Policy on Wednesday Afternoon Teaching and Sport

This Paper was considered by the Senatus at its meeting of 30 May 2012:

"75. POLICY ON WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON TEACHING AND SPORT

Appendix D

The Senatus received a paper from the President of the Dundee University Sports Union.

The President-elect presented the paper and asked Senate to consider the request in the paper to reaffirm the established policy on keeping Wednesday afternoons free from teaching activities so that students were able to participate in sporting activities.

The Principal commended the suggestion to Senate but acknowledged that practical problems of timetabling and the nature of clinical subjects meant that the commitment could not be absolute for all subjects.

The Deputy Principal reported that the Learning and Teaching Committee had been consulted on the issue and had expressed support but with the caveat that in some subject areas it would prove very challenging to make it happen.

The Senatus decided:

(i) to agree, in principle, with the policy of keeping Wednesday afternoons free from teaching, as far as possible, but with a recognition of the fact that in certain subjects it may not be achievable;

(ii) to ask that the Learning and Teaching Committee take this proposal forward and consult with the Central Timetabling Office, and others, to find a solution to problems caused by keeping Wednesday afternoon free from teaching."

The Committee is asked to comment on possible solutions to any problems with implementing the policy.
Wednesday Afternoons
Free from Academic Commitments
Proposal

“Students could boost their chance of a top job by joining University sports and other clubs”
– Daily Telegraph
**Introduction**

Studying at the University of Dundee is about much more than academia. In its strategic plan the University places a vital emphasis on student experience, employability and the health and well-being of its students.

There are 2368 members of the Sports’ Union across 42 clubs, with many more participating in regular physical activity.

40% of these students are unable to represent the University in competitive sport or participate in recreational sport on a Wednesday afternoon.

Whilst timetabling difficulties are appreciated, the Sports’ Union, DUSA and the SRC ask that more is done to overcome these issues.

**Proposal**

The Sports’ Union, alongside DUSA and the SRC, believe that the University should guarantee the freedom of Wednesday afternoons from academic commitments in order to ensure the excellence of the student experience, improve the skill set of current students and increase opportunities open to students. In doing so, the image and standing of the University would also be further enhanced.

The current University policy on academic commitments was passed by Senate in 1999 and states:

While not entirely sacrosanct, Wednesday afternoons should not be used to timetable mainstream classes but could be used for small class teaching, tutorials, laboratories etc where there was an element of optionality for students or where the classes were duplicated elsewhere in the timetable.

The Sports’ Union, DUSA and the SRC ask that the University adopts the following as its policy on academic commitments on Wednesday afternoons:

Where possible, compulsory mainstream classes should not be scheduled for after 12 midday on Wednesdays. Where classes, tutorials or laboratories are unavoidably scheduled for Wednesday afternoons there should be an attempt to provide students with flexibility through a degree of optionality or duplication elsewhere in the timetable or an alternative submission of work.

This more specific and detailed policy, and its enforcement, will ensure that students are able to fully involve themselves in sports, societies and other volunteering activities which are integral to the student experience.

“I just want to thank you for producing such great students... easily the most rounded and insightful” – Rory Hamilton, Head of Insights, Live/Work on Dundee’s product design students
Student Experience

The University, DUSA and the Sports’ Union have spent a significant amount of time and money increasing the number of extra-curricular activities available to students. These provisions have all been a factor in the University of Dundee becoming number 1 in the UK in the Times Higher Education Student Experience Survey. This is, however, not the time for the University to rest on its laurels. The opportunity exists for Dundee to be a leader in the sector, and set the bar for student expectations in the new RUK fee era.

“With higher tuition fees effectively already upon us, student expectations are rising and young people are increasingly looking for ways to make the most from their investment” – John Gill, Editor, Times Higher Education 2012

Employability

Graduates from the University of Dundee are already highly regarded by employers because of the excellence of the degree they receive. Skills developed through involvement in sports, societies and extra-curricular activities further the employability of students and enhance their future prospects as well as the reputation of the University.

“As the graduate job market becomes more and more competitive it is imperative that students not only get a good degree but also take advantage of all the other opportunities that are on offer at University. One of the activities that we value, when assessing applications, is involvement in sports as it encourages a healthy competitive spirit and numerous other soft skills like team work and leadership.” – Recruitment, Enterprise Rent A Car

Evidence of involvement in sports and extra-curricular activities is compulsory for medical and dental students when seeking foundation year jobs. Freedom from academic commitments on Wednesday afternoons would provide all students with the opportunity and time to pursue their individual interests and enable them to develop these essential skills whilst balancing their studies.

Health & Well-Being

Over recent years the University and DUSA has put significant resources in to improving student services to ensure the mental health, well-being and support of its students. Sport and physical activity is a proven method of improving mental health as well as physical well-being. Studies have also shown that physical activity can improve study by enhancing concentration levels.

Keeping Wednesday afternoons clear of academic classes breaks up the week for both staff and students and provides them with the opportunity to be physically active.
Conclusion

While a number of schools do accommodate students by allowing them to reschedule classes for sporting purposes, a large proportion of students are forced to choose between their academic commitments and sporting endeavours. For a University which is committed to educational achievement and personal development this situation is far from satisfactory.