

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

Minutes of meeting held on 4 November 2003

Present: Mr Mair (in the Chair), Principal, Mr A Amoore, Lady Catto, Dr A Dawson, Mrs S Grant, Miss A Harper, Mr C Henry, Councillor P Johnston, Mr M Lockhead, Dr M Mackie, Mr D Marr, Dr G Roberts, Professor T Salmon, Professor J Sewel, Professor W Cairns Smith, Mr G Stevenson, Councillor J Stewart, Mr S Styles, with Professor D Houlihan, Professor A Rodger, Professor B MacGregor, Mr S Cannon, Ms I Bews, Mrs C Inglis, Dr P Murray, Mrs L Manders and Mr B Purdon (Clerk)

Apologies for absence were received from, The Rector, Professor P Beaumont, Ms C Edge, Mr J Leiper, Professor S Logan, and Dr N Milne.

MINUTES

- 38 The Minutes of the meeting held on 16th September 2003 were approved.

STATEMENT BY PRINCIPAL

- 39 The Principal noted that the University was progressing the £9 million investment programme of targeted re-structuring, which was on a scale more ambitious than had been undertaken before. The Principal also reminded the Court that the forthcoming SHEFC institutional visit was of considerable importance and he expressed his gratitude to members of Court who had agreed to meet with representatives of the Council.

UPDATE ON COLLEGES AND RESTRUCTURING

- 40 Professor Sewel introduced to the Court a letter which had been sent to all members of staff on 13th October, regarding the staff restructuring scheme. The letter outlined the terms of the voluntary severance and early retirement schemes.
- 41 Professor Sewel explained that contrary to any impression which might have been gained by some staff, those who expressed an interest would be known only to a very limited number of Finance or Human Resources staff who would provide them with the relevant details of potential settlements. Only when an application was formally made would Senior Management be made aware of it. In accepting or refusing an application the Committee on Restructuring would make their decision on the basis of the best interests of the institution.
- 42 A concern was expressed about the tone of the letter although in discussion it was recognised that all staff had to be made aware of the detailed terms of the scheme. Additionally the University needed to ensure that morale was maintained during this process. The scheme had set a 31st January closing date to allow both an attractive financial package to be offered and for this stage of the restructuring process to be completed within a reasonable period.
- 43 Professor Sewel then provided the Court with a general update on the Colleges' restructuring process. The Court was informed that with a few exceptions senior management positions had now been filled. An away-day for all Heads of School had been held to discuss future research and teaching strategies.

- 44 The Head of the College of Physical Sciences updated Court on progress made in relation to staffing positions, the establishment of a graduate school and research. The Head of the College of Arts and Social Sciences informed the Court of the progress made in relation to senior College staff positions, College and School governance, and research and teaching strategy within Schools. In the absence of the Head of the College of Life Sciences and Medicine, Professor Sewel briefed the Court on the progress made within the College in relation to senior staffing positions.

REPORT FROM THE JOINT PLANNING, FINANCE AND ESTATES COMMITTEE

IT PROJECTS

- 45 The Court noted that the Joint Planning, Finance & Estates Committee had received and, for its part, approved a funding request for a new Library Management System, an upgrade of Medicine IT infrastructure and a replacement NUMA server.
- 46 It was proposed that the Library Management System (£430,000), and Medicine IT infrastructure (£180,000) be funded from institutional reserves, while the replacement server (£94,000) be funded from combined underspends from the Directorate of Information Systems and Services Annual Capital Budget 2002/03 and 2003/04.

- 47 The Court approved the requests.

Matters for Homologation

- 48 The Court homologated the following matters which had been progressed since the last meeting of the Joint Planning, Finance & Estates Committee.

Old Aberdeen Town House

- 49 That the total cost of refurbishing the Town House as a University reception centre was estimated at £850,000 (excluding VAT on the building element).
- 50 Conditional planning and listed building consents for the proposed work had been granted in July 2003. An application was under preparation for the second stage of the Heritage Lottery Fund competition, seeking £250,000 towards the project. The current proposed start date for renovation was February 2004.
- 51 It was anticipated that the Development Trust would contribute towards the costs. In the meantime, while other potential sources of funding were being explored, and subject to a risk assessment, the University had agreed to underwrite funding up to £700,000 from reserves.

Marischal College

- 52 The AXA Sunlife plc be appointed as the preferred Developer/Funder for Marischal College.

Education Relocation – Appointment of Demolition Contractor for the MacRobert Building

- 53 That the decant of the MacRobert Building was proceeding on schedule. Due to time constraints (demolition work had been due to commence on 6 October), a contractor had been appointed at a cost of £459,000, including fees and VAT. The appointment had been made following receipt of tenders which were within initial budgets.

Fee Rate for S6 Pupils Taking University Level Courses

- 54 That a proposed fee rate of £90 for S6 pupils taking University level courses had been approved by circulation by the University Management Group in July 2003.

Faculty of Education Relocation

- 55 That nine bids had been received for the Hilton site, of which four had been short-listed for interview. CALA had been selected as the preferred developer and missives for the conditional sale had been completed in September 2003. A non-returnable deposit of £250,000 had been received. Although the exact proceeds could not be precisely calculated, it was envisaged that they would meet the relocation costs of Education.
- 56 That the SHEFC Strategic Change Grant relating to the Northern College merger had made provision for the borrowing costs of the capital expenditure required to relocate the Faculty of Education from Hilton to the Kings Campus. The current estimate of expenditure for the project was £17 million, of which £4 million related to the decant of the MacRobert building and subsequent moves, and £13 million to the refurbishment of the MacRobert Building.
- 57 The Court approved the recommendation to commence the process of securing short-term borrowing to finance the project expenditure prior to receiving the proceeds from the sale of the Hilton campus. Borrowing would be subject to the normal tendering procedures to ensure best value. It was noted that a request for SHEFC approval was being sought.

Strategic and Operational Planning

- 58 The Court noted that the Committee had received the Strategic Plan 2003-2007 timetable, detailing deadlines and opportunities for comment by various committees and a paper setting out the proposed structure of the forthcoming SHEFC institutional visit on 10 November 2003. (see also *Minute* 69)

Catering Strategy

- 59 The Court noted that the Committee had received, for information, a report on catering strategy developments between June and September 2003. The Court also noted that the recruitment process for a Director of Commercial Services was ongoing. The Russell Partnership continued to provide leadership and advice to enable ongoing improvement of the service.

Capital Expenditure Sub-Committee

- 60 The Court noted that the Committee had approved the Capital Expenditure Sub-Committee's revised remit, updated to reflect current approval procedures for the three-year minor capital programme; conditional functionality budget; and major institutional projects.
- 61 The Court also noted that, further to the proposed re-phasing of Estates capital projects as reported in June 2003, budgets had been rolled forward as below:

Project	2002/03 Budget (£'000s)	Rephased to 2003/04 (£'000s)
Regent Building Roof Replacement	36	36
Deaf Alert System	50	50
JMU Rolling Programme	180	180
Foresterhill Mosque	65	65
Administration Relocation	207	158
King's College Roof Coverings and Stonework	560	23
Marischal College Decommissioning and Consultancy Fees	230	165
King's College Chapel Organ Works	100	86
Meston Building External Wall Repairs	100	3
Edward Wright Building Toilet Refurbishment	100	99
Polwarth Refurbishment	228	228
Powis Gate Roof Coverings	75	74
Central Refectory Refurbishment	250	73

- 62 The Court noted that the total estimated cost of £12.975 million of projects submitted to the second round of the Science Research Investment Fund (SRIF) would be funded as follows: -

SRIF Award	8,716,000
10% Institutional Contribution from Reserves	968,444
Faculty of Education Consequential Moves	2,000,000
Annual Capital Programme 2002/03 to 2005/06	<u>1,159,000</u>
	<u>£12,843,444</u>

- 63 The Court noted that, in the event that the total estimated cost was confirmed as being £12.975M, then additional funding of £132,000 would be sought from institutional reserves.

- 64 The Court noted that the Committee had received progress reports on a range of property matters and capital projects including Tarradale House; Pathfinder: Halls; Sports Facilities; Institute of Applied Health Sciences and the new Health Centre.

Research Consultations

- 65 The Court noted that the Committee had received and noted the University's responses to the consultations on the Review of Research Assessment, Improving Standards in Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes; and the Reform of Part of the Dual Support Review.

Student Admissions

- 66 The Court noted that Professor Houlihan had reported to the Committee that early indications suggested that admissions for 2003/04 were generally good. Home and overseas undergraduate admissions targets had been reached, with the Master of Arts Degree having been withdrawn from Clearing one week into the process. Initial figures for postgraduate taught programmes were encouraging, while data on postgraduate research students, who tended to register later, was not yet available. The Committee noted that recruitment to the Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme was not as strong as in 2002/03 but that this had been compensated for by improved performance in other areas. He also reported that admissions to Education programmes were in accordance with targets, eased in part because subject category targets for the Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) Secondary had been relaxed this year to compensate for a shortage of English and Mathematics teachers.

Scottish Parliament Enterprise Committee Inquiry

- 67 The Court noted that the Committee had received, for information, the University's response to the Scottish Parliament's Enterprise and Culture Committee's Inquiry into the impact of the introduction of top-up fees in England upon Scottish Universities. The Committee had also noted the evidence submitted by the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council.

Commercialisation Report 2002/03

- 68 The Court noted that the Committee had received, a report on commercialisation activity during session 2002-03. Twenty-eight SHEFC Knowledge Transfer Grant applications had been considered during 2002-03, of which fourteen had been funded. The University had been awarded almost £327K for two projects in Round Four of the Scottish Enterprise Proof of Concept Fund. During the year, patent and licensing activity had included thirty-five new disclosures, eighteen new patents and seven new licensing deals. The University had received royalty income totalling £524K. Three new companies had been formed.

SHEFC INSTITUTIONAL VISIT

69 The Court was informed that as part of its Strategic Planning processes, SHEFC would visit all institutions every two to three years. Visits were intended to provide all parties with an opportunity to discuss the aspirations and progress. SHEFC were to make an institutional visit to the University on the 10th of November where they intended to discuss our strategic aims for 2003-2007, research strategy, widening access, teaching quality and matters relating to human resource policies and management.

70 All Court members had been provided with a copy of the briefing papers for the visit (copy filed with principal copy of the minutes) and SHEFC intended to meet with some Court members, in addition to representatives of staff and students.

71 The Court was informed that following the visit a report would be received from SHEFC.

PROPOSALS FOR COLLEGE AND SUB-COLLEGE STRUCTURES

72 The Court received a paper inviting its approval of a proposal for College and Sub-College structures. The Senate, for its part had approved the structures at its meeting on 8 October 2003.

73 The structures had been developed following widespread consultation with cross-campus trades unions during August and September across all Colleges.

74 It was proposed that each College would have:

- (i) **College Executive:** This group would meet ordinarily at least once a month and would be the locus for strategic planning and decision-making. Each Executive would comprise the Head of College, the Heads of School, the Chair of the Teaching & Learning Committee, the Chair of the Research & Commercialisation Committee, and the College Registrar. Other staff would be invited to attend as required.
- (ii) **College Council:** This group would meet ordinarily at least twice per half-session to enhance communications within Colleges. It would include elected representatives from the academic constituencies and representation for non-academic members of staff, and students. The proportion from each constituency would be determined by each College, following appropriate consultation. The Council would review, advise and inform College academic planning.
- (iii) **College Forum:** This group would meet ordinarily at least once a year and would comprise all members of staff of the College. The Forum would facilitate communication and open discussion on issues affecting the College and its staff.
- (iv) **Research & Commercialisation Committee:** The Research & Commercialisation Committee would meet ordinarily at least twice per half-session and the Chair of the Committee would be a member of the College Executive. The remit would include RAE planning and direction, prioritisation of research, preparation of bids for internal and external resources, directing research opportunities and monitoring and reviewing research and commercialisation performance.
- (v) **Teaching & Learning Committee:** The Teaching & Learning Committee, which would include student representation, would meet ordinarily at least twice per half-session and the Chair would be a member of the College Executive. The remit would include College-wide responsibility for course and programme academic planning, reviewing current provision, student recruitment and retention, and quality assurance and quality enhancement and related matters.

75 There might be Sub-Committees to address issues such as IT and libraries. *Ad hoc* working groups and committees would deal with specific issues as required.

Administrative Support

- 76 Each College would have a College Registrar who would be supported by a team of administrative staff.

College Sub-Structures

- 77 As indicated in the Colleges' outline proposal, discussed by Senate at its meeting on 18 June 2003, Schools would remain the basic operational units to which staff are assigned. They are the basic form of budgetary grouping. The Head of School would be responsible to the appropriate Head of College for the academic leadership and management of the School.

- 78 There would be six Schools in the College of Arts & Social Sciences: Business School; School of Law; School of Social Science; School of Education; School of Language & Literature; and School of Divinity, History & Philosophy.

There would be four Schools in the College of Life Sciences & Medicine: School of Medicine; School of Medical Sciences; School of Biological Sciences; and School of Psychology.

- 79 In the College of Physical Sciences, academic activity would be arranged in two divisions: (i) Engineering & Physical Sciences School; and (ii) Geosciences School. The divisions would be led by Heads of School and they would have overall line management responsibility for staff as well as accountability for budgetary issues. In addition, the College would establish a graduate school.

- 80 During the Winter Term, the Heads of College would develop, through consultation, proposals for sub-College structures. Whilst there may be Heads of Disciplines/Departments, these individuals would derive their delegated powers solely from the relevant Head of School. In the Colleges of Arts & Social Sciences and Life Sciences & Medicine the consultation would include consideration of graduate schools.

- 81 The Court approved the proposals.

RESOLUTION NO 231 OF 2003

[REFORM OF ACADEMIC STRUCTURES]

- 82 The Court, having noted that the draft Resolution [Reform of Academic Structures] had been approved by the Senate, and been considered by the Business Committee of the General Council, and that no other representations had been received, decided to pass the Resolution (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*).

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

- 83 The Court received a recommendation from the Nominating Committee following the resignation from Court of Mr Hugh Duncan. The Nominating Committee proposed that his position as Chair of the Investment Committee and as a member of the Joint Planning Finance and Estates Committee be taken up by Dr Maitland Mackie, a lay member of Court.

- 84 Dr Mackie would be required to leave the Audit Committee in order to take up this appointment due to the fact that the rules governing the composition of Audit Committee state that members should not also be members of the JPFEAC.

- 85 The Court agreed that Dr Maitland Mackie be appointed to the Joint Planning, Finance & Estates Committee and also as Chairman of the Investment Committee.

REPORT FROM AUDIT COMMITTEE

Internal Audit Reports

- 86 The Court noted that the Committee had approved ten internal audit reports, namely: Personnel Procedures, Students' Association, School of Engineering & Physical Sciences, Fundraising and Marketing, Student Support Services, School of Modern Languages, Contingency Planning, VFM Review of Commercial Vehicles, Commercialisation and Follow-up Review of 2001-02.

Internal Audit Annual Report

- 87 The Court had received for information a copy of the Internal Audit Annual Report for 2002-03 and noted that the Committee had approved the report.

Internal Audit Programme 2004-04

- 88 The Court had received for information a copy of the Internal Audit Programme 2003-04 and noted that the Committee had approved the programme.

PAPERS FOR INFORMATION

- 89 The Court noted that copies of the following papers were available on request from the Court & Planning Office (ext 272093).
- (i) US RESPONSE TO THE REVIEW OF FUNDING OF LEARNERS: Universities Scotland Circular 74/03, dated 9 October 2003.
 - (ii) EMPLOYMENT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS: HEFCE letter dated 14 July 2003, enclosing draft employment indicators.
 - (iii) CHECKING OF DISABLED STUDENTS PREMIUM DATA: SHEFC circular FST/21/41, dated 22 July 2003, giving notice of a SHEFC visit to the institution this year to carry out checks on the data used to allocate the Disabled Students Premium.
 - (iv) IMPLEMENTING FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (FOI) IN SCOTLAND: Letter from Tavish Scott, MSP, Deputy Minister for Finance, Public Services and Parliamentary Business, Scottish Executive, dated 17 July 2003.
 - (v) NEW HOME OFFICE CHARGES FOR APPLICATIONS FOR EXTENSIONS TO STAY IN THE UK: Universities UK *Information for members*, 1/03/69, dated 14 July 2003, explaining a new charge being introduced by the Immigration and Nationality Directorate for considering applications for leave to remain in the UK and other related work.