

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SENATUS ACADEMICUS

Minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2001

Present: Principal, Professors Macdonald, AR Forrester, Sloane, Logan and Houlihan, Dr JG Roberts, Professors Johnstone, Urwin, Baker, Meek, Racey, Macinnes, Bryden, Graham, Watson, van der Merwe, Logie, Mather, Saunders, Torrance and Duff, Dr N Dower, Dr B Fennell, Dr JRW Hunter, Dr D Mannings, Dr AR Akisanya, Mr WTC Brotherstone, Dr D Heddle, Dr CT Imrie, Dr S Lawrie, Dr JM Liversidge, Dr WF Long, Dr DJ Lurie, Dr WD McCausland, Ms DW McKenzie Skene, Dr D Macphee, Dr LJ Philip, Mrs ML Ross, Dr PVW Schlicke, Dr A Venneri, Mr S Varwell, Mr R McGregor, Ms C Dalglish and Mr C Buchanan with Mr M Torrance in attendance

Apologies for absence were received from Professors Sewel, Cameron, Thomson, Sleeman, Bruce, Helms, Forte, Ritchie, Buckland, Sharp, Little, Hukins, Killham, Lomax, Flin, Rodger, Ingram, Archbold, Swanson, Beaumont, Simpson, Gow and Reid, Dr GJA Burgess, Dr MT Dalgarno, Dr L Foley, Dr LH Chappell, Dr G Hesketh, Dr J King, Dr PR Kinnear, Dr AJ Mordue, Dr DA Nunez and Dr HM Wallace

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

386. The minutes of the meeting of 24 January 2001 were approved.

STATEMENT BY PRINCIPAL

387.1 The Principal's statement focused on three issues: the budgetary position, the general strategy of the University and the merger with Northern College.

387.2 The Senate noted that the University was broadly on track to meet the budgetary target for the current financial year. Details of next year's grant allocation from SHEFC were anticipated within the next few weeks. Analysis of the funding letter would then shape proposals for next year's budgetary position.

387.3 While the Senate was well informed of the University's general strategy, it was important that the general direction of the University was reinforced more formally to the University Court, in particular to the lay members. The Principal had therefore recently delivered a short strategic presentation to the University Court. This would be made available to the University community, via the web-site, after the Senate. The presentation had reiterated the University's objective as being the dominant provider of educational and research services in the North of Scotland as well as being academically distinguished at the international level. The University's success in regard to the former objective would be facilitated, in part, by entering into new, or strengthening existing,

alliances with educational and research institutions, for instance with the Scottish Agricultural College, the University of the Highlands and Islands, and the three local research institutes.

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387.4 In concluding his statement, the Principal updated the Senate in regard to the proposed merger with Northern College. While it was not SHEFC policy to confirm details in writing at this stage, the University understood that the relevant Funding Council committees had approved the revised merger proposal and that it was anticipated that the proposal would now be put to relevant ministers to ratify, with a view to Vesting Day being 1 August 2001.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS AND EXTERNAL EXAMINING

388.1 The Senate received proposals in regard to the clarification of policies and procedures for the assessment of students and external examining. These had emanated from the University Committee on Teaching and Learning's (UCTL) consideration of relevant sections of the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) *Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education*. It was noted that the UCTL had also approved a number of changes to the External Examiners' Report form for undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes and awards in response to the QAA's *Code of Practice*.

388.2 Dr Roberts, as Convener of the UCTL, introduced the proposals, the details of which had been formulated by a Working Group which included the Conveners of the Undergraduate Programme Committees, prior to ratification by the UCTL. Issues relating to three areas were being placed before the Senate for consideration and approval: Examiners' Meetings and Approval of Marks; Feedback to Students; *Viva Voce* (oral) Examinations.

388.3 Dr Roberts indicated that the UCTL would welcome any comments or queries concerning the proposals, which should be e-mailed either to himself or to the Academic Registrar.

388.4 In responding to comments made by Senators, it was agreed that the following issues would be referred to the UCTL at its meeting on 23 March 2001:-

- i. that the requirement for at least one External Examiner to attend the final Examiners' Meetings to confirm postgraduate taught awards where there may only be a very small number of candidates (e.g. one or two) be reconsidered;
- ii. whether more direction should be given to Departments in regard to Course Co-ordinators providing feedback to students on their performance in written examinations: [in particular, whether oral feedback on examination performance was feasible in large classes or whether feedback might be better provided by means of a coversheet completed by markers];
- iii. whether students who had completed their programme of study (and who then left the University) should be entitled to request feedback in regard to written examinations that had been taken at the end of their programme e.g. at the May/June diet of the final Honours year;

- iv. that clarification be sought concerning the last date by which oral examinations for postgraduate taught students should be held;
- v. that further consideration be given to (1) the use of discretionary oral examinations to enable External Examiners to satisfy themselves as to the quality of academic provision and the overall standard of academic performance, and (2) whether a student should have the right to request an oral examination.

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388.5 The Senate approved the various proposals, which would be incorporated into the next edition of the Academic Quality Handbook, subject to the UCTL considering the above issues and, where necessary, bringing forward further specific recommendations for approval by the Senate at its next meeting.

REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COURT

(6 February 2001)

1. Faculty Restructuring – Arts & Divinity

389. The Senate noted that the Court had approved the proposals for the restructuring of the Faculty of Arts & Divinity, including the position concerning Heads of School for the purposes of Ordinance 122 of 1979 and Resolution 129 of 1988.

2. Resolution No. of 2001

[Changes in Regulations for Various Degrees]

390. The Senate noted that the Court had received the draft Resolution [Changes in Regulations for Various Degrees] and agreed that it be forwarded to the General Council and made generally available within the University under the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966.

REPORT FROM THE JOINT PLANNING, FINANCE AND ESTATES COMMITTEE

(21 February 2001)

1. SHEFC Review of Teaching Funding: Third Stage Consultation

391.1 The Senate received a draft University response to SHEFC Consultation Document 08/00 on its Review of Teaching Funding, for submission to the Funding Council by its deadline of 30 March 2001. It was noted that the Consultation document and further information regarding the rationale for SHEFC's proposals for revised subject groups and prices could be accessed at www.shefc.ac.uk/whatsnew.htm.

391.2 In approving, for its part, the draft response, the Senate authorised the Senior Vice-Principal to revise the response, if deemed necessary, in light of discussions he would hold with individual Senators after the meeting.

2. SHEFC Review of Research Policy and Funding: Second Stage Consultation

392. The Senate approved, for its part, the draft University response to SHEFC Consultation Document 09/00, for submission to the Funding Council by its deadline of 30 March 2001. It was noted that the Consultation document could be accessed at www.shefc.ac.uk/content/library/consult/2000/hec0900/hec0900letter/html.

3. Admissions 2001/02

393. The Senate noted the position concerning undergraduate applications for 2001/02.

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REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

(2 February 2001)

1. Institutional Review

394. The Senate noted that the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) would be undertaking an Institutional Review of the University in Spring 2004. The last similar review of the University, the Academic Quality Audit, had been undertaken by the QAA in May 1998.

2. Working Groups

395. The Senate noted the following:-

- i. that the Committee had received preliminary reports from three Working Groups on the following issues: Advising and Students' Progress; C&IT Skills; Student Retention;
- ii. that the Committee had established a Working Group to consider the section of the QAA's Code of Practice for the Assurance of Quality and Standards in Higher Education that related to Academic Appeals and Student Complaints on Academic Matters;
- iii. that the Committee had established a Working Group to consider the implications for the University of a policy document on establishing a Progress File for Higher Education.

REPORT FROM THE ACADEMIC STANDARDS COMMITTEES

1. Degree and Diploma Regulations

396. The Senate agreed to forward to the University Court the following further proposals from the Academic Standards Committee (Science, Engineering and Medicine) for amendments to degree regulations. The Senate also agreed to forward the request that these be incorporated in the Resolution 'Changes in Regulations for Various Degrees', the draft of which was currently before the Business Committee of the General Council, before that Resolution was passed by the University Court.

1. Supplementary Regulations for the Degree of Bachelor of Science (BSc)

Regulation 2(ii)

To the existing Regulation add "and not less than eight sessions in the case of the Degree of BSc with Honours."

Regulation 5.1

To the existing Regulation following "Biology" insert "(which is regarded for the purposes of Regulations 4.1 and 5.3 as constituting 2 disciplines)".

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Regulation 5.3(i)

For the existing Regulation, substitute the following "may not include a pass in more than 8 credits at level 1 from any one discipline, with the exception that it may not include not more than a total of 20 credits at level 1 in Computing Science and Mathematics and not more than 12 of these credits in either discipline".

Regulation 9

From the list of disciplines in which a Designated Degree may be awarded delete "Chemistry with Biomedical Sciences".

Regulation 11

To the Note at the start of this Regulation, add "Those Honours programmes marked with an asterisk can only be taken by full-time study."

To the following Honours programmes, add an asterisk:

Single Honours

Biochemistry, Biochemistry with Industrial Placement, Biochemistry (Immunology), Biochemistry (Immunology) with Industrial Placement), Biotechnology (Applied Molecular Biology), Chemistry, Chemistry in the Life Sciences, Chemistry with New Materials Technology, Environmental Chemistry, Genetics, Genetics with Industrial Placement, Genetics (Immunology), Genetics (Immunology) with Industrial Placement, Geoscience, Medicinal Chemistry, Microbiology, Microbiology with Industrial Placement, Molecular Biology, Molecular Biology with Industrial Placement, Pharmacology, Physiology, Sports and Exercise Science.

Joint Honours

Geography-Geology, Geology-Petroleum Geology, Microbiology-Genetics, Microbiology-Genetics with Industrial Placement, Molecular Microbiology, Molecular Microbiology with Industrial Placement.

Combined Honours

Chemistry with Accountancy, Chemistry with Study in France, Chemistry with Study in Germany, Chemistry with Management, Chemistry with Physics.

From the list of disciplines in which a Combined Honours Degree may be awarded delete "Chemistry with Biomedical Sciences".

2. *Supplementary Regulations for the Degree of Bachelor of Science in Biomedical*

Science (BSc Biomed Sci)

Regulation 8

To the existing Regulation add "The Honours programme can be undertaken by full-time study only."

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3. *Regulations for the Degrees of Bachelor of Medicine and*

Bachelor of Surgery (MBChB)

Regulation 2(a)

To the existing Regulation add ", and can be undertaken by full-time study only."

4. *Regulations for the Degree of Bachelor of Science in*

Medical Science (BSc Med Sci)

Regulation 1

To the existing Regulation add "It can be undertaken by full-time study only."

2. New and Discontinued Courses and Programmes

397. 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:

Biology

Re-designation as courses in 'Biology' of the existing level 1 and 2 courses (other than Zoology field courses) in Agriculture, Anatomy, Biochemistry, Forestry, Genetics, Microbiology, Physiology, Plant Science, Zoology.

Consequent re-titling of PY2002 and PY2502 as 'Physiology of Human Cells' and 'Physiology of Human Organ Systems', respectively.

Computing Science

New Postgraduate Diploma/M Sc programme in Information Technology.

New courses at level 5 (postgraduate): 'Internet Information Systems', 'Procedural Programming I', 'Essentials of Information Technology', 'Procedural Programming II', 'Data Structure and Algorithms', 'Introduction to Databases', 'Introduction to Knowledge-Based Systems', 'Systems Analysis', 'Systems Engineering Project'.

Engineering

Introduction of new level 4 courses Individual Project (M Eng) (replacing EG4511), Individual Project Abroad (M Eng).

Introduction of new level 5 courses (Undergraduate) 'Advanced Topics for MEng Study', Group Project (MEng) (replacing EG5083).

Introduction of new level 5 course (Postgraduate): 'Safety and Reliability of Electronic & Programmable Systems.'

Withdrawal of courses EG5515 and 5516.

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Degree of BSc

Withdrawal of the Designated degree and Honours programme in Chemistry with Biomedical Sciences.

IMPLEMENTATION OF FACILITY CMIS SOFTWARE FOR TEACHING TIMETABLING

398. The Senate noted the following:-

- i. that, following discussion at the Senate on 24 January 2001, it was proposed that the teaching timetable would be 'floated' on Facility CMIS and, as with the examination timetables, Departments would be asked for comments and possible changes. If the first timetable proved totally unacceptable, a second timetable would be produced, having changed some of the constraints and/or included further information on staff or courses which Departments had not given before the first attempt;
- ii. that in the event that it proved impossible to produce a teaching timetable which was acceptable to the University, then all the activities would be fixed into their historical slots and only rooms would be allocated by the system, as in previous years;
- iii. that this proposal allowed for an opportunity to try a totally floated teaching timetable with the fall-back of reverting to the historical timetable if required;
- iv. that in order to produce a teaching timetable, information would be requested from Departments on staff and courses. It was important that this information was returned to the Examinations & Timetabling Office as quickly and accurately as possible;
- v. that a Project Board to oversee the management of this project had been established as follows:-

Professor I Macdonald (Project Executive)

Professor R Buckland (Accountancy)

Dr M Gorman (Zoology)

Mrs M Park (Project Manager)

Mr G Pryor or Mr J Perera (DISS - one to attend each meeting)

Mr M Baird (Database Administrator DISS)

Dr T Webb (Registry)

Mr S Gordon or Mr A Donaldson (Facilities Management - one to attend each meeting)

GRADUATIONS *IN ABSENTIA*

399.1 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 2001].

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

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