

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SENATUS ACADEMICUS

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2015

Present: Principal, Professors Kilburn, Haites, Hannaford, Greaves, MacGregor and Ross, Ms AM Slater, Professors Morrison, Craig and Gimlin, and Mr M Whittington, Professors Baggs, Morgan, Jolley, Guz, Lumsden and Wells, Dr R Neilson, Dr C Kee, Professors Connolly and Masthoff, Dr M Ehrenschwendtner, Professor Lurie, Dr D Hendry, Dr P Bishop, Mrs L Tibbets, Dr J Lamb, Professor Buckland, Dr A Sim, Dr A Dilley, Professor Friedrich, Dr H Pierce, Dr Y Bain, Ms S Cornelius, Dr A Halsall, Dr G Sharman, Dr K Groo, Dr J Biggane, Dr A Simpson, Dr Z Yiidhego, Dr L Bennie, Dr M Bain, Dr T Argounova-Low, Dr A King, Dr J Sternberg, Dr D Lusseau, Dr J Baird, Mrs C Dennis, Professor Johnson, Dr A Rajnicek, Professor Teismann, Dr M Delibegović, Dr A Jenkinson, Dr N Mody, Professor Heys, Dr M Cruickshank, Dr L Aucott, Professor M Helfirch, Dr A Venkatesh, Dr S Fielding, Dr K Foster, Professor A Lee, Dr D Ray, Dr N Hoggard, Dr L Williams, Professor Chandler, Dr A Akisanya, Dr O Menshykov, Professors MacDonald and Coghill, Dr R Macpherson, Dr M da Silva Baptista, Dr B Martin, Dr W Vasonselos, Professor Hutchison, Mr R Henthorn, Mr L Fuller, Miss Z Howell Mr T Griffin-Walker and Miss G Clarke

Apologies: Professors Kunin, McGeorge, Coyle, McCaig, Macrae, Reid, Skakle, Davies Brown, Gow Shennan, Dr S Lawrie, Ms M Beaton, Ms D Bruxvoort, Dr WD McCausland, Dr A Bryzgel, Dr P Ziegler, Dr E Curtis, Professors Stollery and Mealar, Dr A Lewis, Professor Duff, Dr M Mills, Dr M Pinard, Dr J Barrow, Dr S Tucker, Dr D Scott, Professor Schwarzbauer, Dr K Khalaf, Dr R MacKenzie, Dr C Black, Professor Barker, Dr I Cameron, Dr F Thies, Professor Sahraie, Dr J Keifer, Professors Kashtalyan and Dobney, Dr D Green, Dr A Ebinghaus, Dr C North, Dr N Oren, Dr C Brittain, Miss E Beever, Miss A Pavelekova, Mr D Delelis, Miss G Ivanova, Mr O Toloch, Miss J Killin, Mr K Strain, Mr J Squires and Miss K Gomber

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 32.1 The minutes of the Senate of 29 April 2015 were approved, with three amendments to minute 28.4 as detailed by the Academic Registrar.

STATEMENT BY PRINCIPAL

- 33.1 The Principal opened the meeting by responding to three questions that had been received from Senators in advance of the meeting. The first question related to how the University would be able to deliver teaching and promote research in the light of the plans to achieve £10.5 million recurrent savings by reducing staffing levels. The Principal reassured Senate that delivery of high quality learning, teaching and research remains a priority and that all avenues, not solely staffing, are being explored to identify savings. It had always been the intention to ensure that the exercise did not impact on standards of education delivery. The second question sought an impact assessment by academic discipline in regard to turnaround times for student feedback, staff:student ratios in seminar/tutorial groups and in regard to personal tutoring. The Principal responded by saying that it would be essential that Schools detail in their operational plans how levels of feedback would be maintained and how tutorials would be organised. The third question related to the new Code of Practice on Student Discipline. It was proposed that an additional paragraph be added to the Code, as detailed below, to address the situation where a Head of School in imposing a penalty

for plagiarism feels it appropriate to recommend mitigation of the penalty due to extenuating circumstances.

“4.2.7 The Head of School shall have the discretion to refer any case where plagiarism is suspected for further investigation to the Academic Registrar in accordance with section 5 The Head of School must inform the student in writing that the matter is being referred to the Academic Registrar for a Discipline Hearing to be arranged under this code.”

- 33.2 It was agreed that this amendment should be made to the draft Resolution to effect this change ahead of its consideration by the University Court.
- 33.3 The Principal informed members that some queries regarding the paper on Moderation (paper filed with the principal copy of the minute) had been received. In the absence of the Vice-Principal (Learning & Teaching) it was agreed to defer consideration of the paper to the October meeting.
- 33.4 The Principal began his statement by noting that now that the General Election was over, it was clear that the fiscal austerity would continue. The University would continue to lobby for spending on higher education, particularly to ensure that the impact of any cuts on research funding is minimised and would actively contribute to the ongoing review of Research Councils. The Principal continued by commenting on the recent stories in the press regarding the pay differentials between male and female staff working at the University. The Principal said that the reports were inaccurate in that the figures did not differentiate salary grades and that if the reports had done so it would have been clear that disparities were low and where, at higher levels they continue to exist the University will year on year work to reduce them. The Principal announced that congratulations were due to the Development Trust, and the staff across the University who had worked hard alongside the Trust, who had raised £69M (against a target of £50M). The Trust was about to launch a new campaign and the Principal encouraged all staff to engage with it. The Principal was pleased to see that the University had been ranked 55th in the world in the Leiden Ranking, with the Medical School being ranked 7th and the Law School 11th in the Guardian League Table. The Principal drew Senate's attention to the recent awards presented to Professor Alex Kemp who had been inducted into the Press & Journal Hall of Fame and to Liza Young in Life Sciences & Medicine who had been named Scottish PA of the year at the Annual Conference and Award for Executive Secretaries and PAs. He further reminded Senate of the recent press coverage regarding the signing of the agreement for the establishment of a branch campus in South Korea. In drawing his statement to a close, he thanked the outgoing sabbaticals from the Students' Association for their contributions to Senate over the past two years.
- 33.5 There followed some brief questions which are summarised below:
- One member queried why the University was doing well in the Leiden rankings yet less well in the REF exercise. In replying, the Principal advised that the Leiden index focused on citations which is an area in which the University performs well. Work is needed to promote our work more widely.
 - One member queried why the University is looking to establish a branch campus overseas when others, as detailed in the Times Higher, are disinvesting from such initiatives. In response, the Principal stressed that while broad based overseas campuses may not be the way forward, where there is a close fit to areas of strength at the home institution such as is the case with the Korean campus there is value to such initiatives. It was further stressed that the governmental funding being provided to this project from the Korean Government reduces the risks.

Furthermore, the project has strong links to the four largest industrial companies in the areas of shipbuilding and offshore developments particularly around CPD provision which will reduce the reliance on student recruitment.

FINANCIAL SITUATION

- 34.1 The Senior Vice-Principal reported on the financial situation, saying that the University is on target this financial year. For next financial year, the savings targets are more stringent due to funding cuts, USS changes and increases in national insurance costs. The voluntary severance scheme has received 130 applications, of which 61 (52 FTE) have been approved, amounting to savings of around £3M. A further call has been released, with options for early retirement, part-time working and offers of unpaid leave. The University is currently looking for other ways to make savings. The budget for next year, which includes a gap of £2.885M, has been approved by the Operating Board.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- 35.1 There were no items to report in relation to health and safety. The Principal advised members that progress was being made to appoint a new Director of Health, Safety and Wellbeing.

CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT

- 36.1 On behalf of the Vice-Principal (Learning & Teaching), a member of the Quality Assurance Committee presented the paper on Curriculum Management (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes). The Senate heard that there are several problems with the existing SENAS Programme and Course approval procedures, both in regard to the complexity and time-consuming linear nature of the process, the inflexibility of the technology used and a need to enhance the information provided to students regarding learning outcomes and how these are assessed. As a result, proposals were being brought forward to introduce a better method of curriculum management that is in alignment with the methods used commonly across the sector, which allows better matching of learning outcomes with level and credit, which ensures greater consistency in the way that courses and programmes are designed and described, and which reduces the unnecessary duplication of effort that exists with the current system. The new procedure and system will allow automatic feeds through to the Catalogue, Calendar and Timetable and allow updates to occur throughout the academic year rather than just in a narrow window once each year. The proposed new procedures and methods are described in detail in the paper.
- 36.2 The floor was opened up for discussion, the main points of which are as follows:
- There was general support for the proposal.
 - Some members asked whether or not it would apply to taught postgraduate programmes and courses as well as undergraduate and it was confirmed that it would.
 - It was confirmed that existing courses and programmes would not have to be put in to the new system until a change to the course or programme was required. Senate was assured that the system would have pro-forma templates and would include drop-down-box options, for example, that would reduce the need for a great deal of data input. The system, through version

control, would also enable course amendments to be made by amending the current version rather than completing a new entry.

- In noting that the new system would reduce the number of stages of approval queried the impact that loss of College approval might have. It was noted that this stage often duplicates scrutiny by the Quality Assurance Committee and given the number of forms it can be difficult to have an oversight at College level. It was noted that the College level scrutiny can provide input regarding marketability but such consideration should be addressed at the business case stage.
- One member raised concerns as to the use of Bloom's model as this had been developed in 1956 and had changed little since then. In response, it was said that the Quality Assurance Committee had to select one model and that Bloom's was chosen for its clear definitions. The decision had been a pragmatic one and the model was not meant to dictate pedagogy but to bring clarity and consistency to the description of learning outcomes – for the benefit of staff and students.

36.3 In supporting the proposals, it was noted that training would be provided for staff in regard to the new system and the outcomes-based approach to quality assurance.

CHANGES TO THE ACADEMIC STRUCTURES AND BUDGETARY MODEL

37.1 The Senior Vice-Principal presented the paper on Changes to the Academic Structure and Budgetary Model (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes). In doing so, he outlined the proposals for changes to the academic structures and budgetary model, including the merging of the School of Medicine and Dentistry, the School of Medical Sciences and the Rowett Institute, and the establishment of the School of Business as a standalone School outwith the existing College structure, reporting directly to the Senior Vice-Principal. He drew attention to the accompanying draft resolution 'Reform of Academic Structure' which he informed Senate would formalise the establishment of the new School of Business. In addition to these changes in organisational structure, he further informed Senate that budgets would be devolved to the School level to empower Heads of School to drive forward School plans. Alongside budget devolution, an annual planning and accountability process at School and College level was being introduced in line with financial and estate planning and a resource allocation model to provide Schools with clear financial incentives to generate new income. The Senior Vice-Principal invited the Senate to approve the proposals.

37.2 There followed a discussion, the main points of which are as follows:

- There was general support for the larger School on the Foresterhill campus but a note that there would be a need to ensure that brand visibility of the Rowett is not lost in the creation of the combined School;
- It was noted that clarity would be required around how any cross-subsidy between units would be enabled in the devolved budgetary model and how research allocation would operate including how this might be incentivised;
- Concern was noted by a few members around the speed of implementation and the need for greater detail about the process for implementation;
- The need for clarity around the role of Colleges was raised although it was noted that their role would focus on ensuring delivery and integration;

- There was general support for the Business School being established as a stand-alone School outwith the College structure but it was noted that there was a need for clarity around the detail of its operation as a stand-alone entity;
- The need to ensure the strength of student representation was raised and in particular a request that the role of School Convener is not diluted with the introduction of the revised structures;
- The need to ensure that the new structures do not impact adversely on Athena Swan activities was also noted;
- Clarity around how the devolved budget model and associated accountability will operate was sought. It was clarified that the Head of School would be accountable for ensuring that the School met its budgetary targets, and that in setting the target the level of initial deficit carried by a School would be taken into consideration.

37.3 Following discussion, the Senate approved the proposals in principal, including the draft resolution, and agreed to move forward with implementation and that an extraordinary meeting of the Senate should be held in late summer to enable discussion of more detailed issues associated with implementation.

(I) WORKLOAD MODELLING POLICY

38.1 On behalf of the Working Group, the Head of the School of Law introduced the Workload Modelling Paper (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes) which proposed a set of core principles and high-level parameters that should underpin workload allocation for academic staff within the University, in line with practice used elsewhere in the sector. Academic activity is defined in three main categories – teaching, research and scholarship and administration – as a function of career track. Teaching Fellow and Senior Teaching Fellow are to be renamed Lecturer and Senior Lecturer respectively, to recognise the activities undertaken by those in such roles. Based on commonly reported data across the UK and in international higher education, and following RCUK guidance, a notional figure for what constitutes total managed hours was proposed, alongside recommended baseline proportions for time on activities for each career track for full-time academic staff. These figures will include staff development time and activities. To inform these proposals further, she informed Senate that the Vice-Principal (Learning & Teaching) had asked all Heads of School to ‘stress test’ the model, reporting how much time is allocated to specific activities based on current activity, and how many courses could reasonably be offered in an academic year based on this.

38.2 There then followed a discussion, the main points of which are as follows:

- The paper was welcomed by most members of Senate, in particular the clarity regarding roles and career tracks. It was noted that a strength of the policy was that it required all staff to undertake some teaching activity.
- It was suggested that there should be clarification within the categories, or perhaps even additional categories, related to research impact, public engagement, citizenship, pastoral care, mentoring, outreach and committee membership, for example.
- It was also suggested that the detail of the paper should reflect reduced hours for probationary staff and early career researchers, and should the address workload for postgraduate research students who teach.
- Some members considered that it might be helpful to specify a minimum level of allocation of administrative duties in each role, particularly for those on the teaching and scholarship route, to encourage others to take leadership roles.

- Some members asked whether 1650 hours per annum is a realistic target given the amount of work undertaken currently. The Principal emphasised that he was not prepared to accept an annual workload greater than this, and that the institution must not ask more of staff than was reasonable. A member stated that it was important to find a way to link available resource to amount of time required. It was noted that the 'stress test' would be helpful in this regard.
- A member suggested it would be helpful to clarify how and to what extent the core principles should be considered alongside the framework for academic excellence and that clarification would be required regarding the promotional route and expectations beyond Senior Teaching Fellow. Another member commented that it was important that Heads of School retained flexibility in allocating workloads as appropriate to the disciplinary contexts, particularly in regard to the framework for academic excellence.

38.3 It was agreed that the points made in the discussion would be fed back to the Working Group for consideration.

(II) ORGANISATIONAL PROPOSAL – SCHOOLS AND ACADEMIC LINE MANAGEMENT

39.1 The Head of the College of Arts and Social Sciences presented the Schools and Academic Line Management paper (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes). The paper proposed that the University create a more vertical approach to academic line management so that no individual Head of School is expected to line manage a whole School. The paper proposed the establishment of the role of Academic Line Manager, with no manager being responsible for more than 15 staff. This approach would respond to issues caused by the current flat management structure, facilitate personal and management development in individuals in the executive group within each School, facilitate management succession planning and improvement in consistent and creative annual review, objective planning for excellence, personal or career development and management of issues of capability or performance. Specifically it was proposed to restructure the management of academic Schools such that each School has an academic head and at least one deputy with line management responsibility and to devolve leadership and management over areas of definable academic activity within the School through academic line managers, each of whom will have no more than 15 direct staff members reporting to them. It was proposed that members of staff at Senior Lecturer, Senior Research Fellow, Senior Teaching Fellow, Reader and Professor level may be called upon to line manage other members of academic staff within a School, with devolved responsibility from the Head of School. A draft job description for Academic Line Manager was also presented, and it was noted that expressions of interest for the post of academic line manager would be solicited in the first instance.

39.2 A discussion then followed, the main points of which are as follows:

- Members of the Senate were generally in support of the proposals, noting that they would reduce the burden on Heads of School and provide opportunity for others to gain management experience.
- Some members expressed concerns, namely that staff training would be essential for the implementation of the proposals; that there may be a need for some local variation in the roles of line managers; that consideration may need to be given to softening wording within the draft job description in regard to allocation of duties by line managers; and that there may need for incentivisation, possibly

through promotions, to encourage staff to volunteer for the line management roles.

- Many members noted that such practice already took place informally within larger schools and disciplines. It was further noted that the proposals would allow more staff to gain formal line management experience, which would be helpful for personal and career development and for future promotion.
- One Senator commented that succession planning within schools might be easier under the proposed system, and the Principal voiced his support noting that a more manageable number of staff for line managers would enable each to offer greater time and resource in supporting their staff.
- During the discussion it was clarified that the line manager would not be accountable for the behaviour of those s/he line managed, but would be held accountable for the activities outlined in the job description.
- It was further noted that whilst there was not huge scope for local amends to the job description within Schools, it was anticipated that the relative proportions of activities within the job description might vary within and between schools.
- It was confirmed that training and support for new line managers would be made available, and in advance of the anticipated launch date of 1 August 2015.
- Some reservations were noted. Several Senators voiced concern at the pace at which implementation was intended and at the limited opportunity for Schools to adapt the line manager job description.
- One Senator felt that there might be serious tension in regard to workload allocation if this activity was devolved beyond Head of School and it was agreed that thought would have to be given as to how this activity was carried out.
- Another Senator, whilst welcoming the plans for staff training, suggested that 'capability management' should be integral to the selection and training, and further suggested that the role of Deputy Head of School might become formalised, with an associated defined remit and appropriate recognition. In regard to training it was requested that equality and diversity be included, and a final comment from one senator cautioned against over-prescription.

- 39.3 The Principal thanked everyone for their very helpful comments and asked the Head of College to take the feedback away for further consideration before finalising the policy.

TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION – KOREAN CAMPUS

- 40.1 The Vice-Principal for Internationalisation introduced a paper providing an update on the preparations for the establishment of a University Branch Campus in South Korea (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes), which Court had approved at its meeting in December 2014. The Vice-Principal for Internationalisation informed members that the Korea project, whilst not a huge income generator, is nevertheless a key aspect of the University's strategic aims. It will allow the University to expand in areas of teaching excellence in engineering, and in business- and industry-supported continuing professional development; it will help the University to reach students who are unable or unwilling to travel to Aberdeen; and it will provide opportunities for Aberdeen-based students to access facilities and connections with industries in Korea. In addition, there is huge research potential in South Korea, with access to research facilities, funds and projects that are not accessible elsewhere in the UK. Senators were informed that the University of Aberdeen 'brand' is already promoted well in South Korea, as well as Japan and China, and that the Branch Campus project has already positively enhanced Aberdeen's reputation.

- 40.2 One Senator asked whether there were plans to expand the project in future. In response the Vice-Principal suggested that other Schools with provision related to the field of energy might get involved, and that in time undergraduate provision might also be considered. It was also suggested that other transnational education projects in other international markets with real potential might be considered.

DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN 2015–2020

- 41.1 The Senate approved, for its part, the draft Strategic Plan 2015-2020 (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

REVIEW OF PRINCIPAL COMMITTEES AND ADVISORY GROUPS

- 42.1 The Senate approved, for its part, the review of Principal Committees and Advisory Groups (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Senate approved and noted the recommendations arising from the meeting of the University Committee on Teaching & Learning held on 13 May 2015.

1. Changes to General and Supplementary Regulations

- 43.1 The Senate approved, on the recommendation of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning, and forward to the University Court, the draft Resolution 'Changes in Regulations for Various Degrees' (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

The Senate was further invited to ask the University Court that, in accordance with the provisions of Section 6 (2) of the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966, the draft Resolution be passed forthwith, so that the amended provisions may be applied with effect from date on which they are passed by the University Court.

2. Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic)

- 43.2 The Senate approved, on the recommendation of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning, and agreed to forward to the University Court, the draft Resolution 'Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic) (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

3. Proposed Moderation Procedures 2015/16

- 43.3 On the recommendation of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning, the Senate approved the Proposed Moderation Procedures 2015/16 (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

4. Proposed Process for Considering Student-Focussed Partnerships

- 43.4 On the recommendation of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning, the Senate approved a proposal for a revised, streamlined process for the consideration and approval of University partnerships related to learning and teaching (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

5. Student Progress Committee Remit

- 43.5 On the recommendation of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning, the Senate approved the amendments to the Student Progress Committee remit (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

6. Term Dates

- 43.6 The Senate noted that the Committee approved the Term Dates for Academic Year 2016/17. The dates of term are available at <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/study/term-dates-201415-631.php>.

7. Study overseas

- 43.7 The Senate noted that the University Committee on Teaching & Learning had approved a proposal to have minimum academic requirements to participate in student exchanges, either through the Erasmus programme or the International Exchange programme. The Committee had agreed that the University should adopt a matrix type model similar to that of the University of Glasgow with regards to the assessment criteria. This would include an assessment of a student's academic performance. The University of Glasgow requires a minimum of a C grade average to participate in exchange.

In addition, the Committee had agreed to a proposal to remove the inclusion of grades achieved during study abroad, when the study abroad is undertaken as part of the honours programme, from the determination of final degree class. It was anticipated that this would help to increase the number of students taking up the opportunity to undertake a period of study overseas. With the move to a GPA approach to determination of degree classification, such a move would mean that student's degree class would be solely determined on the basis of the grades achieved at Aberdeen

8. Provisional Marks

- 43.8 The Senate noted that the University Committee on Teaching & Learning had approved a proposal, aimed at speeding up the return of non-honours results in January. The Committee had agreed that non-honours first half-session results should be returned to students as 'provisional' as with the honours and PGT results. Whilst there would still be an expectation that Externals would be sent the marks in January, there would be no requirement to delay publication of results to students until after the External has confirmed his/her approval.

The same logic would apply to the non-honours results as applies to honours and PGT: 'they can be raised or lowered at the final Examiners' meeting later in the same Academic Year (with one exception). The exception is that while E1 (Not Achieved) for a first half-session course that forms part of an Honours or postgraduate taught programme may be changed at the final Examiners' meeting to D3 or above (Achieved), D3 or above cannot be changed to E1 or lower'. The Academic Quality Handbook would be updated accordingly to reflect this change.

VALIDATION OF TRINITY COLLEGE BRISTOL WITH BRISTOL BAPTIST COLLEGE

- 44.1 The Senate approved, for its part, the Validation of Trinity College Bristol with Bristol Baptist College for a period of five years with effect from September 2015 for the delivery of University of Aberdeen postgraduate research degrees (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes). The Senate noted that approval would be subject to endorsement of the arrangements and proposed fees by the University Management Group (UMG).

BUREAUCRACY REVIEW UPDATE

- 45.1 The Senate noted the Bureaucracy Review Update (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).