

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

Minutes of meeting held on 24 March 2009

Present: Dr A Mair (in the Chair), Principal, Mr A Arthur, Lady Catto, Ms J Craw, Sir Don Cruickshank, Dr P Edwards, Professor C Fynsk, Mrs S Grant, Miss A Harper, Mr G Hunter, Cllr P Johnston, Mr B Lockhart, Professor S Logan, Mr D McKay, Dr M Mackie, Mr B Pack, Professor C Secombes, Professor N Webster, with Professor C Gane, Professor N Haites, Professor B MacGregor, Professor A Rodger, Mr S Cannon, Ms I Bews, Mr A Donaldson, Mr P Haley, Mrs C Inglis, Dr G Mackintosh, Dr P Murray, Mrs L Manders, Mrs E Schofield and Mr B Purdon (Clerk).

Apologies were received from the Rector, Mr A Amooore, Ms C Banks, Professor D Houlihan, Sir Moir Lockhead, Ms C Macaslan, Professor P Morgan, Professor G Robinson and Mr R Ruddiman.

MINUTES

151 The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2009 were approved.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

152 The Court noted that the Principal's wife, Mrs Susan Rice, had been appointed as Managing Director of Lloyds Banking Group Scotland which was currently the University's bank.

REPORT FROM THE PRINCIPAL

153 The Principal commented on the importance of attracting large grant-funded research units to the University. In recent years the University had been successful in this area but he believed that the challenge would be to improve further.

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

OPERATING BOARD

Committee Structure

154 The Court noted that the Board had considered a paper on the Review of the Committee Structure.

155 The Court noted that proposals would be brought before it following consideration by the Governance Committee, Senate, Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee and the Support Staff Liaison Committee.

Capacity for Investment

156 The Court noted that the Board had considered a paper on the University's capacity for investment. (See Minutes 163-166).

Estates Development Plans

157 The Court noted that the Board had considered a paper on estates development plans for University-owned land. (See Minutes 171-173).

Pay Negotiations

- 158 The Court noted that the Board had received an update on developments in relation to pay negotiations. (See *Minutes* 174-176)

Curriculum Reform

- 159 The Court noted that the Board had received a presentation on progress towards implementing Curriculum Reform. (See *Minute* 182)

College of Physical Sciences: Recent Initiatives

- 160 The Court noted that the Board had been advised of two successful initiatives within the College of Physical Sciences, being the National Subsea Research Institute (NSRI) and the Scottish European Green Energy Centre (SEGEC).

Items Approved by the Board

- 161 The Court noted that the Board had approved:
- (i) Tuition and Miscellaneous Fees 2009/10
 - (ii) Campus Services Budget 2009/10: Student Residence Fees

Minutes

- 162 The Court received and noted a copy of the unconfirmed minutes of the Operating Board meeting of 3rd March 2009.

INVESTMENT NEXT STEPS

- 163 Professor Logan introduced a paper on further investment in intellectual capital to enable the University to build on its success in the recent Research Assessment Exercise and to gain further ground on its international competitors at a time when many might be forced to retrench.
- 164 The paper proposed an investment fund of £15M over a period of three to five years, which would be made available for new appointments and to support retirement packages for existing staff. The paper detailed the options for freeing up cash for investment over this period, which were:
- Anticipated delays in spending on capital projects estimated at £3M for 2 years
 - Reviewing the timing of asset sales and cash-generating opportunities at £3-5M
 - Generating revenue savings and new income streams, estimated at £1-2M per annum
 - Making strategic use of staff vacancies arising within Colleges and Administration, estimated at £2-3M per annum
 - Increasing the Strategic Investment Fund to £2M per annum
- 165 In discussion, it was agreed that it was essential that the University invest further in high quality staff. It was also agreed, that the Court should receive further analysis of how the generation of the £15M might be affected by changes in the economy, such as the anticipated cuts in public expenditure.
- 166 The Court agreed to endorse the Executive's proposed approach to creating a new investment fund of £15M over the next three to five year period.

FINANCIAL RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- 167 The Director of Finance introduced an updated paper on the financial risks and opportunities relating to University income streams.
- 168 The Court noted the paper.

FINANCIAL COMPARISON OF UNIVERSITIES

- 169 The Director of Finance introduced comparative analyses of the accounts of Scottish universities and key competitor institutions across the UK for the year ended 31st July 2008.
- 170 The Court noted the analyses.

ESTATES DEVELOPMENT

- 171 Professor Logan introduced a paper which set out submissions made by the University to the City Council in respect of the future use of University-owned land.
- 172 In discussion, it was noted that the University was taking steps to promote its plans for the areas in question with the City Council and relevant local communities.
- 173 The Court noted the paper.

UPDATE ON NATIONAL COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

- 174 The Director of Human Resources updated Court on the progress of National Collective Bargaining and Pay Negotiations.
- 175 The Court noted that the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) had agreed not to ballot its members following talks facilitated by the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS). A formal round of pay negotiations would now take place and UCU and the other campus trade unions were due to meet to discuss a single pay claim. The Court noted that the support staff trade unions had submitted their pay claim which included significant changes to terms and conditions of employment. Taken together the proposed changes would, if agreed, result in a significant increase in staff costs.
- 176 The Court also noted that 90% of institutions had agreed to participate in National Collective Bargaining. The University had previously confirmed its support for collective bargaining but had also reserved its position, pending the progress of discussions.

SENATE REPORT

Draft Resolution No of 2009 [Changes to Regulations for Various Degrees]

- 177 The Court received the draft Resolution No of 2009 [Changes to Regulations for Various Degrees] from the Senate and agreed to forward it to the General Council and to make it generally available in terms of Section 6 of the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966.

Draft Resolution No of 2009 [Regulations for the Degree of Master in Science (MSci)]

- 178 The Court received the draft Resolution No of 2009 [Regulations for the Degree of Master in Science (MSci)] from the Senate and agreed to forward it to the General Council and to make it generally available in terms of Section 6 of the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966.

Validation Agreement: UHI/Sustainability

- 179 The Court approved a proposal that the research degree programmes of MSc, MLitt, MPhil and PhD: Archaeology of the Highlands and Islands; Archaeological Geophysics and Archaeological Resource Management be validated under the terms of the accreditation agreement currently in force between the University and UHI Millennium Institute.

Amendment to the Policy on Student Complaints

- 180 The Court approved an amendment to the *Policy on Student Complaints* to insert a new paragraph required to ensure compliance with the revised version of Section 5 of the *QAA Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education* and consistency with the University's *Policy on Academic Appeals*.

SENATE REPORT

- 181 The Court noted that the 2007/08 Annual Report from the University Committee on Teaching and Learning is available on the Senate website.

CURRICULUM REFORM

- 182 The Court received and noted a paper on the progress of Curriculum Reform.

QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REPORT

- 183 The Court received and noted the management accounts for the period ended 31 January 2009.

OUTSOURCING OF STUDENT E-MAIL TO MICROSOFT

- 184 The Court received and noted a paper which set out the successful out-sourcing of its student email provision to Microsoft. This had resulted in a much enhanced service to students and a significant cost saving to the University.

FUTURE BUSINESS

- 185 Members were invited to forward to the Court any matters they felt should be included in Court papers as future business.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 186 The Court noted that the date of its next meeting was Tuesday 19 May 2009, at 2.00pm, in the Court Room.