

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SENATUS ACADEMICUS

Minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2013

Present: Principal, Professors Logan, Haites, McGeorge, Morgan, Wallace, Greaves, MacGregor, Ross, Craig, Buckland and Reid, Dr Skakle, Professors Soulsby, O'Donoghue and Lumsden, Dr S Davies, Dr R Wells, Professor Naphy, Dr B Connolly, Dr J Masthoff, Dr S Lawrie, Mrs M Beaton, Dr M Ehrenscheidtner, Ms C Banks, Professor Dawson, Dr J Lamb, Dr WD McCausland, Dr C Brittain, Dr A Dilley, Dr A Bryzgel, Dr K Friedrich, Dr DJ Smith, Dr Y Bain, Dr E Curtis, Ms S Cornelius, Dr G Sharman, Professor Duff, Dr A Simpson, Dr L Bennie, Dr A Jenkinson, Dr I Greig, Dr A Rajnicek, Dr P Teismann, Dr S Fielding, Dr S Semple, Dr L Aucott, Dr D Martin, Dr S Duthie, Dr L Williams, Dr D Pokrajac, Professor Chandler, Dr J Keifer, Dr L Philip, Dr A McLaughlin, Dr F Guerin, Dr N Oren, Professor Hutchison, Miss AC Deseillingy, Miss J Bjorkqvist, Miss M Dunn, Mr R Henthorn, Miss HL Smith, Mr HD Naio, Miss R Munday, Mr J Douglas, Miss G Maerker, Mr M Burke and Mr J Kenter

Apologies: Mr Cannon, Professor Hannaford, Rodger, Ms AM Slater, Dr Morrison, Professors Coyle, Zalewski Baggs, McCaig, Macrae, Professors Schaper, Gow and Nelson, Mr M Radford, Dr D Hendry, Professor Ritchie, Dr K Shennan, Dr Bunduchi, Dr R O'Connor, Dr P Mealar, Dr D Robson, Dr J Stewart, Dr T Wills, Dr K Groo, Dr T Burns, Dr A Pillai, Dr P Bernhagen, Dr R Vij, Dr M Mills, Professor Lambin, Dr J Sternberg, Dr A Carrington, Dr D Scott, Dr J Barrow, Dr J Cleland, Dr A Denison, Dr LP Erwig, Professor H Galley, Professor Schwarzbauer, Professor S Heys, Dr K Khalaf, Dr M Cruickshank, Dr R MacKenzie, Professor Newton, Dr D Pearson, Dr M Kashtalyan, Dr A Akisanya, Professor D MacDonald, Dr TFJ Norman, Dr N Vargesson, Professor Edwards, Mr M Kania, Miss CC Hunter, Miss L Reid, Mr P Bond, Miss Z McKellar, Miss Jennifer Paton and Mr G Maloney

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 31.1 The Senate was invited to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2013 (copy filed with Principal copy of the minutes).

STATEMENT BY PRINCIPAL

- 32.1 The Principal opened his statement by reminding members of the forthcoming Installation of the new Chancellor on 10 June and encouraged colleagues to attend this important University event. The Principal drew Senate's attention to the recent publication of the Leiden Ranking which had placed the University in the top 100 in the world for scientific performance. He noted the positive progress made with the Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council. The Principal advised Senate that the last round of REF evaluations had been completed and that all efforts were being made to ensure that the REF submission is as good as it can be. In that regard he thanked Senate members for their efforts. The Principal drew Senate's attention to the recently published draft Scottish Code of Good HE Governance which was out for consultation. He drew to Senate's attention the focus within the report on equality and diversity in regard to membership of governing bodies and invited the Senate to reflect on this in terms of the gender balance of

Senate Assessors on the Court. The Principal informed the Senate that the Fulbright Commission was undertaking a visit and that the Leverhulme Trust was also visiting the University. The Principal highlighted to Senate the celebrations for the 100th Anniversary of the Rowett. He also noted the recent alumni event in the US which had included a performance of Paul Mealor's latest work. In drawing his statement to a close, the Principal expressed his best wishes to the student members for their forthcoming examinations.

- 32.2 The Principal invited comment from the Senate. A student member of the Senate queried why there was no opportunity for discussion at Senate about Honorary Degree nominations. The Principal, in response, that nominations were considered by the Honorary Degrees Committee and were brought to Senate for approval but that consideration would be given to whether any amendment to the Ordinance should be made.
- 32.3 One member in regard to the issue of gender balance commented that systems to ensure gender balance were operated in some political parties and did work. Similarly, another Senator suggested a system based on proportional representation that might be used to manage gender balance. The President of the Students' Association expressed her support for any steps to make the institution more representative.

OUTCOME AGREEMENT 2013/14

- 33.1 The Senior Vice-Principal updated the Senate on the draft Outcome Agreement 2013/14 (copy filed with Principal copy of the minutes). He reminded the Senate that the Outcome Agreement is an individual agreement between an institution and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). The first of such agreements was established for 12/13. He informed the Senate that the Agreement for 13/14 covers the areas of widening participation, retention, graduate skills, research competitiveness and university and industry knowledge exchange and collaboration. He advised Senate that the SFC had requested that the Outcome Agreement include targets which include a baseline, a 3-5 year target and milestones towards achievement. He further informed Senate that the recent funding announcement from SFC regarding additional research funding would require modification to the Outcome Agreement to include a section indicating how the University would use this additional funding to support world-leading research. He also noted that the SFC may also ask the University to include further detail on widening participation metrics.
- 33.2 There being no questions, the Principal thanked the Senior Vice-Principal for his update.

SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL: FINAL GRANT ANNOUNCEMENT 2013/14

- 34.1 The Senior Vice-Principal updated the Senate on the Scottish Funding Council: Final Grant Announcement 2013/14 (copy filed with the Principal copy of the minute). In presenting his update, he highlighted to the Senate the main changes in from the indicative announcement in December 2012 and the final allocations. These changes were primarily (i) the allocation of additional funds for postgraduate taught students (home – Scots/EU), (ii) the allocation of Scottish Government funded places in the controlled subjects of medicine, dentistry and education, (iii) strategic funding

including additional Research funding and Knowledge Transfer Grant, (iv) other strategic funding including the Disabled Students' Premium and the Museums and Galleries grant and (v) the allocation of capital funding.

ENHANCEMENT-LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW

- 35.1 The Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching) updated the Senate on progress in regard to preparations for the forthcoming Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) and in particular sought comment from the Senate on the draft of Section 3 of the Reflective Analysis: Enhancing the Student Learning Experience (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes). He reminded the Senate that the Reflective Analysis (RA) was due to be submitted to the QAA along with the Advanced Information Set by 9 August 2013 and that the Panel would be visiting on 9 and 10 October and again during the week of 18 November 2013. He highlighted to Senate the focus of section 3 of the Reflective Analysis which covers areas concerning Enhancing the Student Learning Experience and asked Senate in particular for their views on the institution's effectiveness in (i) supporting equality and diversity in the student population, (ii) engaging and supporting students in their learning, and (iii) promoting the development of graduate attributes, including employability.
- 35.2 The Principal thanked Professor McGeorge for his update and stressed to the Senate the importance of the ELIR process. He invited comment from the Senate. There followed a short discussion, the main points of which are summarised below:
- A member questioned the proposed enhanced graduate transcript and whether this would extend to include skills training for PgR students. He further queried the comment in the RA in regard to student representation on major decision making bodies and noted that there were some areas where students were not represented. In response, it was noted that a sub-committee of the Researcher Development Advisory Group was reviewing skills training issues for PgR students.
 - One member queried whether reference would be included in the RA about the recent review of the Centre for Lifelong Learning. In response, it was confirmed this would be included.

ONLINE DELIVERY

- 36.1 The Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching) updated Senate on Online Delivery (copy filed with the Principal copy of the minutes). In opening, he informed the Senate that the paper presented set out a high level strategy for online delivery. While the University is primarily a campus-based institution, he informed Senate that it was also appropriate to consider the opportunities that online delivery might provide. He reminded the Senate that the University already offers a number of online programmes but noted that these had grown somewhat organically. It was now timely to look more strategically at how the institution should move forward in this area. Looking at this, he proposed to Senate that the focus should be initially on postgraduate taught provision as this is where the provision already exists. Looking at what programmes to offer, he suggested that the Senate should look at what the University wishes to be known for. Taking that approach, as indicated in the Strategic plan, it would seem appropriate to focus on the research themes and in particular he proposed Energy as an appropriate area to focus as the University

already has online provision in this area. He then proposed that the next step would be to review individual programmes to identify those best suited for online delivery: some would only be suitable for on-campus delivery, others might be appropriate for online delivery and could be supported internally whilst others may require an external partner to support the scale of online delivery anticipated. Finally, he also highlighted the opportunities afforded by MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) and suggested that some of the Sixth Century courses might be suitable for development as non-credit bearing MOOCs particularly those associated with the Research themes. In drawing to a close, he invited comment from the Senate.

36.2 There followed a short discussion, the main points of which are summarised below:

- A student member of the Senate stated that he felt the timing was right for such consideration of an online strategy and that he was supportive of the University pursuing such activities. While noting support for some potential external partners, he cautioned the University against forming links with for-profit organisations and expressed concern about the selling of the University's brand and reputation to such a body. In responding, the Vice-Principal stressed that the range of options for online delivery was a continuum from in house to fully outsourced. He stressed that it would be important to develop a clear strategy and criteria before making a decision on the model to follow. He further stressed that robust due diligence would be conducted before signing up with any prospective partner
- A senator commented that the education environment is rapidly changing and as such it is important for the University to be looking at all available opportunities.
- A senator noted the focus on Postgraduate taught provision and requested that Heads of Graduate Schools be included in future discussions.

UPDATE ON PERSONAL TUTORS

37.1 The Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching) updated Senate on Personal Tutors (copy filed with the Principal copy of the minutes). In particular, he drew member's attention to the role descriptor for the role of Personal Tutor which had been developed in close liaison with the Students' Association. He further advised the Senate that progress was being made in regard to training and that information about this would be provided to staff in the near future.

ONESOURCE STUDENT LIFECYCLE PROJECT (PHASE 1) - UPDATE

38.1 The Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching) updated Senate on OneSource Student LifeCycle Project (Phase 1) (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes). In presenting the update on progress with the project to date, he drew members' attention to the decisions approved by the Senate Business Committee on the recommendation of the OneSource Programme Board. These concerned (i) the system being student-led with responsibility placed on the student to make course selections and (ii) functionality within the system to enable appointments to be made 'on demand' by either the student or the Personal Tutor.

38.2. The Vice-Principal highlighted to the Senate the requirement in the General Regulations for curriculum approval to be approved by an Adviser of Studies. With the introduction of the MyCurriculum project from 2014/15, there would be the opportunity for straightforward curriculum to be automatically approved without the need for intervention by the Personal Tutor. He advised the Senate that there would be some situations where student's curriculum choice would not be straightforward e.g. for those repeating the year or who have had their case to progress considered by the Students' Progress Committee. Such cases may require input by the Personal Tutor. He invited Senate to comment on the proposal that a student's curriculum choice be automatically approved where it is straightforward and conforms to the Regulations.

38.3. There followed a short debate, the main points of which are summarised below:

- One member of Senate commented that for accredited degrees such as the BEd input by an Adviser of Studies was valuable to ensure that the requirements for accreditation were being met. In response it was stressed that such requirements could be defined in the MyCurriculum system.
- One member queried whether such an automatic approach would work for those programmes with a high degree of choice. It was further commented that there may also be a degree of uncertainty as to which level 3 and 4 courses might be offered and that a link to the timetable would be important. In response, it was noted that early course selection through MyCurriculum should help with managing optional courses and their scheduling. It was further noted that it was planned to provide students with a personal timetable as part of the Phase 1 deliverables.
- One member queried where responsibility would lie should a student not take the right course selection and in particular whether first years would have sufficient guidance to help them make course choices. In response, it was noted that as far as possible all regulations would be built into the system and so the system should be able to guide students to make the correct curriculum choice. The system would also provide opportunity for a student to request a meeting with their Personal Tutor should they wish. In more complex cases, a student may be required to meet with their Personal Tutor.
- A member stressed the value of the flexibility within the Scottish degree structure and the importance of a student keeping a number of degree options open in their early years. They further commented that not just regulatory adherence is important, it is also important that students are also made aware of the opportunities provided by the degree structure.
- One member queried the role of Personal Tutor and in particular, focusing on the role descriptor, questioned whether they were expected to provide curricular advice as this was not included in the role descriptor. In response it was noted that the role descriptor was for 2013/14 when Advisers of Studies would be providing curricular advice but doing so with the support of the MyCurriculum system. The role descriptor would be reviewed for 2014/15.

- One member commented that he had previous experience from another University where a similar system had been introduced some years ago and had proved successful.
- One member suggested that there might be value in having the personal tutor sign off a student's curriculum choice as a double check that the system is working. In response, it was noted that robust testing would be undertaken prior to the release of the MyCurriculum system and that it would not be released if there is any concern that it is not working as expected. By using a rules-based approach there should be less opportunity for mistakes.
- One Senator queried the extent to which the introduction of the new system would involve changing the rules to fit e.g. Joint degrees. In response, it was noted that there are a large number of joint degrees for which there are no registered students. These programmes impact on the timetable. Work is therefore required to tidy up such constraints. It was noted that removing such redundant joint degrees need not prevent them being available as exit routes should a student be able to take the required courses.
- One member commented that the University markets flexibility and student choice as an important element of an Aberdeen degree. The MyCurriculum software would provide students with the opportunity to exercise that choice.
- One member commented that the current system is not perfect and that errors do occur. The proposed system should make improvements.
- A Senator queried whether the MyCurriculum system might lead to the expertise of Advisers being lost. In response, it was noted that the system would deal with straight forward cases with more complex ones requiring intervention. Registry staff would also be available to assist with any more complex cases where regulatory advice was required.
- One member commented that a rules based system would work well if straightforward. Students would however need guidance in regard to flexibility e.g. in keeping a number of degrees open. In response, it was noted that the system should be able to show a student the degree options open based on their curriculum choice.
- One member commented that in law, Advisers often guide students in regard to course choice which may be required for different careers e.g. Private International Law which is required for those wishing to pursue a career at the Scottish Bar. In response, it was suggested that such advice could be captured within the system.
- A student member questioned whether new students would have any compulsory meeting with their Personal Tutor. In response it was noted that it was planned that Personal Tutors would meet with new tutees early in the new session.

- A student member noted that the current Advising system has inconsistencies it suggested that training could address this and would be better than simply using an IT system to address these problems.
- 38.4. In drawing the debate to a close, the Principal thanked members for their comments which would be taken into account in developing the system.

RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK – REPORT ON INSTITUTIONAL PREPARATIONS

- 39.1 The Senior Vice-Principal updated Senate on Research Excellence Framework – Report on Institutional Preparations (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes). He informed the Senate that the April reviews of documentation and impact case studies had been completed for all 25 units of assessment. Work was also ongoing in regard to selection of staff. As the 2* rated research was no longer SFC funded, work was ongoing to minimize the share of 2* research in our submissions and to have no 1* or unclassified included. Selection decisions for 80% of staff had been approved by the REF Steering Group and the decisions on the remaining 20% were pending and would be considered by the REF Steering Group in the coming weeks. A communication to staff in regard their right of appeal against selection decisions under procedural grounds had been issued in early April.

REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COURT

The Senate noted the actions taken by the University Court at its meetings on 26 March 2013.

1. Draft Resolution No of 2013 [Changes to *Regulations for Various Degrees*]

- 40.1 The Senate noted, for its part, that the Court had approved the Draft Resolution No of 2013 [Changes to Regulations for Various Degrees] and agreed to forward it to the General Council and to make it generally available in terms of Section 6 of the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966.

2. Second Chair of History: Amendment of Title

- 40.2 The Senate noted, for its part, that the Court had approved the Draft Resolution 'Second Chair of History – Amendment of title] referred to in Ordinance No. 515 (Aberdeen No. 103) (Chairs in History) to: The Hector Boece Chair in History.

The Senate noted, for its part, that the Court had approved the draft Resolution No 273 of 2013 [The Hector Boece Chair in History] and that in accordance with the provisions of Section 6(2) of the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966 had passed the draft Resolution forthwith.

3. Amendments to the *Policy on Undergraduate Student Progress and Amendments to the Policy on Appeals and Complaints*

- 40.3 The Senate noted, for its part, that the Court had approved revisions to the *Policy on Undergraduate Student Progress*.

4. Enhancement-led Institutional Review

- 40.4 The Court noted progress made in regard to preparation for the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR).

5. Draft Resolutions

- 40.5 The Court noted that the draft Resolution No 271 of 2012 [Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Non-Academic)] and Draft Resolution No 272 [Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic)] had been approved by the Senate and had been made generally available in terms of Section 6 of the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966.

The Court approved the Resolutions, subject to approval by the Business Committee of the General Council

SENATE APPOINTMENTS

- 41.1 The Senate noted that the Senate Business Committee approved the following appointments:

Dr J Cleland as the Senate representative on the Board of Governors of Strathallan School (*vice* Mr S Cannon).

Dr B Lord (*vice* Professor C Wilson) and Professor A Avenell (*vice* Professor J N'Dow) as members of the Gifford Lecture Committee.

PRO-CHANCELLOR ROBE

- 42.1 The Senate noted that the Senate Business Committee approved by circulation the robe for the Pro-Chancellor as detailed below:

The robe will be made of the same black damask as the Chancellor's and Vice-Chancellor's robes. The style of the Pro-Chancellor's robes will be the same as the Vice-Chancellor's robe. The Pro-Chancellor's robe will be trimmed with gold lace and will incorporate gold ornaments on the sleeves. The Pro-Chancellor's hat will be the same as the Chancellor's.