

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

Minutes of Meeting held on 27 May 2003

Present: Rector (in the Chair), Principal, Mr A Amoore, Lady Catto, Mr D Cockburn, Dr A Dawson, Dr N Dower, Mr H Duncan, Professor G Graham, Mrs S Grant, Miss A Harper, Cllr P Johnston, Dr P Kinnear, Dr S Kunin, Mr J Leiper, Professor S Logan, Professor B MacGregor, Dr M Mackie, Mr A Mair, Dr N Milne, Dr G Roberts, Professor T Salmon, Professor J Sewel, Professor W Smith with Professor D Houlihan, Professor A Rodger, Mrs C Macaslan, Mr S Cannon, Ms I Bews, Mr A Donaldson, Mrs C Inglis, Mrs L Manders, Dr P Murray and Mr B Purdon (Clerk)

Apologies for absence were received from Mr M Lockhead, Mr D Marr, Mr G Stevenson, Professor I Torrance, Mr J Graham and Miss C Edge.

The Rector welcomed Dr Kunin to his first meeting as Acting Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Divinity.

The Rector also conveyed the Court's congratulations to Cllr Johnston on his re-election to Aberdeenshire Council, to Dr Milne on her election as a Member of the Scottish Parliament, and to Professor Graham on his re-election as a Senate Assessor to Court.

MINUTES

193 The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2003 were approved.

STATEMENT BY PRINCIPAL

194 The Principal noted that the third Aberdeen Word Festival had been a tremendous success and signalled to the wider public the importance of the University to the cultural life of the community.

195 The Principal then asked Mr Cannon to update the Court on the steps the University was taking to address any threats posed by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). Mr Cannon informed the Court that:

- (i) Advice from the Home Office on travelling to affected areas had been issued to staff and students.
- (ii) Students returning to the University from affected areas had been identified and would be monitored individually.
- (iii) A Monitoring Group had been established and was meeting weekly to ensure the position was reviewed regularly.
- (iv) In some of the affected areas abroad, there had been disruption to English Language tests that foreign students were required to complete prior to matriculation.

196 The Principal then commented on the importance of the proposals for the establishment of colleges which were before Court. They had originated from the Costed Academic Planning process (refer minute 216). The plans had produced important analyses of the research strengths of the University. Most importantly they had highlighted many of the issues which the University would need to address to achieve its ambition of being a research-led institution of international quality. He noted that the proposals had the support of the Senior Management Group, which believed that it was imperative for the both the short-term and long-term competitive position of the University that they were taken forward as quickly as was practically possible. It was recognised that the proposals as currently formulated were of a high level nature, and that if approved in principle, considerable work on the detail, including the necessary democratic structures underpinning the College structures, would be required.

## REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

**Joint Planning, Finance & Estates Committee (13.05.03)**

- 197 The Court received a report from the Joint Planning, Finance & Estates Committee which had met on 13th May 2003.

*Strategic and Operational Planning*

- 198 The Court noted that the Committee had received and considered a paper proposing that the University should establish three academic Colleges; a College of Life Sciences and Medicine, a College of Arts and Social Sciences and a College of Physical Sciences. (see also minute 216).
- 199 The Committee, for its part, had agreed that detailed discussion within the University community be undertaken over the next few weeks by the Principal and members of the University Management Group.

*Pathfinder: Hillhead Halls*

- 200 The Court approved the Committee's recommendation that delegated authority be given to the Principal, the Senior Lay Member and the Convener of the Capital Expenditure Sub-Committee, or two of the three if one were unavailable, to act on its behalf in relation to matters regarding the Hillhead Student Village Development, when speed of response was necessary and during the summer vacation.

*Science Research Investment Fund (SRIF) Round 2*

- 201 The Court noted that the Committee had received a report on the on-going internal selection of applications for the second round of the Science Research Investment Fund. It was noted that, further to the SHEFC funding allocation of £8.716M, the University would add a 10% contribution, giving a total fund of £9.684M. Outline proposals had been considered by a special meeting of the University Committee for Research, Income Generation and Commercialisation on 1 April 2003, and by the University Management Group on 7 April 2003. The proposals had been considered in light of institutional priorities, estates priorities and the underlying principles and criteria of the SRIF2 scheme.
- 202 The Committee had noted that seven of the outline proposals had been selected for further development. Professor Sewel informed Court that subsequent to the meeting of JPFEC, three bids were preferred, relating to the Institute of Applied Health Sciences, the Zoology Building and the Cruickshank Building, and were being developed for formal submission.
- 203 The Court noted that the deadline for submission of proposals was 30 May 2003, and agreed that the Principal and Senior Lay Member be given delegated authority to approve the final submissions on behalf of the University.

*Funding for Teaching and Research 2003/04*

- 204 The Court noted that the Committee had received a copy of SHEFC circular letter HE/09/03, detailing Main Grants in Support of Teaching and Research for the academic year 2003/04, together with an analysis of its impact on the University.
- 205 The Court noted that, although SHEFC had relaxed the requirement for the annual submission of strategic plans, Universities must continue to demonstrate progress in particular areas as specified under the conditions of grant, namely: (i) equality of opportunity and widening access, (ii) maintaining and enhancing the quality of learning and teaching, (iii) maintaining and developing the quality of the research-base and fully exploiting the potential for knowledge transfer, and (iv) developing the highest calibre of management and leadership and sound business processes.
- 206 The Court also noted that the University's total main grants for Teaching and Research for 2003/04 had increased by 4% since 2002/03, which was below the sector average increase of 4.6%.

*Capital Expenditure Sub-Committee*

- 207 The Court noted that the Committee had received a report from the Capital Expenditure Sub-Committee and had approved recommendations that: (i) the annual capital programme 2003/04 and, subject to financial performance in the preceding year, the functionality improvement budget 2003/04, be allocated); (ii) an initial budget of £100K be allocated for preliminary work on the development of the Hillhead Site; (iii) delegated authority be granted for the Principal, the Senior Lay Member and the Convener of the Capital Expenditure Sub-Committee, or two of the three if one were unavailable, to act on behalf of the Committee, when speed of response was necessary and during the summer vacation (see also Min No 1 above); (iv) a detailed review of the contents of the Tarradale House Library be undertaken; and (v) a budget of £50K be approved for initial design work associated with the relocation of the Faculty of Education.
- 208 The Committee noted the Sub-Committee's progress reports on a range of property matters and capital projects including: planning development briefs for Dunbar, Hilton and Hillhead sites, Sports Facilities, Marischal College, Tarradale House, Faculty of Education Relocation Project, Pathfinder: Halls, the Institute for Applied Health Sciences, the new Health Centre and Old Aberdeen Town House.
- 209 The Principal updated the Court on the latest developments regarding plans to provide the University with a range of high quality sporting facilities. At present discussions were underway with the City Council to develop a proposal involving a site at Linksfield. It would be submitted to Sportscotland for financial support. If this were not successful, the University would still explore the potential to build facilities at Linksfield, with the knowledge that there was also an alternative site near Bedford Road. It was intended that more detailed proposals would be considered in due course.

*Investment Committee*

- 210 The Court noted that Mr Mair had declared an interest in the proposed appointment of Martin Currie as the University's Fund Managers, and that he had not participated in the selection process.
- 211 The Court noted that the Committee had received a report from the Investment Committee and approved recommendations that (i) Martin Currie be appointed as Fund Managers in relation to the University Endowments and Development Trust, for a period of three years, with an option to extend for a further two years, based on satisfactory performance; (ii) that the current cash holding of around £7M be passed to the newly appointed Fund Managers to be invested in line with the overall investment strategy; and (iii) that the final mix of investments be agreed by the Investment Committee, under advice from external consultant, Psolve, provided that the overall objective of a 4% annual income yield was met. It was noted that, in relation to (ii), the Fund Managers might be asked to retain an amount in cash.

*Financial Reports FY 2002-03*

- 212 The Court noted that the Committee had considered the management accounts for the eight months to 31 March 2003. They showed an historical cost surplus of £2.713M, against a budgeted surplus of £1.927M.

*Mid-Year Return*

- 213 The Court noted that the Committee had received a copy of the Mid-Year Financial Return 2002 03, as submitted to the Funding Council in April 2003.

**Audit Committee (28.03.03)***Annual Reappointment of internal Auditors*

- 214 The Court, approved the reappointment of Deloitte and Touche as internal auditors to the University from 1 August 2003. This represented the fifth year of their appointment from 1 August 1999 for a three-year period with the possibility of extension for two years subject to satisfactory performance. It was noted that the External Auditors period of appointment had been renewed at the meeting of Court on 17th December 2002.

*Internal Audit Reports*

- 215 The Court noted that the Committee had approved two internal audit reports namely, Building Maintenance and Estates, and Department of Chemistry

## OUTCOME OF COSTED ACADEMIC PLANS

## PROPOSALS TO CREATE A COLLEGE STRUCTURE

- 216 Professor Sewel introduced the paper (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) which proposed the restructuring of the University into three academic Colleges: a College of Life Sciences and Medicine, a College of Arts and Social Sciences, and a College of Physical Sciences.
- 217 The proposals sought to respond to the analyses and corresponding challenges identified in the Costed Academic Plans, prepared by Schools. With future research funding likely to be increasingly restricted to units rated by the Research Assessment Exercise at the level of five or better, Schools had been asked to consider in their Academic Plans how they could reach that level by the next Research Assessment Exercise. In most cases, Schools had concluded that this required a significant increase in financial resource, which, in total, amounted to considerably more than the University could afford, given that funding was expected to be flat. Despite moving to a Schools structure within Faculties, many academic units still lacked scale and flexibility, and were limited to making only incremental changes.
- 218 The Colleges proposal sought to address these issues by creating structures that would respond quickly to promising and emerging opportunities for academic activity. They would enable the University to focus on which areas of research to invest in, while at the same time maintaining a broad teaching portfolio. Heads of College, would hold Vice-Principal status, and would be given considerable devolved authority to bring decision-making closer to the intellectual activity and to deliver the step change in academic quality that was required to make the University a research-led institution of international standard.
- 219 The Court was asked to approve in principle the proposals to create a College structure, on the understanding that appropriate consultation with staff and students be undertaken in the preparation of more detailed proposals upon which Court would take a formal decision at its next meeting.
- 220 The reorganisation, if approved by Court, would take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2003. It would be a precondition for asking Court to invest £9 million over three years across the University, to accelerate the creation of vacancies through restructuring and focused staff recruitment.
- 221 The Court was further invited, if it approved in principle the establishment of three academic Colleges, to endorse a recommendation by the Principal and the Chairman of the Nominating Committee that, pending formal approval, the following be appointed immediately as Heads of College (Designate), with authority to take forward preliminary planning for transition to the new structure:

Proposed College of Arts & Social Sciences	Professor B D MacGregor
Proposed College of Life Sciences & Medicine-	Professor S D Logan
Proposed College of Physical Sciences-	Professor A A Rodger

- 222 These appointments would translate on the date of the formal establishment of Colleges to substantive appointments as Heads of College, with the title and status of Vice-Principal, for a fixed period of five years, subject to review after an initial twelve months.
- 223 In an extended discussion, the following principal points of record were made:
- Concern was expressed by several Senate Assessors that, while accepting the need to improve the academic quality of the University, the creation of a College structure would be disruptive and would hinder academic activity.
  - The Schools structure had been introduced with the expectation that it would need to be revised. In addition to this, during the first year a number of external developments had occurred, most notably the proposed changes to the RAE and the proposed reforms of higher education in England. The proposals to form Colleges sought to build upon the Schools structure and to enable the University to respond to the challenges presented by a changing and increasingly competitive external environment.
  - The College structure would allow most, but not all of the MA degree programmes to be offered within one College, and would remove the unhelpful competition for students between the Faculties of Arts and Divinity and of Social Sciences and Law.
  - It was noted that structures do not by themselves guarantee success, and that the engagement of staff was vital to ensure they worked.
  - The Court was assured that consultation would be undertaken during which the views of staff on the development of appropriate democratic academic structures to govern the individual Colleges would be considered. These structures would be part of the detailed College proposals that would require Court's ultimate approval.
- 224 There then followed a brief period during which Professor MacGregor, Professor Logan and Professor Rodger, left the room to allow the Court consider their appointment as Heads of College (Designate).
- 225 Professor MacGregor, Professor Logan and Professor Rodger, were invited to rejoin the Court, whereupon, by a clear majority the Court approved in principle proposals to create a College structure, on the understanding that appropriate consultation with staff and students be undertaken in the preparation of more detailed proposals upon which Court would take a formal decision at its next meeting.
- 226 The Court, thereby, also approved the appointment of Professor MacGregor, Professor Logan and Professor Rodger, as Heads of College (Designate) of the College of Arts & Social Sciences, the College of Life Sciences & Medicine, and the College of Physical Sciences respectively.

#### SUMMARY OF ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH GOVERNMENTAL REVIEWS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

- 227 Professor Sewel introduced the paper (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes) which summarised for Court the main proposals contained within both the English and Scottish Governmental Reviews of Higher Education. It was noted that the Scottish Review included a commitment to carry out a further review on issues related to the funding of higher education.

#### SENATE REPORT (07.05.03)

#### *Membership of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning*

- 228 The Court noted that Senate had approved, for its part, a recommendation from the University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL) that "a representative from each Faculty, nominated by the Dean" be added to the composition of the UCTL instead of "the Conveners of the Faculty Teaching & Learning Committees (or equivalent)" being in attendance.
- 229 The Court approved the change in composition of the UCTL.

*Library Access Policy*

- 230 The Court noted that Senate had approved, for its part, the Library Access Policy, on the recommendation of the Information Management Committee.
- 231 The Court approved the Library Access Policy, as set out in the appendix to this minute.

## MUSEUMS, COLLECTIONS &amp; GALLERIES COMMITTEE (23.04.03)

*Repatriation Report*

- 232 The Court noted that the Committee, in accordance with the University's policy on repatriation requests, had approved the recommendations of the Ad-Hoc Panel relating to the request from the Blood Tribe Horn Society for the return of the horned head-dress.
- 233 The Court approved the following recommendations:
- (i) that the head-dress be re-patriated to the Blood Tribe Horn Society, and that legal title be transferred to the Mookaakin Foundation;
  - (ii) that a replica should not be requested, but that a photographic record should be made of the head-dress for museum record purposes;
  - (iii) that an agreement be made between the University and the Blood Tribe Horn Society to govern the use of the photographs and the presentation of the repatriation process by the museum in exhibitions, publications and other media;
  - (iv) that further discussions between the museum and the Blood Tribe should take place to identify appropriate cultural material to be donated to the museum as part of the repatriation process;
  - (v) that the University and the Blood Tribe agree to a Memorandum of Understanding to govern future relationships and to indemnify the University against any complaint made regarding the decision to repatriate the head-dress or as a result of any injury caused as a result of the repatriation of the head-dress.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN SUPERANNUATION AND LIFE ASSURANCE SCHEME:  
APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEE

- 234 The Court approved a recommendation by the Trustees of the University of Aberdeen Superannuation and Life Assurance Scheme that the University Finance Director be appointed as a Trustee *sine die*.

## MATTERS FOR HOMOLOGATION

- 235 The Court homologated the following items, approved by the Principal under powers delegated to him on specific matters authorised by the Court:

Dr Paul Tomassi, Acting Head of the School of Divinity, Religious Studies & Philosophy

- 236 The appointment of Dr Paul Tomassi as Acting Head of the School of Divinity, Religious Studies and Philosophy, with immediate effect until 31 May 2004.

Professor Margaret Smith, Chair in Microbiology

- 237 The appointment of Professor Margaret Smith to a Chair in Microbiology, with effect from 1 September 2003.

## FUNDING FOR TEACHING AND RESEARCH 2003-04

- 238 The Court received circular letter HE/09/03 from the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council regarding the Council's decision on the allocation of its main grants for teaching and research for the academic year 2003-04.

- 239 The Court received for information the University of Aberdeen Superannuation and Life Assurance Scheme Annual Report for the year ended 31 July 2002.

PAPERS FOR INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

- 240 The Court noted that copies of the following papers were available on request from the Court & Planning Office (ext 272093)
- (i) STRATEGIC CHANGE GRANT: NEW CRITERIA, GUIDANCE FOR FUTURE PROPOSALS, REPORT OF EVALUATION, AND ALLOCATIONS TO DATE IN 2002-03: SHEFC Circular Letter HE/07/03, dated 20 February 2003, informing institutions of the new criteria for strategic change grant (SCG), and including a copy of the recent evaluation of the grant and reports on allocations made between August 2002 and January 2003.
  - (ii) SCIENCE RESEARCH INVESTMENT FUND (SRIF) 2: Letter from SHEFC, dated 26 February 2003, (i) inviting representatives from each institution to attend a meeting that will explain the underlying principles of the SRIF 2 scheme, and the specific procedures in place for its administration; (ii) providing sources of information about the national priorities of the research councils; and (iii) announcing the indicative amounts of SRIF 2 funds that may be invested in arts and humanities research infrastructure by institutions.
  - (iii) ABERDEEN COLLEGE DRAFT STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2003-04 TO 2005 06.
  - (iv) RECOVERING THE FULL ECONOMIC COSTS OF RESEARCH AND OTHER ACTIVITIES: SHEFC Circular Letter HE/08/03, 18 February 2003, setting out a joint approach by the Office of Science and Technology (OST) and the funding councils to identifying the full economic cost of research projects and other related activities.
  - (v) SCOTTISH HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS FOCUS ON INTELLECTUAL COMMERCIALISATION: SHEFC Press Release PRHE03/03, 7 March 2003.
  - (vi) HIGHER EDUCATION BUSINESS INTERACTION SURVEY: ACADEMIC SESSION 2000/2001: Results for Scotland, based on data from a survey undertaken by the Higher Education Council for England on behalf of a group of stakeholders including the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council and the Scottish Executive.
  - (vi) HIGHER EDUCATION-BUSINESS INTERACTION SURVEY 2000-01: HEFCE publication, March 2003/11, presenting the analysis of the 2002 Higher Education-Business Interaction (HE-BI) survey, commissioned by HEFCE on behalf of a group of stakeholders.
  - (vii) HILLHEAD HALLS OF RESIDENCE – THE WAY FORWARD: Communication to Staff at Hillhead Halls of Residence.
  - (viii) HIGHER EDUCATION REVIEW: PHASE 2 REPORT: Universities Scotland Circular 21/03.
  - (ix) 14-19 GREEN PAPER: OPPORTUNITY AND EXCELLENCE – GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE 14-19 GREEN PAPER: Universities UK letter 1/03/22 of 17 March 2003, outlining the key points of the Government's recently published proposals for 14-19 education.

## DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

241 The Court received for information dates for Court meetings in session 2003-04.

<b>Date of Court</b>	<b>Lunch Venue/Time</b>		<b>Time</b>	<b>Venue</b>
16 Sept 2003		Court	4.00pm	Court Room
16 Sept 2003		Court Dinner	6.30pm for 7.00pm	tbc
17 Sept 2003		Court Away Day	9.00am-2.00pm (incl lunch)	IMS 2, Foresterhill Level 7 Conference Room
4 Nov 2003	Linklater Rooms 12.30 for 12.45	Court	2.00pm	Court Room
16 Dec 2003	Linklater Rooms 12.30 for 12.45	Court	2.00pm	Court Room
10 Feb 2004	Linklater Rooms 12.30 for 12.45	Court	2.00pm	Court Room
23 March 2004	Linklater Rooms 12.30 for 12.45	Court	2.00pm	Court Room
25 May 2004	Linklater Rooms 12.30 for 12.45	Court	2.00pm	Court Room
29 June 2004	Linklater Rooms 12.30 for 12.45	Court	2.00pm	Court Room