

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SENATUS ACADEMICUS

Minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2009

Present: Principal, Professors, Logan, Houlihan, MacGregor, Morgan, Rodger, Gane, Mrs M Ross, Professors Frost, Fynsk, Secombes, Salmon, Cotter, Walkden, Nelson, Mrs L Johnson, Professors Long, Burgess, Hutchison, Dr C Brittain, Dr M Mills, Mr C Munro, Mrs F Payne, Dr A Gordon, Dr H Hutchison, Professor Saunders, Dr J Stewart, Dr A Campbell, Professor Duff, Mr S Styles, Dr Arnason, Mr N Curtis, Dr AD King, Dr M Delibegovic, Dr P Fraser, Dr L Hastie, Dr J Sternberg, Dr I Greig, Dr A Jack, Dr A Jenkinson, Dr D Scott, Dr N Vargesson, Professor Liversidge, Dr T MacFarlane, Professor Shaw, Dr G Shirriffs, Dr H Wallace, Dr P Benson, Dr D Pearson, Dr S Duthie, Dr L Williams, Professors Chandler, Guz, Reid, Dr D Jolley, Dr T Mighall, Professors Price, Anderson, Dr J Skakle, Dr SP Townsend, Professor Webster, Mr D McKay, Ms J Elliott, Mr J Simpson, Mr K Naismith, Ms L Bruce, and Ms T Smith with Mr N Edwards in attendance

Apologies: Professor Haites, Ms M Pearson, Professors Black, McCaig, Greaves, Imrie, MacDonald, O'Donoghue, Naphy, Dr P Edwards, Dr DC Hendry, Mr A Arthur, Dr J Lamb, Professor Schaper, Mr DC McMurtry, Dr P Mealor, Mrs A Valyo, Dr M Young, Dr J Cleland, Dr M Psatha, Professor Smith, Dr T Thevar, Professor Watson, Dr N Spedding, Ms S Stevenson

At the start of the meeting, the Senate congratulated the Principal on the news of his knighthood.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

40. The minutes of the meeting held on 6 May 2009 were approved.

STATEMENT BY PRINCIPAL

- 41.1 The Principal informed the Senate that he would be circulating to staff in the near future two essays setting out his view on the short/medium term and the longer term challenges facing the University.
- 41.2 The Principal informed the Senate that an announcement about the appointment of Sir Moir Lockhead as Senior Governor of the Court would be issued soon.
- 41.3 The Principal informed the Senate that the University Secretary was leading the University's work in regard to (i) planning for a possible pandemic flu outbreak and (ii) implementation of procedures to address the new Tier 4 Immigration requirements. The Secretary reminded the Senate that there could be developments in these areas which might require attention over the summer. In view of this, he asked that the Senate give delegated powers to the Principal, working in consultation with the Senate Business Committee, should any action require to be taken before the November meeting of the Senate. Any action taken would be reported at that meeting. The Senate gave its approval.
- 41.4 In drawing his statement to a conclusion, the Principal expressed his thanks to all staff for their contribution and hard work in what, he felt, had been one of the most successful years for the University.

CURRICULUM REFORM UPDATE

- 42.1 The Principal invited the Vice-Principal (Curriculum Reform) to update the Senate on progress in regard to the implementation of the Curriculum Reform recommendations (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes). In presenting the update, the Vice-Principal informed the Senate that work on Sixth Century courses and Sustained Study Programmes was progressing well. The Communication Strategy had been developed and was progressing well. Plans for co-curricular aspects of the new curriculum were being developed focusing on work placements and the STAR project. The UCTL was overseeing work on course and programme review. The Centre for Learning & Teaching was taking forward development of a Strategy for Dissemination of Good Practice and a Feedback Framework. Work on the Student Centre, eLearning and Flexible Teaching Spaces was also progressing.
- 42.2 He invited comment from the Senate. One member queried whether in regard to Bologna compliance, if there was any problem with the University not offering two year Master's programmes and questioned how the one-year Master's degrees offered by the University would articulate with European Master's degrees. In response, it was noted that consideration was being given to this issue. It was noted that some institutions in the South of England are now offering two-year Master's degrees.

TIMETABLING

43. The Principal invited the Vice-Principal (Curriculum Reform) to present a discussion paper on the plans for the new timetable (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes). In presenting the paper, he informed the Senate that no principles had as yet been approved rather the Timetabling Sub-Group was seeking feedback from the Senate on a number of issues to help refine their thinking. He outlined the various issues which included:
- (i) The evidence from the Room Usage Survey that the University does not make effective use of its teaching space and a proposal that in developing the new timetable there should be an expectation that full-time staff would normally be available to teach at anytime of the day.
 - (ii) That, for social inclusion reasons, consideration might be given to use of evening or weekend teaching. It was noted this already happens in some programmes. It was also noted that this would not be required for the mainstream teaching.
 - (iii) That a blocked approach to timetabling be adopted to make the timetable more accessible for part-time students and more flexible for those undertaking extra-curricular employment.
 - (iv) That consideration be given to enabling returning students to pre-register for courses before the start of the academic year to enable a more informed timetable to be created.
 - (v) That, subject to having the necessary information, to provide benefits such as guaranteed lunch breaks and blocked research time.

DEGREE FRAMEWORK

- 44.1 The Principal invited the Convener of the UCTL to present the paper in the Degree Framework (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes). In presenting the paper, the Convener of the UCTL stressed to the Senate that they were being asked to approve the Framework which had been prepared by the Academic Administration Sub-Group and had been presented to the UCTL and the Implementation Board on 20 and 21 May respectively. The paper had also been circulated to Colleges for comment.

44.2 He highlighted the main aspects of the Framework as detailed in the paper. He invited comments from the Senate. There followed a brief discussion, the main points of which are summarised below:

- It was queried whether the Accelerated Degree would solely apply to the Degrees of MA and BSc. In response, it was noted that the proposals would apply equally to the other degrees offered by the University, where appropriate. It was, however, acknowledged that constraints such as timetabling may restrict its availability in some areas. It was further stressed that the Accelerated degree route would be especially appropriate in subject areas not normally available as part of the School curriculum.
- It was noted that the Master's degree was listed as requiring 180 credits. It was queried that some programmes currently require more than 180 credits. In response, it was stressed that the credit requirements stated were the SCQF minimum. It was intended that, where possible, degrees should align with this minimum credit requirement although it was acknowledged that in some areas there may be good reason to have a higher credit requirement.

44.3 Following discussion, the Senate was invited to approve the proposals. The Senate unanimously recorded its approval.

REVIEW OF COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

45.1 The Principal invited the University Secretary to present the paper on the Review of the Committee Structure (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

45.2 In introducing the paper, the Secretary stated that the paper sought to address the concerns raised at the last meeting of the Senate regarding the proposals to review the Committee structure (Minute 34 refers). He reminded the Senate that these concerns primarily related to the reporting lines for the Joint Committees of Court and Senate that were to be removed from the formal governance structure.

45.3 He outlined to the Senate, that in the light of the concerns expressed at the last meeting, the proposals had been revised. It was now proposed that responsibility in these areas would be delegated to a Vice-Principal who would be accountable to the Senate and Court. The Vice-Principal would be required to report to the Senate, Court or Operating Board, as appropriate, at least once per academic year.

45.4 In terms of the issue of the determination of Going Rates previously a responsibility of the Student Recruitment and Admissions Committee, he reported that it was proposed this matter become a responsibility of the UCTL.

45.5 In regard to the Chapel Committee, in the light of the issues raised at the last meeting, he reported that it had been agreed that this would be retained as a Joint Committee of the Senate and Court but that there be a more extensive review of its remit and role in the context of the University's governance structure.

45.6 The Secretary further stressed that, should the proposals be approved, the operation of the new lines of accountability for the areas represented by the joint Committee of Court and Senate concerned would be reviewed after a year.

45.7 The Secretary invited comment from the Senate. There followed a brief discussion, the main points of which are noted below:

- It was queried whether the move to require the Vice-Principal to report to the Court would not reduce the business being considered by Court. In response it was stressed that the new proposals sought to enhance accountability rather than a Committee being responsible.
- The need for transparency in regard to membership of Committees and of agendas and minutes was stressed. In response, it was acknowledged that transparency would be vital.

45.8 The Principal then invited the Senate to approve the proposals. The Senate unanimously expressed its approval.

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP OF SENATE

46. The Senate approved proposed revisions to the student representation on the Senate as set out in the attached paper. The Senate further approved, for its part, the accompanying amendment to Ordinance No 138 to reflect these changes and agreed to invite the University Court to promote the amended Ordinance (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

REPORT FROM THE ACADEMIC STANDARDS COMMITTEES

1. Re-accreditation of the UHI Millennium Institute

47.1 The Senate approved, on the recommendation of the Academic Standards Committee (Postgraduate), the recommendation that the UHI Millennium Institute be re-accredited to deliver research degree programmes in specified academic areas subject to the recommendations detailed in Appendix 1 to the draft agreement (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

47.2 The Senate noted that the accreditation would remain in force for five years from the date on which it is approved by the University Court. The report from the re-accreditation panel can be accessed at <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/registry/internal/>.

2. Re-validation of the UHI Millennium Institute academic area of Theology

47.3 The Senate approved, on the recommendation of the Academic Standards Committee (Postgraduate), the recommendation that the UHI Millennium Institute academic area of Theology be re-validated under the terms of the accreditation agreement currently in force between the University and UHI to deliver the research degrees programmes of MPhil and PhD.

47.4 The Senate noted that the validation would remain in force for five years from the start of the 2009-10 academic year under the terms of the accreditation agreement between the University and UHI. The report from the validation panel can be accessed at <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/registry/internal/>.

REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COURT

The Senate noted the actions taken by the University Court at its meeting on 19 May 2009, as under:

**1. Draft Resolution No 261 of 2009
[Changes to Regulations for Various Degrees]**

- 48.1 The Court, noted that the draft Resolution No 261 of 2009 [Changes in Regulations for Various Degrees] had been approved by the Senate, and had been considered by the Business Committee of the General Council. Following this process, one amendment to the regulation (Regulation 21) had been proposed. The Court approved the Resolution, subject to that amendment being made.

**2. Draft Resolution No 262 of 2009
[Regulations for the Degree of Master in Science (MSci)]**

- 48.2 The Court, having noted that the draft Resolution No 262 of 2008 [Regulations for the Degree of Master in Science (MSci)] had been approved by the Senate, and had been considered by the Business Committee of the General Council, and that no other representations had been received, approved the Resolution.

3. Validation Agreement: UHI / Marine Science

- 48.3 The Court approved the recommendation from the Senate that the UHI Millennium Institute academic area in Marine Science be validated under the terms of the accreditation agreement currently in force between the University and UHI to deliver the research degree programmes of MSc, MPhil and PhD.

REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Senate noted the actions taken by the University Committee on Teaching and Learning at its meetings on 20 May and 3 June 2009, as under:

1. Curriculum Reform

- 49.1 The Committee received updates on the work undertaken in connection with the recommendations assigned to the Committee by the Implementation Board of Curriculum Reform. In particular, the Committee considered and approved a draft *Feedback Framework* and a draft *Strategy for the Identification and Dissemination of Good Practice in Learning and Teaching*. Both of these will now be forwarded to the Implementation Board for consideration at their next meeting.

2. Report from the Working Group on the Postgraduate Grade Spectrum

- 49.2 The Committee considered the report from the Working Group on the Postgraduate Grade Spectrum. Following extensive discussion, the Committee agreed that, whilst there was clearly a case for revisions to be made to the current process, it was not clear on the most appropriate way forward. It was, therefore, agreed that the Working Group be asked to reconvene to reconsider the options available taking into account the comments of both the Committee and the Heads of School.

3. Review of the Academic Year

- 49.3 The Committee received a paper outlining possible revised structures for the academic year. The Committee noted that the paper for consideration was based around 5 key criteria which had arisen in discussions at Senate. Following a wide-ranging discussion it was agreed that the Committee's views would be forwarded on as appropriate.

4. Skills Forge

- 49.4 The Committee received a paper giving details of '*The Skills Forge*' software that features tools to support both delivery and tracking of the personal and professional development of postgraduate research students. The Committee endorsed the proposal that the '*The Skills Forge*' will be mandatory for all new PhD students and as many continuing students as possible.

5. Amendments to the Postgraduate Codes of Practice

- 49.5 The Committee approved amendments proposed by the Academic Standards Committee (Postgraduate) to the Codes of Practice for Postgraduate Taught and Research Students. It was agreed that further changes to the Codes required before the commencement of the next academic year, would be approved by the Convener on behalf of the Committee.

6. Amendments to Regulations

- 49.6 On the recommendation of the Academic Standards Committee (Undergraduate) the Committee approved regulations for new awards:

from the Centre for Lifelong Learning for the Certificate and Diploma in Archaeology
from the School of Education for the Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (Adult Literacies)

7. Schedule for the Production of the Reflective Analysis for ELIR 2010

- 49.7 The Committee approved the schedule for the production of the Reflective Analysis for submission to the QAA for the forthcoming Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR).

8. Establishment of Working Groups

- 49.8 The Committee approved the establishment of two Working Groups to continue work previously undertaken on behalf of UCTL: to complete the review of the Common Assessment Scale (CAS); and to undertake an evaluation of the revised Student Course Evaluation Form (SCEF). The Committee noted that the composition of these groups would be approved by the Convener in due course with a view to recommendations being brought forward for UCTL's consideration in the next academic year.

9. Examination, Graduation and Progression issues in the event of Pandemic Flu

- 49.9 The Committee noted the draft attendance and assessment policies which had been produced as part of the University's contingency arrangements in the event that the University were to become affected by a flu pandemic. The Committee approved a proposal that the Convener would act on behalf of the Committee if it were to become necessary before the next meeting of the Committee.

REVIEW OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR

50. The Senate noted that following discussion at the last meeting of proposals for a review of the academic year (Minute 33 refers), a revised set of proposals were developed taking account of the issues raised by the Senate. The revised proposals were considered by the UCTL at its meeting on 20 May 2009 and by the University Management Group and the Senate Business Committee on 25 May 2009. In the light of the discussions at these meetings, it had been agreed that further consideration would be given to the proposals over the summer with a view to a revised paper being brought to the November meeting of the Senate.

PROPOSED REVISIONS TO EMPLOYMENT STATUTE

51. The Senate noted developments relating to proposals to revise the Employment Statute, and the process which would be followed for the revisions (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

REPORTS FROM THE ACADEMIC STANDARDS COMMITTEES – COURSE AND PROGRAMME CHANGES

52. The Senate noted the changes to the list of courses and programmes approved by the Academic Standards Committees at their recent meetings, available at <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/senastracking/report>.

ELECTION OF SENATE ASSESSORS TO COURT

- 53.1 The Senate noted that the terms of service of Mr Arthur and Professor Secombes as Assessors on the University Court expires on 30 September 2009.
- 53.2 In accordance with the decision of the Senate in February 2006, these vacancies must be filled (i) by a non-professorial Senator from the College of Arts & Social Sciences, and (ii) by a non-professorial Senator from the College of Life Sciences & Medicine.

The Senate Business Committee at its meeting on 1 June 2009 approved the following arrangements for the election:

Friday 5 June 2009	Nomination papers issued to relevant Senators
Wednesday 17 June 2009	Submission of nominations to the University Secretary
Friday 19 June 2009	Issue of voting papers to eligible Senators
Wednesday 1 July 2009	Submission of voting papers to the University Secretary

The last time for receipt of Nomination Forms and Voting Papers is 5.00 p.m.

ADMISSIONS SELECTOR (ENGINEERING)

54. The Senate noted that, on the recommendation of the Student Recruitment & Admissions Committee, the Senate Business Committee had approved the appointment of Dr P MacConnell as Admissions Selector (Engineering) (*vice* Dr H Barron).