

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

Minutes of meeting held on 25 March 2003

Present:: Rector (In the Chair), Principal, Mr A Amooore, Lady Catto, Mr R Clements, Councillor D Clyne, Mr D Cockburn, Dr A Dawson, Mr H Duncan, Professor G Graham, Miss A Harper, Councillor P Johnston, Dr P Kinnear, Mr M Lockhead, Professor S Logan, Mr A Mair, Dr N Milne, Dr G Roberts, Professor T Salmon, Professor J Sewel, Professor W Smith, Mr G Stevenson, Professor I Torrance, with Mr J Graham, Professor D Houlihan, Professor B MacGregor, Ms C Macaslan, Professor A Rodger, Mr S Cannon, Mr A Donaldson, Mrs C Inglis, Mr R Taylor and Ms K Atkinson (Acting Clerk).

Apologies for absence were received from Ms I Bews, Dr N Dower, Mr J Leiper, Dr M Mackie and Mr D Marr.

The Rector welcomed Mrs Sheena Grant, who was attending her first meeting.

MINUTES

139 The Minutes of meeting held on 11 February 2003 were approved.

STATEMENT BY PRINCIPAL

140 The Principal noted that, in addition to the UK Government White Paper on the Future of Higher Education in England, the external environment would be shaped by (i) the Scottish Executive Report of the Higher Education Review: Phase 2, entitled A Framework for Higher Education Scotland, and (ii) the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council's funding letter (ref. HE/09/03). The Scottish Executive report indicated that, in future, the Funding Council would play a more active role in influencing the formulation of institutional strategy. It was noted that the University's Teaching and Research grant for 2003/04 had increased by 4%, compared with an average increase of 4.6% across the sector. The Principal further noted that, looking forward, the size of disciplinary groupings would be crucial in securing funding for research. In light of recent developments with The Robert Gordon University, and the Scottish Agricultural College decision to focus activity in the Central Belt, the University would concentrate on alternative means of achieving critical mass. The current Costed Academic Planning process would identify proposals to maximise existing potential for consideration by the Senate and Court. The Principal also welcomed the allocation of £8.716M under Round 2 of the Science Research Investment Fund for the renovation of research infrastructure.

RGU COLLABORATION DISCUSSIONS

141 The Court received the Joint Statement by the Principals and Vice-Chancellors of the University of Aberdeen and The Robert Gordon University. Professor Logan confirmed that the Universities had agreed that this was not the time to continue talks exploring the possibility of merger.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

Joint Planning, Finance & Estates Committee (11.3.03)

142 The Court received a report from the Joint Planning, Finance & Estates Committee which had met on 11 March 2003.

Tuition and Miscellaneous Fees

143 The Court considered a paper setting out proposed tuition and miscellaneous fees for 2003-04. It noted that at the request of the President of the Students' Association, the Committee had agreed that the Registry should provide a detailed justification for the charging of miscellaneous fees with respect to future years.

144 The Court approved the recommendations as set out.

Hospitality Services Budgets and Hall Fees 2003-04

145 The Court considered a paper on the Hospitality Services Budgets and on Hall Fees for session 2003-04. The Court noted that the average proposed increase in Hall Fee rates was 2.9%.

146 Mr Cannon noted that the ongoing review of residences and catering would report its recommendations for catering and conferencing to Court in May 2003.

147 The Court approved the recommendations as set out.

Students' Association: Proposal for Fifth Sabbatical Officer

148 The Court received a paper from the Students' Association, proposing the establishment of an additional sabbatical officer post to be elected from 2003-04. It was noted that this would enable the sabbatical officers' remits to be revised in order to deliver an improved service to the student population.

149 The Court approved the proposal.

Strategic and Operational Planning

150 The Court noted that the Committee had received:

- (i) a copy of SHEFC circular letter HE/03/03 detailing Guidance for Institutional Strategic Plans 2003 and an overview of 2002 Plans;
- (ii) a paper setting out the financial assumptions underlying the Resource Allocation Model for the current budget setting exercise for financial year 2003-04;
- (iii) a report on the progress achieved to date in the revised planning process for the period 2003-06.

151 The Court was informed that the Committee had noted key issues that had arisen from the Costed Academic Plans and an analysis of the institutional issues in the context of the external environment. (*See Minute 168 below*)

Capital Programme

152 The Court noted that the Committee had received a paper on the Capital Programme and had approved the following recommendations:

153 Annual Capital Programme

- (i) That projects for the next three years be identified by the Estates Section and the Directorate of Information Systems and Services and that they be ranked, prioritised, and notionally allocated to a particular year. In total terms, no more than £9M of projects would be identified, with approximately £3M of annual spend;

- (ii) That projects follow the standard approval process – University Management Group, Capital Expenditure Sub-Committee and Joint Planning Finance and Estates Committee;
- (iii) That once projects had been approved, their financial management would be on an individual basis i.e. any over or under spend must be reported along with any changes in budget phasing (for cash management purposes);
- (iv) That monthly reporting of the Capital Programme continue;
- (v) That, once projects had been approved, should any new projects arise which had not been previously identified, formal approval must be sought to include the new project which would remove the lowest ranking project(s) from the three year programme;
- (vi) That the three-year programme be reviewed and revised on an annual basis.

154 Major Institutional Capital Projects

The Court noted that the Committee had approved a recommendation that the approval process for all major institutional projects should be University Management Group, Capital Expenditure Sub-Committee, Joint Planning, Finance and Estates Committee and Court, if required. This would ensure institutional prioritisation and be based on a full business case, including option appraisal and risk assessment.

RGU Collaboration

- 155 The Court noted that the Committee had received a copy of the joint statement issued by the Principals regarding the decision to call off merger talks with The Robert Gordon University. (*See Minute 141 above*)

Capital Expenditure Sub-Committee

- 156 The Court noted that the Committee had received a report from the Capital Expenditure Sub-Committee and had approved recommendations:
- (i) That £70K of funds, previously approved for the soft-strip of Marischal College, be reallocated for the appointment of a Specialist Property Adviser;
 - (ii) That subject to the identification of recurrent savings by Human Resources, £30K be approved for the installation of Serengeti Software, thus enabling the introduction of an electronic staff recruitment system: £17K from the Functionality Budget 2002-03 and the remainder from an underspend in the Finance Document Management System budget;
 - (iii) That the budget for the demolition of Dunbar Hall and associated costs be increased from £100K to £165K, subject to the agreement of a satisfactory brief with the Council;
 - (iv) That an additional £70K for the refurbishment of Carnegie Court be funded from the proceeds of the sale of the Bridge of Don Site;
 - (v) That a budget of £5K be approved for initial design work on the Old Aberdeen Town House Project and that an application be made for Listed Building Consent for the proposed project.

- 157 The Court was informed that the Committee had noted:

- (i) That SHEFC had allocated the University additional funding of £791K for the development of infrastructure to meet the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001, and

- (ii) The Sub-Committee's progress reports on a range of property matters and capital projects including: the Bridge of Don site, planning development briefs for Hilton and Hillhead sites, Tarradale House, Faculty of Education Relocation Project, Pathfinder: Halls, the Institute for Applied Health Sciences, the new Health Centre and the Old Aberdeen Heating Station replacement.

Financial Reports FY 2002-03

- 158 The Court noted that the Committee had received the management accounts for the first five months of the current financial year to 31 January 2003. These showed an historical cost surplus of £1.49M, against a budgeted surplus of £838K.

Science Research Investment Fund (SRIF) Round 2

- 159 The Court noted that the Committee had received two letters from SHEFC providing guidance on the application process for the second round of the Science Research Investment Fund. The total indicative allocation for the University for the period 2004-06 was £8.716M, of which £353K might be invested in arts and humanities research infrastructure.

Staffing and Development Committee (25.2.03)

- 160 The Court received a report from the Staffing & Development Committee.

Statement of Flexible Working Procedures

- 161 The Court approved a Statement of Flexible Working Procedures, as set out in the appendix to this minute, to be implemented with immediate effect.

Joint Committee on Equal Opportunities

- 162 The Court approved the proposal to develop a Joint Committee of Court and Senate on Equal Opportunities. This would ensure the development of a coherent approach to Equal Opportunities issues for staff and students. The proposal is set out as an appendix to this minute.

Staff Development

- 163 The Court noted that the Career Development and Staff Appraisal Scheme was progressing and that a full end-of-year report would be produced. The Court also noted the significant progress made in management development and leadership activities, that feedback to date had been extremely positive and that core leadership skills were being covered.

Maternity Policy

- 164 The Court noted that the Committee had noted the statutory changes to parental leave, introduced by the Employment Act 2002 and the incorporation of these changes within the University's parental leave policies.

Technical Staff

- 165 The Court noted that the Committee had considered a recommendation from the Technical Staff Liaison Committee for joint grading of technical staff posts in the annual grading exercise and that the Committee had agreed to take forward joint grading as a pilot exercise this session. The Committee had also considered proposals for the local amendment of technical staff salary scales to incorporate greater flexibility for reward. The Committee had agreed to seek further detailed proposals from the Technical Staff Liaison Committee on this issue.

Equal Opportunities

- 166 The Court noted that a proposed Race Equality Policy Action Plan would be submitted for approval in due course.

Manual/Ancillary Staff

- 167 The Court noted that the Committee had commented on proposals relating to the hours of work of manual and ancillary staff, a proposed change in title and that a proposal would be submitted for approval to the Court at the end of the appropriate consultation period.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

168 The Court received:

- (i) a copy of SHEFC circular letter HE/03/03, detailing Guidance for Institutional Strategic Plans 2003, and an overview of 2002 Plans;
- (ii) a report on the planning process 2003-2006.

RESOLUTION No 230 OF 2003
[CHANGES IN REGULATIONS FOR VARIOUS DEGREES]

169 The Court approved the draft Resolution 'Changes in Regulations for Various Degrees', which had been agreed with minor amendments by the Business Committee of the General Council, and by the Senate, as set out in the appendix to this minute.

APPOINTMENTS TO COURT AND COURT COMMITTEES

170 The Court approved the following recommendations from the Nominating Committee. All appointments were with immediate effect until 31 July 2006.

Court

171 Mrs Sheena Grant

Audit Committee

172 Dr M Mackie as a lay Court member.

Remuneration Committee

173 Mr M Lockhead, as a lay Court member.

Committee on Biological Service Units

174 Professor W C Smith as a Court representative.

Joint Planning Finance & Estates Committee

175 Mr M Lockhead as a lay Court member.

Museums, Collections & Galleries

176 Councillor Johnston as a Court representative.

Staffing & Development Committee

177 Lady Catto as a non-academic member.

Student Recruitment & Admissions Committee

178 Mr D Marr as a Court representative.

Committee for Research, Income Generation and Commercialisation

179 To meet the revised composition agreed by the Court, it was agreed to appoint Dr M Mackie as a lay member.

University-nominated Trustees of the Aberdeen International Football Festival and of the Aberdeen International Youth Festival

- 180 The Court agreed that Mr A Donaldson, Director of Property Development, be appointed to the Football Festival and Professor Houlihan, Vice-Principal for Research and Commercialisation, be appointed to the Youth Festival as University representatives.

STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE (24.2.03)

- 181 The Court received a report from the Student Affairs Committee which had met on 24 February 2003.
- 182 The Court received a copy of the Second Term Report of the Students' Association 2002-03.

LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGY FOR SCOTLAND SUMMARY

- 183 The Court received for information a copy of the Scottish Executive's paper entitled ' Lifelong Learning Strategy for Scotland Summary.

MATTERS FOR HOMOLOGATION

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

Mr Roderick Begg Emeritus Secretary

- 185 That the award of Emeritus Secretary status be conferred on Mr Roddy Begg from a retrospective date of 1st March 2002.

Dr David Ditchburn Head of School of History & History of Art

- 186 The appointment of Dr David Ditchburn as Head of the School of History & History of Art, from 1 February 2003 to 31 July 2006.

Professor John Ayres, Headship of Department of Environmental & Occupational Medicine

- 187 The appointment of Professor John Ayres as Head of the Department of Environmental & Occupational Medicine from 1 January 2003 to 31 December 2005

- 188 *Confidential*

Acting Dean, Faculty of Arts & Divinity

- 189 The appointment of Dr Seth Kunin, Head of School of Divinity and Religious Studies and Philosophy as Acting Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Divinity for a fixed period from 1 April 2003 to 31 May 2004.

Chapel Committee Quorum

- 190 The Court noted that the Chapel Committee at its meeting of 4 February had agreed that its quorum should be increased to four voting members from the existing requirement of three.

GIFTS, BENEFACTIONS AND AWARDS

- 191 The Court received for information a report from the Director of External Relations on gifts, benefactions and charitable awards received by the University in the period 1 November 2002 to 31 January 2003.

PAPERS FOR INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

192 The Court noted that copies of the following papers were available on request from the Court & Planning Office (ext 2093)

- (i) JOINT COSTING AND PRICING STEERING GROUP (JCPSG): FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT FROM JULY 2001 TO JULY 2002: SHEFC Circular Letter HE/51/02, dated 16 December 2002, enclosing the fourth and final report produced by the Joint Costing and Pricing Steering Group (JCPSG) on the four-year project which began in 1998.
- (ii) TRANSPARENCY REVIEW REPORTING FOR ACADEMIC YEARS 2001-02 AND 2002-03: SHEFC Circular Letter HE/53/02, dated 24 December 2002, requesting submission of data from institutions by 31 January 2003 to fulfil the requirements of the transparency review, together with analyses of data at the UK and Scottish sector levels in respect of data provided for financial years 1999-2000 and 2000-01.
- (iii) SHEFC HIGHLIGHT, December 2002.
- (iv) FUNDING OF SCOTTISH HIGHER EDUCATION: Universities Scotland Circular 03/03, 23 January 2003.
- (v) A GUIDE TO STRATEGIC INVESTMENT IN RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE: Scottish Universities Research Policy Consortium, December 2002:
 - (a) Foreword; Preface and Acknowledgements; Executive Summary
 - (b) Toolkit Summary
- (vi) 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 & Technology (OST) and the funding councils to identifying the full economic costs of research projects and other related activities.
- (vii) LAUNCH OF THE LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGY FOR SCOTLAND: Universities Scotland Circular 09/03, 17 February 2003, providing information on the key issues arising from the launch of the Lifelong Learning Strategy for Scotland.
- (viii) 'LIFE THROUGH LEARNING; LEARNING THROUGH LIFE': Scottish Executive's new Lifelong Learning Strategy, February 2003.
- (ix) CYCLE OF MEETINGS 2003-04