UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
BUSINESS COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 7 SEPTEMBER 2017

Present: Nigel Lindsay (Convener), Corrine Blackstock, Mike Cooper, Professor Sir Ian Diamond (Principal and Vice-Chancellor), Steve Duggan, Colin Duncan, Graham Hunter, Caroline Inglis (University Secretary), Tom Lynch, Willie MacColl, Duncan Macniven, Lynne Mennie, Alan Milne, Iain Percival, Patricia Pugh, Marjory Reid, and Brian Wood, with Katrina Allan (Alumni Relations Manager), Steve Heys (Item 7), Guste Saduikyte (Clerk), Fiona Urquhart (Alumni Relations Officer).


1. MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting held on 8 June 2017 were approved.

2. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

3. REPORT FROM THE CONVENER

The Convener prepared a written report ahead of the meeting, in which he spoke about:

- The new composition of Court;
- The annual meeting of representatives of the General Council of the universities of Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and St Andrews and the Graduates Association of Dundee which was held in Edinburgh on Thursday 15 June.

The Convener proposed a strategy day in the next six months. The following members were nominated to organise it: Eric Crockart (member from 1 October 2017), Duncan Macniven, Alan Milne, Tom Lynch, Iain Percival and Brian Wood. The Convener would also be present.

The Convener thanked the Committee members who took part in the summer graduation ceremonies.

The committee approved the report.

ACTION: Mr Lindsay, Mr Crockart, Mr Macniven, Mr Milne, Mr Lynch, Mr Percival, Mr Wood

4. ALUMNI RELATIONS UPDATE

Katrina Allan, Alumni Relations Manager, updated the committee on recent alumni relations activity. Highlights included:

- The Alumni Relations team activities during summer graduations, which included the stewarding of honorary graduates and collecting contact details for new graduates;
- The annual Parent & Family Programme welcome reception which took place on Saturday 2 September. The Principal, Professor Hazel Hutchison and a number of alumni were also in attendance;
- Upcoming Aberdeen Connect events programme;
- Ongoing Alumni Relations website review;
- A number of class reunions over the summer including the Hong Kong reunion which took place on Friday 28 July in Elphinstone Hall;
- Upcoming London Celebration of Carols and other Christmas events;
- Increased presence at Student Recruitment events.

The Convener thanked Mrs Allan for her update.
Professor Sir Ian Diamond gave his annual update. He began by mentioning that, despite reduced government funding, the University has increased its position in the Times Higher World University Rankings, rising six places to 172nd. The University is currently ranked number one for film studies and civil engineering and number three in the UK for medicine. There are still some challenges in geoscience and education.

The Principal spoke about this year’s Freshers’ Week and student numbers. He noted that Scottish and European student numbers are good. There has also been an increase in international student numbers from China and Vietnam. The new electronic registration system is working very well, allowing students to choose their courses wherever they are.

The Principal spoke about a number of international developments:

- The Qatar campus will be officially opened in October and teaching will commence this month;
- South Korea campus will open in May 2018;
- Potential collaboration between the Medical School and a university in Sri Lanka.

The Principal talked about the upcoming Research Excellence Framework (REF) assessment and Government Spending Review. He went on to say that after Brexit, EU students will probably not be eligible for tuition fees to be covered by the Scottish Government. Therefore, the University has to plan effectively and continue to drive for fee paying students and research grants. The Principal informed the Committee that 27% of students in medicine this year are from widening access background.

The Principal ended his presentation by highlighting some key achievements among the student community:

- The University of Aberdeen Chamber Choir success, including their recent performance for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and Their Royal Highnesses The Duke of Edinburgh, Prince of Wales and Princess Royal at Crathie Kirk in Ballater;
- The University’s women’s powerlifting team finished fourth in July’s International Powerlifting Federation (IPF) World University Cup;
- Aberdeen graduate Zoey Clark won silver as part of the 4x400m team at the World Championships in August;
- This summer the highest percentage of graduates achieved a first-class or upper second-class honours.

Professor Steve Heys gave a presentation on changes in higher education across the world and how it is effecting the School. He highlighted the main developments within the School, potential opportunities and future plans.

The University Secretary introduced a paper on the changes to the composition of Court. It was recommended that Professor Booth, Mr Duncan, Mr Percival and Mrs Shirreffs should continue to be invited to attend meetings of the Business Committee until the changes have been implemented. The Committee accepted the proposal.

Mr Macniven proposed that a non-speaking, non-voting Business Committee representative should sit on Court. The Convener welcomed the suggestion and asked Mr Macniven to produce a draft paper for Court to consider next month.

**ACTION: Mr Macniven**
8. CO-OPTION OF NEW MEMBERS

At the closing date for nominations of candidates, four nominations for six vacancies had been received and so the following were duly elected to the Business Committee: Eric Crockart, Euan Mackenzie, Duncan Macniven and Jan McRobbie. They will all serve on the Business Committee from 1 October 2017 to 30 September 2020.

There are two vacancies available for co-option. The Committee agreed to proceed with co-option at the next meeting.

ACTION: Ms Saduikyte

9. DRAFT COURT MINUTES FROM 27 JUNE 2017 MEETING AND REPORTS FROM ASSESSORS

The Committee noted the minutes.

10. AOCB

Iain Percival suggested that Professor Steve Heys’ presentation be circulated to members.

ACTION: Ms Saduikyte

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Business Committee will be held on Thursday 9 November at 4pm in the Court Room.