

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

Minutes of meeting held on 29 June 2004

Present: Mr A Mair (in the Chair), Principal, Professor P Beaumont, Lady Catto, Dr N Dower, Ms J Duncan, Ms C Edge, Mrs S Grant, Miss A Harper, Mr J Leiper, Mr M Lockhead, Professor S Logan, Dr M Mackie, Mr D Marr, Dr N Milne, Dr G Roberts, Professor W Smith, Mr G Stevenson, Mr S Styles, with Professor C Gane, Professor N Haites, Professor D Houlihan, Professor B MacGregor, Professor A Rodger, Mr S Cannon, Ms I Bews, Mr A Donaldson, Mrs C Inglis, Mrs L Manders and Mr B Purdon (Clerk).

Apologies for absence were received from the Rector, Mr A Amoore, Dr A Dawson, Councillor P Johnston, Dr P Murray, Professor T Salmon, Professor J Sewel, and Councillor J Stewart.

- 329 Mr Mair noted that this was Ms Duncan's and Ms Edge's last meeting as President of the Students' Association and Rector's Assessor, respectively. Mr Mair thanked them for their contribution to the work of the Court over the past year and welcomed Mr Richards who would join the Court as President of the Students' Association from next September.
- 330 Mr Mair also welcomed Professor Haites to her first meeting of Court as future Head of the College of Life Sciences & Medicine.
- 331 Mr Mair informed the Court that Professor Graham had resigned his position as a Senate Assessor to Court. An election to appoint a replacement would be held in the autumn. Mr Mair also noted that in the recent Senate elections Professor I Booth and Mr T Brotherstone had been elected to serve on Court with effect from the 1st October 2004.

MINUTES

- 332 The Minutes of meeting held on 25th May 2004 were approved.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 333 The Court noted declarations of interest which were made by the following members: -
- (a) Mr Styles as the local representative of the Association of University Teachers.
 - (b) Mrs Grant as the local representative of UNISON.
 - (c) Dr Milne as a Member of the Scottish Parliament.

STATEMENT BY PRINCIPAL

- 334 The Principal informed the Court that the University had recently been visited by the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC) to evaluate the progress of the School of Education following the merger with Northern College in late 2001. The indications were that the visit had proceeded very well.
- 335 The Principal added that the School of Education had recently been awarded £1.8million from the Scottish Executive and The Hunter Foundation (THF) to fund a four year project that will test a progressive new model for Initial Teacher Education in Scotland. This represented a considerable achievement for the School with its bid having been preferred to all other Scottish Schools, and Faculties of Education.

- 336 The Principal was equally pleased to report that the Heritage Lottery Fund had awarded the University £250,000 to support the development of the Town House as a visitor gateway to the University, with a focus primarily on student recruitment. This was in addition to £150,000 previously pledged by the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland.
- 337 The Principal then invited Professor Houlihan to advise the Court of the University's success in the Scottish Enterprise Proof of Concept funding round which aimed to help commercialise excellence in scientific research. Professor Houlihan noted that the University had done extremely well this year and out of total awards of £6 million, Aberdeen had won around £900k.
- 338 Finally, the Principal informed the Court that Dr Roberts had agreed to defer his retirement for a year and continue full time as Vice-Principal for Teaching and Learning.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

- 339 Professor Logan introduced to the Court the final draft version of the Strategic Plan together with budgets for 2004-05 to 2006-07 and Five Year Financial Forecasts.

Draft Strategic Plan 2004-2009

- 340 The Plan had been developed in consultation with academic staff within the three Colleges and had been the subject of a lengthy discussion at the Senate (*See min 391*). Professor Logan reminded the Court that the University had recently received an institutional visit by SHEFC which had challenged the University on a number of areas, one being its research strategy. The Plan sought to address those comments and set out Aberdeen's ambition to be a world class university and how it proposed to achieve it. He highlighted a number of key elements of the Plan, including the strategy of developing areas of existing or potential research strength, as well as other areas to be refocused or realigned. A shorter, more 'user friendly' version of the Plan would be prepared to help engage staff and stakeholders further with the strategic development of the University.
- 341 The Court was informed that underpinning the Plan, would be a series of institutional performance indicators to monitor progress and an institutional operational plan.

There would also be operational plans at College level.

- 342 Following discussion, it was accepted that the Plan be amended to give more emphasis to the University's Sustainability Policy and to the ACES initiative. While many of the targets were ambitious, members welcomed the Plan as being a significant step forward.

- 343 The Court approved the Strategic Plan.

Budgets for 2004-05 to 2006-07

- 344 Professor Logan highlighted to the Court the main points of the Budgets for the three year planning period 2004/05 to 2006/07. The targets were challenging, particularly for the College of Life Sciences & Medicine, and for the 2004/05 budget much would depend on the success of the Voluntary Severance scheme. Another challenge would be the introduction in 2006/07 of the new National Framework for staff which was expected to add around £2.8 million to core staff costs. As it was presently unknown whether SHEFC would provide assistance to universities with these additional costs, the planning assumption used had been that the University would need to meet these costs out of existing budgets.

345 In discussion it was agreed that it was important to ensure that the deficit in the College of Life Sciences & Medicine was vigorously addressed. The Court was also reminded that the College made a significant contribution to the University's research income generation and that the nature of some of its academic activities gave rise to significant fixed infrastructure costs.

346 The Court approved the detailed budget for 2004/05 and the targets for 2005/06 and 2006/07 and agreed that the Management Accounts include as a standard item progress against savings targets. The Court also agreed that the Joint Planning, Finance and Estates Committee receive regular progress reports on the actions required to meet the agreed targets for 2005/06 and 2006/07.

Five Year Financial Forecasts

347 Ms Bews introduced the Financial Forecasts return which the University was required to make to SHEFC. She drew to the Court's attention the fact that SHEFC had introduced a 'Financial Health' categorisation this year. This ranged institutions from 'weak' to 'secure', with this University being categorised as secure.

348 The Court approved the return for submission to SHEFC.

TERTIARY EDUCATION (SCOTLAND) BILL

349 Professor Gane introduced a draft response to the Scottish Executive's consultation on the merger of the Scottish Higher and Further Education Funding Councils.

350 The response had been drafted following consultation with the University Senate and while it welcomed some aspects of the proposals many others gave cause for serious concern. The primary concern was that, as framed, the draft Bill gave Scottish Ministers extensive new powers in relation to higher education and changed the fundamental relationship between the state and autonomous higher education institutions.

351 Mr Mair informed the Court that at meetings of the Committee of Chairmen of Scottish Higher Education Institutions the same concerns had been expressed across the University sector.

352 The Court approved the response and it was agreed that the University would bring its concerns to the attention of local Members of the Scottish Parliament.

RESTRUCTURING

353 Professor Logan introduced a paper which provided the Court with an update on the progress of the Voluntary Severance Scheme.

354 He reminded Court that the Scheme remained open until 31st July, after which date it would be known whether any further measures were necessary. At this stage, however, it was difficult to gauge, because, while a number of formal applications had been made and a much larger number of enquiries had been registered, it remained to be seen if these would become formal applications.

355 Following discussion, the Court agreed that it would review the progress of the Scheme at its next meeting in September.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

Joint Planning Finance and Estates Committee*Library Project*

356 Professor Gane introduced a paper on the development of the Library Project, which had been considered and approved by the Joint Planning Finance and Estates Committee. The paper set out the pressing need for improved library facilities to meet the requirements of students and academic research. Professor Gane explained that the project group had considered 8 detailed options before narrowing these down to three. The three options were:

Option 3 - A new, free-standing home for Special Libraries & Archives. Project Cost £17.3 million.

Option 6 - A new integrated University library on a new site. Project Cost £47.8 million.

Option 8 - A new integrated University library, based around the present Queen Mother Library, with a new-build front-of-house facility, making use of the space freed by the replacement of the heating station. Project Cost £27 million.

357 Option 3 had been discounted for several reasons but primarily because, relative to its cost, it did not sufficiently address the general library needs of the institution. Option 6 was in many respects the ideal solution but it was considered to be outwith the reach of the institution financially. The preferred option was, therefore, Option 8 which was thought to be financially realisable and met the institution's needs.

358 Several members of Court expressed their concern that the University's reputation, academically and in its ability to recruit students, would suffer if its library provision was not improved. Improved facilities would also allow the University to realise the potential of its special collections as an area of competitive strength.

359 The Court noted that the Committee, for its part, had approved the following recommendations and sought Court's further approval of them: -

- (i) that the development of the Queen Mother Library and Special Libraries and Archives proceed to the next stage, based on Option 8, as described in the paper;
- (ii) that, subject to a full risk assessment and the development of a detailed funding plan, acceptable to Court, expenditure up to £27 million be approved in principle;
- (iii) that expenditure, required to move to the next phase of the programme of development be approved, to (a) review alternative design and construction approaches and cost implications, and (b) develop literature, graphic and other conceptual material, required to embark upon a major fund-raising campaign at a cost of up to £200,000.

360 It was noted that a commitment to the project in principle did not commit the University to move beyond any particular stage until such time as it was confident that the funding was, or would be, available. Equally, if more funding than anticipated was available, then Option 8 could be reviewed in that context. As each stage of the development was reached, prospects for progress would be evaluated by the appropriate University control mechanisms (project board, risk evaluation and Capital Expenditure Sub-Committee).

361 The Court approved the recommendations.

Institutional Business Risk Register

362 The Court approved the amended Institutional Business Risk Register, the original version of which had been approved on 25 June 2002.

Financial Regulations

- 363 The Court approved the amendments to the Financial Regulations . A full copy of the Regulations was available at www.abdn.ac.uk/finance/finregs.hti or by contacting the Court & Planning Office (tel. 2016).

Vacation Powers

- 364 The Court approved a proposal that, for the period between its meetings on 29 June and 14 September 2004, the Court delegate authority to act on its behalf:
- (i) on any estates-related matter of particular urgency to a small committee composed of the Principal (or, in his absence the Senior Vice-Principal), Senior Lay Member and/or Convener of the Capital Expenditure Sub-Committee, or two of the three, if one were to be unavailable, and
 - (ii) on any other matter of particular urgency to a small committee composed of the Principal, the Senior Lay member and/or the Senior Vice-Principal.

SENATE REPORT

Resolution No 238 of 2004

[*General Regulations for First Degrees: Credit Requirements for the Award of Degrees with Honours*]

- 365 The Court approved the Resolution without forwarding it to the Business Committee of the General Council and generally making it available, as provided for, exceptionally, by Section 6 (2) of the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966, so that the amended provisions could be applied to students entering Honours programmes in September 2004. The Resolution is set out as an appendix to this minute.

Resolution No 239 of 2004

[*Regulations for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts (Scottish Agricultural College) in Rural Business Management (BA (Scottish Agricultural College) Rural Business Management)*]

- 366 The Court approved the Resolution, without forwarding it to the Business Committee of the General Council and generally making it available, as provided for, exceptionally, by Section 6 (2) of the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966, so that the amended provisions might be applied with effect from 1 July 2004. The Resolution is set out as an appendix to this minute.

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Appointment of Internal Auditors from 1 August 2004

- 367 The Court approved the recommendation from the Audit Committee that Deloitte & Touche LLP be appointed to provide internal audit services to the University from 1st August 2004. The appointment was to be for three years, subject to annual renewal, and with the possibility of an extension for a further two years, conditional on satisfactory performance.

HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT TO COURT

- 368 The Court approved the draft Health and Safety Committee Annual Report, as set out in the appendix to this minute.

RESOLUTION NO 236 OF 2004
[CHAIR OF IRISH AND SCOTTISH STUDIES]

- 369 The Court, having noted that the draft Resolution [Chair of Irish and Scottish Studies] had 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. *Note by Clerk: Due to a typographical error the paper originally circulated referred to the Chair as "Chair in Irish and Scottish Studies" when it should have read "Chair of Irish and Scottish Studies". The wording has been amended to correct this in the Resolution as set out in the appendix to this minute.*
- 370 The Court approved the recommendation of the Principal that Professor Tom Devine be appointed to the Chair with immediate effect.

RESOLUTION NO 237 OF 2004
[SUPPLEMENTARY REGULATIONS FOR THE AWARD OF
COMBINED DEGREES WITH EDUCATION]

- 371 The Court, having noted that the draft Resolution [Supplementary Regulations for the Award of Combined Degrees with Education] had 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.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY

- 372 The Court approved the Records Management Policy as set out in the appendix to this minute.

MATTERS FOR HOMOLOGATION

- 373 The Court homologated the following recommendation from the Principal:
Dr Peter Clift, Kilgour Chair of Geology
- 374 That Dr Peter Clift, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, be appointed to the Kilgour Chair of Geology. The appointment would take effect from 1st October 2004.

JOINT PLANNING FINANCE AND ESTATES COMMITTEE

Strategic Plan 2004-2009

- 375 The Court noted that the Committee had received the final draft Strategic Plan 2004-2009 and that, for its part, had it. (*See minute 340-343 above*).

Budgets for 2004-05 to 2006-07

- 376 The Court noted that the Committee had received a paper on budgets for the three-year planning period 2004-05 to 2006-07. The Committee, for its part, had approved the following: -
- (i) detailed budgets for 2004-05,
 - (ii) the proposal that Management Accounts include as a standing item progress against savings targets for each of the Colleges and Administration, and
 - (iii) that work commence to identify activities required to meet agreed budget targets for 2005/06 and 2006-07 and progress be regularly reported to the Committee. (*See minute 344-346 above*)

Five-Year Financial Forecasts

- 377 The Court noted that the Committee had received and, for its part, approved the five-year financial forecasts. (*See minute 347-348 above*)

Restructuring

- 378 The Court noted that the Committee had received and noted an update on restructuring comprising: (a) a copy of the pack circulated to Court Members, b) the email sent to all staff on 1 June and (c) a report on applications to the scheme as at 14 June. (See *minute 353-355 above*)

Tertiary Education (Funding etc) (Scotland) Bill

- 379 The Court noted that the Committee had received and considered a briefing paper on the draft Tertiary Education Bill. It was noted that the University's response to the current consultation would be informed by discussions held at the Committee and at Senate. (See *minute 349-352 above*)

Student Centre

- 380 The Court noted that the Committee had received and considered an update on the development of the Student Centre, detailing the options available for catering. It had been agreed that a central food production unit would no longer be required, and that various out-sourcing options would be explored further as per the proposed programme. The Project Board would report back to the Committee in October 2004.

Financial Reports 2003/04

- 381 The Court noted that the Committee had considered the management accounts for the nine months to 30 April 2004, which showed an historical cost deficit of £1.634 million, against a budgeted deficit of £0.356 million, an adverse variance of £1.278 million. Excluding of exceptional restructuring expenditure, the adverse variance was £53,000. It was forecast that, after the removal of one-off restructuring costs of £3.7 million and deficit funding of £1 million, accounts for the financial year 2003-04 would report an underlying surplus of £3 million.

Cash Flow Analysis

- 382 The Court noted that the Committee had received a Cash Flow Analysis for the period 2004/05 to 2006/07, a copy of which was available from the Court & Planning Office (tel. 2016).

Risk Management Committee

- 383 The Court noted that the Committee had received a report from the Risk Management Committee and noted that it had:
- (i) received a report on Disaster Recovery Strategies for Computing and IT Systems from TEED Business Continuity,
 - (ii) agreed to recommend to University Management that the proposed actions and their costs, as contained within the Report, be adopted with an overall cap of £100K for the project,
 - (iii) recognised the risks which the University faced and regarded these as acceptable in the first instance,
 - (iv) noted concerns regarding the potential vulnerability of the JANET network and hoped that these would be reduced over the medium-term future,
 - (v) noted that work should be completed in implementing the strategy within around six months of acceptance of the Report by management.

Capital Expenditure Sub-Committee

- 384 The Court noted that the Committee had received a report from the Capital Expenditure Sub-Committee and had approved the recommendation that budgets for a number of Estates capital projects 2003/04 be rolled forward to 2004/05.

385 The Court noted that the Committee had been informed that current annual and institutional capital projects were slightly below budget for the period ending 30 April 2004.

386 The Court also noted that the Committee had received progress reports on Marischal College, Education Relocation, Sports Facilities and Catering and Student Accommodation.

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Internal Audit Reports

387 The Court noted that the Committee had approved the following internal audit reports from Deloitte & Touche and had agreed that, where necessary, reports on follow-up action be brought forward in due course:

- (i) Dental Unit and Service Level Agreement with the University Medical Practice (Report No. 1 of 2003-04)
- (ii) Loans and Investments (Report No. 3 of 2003-04)

Information Security

388 The Court noted that the Committee had received an update from the Director of Information Systems and Services on progress made, following the internal audit of Information Security. The Committee was generally happy with progress and asked that a follow-up review be included in the 2004/05 internal audit schedule.

389 The Committee had also noted the report prepared by Teed Consultancy on recovery strategies for central IT systems.

SENATE COMMITTEE

Minute of SHEFC Institutional Visit to the University on 10 November 2003

390 The Court noted that Senate had received the Minute of the visit to the University by SHEFC on 10 November 2003.

Strategic Plan: 2004-2009

391 The Court noted that Senate had considered the draft Strategic Plan for 2004-2009 and further noted the principal points of debate. (*See Min 340-343 above*)

Tertiary Education (Funding etc.) (Scotland) Bill

392 The Court noted that Senate had received and discussed a paper, the intention of which was to brief Senate on the principle issues at stake and to take forward discussions in regard to the Scottish Executive's consultation of the proposed merger of the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Councils. (*See Minute 349-352 above*)

Draft Resolution No 2004 [The Glucksman Chair of Irish and Scottish Studies]

393 The Court noted that Senate, for its part, had approved the draft Resolution which had been forwarded to it by the University Court.

REPORT FROM DEVELOPMENT TRUST ON FUNDRAISING

394 The Court noted a report from the Development Trust which summarised a number of developments in matters related to recent donations, staffing, events, and the next phase of the Sixth Century Campaign.

COURT MEMBERSHIP

Senate Assessors

- 395 In the elections of Senate Assessors to the University Court, Professor IR Booth and Mr T Brotherstone had been duly elected to serve with effect from 1 October 2004 until 30 September 2008 and 1 October 2004 until 30 September 2005, respectively.

PAPERS FOR INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

- 396 The Court was informed that the following papers were available on request from the Court office.
- (i) SFEFC/SHEFC JOINT E-LEARNING REPORT: Expression of Interest – University of Aberdeen.
 - (ii) STRENGTHS OF THE SCOTTISH HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH BASE: SHEFC Circular Letter HE/14/04, dated 26 April 2004.
The report is available electronically on the Scottish Funding Council's website at <http://www.sfc.ac.uk>.
 - (iii) HIGHLIGHT, SHEFC Newsletter, May 2004.

PROMOTIONS

- 397 The Court received from the Staffing and Development Committee a series of recommendations pertaining to staff promotions resulting from the annual promotions exercise.
- 398 The Court approved the recommendations.

STUDENT APPEAL: DECISION

- 399 ***CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE***

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

- 400 Members of Court were asked to note the dates of future meetings of Court for 2004/05.

| Date of Court | Lunch Venue/Time | | Time | Venue |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|
| 14 September 2004 | tbc Court room | Court Strategic Forum and Court | 10.00am-5.00pm (incl lunch) | Court Room |
| 2 November 2004 | Linklater Rooms 12.30 for 12.45 | Court | 2.00pm | Court Room |
| 14 December 2004 | Linklater Rooms 12.30 for 12.45 | Court | 2.00pm | Court Room |
| 8 February 2005 | Linklater Rooms 12.30 for 12.45 | Court | 2.00pm | Court Room |
| 22 March 2005 | Linklater Rooms 12.30 for 12.45 | Court | 2.00pm | Court Room |
| 24 May 2005 | Linklater Rooms 12.30 for 12.45 | Court | 2.00pm | Court Room |
| 28 June 2005 | Linklater Rooms 12.30 for 12.45 | Court | 2.00pm | Court Room |