

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SENATUS ACADEMICUS

Minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 1999

Present: Principal, Professors Macdonald, Sloane, Logan and Houlihan, Dr JG Roberts, Professors AR Forrester, Cameron, Johnstone, Miller, Thomson, Fergusson, Penman, Baker, Hendry, Forte, Macinnes, Bryden, Graham, Lomax, Rodger, Pope, Ingram, Adams, Blaikie, Cresser and Salmon, Dr N Dower, Dr GP McQuillan, Mr CA McLaren, Mr G Pryor, Dr AR Anderson, Mr WTC Brotherstone, Dr JB Craig, Dr J Dunkley, Dr D Heddle, Dr G Hesketh, Dr CT Imrie, Dr AM Kiger, Dr PR Kinnear, Dr JM Liversidge, Dr WF Long, Dr PFA MacConnell, Dr MR Masson, Dr DA Nunez, Dr J Ohlmeyer, Mrs ML Ross, Dr J Sheehan, Dr JDF Skatun, Dr RW Slee, Dr IR Torrance, Dr SP Townsend, Dr ER van Teijlingen, Dr A Venneri, Dr GM Walkden, Dr J Watson, Mr D Welsh and Mr J Truscott with Mr A Cole-Hamilton and Ms L Brown in attendance

Apologies for absence were received from Professors Catto, Hubbuck, Mordue, Marshall, Walker, JV Forrester, Templeton, Stephens, Sleeman, Urwin, Russell, Jolliffe, Ritchie, Racey, Sharp, Cassidy, Killham, Gilbert, Booth, Flin, Simpson, Archbold, Smith and Mather, Dr DR Abramovich, Mrs FM Alexander, Dr LH Chappell, Dr S Lawrie, Mr WS McKerrow, Dr TA Mahmood, Dr PVW Schlicke and Dr HM Wallace

MINUTES

134. The Senate approved the minutes of the meeting held on 5 May 1999.

STATEMENT BY PRINCIPAL

Unavoidable Absence From Last Meeting

135. The Principal apologised for his unavoidable absence from the last meeting of the Senate owing to important commitments on University business in Boston and in Houston. He emphasised that his absence had been an exceptional circumstance.

Scottish Offshore Materials Support Facility

136. The Principal expressed his delight at the recent announcement by the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council of an award of £775,000 to the Departments of Chemistry and Engineering for the establishment of the new Scottish Offshore Materials Support Facility which was aimed at serving the needs of Scotland's developing companies within the oil and gas sectors. Both Departments were to be congratulated on this significant achievement.

Scottish-Irish Forum

137. The Principal drew attention to the success of the recently established Research Institute of Irish and Scottish Studies in securing pilot funding to set up an annual Scottish-Irish Forum. The Forum would provide a platform for discussion of the future development of Scottish-Irish links in the context of the devolution process and of the British-Irish Council which is to be established in the near future. This was a very welcome development.

Word Festival

138. The Principal remarked upon the outstanding success of the recent weekend “Word” Festival of Scottish Writers, which, he felt, was an excellent example of the University’s increasing contribution to the artistic landscape of Scotland. He expressed particular thanks to Mr Alan Spence, the University’s Writer-in-Residence, who had taken the lead in organising the event.

Staff Recruitment

139. The Principal commented favourably on the calibre of both professorial and more junior staff recruited to the University over the past 2 to 3 years. At the professorial level in particular staff had been recruited from institutions of international standing. He wished to place on record his thanks to those involved in the taxing recruitment process.

Fundraising

140. The Principal stated that he had been much encouraged by the work of the University’s professional fundraisers to identify potential benefactors. The Sixth Century Campaign was proceeding well. Now that the preliminary research had been completed work could proceed on establishing beneficial relationships with potential new donors. As an example he drew attention to the recent bequest of around £320,000 for developments in Geology. However, fundraising was a long-term activity which required significant input in advance of receipt of funds.

End of Undergraduate Teaching Year

141. Finally, in the context of the end of the undergraduate teaching year the Principal wished to place on record his thanks to academic and support staff for their hard work over the present session. He wished staff well for a productive summer vacation.

PROPOSED MERGER WITH NORTHERN COLLEGE

- 142.1 The Senate received the Merger Proposal Document with Northern College. The Principal drew specific attention to the requirement that the Funding Council provide adequate resource to cover all costs of merger so that the University should suffer no financial detriment. The merger would only proceed on that basis. He then called upon Professor Macdonald to speak to the Document.

- 142.2 Professor Macdonald began by drawing attention to the large number of staff who had been involved in different aspects of the negotiations and thanked them for their substantial contribution. He stated that if the Document were acceptable to the governing bodies of the three institutions concerned, it would be forwarded to the Funding Council and to the Scottish Executive. He also indicated that Appendices 12 and 13, relating to cashflow forecasts and student number projections, were not yet attached to the Document.
- 142.3 He reminded Senate that the Document was more of a draft treaty between three institutions than a strategic plan. While Senate could reject or send back sections for change these would require the approval of all three governing bodies. Thus if the merger were to proceed according to the current anticipated timetable the Document as produced by the Tripartite Group was not as capable as amendment as an internally produced paper. He reported that since Senate had seen the previous draft, the Document had been widely considered, both internally and externally. Consultations had included the General Teaching Council, Local Education Authorities and other interested parties. All comments received had been taken account of by the Tripartite Group. If the Document were to receive approval there would be widespread further consultations with staff under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations.
- 142.4 He then briefly introduced the Document, drawing particular attention to the context in which it was set in terms of both the Dearing and Sutherland Reports. These had supported the integration of teacher education within multi-faculty universities. He pointed out the differences in balance of subject coverage and staffing levels between the Aberdeen and Dundee campuses of the College; the need to provide appropriate academic leadership to the new Faculty on the retirement of the present Principal and Vice-Principal of the College; the intention to ensure the physical and academic integration of the College within the University and the necessity of the transitional costs being met by support from the Funding Council's Strategic Change Fund.
- 142.5 He commended the Document to the Senate for onward transmission to the University Court.
- 142.6 The Principal then invited comment and the following principal points of record were noted:
- (i) Given the very different institutional mission of the current Northern College from that of a research-led University the point was made that work should be begun as soon as possible to plan a detailed implementation strategy with particular reference to the necessity of developing a research culture among the new staff. Additionally, work should be begun now to identify elements of current University provision which could be made available to students within the new Faculty. Consideration of library structures should also be undertaken. Work on the merger must not induce planning blight elsewhere within the University. Professor Macdonald accepted all these points.

- (ii) Considerable concern was expressed as to the extent to which staff from a different institutional culture could be absorbed within a research-led University environment, particularly when they would be given the option of retaining their present contractual terms and conditions. While accepting that the point contained an element of truth, Professor Macdonald indicated that best professional advice had been that as a means of taking merger forward the terms and conditions of current staff should be protected if they wished it. However, all new staff and those who secured promotion subsequent to merger would be placed on standard University terms and conditions. He also emphasised that the University would suffer no financial detriment in terms of the Research Assessment Exercise for those staff not returned as research-active.
- (iii) Hope was expressed that the endeavours of those staff within the University's Centre for Educational Research (which had consistently achieved 4 in the recent Research Assessment Exercises) would be recognised and rewarded in the same way as was intended for incoming College staff. In response Professor Macdonald indicated that the Centre would play a key role in developing a new research culture and he agreed to consult further with members of the Centre before the Document was finally approved.
- (iv) Advice was sought as to whether the staff and student numbers for the College contained within the Document were accurate. In response Professor Macdonald confirmed that they were, indicating that in University terms the Aberdeen campus of the College had a student:staff ratio of around 18:1.
- (v) Confirmation was sought that the projected increase in student numbers with concomitant funding was realistic. Professor Macdonald indicated that the Scottish Office had recognised an impending shortage of school-teachers nationally and that the projections within the Document were on the conservative side. Indeed this was one area in which the University's funded numbers could increase over the next few years.

142.7 Drawing discussion to a close the Principal asked that the Document be forwarded with the Senate's support to the University Court and this was agreed.

DRAFT INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN

- 143.1 The Senate received the Draft Institutional Strategic Plan. The Principal invited Professor Macdonald to speak to the Plan.
- 143.2 Professor Macdonald reminded Senate that a full review of the University's Strategic Plan had last been carried out in 1997. The present version, which was a rolled forward second revision to the Plan, remained substantially similar to that of 1998. During the next year, however, the University would undertake a comprehensive review of its planning process, culminating in a fully revised Strategic Plan for the period 2000/01 – 2003/04. He indicated that he had already received comments from Dr Roberts and from Professor Thomson and he invited further comment from members, before commending the document for onward transmission to the Court.

143.3 A brief debate ensued whose principal points of record were as follows:

- (i) Concern was expressed at mention in a public document of difficulties in student recruitment in the areas of Divinity and Agriculture and it was agreed that these be deleted.
- (ii) With reference to the Research Institute for Irish and Scottish Studies it was argued that this should be portrayed more clearly as a cross-Faculty initiative and this was agreed.
- (iii) Concern was expressed at what was perceived to be the lack of a fully developed University strategy for student recruitment. In response the Secretary indicated that an outline strategy would be considered by the University Court at its next meeting and that this would be supported by an operational plan.
- (iv) The point was made that greater emphasis should be placed within the Plan on the long and distinguished history of the University.

143.4 The Senate, for its part, approved the Draft Institutional Strategic Plan, subject to appropriate account being taken of the points made.

REPORT FROM THE ACADEMIC STANDARDS COMMITTEES

The Senate approved the recommendations of the Academic Standards Committees, as under:

1. Word-Limits for Research Theses

144.1 The Senate received a recommendation by the Academic Standards Committee (Postgraduate) that the word-limits for theses currently prescribed in Regulation 4 for the Lodging and Borrowing of Theses be amended as set out below. The proposed change introduced differential word-limits for the Degree of MPhil and other (one-year) Master's degrees. It also harmonised the different word-limits which existed between Engineering & Medicine (excluding Nursing) and the other Areas of Study within the University in respect of students registered for the same degree. The changes of substance were highlighted in bold type. The wording in italic type previously applied to Engineering only.

'Students registered for the degrees of PhD, MPhil or other Master's degrees should note that, in the case of candidates examined by thesis only, unless the specific permission of the appropriate Postgraduate Officer is obtained (such permission being granted only on the grounds of the exceptional nature of the subject matter or, in the case of candidates registered for a degree in Law, on grounds of exceptional circumstances) no PhD thesis may exceed 100,000 words in length, **no MPhil thesis may exceed 70,000 words in length, and no other Master's degree may exceed 40,000 words in length.** *They may also not exceed 250 pages, in each case including appendices but excluding footnotes, bibliographies, statistical and computational compilations and analogous illustrative material (maps, facsimile documents, etc.). Any data compilation can be separate from this and stored on disk.*

- Notes: (1) These maximum lengths are indicated only as an approximate guide.
 (2) The above prescriptions do not apply to editions.'

- 144.2 Dr Townsend drew attention to what he saw as a possible contradiction between the text of the amendment in bold within the Regulation and the first Note. In response Professor Hewitt, who represented the Committee in the unavoidable absence of Professor Racey, indicated that the Note was intended to give a small degree of latitude in interpretation. He agreed, however, that the work "thesis" should be inserted after "Master's degree". It was further clarified that the reference to page length referred to PhD theses and agreed that the text be amended to clarify this.
- 144.3 Subject to these amendments, Senate approved the Committee's recommendations.

2. Academic Postgraduate Officers

145. The Senate empowered the Principal, on its behalf, to approve recommendations from the relevant Deans, following consultation, for the appointment of academic Postgraduate Officers in Science and Law to succeed Dr H Galbraith and Dr C Kimber, respectively, with effect from 1 September 1999.

3. Deadline for Submission of Dissertations and Project Reports for Postgraduate Taught Programmes

146. The Senate approved a recommendation by the Academic Standards Committee (Postgraduate) that the following policy be adopted in relation to the final date for submission of dissertations which formed part of the requirement of taught postgraduate programmes. It was noted that, where an extended deadline had been given, Departments would be unable to comply with the Senate decision that the results of such programme elements, and the overall results of taught postgraduate programmes, be returned by Friday of the third week in October, following the academic year in which the student was registered for the course concerned.

'Dissertations must be submitted at a date and time determined by the Head of the relevant Department, normally not later than the end of the final calendar month of a candidate's registration. They may be submitted later in individual cases, specifically approved by the Head of the relevant Department; but in no case may the date of submission be later than the end of the ninth month following the end of a candidate's registration.'

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMME COMMITTEE (SCIENCE)

147. The Senate approved the nomination by the relevant Deans of Dr D Watson to membership of the Undergraduate Programme Committee (Science) for three years from 1 October 1999.

ELECTION OF A SENATE ASSESSOR TO THE UNIVERSITY COURT

148. The Senate approved: (i) The following schedule for the by-election of a non-professorial member as an Assessor to the University Court:

Friday 1 October 1999	Nomination forms issued to all electors by the Secretary
Wednesday 13 October 1999	Latest date for return of nomination forms to the Secretary
Friday 15 October 1999	Voting papers issued to all electors by the Secretary
Wednesday 27 October 1999	Latest date for return of voting papers to the Secretary

(ii) The recommendation that the latest time for the receipt of nomination forms and voting papers by the Secretary be 5.00 p.m. on the appropriate date.

APPOINTMENT OF STANDING COMMITTEES

149. The Senate approved the appointment of members to Senate Standing Committees, Senate representatives on Joint Committees of the Senate with the Court and Senate representatives on Committees of the Court, for the academic year 1999-2000.

Committees of the Senate

1. Blackwell Trustees

The next award of the Blackwell Prize, to be made in the academic year 2000-01, would be for a book in the field of Natural Sciences, including Medicine published in the years 1992-99. In terms of the Deed of Foundation, the proposed Trustees of the Prize were as follows:

Dr J G Roberts (*Convener*), the Principal and the Heads of the Departments of Chemistry, Divinity with Religious Studies, Engineering, Mathematical Sciences, Philosophy and Zoology.

2. Honorary Degrees Committee

Principal, Senior Vice-Principal, Professors Graham, F Watson, Russell, Petrie, Sleeman, Thomson, Cusine and Lee, with the Deans in attendance.

3. Student Disciplinary Committee Panel

Staff Members

Professor Britton, Cameron, Cusine, Fergusson, Flin, Forte, Gane, Killham, Racey, and Russell, Dr M Cotter and Dr WF Long.

Student Members

The President of the SRC, the Junior Vice-President (Education) and five of the other student members of Senate.

Joint Committees (Senate Representatives)

1. Chapel Committee

Dr JG Roberts (*Convener*), Professors Johnstone and Beaumont, Dr A Main, Dr EJ Powell and Dr IR Torrance.

2. Committee on Biological Services Units

The Deans of the Faculties of Medicine & Medical Sciences and of Science & Engineering, Professors Lomax, Matthews and Russell.

3. Continuing Education Policy Committee

Professor Macdonald, Dr J Darling and Dr GP McQuillan.

4. Joint Policy and Resource Committee

The Deans of the Faculties, plus two further members elected from amongst the Senate assessors on the University Court (Professors Penman and Graham).

5. Library Committee

As nominated by the Faculties.

6. Military Education Committee

Professors Salmon and Swanson, Dr KR Page, Dr IR Torrance, Mr JH Wyllie and Dr G Herd.

7. Museums, Collections and Galleries Committee

Dr JG Roberts (*Convener*), Mr J Gash, the University Librarian, Mr G Pryor, Dr M Gorman, Dr JS Reid, Dr NH Trewin and Dr CC Wilcock.

8. Research Committee

Professors Devine, Gow and Ingram.

In attendance: The Deans of the Faculties.

9. Student Recruitment and Admissions Committee

The Deans of the Faculties, two Selectors for undergraduate degrees, elected from the Panel of Selectors (Dr SP Townsend and Mr AW Gray), the Convener of the Academic Standards Committee (Postgraduate), the Director of Student Recruitment Services, one other representative of the student recruitment function and the President of the SRC.

In attendance: The Academic Registrar, the Director of External Relations and the Director of the Centre for Continuing Education.

10. Personnel Policy and Staff Development & Appraisal Committee

Professors Houlihan, Logan and Sloane and Dr JG Roberts.

11. University Committee on Teaching & Learning

The Conveners of the Academic Standards Committees and of the Undergraduate Programme Committees, the Deans of the Faculties, the President of the SRC and one other student member.

12. Welfare and Academic Services Consultative Committee

The Conveners of the Academic Standards Committees and of the Undergraduate Programme Committees, Dr N Dower and Dr JB Craig.

Committees of the Court with Senate Members

1. Finance and Estates Committee

Professors MacGregor and Prosser.

2. Staff Disciplinary Tribunal Panel

Professors Fergusson, Russell, Pennington, Cusine, Thomson, MacGregor and Fraser and Dr GP McQuillan.

3. Staff Grading and Promotions Committee

The Deans of the Faculties.

4. Staff Grievance Committee Panel

Professors Duff, Mordue, Penman, Ritchie and Saunders, and Mrs M Ross.

REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COURT

The Senate noted the actions of the Court at its meeting on 18 May 1999, as under:

1. Resolution No. 214 of 1999

[Second Amendment to Resolution No. 50 of 1972 (Matriculated Student – Status Definition)]

150. The Senate noted that, at its meeting on 18 May 1999, the Court had passed Resolution No. 214 of 1999 [Second Amendment to Resolution No. 50 of 1972 (Matriculated Student – Status Definition)].

**2. Closure of Research Centres:
Centre for the Study of Religions; Centre for Literature and Medicine**

151. The Senate noted that the Court had approved its recommendation that the Centre for the Study of Religions and the Centre for Literature and Medicine should be closed.

3. Partnership Agreement: Aberdeen College

152. The Senate noted that, on its recommendation, the Court had approved the Partnership Agreement with Aberdeen College.

4. Year 2000 Contingency Plan

153. The Senate noted: (a) That the Court had approved the institutional Year 2000 Contingency Plan, which had already been circulated to Departments.

(b) That the Court had approved the closure of the University between 30 December 1999 and 4 January 2000; the exclusion, for safety reasons, of all staff and students and the shut-down of all non-essential equipment between those dates; and the delegation of authority for contingency management over the New Year period to a group consisting of the Senior Vice-Principal (Convener), Deans of Medicine & Medical Sciences and Science & Engineering (Deputies), Secretary, Director of Information Systems & Services, Director of Estates, Director of Public Relations and Safety Adviser.

**5. Court Membership of Joint Court-Senate Committees:
Student Recruitment and Admissions Committee**

154. The Senate noted that the Court had approved the recommendation from the Nominating Committee that Miss Margaret Main be a Court member of the Student Recruitment and Admissions Committee in place of Mr Donald Waters.

6. Change of Name: Personnel Services

155. The Senate noted that, as part of the restructuring of Personnel Services, the name of the Section had been changed to Human Resources.

REPORT FROM THE JOINT POLICY AND RESOURCE COMMITTEE

The Senate noted the actions of the Joint Policy & Resource Committee at its meeting on 9 June 1999, as under:

1. Northern College

156. That the Committee had considered the Merger Document, agreed by the Tripartite Group of Representatives of the Universities of Aberdeen and Dundee and the Northern College, and had recommended its approval by Senate and Court (see minute 142 above).

2. Strategic Plan

157. That the Committee had considered and commented upon the draft text of the revised Strategic Plan and commended it to Senate for further consideration and comment (see minute 143 above).

REPORT FROM THE ACADEMIC STANDARDS COMMITTEES

The Senate noted the actions of the Academic Standards Committees, as under:

New and Discontinued Courses and Programmes

158. The Senate noted that the Committees, on the recommendation of the relevant Faculties, had approved changes to the list of courses and programmes available as under. (The list did not include courses which had been re-numbered solely because of a change in half-session). The changes in Engineering and in Physics were subject to the clarification of certain issues by the Department and approval by the Faculty Planning Committee, respectively.

Engineering

New courses at level 3: 'The Structure of the Oil and Gas Industry', 'Petroleum Geology and Geophysics'

New course at level 4: 'Organisations and People' (from 2002/2003)

New course at level 5 (undergraduate): 'Budgets and Financial Control' (from 2003/2004)

New programmes for the Degree of MEng: 'Offshore Engineering', 'Engineering with Safety and Reliability Engineering', 'Civil Engineering and Diploma in Management', 'Electrical & Electronic Engineering and Diploma in Management', 'Mechanical Engineering and Diploma in Management'.

Geology

Withdrawal of level 4 course: 'Marine Geology' (GL4511).

Medicine & Medical Sciences

Discontinuance of separate prescribed degree assessment for the Phase II MBChB course: 'Clinical Skills I'.

Physics

Availability of the courses PX3501, 4504 and 4801 in alternate sessions only.

Withdrawal of courses: 'Geophysics (PX2004)', 'Physics of the Earth (PX3007)'.

Scottish Agricultural College

Introduction of a new MSc/Postgraduate Diploma programme 'Organic Farming' and related level 5 courses.

Withdrawal of the MSc/Postgraduate Diploma programme 'Sustainable Agriculture' and related level 5 courses.

GRADUATION CEREMONIES JULY 1999

159. The Senate noted that the following would promote honorary graduands and give addresses at the July graduation ceremonies, as indicated below:

<u>Honorary Graduand</u>	<u>Promoter</u>	<u>Date</u>
Professor Ian Percy (LLD)	Professor P Fraser	Monday 5 July at 11 a.m.
Professor Per Prinstup-Andersen (LLD)	Professor K Thomson	Monday 5 July at 3 p.m.
Father Leonard Boyle (DLitt)	Mr C McLaren	Monday 5 July at 6.30 p.m.
Sir Lewis Robertson (LLD)	Professor R Buckland	Tuesday 6 July at 11 a.m.
Dr Vartan Gregorian (LLD)	Principal	Tuesday 6 July at 3 p.m.
Sir Russell Hillhouse (LLD)	Professor I Macdonald	Wednesday 7 July at 11 a.m.
Lord Hogg of Cumbernauld (LLD)	Dr A Main	Wednesday 7 July at 3 p.m.
Professor Colin Gunton (DD)	Professor D Fergusson	Wednesday 7 July at 6.30 p.m.
Lord Rodger of Earlsferry (LLD)	Professor C Gane	Wednesday 7 July at 6.30 p.m.
Professor Donald Michie (DSc)	Professor D Sleeman	Thursday 8 July at 11 a.m.
Dr Iain Chalmers (DSc)	Professor N Haites	Friday 9 July at 11 a.m.

<u>Ceremony</u>	<u>Address</u>
Monday 5 July at 11 a.m.	Professor TC Salmon
Monday 5 July at 3 p.m.	Professor D Adams
Monday 5 July at 6.30 p.m.	Professor G Graham
Tuesday 6 July at 11 a.m.	Chancellor
Tuesday 6 July at 3 p.m.	Dr V Gregorian
Wednesday 7 July at 11 a.m.	Professor S Logan
Wednesday 7 July at 3 p.m.	Professor D Houlihan
Wednesday 7 July at 6.30 p.m.	Professor DJ Cusine
Thursday 8 July at 11 a.m.	Professor R Flin
Thursday 8 July at 3 p.m.	Principal
Friday 9 July at 11 a.m.	Professor JC Petrie

GRADUATION CEREMONIES : NOVEMBER 1999

160. The Senate noted that degrees would be conferred at the graduation ceremonies in November 1999 as follows:

Friday 26 November at 3.00 p.m.

Degrees in Science and Divinity

Saturday 27 November at 11.00 a.m.

Degrees in Arts & Social Sciences, Engineering, Law and Medicine

ELECTION OF SENATE ASSESSORS TO THE UNIVERSITY COURT, TO THE
FINANCE & ESTATES COMMITTEE AND TO THE JOINT
POLICY & RESOURCE COMMITTEE

161. The Senate noted that the following members of the Senate had been elected as Assessors to the University Court, to the Finance & Estates Committee, and to the Joint Policy & Resource Committee, as indicated:

University Court

Dr IR Torrance
Professor G Graham

Finance & Estates Committee

Professor BD MacGregor

Joint Policy & Resource Committee

Professor G Graham

GRADUATIONS *IN ABSENTIA*

- 162.1 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).
- 162.2 The Senate conferred the degrees on, and awarded the diplomas and other qualifications to, the persons stated.
- 162.3 The Senate further agreed that the list of those upon whom degrees had been conferred, or to whom diplomas or certificates had been awarded *in absentia* since 1 August 1998 should, in accordance with its previous decision, be annexed formally to the minutes of the current meeting.