

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 23 May 2006

Present: Rector (in the Chair), Principal, Mr A Amoore, Mr T Brotherstone, Lady Catto, Dr D Cruickshank, Miss A Harper, Professor D Houlihan, Mr J Leiper, Mr M Lockhead, Professor S Logan, Ms C Macaslan, Dr M Mackie, Dr A Mair, Mr M Moir, Mr R Ruddiman, Professor C Secombes, Councillor J Stewart, Mr S Styles, with Professor C Gane, Professor B MacGregor, Professor A Rodger, Mr S Cannon, Ms I Bews, Mr A Donaldson, Mrs C Inglis, Mrs L Manders, Dr T Webb and Mr B Purdon (Clerk).

Apologies for absence were received from Professor P Beaumont, Professor I Booth, Mrs S Grant, Professor N Haites, Councillor P Johnston, Mr E Obi, Mr P Richards, and Mrs M Ross.

MINUTES

312 The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2006 were approved.

STATEMENT BY PRINCIPAL

313 The Principal regretfully informed Court of the death of Mr James Michie, a former General Council Assessor on Court and a member of the Business Committee. It was agreed that the Principal should write on behalf of Court to convey its condolences to Mr Michie's family.

314 The Principal informed Court of a number of significant research awards which had been achieved by the University recently. A particularly important award had been the announcement of the Scottish Translational Medicine Research Collaboration with Wyeth Pharmaceuticals, a £50 million project involving Aberdeen and three other Scottish Universities. Other recent successes included, an award of £1 million from the Leverhulme Trust to Professor Edwards in the School of Geosciences to continue research on settlements in North Atlantic Communities, and award of £3.5 million from the US Government to Dr Preece in the Computing Science Department, as part of a collaborative project with a number of leading Universities around the world.

315 The Principal noted that Court had received at the Court lunch a presentation from the Library Design Team and that the commitment of the Court to build a new Library represented an important statement about the ambition of the University.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS UPDATE

316 Professor Logan introduced to Court an update on the continuing Industrial Dispute with the Association of University Teachers (AUT).

317 The Court was informed that in an attempt to resolve the dispute locally, the University on 4 May had offered a local pay settlement. The offer, over three years, contained an increase of 5% from 1 August 2006, and a further 3.5% from 1 August 2007 and again in August 2008. The offer further agreed to match a national settlement, should that settlement be more favourable, and reaffirmed the University's commitment to the national collective bargaining. This offer had been rejected by the Aberdeen Association of University Teachers (AAUT) without recourse to a ballot of its members.

318 The Court noted that on 8 May 2006, the University and Colleges Employers' Association (UCEA) had made an offer of 3% from 1 August and 1.0% from 1 February in each of the next three years. This offer had been rejected at a national level by the AUT.

- 319 The Court noted that the University expected to maintain the integrity of its examination processes. It was also noted that this had only been possible due to those staff who had chosen to work normally taking on a considerable additional level of duties. In this context, and given the potential impact of the dispute at Aberdeen, the interests of the students and staff in achieving a resolution to the dispute were considered to be of greater importance than the process whereby settlement was achieved. In addition, as there appeared to be no immediate prospect of a national settlement, the University had informed staff that its earlier offer would be implemented from 1 June 2006.
- 320 The Court also noted, at the request of the AAUT, an online petition protesting against any attempt by the University to withhold pay from staff. The AAUT had requested that Court be made aware of the petition but accepted that it was not necessary to formally present the petition to Court due to subsequent local developments. The Court was informed that the University considered the wording of the petition to be erroneous in stating that the University would ask Court to authorise that pay and pension contributions of all staff participating in the present industrial action short of a strike be stopped entirely. The University had, in fact, stated that depending on the level of disruption to students caused by action short of a strike, it would have to consider recommending to Court the withholding of pay for partial performance. The University has subsequently informed staff that it does not, at this time, consider it necessary to make such a recommendation.
- 321 In discussion, the principal following points of record were made:
- Mr Brotherstone made a number of comments to inform Court of the perspective of the AUT.
 - Professor Logan reminded Court that the pay offer had also to be seen in the context of the Framework Agreement and the improvements to salary scales that this would bring to staff, particularly junior academic staff.
 - The Rector, at the request of the President of the Students' Association, read out a statement articulating the Students' Association position on the issue.
- 322 The Court noted the update on the position of the Industrial Dispute and the implementation of the local pay settlement from 1 June 2006.

STRATEGY AND PLANNING

Analysis of Scottish Funding Council Main Grant Letter for 2006/07

- 323 Professor Logan introduced a paper that analysed the outcome of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) grant allocation to Scottish Higher Education Institutions for 2006/2007.
- 324 There had been an average 7.2% increase in resources nationally and Aberdeen had received an increase of 7.2%, although this included resources allocated to assist with the implementation of the costs of the Framework Agreement.
- 325 The Court noted the paper.
- ##### *Strategic Plan 2004–2009: Draft Update*
- 326 Professor Logan introduced to Court a draft update to the Strategic Plan 2004-2009.
- 327 The Court noted the draft update and that it would return to the June meeting of Court for approval.

Key Performance Indicators

328 Professor Logan introduced a paper that provided a Quarterly Report to Court on the University's Key Performance Indicators.

329 The Court noted the report.

SFC Draft Strategy and Corporate Plan: "Developing a New Strategy" Consultation

330 Professor Logan introduced to Court a Consultation paper issued by the Scottish Funding Council to seek Universities and Colleges views on its Draft Strategy and Corporate Plan.

331 In discussion, the Court agreed that there were a number of areas of the consultation paper that suggested the Council was moving from being a funding body towards an extended role as a planning body.

332 A number of members of Court expressed concern that this was indicative of a policy framework and approach to universities that would increasingly restrict institutional autonomy and inhibit their ability to compete internationally. It was also noted that the SFC consultation appeared to ignore stated policy priorities set by the Scottish Executive.

333 The Court agreed that the University should incorporate the discussions into its response to the consultation. The Court also agreed, that separate to this consultation, it should have an opportunity to debate further a range of issues related to higher education policy in Scotland set against a context of the future development of the University as a competitive higher education institution.

REVENUE BUDGETS 2006/07 to 2008/09

334 Professor Logan introduced to Court a paper setting out the proposed Revenue Budgets for the University for 2006/07 to 2008/09 and the use of the Strategic Investment Fund for 2006/07. The paper had been approved by the Joint Planning, Finance and Estates Committee.

335 The Court approved, on the recommendation of the Joint Planning, Finance and Estates Committee, the Revenue Budgets for 2006/07 and The Strategic Investment Fund for 2006/07.

JOINT PLANNING, FINANCE AND ESTATES COMMITTEE

Tuition and Miscellaneous Fees 2006/07: Additional Issues

336 The Court received a recommendation from the Joint Planning, Finance and Estates Committee for approval of amendments to tuition and miscellaneous fees for 2006/07 that had been previously approved by the Court on 21 March 2006.

337 The Court approved the amended tuition and miscellaneous fees for 2006/07.

SENATE REPORT

Draft Ordinance No of 2006

[Amendment to the Composition of the Senatus Academicus]

338 The Court having considered Draft Ordinance No of 2006 [Amendment to the Composition of the Senatus Academicus], which had been forwarded by the Senate, decided that the draft Ordinance be forwarded to the General Council and made available within the University in terms of the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966.

Validation Agreement: International Christian College

- 339 The Court received an invitation from Senate for approval of the Validation Agreement between the University and the International Christian College in regard to the delivery of undergraduate and postgraduate taught and research programmes in divinity and religious studies.
- 340 The Court, for its part, approved the Validation Agreement between the University and the International Christian College.

Validation Agreement: UHIMI/Highland Theological College

- 341 The Court received an invitation from Senate for approval of the Validation Agreement the University and the University of the Highlands and Islands Millennium Institute (UHIMI) in regard to the delivery of the Degree of Master of Theology at the Highland Theological College, one of the academic partners of UHIMI.
- 342 The Court, for its part, approved the Validation Agreement between the University and the UHIMI.

APPOINTMENT OF THE PRINCIPAL AND VICE-CHANCELLOR

- 343 The Court received a recommendation to extend the contract of Professor C Duncan Rice as Principal and Vice-Chancellor for a period of two years from 1 October 2008 to 30 September 2010.
- 344 The Court was informed that given that the Nominating Committee was not formally remitted to consider the appointment of the Principal, and in the absence of an established process, the Senior Lay Member, and Chair of the Nominating Committee, had consulted with a wide and representative section of the University community. In so doing, the views of the Nominating Committee had also been sought. In respect of the Office of Vice-Chancellor, the appointment had the concurrence of the Chancellor.
- 345 In the discussion that followed, the Court expressed its support for the recommendation. It was agreed, however, that the lack of an identified process and the role of the Nominating Committee should be addressed in the Review of Court Effectiveness. The Principal excused himself from the meeting for a period to allow full discussion of the proposal.
- 346 The Court approved the recommendation to extend the contract of Professor C Duncan Rice as Principal and Vice-Chancellor for a period of two years from 1 October 2008 to 30 September 2010.

MATTERS FOR HOMOLOGATION

Professor Cairns Craig, Glucksman Chair of Irish and Scottish Studies

- 347 The Court, was invited, on the recommendation of the Principal to homologate the appointment of Professor Cairns Craig to the Glucksman Chair of Irish and Scottish Studies with immediate effect.
- 348 The Court approved the recommendation.

JOINT PLANNING FINANCE & ESTATES COMMITTEE

Industrial Relations

- 349 The Court noted that the Joint Planning Finance & Estates Committee had received an update on the ongoing AUT Industrial Dispute and measures which had been taken to minimise the impact on students. (See *Minutes* 316-322 above)

Strategy and Planning

- 350 The Court noted that the Joint Planning Finance & Estates Committee had received and considered the following planning documents. (*See Minutes 323-333 above*):

Analysis of Scottish Funding Council Main Grant Letter for 2006/07
Strategic Plan 2004–2009: Draft Update
Key Performance Indicators
SFC Draft Strategy and Corporate Plan: “Developing a New Strategy” Consultation

FINANCE AND RESOURCES

Revenue Budgets 2006/07 to 2008/09

- 351 The Court noted that the Committee had received and considered proposed Revenue Budgets for 2006/07 to 2008/09 and the Strategic Investment Funding for 2006/07.
- 352 The Committee, for its part, approved the paper (*See Minutes 334-335 above*).

Monthly Management Accounts to 31 March 2006

- 353 The Court noted that the Committee had received and considered the monthly management reports to 31 March 2006. The Court noted that the accounts reported an historical cost surplus of £9.4 million against a budgeted surplus of £8.8 million, a favourable variance of £0.6 million. The Court also noted that progress against savings targets remained positive.

University Superannuation Scheme (USS) Actuarial Review 2005

- 354 The Court noted that the Committee had received and noted a summary paper on the 2005 Actuarial Review of the University Superannuation Scheme. (*See also Minute 362*)

Capital Expenditure Sub-Committee Report

- 355 The Court noted that the Committee had noted that the University had been allocated £3 million Learning and Teaching Infrastructure Funding for the period 2006/07.
- 356 The Court noted that the Committee had also noted that two reviews would be completed prior to the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review: the Audit Scotland Review of Higher Education Estate Management and the JM Consulting investigation of the requirement for continued exception remedial public capital investment.
- 357 The Court noted that the Committee had noted that the King’s College Campus Masterplan was in final draft form.
- 358 The Court noted that the Committee had noted that capital expenditure on both major projects and the annual recurrent programme 2005/06 were generally on budget.
- 359 The Court noted that the Committee had received progress reports on various projects including Marischal College, Matthew Hay Project, Education Relocation, Library, Regional Sports Facilities, Student Accommodation, Institute of Applied Health Sciences (IAHS) 2, Zoology Building, Central Heating Station, Hub, Oceanlab, Fraser Noble Building and 50-52 College Bounds.

Court Effectiveness Review

- 360 The Court noted that the Committee had been joined by the Convenor of the Court Effectiveness Review Group and had discussed a range of issues relating to its own effectiveness.

SENATE REPORT

Second (Final) Report of the Senate Effectiveness Review Working Group

- 361 The Court noted that the Senate had approved the Second (Final) Report of the Senate Effectiveness Review Working Group.

PENSIONS UPDATE

- 362 The Court noted a paper summarising the key points arising from the 2005 Actuarial Review of the University Superannuation Scheme. (*See Minute 354 above*)

ROLE OF THE SENATE

- 363 The Court noted a paper that summarised the role of the Senate for the benefit of members of Court.

FUTURE BUSINESS

- 364 Members of Court were invited to forward to the Clerk any matters which they felt should be included in Court papers as future business

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Tuesday 2006

- 365 It was noted that the next scheduled meeting of Court would be held on Tuesday 27 June 2006.