

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SENATUS ACADEMICUS

Minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 9 March 2016

Present: Principal, Professors Kilburn, Haites, Kunin, McGeorge, Hannaford, MacGregor and Ross, Ms AM Slater, Professors Morrison, Welch, Coyle and Gimlin, Mr M Whittington, Professor Heys, Skakle, Jolley and Guz, Dr A Arnason, Professors Davies, Wells, Brown and Campbell, Dr R Neilson, Professors Connolly, Masthoff and Shennan, Dr M Ehrenschwendtner, Dr S Lawrie, Professor Lurie, Dr P Bishop, Mrs L Tibbetts, Dr J Lamb, Professors McCausland and Hutchison, Dr A Sim, Dr P Ziegler, Dr Y Bain, Ms S Cornelius, Dr G Sharman, Dr A Lewis, Professor Duff, Mr S Styles, Dr M Mills, Dr L Bennie, Dr T Argounova-Low, Professor Anderson, Dr J Sternberg, Dr D Lusseau, Professor Pinard, Dr J Baird, Professor Johnson, Dr J Barrow, Dr A Rajnicek, Dr S Tucker, Dr M Delibegović, Dr N Mody, Dr D MacCallum, Dr R MacKenzie, Dr A Venkatesh, Dr I Cameron, Dr K Foster, Professor Lee, Dr F Thies, Dr D Ray, Dr O Menshykov, Professor MacDonald, Dr J Oliver, Dr A Ebinghaus, Dr C North, Dr N Oren, Professor Coghill, Dr M da Silva Baptista, Dr B Martin, Dr W Vasonselos, Mr L Fuller, Miss Z Howell, Miss A Pavelekova, Mr D Kaminek, Miss A Sharp and , Mr C Herbert, Miss A Hay, Miss C Henssen, Mr I Tashim, Mr F Archibald, Miss C Christie, Mr C Coyle and Miss S Small

Apologies: Professors Glover, Baggs and Sahraie and Naphy Dr M Beaton, Mrs D Bruxvoort, Professor Friedrich, Dr H Pierce, Dr E Curtis, Mrs M Stephen, Dr K Groo, Professors Mealor, Dr A Simpson, Dr Z Yihdego, Mrs C Dennis, Professor Teismann, Dr A Jenkinson, Dr D Scott, Professor Ibbetson, Dr K Khalaf, Dr M Cruickshank, Dr L Aucott, Dr C Black, Professor Barker, Dr S Fielding, Dr N Hoggard, Dr L Williams, Dr B Timermans, Dr K Pilz, Professor Akisanya, Professor Kashtalyan, Dr R Macpherson, Professor Brittain, Miss G Clarke, Mr J Waddell, Miss K Hood, Miss A Sevadjian, Miss D Passinke, Mr F Neldelea and Mr D Rennie

OPENING REMARKS

- 32.1 The Principal began by welcoming those present to the extraordinary meeting of the Senate. In opening the meeting, he reminded members of the Senate of the following four key points:
- i. That the meeting would be audio recorded.
 - ii. That members should give their name when they wished to speak to allow the minute to appropriately recognise those contributing to Senate debate.
 - iii. That a vote would be taken at the conclusion of debate for each item.
 - iv. That the University Secretary, Mrs Inglis, would at the end of each item, confirm to Senate the outcome which would then be reproduced in the minute.

MOTION TO AMEND THE STANDING ORDERS

- 33.1 Before taking the main agenda item, the Principal advised that one motion had been received in advance of the meeting. He invited Professor Anderson to present his motion which concerned the Senate Standing Orders.
- 33.2 Professor Anderson addressed members of the Senate and detailed that although the motion concerned the amendment of the Standing Orders, the rationale for it focused on the difference between a discussion of the minutes of the previous Senate and a discussion of the agenda. He proposed that this would help clarify proceedings and

avoid the misunderstandings which had occurred at the last two meetings of the Senate. There then ensued a short discussion, the main tenets of which were as follows:

- Professor Masthoff noted that the Senate Business Committee (SBC), on which elected members of the Senate will now sit, is specifically tasked with the issue of the preparing and approving the Senate agenda. Professor Masthoff questioned the need for the Senate to then repeat this process at the beginning of each meeting.
- Professor Anderson responded to state that the order of the agendas had, at the last two meetings, been amended on the basis of discussion at the beginning of the meeting. Professor Anderson noted that there currently did not exist an appropriate place to raise an issue in regards to the agenda.
- A student member of the senate queried whether the introduction of the agenda as an item for approval would require discussion.
- Professor Anderson responded to comment that he was not proposing a debate take place unless required, only that the agenda was approved.
- Mr Styles expressed his support for the motion, commenting that to introduce an item in this regard would bring the Senate into line with all other committees in the world.

33.3 Following discussion, the Principal reminded members of the motion raised and asked members to vote on whether or not they supported the motion presented. The results were noted as follows:

Yes, in favour of the motion presented:	48
No, not in favour of the motion presented:	22
Senators abstaining from voting:	3

33.4 A vote having been taken, the Principal confirmed that motion presented had been carried and section 8 of the Standing Orders would therefore be revised in line with the motion presented.

MODERATION PROCEDURES

34.1 The Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning), Professor McGeorge, briefly introduced the Moderation Procedures paper to the Senate (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes). Professor McGeorge expressed his thanks to all those involved in the development of the procedures and specifically thanked Professor Shennan, Convener of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), for her work in preparing the paper. Professor McGeorge invited Professor Shennan to present the paper to the Senate for their discussion.

34.2 Professor Shennan addressed the Senate, briefly reminding members of the background to revisions to the Moderation Procedures, detailing that the issue had initially been raised at the QAC for discussion as a consequence of (i) External Examiner feedback and (ii) as a means of reducing the workload required of schools. Professor Shennan added that the requirement to amend the procedures had also been driven by the approved change to a Grade Point Average (GPA) system, as existing procedures were no longer compatible with such a system.

34.3 Professor Shennan noted a small amendment to paragraph 2.2 of the Procedures as circulated following a meeting held with a number of elected Senators. Professor

Shennan detailed the change as follows which was presented to Senate by means of PowerPoint display:

*2.2 Where a number of different markers are involved in marking an assessment (such as where the coursework for large classes is spread between several markers) there should be a discussion between markers to outline the marking criteria to be used and agree a marking scheme. After marking is complete the Course Coordinator should review the grade distribution for each assessment on the course and for individual markers to ensure consistency in marking. All ~~assessments attaining a~~ **coursework or examination that is graded at CGS E1** ~~CGS grade E1~~ should be second marked.*

34.4 Professor Shennan explained that the change was proposed to recognise examinations as a whole and not individual questions contained therein. A short discussion then ensued, the main tenets of which were:

- Professor MacDonald queried the stipulation that only grades of CGS E1 (those on the borderline) should be double marked, noting that within Geosciences all Postgraduate Taught fail grades are second marked. Professor Shennan confirmed that the procedures detailed throughout the document are to be seen as the minimum requirements only and that more stringent procedures can be followed by disciplines/schools if desired. Professor Masthoff agreed that these should be considered as minimum criteria.
- Dr Oren noted that the term 'assessments' was defined in section 1.1 and queried its deletion from section 2.2 as noted in paragraph 34.3 above.. Professor Shennan confirmed that within section 2.2 'assessments' has been changed to 'coursework or examination' to reflect examinations as a whole and not individual examination questions.
- Dr da Silva Baptista stated that it was important for there to be consistency in the wording used. Professor Shennan responded that amending this to individual questions would increase the marking burden.
- Dr Oren queried the definition of 'assessment' used elsewhere as including examinations.
- Professor Shennan noted the importance of recognising the variability across disciplines and schools in the marking of examinations and that, in some cases, examinations are built of separate questions marked individually and by different markers.
- Mr Styles, on behalf of the School of Law, commented that this could be evidenced within Law where the burden of second marking on the basis of an 'E1' received in any one examination question and not overall would be too great.
- Dr Sim, acknowledging his role as course coordinator, stated that the overall exam is the mark of importance in such instances.
- Professor Duff, on behalf of the School of Law, agreed with Mr Styles noting the burden this would create. Professor Duff also commented that although an 'E1' may have been received in any one examination question, the overall mark may be as low as E3 or F1 and indeed this would represent a clear and confirmed fail for the student concerned. Professor McGeorge expressed his agreement with Professor Duff.

34.5 In moving to a vote, Professor MacDonald confirmed his wish to drop his amendment proposed at the start of the debate as this was raised as a question rather than proposal.

34.6 The Principal invited members to vote on the proposed revision to section 2.2 of the Moderation Procedures as presented by Professor Shennan. The results were noted as follows:

Yes, in favour of the revision to section 2.2:	69
No, not in favour of the revision to section 2.2:	9
Senators abstaining from voting:	2

34.7 A vote having been taken, the Principal confirmed that the amendment proposed to section 2.2 had been carried.

34.8 The Principal noted four motions as received from Senators in advance of the meeting with regards the Moderation Procedures. The Principal invited their proposers, in turn, to present their motions to the Senate.

34.9 Professor Anderson presented a proposed addition to section 4 as follows:

4.5 The regular deadlines for returning agreed marks will not apply in a situation where disparity between the grades awarded by the first and second markers leads to a resampling, adjustment of grades, or the recruitment of a third marker.

34.10 Professor Anderson noted that this addition was designed to reflect the work required involved in second marking in some instances, so as to avoid rush or panic and to ensure reasonable turnaround time. A discussion then ensued, the main tenets of which were:

- Professor McGeorge, responding to the motion, acknowledged the validity of the point raised and noted that the issue of the return of mark deadlines was not specific to Moderation procedures. Professor McGeorge suggested that to amend the policy in this regard, however, was not appropriate, proposing instead that a paper detailing how the wider issue of marking time could potentially be addressed be presented to the May or June meetings of the Senate for discussion.
- Professor McGeorge noted in regard to the forthcoming exam period that there was limited opportunity to make changes due to exam and graduations arrangements being in place. He however made the proposal that Schools be offered the opportunity to bring forward exams later in the diet to an earlier non-clashing time (e.g. a Saturday) and that the result deadline be extended from 27 May to 5pm on 30 May.
- Dr Lamb noted that it would be inappropriate to add point 4.5 as proposed, noting that neither within this paper, nor the Academic Quality Handbook (AQH) as a whole are deadlines, or issues associated to them, referred to. Dr Lamb noted his agreement as to the suggestion by Professor McGeorge to revisit this issue separate from the Moderation paper itself.
- Mr Styles suggested the possibility of the future postponement of the summer graduation diet by a week.
- Professor McGeorge acknowledged the potential effects of any such change and agreed that this should be appropriately researched.
- Professor Anderson agreed to withdraw his motion on the basis that a paper would follow to the May or June Senate for consideration/discussion.

34.11 Following the above debate, the University Secretary confirmed that no vote was taken and that Professor Anderson had agreed to withdraw the motion.

34.12 Dr Martin presented a motion to change the description of how many assessments must be chosen for second marking in sections 2.3, 3.1 and 3.4 of the paper and also in section 7.10.17 of the AQH, 'Selection of work to be sent/made available to the Examiner' to the following:

The sample should contain all borderline fails (assessments attaining a CGS grade E1) in addition to a representative 10% of the remaining assessments (subject to a minimum of 10 assessments). Where a class contains fewer than 20 students the sample should contain 50% of the assessments. The representative sample should include a range of CGS grades.

34.13 Dr Martin explained the rationale for this as ensuring fairness in the number of scripts to be second marked which, under the existing wording, would require 4 assessments to be marked of a class of 9 but 10 assessments to be marked in a class of 10. Professor Shennan agreed with the proposed change.

34.14 The Principal invited members to vote on the proposed amendments to the wording of section 2.3, 3.1 and 3.4 of the Moderation Procedures and to section 7.10.17 of the "Selection of Scripts and other work to be sent / made available to the External Examiner". The results were noted as follows:

Yes, in favour of the revision to section 4.5:	69
No, not in favour of the revision to section 4.5:	6
Senators abstaining from voting:	5

A vote having been taken, the Principal confirmed that the motion had been carried and sections 2.3, 3.1 and 3.4 of the Moderation Procedures and section 7.10.17 of the "Selection of Scripts and other work to be sent / made available to the External Examiner" would be amended accordingly.

34.15 Dr Martin proposed some points of clarification of wording regarding:

- Section 2.3 and whether, if applicable, section 2.4 takes precedent over it;
- Section 3.4 and whether the second marking requirement holds if section 3.2 or 3.5 applies.

34.16 Professor Shennan confirmed section 2.4 would take precedence. In regard to 3.4, she confirmed there would be no need for second marking. Dr Martin agreed with the principle of the procedure and that the wording could be amended by way of discussion following Senate.

34.17 Following this discussion, and the confirmation from Professor Shennan that 2.4 should take precedence and that second marking would not be needed if 3.2 or 3.5 applies. The Principal invited members to vote on this. The results were noted as follows:

Yes, in favour of revision:	59
No, not in favour of revision:	9
Senators abstaining from voting:	9

A vote having been taken, the Principal confirmed that the motion had been carried and invited Professor Shennan and Dr Martin to discuss appropriate redrafting of these sections to make this clear.

34.18 Dr Martin presented a motion to change the wording of the flowchart as follows:

Replace the text in the box on the top left with, "Are the marks awarded by the two markers in broad agreement?" (to make the flow chart consistent with Sec. 4.1).

A discussion of this proposal ensued, the main tenets of which were:

- Professor Shennan noted reluctance to amend the flowchart on the basis that it is provided as an aide memoir to staff. As such it was important to be clear about two alphanumeric grade difference as use of 'broad agreement' would not make this clear.
- Professor Masthoff commented on discussions held at the joint meeting of the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Committees where agreement was taken to include the more specific reference in the flowchart as a means of supporting colleagues.
- Professor Anderson proposed the addition of 'i.e.' to ensure consistency with section 4.1 of the procedures.

34.19 The Principal then invited members to vote on the proposed minor amendment as presented by Dr Martin to the flow diagram which forms an Appendix to the Moderation Procedures. The results were noted as follows:

Yes, in favour of the revision to the flowchart:	35
No, not in favour of the revision to the flowchart:	38
Senators abstaining from voting:	7

34.20 A vote having been taken, the Principal confirmed that the amendment proposed to the flowchart had not been carried. The Principal noted that a footnote could be added to the flowchart to align the two documents.

34.21 Further to the motions as raised, the Principal invited members of the Senate to raise any further issues regarding the moderation Procedures. A discussion followed, the main tenets of which were:

- Professor Anderson noted the removal of 'generally' from sections 4.1 and 4.3 and asserted that this should be reinserted. He proposed that the procedures should be considered as guidelines and inclusion of this word would avoid over micromanagement of disciplines.
- Professor Masthoff noted that this issue had been discussed at both the joint meeting of the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Committees where changes were agreed to section 4.3 to define 'major disparity' as 3 or more alphanumeric grades and 4.1 to reflect 'broad agreement' as within 2 alphanumeric grades, thus removing the requirement for 'generally', and its potential ambiguity, from the text. Professor Masthoff stated that the changes had been made in the spirit of both committee meetings.
- Professor Shennan noted her agreement with Professor Masthoff, noting that the change had been made following the change in tolerance level as expressed in 4.1 and 4.3.
- Professor Anderson expressed the removal of 'normally' as a matter of principle as to whether there exists trust in the academic or not.

- Professor Wells asserted the importance of the same treatment of students across the board, to ensure consistency. Professor Wells stated that the ‘new’ 4.1 and 4.3 reflected flexibility but consistency.
- Professor Duff agreed with Professor Wells and stated that the use of ‘generally’ contributes to local practices, something sought to be avoided. Professor Duff noted that 4.1 and 4.3 represented a fair position to students and acknowledged that while 2 marks difference may be understandable, 3 represented a large difference.
- Dr da Silva Baptista noted that if the second marker detects a problem, then discussion takes place between the markers to agree the mark.
- Professor Shennan noted that where major discrepancy occurs, the procedures states in section 4.3 should apply.

34.22 The Principal invited members to vote on Professor Anderson’s motion to reinsert ‘generally’ to sections 4.1 and 4.3. The results were noted as follows:

Yes, in favour of the addition to sections 4.1/4.3:	14
No, not in favour of the addition to sections 4.1/4.3:	62
Senators abstaining from voting:	5

34.23 A vote having been taken, the Principal confirmed that the amendment proposed had not been carried.

34.24 Dr Ziegler requested clarification on section 2.3 regarding assessments marked by a single member of staff and the rationale behind its inclusion. Professor Shennan stated that it was felt important to have moderation mechanisms in situations where the assessment contributes more than 40%. Professor Ziegler queried why the same principle did not apply to section 2.2. Professor Shennan noted that in such a situation the course coordinator would provide some review. She further stressed that in 2.3 the situation related to a single individual undertaking the marking whilst in 2.2 a number of markers are involved. Professor Wells agreed with Professor Shennan, noting 2.3 as providing protection for an individual marker. Following this discussion, Professor Ziegler confirmed he was content and did not wish to propose any amendment.

34.25 A student member queried whether the procedures would apply immediately given some students would be classified on the basis of both the old Grade Spectrum and the new GPA system. Professor McGeorge responded that it was intended to implement the new procedures immediately. He further stressed that both systems for classification would be used and checks would be in place to ensure no disadvantage to students.

34.26 Votes on the various amendments to the Moderation Procedures having been taken, the Principal invited members to confirm their overall approval of the Procedures by means of a vote. The results were noted as follows:

Yes, in overall approval of the Moderation Procedures:	77
No, not in overall approval of the Moderation Procedures:	2
Senators abstaining from voting:	2

34.27 A vote having been taken, the Principal confirmed that the vote had been carried and the Moderation Procedures as revised by the Senate at this meeting would be implemented with immediate effect.

34.28 Following the vote, although acknowledging the reasoning in this instance, Dr Mills expressed to the Senate his concerns at introducing policies mid academic year and that, where possible, this should be avoided. This was met with agreement from other members of the Senate.

34.29 The Moderation Procedures having been approved, the Principal invited members to approve the associated revisions to the *Selection of Scripts and other work to be sent/made available to the External Examiner* as set out in paragraphs 7.10.17 - 7.10.19 of the Academic Quality Handbook. The results were noted as follows:

Yes – in favour of overall approval of the revisions proposed	74
No – not in favour of overall approval of the revisions proposed	2
Senators abstaining from voting	3

34.30 A vote having been taken, the Principal confirmed that the vote had been carried and the revisions to the Academic Quality Handbook would be implemented with immediate effect.

AOCB

35.1 The Principal noted a concern raised by members of staff within the School of Engineering regarding the length of the last Senate (finishing after 5pm), particularly in recognition of family friendly working policies. The Principal proposed to the Senate that meetings should begin earlier, at 1pm, in place of the Senate lunch to allow for an earlier completion time.

35.2 Mr Styles noted the importance of the Senate lunch in maintaining the social fabric of the Senate and proposed that the lunch be moved earlier, to 12pm, with a Senate start time of 1pm. The Principal asked members of the Senate to vote in this regard.

35.3 The Principal invited members to confirm their approval of the revised Senate and Senate lunch start dates by means of a vote. The results were noted as follows:

Yes, in overall approval of the change:	72
No, not in overall approval of the change:	4
Senators abstaining from voting:	3

35.4 A vote having been taken, the Principal confirmed that the vote had been carried and the change to the start time would be implemented as soon as possible.