

## UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

**SENATUS ACADEMICUS****Minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2001**

Present: Principal, Professors The Lord Sewel and Houlihan, Dr JG Roberts, Professors Sloane, Rodger and Torrance, Ms C Macaslan, Professors Hubbuck, Thomson, Sleeman, Urwin, Baker, Britton, Jolliffe, Chandler, Bryden, Graham, Lomax, Dawson, Ingram, Archbold, Adams, Logie, Mather, Beaumont, Mitchell, Hunter, Ohlmeyer, Secombes, Mannings, Duff, Player, Gow, Imrie and Reid, Dr AD Clarke, Dr B Fennell, Ms M Ramsay, Dr AR Akisanya, Ms L Clark, Dr D Hay, Dr D Heddle, Dr G Hesketh, Mrs B Hookey, Dr H Hotson, Dr J King, Dr PR Kinnear, Dr S Lawrie, Dr JM Liversidge, Dr WF Long, Dr WD McCausland, Dr PFA MacConnell, Ms DW McKenzie Skene, Dr D Macphee, Dr MR Masson, Mr LE Moffat, Dr LJ Philip, Mrs ML Ross, Dr PvW Schlicke, Dr J Sheehan, Mr SC Styles, Dr SP Townsend, Dr A Venneri, Mr D Cockburn, Mr C Buchanan, Ms E Brown, Ms E Livingstone and Mr S McIntosh with Ms L Smith and Dr N Dower in attendance

Apologies for absence were received from Professors Lyall, Mordue, Templeton, Bruce, Forte, Ritchie, Racey, Buckland, Sharp, Seymour, Gane, Little, Killham, Alexander, Harrison, Davidson, Simpson, Dunkley and Salmon, Mr WTC Brotherstone, Dr LH Chappell, Dr H Galley, Dr DJ Lurie, Dr J McDowall, Dr C Thomson, Dr HM Wallace, Mr C Irish, Mr R Jones and Mr J Beardsley

In opening the meeting, the Principal welcomed Mr Alastair Mair, Chancellor's Assessor and senior lay member of the University Court, who was attending the meeting of Senate as an observer.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

493. The minutes of the meeting of 10 October 2001 were approved.

**STATEMENT BY PRINCIPAL****1. Merger with Northern College**

494. The Principal reported that the Statutory Instrument was laid before the Scottish Parliament on 7 November and was expected to be approved by relevant committees in time for Vesting Day being 1 December 2001. Senate noted that various events were planned for the week commencing 3 December: these included a meeting of the University Management Group at the Hilton Campus on 3 December; a reception later that day in King's College for all staff of the new Faculty of Education and a large number of current University staff; and an event organised by the Students' Association to welcome students of the new Faculty of Education as members of the University community. In addition, various publications would be sent to new colleagues and students.

**2. Election of Rector**

495. The Principal announced that Clarissa Dickson Wright, on 15 November 2001, would be re-elected unopposed to the post of Rector for three years from 1 January 2002.

## **REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING**

**(12 October 2001)**

### **1. Annual Report to the Senate**

496.1 The Principal invited Dr Roberts to introduce the second Annual Report from the University Committee on Teaching and Learning (copy filed with the principal copy of the Minutes).

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496.2 Dr Roberts drew attention to the following points:-

- i. the successful introduction in September of AUPHET, the University's teaching and learning programme for HE teachers, with an initial cohort of fifteen. There would be another chance to join the programme in January 2002 and Dr Roberts hoped that Heads of Department would encourage new staff who wished to join the programme and ensure that they had the time they needed to participate fully in it (paragraph 2.2 refers);
- ii. the second edition of the Academic Quality Handbook had been published in hard copy in October. The web-based version was due to be available in the New Year (paragraph 2.5 refers);
- iii. the report giving an overview of the outcome of the seven Internal Teaching Reviews conducted in 2000/01 would highlight any issues of institutional concern that the UCTL required to address, and would provide a way of sharing good practice (paragraph 3.5 refers);
- iv. the excellent outcomes of the first two QAA Subject Reviews under the new system. Dr Roberts expressed his congratulations to the two Departments concerned, who were looking forward to the publication of the final reports in the next month;
- v. the plan that future reports on course and programme approvals would provide data that enabled the University to monitor the extent to which the introduction of new programmes and courses was balanced by withdrawals (paragraph 5.2 refers);
- vi. Appendix 1, which showed the worrying extent to which the number of students deemed to have withdrawn or required to discontinue their studies continued to increase year on year, particularly in the MA programme. This data had been referred to the working parties looking at student retention and support (paragraph 5.8 refers);
- vii. Appendix 2, which showed that about 20% of the students in (vi) above nonetheless qualified for the award of Certificates or Diplomas in Higher Education under the arrangements approved by Senate eighteen months ago – a significant improvement in the University's performance indicators in that area (paragraph 6.2 refers);
- viii. Appendix 3, which showed the overall increase in the number of appeals last year. Dr Roberts drew attention to the steps that were being taken to ensure that appeals were dealt with more timeously (paragraph 7.2 refers).

496.3 In closing his report, Dr Roberts expressed his thanks to the Academic Standards and Undergraduate Programme Committees, and in particular their Conveners and Clerks, for the enormous amount of work they had put in over the past year.

496.4 Dr Roberts responded to general comments and questions in regard to the Report, whose principal points of record were as follows:-

- i. that, following a telephone conversation with the Head of the QAA Scottish Office, it was understood that SHEFC would publish in the next few weeks a paper proposing the way ahead for quality assurance and quality enhancement in Scottish HEIs, with a focus being on quality enhancement rather than compliance. It was also believed that SHEFC was seriously considering the unanimous views of Scottish HEIs that Subject Review in its current format should cease after the end of the current academic year; and that Institutional Audit should become the primary mechanism for verifying that an institution had robust and reliable internal procedures to safeguard the standards of awards and assure and enhance the quality of provision;
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- ii. that the Strategic Plan committed the University to reviewing the Internal Teaching Review procedures, which were currently modelled on the new Subject Review process. The University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL) would bring forward revised internal review procedures once the new external arrangements were clear. In doing so, the UCTL would take cognisance of the view of Senate that current procedures placed a bureaucratic burden on staff that was detrimental to the delivery of teaching and learning and to research;
  - iii. that consideration would be given to routinely informing Advisers of Studies when any of their advisees, on discontinuation of their studies, were awarded an Undergraduate Certificate or Diploma in Higher Education;
  - iv. that the reasons why students left the University without completing their degree studies were very complex and were being investigated by the Working Group on Student Retention. Where data was available to explain why particular categories of students did not complete their studies, steps were being taken to address the causes;
  - v. that entry standards generally were being maintained although some students whom Admissions Selectors considered had the capacity to benefit from a higher education might be admitted with standards less than the normal going rates or with non-traditional qualifications: nevertheless, the University had a responsibility to ensure that all students were given the opportunity, with appropriate support where necessary, to enjoy a productive educational experience and achieve the qualification they were seeking;
  - vi. that consideration would be given in the budgetary process to identifying scholarships for postgraduate research students: this would not only improve the University's research student numbers and research output, it would also create the capacity for an increase in resource for teaching and supporting students;
  - vii. the recognition that a substantial proportion of those students who did not complete their studies did so for non-academic reasons.

496.5 In closing the discussion, the Principal encouraged Senators to write to the Deans or Vice-Principals on any of the issues raised by the Report, as these issues were central to the enhancement of the quality of the educational experience provided by the University and to the maintenance of the academic standards of the University's awards.

## 2. Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework [SCQF]

### (Credit Rating, Qualification Descriptors and Level Descriptors)

497.1 The Senate approved the following recommendations:-

(a) That, with effect from the current planning cycle, the Academic Standards Committees and Undergraduate Programme Committees should credit-rate all provision on the basis of a standard academic year of 120 undergraduate and 180 postgraduate SCOTCAT credit points, and that the course credits proposed by departments in the forthcoming planning cycle should be multiplied by five and assigned SCOTCAT credit points.

(b) That, to facilitate (a) above, Departments, Schools and the Academic Standards Committees should be informed that 1 course credit should represent the learning outcomes to be achieved by the average learner in 10 hours of student effort (including the formal revision and assessment periods at the end of teaching of a course), where credit is a measure of outcomes and not of study time i.e. analogous to the SCOTCAT and SCQF definitions; and that the new course proposal form and the associated guidance notes would be revised accordingly.

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(c) That approval should be sought, via the Omnibus Resolution (to be considered by the Senate in January 2002), for the University's existing courses and programmes to be re-credit-rated by September 2002 and assigned SCOTCAT credit points by multiplying the existing AU credit values (in most cases) by five [or ECTS credits by two for those courses specified on page ix of the introduction to the 2001/02 Catalogue of Courses].

497.2 In approving the above, the Senate noted the following:-

(i) That following modularisation, the University had adopted its own credit rating system whereby:-

*1 AU credit = 36 - 40 hours of notional student effort (excluding revision and assessment periods)*

(ii) That the University had been a signatory to the SCOTCAT agreement for many years, to facilitate the accumulation and transfer of (general) credit in Scotland, whereby:-

*1 SCOTCAT credit point = 10 hours of notional student effort (including revision and assessment periods)*

(iii) That the relationship between AU credits and SCOTCAT credits for most courses therefore was:-

*1 AU credit = 5 SCOTCAT credit points*

(iv) That the standard academic year in terms of credits studied was equivalent to:-

*24 AU credits (120 SCOTCAT credit points) for undergraduate students*

*36 AU credits (180 SCOTCAT credit points) for postgraduate students*

(v) That the QAA, in January 2001, had published *The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland*. This Framework had been developed as part of the wider Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), as referred to in the Garrick Report. The Framework in Scotland and the SCQF, as a whole, were outcomes-based in structure and had been developed to help make explicit the nature, level and volume of outcomes. The positioning of the qualifications of Higher Education Institutions within the full SCQF would facilitate comparisons with other kinds of qualifications, including work-based qualifications. In essence, the SCQF would succeed the SCOTCAT framework, although credits would still be described in terms of SCOTCAT credit points. Qualifications would be expected to adhere to the SCQF for students commencing study in or after September 2003.

497.3 In addition, the Senate noted that the following changes would require to be made:-

(i) The University's publications for 2002/03, as indicated below, should be revised to reflect SCOTCAT credit points:-

*Registry* to revise the University Calendar and Catalogue of Courses (including the web-version), the programme schedules given to students and advisers, and the web-based guidelines for the completion of new course and programme proposal forms.

*Student Recruitment and Admissions Service* to revise the undergraduate and postgraduate prospectuses, and related publications for which it was responsible.

*Departments/Schools* to revise course, programme and departmental handbooks and other publications and web-sites, as appropriate.

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(ii) The Registry and DISS should ensure that relevant changes were made to the computerised student record so that students' records, including their transcripts and historical records, reflected the new credit rating system from 2002/2003.

### **3. Management of Teaching Accommodation**

498. The Senate noted that the Committee had approved the establishment of a group to consider all applications for change of ownership of teaching pool accommodation. This group would consider these requests at a standard time each year rather than the current practice of requests being considered by the Convener of the UCTL on an *ad hoc* basis. The composition of the group would be Dr Roberts (Convener), Deans, the Director of Facilities Management and the Assistant Registrar (Registry Services). The date for this group to meet had not yet been decided.

### **4. Honours Handbooks**

499.1 The Senate noted that, following a review of Honours Handbooks carried out by

the two undergraduate Academic Standards Committees (ASCs), the ASCs had noted that a number of Departments currently only provided web-based versions of their Handbooks and had referred this matter to the Committee for its consideration. The Committee had agreed that, while publication of such Handbooks on Departmental websites was appropriate as a primary way of delivery of this information, Departments must also make available this information in hard-copy, which students should be able to purchase, if they wanted, at cost price.

499.2 Questions were raised in regard to the definition of Honours Handbooks, particularly where web-based versions of these currently provided much general information, including hyperlinks to other websites, which it would not necessarily be appropriate, and might indeed be impractical, to provide in hard-copy. It was agreed that the Conveners of the undergraduate Academic Standards Committees should submit further proposals to the University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL) to specify that information which Departments must make available in hard-copy to students. The UCTL also would clarify the policy concerning whether Departments could charge students for hard-copies of such information.

### **5. Internal Teaching Review Panels**

500. The Senate noted that, following a request from a Head of Department for a review of the policy of having an external subject specialist as a member of all internal teaching review panels, the Committee had endorsed the current policy. It had further agreed that, in appointing these external subject specialists, Deans should ensure that those appointed were not current (or recent) external examiners.

### **6. Report on the Teaching Timetable**

501. The Senate noted that the Committee had received the report on the implementation of the new teaching timetable that had been considered by the Senate on 10 October 2001. The Committee had agreed that the comments raised at the Senate and any additional comments would be considered by the Project Board on 6 November.

### **7. Examination Results and Results Letters**

502.1 The Senate noted that the Committee had approved proposals in regard to students being allowed access to their examination results directly through the World Wide Web using software called Portals, as detailed below:-

(i) Course pass-lists would continue to be posted outside the University Office so that students could ascertain whether or not they had passed a course on the day the results had been submitted. They would be able to ascertain their CAS marks the next day via the web whether they were in Aberdeen or elsewhere.

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(ii) Final degree programme results would continue to be posted outside the University Office so that students had access to final honours classifications the night they had been processed rather than waiting till the next morning.

(iii) No examination result letters would be mailed to internal candidates (current students) as they could access their records on the web to see their own results and most students would now have access to the web even during vacations.

(iv) Any student who had no way of accessing their results on the web could deposit a self-addressed envelope with Registry Services, who would despatch a hard-copy of CAS marks and results to such students after the Senate deadline for submission of results.

(v) All external candidates (students taking resits only who were not currently registered) would still have their results mailed to their home address as they would have no web access.

(vi) Application forms for resit examinations, which had been previously sent out with the May examination results letters, would also be on the web site for students (including external candidates) to download, if they required one, and available in hard-copy from Registry Services on request.

(vii) Only confirmed results (including honours results which may be changed in May/June) would be displayed for students on the web. No results with a provisional status would be available to students.

502.2 It was subsequently agreed by the group overseeing the implementation of Portals that the above proposals would be trialed at the January examination diet with both the current procedure and the proposed procedure operating in tandem, with a view to full implementation of the proposals with effect from the May/June 2002 examination diet.

## **REPORT FROM THE ACADEMIC STANDARDS COMMITTEES**

### **1. Appointment of Postgraduate Officers**

503. The Senate approved the nomination of Dr J Feldman and Dr F Murphy as Postgraduate Officers in the Areas of Study of Science and Divinity, respectively, with effect from 1 August 2001, on the recommendation of the relevant Deans, following appropriate consultation.

### **2. New and Discontinued Courses and Programmes**

504. The Senate noted that the Committees, on the recommendations of the relevant Faculties, had approved changes to the list of courses and programmes available as under, the proposals marked \* having been approved subject to the receipt of satisfactory responses from Departments/Schools to queries raised:-

#### **Biomedical Sciences**

Introduction of new programme 'MSc/PgDip Sports Nutrition (Distance Learning)'.

Introduction of new level 5 courses 'Foundations of Sports Nutrition (DL)', 'Practical Sports Nutrition (DL)', 'Introduction to Human Nutrition and Metabolism (DL)', 'Fundamentals of Exercise Physiology (DL)', 'MSc Dissertation in Sports Nutrition (DL)', 'PgDip Dissertation in Sports Nutrition (DL)'.

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#### **Engineering**

Introduction of modified level 2 to 4 courses 'Engineering Design 1' (replacing ES2071), 'Engineering Design and Practice 1' (replacing EG2078), Materials and Structures (replacing EG2028), 'Digital Electronic Systems A' (replacing EG3569), 'Engineering Project and Manufacturing Management' (replacing EG4583), 'Advanced Topics for M Eng Study'.

Introduction of new level 5 (Undergraduate) course 'Engineering Analysis & Methods 2'.

Withdrawal of course EG5030.

### **English & Film Studies**

Introduction of new level 4 course: 'Film and Music'.

### **Environmental & Occupational Medicine**

Revalidation of the programme 'MSc/PgCert Occupational Health'.

Withdrawal of the programmes 'MSc/PgDip/PgCert Ergonomics', 'MSc/PgDip in Occupational Hygiene'.

### **Geography**

Withdrawal of the course GG4517 'Environmental Monitoring and Modelling'.

### **Geology & Petroleum Geology**

Introduction of new level 5 courses 'Postfolio Optimisation: Decision and Risk Analysis and Petroleum Economics'\*', 'Dealing and Negotiation: Organisational Psychology, Entrepreneurship and Politics'\*

### **Key Learning Opportunities**

Introduction of KEY Learning versions of the level 1 courses 'Animal & Plant Biology', 'Environmental Biology', Cell Biology' and 'Molecular Biology'.

### **Law**

Introduction of new level 5 course 'Computer Law'.

### **Management Studies**

Introduction of new level 5 courses 'Organisational Behaviour'\* (replacing BU5512), 'Business Innovation and Change'\*', 'Communication and Leadership'\*', 'Technology and Innovation'\*', 'Learning Theory and the Integrated Organisation'\*',

Withdrawal of the programme 'MScEcon/PgDip/PgCert Business and Management'.

### **Politics & International Relations**

Introduction of new level 5 courses 'Contemporary Research Issues I: Political Theories and Concepts'\*', 'Contemporary Research Issues II: Approaches and Methods'\*.

### **GOING RATES : 2003 ENTRY**

505. The Senate approved the proposal that the Principal should approve the Going Rates for 2003 entry, on behalf of the Senate, upon receipt of recommendations from the Joint Planning, Finance & Estates Committee meeting of 27 November 2001.

### **REPORT FROM THE STUDENT RECRUITMENT**

#### **AND ADMISSIONS COMMITTEE**

**(25 October 2001)**

506. The Senate noted the abridged, version of the *Admissions Report: October 2001* that had been considered by the Student Recruitment and Admissions Committee (copy filed with the principal copy of the Minute).

### **ELECTION OF SENATE ASSESSOR ON THE JOINT**

#### **PLANNING, FINANCE & ESTATES COMMITTEE**

507. The Senate noted that Professor W Cairns Smith had been elected to serve as a Senate Assessor on the Joint Planning, Finance & Estates Committee from 1 October 2001 for the duration of his assessorship to the University Court.

### **STUDENT MEMBERSHIP OF SENATE**

508. The Senate noted the following:-

(i) that members of the Students' Association had been elected to serve on the Senate for the academic year 2001/02, as under:-

President Mr Duncan Cockburn

Education & Training Convener Mr Craig Buchanan

Area of Study Conveners:

Arts & Social Sciences Ms Elizabeth Brown

Divinity Mr Christopher Irish

Engineering Ms Elaine Livingstone

Law Mr Richard Jones

Medicine Mr Justin Beardsley

Science Mr Simon McIntosh

Vice-President (Representation) [in attendance] Ms Lyndsay Smith

- i. that the posts of Postgraduate Convener and Area of Study Convener for Education (the latter to be effective from Vesting Day) had yet to be filled.

## SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

509. The Senate noted that the Scottish Parliament would meet in the University for one week in May 2002 when it had to vacate its temporary accommodation in Edinburgh. The Parliament would make use, *inter alia*, of the facilities of the King's College Conference Centre, Elphinstone Hall and Linklater Rooms. The Beach Ballroom would be used for the May diet of examinations as an alternative venue.

### GRADUATION CEREMONIES : JULY 2002 – NOVEMBER 2003

510. The Senate noted that the Mitchell Hall would be unavailable for Graduation Ceremonies between July 2002 and November 2003, inclusive. Alternative venues were being considered. Details would be submitted to the Senate in due course.

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### RECTORIAL ELECTION : 15 NOVEMBER 2001

511. The Senate noted the following:-

(i) that, further to the arrangements agreed by the Senate on 2 May 2001, the Principal had approved, on behalf of the Senate, the following arrangements in regard to the Rectorial Election on 15 November 2001:-

(a) that, at the request of the Students' Association, the Polling Station at Queen Mother Library be open from 9.00 a.m. (rather than 10.00 a.m.) and that there be an additional Polling Station at Crombie-Johnston Hall from 5.00 – 7.00 p.m.;

- a. that Professor Rodger and Professor Ohlmeyer be appointed as Scrutineers for the counting of votes, in addition to Professor Duff, and that Professor Rodger be appointed as acting Returning Officer and to declare the result of the election;
- i. that the second candidate for the post of Rector had subsequently withdrawn from the Election. Clarissa Dickson Wright would therefore be re-elected unopposed.

### GRADUATIONS *IN ABSENTIA*

512.1 The Senate received a list of those qualified to receive degrees and diplomas who had applied to have them conferred *in absentia* [See Appendix to the Minutes of June 2002].

512.2 The Senate conferred the degrees on, and awarded the diplomas and other qualifications to, the persons stated.

### SUPPORT FOR STAFF OUTWITH NORMAL OFFICE HOURS

513.1 The Principal indicated that he had received a question from Dr Townsend that related to health and safety. He therefore asked Professor Houlihan, as Convener of the Health and Safety Committee, to respond.

513.2 Dr Townsend had asked how the health and safety policy related to those who attended classes held outwith normal office hours, particularly in view of the fact that the

usual daytime access to first-aid and other support services may not be readily available.

513.3 Professor Houlihan informed the Senate that the University's Health and Safety policy relating to those who attended classes held outwith normal office hours (i.e. after 5.00 p.m. and on weekends) was as follows:-

- a. In event of a crisis developing during a class held outside normal office hours, University security staff would be able to assist with a response. They could be contacted 24 hours per day on their emergency number (ext. 3939).
- b. There were usually trained first-aiders on each security shift. In the event that no first-aiders were immediately available, security staff would be able to assist with the calling of an ambulance, if required. The member of staff in charge of the class would not be on his/her own.
- c. There may be some activities (such as certain laboratory practicals) where Departments might consider it necessary to make additional arrangements for first-aid and other emergency cover. Heads of Department were responsible for making necessary arrangements to ensure health and safety in their Department's activities: this included making arrangements for first-aid provision. It was up to Departments, therefore, to identify when special arrangements might be required and to make appropriate provision.

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- d. The University's Safety Adviser was always pleased to provide Departments with assistance in such matters.

513.4 Professor Houlihan indicated that the above policy was aimed to support all staff who worked outwith normal office hours, not just those teaching classes.

513.5 Since this was an important issue, it was agreed that the Health and Safety Committee be asked to codify the above policy and ensure that it was made available to staff.

513.6 It was also agreed that the current practice of some University buildings being secured before 6.00 p.m. during weekdays would be reviewed, since a significant proportion of classes were scheduled to end at 6.00 p.m.