

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

Minutes of Meeting held on 27 June 2000

Present: Rector (in the chair), Principal, Councillor D Clyne, Mr D Cockburn, Mr A Cole-Hamilton, Dr H Fullerton, Professor G Graham, Mr J Grant, Miss A Harper, Dr D Heddle, Professor D Houlihan, Councillor P Johnston, Dr P Kinnear, Professor S Logan, Professor I Macdonald, Dr M Mackie, Miss M Main, Mr A Mair, Dr N Milne, Professor D Ogston, Dr G Roberts, Dr R Scott Brown, Mr A Salvesen, Mrs A Skene, Professor P Sloane, Mr G Stevenson, Professor I Torrance, with Professor G Catto, Professor A Forrester, Mr S Gordon, Mr S Cannon, Mr S Varwell and Mr D Yule (Clerk).

Apologies for absence were received from Mr J Michie and Professor J Sewel.

MINUTES

196 The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 May 2000 were approved.

TUITION AND MISCELLEOUS FEES 2000-01
(See Minute 179 of 16.5.00)

197 The Court noted that, in the light of the information that, in 1999-2000, income from re-examination fees had amounted to more than £60K, and that substantial costs both in academic departments and in the office were attributable to resit examinations, the Senior Lay Member and the Convener of the Finance & Estates Committee had decided that, for 2000-2001, the re-examination fee be retained at its present level of £15 per course. Consequently, Tuition and Miscellaneous Fees for 2000-01 had been approved in the form in which they had been recommended to the Court at its meeting of 16 May 2000.

PRINCIPAL'S STATEMENT

198 The Principal's reported Professor Pope's success in winning an award of £1.38M in the annual SHEFC Research Development Grant allocations for the purchase of a vertical MRI scanner. He said that the innovative equipment would add further competitive advantage to the University in an area in which Aberdeen was already acknowledged as a leader.

199 The Principal said that the completion of negotiations on the lease of Marischal College was not as close as may have appeared from recent press reports, although the University continued to be actively engaged in attempts to reach a satisfactory conclusion.

200 Noting that Mr Cole-Hamilton and Dr Scott Brown were attending their last meetings of the Court as President of the SRC and Chancellor's Assessor, respectively, the Principal paid tribute to their service to the Court. Dr Scott Brown had always done everything he possibly could for the University, and the Principal deeply appreciated the service he had given.

REPORT BY SECRETARY

Pay Award

- 201 Reporting that salary negotiations for University staff had broken down at national level, the Secretary reminded the Court that, in similar circumstances in 1999, the Court had agreed to implement a 3% per annum increase in anticipation of the national settlement, and recommended that the same action be taken on this occasion.
- 202 Noting Miss Main's expression of concern on behalf of the Unions about the future of national negotiations, and that management had already expressed similar frustrations, the Court agreed that an increase of 3% per annum be awarded to all staff pending a national settlement, and that the matter should be considered further in the Autumn.

Review of Effectiveness of Court

- 203 Mr Cannon reported that the majority of questionnaires on the review of the Court's effectiveness had been returned and had been considered in a preliminary way by the Review Group, which had agreed that the responses should be used as a basis for a Review Meeting of the Court to be held away from Aberdeen on Monday, 25 September and the morning of Tuesday, 26 September, prior to the Court's formal meeting on the latter day.

REVIEW OF COMMITTEES
(See Minute 192 of 16.5.00)

- 204 The Court gave further consideration to the suggestions for review of the committee structure first considered at its previous meeting and to the comments which had been received on the suggestions following consultation throughout the University.
- 205 The Court approved the recommendation for the composition and remit of a new Joint Planning, Finance and Estates Committee, formed by the merger of the Joint Planning & Resources Committee and the Finance & Estates Committee, subject to the proviso that there be further consideration of the proposal by the Rector's Assessor and the President of the SRC that the Rector's Assessor be added to the composition of the Committee, and that a recommendation on this matter be brought before the Court in the Autumn.
- 206 The Court approved the proposed composition and remit of the new Student Affairs Committee, formed by the merger of the former Welfare and Academic Services Consultative Committee and the Student Organisations Committee, including the recommendation that the President of the Debater, the President of the Charities Campaign and the Convener of the Sub-Committee on Disabilities be added to the list of those in attendance at meetings of the Student Affairs Committee and that the Convenership of the Committee need not be held by the same lay member who convenes the Joint Planning, Finance and Estates Committee. The Court further agreed that the Committee should be informed that it might meet up to six times each year, and that it should address the issues raised in the consultation process by the Welfare and Academic Services Consultative Committee, with regard, for example, to the status of the Student Support Forum and to the attendance of additional student officials at committee meetings.

- 207 The Court approved the proposed composition and remit of the new Staffing and Development Committee, formed by the merger of the former Staff Grading and Promotions Committee and the Personnel Policy and Staff Development and Appraisal Committee, subject to the addition to the composition of a member representative of non-academic staff and to modification of the remit to clarify the distinction between the Committee's role and that of the Remuneration Committee with regard to Professorial and Grade 6 staff.
- 208 Following discussion, the Court agreed that the original suggestion for the review of the composition and remit of the Chapel Committee, along with the comments received on it, be referred for further consultation with a view to a recommendation to the Senate and ultimately return to the Court.
- 209 The Court approved the revised remit and composition of the Health and Safety Committee (formerly the Safety Committee).
- 210 The Court approved the abolition of the Continuing Education Policy Committee.

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

Audit Committee

- 211 The Court received a report by the Audit Committee (30.5.00) including the text of a University Code of Audit Practice, which demonstrated compliance with the mandatory requirements of the revised SHEFC Code of Audit Practice.
- 212 The Court approved the University Code of Audit practice subject to clarification of the extension of the scope of internal audit to the University's subsidiary or associated companies, which, it was suggested, would be improper, except in the case of companies in which the University held a controlling interest.
- 213 In response to questions raised by members, it was noted that the Audit Committee would refer to SHEFC guidelines on value-for-money in deciding on recommendations on, for example, the cessation of major elements of the University's business where value-for-money was in question, and that the Audit Committee could use both benchmarking and historical comparison in VFM studies to ensure best value in the University's expenditure.
- 214 The Secretary undertook to make internal audit reports on Departments available to the Dean concerned.
- 215 The Court noted the Audit Committee's approval of internal audit reports.

Nominating Committee

- 216 The Court received a report by the Nominating Committee (31.5.00).

Vice-Principals

- 217 The Court approved the recommendations of the Nominating Committee that Professor Macdonald be re-appointed as Senior Vice-Principal for three further years to 31 July 2003 and that Professor Forrester be appointed for one further year as Vice-Principal to 31 July 2001.

Membership of Court

- 218 The Court approved the recommendation of the Nominating Committee that the three places in the composition of the Court for Vice-Principals *ex officio*s continue to be filled by Professor Macdonald, Professor Sloane and Dr Roberts in 2000-01.
- 219 The Court approved the recommendations of the Nominating Committee that Miss Margaret Main be co-opted as a member of Court for two further sessions until 31 July 2002, that Mr George Stevenson be co-opted as a member of Court for three further years until 31 July 2003, and that Dr Hance Fullerton, whose term of office as a General Council Assessor would terminate on 30 September 2000, be co-opted as a member of Court from the period from 1 October 2000 to 31 July 2002.

Joint Policy & Resource Committee

- 220 The Court received a report by the Joint Policy & Resource Committee (6.6.00).
- 221 The Court noted that the Senate had approved the recommendations of the Joint Policy & Resource Committee that, in the context of the University's provision at non-Honours degree level, programmes explicitly supporting academic skills be developed and the lowering of going rates for admission to non-Honours degrees be implemented with immediate effect, and that the University introduce skills-intensive courses at level 1 to improve overall retention and progression rates. Professor Macdonald said that this represented a very important initiative by the University, that it was imperative that the University filled its places, and that it could do so by challenging students to perform better than their entrance qualifications suggested and by supporting students without lowering standards.
- 222 The Court noted also the Committee's allocation of resources to Faculties and Central Services for 2000-01.

Finance & Estates Committee

- 223 The Court received a report by the Finance & Estates Committee (13.6.00).

Aldroughy House and Estate

- 224 On the recommendation of the Committee, the Court agreed that the contract to terminate SAC's occupation of part of the Aldroughy Estate be approved and signed on behalf of the University with effect from July 2000 and that the marketing of the Estate be undertaken through FPD Savilles.
- 225 It was noted that, in accordance with the Court's decision at its meeting of 29 June 1999, the Finance & Estates Committee, in due course, would bring forward further recommendations on how the receipts from the disposal might be used, taking account of all relevant interests.

Student Residences and University Catering : Pathfinder Project

- 226 It was noted that the Finance & Estates Committee had approved recommendations that, in order to implement the broad proposals for the redevelopment of student residential accommodation and the future provision of University catering, which the Committee had previously considered, the University should secure partnerships with the private sector to provide the necessary capital and that, in order for the projects to be taken to the next stage, external professional advice be sought on the nature of public/private partnerships which would be most suitable. It was hoped that SHEFC would provide further funding towards the additional consultancy costs involved. It was further noted that the Finance & Estates Committee had delegated authority to the Senior Lay Member, the Convener of the Finance & Estates Committee and the Principal to take matters forward during the Summer period.

Bridge of Don

- 227 It was noted that the Finance & Estates Committee had delegated authority to the Senior Lay Member, the Convener of the Finance & Estates Committee and the Principal to determine how best to take forward the University's planning application for a Bridge of Don retail scheme over the Summer period.

Institute of Medical Sciences Phase II and Foresterhill Biological Services Unit

- 228 The Finance & Estates Committee presented a paper on the development of the proposals for the Institute of Medical Sciences Phase II and the new Biological Services Unit, which outlined the history of the two projects, the issues relating to planning, design and timescales, and the financial implications of the projects.
- 229 Introducing the paper, Professor Macdonald said that the provision of the new Biological Services Unit was a core requirement for the continuation of medical research, and that to fail to proceed with IMS Phase II would condemn the first phase of the Institute of Medical Sciences, which was already threatened not only by an inability to expand, but by existing over-crowding. The IMS concept was the major contributory factor to the raised profile of Aberdeen in the field of biomedical research, with Aberdeen being recently listed in a Wellcome Trust report as among the top six fastest growing locations in the UK for biomedical research output. In three years the value of research grants and contracts had grown from £10M to £20M per annum.
- 230 The identified funding requirement for the two projects was £17.4M, and the Committee's recommendation was that this target be met by expected capital receipts from other University property of £6M, an external fund-raising contribution of £6M and borrowing of £5.4M which implied loan servicing of £513K for twenty years. It was expected that SHEFC approval would be obtained for such a package, and the Council's approval would be sought as soon as the Court had approved the developments.
- 231 Responding to questions on the opportunity costs, especially in respect of the commitment to capital projects elsewhere in the University and of the Development Trust's capacity to assist with the fund-raising proposals for other academic developments, the Principal noted that, of the £6M external funding required for the Foresterhill developments, £1.5M was already in hand, and that, while the Development Trust would be directing substantial efforts towards the IMS Phase II project, he had every expectation that capacity would remain to address other worthy proposals.

- 232 Responding to questions on the reliability of income and expenditure figures, Professor Macdonald said that the IMS II Project Board included members from outwith the Medical Faculty, who had scrutinised the figures and were satisfied with them, and that the Institute of Medical Sciences was already exceeding the targets for research grant income which had been projected.
- 233 On the Committee's recommendation, the Court agreed that the IMS II Project Board, under the convenership of the Senior Vice-Principal, be authorised to proceed with the development of both the new Foresterhill Biological Services Unit and Phase II of the Institute of Medical Sciences, reporting progress monthly to the Senior Management Group, the Joint Planning, Finance & Estates Committee and the Court.

Other Matters

- 234 The Court approved the core capital programme for FY 2000-01, the cost of which amounted to £2.275M for Facilities Management and £0.725M for DISS. The Court noted that the Finance & Estates Committee had established a Sub-Committee to invite and evaluate tenders for the provision of legal services to the University with effect from 1 October 2000 (the conclusion of Paull & Williamson's current contract). The Court noted that the Committee had also approved recommendations for increased stipends for student sabbatical officers in line with the average rate in Scottish Universities with effect from FY 2000-01 and backdated supplements for existing student sabbaticals with partial augmentation of disbursement funds in light of the increases.

Personnel Policy and Staff Development & Appraisal Committee

- 235 The Court received a report by the Personnel Policy and Staff Development & Appraisal Committee (30.5.00).

Equal Opportunities Policy

- 236 On the Committee's recommendation, the Court approved the following policy documents which had been prepared by the Joint Management/Trade Union Working Group on Equal Opportunities: *An Equal Opportunities Policy Statement* to replace the existing University Policy Statement; a *Maternity Leave Policy*, which harmonised the previous separate policies for academic and non-academic staff; a new *Parental Leave Policy* and a new *Policy for Urgent Domestic Distress*, as set out in the appendix to this minute.

Redundancy Policies and Procedures

- 237 On the Committee's recommendation, the Court approved Redundancy Policies and Procedures for teaching and research staff and for non-academic staff, administrative, library and computing and other-related staff, respectively, as set out in the appendix to this minute.

- 238 In approving the documents, the Court noted that, following a challenge by AUT Scotland of the University's failure to implement the terms of the University Commissioners' Statute (which had introduced a procedure for dealing with redundancy as it related to teaching and research staff), it was essential that all reasonable steps were taken to protect the University from unnecessary litigation, and to ensure that all members of staff facing redundancy were fully aware of their employment rights. Consequently, the Policy and Procedures had been drawn up as a matter of urgency, and campus Trade Unions would be invited to join a Working Party to monitor the application of the policies and to make recommendations for their further development.
- 239 The Committee also reported on work in progress on staff appraisal, staff induction, the application of SHEFC funding for HR management and the allocation of funding from the SHEFC Staff Restructuring scheme.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2000-04

- 240 The Court considered the University's Strategic Plan for 2000-04 with related Financial Forecasts and Student Number Projections and the Estate Management Action Plan.
- 241 Introducing the planning documents, Professor Macdonald said that, while the Strategic Planning document itself followed the template prescribed by SHEFC, it had been structured around the six strategic aims which the Court had already approved.
- 242 Following discussion, the Court approved the Strategic Plan, the Financial Forecasts, the Student Number Projections and the Estate Management Action Plan subject to minor amendment in the light of points raised about the University's position with regard to the Institute for Teaching & Learning, the University's international outlook, while remaining rooted in the North East community, the competitive advantage bestowed on the University by its natural environment, and the contribution of the Medical School to health. In addition, Professor Macdonald assured the Court that an Action Group would be exploring ways of bringing a more focussed approach to ICT, which would include the consideration of a more pro-active role, for example, in borderless education.

RESOLUTION NO 223 OF 2000

FIFTH AMENDMENT TO SCHEDULE A TO US ORDINANCE NO. 111 (ELECTION OF READERS AND LECTURERS TO THE SENATUS ACADEMICUS)

- 243 The Court, having noted that the draft Resolution had been approved by the Senate, and by the Business Committee of the General Council, and that no other representations had been received, decided to pass the Resolution as set out in the appendix to this minute.

DRAFT RESOLUTION OF 2000 [CHANGES IN GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR FIRST DEGREES AND TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE AWARDS]

- 244 The Court, having received the draft Resolution from the Senate, decided to forward it to the General Council and to make it generally available in terms of Section 6 of the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966.

TUITION FEES : DIPLOMA IN LEGAL PRACTICE

- 245 On the recommendation of the School of Law, endorsed by the Dean of Social Sciences & Law, and in line with the rates to be charged by the other Universities offering the Diploma in Legal Practice, the Court decided to increase the tuition fee for the Diploma in Legal Practice from £2,740 to £3,500 per annum in session 2000-01.

DISABILITY STATEMENT

- 246 The Court approved an institutional Disability Statement entitled *Information for Students with Disabilities and Medical Conditions* for the Academic Years 2000-01 to 2002-03.

INFORMATION STRATEGY

- 247 The Court approved an institutional Information Strategy, which the Senate, for its part, had approved at its meeting of 14 June 2000.

CONDITIONS FOR USING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY FACILITIES

- 248 The Court approved Conditions for Using Information Technology Facilities, which the Senate, for its part, had approved at its meeting of 14 June 2000.

MUSEUM REGULATIONS

- 249 The Court approved Museum Regulations, which the Senate, for its part, had approved at its meeting of 14 June 2000.

MEMBERSHIP OF COURT AND JOINT COURT-SENATE COMMITTEES, REPRESENTATION ON EDUCATIONAL AND OTHER BODIES

- 250 The Court approved the recommendations of the Nominating Committee regarding membership of Court Committees and Court representation on Joint Court-Senate Committees and on Educational and Other Bodies as set out in the appendix to this minute.

SCOTLAND: THE LEARNING NATION - HELPING STUDENTS

- 251 The Court authorised the Secretary to submit a response to the Scottish Executive's consultation document, *Scotland: The Learning Nation - Helping Students*, based on a draft response submitted to the Court and taking account of any comments which Court members might submit to the Secretary no later than 14 July 2000.

VACATION POWERS

- 252 The Court decided that, in accordance with its customary procedure, for the period between its meetings on 27 June and 26 September 2000, authority to act on the Court's behalf on any matter of particular urgency be delegated to a small committee composed of the Principal, the Senior Lay Member and/or the Senior Vice-Principal.

STUDENT HEALTH SERVICE : MANAGERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

- 253 The Court approved a recommendation by the Welfare and Academic Services Consultation Committee that, with effect from 1 October 2000, a managerial structure for the Student Health Service be adopted in accordance with the Personal Medical Service Initiative (PMS) of the Scottish Executive, by means of the most advantageous of the financial options which had been presented to the Court.

MEMBERSHIP OF COURT: CHANCELLOR'S ASSESSOR, SENATE ASSESSORS,
GENERAL COUNCIL ASSESSORS

- 254 The Court noted that the Chancellor had intimated his appointment of Mr Alistair Mair as Chancellor's Assessor in place of Dr Scott Brown for the period 1 August 2000 to 31 July 2004.
- 255 The Court noted that the Senate had elected Professor Trevor Salmon as a Senate Assessor on the University Court from 1 October 2000 to 30 September 2004 and Dr Duncan Heddle with immediate effect until 30 September 2001.
- 256 The Court noted that the General Council had elected Dr Audrey Dawson and Mr Joseph Leiper as General Council Assessors for the period 1 October 2000 to 30 September 2004.

SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT

- 257 The Court received the Annual Report of the University Safety Committee for 1999-2000.

PROMOTIONS

- 258 The Court noted the promotions approved by the Principal on the recommendation of the Staff Grading & Promotions Committee as set out in the appendix to this minute (Confidential).

DATES OF COURT MEETINGS 2000-01

- 259 The Court noted that Court meetings in Session 2000-01 would be held on the following dates:

Tuesday, 26 September 2000

Tuesday, 31 October 2000

Tuesday, 12 December 2000

Tuesday 6 February 2001

Tuesday, 20 March 2001

Tuesday, 15 May 2001

Tuesday, 26 June 2001.