance of the Executive Council acknowledged. Scottish Universities Sport provided an exciting opportunity to make step-wise improvements in the scope and quality of sport and physical activity provision within the HE sector in Scotland. Members expressed their commitment to the new structure, and the work of the Executive Council. It was also noted that members were serving on Executive as individuals (as opposed to being representative of a group or organisation) and thus should feel to speak openly, freely and candidly. This was welcomed.
2. JCA stated that he would record and circulate notes of the inaugural meeting.

HOMOLOGATION

3. *EGM Notes* - the minutes of the EGM held on 24 June'05 have been circulated widely by Jan Griffiths. Executive expressed its thanks to JG for doing this. A discussion ensued, and subject to clarifying the title of SUS (Scottish Universities Sport) and confirming MF's attendance at the meeting, the Notes were adopted as a true and accurate record of proceedings.
4. *Constitution* - GS has updated the SUS Constitution to reflect discussions and amendments proposed at the EGM. After consideration, Executive endorsed these alterations, and agreed to make the terminology of SUS consistent through-out (Scottish Universities Sport). GS undertook to make these adjustments and re-distribute.

POLICY AND RESOURCES

5. Time was spent reviewing the role and operating guidelines of Executive. Membership would encompass individuals here present, together with a further nominee from each of the three main committees (the Competitions Committee nominee being confined to an AU President). It was agreed that this secondary nominee could change throughout the year to promote greater involvement in, and appreciation of, the work of Executive. With this, RG, JB and OD undertook to identify their additional Committee nominees.
6. There was unanimous agreement that Executive meetings should be contained to around two hours. And more, there would be up to six meetings in the year. Exchanges would be informal, yet mindful of the official nature of Executive business.
7. A discussion ensued around the individual and collective aspirations for the Executive's first year. After consideration, it was concluded that Executive's primary concern should be to create the foundations for SUS' future growth and development. This would revolve around issues of business planning, recruiting/inducting/managing staff, establishing an office base, creating network communications and the like. Advocacy (HE network and national agencies) would also feature large in Executive's work. With

ACTION

JCA

GS

RG / JB
/ OD

All

this, LR invited SUS to join sportscotland's Annual Partners' meeting, and this was gratefully accepted. It was also decided that Executive would take a keen and proactive interest in the aspirations and activities of the three Committees. This would be the mechanism for ensuring tangible improvements in the delivery of key programme areas (sport, physical activity and professional standards). The discussion closed with a genuine sense of optimism that SUS' contribution could be real, significant and long-lasting.

JCA

Business Planning

8. Consideration was given to SUS' finances. JCA drew attention to the briefing paper presented to the SUPEA/SUSF conference'05, and the provisional budget presented under paragraph 26. This showed a three-year operating cost of £340k. This was needed if the SUS vision was to be realised. Although some funding support might be forthcoming from sportscotland and BUSA, it was accepted that the vast majority of the running costs would have to be covered from partner contributions. Executive appreciated the difficulties associated with this, but remained adamant that every effort must be made to honour the SUS plan and budget. Any thoughts of budget cuts should be resisted at this stage, and energies instead should be invested into fund raising.
9. GS tabled a proposed budget analysis, which had found favour during previous discussions. The premise was to look at the overall costs, and to apportion them against three discreet income channels. Each channel/indices would be weighted equally, and reflect key elements of activity, namely: the size of the student population; the number of teams entered into BUSA/SUSF leagues; and the number of sports related staff employed. GS stated that the annual remittance fee would simply represent the sum of activity across the three key areas - and in proportional terms. This would mean the larger or more developed Universities paying more than the less fortunate and/or emerging institutions. Examples of proposed charges were given, which proved interesting.
10. A long discussion ensued on the pros and cons of the proposed system. After detailed consideration, Executive concluded that the proposed channel dedicated to staff complements was difficult to interpret, and as such, should be removed. The Executive also determined that the charge plan/system should be straightforward, transparent and open to scrutiny. After further deliberation, it was agreed student population would be the easiest indices to adopt. This could be based on Scottish Funding Council's annual return on student FTE's. Executive favoured this interpretation, though it was accepted that this might conjure some significant charging anomalies (compared with the traditional SUSF subventions) if it were adopted immediately. So, it was agreed to consider a hybrid system based on student numbers and team entries, with the latter diminishing over-time. The annual budget would thus be split in % terms (between student numbers and team entries), and charged out in proportional terms.

	<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>	<u>Year 4</u>
<i>Students/Team entries</i>	<i>60%/40%</i>	<i>70%/30%</i>	<i>80%/20%</i>	<i>100%/0%</i>

11. GS / JCA agreed to assemble accurate stats on student numbers / team entries and to estimate the impact of the preferred new formula on each University.
12. JCA / MF undertook to re-visit the costs presented in the provisional budget. More, given the new financial year had now started, and some activities would need a lead-in time, they agreed to examine the phasing of the budget in year 1.
13. Budget discussions closed with LR noting sportscotland's preparedness to contribute to SUS' budget plan. This would be set against the content of the initial business plan and its targets as pertaining to Sport 21. Executive welcomed this.

GS /
JCA

MF /
JCA

Professional Staffing

14. Brief attention was given to the pre-circulated job descriptions for the Sports Manager and Executive Officer posts (initially graded AA2). Everyone agreed that both these positions were crucial to the strategic success of SUS, and every effort should be made to secure funds for them. The proposed administrative support officer was deemed necessary too (provisionally graded CN3). After discussion, there was a consensus that the title, remit, job description and person specification for the two professional posts should be reviewed one final time. FA agreed to take the lead on this, and to liaise with RG, OD and JB, with a view to formulating final recruitment papers (advert and further particulars) within the next three weeks.

FA / RG
/ OD /
JB

Office Base

15. Executive agreed that SUS should have an office head quarters, and that this should be located in a University setting. This would give a much needed administrative focus and profile, though it was also thought the SM/EO posts would be spending considerable time on out-reach work across the network, necessitating 'hot desk' hospitality from stakeholders. After deliberation, it was agreed that JCA would write to Directors and AU Presidents to see if they might be willing and/or able to host SUS' administrative base, and if so, on what terms. Depending on the response, this might result in a formal tendering process. Executive determined that an office base in the central belt area would be the preferred option.

JCA

YEAR ONE - SETTING ASPIRATIONS

16. Due to the shortage of time, Committee Chairs were given only the scantest opportunity to outline their forward plans.
17. RG reported that the Competitions Committee would be meeting for the first time within the next couple of weeks. This would seek to ensure essential arrangements for the upcoming inter-university programme were in place, but also endeavour to uncover more information about the quality and scope of current provision. Former SUSF Treasurer, Gordon McTweed, has been enlisted to support this process, and has written to all SDCs to clarify their involvement in the year ahead. This will likely mirror the 2004-05 programme, with similar funding levels. During the course of the year, RG hoped to accumulate a better understanding of current issues, and to begin advancing targeted plans to address key blockages and exploit development opportunities.
18. OD noted that the Professional Development Committee has yet to convene, but she has a clear sense of the main action areas. This would revolve around networking and training, and build on the successful programme initiated by SUPEA. One of the first challenges will be to establish a diary of events, including the annual conference, which is scheduled provisionally for June (avoiding the joint UCS/BUSA conference).
19. A report on the Physical Activity Committee was given by JB. She enthused about the potential role of the new PA group, and the areas it could pioneer. Such a group was long over-due, and she hoped it would meet sometime in October. A degree of 'in-reach' work will be required initially, before any out-reach consultancy support/assistance could be made available. JB added that the work of PAC was especially pertinent in terms of Scottish Executive directions. More, its mandate would require close working relations with OD's group too.
20. The value of SUS Forums (AU Presidents; Directors; SDCs; Administrators) was noted, and identified as a central plank of the year's information exchanges. OD agreed to ensure that these key sessions were progressed by the Professional Development Committee.

RG

OD

JB

OD

IMMEDIATE ISSUES

21. *Communications* - JCA stated that great care would need to be taken on SUS communications strategy. This would uphold full and open links with internal (AUs; Departments; SDCs etc) and external contacts (NGBs; BUSA; UCS) too. Care and attention will have to be invested developing e-databases, web site (the domain susport.org.uk is already reserved), intra-net (for sharing internal procedures), handbook and the like. JCA and OD agreed to discuss this matter further, and to scope out some provisional proposals.

JCA /
OD

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| 22. <i>Branding</i> - a new identity for SUS will have to be created. This will be used to furnish team kit, letter-heads, web designs and so forth. Attention will be given to this at the next meeting. | All |
| 23. <i>Interim Staffing</i> - Executive concurred that there would be much setting up to do over the next 6 months or so. This would be all the more difficult until SUS' own professional staff are appointed. Concern was expressed at the potential burden of work on the Executive and its main Committees, and it was unanimously agreed that an interim appointment would help ease matters greatly. This appointment would be temporary only, and serve purely to bridge the gap between now and the start-up of the SM/EO, especially in support of the Competitions Committee. It was noted that Stew Fowlie was available and possessed all the necessary skills and attributes for the role. JCA agreed to make contact with SF to check his interest in a holding position with SUS. Financials were discussed and it was agreed that the SUSF/SUPEA carry-forward (c £50k) could be used for this. | JCA |
| 24. <i>BUSA/UCS</i> - The on-going review of BUSA/UCS was noted, and JCA, MF and FA indicated that they were due to attend the Symposium discussions in Birmingham on Wed 14 Sept'05. A progress reported would be provided at the next meeting. | JCA /
MF / FA |
| OTHER BUSINESS | |
| 25. There were none, though the value of information briefings on on-going developments with big lottery, coaching taskforce, elite sport study and the like was stressed. LR undertook to provide an update at the next meeting. | LR |
| 26. Executive agreed that this initial meeting had been most valuable and productive. | |
| 27. Next meeting - 1400 hrs on Tuesday 4 October'05 at Heriot Watt University, Riccarton Campus. The dates of subsequent meetings during 2005-06 would be decided then. | All |
| 28. Meeting closed at 1645 hrs with a vote of thanks to all concerned. | |