

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SENATUS ACADEMICUS

Minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 3 September 2015

Present: Principal, Professors Kilburn, Haites, Kunin, McGeorge, Greaves, MacGregor and Ross, Ms AM Slater, Professors Morrison and Gimlin, Mr M Whittington, Professors Baggs, Skakle, Guz, Lumsden, Davies, Wells, Brown Dr C Kee, Professors Connolly and Masthoff, Dr M Ehrenschtendner, Dr S Lawrie, Professor Lurie, Ms D Bruxvoort, Mrs L Tibbets, Dr WD McCausland, Dr A Bryzgel, Dr P Ziegler, Ms S Cornelius, Professors Stollery and Mealor, Dr A Lewis, Professor Duff, Dr Z Yihdego, Dr T Argounova-Low, Dr D Lusseau, Dr M Pinard, Dr J Baird, Mrs C Dennis, Dr J Barrow, Dr S Tucker, Dr M Delibegović, Dr A Jenkinson, Dr N Mody, Dr M Cruickshank, Dr C Black, Dr A Venkatesh, Professor Barker, Dr S Fielding, Dr I Cameron, Dr K Foster, Professor Lee, Dr F Thies, Professor Sahraie, Dr D Ray, Dr N Hoggard, Dr L Williams, Professor Chandler, Dr A Akisanya, Professors Kashtalyan, Dr O Menshykov, Dr A Ebinghaus, Dr C North, Dr M da Silva Baptista, Dr B Martin, Professor Hutchison, Dr C Brittain, Miss G Clarke, Mr L Fuller, Miss Z Howell, Miss D Passinke, Mr D Kaminek and Mr F Archibald

Apologies: Professors Hannaford, Glover, Craig, Coyle, Morgan, McCaig, Macrae, Reid, Jolley and Gow, Dr R Neilson, Professor Shennan, Dr D Hendry, Ms M Beaton, Dr P Bishop, Dr J Lamb, Professor Buckland, Dr A Sim, Dr A Dilley, Professor Friedrich, Dr H Pierce, Dr Y Bain, Dr E Curtis, Dr A Halsall, Dr G Sharman, Dr K Groo, Dr J Biggane, Dr A Simpson, Dr M Mills, Dr L Bennie, Dr M Bain, Dr A King, Dr J Sternberg, Professor Johnson, Dr A Rajnicek, Professor Teismann, Dr D Scott, Professor Schwarzbauer, Professor Heys, Dr K Khalaf, Dr L Aucott, Dr R MacKenzie, Professor M Helfrich, Dr J Keifer, Professors MacDonald and Dobney, Dr D Green, Dr N Oren, Professor Coghill, Dr R Macpherson, Dr W Vasonselos, Miss A Pavelekova, Mr J Waddell, Miss A Svadjian, Mr C Herbert, Miss A Hay, Miss K Gombert and Mr R McFarlane

HIGHER EDUCATION GOVERNANCE (SCOTLAND) BILL

- 46.1 In opening the meeting, the Principal advised members that a member of the Senate had requested that the item on the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Bill (agenda point 7.2 refers) be brought forward for discussion. The member expressed his concern at the content of the Bill and the implications this might have for the HE sector and in particular the University's charitable status. The Principal thanked the member for this feedback and noted that the University was required to respond to the Education Committee. The Principal commented that the Bill failed to recognise the strong and diverse nature of Scottish Higher Education. The Principal noted feedback already received from the Business Committee and assured members that Senate's views could be included in the wider University response. The Senate expressed support for the views raised and their inclusion in the response to the Bill.

EXTRACT FROM DRAFT MINUTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 JUNE 2015

- 47.1 The extract from draft Minute of the Senate of 10 June 2015 was noted. The Principal informed members that, as this was an Extraordinary meeting, the full draft minute would be included for approval at the first full meeting of the Senate in the 2015/16 academic year, scheduled for Wednesday 4 November 2015.
- 47.2 It was noted that one member had expressed concern regarding the accuracy of the extract of the minute regarding the discussion on academic structures at the June meeting. As the minutes would be considered at the November meeting, the points made were noted and it was acknowledged the concerns would be raised at the November meeting.

NEW ACADEMIC STRUCTURE AND BUDGETARY MODEL

- 48.1 The Principal, in moving to the main business of the meeting, informed Senate that they would receive four presentations; from the Senior Vice-Principal, Head of the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition, Director of Finance and the University Secretary. The Principal asked Senators to ask questions of fact only following each presentation and to reserve further questions for a more general discussion following their conclusion.
- 48.2 The Senior Vice-Principal reminded members that the meeting had been arranged to enable discussion of the more detailed issues associated with implementation of the new academic structure and budgetary model. The Senior Vice-Principal reminded the Senate of the key changes namely:
- the introduction of the new combined School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition,
 - the establishment of the Business School as a standalone school, outwith the College structure,
 - the devolution of budgets to schools together with the introduction of an annual planning and accountability process at School and College level.

THE NEW COMBINED SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, MEDICAL SCIENCES & NUTRITION

- 49.1 The Head of the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition addressed the Senate and in so doing, provided members with the rationale for the creation of the combined school and an introduction to the proposed work of the School. The PowerPoint slides of the Presentation to the Senate by the Head of the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition are filed with the principal copy of the minutes and available on the Senate webpages here [insert weblink].
- 49.2 There were no questions raised by members.

THE BUSINESS SCHOOL

- 50.1 The Acting Head of the Business School addressed the Senate and provided a presentation on the changes to the Business School structure and its establishment as a stand alone school, outwith the College structure. The PowerPoint slides of the Presentation delivered by the Acting Head of the Business School are filed with the principal copy of the minutes and available on the Senate webpages here [insert weblink].
- 50.2 There were no questions raised by members.

APPROACH TO DEVOLVED SCHOOL BUDGETS

- 51.1 The Director of Finance presented to the Senate an introduction to the approach of the University to the devolvement of budgetary responsibilities to Heads of School. The PowerPoint slides of the Presentation made by the Director of Finance are filed with the principal copy of the minutes and available on the Senate webpages here [insert weblink].
- 51.2 One member queried the contribution to core costs. In response it was noted that core costs are combined and then metrics are used to allocate these to Schools e.g. estates costs being allocated on a space basis.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES REVIEW

- 52.1 The University Secretary delivered to the Senate a presentation on the purpose, structure and methodology of the Professional Services Review. The PowerPoint slides of the University

Secretary's Presentation are filed with the principal copy of the minutes and available on the Senate webpages here [\[insert weblink\]](#).

52.2 There followed a short discussion regarding the Professional Services Review:

- One member queried the opportunity there would be for Schools to input to the Professional Services Review. In response it was noted that opportunity would be provided through the Schools/Section stream and that a Vice-Principal would be leading this work. While an initial report was planned by the end of October, further work would continue after this point.
- One member queried the £3M saving target and the proportion this was of overall turnover. In response it was noted that the central budget was £46M however the Review might identify services which should be centralised and as such the size of the overall central budget from which this saving would be sought might change.
- One member asked if the Business School would be represented on the Project Board. In response it was noted that this was not currently the case but the suggestion would be considered.

52.2 There then followed a discussion of all four presentations and their wider context. The main points of which are summarised below.

- One member of the Senate asked the Head of the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition to confirm whether there were plans to incorporate Athena Swan into the forward plan of the school. The Head of School responded to confirm there were indeed plans in this regard and that the new school was committed to its principles.
- One member of the Senate expressed scepticism at the plan for restructuring, commenting that similar plans in the past had made little difference. The member further commented that the plans were avoiding the main issue, a lack of money, and asked how schools operating at a deficit would be expected to operate without subsidies, previously provided by other schools within the College structure. The Senior Vice-Principal acknowledged the concerns as raised and commented that all Universities must restructure as circumstances change. The Senior Vice-Principal noted that some schools within the University are operating at a deficit and that this would take time and effort to resolve, but that over time a balanced situation would be reached. The Senior Vice-Principal recognised that Heads of School would be afforded the freedom to innovate, to look at salary budgets, and invest/disinvest in areas.
- A member of the Senate queried the lack of detail on changes so far provided. The Principal commented that work on detailed school strategic plans was ongoing and that these would be open documents circulated for comment and discussion.
- A member raised the issue of the Colleges and whether there remained a future role for them. The Principal assured the Senate that the role of Colleges would be to drive the plans forward and ensure, where appropriate, that cognate discussions were held.
- One member queried the potential inconsistency in having budgets devolved to school level, but maintaining Colleges as a means of oversight. The Principal assured Senate that schools could not act as individual bodies with full autonomy. Rather Schools would have a reasonable level of autonomy to choose how to deliver against the strategic objectives of the University.
- A student representative noted a lack of reference to the student experience in the restructuring plans. The Principal acknowledged the importance of the student experience and assured members that this would be thoroughly addressed by way of the school strategic plans.
- One member raised the issue of the Graduate Schools and postgraduate recruitment/fee income. The Vice Principal (Teaching and Learning) commented that a review was currently being undertaken and that this was drawing on practice elsewhere across the sector.
- The element of risk was raised as an issue by a member of the Senate. The Senate were reassured of constant discussion and acknowledgement of the risks involved, of the recognition for leadership, engagement and support.

52.3 The Principal thanked Senate for their participation.

APPOINTMENT OF ELECTED MEMBERS OF SENATE AND SENATE ASSESSORS TO THE COURT

53.1 The Senate approved the revision to the constituencies from which the Senate Assessors are elected and approved the timeline for the forthcoming elections of both elected members of Senate and Senate Assessors.