

## UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

## SENATUS ACADEMICUS

**Minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2002**

Present: Principal, Professors Sewel, Logan and Houlihan, Dr JG Roberts, Professors Rodger, Torrance and MacGregor, Ms C Macaslan, Professors Thomson, Urwin, Bruce, Baker, Jolliffe, Forte, Buckland, Sharp, Macinnes, Gane, Jordan, Chandler, Graham, Flin, Player, Beaumont, Mitchell, Hunter, Ohlmeyer, Duff, Lurie, Salmon and Saunders, Dr B Fennell, Dr S Kunin, Dr WF Long, Dr P Benson, Mr WTC Brotherstone, Dr G Coghill, Dr IG Craw, Dr P Edwards, Dr J Farmer, Dr C Gray, Dr D Hay, Dr D Heddle, Dr D Inglis, Dr J King, Dr PR Kinnear, Dr WD McCausland, Dr MR Masson, Dr A Memon, Mr LE Moffat, Dr AJ Mordue, Dr JG Ollason, Dr D Pearson, Dr LJ Philip, Mrs ML Ross, Dr H Sinclair, Dr SP Townsend, Dr M White, Mr D Cockburn, Ms C Lowe, Mr M Raith, Ms S Kemp, Mr C Galleitch, Ms D White and Ms C McCay with Ms J Duncan in attendance

Apologies for absence were received from Professors Hubbuck, Sleeman, Seaton, Racey, Webster, Little, Killham, Bryden, Alexander, Dawson, Logie, Watson, Simpson, Ayres, Secombes, Archbold, Blaikie, Gow, Shucksmith and Swanson, Ms R Buchan, Ms M Ramsay, Dr AD Clarke, Mrs L Stephen, Mr C Buchanan, Mr G Pryor, Ms L Clark, Dr J Geddes, Dr M Holmes, Mrs B Hookey, Dr A Hull, Ms DW McKenzie Skene, Dr D Macphee, Mr SC Styles, Dr M Syrotinski, Dr C Thomson and Dr HM Wallace

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

655. The minutes of the meeting of 9 October 2002 were approved.

**STATEMENT BY PRINCIPAL****1. Appointments and Honours**

656.1 The Principal announced that Mr M Hepworth and Professor RH Logie had recently been elected to the Academy of Learned Societies for Social Sciences; that Emeritus Professor JR Mallard had been awarded the Royal Society of Edinburgh's Gold Medal; and that Professor IR Torrance would be the next Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

656.2 In recording its congratulations to the above, the Senate agreed that the Principal should write to Professor Mallard to convey its congratulations to him on his recent award.

**2. Tuition Fees**

657. The Principal referred to recent reports that some English universities would give serious consideration to introducing higher ("top-up") tuition fees if permitted by future legislation. He indicated that the funding of universities was complicated and would not become clearer until publication of the impending White Paper in England on the funding of higher education and student support. A ministerial review was also pending in Scotland, although the Scottish Executive had not yet taken a position in regard to the possibility that English universities might charge "top-up" fees. The University of Aberdeen's position was that it was too early in this debate to take an informed decision but that the University would monitor the position carefully.

**3. The University of Aberdeen and The Robert Gordon University Merger**

658.1 The Principal reported on the latest position concerning the possibility of merger with The Robert Gordon University, on which he had spoken at length at the last meeting of the Senate.

Since then, many discussions had taken place, both internally and between the two Universities. The Principal reiterated the importance of a dispassionate and transparent consideration of the issues, which should not be undertaken in a rigid manner but within the framework agreed at the last meeting and which outlined the principles for the next stage of the process. It was important to consider and analyse the potential opportunities for the University that a merger might create. The Principal indicated that he would therefore not take a position until the process had been completed. He then invited Professor Logan to update the Senate on the latest position in regard to discussions.

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658.2 Preliminary discussions had taken place in the five Faculties between the Deans, Vice-Principals and Heads of School/Department. A framework for academic analysis had been considered and identified some of the issues that needed to be addressed. The framework was not prescriptive and each Faculty would take forward discussions, both internally and with colleagues at RGU, in a manner considered most appropriate by each Faculty.

658.3 Professor Logan also referred to a recent document on institutional collaboration produced by the Executive at RGU, which had been placed on our website for the information of staff. While that document posed some issues that had not been agreed between the two Universities, RGU had preferred to proceed with its publication and await comment.

658.4 In the discussion that followed, the following main points of record were noted:-

- That, in the light of misunderstandings concerning the collection and provision of data to facilitate discussions, it was confirmed that, where appropriate, this would be provided centrally. However, it was for each group involved in discussions to indicate the data that it required, as this would vary between Faculties. All requests for data should therefore be sent to the relevant Dean. Requests would be forwarded to Mrs Hartley in the Court & Planning Office, who would collate the information after liaison with colleagues within the University and at RGU, as appropriate. This would not prevent cognate groups exchanging information where it was felt to be useful and appropriate.
- That any data to be provided would only be that which was in the public domain.
- That the University was anxious to engage in an open and transparent process with all campus trade unions as early as possible.
- That while those groups that had direct counterparts at RGU would understandably comment on issues specific to their discipline, it was extremely important that the outcome of discussions should also focus on issues that were central to the University as a whole and to its future, particularly in regard to governance, values and culture: the University's position on these issues were fundamental and would form the basis of negotiations once the current consultation process had been completed.
- That although the Senate would require a detailed statistical analysis of broad issues rather than subject-specific issues, to allow it to make an informed judgement on the potential benefits of merger, analysis of current data should only be one part of the process: of perhaps greater significance was the assessment of the potential and capability of a merged institution to deliver the aspirations of the University of Aberdeen.

658.5 In closing the discussion, the Principal indicated that he was particularly pleased that discussions were not just focusing on the present but were looking to the potential of the merged institution and commended that discussions should continue in this vein.

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

659.1 In introducing the University Committee on Teaching and Learning's third annual report to the Senate, Dr Roberts drew Senate's attention to the following items:-

- i. Arising from the Review of Advising and Students' Progress, Dr Roberts would be meeting with

Deans, UPC Conveners and Directors of Studies (Advising) in December to review the operation of the advising system and to address a number of concerns with the newly-introduced student monitoring system.

- ii. The single Students' Progress Committee that had been established in September to consider the progress of students in Arts & Social Sciences, Divinity, Education, Law and Science had worked very effectively and had ensured consistency in decision-making and equity for students. There had also been a substantial decrease in the number of students referred to Progress Committees as a consequence of the changes to the General Regulations approved by Senate last year.

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- iii. That all of the 37 disciplinary cases in 2001/02 had related to plagiarism. The general issue of plagiarism was being considered by a Working Party on Student Discipline. Attention was also drawn to the launch of a National Plagiarism Advisory Service which, *inter alia*, provided an electronic plagiarism detection facility to assist staff in identifying plagiarism. Five Departments from the University had participated in a trial of the facility and had reported that the software had been useful and that they would use it again.

(iv) That, after rising in each of the last two years, the number of student withdrawals had stabilised, if one allowed for the number of BEd students who were included in the figures for the first time this year. Although the proportion of those qualifying for a Certificate or Diploma in Higher Education appeared to have fallen in the last two years, there were a number of students with insufficient credits to proceed to the next programme year who had not returned and may yet be eligible for an exit award. These figures would be drawn to the attention of the new Retention and Progression Strategy Team.

659.2 In closing, Dr Roberts expressed his thanks to the Conveners, members and Clerks of the Academic Standards Committees and Undergraduate Programme Committees for their excellent contributions to the maintenance of high academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning at the University.

659.3 In the discussion that followed, the following was noted and agreed:-

- o That the Registry should liaise with the relevant Head of School in regard to a question raised concerning the implementation of the proposed changes to the Class Certificate system in 2003/04.
- o That some Faculties no longer had Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees but had moved to School-based Committees instead: in this case, it would be for the Dean to identify a representative of their Faculty to attend the UCTL.
- o That the reason why all appeals considered by the Senate Academic Appeals Committees were upheld in 2001/02 was because the appeals had been well-grounded.

## **POLICY ON GOOD RESEARCH PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE ON**

## **THE HANDLING OF ALLEGATIONS OF RESEARCH MISCONDUCT**

660.1 In introducing the Policy on Good Research Practice and Procedure on the Handling of Allegations of Research Misconduct, Professor Houlihan informed Senate that the guidelines had been prepared in view of a new condition of grant introduced by the Wellcome Trust that required institutions to have formal guidelines on good research practice in place by October 2002. The guidelines had been developed by the Committee for Research, Income Generation and Commercialisation and discussed with the Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee and the AAUT. They had been approved by the University Court until a process of full internal discussion and approval had been completed. They would be referred back to the Court following discussion at the Senate.

660.2 The Senate approved the interim policy statement, subject to adoption of a proposed revision to paragraph 4, and agreed to forward this to the University Court for final approval.

## **REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COURT**

(5 November 2002)

### **1. Guidelines on Good Research Practice and Procedure on the**

#### **Handling of Allegations of Research Misconduct**

661. The Senate noted that the Court had approved draft guidelines as interim University Guidelines until a full internal discussion and approval process had been completed (Senate Minute 660 above refers).

### **2. Institutional Collaboration with The Robert Gordon University**

662. The Senate noted that the Court had received copies of (i) the Principal's letter to staff, dated 20 September 2002, (ii) the Senior Vice-Principal's letter to staff, dated 17 October 2002, together with the paper 'Merger Discussions with The RGU: The Next Phase' which reflected discussion at the Senate on 9 October 2002, and (iii) the joint application submitted by the two Universities to the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council for SHEFC Strategic Change Grant of up to £800K for the period to July 2003.

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### **3. Costed Academic Plans**

663. The Senate noted that the Court had noted that the JPFEC (8 October 2002) had approved proposals for the preparation of costed academic plans in the 2003-04 planning cycle, comprising (a) Guidance Letter from the Senior Vice-Principal; (b) Detailed Guidance for Academic Plans, and (c) a Timetable for Academic Plans. The process had been agreed with Deans and Heads of Schools. It represented a more rational approach to planning as the introduction of costed academic plans should establish clearer academic priorities and direction for the University.

### **4. Committee for Research, Income Generation and Commercialisation**

664. The Senate noted that the Court had approved the revised title, remit and composition of the Committee for Research and Commercialisation, as forwarded by the Senate, together with a subsequent increase in the Senate representation on the revised Committee for Research, Income Generation and Commercialisation from "eight" to "two from each Faculty".

### **5. Universities/NHS Grampian Relationships**

665. The Senate noted that the Court, on the recommendation of the JPFEC, had agreed that the University accept proposed changes to the joint working and planning arrangements between the University, The Robert Gordon University and NHS Grampian to promote better joint working and planning and permit the partners to be more proactive in organising and developing health issues within Grampian.

### **6. Independent Review of Student Complaints**

666. The Senate noted that the Court had approved the recommendations which the Senate had approved and forwarded from the University Committee on Teaching and Learning with regard to the Independent Review of Student Complaints.

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

(18 October 2002)

## 1. Revised Internal Teaching Review Procedures

667. The Senate approved recommendations in regard to revised Internal Teaching Review Procedures and Documentation (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes). These would be piloted in teaching reviews of the School of Modern Languages and the Department of Biomedical Sciences in the current academic year, with a view to bringing final proposals to the Senate in June 2003, for implementation in 2003/04.

## 2. Deadline for Refusal of Class Certificates

668.1 At its meeting on 9 October 2002, the Senate had agreed to invite the University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL) to consider whether the deadline for refusal of class certificates should be brought forward to the end of week 10 of teaching (Senate minute 641 refers). The Students' Association had expressed concern that the proposed deadlines would give very little time for a student to appeal against the refusal of a Class Certificate.

668.2 In its subsequent discussion, the UCTL had noted that where a student had an on-going appeal against the refusal of a Class Certificate at the time of the examination diet, they would be permitted to sit the examination, although the result would be withheld until the outcome of the appeal was known. Where the appeal was successful, the Class Certificate would be reinstated and the result released. The Students' Association agreed that this clarification of the current procedures addressed their concerns and that no revision to the proposed deadlines for refusal of Class Certificates was required. It was, however, agreed that the current practice would be emphasised in any letters sent to students in regard to the refusal of Class Certificates and in particular that where an appeal was pending, they should sit the end-of-course examination.

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668.3 The Senate therefore agreed that the deadline for the notification to the Office of the refusal of Class Certificates be as follows:-

- First half-session courses: 5.00 p.m. on 7 January 2003 i.e. on the first Tuesday following the Christmas closure
- Second half-session courses: 5.00 p.m. on 20 May 2003 i.e. on the Tuesday following the last day of teaching.

## 3. Report on the Teaching Timetable 2002/2003

669.1 The Senate noted that the UCTL had received a report on the Teaching Timetable for 2002/2003 which indicated that production of the teaching timetable had operated much more smoothly this year but that there had still been a large number of timetable clashes. It had been agreed that the current policy for dealing with such clashes should continue in that clashes within the same School be referred to the Head of School, clashes within the same Faculty be referred to the Dean and clashes between two Faculties be addressed by the two Deans involved.

669.2 Faculties had been asked in 2001/2002 to review the number of degree programmes available with a view to reducing the number of timetable clashes. However, no reduction in degree programmes had occurred. It had, however, been noted that with the production of Costed Academic Plans by Schools that this issue might be addressed.

669.3 Since the planned conversion of the McRobert Building would lead to a reduction in the size of the teaching pool, it had been agreed that the Deans should be asked to review the amount of departmentally-managed teaching space with a view to considering whether any of this accommodation could be made available through the teaching pool.

## 4. Appointment of External Examiners

670. The Senate noted that the UCTL had approved revisions to the guidance in the Academic

Quality Handbook in regard to the appointment of PhD external examiners to indicate that an honorary member of staff could not normally serve as an external examiner. Exceptions might be made where a School/Department could argue a special case, for example, on the grounds that a given academic was the only available specialist in a given field and that he/she had no previous knowledge of the student.

### **5. European Policy Statement**

671. The Senate noted that the UCTL had approved a European Policy Statement, which was a required component of the University's application for continued SOCRATES funding.

### **6. Electronic Plagiarism Detection Facility**

672.1 The Senate noted that the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) had launched a National Plagiarism Advisory Service. This Service would provide (i) generic advice of institutions and staff, (ii) on-line guidance for students in regard to essay writing and ways to avoid plagiarism, (iii) workshops and (iv) an electronic plagiarism detection facility.

672.2 In regard to the electronic plagiarism detection facility, it had been noted that this did not solve the problem of plagiarism but did assist staff in identifying plagiarism. Furthermore, as this was a national facility, it allowed the checking of student work for collusion within and between institutions. Five departments from the University of Aberdeen had participated in the trial of this facility during 2000/2001 and had reported that the software had been useful and that they would use it again.

### **7. Working Group on Student and Graduate Feedback**

673. The Senate noted that the UCTL had agreed to establish a Working Group on Student and Graduate Feedback to bring forward recommendations in regard to (i) future mechanisms for, and the timing of, obtaining student and graduate feedback on undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses and programmes and (ii) the mechanisms for responding to such feedback, including how those who had provided feedback were informed of the action taken, if any, in light of this feedback.

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### **8. C & IT Audit - Final Report from the Knowledge Economy Initiative Task Group**

674. The Senate noted that the UCTL had received the final report from the Knowledge Economy Initiative Task Group in regard to the audit which had been undertaken into the use of C&IT for teaching, learning and assessment. In the light of this report and following a recommendation from the Staffing and Development Committee, the UCTL had agreed to give consideration to the development of an institutional C&IT strategy.

## **REPORT FROM THE STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND ADMISSIONS COMMITTEE**

### **1. Partnership Agreement – Barony College**

675.1 The Senate noted that the Student Recruitment and Admissions Committee (14 November 2002), on the recommendation of the relevant Admissions Selector following discussion with the relevant Head of School, Dean and Undergraduate Programme Committee Convener, had approved specifications for entry to the Degrees indicated below, with advanced standing where appropriate, for students from Barony College upon successful completion of the Higher National Diploma programme indicated:-

HND	Degree	Programme
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Programme		Year
HND (Animal Care)	Degree of BSc (Pure Science)	Year 2 or
	Designated Degree of BSc in Animal Care	Year 3 <sup>1</sup>
	Degree of BSc Honours in Animal Care	

For entry to programme year 3, satisfactory completion of the National/Higher National Diploma programme is required with a specified number of distinctions or merits.

675.2 A Partnership Agreement with Barony College had been prepared, based on a model approved by the Senate and the Court in June 2002.

675.3 On the basis that the Senate had already approved the template for such Partnership Agreements, which had also been approved by the University's solicitors, the Senate approved, for its part, a recommendation that the Principal be authorised to sign a Partnership Agreement with Barony College in regard to the articulation routes specified above. The Agreement would be for five years in the first instance.

## REPORT FROM THE ACADEMIC STANDARDS COMMITTEES

### 1. New and Discontinued Courses

676. The Senate noted that the Academic Standards Committees, on the recommendation of the relevant Faculties, had approved the introduction and withdrawal of further courses for 2002-2003, as under. The list does not include courses created in the context of the re-validation of the Degree of BA in Curative Education.

#### **A. New and Withdrawn Undergraduate Courses**

##### **Divinity and Religious Studies**

Introduction of a new level 4 option: 'Transforming Mission: Faith and Mission in a Post-Modern World'

##### **Engineering**

Introduction of new level 2 course: 'Electronics and Programmable Systems' (replaces EG2069)

Introduction of new level 4 courses: 'Advanced Control Engineering', 'Electrical Drives Analysis'

##### **Engineering Science**

Introduction of an amended level 2 course in: 'Engineering Design' (replaces ES2072)

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##### **History of Art**

Introduction of a new level 3 option: 'The Pre-Raphaelites'

##### **Politics & International Relations**

Introduction of a new level 3 option: 'International Environmental Issues'

Withdrawal of the courses PI3536, PI4009, PI4029, PI4514

### **B) New Courses at Postgraduate Level**

#### **Divinity and Religious Studies**

Introduction of new level 5 course: 'Transforming Mission: the praxis of mission in contemporary culture'

#### **English and Film Studies**

Introduction of new level 5 courses: 'Spotting trains and other matters: Contemporary Scottish Literature', 'Textual Editing', 'Preparation and Presentation of Scholarly Writing', 'Literary Issues', 'Renaissance Cultures', 'From Writer to Reader', 'Romanticism and Genre', 'Prose with a Purpose', 'Modernist Revolution in Literature', 'Dissertation in English Literary Studies'.

## **MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE FOR RESEARCH, INCOME**

### **GENERATION & COMMERCIALISATION**

677. The Senate approved the recommendation of the Committee for Research, Income Generation & Commercialisation, from its meeting of 8 November 2002, that Professor F Watson be appointed to the Committee as a Senate representative from the Faculty of Arts & Divinity *vice* Professor Graham.

### **GOING RATES FOR 2004 ENTRY**

678. The Senate approved the proposal that the Principal should approve the Going Rates for 2004 entry, on behalf of the Senate, upon receipt of recommendations from the Joint Planning, Finance & Estates Committee meeting of 3 December 2002, following the latter's consideration of recommendations from the Student Recruitment and Admissions Committee, in order not to delay the production of the undergraduate prospectus for 2004 entry.

### **RACE EQUALITY POLICY**

679. The Senate approved, for its part, the draft Race Equality Policy (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

## **ELECTION OF READERS AND LECTURERS TO THE SENATUS ACADEMICUS**

680.1 The Senate noted that the following had been elected as members of the Senatus Academicus with immediate effect to 30 September 2006 (unless indicated otherwise) in the constituencies stated:-

*Arts & Divinity*: Dr M Syrotinski

*Medicine & Medical Sciences (part-time)*: Dr H Sinclair

*Science & Engineering*: Professor R Archbold

Dr P Benson

Dr G Coghill

Dr JG Ollason

Dr C Gray

Dr A Memon (until 2004)

Dr D Pearson

Professor M Shucksmith

Dr M White (until 2004)

*Social Sciences & Law*: Professor A Blaikie

Professor P Duff

Dr M Holmes

Dr D Inglis (until 2004)

680.2 The following vacancies remained:-

*Arts & Divinity*: 1 (for 2 years)

*Medicine & Medical Sciences (full-time)*: 2

*Medicine & Medical Sciences (part-time)*: 3 (including 1 for 2 years)

*Science & Engineering*: 3 (for 2 years)

*Social Sciences & Law*: 2 (for 2 years)

#### **STUDENT MEMBERSHIP OF SENATE**

681. The Senate noted the following:-

(i) that members of the Students' Association had been elected to serve on the Senate for the academic year 2002/03, as under:-

President Mr Duncan Cockburn

Education Convener Ms Claire Lowe

Postgraduate Convener Ms Ciara McCay

Area of Study Conveners:

Arts & Social Sciences Mr Michael Raith

Education Mr Brian Gunnee

Engineering Mr Calum Galleitch

Law Ms Sarra Kemp

Medicine Ms Deborah White

Vice-President (Representation) [in attendance] Ms Jenny Duncan

(ii) that the posts of Area of Study Convener for Divinity and for Science had yet to be filled.

#### **GRADUATIONS *IN ABSENTIA***

682.1 The Senate noted that a list of those qualified to receive degrees and diplomas who had applied to have them conferred *in absentia* had been posted on Noticeboards outside of the University Office [See Appendix to Minutes of June 2003].

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