Creation of Welcome Week Orientation

What will we do:

1. Lobby the university to include a university orientation in the matriculation process for all undergraduate students by:
   a. Working alongside the admissions department to ensure that before new students arrive they are introduced to University resources, the Students’ Association, their Academic College and life in Edinburgh.
   b. Placing students into groups/houses before they arrive, in order to organise them in a way so peer mentors can help them with the matriculation process.
      i. They would stay within these houses for the duration of their time at the University of Edinburgh. This would increase sense of community on campus because it breaks down barriers such as housing or field of study as groups aren’t determined by where you live or your degree.
      ii. As students progress through their time at University they would take on Peer mentor roles and maintain relationships with their houses, continuing the sense of community between and across years.
   c. During Welcome Week these groups would go to University and Students’ Association events together to familiarise themselves with resources that all students have access to and may need to use over their time here.
   d. Incorporating workshops or events including sexual consent as compulsory elements of the orientation process.

Background to this:

1. Each undergraduate year has nearly 6,000 students from all over the world and encouraging community-building amongst such a diverse and large mix is an ongoing process.
2. Socialization during orientation within an institution leads to greater individual satisfaction and direction within said institution later on and encourages better use of institutional resources (Jones, 2007).
3. “Incoming first-year students at Michigan State University who felt a connection with the university during orientation were more likely to fit in and want to stay [involved with] the university, particularly students from ethnic minority groups” (Fain 2017).
4. Partially due to a lack of guidance for incoming students about the numerous resources available, there is an inadequate feeling of community between all students and an unawareness/overwhelmingness about said university resources, a major reason we are ranked third to last in the UK for student satisfaction.
5. “The net effect of the first year of college on critical thinking skills . . . was nearly 75% of the estimated net effect of the first three years of college” (Pascarella 2005).
6. There was a strongly correlated 15% improvement in student satisfaction levels with their undergraduate experience noted in those who participated in first-year orientation compared to those who did not at the University of Kentucky, which was attributed to improved awareness about university resources and greater social inclusion (Davis, 2013:51).
Beliefs and Motivating Actions:

1. Students should be aware of available resources once they arrive on campus so that they can be utilized as soon as a potential problem arises rather than found once there exists a need.

2. Student involvement with Democracy, Societies, access to resources, and knowledge about what it means to be a University of Edinburgh student and Edinburgh University Students’ Association member encourages greater participation which encourages identification of areas to improve upon and increases student satisfaction.

3. For international and underage students among others, division can stem during Welcome Week from the unfamiliarity of living independently in the UK, nightlife culture, and the missed opportunities arising from neglected use of university resources.

4. The university needs to take larger responsibility in providing education on sexual consent and education on inclusivity to promote safety and solidarity.

5. A greater degree of organization is needed during Welcome week to reduce the individual burden to incoming students of trying to familiarize themselves with the university and Edinburgh University Students’ Association, whereas we should also be trying to familiarize ourselves to them.

6. The matriculation process and Welcome week is largely administrative and/or voluntary, meaning that the burden of understanding the nuances of life here falls on the individual, a burden which could be lightened through peer guidance.

7. Adverse positive effects include honouring notable alumni and educating students on university history, creating Edinburgh school spirit, transcending unintended socioeconomic segregation as a result of ability to afford different accommodation, merchandising opportunities for the greater university houses, and less instances of hate and misconduct on campus.

Submitted with 20 Student Signatures.