Professor Logan advised the Committee that Mr Brian Paterson, Convener of PNCC, had declared a potential conflict of interest in relation to the first item on the agenda and that as a result, had not felt it appropriate for him to chair the meeting. All participants agreed that they were content that Professor Logan convened the meeting.

1 THE PERSONAL TUTOR SYSTEM

The UCU representatives requested clarification on a number of points in relation to the Personal Tutor System:

1.1 Adviser of Studies Letter

The Committee noted that the sentence “From Session 2014/15 all Academic and Teaching staff shall undertake activities as a Personal Tutor as part of their normal duties and responsibilities” sent to all Advisers of Studies from Human Resources in letters in September and October was in error and that all Academic Staff were expected to perform these duties as part of their normal duties and responsibilities in the session 2013/14. Mrs Dyker agreed to ensure that HR Advisers were made aware of the differences between the roles of Adviser of Studies and Personal Tutor.

1.2 Relevance of Personal Tutor System to Students in Years 3 and 4

The UCU representatives advised that concerns had been expressed by members that some of the material that students had been required to provide was not relevant to those who were further advanced in their studies. It was noted that the Personal Tutor system had been widely debated in Senate and other fora and had been introduced in response to feedback from students at all stages.

1.3 Changes to Student Allocation

The UCU representatives expressed concern that the students allocated to Personal Tutors had been changed at a relatively late stage in the process. Professor McGeorge explained that the changes had been made to ensure an equitable distribution of workload amongst Personal Tutors.

1.4 Implementation of One Source

Clarification was sought on how the implementation of the One Source system would impact upon the role of Personal Tutors. In particular, clarification was sought on the curriculum advice role expected of Personal Tutors. It was noted that the My Curriculum system would provide students with the information they required to make curricular choices and that as a result, it was expected that the majority of students would select course options online. It was
also highlighted that it was anticipated that many of the issues arising from this would be resolved at Registry or at individual School/Programme Co-ordinator level. Professor McGeorge confirmed that a system of "helicopter advisers" would not be implemented to deal with more complex cases, despite information to the contrary which UCU representatives had received from the Students’ Association.

In addition, it was noted that the role of Personal Tutor was clearly defined and publicised on StaffNet and that it did not include the provision of curricular advice. Professor MacGregor offered to discuss the implementation of My Curriculum in more detail with members of the Committee outwith the meeting if participants felt this would be beneficial.

Professor Logan highlighted that dialogue with members of staff and students would continue during the current transitional year between the Adviser of Studies and Personal Tutor systems. The UCU representatives were asked to encourage their members to provide feedback to Senior Personal Tutors for onward transmission to their regular meetings with Professor McGeorge.

2 RESULTS OF THE TEACHING FELLOW SURVEY

The UCU representatives highlighted a number of concerns in relation to the support provided and career progression opportunities available to Teaching Fellows. It was noted that the review of the promotion procedures ahead of the launch of the 2013 Exercise had resulted in revised criteria being applied in relation to the research requirements for career progression on the Teaching & Scholarship career track. The Committee was advised that the number of applications for promotion which had been received on this route had increased in comparison with other years. The UCU representatives were advised that the 3 career tracks followed the national agreement which had been reached in 2006 and that clear alternative proposals would be required if they wished to suggest that the University deviated from it in going forward. In addition, it was clarified that the Promotion Procedures were applicable to staff engaged on both fixed term and open ended contracts.

The UCU representatives were asked to encourage their members who had expressed concern about inadequate support, including those who had not undergone an appraisal review, to raise the matter directly with their line manager and to escalate it to Head of College level if necessary.

The Heads of College noted the concerns which had been raised regarding availability of funding to facilitate attendance at pedagogic conferences and expressed their desire to ensure that staff received appropriate support in this regard.

3 INTER-CAMPUS TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Professor Logan noted that he had received a letter from UCU expressing concerns regarding the inter-campus travel arrangements which were in place and the manner in which the University had dealt with a number of queries. Professor Logan confirmed that the agenda item had been raised at JNCC as the letter had expressly requested a separate meeting in relation to the situation. The UCU representatives were advised that the concerns outlined in the letter had been raised with Heads of School and College Registrars and that they would be addressed either at local level or via the Transport Co-ordinator.

The UCU representatives highlighted the small number of taxis within Aberdeen which were capable of accommodating the needs of disabled passengers. It was agreed that this point would be raised with the Transport Co-ordinator.

The Committee was advised that the feasibility of operating an additional bus run in the late afternoon was being explored. The Committee also noted that due to demand, additional runs from Hillhead had already been implemented. However, the lack of capacity to accommodate staff travel was also highlighted.
It was agreed that the Heads of College would emphasise the need for student timetables to take account of appropriate travel time between campuses and buildings at local level.

Professor Logan noted that separate discussions would take place to explore the environmental impact of inter-campus travel issues.

4 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Professor Logan noted that, with effect from 31 October 2013, the Campus Trades Unions would officially be in dispute with the University. He highlighted that, whilst recognising that there was a formal element to the dispute which would impact upon certain elements of business, he wanted to keep informal channels of communication open with a view to transacting as much institutional business as possible. He noted that it would be up to the Trades Unions to determine the extent of their engagement with the University in line with the terms of their national dispute.

Professor Logan also noted that, whilst Trades Unions were entitled to utilise the University IT system to email members regarding the dispute via their own membership mailing lists, it was not appropriate for corporate or departmental mailing lists to be used for this purpose.