

Principal's Update October 2012

Colleagues

Opening of Library

I want to begin with a very big thank you to all colleagues who were involved in making the opening of the Library and the visit of Her Majesty The Queen such a memorable and successful occasion. It was a major event for the University with hundreds of alumni and donors joining us for the day. I know from the messages I have subsequently received from our guests how impressed they were with the event and the University, which is a credit to the professionalism with which we organised the event. Congratulations are due to everyone who played a part in the day.

National Student Survey

The results of the National Student Survey have recently been published and I'm sure colleagues will have been pleased to see the University maintaining the strong performance we achieved last year with 89% of students indicating overall satisfaction compared to 88% in 2011. There are, of course, some areas where there is scope to improve. In particular, it is evident that we still need to look at the area of feedback to students where our satisfaction ratings were once again below where I know colleagues would want us to be. Peter McGeorge and Heads of Schools have already agreed upon a series of actions to help us address this in the new academic year and I urge all colleagues to support them with this.

Freshers

With the commencement of the new academic year underway, it's good to see the University back to 'normal' and busy again. It is an important period for our new students, undergraduate or postgraduate, and I know that staff will be keen to welcome them to the University and to give them as positive a start to their time at Aberdeen as we possibly can. I myself had the pleasure of attending the very successful CASS Freshers' welcome events including the 'Big Read' which had two fabulous lectures by Pete Duff and Jane Stevenson. Providing our new students with a positive first impression of Aberdeen can make an important contribution to improving retention and I know that across the Schools and support services colleagues are working hard to make these important first few weeks as a smooth a transition period for Freshers as possible.

International Partnerships

Over the past couple of weeks we have welcomed senior delegations from two overseas universities, the South China Normal University, China, and Escuela Superior Politecnica del Litoral, Ecuador, with whom we now have an agreement to formalise closer collaboration. Both visits were positive and offer opportunities for the University to extend its international reach.

You may have also noted that over the weekend the Prime Minister during his trade visit to Brazil announced a £4.5m scholarship agreement sponsored by BG Group to educate Brazilian PhD students through a partnership between the University and the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil). It is clearly great news that the University through its strength in geosciences is at the forefront of this, which will see a number of PhD students come to Aberdeen, but which is only the beginning of a number of other emerging opportunities in Brazil which we believe we are well placed to take advantage of.

Court

Last week the University Court held its annual extended strategy meeting and we had a very productive day of discussions with our governors on the progress of the Strategic Plan and the key objectives around the student experience, research and knowledge exchange, the interdisciplinary research themes and fundraising.

Research Excellence Framework 2014

The forthcoming REF was a major part of those discussions at Court and I can't emphasise often enough just how important a stage we are entering into in our preparations and how vital the continued support of colleagues in this decisive phase will be.

Best Regards

Ian Diamond

Principal and Vice-Chancellor