

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SENATUS ACADEMICUS

**Minutes of the meeting held on 30 April 2014**

*Present:* Principal, Professors Logan, Hannaford, McGeorge, Greaves and Ross, Ms AM Slater, Professors Morrison, Craig, Coyle, Mr M Whittington, Professors Skakle, Soulsby, Guz, Lumsden, Davies, Wells and Schaper, Dr J Masthoff, Dr M Ehrenschtendner, Dr S Lawrie, Professors Coghill and Dawson, Dr J Lamb, Dr WD McCausland, Dr R O'Connor, Dr A Dille, Professor Friedrich, Dr D Robson, Dr Y Bain, Dr E Curtis, Ms S Cornelius, Dr G Sharman, Dr T Burns, Dr D Hanschel, Professor Duff, Dr L Bennie, Professor Lambin, Dr J Sternberg, Dr D Lusseau, Dr I Greig, Professor Teismann, Dr S Fielding, Dr J Hussein, Professor Schwarzbauer, Dr M Cruickshank, Dr D Pearson, Dr M Kashtalyan, Dr D Pokrajac, Professor Chandler, Dr A Akisanya, Dr L Philip, Professor MacDonald, Dr A McLaughlin, Dr F Guerin, Dr N Oren, Professor Hutchison, Mr R Henthorn, Miss Z McKellar, Miss HL Smith, Miss J Franke and Mr A Swan,

*Apologies:* Professors Haites, Kunin, Morgan, Rodger, Wallace, MacGregor and Zalewski, Baggs, McCaig, Macrae, Reid and Gow, Dr R Neilson, Dr C Kee, Professor Connolly, Dr K Shennan, Professor Lurie, Dr D Hendry, Ms M Beaton, Dr P Bishop, Mr L Bebbington, Dr C Brittain, Dr A Bryzgel, Professor Mealar, Dr DJ Smith, Dr T Wills, Dr K Groo, Dr A Simpson, Dr P Bernhagen, Dr R Vij, Dr M Mills, Dr M Bain, Dr B Scott, Dr M Pinard, Dr A Carrington, Dr A Jenkinson, Dr D Scott, Dr J Barrow, Dr A Rajnicek, Dr S Tucker, Dr J Cleland, Dr LP Erwig, Dr A Denison, Professor Galley, Dr S Semple, Dr J Kyle, Professor Heys, Dr K Khalaf, Dr L Aucott, Dr R MacKenzie, Dr C Black, Dr D Martin, Professor Sahraie, Dr S Duthie, Dr L Williams, Dr J Keifer, Professor Norman and Edwards, Miss M Dunn, Mr T Balsys, Mr D Delelis, Miss J Molyneux, Mr R Islam, Mr H Naio, Mr T Stephen, Miss T Womersley, Mr M Amm Mr P McClenaghan, Mr S Gotsev, Miss L Nitsche, Mr S Adetola, Miss K Gombert and Mr B Amponsah

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- 21.1 The Senate was invited to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2014 (copy filed with the principal copy of the minute). The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed and there were no matters arising.

**STATEMENT BY PRINCIPAL**

- 22.1 The Principal began by welcoming those present to the April meeting of the Senate. The Principal spoke of the University's current good shape and emphasized how good it was to see a number of disciplines of the University represented in the world subject QS rankings, including Biological Sciences, Economics, Geography, History, Language and Literature, Law, Medical Sciences, Philosophy, Political Science and Sociology. In addition to academic recognition, the Principal spoke of the University's sound financial position but emphasized the need to work tirelessly to develop ways in which to raise funds for the University. The Principal emphasized the need to think imaginatively and wisely.

Turning to internationalisation, the Principal congratulated Professor Seth Kunin and the Deans of Internationalisation on the work being undertaken. He commented on the challenging nature of the international student market and noted data from England which showed major declines in the numbers of students coming from India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The Principal outlined to the Senate the importance of ongoing work of College marketing officers and importance of the enhancement of these roles. He also reminded the Senate that the new Director of External Relations, Theresa Merrick, would be joining the University in May.

- 22.2 The Principal spoke of the financial issues faced by the University and the UK Higher Education sector as a whole. The Principal used two slides to demonstrate the points raised.
- (i) The first slide demonstrated to the Senate income and expenditure across the UK HE sector; and showed that overall there was an excess of income over expenditure.
  - (ii) However, the second slide provided trends in capital expenditure. The graph highlighted a decrease in the amount of funding received by way of an annual grant and demonstrated the increasing need for universities to generate surpluses in order to finance capital expenditure.. The Principal emphasized the point that Universities such as Aberdeen are increasingly funded by their own resources and that the maintenance of a surplus was critical to enable developments such as the 10 Year Capital Plan.
- 22.3 The Principal announced the imminent arrival of Diana Bruxvoort, the new University librarian who was formerly at the University of Florida.
- 22.4 The Principal spoke of the Strategic Plan which, being from 2011 to 2015, would shortly require updating. The Principal informed Senate that he had had early discussions with Heads of School and the Senior Management Team and urged everyone to form part of ongoing discussions surrounding the plan. He informed Senate that these discussions had stressed the need for the University to be a 'community of scholars' and the importance of working in partnership with students to ensure great experience and to nurture careers and employment.
- 22.5 The Principal updated the Senate that the outcome of the Working Group on Bureaucracy would be brought to the next meeting of the Senate. The Principal expressed his thanks to Dr Chris Brittain and all others involved in the working group.
- 22.6 The Principal spoke of the University's commitment to issues including Health and Safety and Equality & Diversity. He spoke of the recent Women's Day Conference and the success of Project Search. He commented on the Scottish independence referendum in September 2014 and emphasized the stance of the University to remain entirely independent. The Principal urged members to ensure they made an informed decision in the referendum. The Principal acknowledged recent discussions in the press regarding CBI and confirmed the University had taken the decision to withdraw.
- 22.7 The Principal conveyed his congratulations on colleagues being shortlisted in the Times Higher Education awards for two leadership and management awards, in addition to the University success in being nominated in the Commonwealth Game Changer awards. In noting this, the Principal encouraged people to visit the newly opened Aquatic Centre. The Principal commented on the May festival, scheduled to take place over the weekend of the 9-11 May.
- 22.8 The Principal congratulated the outgoing Student President on her newly appointed role as the NUS Vice-President for Higher Education. He further congratulated all of the newly appointed sabbaticals for 2014/15 and looked forward to working with them.
- 22.9 The Principal commented with regret that the Rector was currently absent from his post due to ill health. He commented that in his absence the Rector's Assessor would be fulfilling all duties.
- 22.10 The Principal concluded his statement by wishing all students good luck in their upcoming examinations.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 23.1 The Principal introduced the item on Health and Safety. He issued a reminder of the paramount importance of Health and Safety throughout the Institution and urged everyone to complete the Health and Safety survey recently circulated.
- 23.2 The Principal informed Senate that, sadly, Nigel Corby, University Safety Advisor, would shortly retire. He stated that Mr Corby had agreed to stay on to manage the transition period, while a new member of staff is inducted into this role.

## UPDATE ON THE 10 YEAR CAPITAL PLAN

- 24.1 The Senior Vice-Principal presented a fly-through of the 10 Year Capital Plan developments to Senate.

There then followed a discussion, the main points of which are summarised below.

- One member commented that it was a very nice video which would prove informative and valuable to students, particularly during orientation, if made available online. The Senior Vice-Principal commented that in time it would be the intention to have the video made accessible online.
- Another member queried the images presented in the video and whether the artwork depicted was a true reflection of the designs. The Senior Vice-Principal commented that this was just a mock-up of how these buildings may look.
- Another member commented on the failure to mention any proposed refurbishment to Crombie Annexe, where the History department is currently located. The Senior Vice-Principal commented that plans to move all of the School of Divinity, History and Philosophy to King's College were incorporated in the plan. The Vice-Principal and Head of the College of Arts and Social Sciences further commented that there were plans to modernise and upgrade the teaching facilities in King's College and that a project board to progress this had already met.
- One member commented on the removal of the Meston building and asked if this would likely have any impact of the wind issues experience on the Academic plaza. The Senior Vice-Principal confirmed that a wind analysis would be conducted to identify any issues.
- Another member commented on the timescale of the proposed changes and asked for clarification on whether teaching space would be affected during the period of transition. The Senior Vice-Principal reassured the Senate of the commitment to teaching space. This was further reiterated by the Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning) who commented that an analysis of teaching space is currently underway.
- Another member asked whether it would be possible for the planned performance space to potential be used as a venue for lectures. The Senior Vice-Principal commented that while potentially possible, this space would be used primarily with a cultural engagement focus.
- Another member commented on the inadequacies of older lecture theatres, particularly those within the New King's building. The Senior Vice-Principal responded that some lecture theatres were not fit for purpose and that these issues would be addressed as part of ongoing projects.
- One member questioned the future use of the building currently used as the Rocking Horse Nursery. The Senior Vice-Principal commented that there were no immediate plans for the building but that it would likely revert to become an academic building.
- The Head of the School of Law expressed the delight of the School at the proposals for the Law School, asking for clarification on the timing of the proposed projects. The

Senior Vice-Principal commented that work would be undertaken in stages, with the renovations to King's College, the Students Association and the Science Building to be undertaken within the first 3 years. He commented that steps would be taken to avoid the campus entering into a 10 year period as a building site.

- One member commented on whether there were any proposed plans for the Foresterhill campus, particularly in regards to the Polwarth building. The Senior Vice-Principal commented that many changes had been made over the last 10 years at Foresterhill but expressed the commitment to the ongoing care and maintenance of the provisions as required.
- The Head of the Business School welcomed the proposed changes.
- In concluding the Senior Vice-Principal commented that there were also additional plans being considered regarding providing suitable housing accommodation for early career researchers, young academic staff and students with families.

### **OUTCOME AGREEMENT 2014/15**

- 25.1 The Senior Vice-Principal presented the Outcome Agreement for 2014/15. The Senior Vice-Principal commented on the changes in recent years to the structure of the agreement, and detailed the now refined method setting out the University's commitment to its strategic objectives, in line with the Scottish Government priorities. The Senior Vice-Principal commented that the agreement had been made following a long period of negotiation and that the University would be monitored against its achievement of the objectives listed within the paper.

There then followed a discussion, the main points of which are summarised below.

- The Principal noted his thanks to the Senior Vice-Principal and colleagues for the preparation of the Outcome Agreement.
- One member commented on whether there was a parallel process within England. The Principal commented that that there is not an HE bill in England to accord with that as laid out in Scotland.
- Another member asked the Principal to comment on whether he felt this allowed more academic freedom within England. The Principal commented that he didn't believe it mattered either way and that the Scottish Government remained committed to recognising Scottish Universities as autonomous bodies.
- The Senior Vice-Principal commented that the SFC has a recognition of the differentiation in types of Universities in Scotland. The Principal further commented that there remains a need to continue to make clear the benefits of HE and the work of the HE sector for the people of Scotland.
- One member commented on the lack of reference within the Agreement to Distance Learning or Part-time students. The Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning) commented on the commitment of the University in this regard. The member commented specifically on the Aim 4 Uni project and whether it was staffed or funded appropriated. The Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning) commented on the commitment to the project and the recent appointment of two new members of staff.

### **SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL: FINAL GRANT ANNOUNCEMENT 2014/15**

- 26.1 The Senior Vice-Principal updated the Senate that the letter expected from the SFC had still yet to arrive. The Senior Vice-Principal stated that budgets for 2014/15 were currently being based on the grant as detailed in the indicative letter and that a deviation from this was not expected. The Senior Vice-Principal commented that it was unusual for the SFC to be late.

## REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COURT

The Senate noted the actions taken by the University Court at its meeting of 25 March 2014, as under:

### 1. Equality and Diversity: Court Statement of Intent

- 27.1 The Senate noted that the University Court had approved a Court Statement of Intent of Equality and Diversity. The Statement had been prepared following the Court's consideration of the new Scottish Code of Good HE Governance, as a result of which the Court agreed that such a statement should be prepared and that it should articulate the Court's goal of securing a minimum of 25% female representation at Court. The Statement is as follows:

*The Governing Body of the University of Aberdeen (the University Court) is committed to supporting the achievement of excellent practice in embedding the principles of Equality and Diversity across all of the University's activities. In particular, the Court recognises that the increasing diversity of the University staff and student community adds to the University's success and integrity.*

*The Court believes that its own membership should represent the diverse nature of the University community insofar as is possible and practicable. To this end, the Court will seek, without prejudicing the skills and knowledge requirements of the Court, to address the current gender imbalance within its membership and will aim to achieve and maintain female representation of a minimum of 25%, with aspirations to achieve 40%, over the longer term.*

*The Court also recognises that Equality legislation protects nine specific characteristics (gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, age, pregnancy and maternity, transgender status, disability, marriage and civil partnership) and will endeavour to promote inclusivity and equality for all groups through its business and in due course may set goals in relation to these particular aspects of diversity. The University will ensure that the recruitment and selection processes for Court appointments are transparent, fair and objective.*

*All internal or external bodies when electing or appointing members of Court are asked to take this statement and the commitment to greater diversity on Court that it represents, into account.*

### 2. Ethical Statement

- 27.2 The Senate noted that the Court on, the recommendation of the Governance and Nominations Committee, approved an Institutional Ethical Statement.

The statement had been prepared following a review by the Committee of issues arising from the Woolf Inquiry into the London School of Economics' links with Libya and a subsequent benchmarking review of the University of Aberdeen's ethical policies and procedures. The Senate noted from this that the University had extensive and well developed policies and procedures for a range of ethical issues. The Senate further noted that the Court had, however, agreed to recommend that these policies and procedures be reflected in an overarching ethical statement which could guide staff and students to relevant policies and which could be highlighted in the University's corporate governance statement (copy filed with the principal copy of the minute).

## **REPORT FROM THE UCTL**

The Senate approved the actions taken by the University Committee on Teaching and Learning at its meeting of 19 March 2014, as under:

### **1. Implementation on the *Code on Practice on Assessment***

- 28.1 The Senate approved, on the recommendation of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning, the implementation plan for the *Code of Practice on Assessment* (copy filed with the principal copy of the minute)

### **ONESOURCE UPDATE**

- 29.1 The Senate noted the update on progress in regard to the OneSource Student Lifecycle Project (copy filed with principal copy of the minutes).

### **ELECTION OF NON *EX-OFFICIO* MEMBERS TO THE SENATUS ACADEMICUS**

- 30.1 The Senate noted that the Senate Business Committee had approved the timetable for the election of non *ex-officio* members of Senate (copy filed with principal copy of the minutes).

### **RECTORIAL ELECTION**

- 31.1 The Senate noted that the Senate Business Committee had approved the arrangements for the forthcoming Rectorial Election as detailed in the attached paper.