

SENATUS ACADEMICUS

Minutes of the meeting held on 4 May 2005

- Present: Principal, Professor Logan, Dr JG Roberts, Professors Gane, Haites, Rodger, MacGregor, Hubbuck, Baker, Chandler, Watson, Leboutte, Howe, Saunders, Beaumont, Frost, Dr B Fennell, Professor Secombes, Dr P McGeorge, Professor Mitchell, Dr WF Long, Dr IA McFarland, Professor Archbold, Dr P Benson, Mr WTC Brotherstone, Miss R Buchan, Dr JC Forbes, Dr J Liversidge, Professor Salmon, Dr P Edwards, Dr J Geddes, Dr D Hay, Dr X Lambin, Dr WD McCausland, Dr H McKenzie, Dr MR Masson, Dr LJ Philip, Mrs ML Ross, Dr H Sinclair, Dr J Skakle, Dr SP Townsend, Dr HM Wallace, Dr RPK Wells, Mr P Richards, Mr G Murray, Miss D White with Dr G Walkden and Miss J Niven.
- Apologies: Professors Houlihan, Forrester, Sleeman, Bruce, Sharp, Flin, Dawson, Ayres, Imrie, McKenzie Skene, Urwin, Mrs L Stephen, Professor Blaikie, Mr J Chalmers, Ms L Clark, Professor Lurie, Dr J Farmer, Dr C Gray, Dr P Mealor, Dr WG Naphy and Professor GJB Watson.

NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING

929. The notes of the meeting held on 3 March 2005 were approved.

STATEMENT BY PRINCIPAL

- 930.1 In opening his statement, the Principal reported that two candidates had been proposed for the position of Rector: Robin Harper and Hamish Mackay. He also congratulated Paul Richards on his re-election as President of the Students' Association for the next academic year, and extended his congratulations to the other successful candidates in the recent Students' Association elections. The Principal also congratulated all those involved with the University's Undergraduate Prospectus, which was recently awarded a HEIST Award for Education Marketing as the best university Prospectus in the UK.
- 930.2 In closing his statement, the Principal indicated that the Heads of College would give oral presentations at the next meeting to update Senate on recent activities within the Colleges, and he directed members to the College web-sites for the latest information. An update on collaborative ventures would also be reported at the next meeting.

ENHANCEMENT-LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW

- 931.1 Dr Roberts presented a summary of the University's Enhancement-led Institutional Review by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, which had taken recently.
- 931.2 On the first morning of the Part 1 visit to the University in March, the University had had the opportunity to present to the Review Team. The remaining part of the Team's Part 1 visit involved three meetings with staff and students: (i) a meeting with senior staff, (ii) a meeting with students who undertook a representative role, and (iii) a group of staff who had had involvement with the internal teaching review process. The topics discussed in these three meetings had been fairly wide-ranging covering issues relating to quality assurance, quality enhancement and the student learning experience.
- 931.3 The Team's second visit involved eight meetings with staff (drawn from all Schools) and students (drawn from all areas of study). These meetings each had a particular focus as summarised below:
- Meeting with students to discuss issues relating to the student learning experience and student support;
 - Meeting with staff to discuss issues relating to the student learning experience and student support;
 - Meeting with recently appointed/probationary staff and experienced staff with no programme responsibility to discuss issues relating to quality assurance, quality enhancement and the student learning experience;
 - Meeting with staff to discuss staff development, promotions, recognition, reward and culture change;

- Meeting with staff (including members of the Academic Standards Committees) to discuss issues relating to quality assurance;
- Meeting with staff (including members of School Teaching & Learning Committees) to discuss quality enhancement and the review of the teaching and learning strategy;
- Meeting with staff to discuss the provision of information for staff and students;
- Meeting with sabbatical and non-sabbatical post-holders of the Students' Association;
- Final 'wash-up' meeting with staff to discuss any outstanding issues.

931.4 There were a number of strands of discussion which had been touched upon in a number of these meetings, as summarised below:

- The recent restructuring and the benefits for teaching and learning brought about by the move to Colleges;
- Employability and steps taken to ensure that degree programmes prepare students for employment;
- The Teaching & Learning Strategy Review
- The use of E-learning;
- Independent learning;
- The first year experience and steps taken to support students and aid their progress;
- Assessment – particularly the use of assessment, including formative assessment, to enhance learning;
- Feedback on assessment from in-course assessments and end-of-course examinations;
- The robustness of our procedures for Programme Review;
- Our ongoing work in regard to staff development and greater recognition of teaching in promotions;

931.5 The final 'wash-up' meeting had provided an opportunity for the Team to raise any issues on which they still required clarification as outlined below:

- Our progress in regard to the development and implementation of personal development planning (PDP) for students;
- The Class Representative Forums run by the Students' Association;
- Student participation in Internal Teaching Review;
- Provision for students' with disabilities and the mechanisms for ensuring the appropriate provision is provided to students both in course and at examinations;
- The mechanisms for ensuring the quality of publicity information provided by partner institutions;
- Mechanisms for scrutiny of programme proposals;
- Plans for peer-observation of teaching;
- The mechanisms used to ensure consistency in policy and practice across the three Colleges.

931.6 In summing up, the Team commented on how the *Reflective Analysis* submitted by the University reflected well on the University and had provided the Team with a rich source of information and analysis. The Team also commented on the quality of supporting documentation provided and, in particular, commented that the Interim Report on the Teaching & Learning Strategy was a 'powerful tool'. They also highlighted the quality of the report on Student Retention which arose from a study conducted by Dr David McCausland and colleagues in the Business School. The Team had welcomed the opportunity to engage in discussions with staff and students, and following comment made at the end of the Part 1 visit had amended the tone and style of meetings to encourage more opportunity for open discussion. The Team also highlighted how the Case Study focusing on the use of E-learning had reflected well on the quality of IT provision and commented on how the Case Study focusing on the Zoology teaching laboratories had highlighted the work being done to enhance the quality of the learning environment. In concluding, the Team stated that their overwhelming impression was that the recent restructuring had been most successful and that the benefits for teaching and learning were clear to see. This view had been supported by positive comments from staff and students.

931.7 Senate noted that a letter informing the University of the key themes of the final report would be sent to the University on Monday 9 May. The University would then receive a draft copy of the report for comment on its factual accuracy on Monday 27 June. The report would be finally published in September 2005.

931.8 In closing his presentation, Dr Roberts expressed his thanks to all those who had been involved with the review, either in preparing documentation or case studies, or in meeting with the Review Team.

DRAFT UPDATE OF STRATEGIC PLAN 2004-2009 / PLAN 2005-2006

- 932.1 Professor Logan introduced the draft update of the Strategic Plan, which had been commented on by Colleges, the UMG and Officers, as well as other University committees. Senate noted that the University's Ambition, Mission and the guiding Principles and Objectives, the Plan had remained unchanged from the current Plan. The update, which was based on College Plans, included reviews of the 2004/05 academic year, followed by challenging targets for 2005/06.
- 932.2 During the discussion that followed, the following principal points were noted:
- that, in regard to quality research, it had already been agreed to re-word the Strategy (2.6) in regard to the provision of training for research students and staff, to build on our existing provision;
 - that, in regard to the five-year target "to be among the top 20 UK research-led universities in terms of peer-reviewed research grant and contract income", members were invited to send other metrics, e.g. in regard to RAE positioning, to Professor Logan, as indicators of research quality;
 - that, in regard to the target to increase UK/EU applications to postgraduate taught programmes, the precise target, which must be sustainable and satisfy the University's quality agenda, would be finalised on the recommendation of the Colleges, via the Postgraduate Strategy Advisory Group.
- 932.3 In closing the discussion, Professor Logan invited any comments to be sent either to him or to Dr Murray in the Court & Planning Office by early the following week.

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY REVIEW: INTERIM REPORT

- 933.1 The Senate noted that the Convener of the Teaching and Learning Strategy Review Group, Cathy Macaslan, was abroad on business. Dr Walkden, Director of Teaching & Learning for the College of Physical Sciences, therefore introduced this item, on behalf of Ms Macaslan and the other Directors of Teaching & Learning, all of whom were members of the Review Group.
- 933.2 Senate noted that the Review Group's remit was to develop a distinctive, strategic vision of teaching and learning appropriate to the University of Aberdeen. The Interim Report provided an outline definition of teaching and learning at a research-led university, and the Review Group was now seeking comment from the University community on its draft proposals and seeking Senate support in principle for these proposals.
- 933.3 The Review Group had identified four principal drivers for change: the new external environment, centred on quality enhancement and enhancement-led institutional review; the University's Mission to be a world-class, research-led, university; the College structure and the greater prominence given to teaching and learning since the establishment of the posts of Directors of Teaching & Learning in each College; income in terms of SHEFC funding for teaching, student recruitment and the University's image and reputation. Dr Walkden stated that the Review Group were keen to establish a relationship of equality for teaching and learning with research, that reflected and contributed to the prime institutional driver to be world class.
- 933.4 The Interim Report of the Review Group was centred on a vision for the University "to be a learner-focused, dynamic and responsive provider of learning and teaching, offering our students an education that is inextricably linked to our research environment". The vision was one where the University "will constantly enhance our provision by responding to identified learners' needs, development in the fields of knowledge, and wider community interest, including those of employers and market forces".
- 933.5 The Review Group had identified six key principles to expand on the vision:
- (i) to enable our students to realise their full potential;
 - (ii) to ensure that research and teaching are similarly valued;
 - (iii) to ensure that staff are at the forefront of their profession;
 - (iv) to ensure that staff are highly motivated and appropriately rewarded;
 - (v) to have infrastructure that is "fit for purpose" and provides an attractive, high quality and up-to-date learning environment;
 - (vi) to enhance our academic reputation.

- 933.6 Dr Walkden placed the Teaching and Learning Strategy in the context of other parallel developments, i.e. the proposed Centre for Teaching and Learning, College developments, generic training for research students, staff appraisal and the various working groups on personal development planning, promotions and employability.
- 933.7 A key to the successful implementation of the Teaching and Learning Strategy was a model of the effective learner, i.e. what we want for, and expect of, our students. The proposed model demonstrated how these expectations would change as a student progressed through their programme of study: underlying this strategy was a change in emphasis from teaching to learning by encouraging students to take more responsibility as effective learners.
- 933.8 In closing the brief discussion that ensued, the Senior Vice-Principal accepted the proposed change to the University's Mission in its Strategic Plan in light of the Teaching and Learning Strategy, so that the University should aim to be "excellent in delivering teaching and enabling learning ...", rather than the current mission of being "excellent in delivering learning and teaching ...".
- 933.9 The Principal considered the Interim Report and proposals to be excellent progress in developing a Teaching and Learning Strategy and congratulated all concerned. It was agreed that an update on progress would be reported at the next meeting of Senate with a view to the final Report being considered by the University Committee on Teaching & Learning and the Senate during the Autumn.

REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COURT
(22 March 2005)

1. Draft Ordinance No of 2005
[Use of Surplus Endowment Revenue]

- 934.1 The Senate noted that the University had access to endowments valued at approximately £23.5m as at 31 July 2004. Although the majority of these endowments were active and used for the purpose set down by the donor, a number of them had become inoperative. This had occurred over a considerable period of time, usually because the University no longer catered for the specific terms of the endowment, for example prizes in discontinued subjects.
- 934.2 The purpose of the proposed Ordinance was to free up the unused revenue balances in order that better use could be made of the resources available, for example to provide funding for postgraduate studentships. The ordinance sought to allow access to revenue balance, which could no longer be used to meet the original terms of an endowment, while protecting the original (capital) element of the fund for its original purpose. Legal advice had indicated that this was the most efficient method of releasing funds from endowments, without having to apply to the Court of Session for every individual fund.
- 934.3 The Court had approved the following draft Ordinance and had forwarded it to the Senate for comment and approval.
- 934.4 The Senate approved, for its part, the following draft Ordinance:

DRAFT ORDINANCE OF THE UNIVERSITY COURT
of the UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
No [USE OF SURPLUS ENDOWMENT REVENUE]
At ABERDEEN, the day of Two Thousand and

WHEREAS the University Court of the University of Aberdeen considers it desirable to make improved provision in regard to the vacant or accumulated revenue of Prizes and Other Endowments for Specific Purposes which are wholly or partially inoperative:

Therefore the University Court in exercise of its powers under Section 3 and Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 2 to the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966 and of all other powers enabling it in that behalf, hereby statutes and ordains:

1. Where in any academic year the revenue of Endowments for Prizes and Other Specific Purposes either cannot be used for the original purpose or exceeds the amount reasonably required for that purpose, it shall be in the power of the Senatus Academicus with the approval of the University Court to determine as to the disposal thereof or the income thereof.

2. This Ordinance shall come into operation on the date on which it is approved by Her Majesty in Council.

In Witness whereof these present are sealed with the Common Seal of the University Court of the University of Aberdeen and subscribed on behalf of the Court in terms of its Ordinance No. 113.

**2. Resolution No 241 of 2005
[Changes in Regulations for Various Degrees]**

934.5 The Senate noted that the Court had received the draft Resolution [Changes in Regulations for Various Degrees], it having been approved by the Senatus Academicus, the General Council and made generally available in terms of Section 6 of the Universities (Scotland) Act, 1966; and that the Court had approved the Resolution.

**3. Draft Ordinance No of 2005
[Power to Extend the University by Affiliating Colleges
and Other Educational Bodies]**

**Draft Ordinance No of 2005
[Power to Incorporate into the University Other Universities, Colleges
and Other Educational Bodies]**

934.6 The Court had noted that the Senate, for its part, had approved the two draft Ordinances, as referred to it by the Court.

4. Rectorial Election

934.7 The Court had approved a recommendation from the Principal, on behalf of Senate, that nominations for election of a Rector should close at 1.00pm on Thursday 28th April, with a vote to be taken on Thursday 14th May 2005.

**REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING
(25 March 2005)**

935.1 In approving the recommendations of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes), the Senate approved the following:

1. University's European Diploma Supplement

935.2 The Senate approved the Institutional Statement for inclusion in the University's European Diploma Supplement.

2. Monitoring Students' Progress

935.3 The Senate approved the proposal that the existing trial abolition of the Class Certificate system be extended for one further year and approved the following amendment to the General Regulations for First Degrees:

1.2 Notwithstanding the definition of 'class certificate' in 1.1 above, by a decision of the Senatus Academicus at its meeting held on 12 June 2002, and applicable to the Academic Years 2003/04, and 2004/05 only in the first instance **[and 2005/06, following a decision of the Senatus Academicus on 4 May 2005]**, a student who has been validly registered by their Adviser of Studies for a course, and who has not withdrawn from the course before the last day of teaching (or deemed to have withdrawn, in accordance with Regulation 1.3 below), shall normally be regarded as having obtained a Class Certificate for that course.

3. ELIR Update

- 935.4 The Senate noted that the UCTL had received an update on the part-one visit conducted by the QAA as part of the ELIR process and noted that, in general, the visit had gone more or less as expected. The part-two visit would take place during the week commencing 25 April 2005 and was scheduled to last for four and a half days.

4. Review of Teaching and Learning Strategy Interim Report

- 935.5 The Senate noted that the UCTL had received the Interim Report from the Teaching and Learning Strategy Review Group. The Committee had noted that the document would be made available to all staff for comment and would be considered by College Teaching and Learning Committees before consideration by the Senate on 4 May 2005.

5. Strategic Plan Update – Quality Learning draft targets for 2005/2006

- 935.6 The Senate noted that the UCTL had approved the Quality Learning draft targets for 2005/2006.

6. In-Course Assessment

- 935.7 The Senate noted that the UCTL had approved the proposal to change from using the term 'continuous assessment' on both the SENAS forms and in the Catalogue of Courses when describing those assessments conducted during the course. It had been suggested that this term was misleading in that it implied the assessment was on-going throughout the whole course. It had been agreed that the term 'in-course assessment' would be more appropriate.

7. Postgraduate Catalogue of Courses

- 935.8 The Senate noted that, at the request of the Heads of Graduate School, the Postgraduate Strategy Advisory Group had asked the Registry to include postgraduate taught courses in the on-line Catalogue of Courses as soon as was feasible.

8. Academic Quality Handbook

- 935.9 The Senate noted that the third edition of the Academic Quality Handbook (AQH) was now available at <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/registry/quality>. The latest edition of the AQH had been produced as a web-only version to facilitate updates as they become necessary.

REPORT FROM THE ACADEMIC STANDARDS COMMITTEES

1. Supplementary Regulations for the Degree of Master of Arts (MA)

- 936.1 The Senate approved an amendment to the Supplementary Regulations for the Degree of Master of Arts (MA), as under, on the recommendation of the Academic Standards Committee (Undergraduate):

Regulation 14

To the existing regulation add 'of full-time study or the equivalent'.

2. New, Withdrawn and Amended Postgraduate Courses and Programmes

- 936.2 The Senate noted that the Academic Standards Committee (Postgraduate) had approved new, amended and withdrawn courses and programmes (copy filed with the principal copy of the Minutes).

3. Alfie Tough Music Scholarship

- 936.3 The Senate approved, on the recommendation of the Academic Standards Committee (Undergraduate), a paper setting out the purpose, eligibility and criteria for the award of the Alfie Tough Music Scholarship (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

APPOINTMENT OF COLLEGE POSTGRADUATE OFFICER

937. The Senate approved the appointment of Professor Jens Adolphsen as a College Postgraduate Officer in Arts and Social Sciences and a member of the Academic Standards Committee (Postgraduate) with immediate effect, *vice* Dr Heather Lardy, on the recommendation of the Head of the College of Arts & Social Sciences.

APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

938. The Senate approved the appointment of Dr Paul Schlicke as Director of Undergraduate Programmes (Arts and Social Sciences) and a member of the Academic Standards Committee (Undergraduate), with effect from 1 August 2005 *vice* Professor Derek Urwin, on the recommendation of the Head of College of Arts & Social Sciences.

DATES OF SENATE MEETINGS

939. The Senate approved a recommendation that it should meet at 2.00 p.m. on the following Wednesdays in the academic year 2005-2006, on the understanding that these may be subject to change if recommended by the Working Group that would review the effectiveness of the Senate and subsequently endorsed by the Senate:

5 October 2005, 16 November 2005, 25 January 2006, 1 March 2006, 3 May 2006, 14 June 2006, 12 July 2006 (if required).

RECTORIAL ELECTION

940. The Senate noted that (i) the Students' Association had identified a candidate for the position of Rector, which was currently vacant; (ii) that the Court, on the recommendation of the Principal, acting on behalf of the Senate, had agreed that nominations for election would close at 1.00 p.m. on Thursday 28 April 2005, with voting (if required) taking place on Thursday 12 May 2005; (iii) that two candidates had been proposed by the stipulated deadline (Minute 934.7 above refers); and (iv) that the arrangements for the election would be as agreed by the Senate on 5 May 2004, with the exception that a polling station would be situated in Crombie Johnston Hall *vice* the Central Refectory.

ELECTION OF MEMBERS TO THE WORKING GROUP TO REVIEW THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SENATE AND ITS SUB-COMMITTEES

941. The Senate noted that the following had been elected unopposed to the Senate Working Group:

College of Arts & Social Sciences: Professor PR Beaumont and Professor R Buckland

College of Life Sciences & Medicine: Dr H McKenzie

College of Physical Sciences: Professor CT Imrie and Professor J Hubbuck

GRADUATIONS *IN ABSENTIA*

942. The Senate noted that details of those qualified to receive degrees, diplomas and other awards who had applied to have them conferred *in absentia* could be viewed in the Senate Office of the Registry (see Appendix to Minutes of June 2005).

The Senate agreed to confer the degrees on, and award the diplomas and other qualifications to, the persons stated.