UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SENATUS ACADEMICUS

Minutes of the meeting held on 2 May 2012

Present: Principal, Professors Logan, Haites, Hannaford, Houlihan, McGeorge, Morgan, Greaves, MacGregor, Ross and Crotty, Mrs L Clark, Professors Skakle and O'Donoghue, Dr J Morrison, Dr S Davies, Dr R Wells, Professor Schaper and Naphy, Dr B Connolly, Dr J Masthoff, Dr S Lawrie, Mrs J Bruce, Dr D Hendry, Dr M Ehrenschwendtner, Dr K Shennan, Ms C Banks, Professor Hutchison, Dr J Lamb, Dr WD McCausland, Dr C Brittain, Dr M Brown, Dr T Weber, Dr D Robson, Dr DJ Smith, Dr M Durham, Dr J Stewart, Professor Syrotinski, Dr T Wills, Dr T Burns, Professor Duff, Mr S Styles, Mr N Curtis, Professor Haerpfer, Dr AD King, Dr M Delibegovic, Professor Lambin, Dr L Hastie, Professor Robinson, Dr A Jenkinson, Dr I Greig, Dr J Cleland, Dr A Denison, Professors de Bari, Dr S Fielding, Professors Galley and Newton, Dr S Semple, Dr P Benson, Dr D Martin, Dr S Duthie, Dr L Williams, Professor H Chandler, Dr T Thevar, Dr D Jolley, Dr T Mighall, Dr L Philip, Professor Grebogi, Miss T Birley, Miss J Bjorkqvist, Mr H Grieve, Miss J Paton, Mr P Bond, Mr J Douglas, Mr M Burke, Mr L Butler Perks and Mr J Kenter

Apologies: Mr S Cannon, Professors Rodger, Wallace and Paterson, Dr Ziegler, Professors Zalewski, Buckland, Baggs, McCaig, Macrae, Reid, Soulsby, Gow and Nelson, Mr M Radford, Professor Sir Ritchie, Dr B Marsden, Dr R O'Connor, Mr McMurtry, Professor Mealor, Dr A Pillai, Dr P Bernhagen, Dr R Vij, Dr A Carrington, Dr A Jack, Dr J Pettitt, Dr D Scott, Dr N Vargesson, Dr I Stansfield, Professor Heys, Dr LP Erwig, Professors Francis, Dr H Wallace, Dr R Bull, Dr D Pearson, Professors Watson Guz and Dobney, Dr M Reed, Professors Norman, Coghill, Webster and Edwards, Miss L Sivula, Miss F Johansson, Mr M Fortune, Miss K Kaushik, Mr J Filous, Miss R Munday, Mr N Marley, Mr A Khan, Mr A Denham and Mr T Majchrowski

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

26.1   The Senate approved the minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2012.

STATEMENT BY PRINCIPAL

27.1   The Principal updated the Senate on recent important events. Early in April, members of Court, senior University staff and members of academic staff and the student body met with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). Discussion included governance, the post-16 education agenda, partnerships and collaboration, and sustainability. The meeting was successful with very supportive feedback to the University. Meetings were also held with local MSPs and local MPs which included discussion on the Government's announcement of the 'philanthropy tax'. The University made clear that this will be a disincentive to donors and that the University will continue to lobby against this. There had been a very successful reception for alumni at the House of Lords at which there was maximum attendance of 180 alumni; many more would have attended had the venue capacity allowed this. The Principal reported to the Senate that articles had recently appeared in the THE and Observer on a proposal to appoint a Chair in Anthroposophic Medicine. He asked members to note that the University had been considering a proposal and funding to establish a Chair in Integrative Health Care Management which would conduct research into the science and evidence base of alternative and complementary medicine, and that the Governance and Nominations Committee would consider this further at its meeting on 8 May 2012. However following a meeting of members of the senior management team on 23 April 2012 it had been decided that a recommendation should be made to the Committee not to proceed with the proposal. This decision was made prior to the articles appearing in the press and the University had not been consulted about the content of the articles. The Principal ended by reminding members of the current campaign to recruit over 100 academic staff to the University and encouraged members actively to head hunt high-calibre academic contacts and to encourage them to apply for the recently advertised posts.

RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK UPDATE

28.1   The Vice-Principal (Research and Knowledge Exchange) updated the Senate on preparations for the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF) (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes). The

Vice-Principal reported that the preparation was ongoing and that outputs for most units of assessment were now with external reviewers. This was to provide a calibration of our internal assessment of outputs, and to help with decisions about the final shape of the submission. The University was hoping to submit in around 25 units of assessment areas. The Equality and Diversity Policy was now with REF Team and the University was awaiting feedback on this. Training would be given to everyone involved in informing decisions about the selection of staff to REF. The Vice-Principal also reported that work was currently underway on the impact component of REF, and that discussions were being held with unit of assessment leads on case studies that were being developed. Finally, the Vice-Principal reported that information, procedures and policies relating to REF were now available on the University's web pages.

SFC FINAL GRANT ANNOUNCEMENT FOR 2012/13

29.1   The Senior Vice-Principal updated the Senate on the Scottish Funding Council: Funding Allocation for 2012/13 (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes). The Senior Vice-Principal reported that the University had now received the final letter from the SFC. Taking Senate through the main points of the accompanying paper, the Senior Vice-Principal reported that there were changes in Strategic Funding and Capital funding. In Strategic Funding some funding was formulaic, for example the Knowledge Transfer Grant (KTG), other funding was competitive, for example Research Pooling. The Senior Vice-Principal highlighted that the University had done well in the KTG, which had risen to 1.8M from 1.6M last year. It was reported that the University was no longer eligible for Widening Access or Part-time Premium under the Regional Coherence grant. The University had retained its grant for Museums and Galleries, and had received 2.6M in capital funds. There was a reduction in the main grant for teaching due to the removal of funding for RUK students and the University would have to recruit more RUK students to make up the shortfall. The University had been granted a temporary increase of 300 students in non-controlled subject areas. Overall, the University's funding was reduced by approximately 12%. The Senior Vice-Principal reminded Senate of the move towards a single Knowledge Exchange Office, and of an initiative by which universities would transfer unwanted intellectual property rights to interested parties using quick and simple agreements. ('Easy Access IP'). Finally, the Senior Vice-Principal reported that discussions were about to commence with the SFC on 'Outcome Agreements', whereby universities have formally to propose to the Scottish Government, and have approved, how they will deliver policy.

29.2   There followed a discussion, the main points of which are summarized below:

- It was asked whether the possible categorisation of Eire students holding an Irish passport from RUK to EU would have an impact on the University's financial position. In response, it was said that it was not yet clear how this would affect the University, though it was pointed out that RUK fees were dependent on domicile not on passport or nationality. It was also pointed out that Home and EU student numbers were capped.
- It was also asked whether the increase in postgraduate skills training (as a result of increased funds in this area) was still planned. In response, it was reported that this was the case and that the University was setting up a Researcher Development Unit to deliver generic skills as well as discipline-specific skills training to postgraduate students. Further detail was to be reported to a future Senate.

DISTANCE LEARNING

30.1   The Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching) updated Senate on Distance Learning (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes). The Vice-Principal reported that the University was in initial discussions with a provider of distance on-line learning, HE Online, about 100% online delivery of a selection of the University's programmes. It was noted that there were certainly opportunities for the University in this area though that a key element of the discussions was that standards and quality assurance must remain entirely with the University. Currently, HE Online were using sample materials from the University to convert to online course examples, so that the University could see what was possible. Senate was asked to highlight any questions it thought should be raised in the discussions with HE Online.

30.2   There followed a discussion, the main points of which are summarized below:

- It was asked whether it was known how affordable an option this would be. In response, it was said that fees had not yet been discussed, though it was pointed out that students studying online would not have the same costs associated with accommodation and living expenses.
- It was asked whether this was to be a full Aberdeen degree, and how the University would ensure that students had a good student experience equivalent to that of on-campus students? In response it was confirmed that this was to be an Aberdeen University degree. It was emphasized that an important part of the delivery would be to ensure that students had the same levels of support as on-campus students, through that support might be delivered in different ways that were suited to the online delivery. This was all being discussed with HE Online.
- It was asked why RUK students had been chosen as the primary target market. In response it was said that this was the market HE Online had identified as having greatest demand, though the nature of online delivery of course meant that it did not exclude a wider market.
- A point was made whether partnership with a 'for profit' deliverer of education was desirable, especially given the publicised negative experience of students with some US providers. It was also asked why our existing materials were being converted, rather than designed with online delivery in mind. In response, it was reiterated that quality assurance would remain entirely with the University, and that HE Online had approached Aberdeen University specifically because it considered a University of Aberdeen degree would be a quality product. The University was applying appropriate due diligence to the proposed partnership and that the company had specialist staff with much experience in the pedagogies of online delivery. The sample materials were being developed specifically to gauge better what could be provided.
- It was asked how personal contact – an element proven to be essential in retaining on-campus students – would be replicated if the delivery was online. In response the Vice-Principal said that various substitutes for face-to-face contact would be embedded into online delivered programmes. He added that it was not a model of tutors and summer schools but one of 100% online delivery. He reiterated that the student experience would be different to the student experience on campus but not of a lower quality, and added that many students who opted for online programmes did so specifically because they did not want an on-campus experience.
- It was asked why we were in discussions with HE Online when the University already offered such programmes in some disciplines, for example the Part-time MA, and whether this would replace the Part-time MA. In response, it was pointed out that the Part-time MA was blended learning rather than online distance learning, and that it could be targeted only at those who were local, so the two were not in conflict.
- A question was asked about who would receive the fees and how much students would be charged. It was said that it would probably be a cost-sharing model and that student fees had not yet been discussed.
- It was asked about the implications of intellectual property (IP) and copyright and who would own the materials. It was also asked what capacity there would be for members of staff to opt out of having their materials used in this way. In response, it was noted that discussions were ongoing about IP.
- A point was made that staff schedules are already full in delivering their own programmes and added that the University should place its priorities there.
- It was pointed out that students on such courses might not have adequate support, for example in the form of elected student representatives, and in response the Vice-Principal said that he welcomed feedback from the AUSA about such issues. He added that HE Online had significant experience in how best to support online students. He also reiterated that a student choosing to study online was not expecting a student experience that was a facsimile of the on-campus experience.
- It was pointed out that the paper missed mention of the advantages of 100% online delivery in allowing access to non-traditional students and non-traditional routes.
- It was asked who would be responsible for marking and for setting examinations. It was said that academic quality assurance would lie entirely with the University, and that HE Online would employ academics to Aberdeen criteria to carry out activities such as marking. The Vice-Principal reported that online delivery would not involve the traditional examination and that the examples of assessment provided by HE Online were extremely rigorous and intensive. The Vice-Principal reassured the Senate that as with Aberdeen University on-campus degrees, all online programmes would have to satisfy the requirements of the Quality Assurance Agency, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework and the Scottish Funding Council.

- It was asked why students would choose our online programmes rather than those of other providers, and it was wondered whether we might invest a great deal for very little return. In response it was acknowledged that our programmes would not be unique, but that it was a large and growing market.

PERSONAL TUTORING SYSTEM

31.1 The Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching) updated Senate on the Personal Tutoring System (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes). The Vice-Principal stated that it was three years since the possible introduction of personal tutors had last been discussed, and that the current discussions were derived largely from the need to enhance student support. The Vice-Principal reported that it is clear from feedback and reports that student experience is greatly enhanced by regular contact with academic staff who the student knows well. This necessitates each member of staff having a smaller number of students to tutor, and this necessitates more staff to be involved in tutoring. The proposal is that the University replace the existing Advisers of Studies with Personal Tutors and that the expectation is that all members of academic staff involved in teaching will be Personal Tutors. Members of academic staff who are research-only but who would like to be a Personal Tutor would also be welcomed. The model is based on a minimum number if interactions between tutors and their students, in groups and individually. Core meetings would be scheduled at key times in the student lifecycle, and the guidance for these meetings would include the types of things that should be discussed at each of these key times. The Vice-Principal then reported that the academic advising aspect of the Personal Tutor role was dependent on the implementation of the curriculum support component of OneSource, the new resource planning software. It was therefore considered that in the short-term the current Adviser of Studies system and Personal Tutor system should run in tandem, with the Adviser role covering academic advice and the Personal Tutor role covering pastoral and other support. The Vice-Principal proposed the implementation of the Personal Tutor system, excluding academic Advising, could be implemented from September 2012 and sought comment from the Senate on that proposal.

31.2 There followed a discussion, the main points of which are summarized below:

- It was asked that it be clarified whether or not it was proposed that first-year students next year would have two members of staff allocated to them – an Adviser of Studies and a Personal Tutor. This was confirmed.
- It was asked where the figures for the staff : student ratio had come from as they did not seem to tally with the numbers of students some Schools believed they had and seemed to be too low. The Vice-Principal reported that the staff numbers were from Human Resources and the student numbers from the HESA report. The Vice-Principal reminded Senate that the Personal Tutor system would be very different to the Advising system in that students would not have to be allocated to staff of the same discipline or School, so the numbers were not dependent on those ratios but on overall staff : student ratios.
- It was pointed out that while such a system might retain students, it might have a negative impact on staff retention. It was said there was a general consensus amongst academic staff that their involvement in non-teaching and non-research activity was already too high and that the University might struggle to retain and attract high-calibre staff if this responsibility was added to the workload. It was pointed out that many institutions use postgraduate students for such tasks. In response, it was said that many other universities had such a system and that Aberdeen University was somewhat behind in introducing this type of student support. It was added that many members of staff found tutoring to be a very enjoyable and role and one that was beneficial not only to the students but also to the member of staff.
- The point was made that the word 'consider' should be removed from the sentence saying 'consider removal of the honorarium'. It was said that the honorarium should be removed as the role was an integral part of the job of an academic and staff should not expect additional payment for it.
- A point was made that the quality of advising is not consistent and that some members of staff are better at it than are others. It was suggested that with any amount of training some staff would not be suitable for the role. It was asked what training staff would have in pastoral care as this might be a skill that was harder to acquire than would be knowledge of the curriculum for academic advice. In response the Vice-Principal confirmed that training and guidance would be available for all aspects of the role.

- It was pointed out that though staff would have fewer students to oversee, their workload might be greater because of the broader remit and the greater number of meetings expected. In response, the Vice-Principal agreed that a vital aspect of the role was getting to know students, and this could only be done through more regular contact. He added that it was not a trade-off for fewer numbers of students but a critical element of the role. He confirmed that giving pastoral support is part of the academic role profile.
- It was suggested that it would be better to delay the implementation of Personal Tutors until the technology was in place to support curricular advice. It was thought that having a dual system of both Advisers and Tutors would be confusing. It was added that the Personal Tutor system would be excellent for both staff and students, and that the effectiveness of this could be diluted by the dual phase. It was pointed out that in order to get buy in to the system and appreciation of its value, it would be desirable to see Professors, Heads of School, and Heads of College taking on the role as well. It was added that a very good use of the money previously used for honoraria would be staff training for the role. In response, the Vice-Principal agreed and reiterated that all staff involved in the teaching of students will be expected to be Personal Tutors.
- It was pointed out that it might be unrealistic to provide training adequate by September 2012.
- It was asked whether Personal Tutoring might go hand-in-hand with Peer Mentoring as it was considered that the two would complement each other very well. In response the Vice-Principal confirmed that the two would work together as complementary aspects of student support.
- It was pointed out that there are some students who might not want such a personal approach and suggested that Personal Tutors should be sensitive to the needs of individual students.
- Another point was made that academic advising is very different from pastoral support and perhaps they should remain as two distinct functions. In response, it was noted that the Personal Tutor would be a very different role, and that the side relating to academic advice would be made much simpler than the University's current system by the use of OneSource.
- It was asked whether the Personal Tutor scheme would replace the Regent scheme in Medicine and Dentistry. It was confirmed that it would not, though it was added that discussions would be had about harmonizing the two if possible.
- Concerns were raised about the amount of time this role would take up, and whether the proposal was feasible, especially given the current difficulties there are in recruiting Advisers because of the amount of time required for that role.
- Another point was made that it would be helpful if the University followed the example of many English universities who timetable slots for scheduled meetings between students and their Tutors to enable the system to work effectively.

UCTL ANNUAL REPORT TO SENATE

32.1 The Principal invited the Vice-Principal (Learning & Teaching) to present the UCTL Annual Report to Senate for 2010/2011 (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes). The Vice-Principal first noted that the timing of the Annual Report meant that the data presented were out-of-date. It was therefore proposed that in future the Annual Report would go to the November meeting of Senate, thus being a summary activity of the immediately previous academic year. The Vice-Principal then stated that he would like to highlight some of the achievements outlined in the Report. The first of these was the success of the new Student Appeals and Complaints process. There had been a 40% drop in appeals and complaints over the last year and this was largely due to the greater number of issues that were now being resolved at an informal level, thus obviating the need for students to go though the formal appeals process. This was a very positive step and the Vice-Principal thanked staff for their commitment to the new process. It was noted that there were areas of the University where improvements needed to be made but added that the University would be working with AUSA to reduce these issues. The Vice-Principal also then highlighted the success of the new electronic SCEF process, evidenced by the high return rates and positive feedback from staff and students. It was said that once the returns had been analysed, a detailed report of the feedback would be produced.

32.2 There followed a discussion, the main points of which are summarized below:

- It was noted that there were a higher proportion of postgraduate and international students appealing, and it was hoped that the extension of the Personal Tutor system to postgraduate students might improve this.
- It was suggested that the University might look to improve and simplify its code of Practice on Student Discipline in the same way as the appeals process had been streamlined, in particular

introducing an informal initial stage. It was also suggested, however, that the University would need to carefully consider how this was done as cheating and appeals are very different; cheating having an impact on fellow students and being judged by external standards. It was also pointed out that more informative data on discipline cases was required. In response to these points, the Vice-Principal said that a review of the discipline process would be considered. He added that it was, indeed, hoped that Personal Tutors would be able to provide the type of support that meant students were getting the help they required before they got into the types of difficulties that could lead to appeals or discipline.

REPORT FROM THE UCTL

The Senate approved the actions taken by the University Committee on Teaching & Learning at its meetings on 21 March 2012, as under:

1. Collaborative Provision

32.1 The Senate approved, for its part, the new procedure for the submission and approval of collaborative teaching partnerships.

2. Higher Education Achievement Record

32.2 The Senate approved, for its part, the following proposals:
- That the University's Co-Curricular award (STAR) be included as the initial 'accredited' co-curricular activity within HEAR section 6.1.
- That the activities verified by the Students' Association (copy filed with the principal copy of minutes) be included as 'recognised' co-curricular activity within HEAR section 6.1.

3. Postgraduate Taught Graduate Attributes

32.3 The Senate approved, for its part, the following proposals:
- the set of Graduate Attributes (copy filed with the principal copy of minutes) proposed for taught postgraduate students.
- the amendment of 'civilised' to 'inclusive' in the Active Citizenship domain of the Undergraduate Graduate Attributes.

REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COURT

The Senate noted the actions taken by the University Court at its meeting on 27 March 2012, as under:

1. Draft Resolution No of 2012 [Supplementary Regulations First Degrees in Education]

33.1 The Court drew to the Senate's attention that draft Resolution No. of 2012 (Supplementary Regulations First Degrees in Education) and agreed to forward it to the General Council to make it generally available in terms of Section 6 of the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966.

2. Draft Resolution No of 2012 [Supplementary Regulations First Degrees in Science]

33.2 The Court drew to the Senate's attention that draft Resolution No. of 2012 (Supplementary Regulations First Degrees in Science) and agreed to forward it to the General Council to make it generally available in terms of Section 6 of the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966.

3. Draft Resolution No. of 2012 (Changes to Regulations for Various Degrees

33.3 The Court drew to the Senate's attention that draft Resolution No. of 2012 (Changes in Regulations in Various Degrees) and agreed to forward it to the General Council to make it generally available in terms of Section 6 of the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966

UPDATE ON STUDENT SURVEYS

34.1   The Senate noted that the Institutional Student Survey of all undergraduate students in years one to three had now closed (minute 21 of the Senate Minute from 8 February 2012 refers). 3329 students responded giving a response rate of 39.5%. The results will be analysed over the summer and a detailed report will be brought to Senate in November. The National Student Survey will close on 30 April 2012 and again a report on the outcome will be reported to Senate in November.

ELECTION OF NON *EX OFFICIO* MEMBERS OF SENATE

35.1   The Senate noted that the Senate Business Committee had approved the timetable for the election of non *ex-officio* members of Senate (copy filed with principal copy of the minutes).

DEGREE CERTIFICATE FOR DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF DENTAL SURGERY

36.1   The Senate noted that the Senate Business Committee had approved, for its part, the degree certificate for the Degree of Bachelor of Dental Surgery which will be delivered jointly with the University of Dundee.

SENATE APPOINTMENTS

37.1   The Senate noted that the Senate Business Committee had approved the following appointments:

- The appointment of Professor C De Barri and Professor R Ogden as members of the Committee for Research, Income Generation and Commercialisation;
- The appointment of Dr K Shennan and Dr A Starkey (*vice* Professor P MacConnell) as Director of Studies (Admissions) for Engineering. Both will carry the title of Director of Studies (Admissions) for Science and Engineering;
- The appointment of Dr R Wells as Convener of the Undergraduate Committee (*vice* Dr J Morrison) and Professor B Naphy as Convener of the Postgraduate Committee (*vice* Dr B Connolly) with effect from session 2012/13 for a period of two years.