

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SENATUS ACADEMICUS

Minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 1999

Present: Principal, Professors Macdonald, Sloan and Logan, Dr JG Roberts, Professors Cameron, Johnstone, Thomson, Sleeman, Fergusson, Urwin, Jolliffe, Meek Forte, Racey, Buckland, Sharp, Fraser, Graham, Lomax, Simpson, Ingram, Archbold, Lee, Adams, Logie, Mather, Duff and Salmon, Dr GJA Burgess, Dr MT Dalgarno, Dr N Dower, Mr CA McLaren, Dr AR Akisanya, Dr JAD Blaikie, Mr WTC Brotherstone, Dr JB Craig, Dr H Galley, 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 JDF Skatun, Dr IR Torrance, Dr SP Townsend, Dr ER van Teijlingen, Dr A Venneri and Dr HM Wallace

Apologies for absence were received from Professors Catto, Mordue, Marshall, Walker, Miller, JV Forrester, Kidd, Templeton, Stephens, Seaton, Russell, Bruce, Baker, Hendry, Cusine, Ritchie, West, Little, Hukins, Cassidy, Killham, Bryden, Gilbert, Flin, Prosser, Watson and Swanson, Dr CD McCaig, Dr DR Abramovich, Mrs FM Alexander, Dr LH Chappell, Dr S Lawrie, Mr WS McKerrow, Dr TA Mahmood, Dr JA Petty, Mrs ML Ross, Dr PVW Schlicke, Ms P Surridge, Dr J Watson and Mr D Welsh

MINUTES

91. The Senate approved the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 1999.

STATEMENT BY PRINCIPAL

Rectorial Installation

92. The Principal reminded members of the Senate that the Installation of Miss Clarissa Dickson Wright as Rector of the University would take place at 4 p.m. this afternoon in the Mitchell Hall, Marischal College. Members of the Senate who had not intended to attend but now wished to do so were welcome to use a complimentary bus which would transport staff and other guests from Old Aberdeen to Marischal College and back after the ceremony.

Northern College

- 93.1 The Principal invited Professor Macdonald to brief Senate on the state of negotiations with Northern College regarding possible merger.
- 93.2 Professor Macdonald explained that the timetable for consideration of an agreed merger document had not yet been finalised. Tripartite negotiations between Aberdeen and Dundee Universities and the College were a complicating factor. However, it was hoped that the merger document would be released simultaneously for wide-scale consultation in all three institutions around 20 March 1999. It would receive first consideration by the University Court at its meeting on 23 March. Thereafter it was proposed that a meeting open to all University staff be held to introduce the document and to take comments. It would then be considered by Senate and further by the Court early in the Summer Term. Professor Macdonald emphasised finally that once the contents of the document had been agreed by the governing bodies of the institutions there would be further consultations in the context of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations.

Copyright

(Minutes 10, 37 and 64 refer)

94. Mr Cannon reported that the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals had now instituted negotiations with the Copyright Licencing Agency over serious problems in relation to the new Copyright Act, but that there was as yet no progress to report. Senate would be kept informed as more information became available.

FUNDING FOR THE FUTURE : A CONSULTATION ON THE FUNDING OF TEACHING

- 95.1 Following consideration by the Joint Policy and Resource Committee, the Senate received the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC) Consultation Paper 05/98 entitled '*Funding for the Future : A Consultation on the Funding of Teaching*', together with a draft University response. The Principal invited Professor Macdonald to speak to the papers.
- 95.2 Professor Macdonald stated that the SHEFC had published two Consultation Papers simultaneously, namely that presently under consideration and the Paper considered under minute 96 below. Both concerned issues of fundamental importance for Scottish higher education. He did not wish to comment on the University's draft response in detail but emphasised that the key principle underlying it was that any new funding regime should be sufficiently flexible that individual institutions had full control over their internal allocations of resource.
- 95.3 The Senate, for its part, approved the draft response.

STRATEGIC ISSUES FOR SCOTTISH HIGHER EDUCATION

- 96.1 Following consideration by the Joint Policy and Resource Committee, the Senate to received the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC) Consultation Paper 06/98 entitled ‘*Strategic Issues for Scottish Higher Education*’, together with a draft University response. The Principal invited Professor Macdonald to speak to the papers.
- 96.2 Professor Macdonald introduced the papers briefly, indicating that in many ways the SHEFC document sought principally to secure the views of outside bodies on the functions of higher education, rather than those of the sector itself. The following four key issues had been identified in the University’s response, namely ensuring the supply of employable high quality graduates; developing and enhancing excellent research capacity; exploiting new approaches to learning and teaching; and acting as local, regional and national cultural centres.
- 96.3 A brief discussion ensued, whose principal points of record were as follows:
- (i) Professor Cameron suggested that surveys of graduate employment should be undertaken around three years after graduation as a more effective means of monitoring graduate success.
 - (ii) Professor Salmon asked that mention be made of the low levels of staff salaries, which, he argued strongly, were a strategic issue for higher education.
- 96.4 Professor Macdonald agreed that both of these points would be taken account of.
- 96.5 The Senate, for its part, approved the draft response, subject to appropriate inclusion of the comments made above.

REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON
TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Senate received the recommendations of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning, as under:

Students’ work affected by their undertaking paid employment

- 97.1 The Senate received and considered the following Policy Statement:-

The University is sympathetic to the financial burdens placed upon students and recognises that many full-time students undertake part-time paid employment to provide financial support for their studies. The University’s general guideline is that full-time students should spend no more than 15 hours per week undertaking employment during term-time. Notwithstanding this guideline, it remains the students’ responsibility to ensure that their employment commitments do not conflict with the academic requirements of their studies. Where a potential conflict is expected to arise in regard to fulfilling the attendance and/or performance requirements of a particular course, students are strongly recommended to seek advice from the relevant Course Organiser or Head of Department, as appropriate, before undertaking their employment duties.

97.2 A brief discussion of the Statement ensued, whose principal points of record were as follows:

(i) It was proposed that the structure of the introductory sentence be amended to indicate clearly that the University's sympathy lay with students in financial difficulties and this was agreed.

(ii) It was suggested that the phrase 'Course Organiser' be replaced with the more accurate 'Course Co-ordinator' and this was agreed. It was also proposed that students be recommended to seek advice from Advisers of Studies. While accepting that Advisers of Studies had a role to play, Professor Macdonald was keen to ensure that full responsibility for the management of any student problems clearly remained with academic departments.

(iii) More general concern was expressed that the Statement might be taken to equate work commitments with unpredictable personal circumstances, such as illness. The Statement must make it clear that no compromise could be made on academic standards and that students' first priority was to fulfill the academic obligations of their studies.

97.3 Professor Macdonald agreed that the Committee on Teaching and Learning should reconsider the draft Statement in the light of the Senate's comments and bring back a revised version to a future meeting.

The role of academic staff in the supervision of examinations

98.1 The Senate noted the unanimous recommendation of the Committee that the University's current practice that academic staff be required to supervise and invigilate examinations should continue.

98.2 Dr Kinnear reminded Senate that he had initially raised the possibility of the University employing invigilators. He fully accepted the necessity of academic staff being available during examinations but asked whether all invigilators needed to be academics and whether tasks not directly associated with invigilation, such as checking student identity cards and distributing examination papers, could be undertaken by other categories of staff.

98.3 Professor Macdonald emphasised that the Committee had held very strongly to the view that examination invigilation was a proper and appropriate element of the professional life of an academic. Indeed, a survey of the eight older Scottish universities had confirmed that academic staff invigilated examinations at all of them. However, he saw no problem with other categories of staff assisting, as long as the operation was overseen by appropriate academic invigilators.

98.4 Drawing discussion to a close the Principal put the matter to a vote. This resulted in a majority of 36 against 12 in support of the Committee's recommendation. Accordingly the Senate approved the recommendation of the Committee.

Guidance Note on Academic Appeals - Medical Certification

99. The Senate approved the addition to paragraph 3 of the Guidance Note on Academic Appeals as highlighted in ***bold italics*** below, to be effective from the start of the session 1999-2000:-

3. Notwithstanding the above time limit, details of illness (***which must be certified by a medical practitioner***) and/or other personal circumstances which students believe may have affected their performance in an element of prescribed degree assessment will be accepted as grounds for appeal only if the Head of the relevant Department has received written notification of them no later than one week after the date on which a student submitted or appeared for the assessment concerned. Where good reasons have prevented a student from notifying the Head of the Department within this period, the student should write to the Head of the Department as soon as is practicable and give details both of the illness (***which must be certified by a medical practitioner***) and/or other personal circumstances and of the events which prevented him or her from notifying the Head of the Department within the prescribed period. Details reported after notification of a result will be accepted as grounds of appeal only in exceptional circumstances.

Release of CAS marks for assessments which are not part of an individual course

- 100.1 The Senate approved a recommendation that Common Assessment Scale (CAS) marks for additional written degree assessments, prescribed as part of a degree programme, which were not a component of the assessment for an individual course be released formally to students with effect from the session 1999-2000. The Senate up to now agreed that CAS marks be released to students on the basis that these would only be for *courses*. The recommendation was made to rectify the anomaly, whereby general summative written examinations which contributed to a candidate's degree classification were not currently released formally to candidates.
- 100.2 The Senate noted that the practical implication of the recommendation was that a "course code" would be allocated to summative assessments. This would allow class and examination lists to be run by Departments, which could then formally submit individual CAS marks and results for these assessments, duly signed by the External Examiner. The results could be recorded on a student's computerised record and could appear on results letters and transcripts.

REPORT FROM THE ACADEMIC STANDARDS COMMITTEES

- 101.1 The Senate approved a recommendation that the Regulations governing the Accelerated Programme for the Degree of MA with Honours, open to students with high grades at GCE Advanced level or the equivalent, be amended to require students to take only 24 credits in their first year of study and to graduate with 72 credits. An explanatory memorandum, together with draft amendments to the Degree Regulations, was received.
- 101.2 The Senate agreed to request the University Court to include the changes proposed in the draft Resolution 'Changes in Regulations for Various Degrees', which was currently before the General Council, so that they might be effective from the session 1999-2000.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE HONORARY DEGREES COMMITTEE

102. The Senate approved the nomination by the Faculty of Arts & Divinity of Professor Francis Watson to replace Professor George Rousseau on the Honorary Degrees Committee, with immediate effect.

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE SENATE

103. The Senate was advised that a special meeting to consider the Northern College Merger Proposal might need to be held before the next ordinary meeting.

REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COURT

The Senate noted the actions of the University Court at its meeting on 9 February 1999, as under:

Draft Resolution No. of 1999
[Changes of Regulations for Various Degrees]

104. The Senate noted that, at its meeting on 9 February 1999, the Court had noted that draft Resolution No. of 1999 [Changes of Regulations for Various Degrees] had been approved by Senate. It had been forwarded to the General Council and been made generally available in terms of Section 6 of the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966.

Resolution No 212 of 1999
[Chairs of Psychology - Amendment of Title]

105. The Senate noted that the Court had passed Resolution No. 212 of 1999 [Chairs of Psychology - Amendment of Title].

Scottish MSc in Primary Care:
Inter-Institutional Agreement

106. The Senate noted that the Court had approved the Inter-Institutional Agreement to govern award of the Scottish MSc in Primary Care.

Fees payable by students
on split research degree programmes

107. The Senate noted that the Court had approved the recommendation of the Joint Policy and Resource Committee that the proportion of tuition fees payable by overseas and self-funding full-time UK/EU students, granted permission to study elsewhere, be increased from one-third to one-half the full rate. The new rate would apply to students commencing studies on or after 1 April 1999.

REPORT FROM THE ACADEMIC STANDARDS COMMITTEES

108. The Senate noted that the Academic Standards Committee (Science, Engineering and Medicine), on the recommendation of the relevant Faculties, had approved the following further changes to the list of courses and programmes currently available. The list did not include courses which had been re-numbered solely to reflect changes in teaching and/or assessment arrangements:

Biomedical Sciences

Introduction of modified level 4 project courses 'Biomedical Sciences Honours Project', 'Pharmacology Project', 'Physiology Project'

Engineering

Introduction of new level 4 course 'Computer-Aided Engineering Design'

Mathematical Sciences

Availability in the second half-session, as well as the first, of the level 4 course MX4028/4078 'Algorithms'

Faculty of Medicine & Medical Sciences

Re-structuring of the programme for the intercalated degree of BSc Med Sci, including replacement of the existing core course (ME38M1) by three new courses: 'Foundations of Medicine and Medical Sciences Core Course', 'Laboratory Based Research Core Course', 'Health and Health Services Based Research Core Course', and modifications to the Options and Research Project Courses (ME38M2, ME30M3)

Psychology

Withdrawal as separately identified courses of the level 3 courses currently taken by non-Honours students: PS3054, PS3056, PS3057, PS3556, PS3557, PS3558, PS3559. In future both Honours and non-Honours students at level 3 would take the same courses, viz PS3004, PS3006, PS3007, PS3506, PS3508, PS3509

GRADUATIONS *IN ABSENTIA*

- 109.1 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 1999).
- 109.2 The Senate conferred the degrees on, and awarded the diplomas and other qualifications to, the persons stated.

INSTALLATION OF THE RECTOR

- 110.1 Members of the Senate were reminded that the Installation of Clarissa Dickson Wright as Rector of the University would take place in the Mitchell Hall, Marischal College at 4.00 p.m. on 3 March.
- 110.2 Those members who had indicated their intention to join the Academic Procession should assemble in the Senior Common Room no later than 3.30 p.m.