

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

Minutes of meeting held on 23 March 2004

Present: Principal, Mr A Amooore, Professor P Beaumont, Lady Catto, Dr A Dawson, Dr N Dower, Ms J Duncan, Professor G Graham, Mrs S Grant, Miss A Harper, Mr C Henry, Councillor P Johnston, Mr M Lockhead, Professor S Logan, Dr M Mackie, Mr A Mair, Dr G Roberts, Professor T Salmon, Professor J Sewel, Mr G Stevenson, and Mr S Styles, with Professor D Houlihan, Professor A Rodger, Professor B MacGregor, Mr S Cannon, Ms I Bews, Mr A Donaldson, Mrs C Inglis, Dr P Murray and Miss C Murray (Clerk).

Apologies for absence were received from the Rector, Mr J Leiper, Mr D Marr, Dr N Milne, Professor W Cairns Smith and Councillor J Stewart.

MINUTES

192 The Minutes of the meeting held on 10th February 2004 were approved.

STATEMENT BY PRINCIPAL

193 The Principal drew the Court's attention to the new Aberdeen Magazine, which had been sent to all members, and noted that it would be produced approximately every six months.

194 The Principal commented on the SHEFC announcement of the main grant allocation for teaching and research. The University's grant had increased by 4.3%, which was greater than the rate of inflation. He noted particular success in Knowledge Transfer, where the grant had increased by sixty percent. He advised that further analysis was required to evaluate the impact of elements such as salary increases and incremental drift.

195 The Principal reported on the University's highly successful seminar on Irish and Scottish Studies at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C., which was part of their "Great Schools" series. The University was the only UK institution apart from Oxford to have been invited to take part in the series. The event had been well attended by alumni and donors.

196 The Principal drew the Court's attention to the launch of the Word Festival, which was to take place on 25th March. The Festival would run from 14-16 May.

197 The Principal noted that the development of the Aberdeen Centre for Environmental Sustainability (ACES) was being planned as a joint venture between the University, the Macaulay Land Use Research Institute and the Natural Environmental Research Council (NERC). Negotiations between the three bodies were continuing, and the Court would be kept apprised of developments.

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT AND INDUSTRIAL ACTION

198 Professor Sewel updated the Court on progress made in resolving current dispute with the AUT. The General Secretary of the TUC had facilitated the preparation of a joint memorandum of understanding, which made clear that there would be no detriment to current staff and no de-coupling of academic-related from academic staff.

- 199 It was likely that the salary settlement would be an increase of 3.44% from August 2003, followed by 3% in August 2004. It was anticipated that the AUT Conference on 25th March would recommend withdrawing action short of a strike, pending the results of a national ballot of members on whether to accept the offer. The Court was advised that the new system of job evaluation would have an effect on the salary bill, but it would be some time before the full financial impact of this could be determined.
- 200 The Principal recorded his thanks to all those involved in working to resolve the dispute.

SPORTS FACILITIES

- 201 Dr Roberts provided the Court with an update on the plans to develop a new sports facility in conjunction with Aberdeen City Council. He reported that the Council had recently requested significant amendments to the bid to SportScotland that was in preparation. These amendments were:
- a) Inclusion of a land value of £5.8 Million (including site clearance costs).
 - b) Inclusion of sums already committed by the City to develop sports infrastructure in Aberdeen, to the tune of £0.5 Million.
 - c) Reduced direct capital provision of £2 Million from the Council from that modelled.
- 202 He advised the Court that the Council viewed the bid as a means of finding out the extent of the financial support that SportScotland would be prepared to provide. Court members were, however, disappointed by the late changes to the City's contribution. Negotiations with the Council were ongoing but, whatever the outcome, the future development strategy would have to be revisited once the results of the SportScotland bid were known.
- 203 The Court approved the submission of the Stage 1 bid to SportScotland.

RESEARCH ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2008

- 204 Professor Houlihan introduced a paper outlining the proposed new arrangements for Research Assessment. Although there were still uncertainties regarding some aspects of the process, it was known that assessment would occur in a six-year cycle, and that results would be published as continuously graded profiles. The census date was to be 31 October 2007, with results to be published in December 2008. Hence the financial outcomes of the Exercise would not be implemented until the academic year 2009/10.
- 205 Court members raised queries on details of the Exercise, such as the assessment of applied and commercial research, collaboration between institutions and factoring in of postgraduate numbers. However it was felt that it was too early to speculate, and that advice would be received in due course on these and other areas.

JOINT PLANNING FINANCE AND ESTATES COMMITTEE MATTERS FOR APPROVAL

Treasury Management Policy

- 206 The Court received and approved a copy of the proposed Treasury Management Policy. The document set out how the University would be open and transparent in its treasury dealings and would be incorporated into the Financial Strategy.

Residences Fees 2004/05

- 207 The Court received and approved proposed student residential fees for 2004/05.

Student Admissions 2004/05 – Revised Targets

- 208 The Court received and approved revised undergraduate admissions targets for Education with Music programmes.

Tuition and Miscellaneous Fees 2004/05

- 209 The Court received and approved tuition and miscellaneous fees for 2004/05.

SENATE REPORT MATTERS FOR APPROVAL

Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002

- 210 The Court received and approved recommendations in regard to the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, including a Protocol for the Handling of Section 1 Requests as set out in the appendix to this minute.

Resolution No < > of 2004 [Amendment to Resolution No 195 of 1996: Regulation of University Teaching and Learning]

- 211 The Court received the draft Resolution No of 2004 [Amendment to Resolution No 195 of 1996: Regulation of University Teaching and Learning] from the Senate and 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. The changes were being recommended as a consequence of a review of the University's quality assurance arrangements, following the establishment of Colleges and their Teaching and Learning Committees.

STAFFING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MATTERS FOR APPROVAL*Statement on Flexible Working Procedures*

- 212 The Court received and approved the amended Statement on Flexible Working Procedures.

College of Life Sciences and Medicine: Head of Clinical Department Job Description

- 213 The Court received and approved the Head of Clinical Department Job Description.

Manual Staff

- 214 The Court received and approved a proposal to change the title of Manual and Ancillary Staff to Support Staff.

DRAFT RESOLUTION NO OF 2004
[CHANGES IN REGULATIONS FOR VARIOUS DEGREES]

- 215 The Court, having noted that the draft Resolution [Changes in Regulations for Various Degrees] had been amended and 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 as set out in the appendix to this minute.

DRAFT RESOLUTION NO of 2004
[PROCEDURE FOR REMOVAL OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS
OF THE UNIVERSITY COURT]

- 216 The Court decided to forward the draft Resolution No of 2004, [Procedure for Removal of Co-Opted Members of the University Court], to Senate and to the General Council and to make it generally available in terms of Section 6 of the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966.

RECOMMENDATION FROM NOMINATING COMMITTEE

217 The Court homologated the following recommendations from the Nominating Committee:

Equal Opportunities Sub-Committee

218 Councillor John Stewart as a Court representative on the Equal Opportunities Committee.

Audit Committee

219 Mr George Ross as a member of the Audit Committee.

RESTRUCTURING UPDATE

220 The Court received for information a paper which gave an update on the number of formal applications and their outcomes received by 31 January 2004, the date on which the restructuring scheme closed.

CUC GOVERNANCE PROJECT

221 The Court received for information a paper regarding the CUC Governance Project.

SCOTTISH HIGHER EDUCATION REVIEW OF EDUCATION PHASE 3

222 The Court received for information a summary of the conclusions of the Scottish Executive's Phase 3 Higher Education Review.

JOINT PLANNING FINANCE AND ESTATES COMMITTEE
MATTERS FOR INFORMATION*National Framework Agreement and Industrial Action*

223 The Court noted that the Committee had received a paper on the proposed National Framework Agreement and recent and future industrial action by the Association of University Teachers. **(see minute 198 above)**

Restructuring

224 The Court noted that the Committee had received a paper on the status of applications to the Voluntary Severance Scheme, which closed on 31 January 2004.

Research Assessment Exercise 2008

225 The Court noted that the Committee had received a report on the UK Funding Councils' recent announcement on the timing and conduct of the next Research Assessment Exercise in 2008. **(see Minute 204 above)**

Aberdeen Centre for Environmental Sustainability (ACES)

226 The Court noted that the Committee had considered a paper on the Aberdeen Centre for Environmental Sustainability (ACES) which comprised an update on developments relating to the proposed Centre and a draft statement of intent between the Macaulay Land Use Research Institute, the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) and the University. **(see Minute 197 above)**

227 The Court noted that the Committee had agreed that the development of more detailed proposals for the Centre was required prior to any institutional commitment being made further to that described in the Statement of Intent.

Sports Facilities

228 The Court noted that the Committee, for its part, had approved proposals for new sports facilities. **(see Minute 201 above)**

Strategic and Operational Planning

- 229 The Court noted that the Committee had received and considered the first draft of the Strategic Plan 2004-2009. It was noted that Colleges would be involved throughout the consultation process, which was in its early stages.

Capital Expenditure Sub-Committee

- 230 The Court noted (a) that the Committee had received a report from the Capital Expenditure Sub-Committee and (b) that the annual programme of capital projects and institutional capital projects were slightly below budget for the year to date.
- 231 The Court noted that the Committee had agreed that the refurbishment of the Old Aberdeen Town House would commence in July 2004.
- 232 The Court noted that the Committee had received reports on the following projects: Marischal College; Education Relocation; Sports Facilities; Student Accommodation; Institute of Applied Health Sciences (IAHS); IAHS Clinical Research Facility; Cruickshank and Zoology Buildings and the Old Aberdeen Heating Station Replacement.

Investment Committee

- 233 The Court noted that the Committee had received a report from the Investment Committee, including the fund manager's quarterly report as at 31 January 2004. Overall, the fund had outperformed its benchmark of 2.79%, rising by 2.99%.

Financial Reports 2003/04

- 234 The Court noted that the Committee had considered the management accounts for the six months to 31 January 2004, which showed an historical cost deficit of £2.804 million, against a budgeted deficit of £1.836 million, an adverse variance of £0.968 million. It was forecast that, after the removal of restructuring costs of £4.7 million, the accounts for the financial year 2003-04 would report an underlying surplus of £2.8 million, against a target surplus of £3 million.
- 235 The Court noted that the Committee had also received and considered a report on research grants and contracts applications and awards for a five-year period to January 2004.

Admissions Report 2004

- 236 The Court noted that the Committee had received a report on home and overseas undergraduate applications for 2004 entry.

Purchasing Services Annual Report 2002/03

- 237 The Court noted that the Committee had received the Purchasing Services Annual Report 2002/03.

STAFFING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

Staff Restructuring Scheme

- 238 The Court noted that the Staffing and Development Committee had noted the outcomes of the Staff Restructuring Scheme and had anticipated that further developments in the restructuring process would be reported, as appropriate.

Framework Agreement and Industrial Action

- 239 The Court noted that the Committee had received information regarding the Framework Agreement and planned Industrial Action and requested that further developments be reported as appropriate (**See Minute 198 above**).

Review of Technical Staffing

- 240 The Court noted that the Committee had noted that the Colleges were consulting on the recommendations contained within the consultants' report on technical staffing with a view to informing the Technical Staff Liaison Committee of the final outcome.

Clinical Academic Staff

- 241 The Court noted that the Committee had noted the ongoing work in the College of Life Sciences and Medicine in relation to clinical academic staff and anticipated that further developments would be reported, as appropriate.

Frequency of Meetings

- 242 The Court noted that the Committee had agreed that additional meetings mirroring the Court schedule should be arranged.

Acting Up Allowances

- 243 The Court noted the Committee had noted ongoing work in relation to Acting Up Allowances and recommended that a Guidance Note on Good Practice be issued to managers.

Flexi-Time

- 244 The Court noted that the Committee had noted the evaluation of the University Office pilot scheme for Secretarial and Clerical Staff and had recommended that Schools/Departments wishing to operate on a flexi-time basis should adopt the principles of the scheme.

Strategic Plan 2004-2007

- 245 The Court noted that the Committee had welcomed the consultation process on the Strategic Plan being conducted through the Committee structure.

Staff Training and Development

- 246 The Court noted that the Committee had noted ongoing work in the Educational and Staff Development Unit in relation to course evaluation and generic skills development for postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers and anticipated that further developments would be reported, as appropriate.

REPORT FROM AUDIT COMMITTEE

Review of Information Security

- 247 The Court noted that the Committee had approved the Review of Information Security (Report No 7 of 2002-03) from Deloitte but noted that it made several significant recommendations relating to disaster recovery strategies and risk management. The Committee requested that it be kept informed of progress in these areas.

Tendering Process for Internal Audit

- 248 The Court noted that the Committee had approved a timetable for the tendering process to appoint internal auditors for the period 1 August 2004 – 31 July 2007. It was proposed that a selection panel meet in May 2004, enabling the Committee to make a recommendation for appointment to Court in June.

REPORT FROM STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Students' Association: Constitution

- 249 The Court noted that the Committee had received an update by the Students' Association President on progress in developing a revised Constitution and Schedules for the Association to accommodate its changing operational arrangements.

Directorate of Student Affairs: Termly Report

- 250 The Court noted that the Director of Student Affairs had reported on improving liaison arrangements with the Students' Association, including regular meetings of a joint Liaison Group and a highly successful away-day. Other developments included progress with the transfer to the University of the principal commercial activities of the Association and the relocation of the University Medical Practice to Sunnybank.

Students' Association: Termly Report

- 251 The Court noted that the Committee had received a detailed report from the Students' Association President, including the ongoing development of its support functions on behalf of the student body and the continuing high standard of achievement in student sports.

Central Refectory Students' Centre

- 252 The Court noted that members had been informed of evolving proposals and timescales for the new Students' Centre – to be located within the Central Refectory Building at Old Aberdeen – and had had sight of detailed floor plans for the project.

Development of Sports Facilities

- 253 The Court noted that Dr Roberts had reported on the thrust of the University's strategy for the development of its sports facilities in combination with local interests and SportScotland. He had outlined alternative options available and interim measures to afford ongoing improvement, including the acquisition of Keith Park.

INTIMATION OF REPATRIATION REQUEST

- 254 The Court noted that a request from the National Museum of New Zealand to repatriate nine Maori heads, currently held in the Marischal Museum, was being taken forward under the Repatriation Policy and Procedures, previously approved by the Court.

PAPERS FOR INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

- 255 The Court noted that copies of the following papers were available on request from the Court & Planning Office:
- (i) FINANCIAL LIABILITIES TO UNIVERSITIES AND ACADEMICS RESULTING FROM THE 2003 FINANCE ACT: Paper, prepared by Research & Innovation, indicating that, under the Finance Act 2003, the Inland Revenue is interpreting the gains made by academics as a result of equity holdings in start-up companies as university employment benefits.
 - (ii) MAGNA CHARTA UNIVERSITATUM AND THE BOLOGNA DECLARATION: Briefing Note on the biennial meeting of Ministers to discuss progress in the Bologna process, held in Berlin in September 2003. The *Magna Charta Universitatum*, signed in September 1988 and adopted by some 430 universities, focuses on the fundamental values of European University tradition.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 256 It was noted that the next scheduled meeting of Court would be held on Tuesday 25 May 2004.