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GENERAL COUNCIL

MINUTE OF THE 322nd STATUTORY MEETING

The 322nd meeting of the General Council was held in King's College Conference Centre and online on Saturday, 17th May 2025. The Convener of the Business Committee, Dr Duncan Macniven, was in the Chair.

1. WELCOME

The Convener welcomed attendees and noted there were 28 General Council members attending in King's College Conference Centre and 23 members attending online via Microsoft Teams.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The General Council received and approved minutes from the 321st statutory meeting held on Saturday, 7th December 2024.

3. MATTERS ARISING

It was noted that the motion approved at the previous meeting of General Council regarding Marischal College had been communicated to Court, but no formal response had been received. The Vice-Convener of the Business Committee noted that the Committee has had close links with Morag Beers, the Director of Estates & Facilities, who was aware of the importance of the building. The University would look after the parts of the building not leased to Aberdeen City Council, until such a suitable tenant or tenants could be found. There was no intention of selling the property.

Questions were taken about the fixed organ in Marischal College and the collections which were being decanted from Marischal to a storage facility in Inverurie.

4. UNIVERSITY UPDATE

Professor George Boyne, Principal & Vice-Chancellor of the University, delivered a presentation to the General Council to provide an update on the institution.

The presentation covered the progress made towards the commitments made in the University's strategic plan, Aberdeen 2040.

The Principal noted that external research funding awards had grown by 80% over the last 5 years, from £38m in 2019/20, to £69m in 2023/24. Research income had grown by more than 20% from £46m in 2021/22 to £57m in 2023/24.

The Principal reported that in the most recent National Student Survey (NSS) results the University ranked 15th in the UK and 3rd in Scotland. It had been ranked 1st in the UK for several subjects and 1st in Scotland for more than 20 subjects. The

CONFIRMED

University was in the UK top 10 for teaching, academic support, organisation and management and learning resources. The proportion of graduates in employment or further study after graduation had increased to 95%.

Highlighting the recognition of the quality of the University's education and research, the Principal noted that it had achieved its highest ever UK position of 15th in the Times and The Sunday Times Good University Guide 2025 and had also moved up from 4th to 2nd in Scotland.

The University was also ranked 12th in the UK and 2nd in Scotland in The Guardian University Guide 2025, including 1st in the UK for Medicine. Recently, the University had been ranked 2nd in the UK in the Times Higher Education interdisciplinarity rankings. In the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2024, the University had been placed 48th in the world and 10th in the UK for supporting the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

Financial challenges for the University were highlighted by the Principal, including a decline in Scottish Government funding as well as in international student numbers.

General Council members then asked the Principal several questions on a range of topics including government funding, the forthcoming fundraising campaign, the University's industry links, the provision of Summer Schools, and involvement in cultural activities.

The Principal noted that Scottish Government funding per Scottish undergraduate student was £7,500 compared to £9,535 undergraduate fees in England. He believed that there was little prospect that the Scottish position would change soon as no political parties support the introduction of fees for Scottish students.

The Principal said that work was ongoing to move the fundraising campaign forward and that Aberdonians were under recognised for their generosity. The Convener emphasised that many alumni wanted to help pay back what the University had given to them.

Compared to the recent UK league table successes, the international picture looked more challenging with the University moving out of the top 200 in the last few years. The Principal noted that research income and research awards would help move the University back up the international league tables, but it would take time.

The Principal noted that the best solution to the University's current difficulties was increased income across the University's revenue streams.

5. CONVENER'S REPORT

General Council received and noted the Convener's Report and agreed a proposal to make representation to Court to strengthen the link between the Court and the Business Committee.

General Council also discussed subjects the Business Committee should focus on in the coming year.

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6. ELECTION OF MEMBERS OF THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE

A ballot was held to elect 10 new members to the Business Committee. A total of 14 candidates stood for election and voting was conducted during the meeting via ballot papers for those in attendance at King's College and an online voting form for those voting online. It was noted that the Single Transferable Vote system would be used, and the ballots would be counted in the next week.

Clerk's note: the ballots having been counted, the following members of the General Council were elected for a three-year term:

Doris Edem Agbevivi
Natalia Calanzani
Andrew Duffell
David Evans
Jason Forbus
Christian Haerpfer
Elizabeth (Beth) Ann McClure
Daniel Montgomery
Mel Roberts
Xiaou Zhao

7. REMIT OF BUSINESS COMMITTEE

General Council received and approved an updated version of the remit of the Business Committee.

8. NOTICE OF THE 323rd STATUTORY MEETING

The Convener noted that there were two statutory meetings per year, usually in May and December. The Convener noted that his term on the Business Committee would conclude at the end of September, and it would be for the new Convener to propose a date of the next meeting. Saturday, 6th December could be pencilled in subject to future confirmation.

In parting remarks, the Convener noted that the Business Committee is an interesting organisation, bringing together alumni from around the world with excellent and diverse skills. He thanked Professor Jenny Mordue (Vice-Convener), Samantha Waters (Clerk) and Ross Anderson (Executive Support Officer) for their support. He was sorry to leave the role but believed that the General Council and its Business Committee were in a good position to support the University over the coming years.