

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SENATUS ACADEMICUS

**Minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2018**

*Present:* Professor M Greaves, Professor P McGeorge, Professor R Wells, Professor M Campbell, Professor M Ross, Professor BD MacGregor, Professor P Hannaford, Dr P Sweeney, Professor E Welch, Mr M Whittington, Professor G Paton, Professor J Skakle, Professor D Jolley, Professor I Guz, Professor C Kee, Professor E Pavlovskaja, Professor M Brown, Professor K Shennan, Dr M Ehrenscheidtner, Mrs L Tibbetts, Dr J Lamb, Dr L McCann, Professor N Hutchison, Dr A Sim, Professor P Nimmo, Dr G Hough, Dr P Ziegler, Dr H Martin, Mrs M Stephen, Dr T Rist, Dr A Lewis, Professor P Mealar, Dr P Glover, Dr A Simpson, Dr Z Yihdego, Mr S Styles, Dr M Mills, Dr A McKinnon, Professor J Jayasinghe, Dr A Rajnicek, Dr K Kiezebrink, Dr J Macdiarmid, Dr M Brazzelli, Dr D MacCallum, Dr G Jones, Dr P Murchie, Dr S Fielding, Dr I Cameron, Professor A Lee, Professor H Wallace, Dr E Nordmann, Dr M Jackson, Professor D Jovcic, Professor A Akisanya, Professor M Kashtalyan, Dr B Rea, Dr J Oliver, Dr C North, Professor J Feldmann, Professor G Coghill, Professor C Grebogi, Dr M da Silva Baptista, Dr B Martin, Dr W Vasconcelos, Dr N Oren, Mr L Ogubie, Miss D Connelly, Mr O Kucerak and Miss M Jensen,

*Apologies:* Professor I Diamond, Professor N Haites, Dr G Gordon, Dr D R Smith, Dr M Bain, Professor A Sahraie, Professor S Heys, Professor H Hutchison, Professor A Jenkinson, Professor J Masthoff, Professor G Macfarlane, Dr R Neilson, Mr D Auchie, Dr M Hole, Dr P Bishop, Professor W Naphy, Mr E Usenmez, Dr T Fahey Palma, Mrs D Bruxvoort, Professor J Schaper, Dr H Pierce, Dr R Shanks, Dr A Bryzgel, Dr B Tribut, Dr T Argounova-Low, Professor D Anderson, Dr D Lusseau, Professor M Pinard, Dr J Baird, Dr M Barker, Dr M Delibegović, Dr D Scott, Dr N Vargesson, Dr J Hislop, Dr A Jack, Dr N Mody, Professor R Barker, Dr K Foster, Dr F Thies, Professor G Nixon, Dr D Ray, Dr K Pilz, Dr O Menshykov, Dr N Schofield, Dr A Ebinghaus, Miss M Leskovska, Mr K Thomson-Duncan, Miss K Metcalfe, Mr J Brown, Miss K Paterson-Hunter, Mr N Johansson, Miss I Ewart, Mr L Budrass, Miss I Donaldson, Mr J Short, Miss A McSeveney, Mr Y Dmitrov, Mr L Fuller and Miss K Smith

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

- 68.1 The Senior Vice-Principal opened the meeting, welcoming members of the Senate. The Senior Vice-Principal reminded members that the meeting would be recorded and asked that they introduce themselves before contributing to discussion to allow for an accurate minute. With respect, the Senior Vice-Principal reminded members that they represent constituencies and asked that if members choose to speak from a personal perspective that they make this known. He noted that attendance was somewhat depleted but confirmed that the meeting was quorate.
- 68.2 The Senior Vice-Principal invited members to approve the agenda. No objections or comments were raised and the meeting proceeded.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- 69.1 The Senior Vice-Principal invited members to confirm that they were content with the minute of the meeting of the Senate held on 21 February 2018. No objections or comments were raised and the meeting proceeded.

## UPDATE FROM THE SENIOR VICE-PRINCIPAL

- 70.1 On behalf of the Principal, the Senior Vice-Principal provided an update to the meeting. The Senior Vice-Principal began by noting the announcement of the appointment by the Court of Professor George Boyne as the successor to Professor Sir Ian Diamond. He noted that Professor Boyne is currently Pro-Vice Chancellor at the University of Cardiff. On behalf of the Senate he stated congratulations and welcome to Professor Boyne. The Senior Vice-Principal also thanked all members of the Senate who contributed to the recruitment process, whether by way of informal meetings with candidates or as members of the selection panel. He stated that he felt the process had been both collegial and democratic. The Senior Vice-Principal stated that Professor Boyne would take up the position of Principal on 1 August 2018.
- 70.2 The Senior Vice-Principal noted the developments with regards to the pension dispute. He informed the Senate that discussions over the USS pension scheme at a national level had resulted in agreement on a way forward and stated that this was welcomed. The Senior Vice-Principal noted that the current industrial action was therefore at an end. He expressed that he was hopeful that the process that was being taken forward at a national level would identify a future for the USS scheme agreeable to all.
- 70.3 The Senior Vice-Principal acknowledged that at the meeting of the Senate held on 21 February 2018, the Principal had informed the Senate of the success of the Health Services Research Unit (HSRU) and the Health Economics Research Unit (HERU) in being awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher Education. The Senior Vice-Principal confirmed that the Principal and colleagues from the HSRU and the HERU had received the award at a ceremony at Buckingham Palace. He stated that this represented a great accolade for the University. The Senior Vice-Principal further noted academic initiatives, further developing the reputation of the University as follows:
- The launch of the Centre for Women's Health Research, to be based in the forthcoming Baird Family Hospital within the Foresterhill site.
  - The announcement of the University as a key partner in a major £54 million UK project to use data science to address healthcare issues. The Senate noted that the University would work collaboratively with Universities around the UK and form part of the Health Data Research UK partnership because of its reputation for world-class expertise, its track record in using health data to derive new knowledge, and its close partnership with the NHS and the public to translate research findings into benefits for patients.
  - The award of £1 million in Leverhulme funding to establish a centre for doctoral training, to help train new researchers in technologies that convert organic waste into sustainable materials. It was noted that the University was one of only ten Universities receiving funding under this heading.
  - In partnership with the Oil and Gas Technologies Centre, the launch of the multimillion pound Centre of Excellence in Decommissioning and Late Life. The Senate noted that it was probably the first of its kind in the world and would allow the University to take a leading role in an area which is very relevant to the North East of Scotland and indeed globally.
- 70.4 With reference to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) the Senior Vice-Principal informed the Senate that nine University colleagues had been appointed to REF panels. He detailed that three members of staff had been appointed to the subpanel for the criteria setting phase: Professor Neil Gow, Professor Marion Campbell and Professor Jen Cleland and that a further six staff members had been selected for the assessment phase subpanel: Professor Euan Phimister, Professor Xavier Lambin,

Professor Bernadette Hayes, Professor Alison Brown, Dr Beth Lord and Professor Tom Greggs. On behalf of the Senate, he offered his congratulations to those appointed. He stated that the accolade was not only a reflection of personal academic esteem but of great benefit to the University through the insights which will be gained through memberships of the panels.

- 70.5 The Senior Vice-Principal also offered his congratulations to Professor Alison Murray, Roland Sutton Chair of Radiology and Professor Jorg Feldmann, Chair in Environmental Analytical Chemistry, on being elected as fellows of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.
- 70.6 The Senior Vice-Principal acknowledged the fifth annual International Women's Day Conference at the University, celebrating International Women's Day and bringing together a varied audience of students, staff, including early career researchers, and members of the public to hear from a variety of speakers. He noted the publication of the May Festival programme to be held from 25-27 May 2018. He thanked those involved in the programme. Finally, the Senior Vice-Principal informed the Senate of the 10<sup>th</sup> annual Academic Development symposium taking place on campus on 26 April 2018, with Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience as its main topic for discussion.
- 70.7 In concluding, the Senior Vice-Principal informed the Senate that the University had lost the annual boat race to RGU. He stated that the team had performed very well and had given RGU a very challenging race.

### **HEALTH SAFETY AND WELLBEING**

- 71.1 The opportunity for Senators to raise any issues regarding health, safety and wellbeing was provided. No issues were raised and the meeting proceeded.

### **REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COURT**

- 72.1 The Senate received an update from Dr Oren on behalf of the Senate Assessors on the meeting of the University Court held on 4 April 2018 (copy filed with the principal copy of the minute).
- 72.2 Dr Oren provided an update on the key points arising from discussions at the meeting of Court on 4 April 2018 as follows:
- Regarding the appointment of Professor Boyne as the new Principal. He thanked all members of Senate who took part in the focus groups conducted as part of the appointment process.
  - The approval of proposals from the Remuneration Committee to create a fund to recognise, reward and incentivise senior members of staff.
  - The discussion of an extensive analysis of the possible scenarios and associated risks to the University arising from Brexit and how the University might adapt to these. Dr Oren stated that these were not only from a financial point of view but also focussed on retaining staff and students.
  - An update on the establishment of two Court working groups, one to develop proposals for new borrowing for investment via a bond, and one to consider the potential to grow income streams out with teaching and research activity. Dr Oren recognised the early stages of discussion in this regard.

- An update on the resolution to the USS pension dispute.
- Regarding the student occupation of part of the University Office, the Court agreed not to consider the matter further pending the outcome of ongoing independent investigations.
- The consideration of a report on the University's Superannuation and Life Assurance Scheme (UASLAS) which provides pensions to support staff.
- The consideration of papers on the University's strategic planning process and reports on performance against the Key Performance Indicators which underpin the Strategic Plan to 2020.
- The consideration of the Senate's request for increased transparency of Court business. Dr Oren confirmed that the Court has agreed its agendas be made available to staff and students in advance of meetings.

72.3 No comments or queries were raised in response to the report from the University Court and the meeting proceeded.

### **STUDENT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT 2018 – 2020**

73.1 The Senate received the paper on the Student Partnership Agreement 2018-2020. Members of the Senate noted that that item had been carried forward for consideration from the meeting held on 21 February 2018. The Student President confirmed that the agreement had been considered by the Student Council and asked members of the Senate to approve the document as a working document.

73.2 Professor McGeorge, Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning), informed the Senate that many institutions in Scotland have a partnership agreement and that it represented a powerful vehicle for establishing the areas the University and the Students' Association agree they would like to focus on. Professor McGeorge acknowledged the work which had gone into the creation of the agreement. He noted that the document was a living one and that, given the delay in its consideration by the Senate, some of the dates contained within it would need to be amended. He stated his support for the agreement.

73.3 The Senior Vice-Principal echoed Professor McGeorge's comments in recognising the important nature of the document and moved to undertake a vote on the proposed Student Partnership Agreement.

In favour of the proposed Student Partnership Agreement:	67
Not in favour of the proposed Student Partnership Agreement:	0
Abstaining from the Vote:	4

A vote having been taken, the Senior Vice-Principal confirmed that the Student Partnership Agreement had been approved.

### **HONOURS CLASSIFICATION METHOD: COMPARISON OF GS VS GPA**

74.1 Members of the Senate received the paper on the Honours Classification Method and the Comparison of GS vs GPA. Members of the Senate were informed that they were not being asked to approve anything at this time but to discuss the paper and to provide an academic view in advance of the paper returning to the Senate at its next meeting in May 2018.

74.2 Professor Shennan, Dean for Quality Enhancement and Assurance, introduced the paper to the Senate and provided background on it to members. Professor Shennan stated that, since 2014, the University had been using two different classification systems, with students being advantaged by the award of the most favourable result. She noted, however, that the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) in response to feedback from External Examiners had noted that it was time to decide which classification system should be adopted for use in 2018/19 and beyond. Professor Shennan informed the Senate that the QAC had undertaken to gather data on the results of the 2017 graduating cohort, as detailed within the paper within Appendix 1. She noted that the Committee had looked at students classified in the same way under both systems, the number where the Grade Spectrum (GS) system gave the higher classification and the number where the Grade Point Average (GPA) system gave the higher classification. Professor Shennan acknowledged the discrepancies demonstrated by this analysis, particularly regarding the differences between the Arts and Social Sciences and the Science based degree programmes and which system favours each.

74.3 Professor Shennan invited members of the Senate to discuss the paper and, in so doing, inform the paper that would return to the Senate for consideration and approval. Following Professor Shennan's introduction a discussion ensued, the main tenets of which were as follows:

- Professor McGeorge, Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning) reminded the Senate that on the paper's return to the Senate in May, a decision would need to be taken if the University did not wish to continue with the current system so that that students entering their Honours years are aware of how their degree classification will be calculated.
- Mr Styles stated his agreement that the dual system currently in place is unsatisfactory. He noted, however, his concern and those of his colleagues within the School of Law, at the huge grade inflation brought about by the grading system. With reference to appendix 2 of the paper, Mr Styles noted that in 2013, approximately 25% of students graduated with a first class degree and that this has risen in 2017 to nearly 40%. Mr Styles stated that if 40% of students are achieving a first class degree, the award ceases to have any meaningful mark of distinction. Mr Styles suggested that this was as a result of the use of the Common Grading Scale (CGS) and the five points within the 'A' band of the scale as opposed to the three points within the other bands. He noted concern that the system had been designed to create grade inflation and that, in the long run, awarding this number of first class degrees was not good for the reputation of the University. He further noted that the number of 2:2s awarded had all but disappeared, with approximately 5% of students receiving this classification. He noted that when undertaking his degree, this was the other way round, with 5% of students achieving a first class degree. Concluding, he expressed his concern that this was an issue which should be taken very seriously, particularly in the quality assuring of degrees. Responding, Professor Shennan confirmed that the move to 5 points within the 'A' band of the CGS had been in direct response to feedback from External Examiners who stated that the full range of the marking scale was not being used and therefore it was incredibly difficult to achieve a first class degree at the University of Aberdeen compared to other comparable Institutions, primarily as markers were reluctant to use the full scale. Mr Styles stated he understood this logic but that, inevitably, mathematically this equated to an increase in first class degrees. He further noted that combined with the instruction to mark to the middle of a band on the scale, grade inflation was unsurprising. He again

asked whether it was good for the reputation of the University if approximately 40% of students achieve a first class degree.

- Regarding grade inflation specifically, Professor Shennan noted that this was seen across many institutions in the UK and not an issue unique to the University or the University's marking scale. Professor Shennan clarified that markers were asked to mark to the middle of the appropriate band and then up or down within it. Mr Styles noted that this could have been achieved under the former Common Assessment (20-point marking) Scale (CAS). Professor Shennan stated that the evidence presented within the paper demonstrates that the GS is resulting in more first class awards than the GPA.
- Professor McGeorge stated that he was not going to argue against the fact that, in some cases, grade inflation may be being seen. He noted, however, that, in the majority of cases at a course level, External Examiners confirm that the grades awarded to students are appropriate to the work they are producing. He further noted that the way this was translated into the award of a degree classification was entirely at the University's behest. He urged caution, however, at the assumption that the quality of the work of students does not justify the level of mark they are achieving. He expressed concern at this position and that the evidence, such as External Examiners reports, did not support the hypothesis that marks at the level of first class were being given away. He acknowledged that it was difficult and problematic to make comparisons to the past since when a lot had changed, including the setup of assessment, pedagogic approaches and modularisation, and that these significant changes would undoubtedly impact the marks awarded to students. He expressed that to state the increase in degree classes awarded was all down to grade inflation was to exclude other equally plausible hypotheses.
- Mr Styles drew attention to the fact that the paper demonstrated an increase in the number of first class degrees awarded from 25% to 40% within a period of five years. Responding, Professor McGeorge acknowledged the alternative hypothesis that what the University was doing before was disadvantaging students and that marking is now completed more fairly and appropriately. He stated that both were equally plausible hypotheses to explain the same data set.
- Professor Pavlovskaja stated that the University was recruiting high quality students with School qualifications of As and Bs. She noted that it would be concerning and a strong message to convey, if students at this level after four years of study at the University weren't able to achieve a first class degree. She further stated the appropriateness of the A grade band.
- Mr Simpson informed and sought to reassure the Senate that at a Law exam board, the grading was not seen to be an issue and it was confirmed as comparable to grades awarded at the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow. He stated, however, that the concern at the most recent exam boards related to the dual classification system and the potential that this results in disparity.
- Professor Anderson stated that he received several submissions from constituents within the School of Social Science, including Heads of Department and Exams Officers in response to the paper. He noted that the main concern raised was that the paper was structured rhetorically and in such a way that did not allow for an easy debate on the two positions. He informed the Senate that colleagues felt that there should be a move to one system but that they disagreed strongly with undocumented assertions in the paper that staff were not applying the full scales properly and had asked for evidence from External Examiner reports that this was indeed the case. Professor Anderson asserted that the paper was rhetorically steering Senate towards the approval of the GPA without sufficient evidence. He noted that a constituent had

expressed that the debate would be more meaningful if the University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL) would admit that the purpose of the change was to increase the number of first class degrees. He continued to note that some of his constituents felt it was inappropriate to compare the GS with the GPA. Professor Anderson expressed his personal concern at allegations that staff were not doing their job properly, weren't properly aware or marking appropriately. He stated that there was no evidence of this within the School of Social Science and that any staff member or student can make sense of any system. Finally, Professor Anderson expressed the feeling of his constituents that the emphasis of Senate's debate should be on the handling of borderline grades and not the use of mathematical systems to generate classifications but the importance of local degree collectives and exam boards and their role in adjudicating borderline grades and putting the whole context of a student in perspective. Responding, Professor Shennan stated that in some areas of the University, there was evidence that Schools were not marking appropriately and making use of the entire scale. She stated that External Examiners reports reflected this assertion but that it may not be present in the School of Social Science.

- Professor McGeorge agreed the importance of the issue of borderlines. He acknowledged recent reviews undertaken by Universities UK (UUK) and that they had been keen to ensure consistency when it came to borderline cases. He stated that this was of particular importance within the University of Aberdeen where such a large proportion of students were undertaking joint degrees and to ensure a student is treated consistently across disciplines. Professor McGeorge further responded to the assertion that the paper was designed to increase the number of first class degrees awarded. He stated that the paper isn't designed to do so nor to encourage the use of either system. In terms of the broader question of increasing the number of first class degrees awarded, feedback from External Examiners from some time ago detailed that at the University it was very difficult to achieve this and, on looking at comparable Institutions recruiting students on comparable entry tariffs, the University was awarding significantly fewer first class awards.
- Dr North acknowledged that there were other points within the paper that required to be addressed. He noted that the data provided within appendix 1 was incorrect. Dr North stated that the use of the GS made a significant difference to students from Geology. He acknowledged past feedback from External Examiners that marks awarded had not reflected the standard of work being seen and that the consequence of a move to GPA would be a dramatic reduction in the classifications awarded within Geology. Dr North expressed concern at the proposal within the paper to equally weight levels 3 and 4. He clearly stated that due to the progressive nature of Geology, this would not be appropriate. Furthermore, he expressed that he had often seen an improvement in students in level 4. He added that External Examiners and relevant accrediting bodies were content with the structure of the discipline and that had an equal weighting structure been in place, a third of Geology students graduating in 2017 would have received a lower degree class and zero first class degrees. He expressed that not all disciplines should be treated in the same way. Responding, Professor Shennan stated that the data used within appendix 1 was that provided by Schools. She committed to investigate this issue further.
- Dr Oliver echoed the points as raised by Dr North. He stated that he had spoken with exams officers from within the School of Geosciences and conveyed their concerns that a move to the use of GPA would potentially take away significant powers from Exam Boards. He noted that while he understood the simplicity of

the use of mathematical calculation systems as a means of determining degree classification, he was concerned that this took away the ability of individuals in Exam Boards to feed into individual experiences. He expressed that Exam Boards allow for the scrutiny of individual student records and to pay attention to issues such as exit velocity. He expressed the concern of Exams Officers within Geosciences that Exam Boards would become a rubber stamping exercise as opposed to the opportunity to drill down into the individual histories and contingencies surrounding grading.

- Mr Whittington expressed concern that the data provided in the paper provided data only in relation to Undergraduate (UG) and not Postgraduate Taught (PGT) students. Responding, Professor Shennan confirmed that PGT had been requested from Schools but had not yet been provided.
- Professor Brown expressed concern of the risk of student progression in equally weighting levels 3 and 4 and the risk of the weighting early stages of the Honours programme too heavily. He noted the importance of level 4 and the demonstration of ability through the process and therefore the marks achieved therein. He further stated the additional benefit of defending the four-year process.
- Ms Connelly confirmed that as a consequence of Spring break and the current period of revision, there was no feedback from the student body on the paper as yet but that it would be sought in advance of the consideration of the paper at the May meeting of the Senate.
- Professor McGeorge stated his agreement of the importance of Exam Boards, however, equally stated the importance of the need for the judgement of Exam Boards to be consistent and that that consistency be well documented. While stating an understanding for the need for flexibility and the operation of expertise, he reminded the Senate of the importance of consistent approach to ensure fairness. He further reminded the Senate that the move to the equal weighting (50/50 split) of levels 3 and 4 had previously been agreed by the Senate and that it had been brought back to Senate for discussion on this basis. Professor McGeorge noted that he had no strong view on whether the GS or GPA should be implemented or whether levels 3 and 4 should be equally weighted, other than to ensure consistency and transparency were achieved.
- Dr Rea reiterated the comments made by Drs North and Oliver. On behalf of the department of Geography, Dr Rea stated that they would be against the move to the GPA on the basis that the system is not favourable to Geography students. He noted his concern that there was a split amongst the University in terms of which system better suited disciplines and/or Schools.
- Dr Oliver, addressing the issue of consistency in the context of exam boards, proposed that Exams Officers be appropriately trained in order that they might communicate appropriately to members of Exam Boards, including course coordinators on appropriate practice and procedure. Responding, Professor McGeorge noted practice at other institutions where members of staff from other University Schools attend Exam Boards across the institution in order to share practice and to achieve cross-institutional consistency.
- Professor Shennan informed the Senate that the direction of traffic across institutions within the UK was to move to a more defined system for determining degree classifications, in order to achieve transparency.
- Ms Jensen expressed the view of students that the CGS system represented a fair system and noted that the award of 'A1' on the 5-point scale is recognised as being special and is meaningful to the student body. She further noted that an award of this nature represents a student's commitment, originality and curiosity in academia.

- Professor Wells, Vice-Principal (International) stated that the dual system was put in place for good reason, but noted that the longer it is to be used, the more problems it will create. Professor Wells recognised the issue of training and the appropriate use of the scale. He acknowledged that the use of the scale as intended may be easier to do within the numerical subjects, further intensifying a need for training. He stated that as long as a safety net of a dual system was in place, staff would be less likely to engage with training and the scale as it is intended.
- Mr Styles stated that the proposal of equal weighting of years 3 and 4 was particularly problematic for the School of Law as a consequence of the requirements of the Law Society. Mr Styles informed the Senate that students within Law only undertake two of their Honours courses during level 3 and four Honours courses plus their dissertation in level 4. Mr Styles noted that the equally weighted model would not be feasible nor appropriate within the School of Law.
- Dr Lamb expressed concern as to the different weighting of Honours years. Dr Lamb noted that students, under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) must be aware of the calculation used to classify their degree. He expressed the issue of varied weightings leads to problems in ensuring students can understand the calculation. He noted this was further intensified by students undertaking cross-School joint degrees and in instances of students undertaking Enhanced Study. Dr Lamb emphasised the fact that such calculations must be transparent and understandable to students. Dr Lamb proposed that the way to address the issue was to amend the credit value of courses and differentiate the number of credits undertaken at levels 3 and 4.
- Professor Kashtalyan also emphasised the importance of transparency to students, in ensuring that they are able to calculate their degree classifications themselves. Professor Kashtalyan expressed the view that the GS has this transparency. She noted that the elements of assessment which are considered are made clear to students in course handbooks, allowing for this transparency. Professor Kashtalyan noted that this was not the case with the GPA and students were unable to calculate their own achievements. She noted that if the GPA was to be adopted, students should receive alphanumeric results, in addition to grade points with two decimal places in order to negate issues of transparency. Responding, Professor Shennan informed the Senate that it was her understanding that, going forward, students would be provided this level of detail.
- Professor Welch informed the Senate that students within the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture particularly benefit from the GS. He expressed the concern of the School as to the potential impact of moving away from this system. He noted discussions within the School regarding consistent and fair marking. Professor Welch proposed that amending where borderlines are positioned would mitigate the effects of the GPA for students within the School. Professor Welch expressed the desire of the School to engage in discussions around how borderlines might be revised in order to address the overall impact of a move to the GPA on their students.
- Professor Coghill, addressing the issue of transparency and auditability, acknowledged the suggestion by Professor McGeorge regarding the idea of the use of 'externals' from other Schools within the University. He noted that this approach would help with transparency and standardisation but not with regards to the maintenance of central University processes and an appropriate check to ensure all Schools and disciplines are operating in the same, appropriate, manner.

- Professor Shennan expressed that she and the QAC as a whole were in favour of the proposal. She informed the Senate that Exams Officer training was in place. She noted, however, that it was difficult in ensuring the attendance of all Exams Officers and therefore in achieving consistency of approach.
- Professor Feldmann raised the point of the use of the median in the GPA system. So far, he noted, the median is calculated for each year and then an average is determined. On behalf of Chemistry, he proposed the use of a median over both years which may serve to replace the effects of the GS. Professor Feldmann asked that statistics on this be presented to the May meeting of the Senate. Professor Feldmann also noted, with regards to the equal weighting of levels 3 and 4, the negative consequences this may have on direct entrants to level 3. He stated the likely increase in students of this type as a consequence of an increase in the number of the University's articulation agreements and that determining their classification on the work they produce on entry to the University may be detrimental. Professor Shennan acknowledged the points raised and committed to try to obtain the relevant data to complete the calculations requested from Schools.
- Dr Da Silva Baptista suggested that it would be helpful for the paper presented to the Senate in May to include a summary of the use of the GS and the GPA across the University. He further asked if there was data on the percentage of students achieving specific grades and in order to ensure were aware of their place within their School and across the University as a whole. Responding, Professor Shennan noted that this was not data the University held.
- Dr Martin noted that within the School of Education the two systems only resulted in a difference of award for one or two students. She stated that it was important to separate out the issues raised, beginning with the agreement that only one system was desirable. Acknowledging this, she stated the importance of the design of any appropriate system and suggested that the University may wish to revisit the design of a reasonable system. She further stated the importance of the issues of the award of first class degrees. Noting her agreement with Mr Styles, she emphasised the value of a degree of this standard and its dilution by the award of an increasing number. Regarding the weighting of levels 3 and 4, Dr Martin suggested that diversity should be valued and that standardisation must not always be sought. She referenced the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) comment within the paper, drawing on her own experience as an SQA marker for Mathematics. Dr Martin accepted that joint degrees may present an issue in this regard, but that conversations should be encouraged between disciplines to ensure consistency in approach. Finally, Dr Martin agreed that it was crucial for students that internal and External Examiners have a say at an Exam Board in recognition of the individual experiences a student may have encountered.
- Dr Barker acknowledged the importance of Dr Martin's comments. He stated the importance of consistency with disciplines and with a discipline's competitors both nationally and internationally and the importance of employers being able to recognise what graduates of a particular discipline had to offer. He noted that consistency in this regard was of greater importance than of consistency across the University as a whole.
- Mrs Tibbetts expressed concern with regards to a move within the Business School to the adoption of the GPA and the effect this would have on students. Mrs Tibbetts also expressed the importance of humanity in the process and, as such, clear guidance to be contained within the May paper regarding the role of the Exam Board under the GPA. She stated that a move to the GPA is to adopt a numerical system and that the role of an Exam Board is unclear in this model. Mrs Tibbetts expressed her support for consistency and voiced concern

that while some students have advocates on an Exam Board who is aware of their story, many with equally valuable stories do not and are therefore disadvantaged.

- Mr Simpson noted that he spoke personally in stating his agreement with Professor Brown and the suggestion that fewer Honours courses are undertaken at level 3 to allow students to become used to the specific demands of an Honours course. He queried the suggestion as made by Dr Lamb to differentiate courses by credit point value and that this could potentially limit student choice. Mr Simpson also clarified that the School of Law did not weight Honours courses at level 3 differently, but requires that fewer be taken.
- Dr North addressed the recurrent issue of standardisation. He reminded the Senate of the law of unintended consequences and the potential impact that solving a problem for joint Honours students could have on single Honours students. He stated that feedback from employers was consistent with the marks being awarded within Geology and that care must be taken in maintaining this.

74.4 In bringing discussion to a close, the Senior Vice-Principal welcomed any final comments from Professors McGeorge and Shennan. Professor McGeorge issued a plea that the Senate agenda for May be kept to a minimum to reflect the fact that this issue was likely to generate lengthy discussion. He further cautioned the Senate that if radical changes were to be made to the systems in operation, the University could potentially be in the position of having to run a dual system of classifying degrees and therefore a system of no detriment to students for a further period.

74.5 Professor Shennan committed to gather the additional data required to complete the analysis as requested by the Senate. Members of the Senate were asked to consult with their Exams Officers in this regard. The Senior Vice-Principal thanked all those who contributed to the full debate. He noted his understanding of the strongly held opinions in regards to the issue and the need for a decision to be taken at the next meeting. He stated his agreement that the issue should form a significant agenda item at the May meeting.

### **STUDENT ENGAGEMENT PILOT**

75.1 Professor McGeorge, Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching), presented to the Senate feedback following the recent Student Engagement pilot study. Professor McGeorge informed the Senate that the paper provided initial feedback on the pilot only and that a further analysis was being undertaken of more courses and programmes which had made more extensive use of it. Professor McGeorge acknowledged the technical issues raised within the feedback and that that administrative areas in Schools had found the pilot very useful in speeding up administrative process.

75.2 Members of the Senate were asked to comment on the paper. A short discussion ensued, the main tenets of which were as follows:

- On behalf of the Students' Association, Ms Connelly acknowledged students liked the use of QR codes but that they were open to abuse.
- Professor Anderson stated that he had received comments from several constituents on the paper. He noted that it was not clear this was an interim paper. He expressed that staff had indicated they objected to paragraph 3.8 which stated overall staff were happy with the system. He stated that this was

not the case within the School of Social Science and that such differences of opinion should be reflected.

- Dr Lamb proposed that there were other ways to monitor engagement. He suggested the use of ID cards being scanned on entry to lecture theatres and the use of monitoring the attendance of students by way of the use of wireless routers to determine a student's location. Responding, Professor McGeorge noted that ID card scanning had been considered but that to use a student's data by way of wireless routers was not an appropriate use of data.

## **NEW TNE-PROCEDURES**

- 76.1 The Senior Vice-Principal invited Dr Rist to introduce the paper on new Transnational Education (TNE) Procedures.
- 76.2 Dr Rist stated that he was speaking on behalf of the Senate Sub-Committee for TNE. He noted he was grateful for the opportunity to present the proposed set of procedures for TNE. He stated that he wished to cover three specific points within his introduction as follows: (i) the origins of the proposed procedures, (ii) creating the procedures and turning criticisms and ideas into the paper presented and (iii) procedures since the creation of the document.
- 76.3 Beginning with the origins of the proposed procedure, Dr Rist reminded the Senate of the final meeting of the Senate in the 2016/17 academic year. He noted that in the run up to that meeting, Senate had considered a number of proposed initiatives in TNE, in Rwanda, Korea and Qatar. He noted that as the papers to Senate implied, substantial resources, human but also financial, were applied to these projects and members of the Senate spent many hours reading and debating the papers, yet only Qatar has borne any fruit and only time will tell how much. Dr Rist stated that Rwanda was now abandoned and that the University website states that the Korea campus is 'opening shortly'. Dr Rist informed the Senate that in anticipating this rather limited success, a year ago Senate looked beyond the cases for this or that TNE project to the underlying principles of the University in TNE projects and the guidance booklet, Collaborative Provision Principles and Procedures. Dr Rist noted that the objections to these principles fell under three headings: (i) the problematic role assigned to Schools, (ii) the inadequate definition of key criteria for decision making and (iii) the inadequate definition of the Project Board tasked with TNE oversight. He stated that it was important to remember how deep the problems seemed to go and quoted the following in regards to the Project Board, 'A Project Board will be chaired by either the Vice-Principal (International) or the Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning) to oversee the investigation and approval process and activities leading to implementation'. He noted that the Project Board was to have a major role in partnerships but that was the sum total of information about the Project Board makeup and remit within the Procedures and, as Senate agreed, it was woefully short. He continued to state that, in particular, no information was provided on the number of persons that would constitute the Project Board or the kind of expertise those on the Project Board would bring to its discussion. He further stated that no information was provided on the procedures by which the Project Board would come to its decisions or the role of teaching staff on the Project Board. He informed the Senate that in view of the importance of the Project Board, these were found by the Senate to be significant omissions, damaging to the successful planning of delivery partnerships abroad. Dr Rist stated that he would not dwell on other areas where the document was found wanting but that the structural flaws this exemplified led to the motion which Senate debated and approved. Dr Rist read an excerpt from the following motion (minute point 58 of the minute of the meeting held on 7 June 2017 further refers):

**MOTION TO ESTABLISH A WORKING PARTY WITH OVERSIGHT  
OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF OVERSEAS CAMPUSES**

*Senate notes the establishment of the new campus at Qatar and the likelihood of the university creating new campuses in the future. Senate welcomes such developments, but believes that they should only be undertaken after due diligence and rigorous academic planning with the cooperation of Schools. Senate therefore resolves to establish a working party to design a proper procedure for the approval of overseas campuses. The committee is to be made up of elected senate representatives and members of appropriate management. This committee is to report back to the spring meeting of Senate for consideration of its findings.*

- 76.4 Dr Rist moved to inform the Senate as to how the Working Party which emerged, turned its criticisms and ideas into the paper presented. Dr Rist informed the Senate that the membership of the group was formed under the instruction of the Acting Academic Registrar and composed of two representatives from every School in the University. He stated that many members had direct involvement in TNE projects and, in accordance with evidence based principles the group began with presentations on these TNE projects and experiences. He stated that the group heard presentations on the East Africa initiative in Rwanda and the initiative in Qatar. It also heard presentations on the University's partnership with South China Normal University (SCNU) as well as emerging collaborations between Geography and Environment in Peru and with the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire. Dr Rist informed the Senate that one speaker presented on TNE experiences from 1993-2017. Dr Rist stated that out of these extensive, detailed presentations from persons involved in TNE first hand, the committee had arrived at a collective set of guiding principles on how to proceed in the formation of the document. Dr Rist provided the example that normally, although not necessarily in every case, teaching in TNE should be accompanied by research according to the University's joint emphasis on teaching and research. In addition, he stated that TNE should normally, although again not necessarily in every case, arise out of the contacts and intellectual synergies that Aberdeen academics establish with counterparts abroad as part of the daily business of academic life. He continued, that academics seeking to develop these TNE opportunities should have financial and other kinds of support and that programmes and Schools should collectively agree on TNE projects worth pursuing and, as incentive that they should receive a financial benefit negotiated with the Senior Management Team (SMT) for successful projects. Dr Rist stated that proper due diligence on issues such as Human Rights should be done as part of the assessment of a country's suitability for TNE and that the final say of the suitability of projects should lie with the Senate by way of vote. Dr Rist confirmed that the group envisaged a School and programme centred rather than top-down approach to TNE, though as members stressed, this did not exclude the possibility of TNE projects from the top where opportunities were compelling. Dr Rist stated that these were the general principles which gave rise to the paper and that there were many meetings and hours in which the group debated how to put these principles into effect, including debate over the phrasing of the principles. Dr Rist stated that it was an exhaustive and occasionally tense process in which everyone was aiming for the best and that the wording was agreed by all members, representative of every School in the University.
- 76.5 Finally, Dr Rist addressed procedures since the creation of the paper. He stated that in January 2018, the QAC asked to see the group's findings for consideration. Dr Rist further stated that this was a seeming duplication of Senate sub-Committee activity, not least because the original motion had spoken only of reporting to the Senate. It was confirmed, however, that the group agreed to this action in the spirit of

cooperation. Dr Rist informed the Senate that on 21 February 2018, he received an email stating that the TNE paper would not only go to the QAC but to the UCTL and each of its sub-committees. At this point, as this implied further significant duplication of committee work and ran counter to the wording of the motion, he noted, that the group sought to suspend the submission of the document and to receive procedural clarification. He noted that this was communicated to the Acting Academic Registrar and a Registry Administrative Officer in an email of 8 March 2018. Dr Rist quoted from an email of response received from the Acting Academic Registrar on 28 March 2018 as follows:

*'Although there are no specific regulations governing working groups of the Senate, there are Committee structures in place governing proposed policies in regards to Teaching and Learning. As such, any Teaching and Learning policy should be considered by the University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL) and its sub-Committees, appropriate to the specifics of the policy itself. As Transnational Education (TNE) impacts undergraduate and postgraduate teaching and must be overseen by the Quality Assurance Committee in this instance it was appropriate for all three sub-committees (the UGC, PGTC and QAC) to consider the document.'*

*The paper will next be considered by the UCTL tomorrow, 28 March 2018 and is on the draft Senate agenda for its meeting on 23 April 2018. UCTL will report its findings to both the Senate and the Court.'*

Dr Rist noted that in recognition of the lack of specific regulation, the paper was intended to remain suspended from submission, pending clarification at this meeting of the Senate, however, that he was surprised to receive confirmation on 2 April 2018 that the item was on the Senate agenda for discussion and to confirm the correct version for use. He further informed the Senate of the group's surprise that the paper had been considered and rejected by a meeting of the University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL). He expressed this concern that the procedural clarifications sought were now as follows:

- Should sub-Committees appointed by the Senate as answerable to the Senate go through standard committee processes, bearing in mind the statement that there 'are no specific regulations governing working groups of the Senate'.
- Must documents from Senate working groups go through the standard Committee structure when the working group has been set up in response to a document that has already been considered by way of the structure?
- Regarding procedure, why did the document proceed through the Committee structure without someone to speak for it, in spite of University procedure to the contrary? Dr Rist stated that at no point did he or any member of the group receive such an invitation.

Dr Rist stated that procedure was disregarded and the result was decision making without the full information. For the record, Dr Rist noted that TNE procedures was on the QAC agenda with the addition 'Dr Rist will introduce the paper for discussion regarding changes to TNE procedures'. He stated that the first he had heard of this was Wednesday 18 April 2018. He further noted references to the TNE paper on the UG and PGT Committee agendas. Dr Rist alleged that the Committee meeting at which the TNE paper was considered went ahead in defiance of convention and formal procedure and that the discussions and decisions that took place within them were uninformed as a result. In concluding, Dr Rist quoted from the report to the Senate of the meeting of the UCTL of the 28 March 2018 and their stated objections to the procedures as follows:

*Members of the Committee received the paper on Transnational Education (TNE)*

*Procedures. The Committee were concerned that the document presented could not be mapped to the UK Quality Code and would therefore place the University in breach of it. The Committee noted that the procedures outlined did not provide a required level of Quality Assurance and/or may be technically unworkable. The Committee further noted concerns over the lack of attention to ensuring equivalents of student experience and a range of issues regarding the development of the document, including the level of consultation across the University in areas of academic and professional services expertise or from the student body. The Committee further concluded that it was unclear whether the document matched the sector wide expectations embodied in many documents dealing with these issues, including the UK Quality Code. The Committee recognised that the document appeared to be attempting to address issues, such as research or online education, beyond the initial motion approved by the Senate around overseas partners.*

*Having discussed the document provided on TNE procedures, UCTL, for its part, was unable to approve the document and felt unable to recommend it to the Senate or the Court.*

Dr Rist stated that the report was unhelpfully vague and misinformed. He noted that the original motion passed was for the establishment of a Working Party to design a proper procedure for the approval of overseas campuses, it is not correct that the paper goes beyond the initial motion. Regarding the point about levels of consultation, Dr Rist informed the Senate that all schools were involved in the process and that the composition of the group agreed with the Acting Academic Registrar. He noted that Professional Services had been represented by way of the Clerk to the group and the Vice-Principal (International) was invited to all meetings although he did not attend any. Most importantly, Dr Rist asserted, was that the criticism levelled is beside the point, that the Senate had elected the group and that the group's remit was fulfilled to the letter. In concluding, Dr Rist acknowledged the criticisms regarding Quality Assurance (QA) matters but stated that the document referred to existing University procedures in this regard. He provided the defining statement and reference to the Academic Quality Handbook (AQH) as example of this. Dr Rist stated that the document was only in breach of the UK Quality Code if the University itself was in breach at present. Dr Rist stated that the group was happy to consider any light revisions the Convener of the QAC may deem necessary. He extended an invitation to the Convener to attend a meeting of the group and to provide specific pointers for improvement and not disengaged, vague and sometimes erroneous commentary. Finally, he stated that the group had developed a proper procedure for the approval of overseas campuses in place of what Senate tacitly implied by vote were improper ones and that the group sought constructive criticism and clarification on the procedural points raised.

- 76.6 The Senior Vice-Principal queried the crucial point raised, that a Working Group of the Senate should not be subject to the University's QA procedures. Responding, Dr Rist stated that this was not the case. The Senior Vice-Principal asked Dr Rist to summarise the objection. Dr Rist stated that he was happy to abide by any QA requirements and in areas of deficiency, he was happy to hear from the Convener of the QAC. The Senior Vice-Principal noted his misunderstanding that the group felt they should not be subject to the University's QA procedures. Dr Rist stated that the group had a series of questions around procedure including why no presentation was provided to the committees which saw the paper.
- 76.7 Professor McGeorge, Vice Principal (Teaching and Learning), quoted from the minute of the meeting of the Senate held on 17 June 2017 (minute point 58 refers) as follows:

*In view of ongoing discussions and the likelihood of the University creating new campuses in the future, the proposal seeks a working group comprised of appropriate management and elected Senate representatives be set up to form a view and, if appropriate, redesign, the University's procedures for organising campuses abroad.*

Professor McGeorge stated the importance of 'if appropriate' and sought clarity on what made the revised procedures more suitable than those already approved. Professor McGeorge, in terms of process, provided clarification of the University's Teaching and Learning Committee structure and noted its approval by the Senate. He stated that at no stage did any of the Committees involved attempt to change or prevent the paper proceeding to the Senate. He stated his understanding from the minute of the meeting held on 17 June 2017 that there was an expectation it would come to the Senate for discussion and reminded the Senate that the UCTL and its sub-Committees is a joint Committee of the Senate and the Court and, as such, the UCTL is required to consider any matters such as TNE from either perspective and to inform any position to the Court. Professor McGeorge further clarified that the UCTL draws on its sub-Committees as each of them has appropriate representation and expertise from each of the University's Schools and appropriate Professional Services before a view is formed and reported to the Senate and the Court. Professor McGeorge, addressing the issue of members of the group being invited to attend meetings of the Teaching and Learning Committees, he expressed concern that Dr Rist is a member of the QAC and would have been sent the papers in advance of the meeting. He further noted his understanding that Dr Rist had been written to, asking that he provide a cover paper including context and background to go along with the papers to each of the respective Committees.

- 76.8 Responding, Dr Rist addressed the matter of whether or not it was appropriate to redesign the Procedures. He explained that at the first meeting of the group, presentations were delivered on a variety of TNE projects including two of those recently discussed at the Senate. He noted sustained discussions of these and an evaluation of the positive and negative means of delivering TNE. He confirmed this was a sustained and deliberate discussion of what might and what might not work in terms of TNE production. He stated that the view of the group had been that the approach of the principles and procedures document was not appropriate and therefore, they were taken substantially in a new direction. Dr Rist again stated that the group had asked for the paper to be suspended in its consideration pending the clarification of procedural matters and reiterated his question as to why this suspension was not recognised. Dr Rist acknowledged the point raised regarding the expertise of the Teaching and Learning Committees but stated that the document created by them had been voted by the Senate as inadequate. With respect, he noted, Senate did not take the view that their expertise was sufficient. Dr Rist confirmed that he is a member of the QAC but that he had not received papers in respect of the meeting concerned. Dr Lamb, also a member of the QAC, stated that this was not the case.
- 76.9 For the purposes of clarification, Professor McGeorge stated that the original Principles and Procedures document was accepted by the Senate at the meeting held on 25 January 2017 (*minute point 37 of the minute of the meeting held on 25 January 2017 further refers*). While acknowledging that a vote had been undertaken to set up a working group to look at TNE procedures, if deemed appropriate, Professor McGeorge confirmed that a vote had not been taken to reject the document. The Clerk to the Senate confirmed this to be accurate. Dr Rist, responding, expressed that the document had been put under review, the implication of which is that it isn't sufficient as it stands.

76.10 The Senior Vice-Principal sought clarification from Dr Rist that QAC papers are distributed through SharePoint. Dr Rist confirmed this to be the case and asserted that he does not always receive papers in this way and has to go hunting after them.

76.11 Further to the introductory remarks made on the issue, the Senior Vice-Principal invited comments from members of the Senate. A discussion ensued, the main tenets of which were as follows:

- Professor Hutchison, Co-Convener of the Undergraduate Committee, acknowledged the two issues for discussion; the first of process and the second of content. With regards to process, Professor Hutchison confirmed her understanding that all teaching business should appropriately go to the UCTL and its sub-Committees before reporting to the Senate and the Court. She stated that the University would be unwise to make any decisions in regards to teaching and learning without drawing on the expertise available within these Committees. Professor Hutchison noted that she understood that Dr Rist had been invited and that a cover paper had been requested. Regarding the suspension on the document, the request was received following the circulation of papers to the Undergraduate Committee. Professor Hutchison acknowledged, however, that the paper was relevant to Schools both in terms of their teaching and their income budgets. She stated canvassing had been undertaken extensively to ensure discussion was well informed. Moving to address the issue of content, Professor Hutchison expressed the feeling of the Undergraduate Committee that the paper had not had the necessary input that it might from the QAC or from others with expertise in the area of TNE. Consequently, Professor Hutchison informed the Senate there was little support from the Undergraduate Committee for the paper. For clarity, the Senior Vice-Principal asked Professor Hutchison to confirm that an invitation to attend and an invitation to provide a cover paper had been provided. Professor Hutchison stated that this was her understanding. Responding, Dr Rist reiterated that he never received such an invitation.
- Mr Styles expressed that the meeting should proceed from the discussion on matters of process to matters of content. Acknowledging this point, the Senior Vice-Principal stated that serious allegations had been raised by Dr Rist which must be challenged.
- Professor Wells, Vice Principal (International), on the subject of content, noted that there was a clear misunderstanding both within the document and in discussion. Professor Wells stated that the original paper was titled Delivery Partners Principles and Procedures and not exclusively about TNE. Professor Wells expressed that it was a misunderstanding which has led to the ambiguities within the document.
- Professor Shennan, Dean of Quality Enhancement and Assurance and Convener of the QAC, stated that she had suggested to Dr Rist that she speak with the group regarding what is missing from the paper. She informed the Senate that there is a huge amount of QA issues that have not been addressed within the document. While acknowledging some sections had been copied and pasted from the original document, Professor Shennan noted that some crucial elements had been missed. Professor Shennan provided the following examples of QA detail missing from the document:
  - Reference to validation visits or panels, how such a panel would be composed or documentation they would need to be in sight of, individuals they would need to meet with or the type of outcome report required;

- Specific detail on due diligence, such as the scrutiny of in-country regulations to ensure they do not conflict with University regulations;
- Detail of governance structures, despite the specific criticisms raised over a lack of detail on Project Boards in the existing document;
- Reference to the appointment, training and development of staff;
- Reference to the moderation of assessment, equivalence of student experience, student support and issues such as the handling of appeals and complaints.

In terms of QA, Professor Shennan stated that it was wrong to say that partnerships will follow the University's QA processes, explaining that TNE requires a far more stringent set of QA procedures to ensure the appropriate oversight of an overseas campus. Professor Shennan voiced her concern at the lack of reference to the UK Quality Code or statements demonstrating that the procedure meets the requirements of chapter B10 of the Code and therefore the expectations of the QAA. Professor Shennan informed the Senate that not meeting the requirements of the QAA was a disaster for the University and its TNE. Professor Shennan confirmed huge gaps in the document provided. Concluding, Professor Shennan stated that as Dr Rist is a member of the QAC his attendance at the meeting to speak to the paper was expected. She informed the Senate that she had asked the QAC whether the processes within the document could allow the QAC to quality assure overseas provision. The QAC determined that this was not the case.

- Dr Rist reiterated the invitation to the group to explain the issues missing from the paper. In response to the lack of reference to Project Boards, Dr Rist confirmed that the group has envisaged a different way of looking at the running of TNE and that leadership would be provided from programmes and Schools. Dr Rist noted that the list of those things missing were also missing from the Principles and Procedures document, this echoing the deficiencies of the existing document.
- Professors Shennan and Wells confirmed that all issues raised were covered by the existing Principles and Procedures document. Dr Rist refuted this statement but agreed to check and apologise if this was in fact the case.
- Dr Lusseau expressed his confusion at the discussion being held. He thanked the working group for their work in preparing the document but stated his perception that such groups must engage with QA procedures and with the UCTL and its sub-Committees. He noted his perception that the issue should be guided by the UCTL.
- Ms Connelly sought clarification from Dr Rist if there was student representation on the group. She further expressed concern at the reference to students only four times within the document. Dr Rist confirmed that the group did not include a student member but that the group would be delighted to have students attend a meeting of the group.
- Mrs Tibbetts, noting that she was a member of the group, informed the Senate of her understanding that the group was not looking at the document in its entirety but only the section addressing the fundamental principles. Mrs Tibbetts noted that there was perhaps overlap and confusion surrounding what members of the group thought they were looking at.
- Professor Kee, Co-Convener of the Postgraduate Taught Committee, reiterated the comments made by Professor Hutchison in relation to how the paper was distributed. By coincidence, he noted, a member of the group was in attendance at the Committee meeting. In terms of content, Professor Kee highlighted that this was looked at in terms of it having been prepared by a working group and not a Senate sub-Committee. Professor Kee expressed in his mind this was a working group. He further expressed concern that the

group's assertion that they sat out with the Teaching and Learning Committee structure contradicted the content of the document's aims regarding parity across the institution. He sought clarification of the role of the group and the purpose of the document itself.

- Professor Anderson stated that he was a member of the group and also a member of an earlier group tasked with amending the Principles and Procedures document prior to its approval at Senate in January 2017. He stated that debate prior to the approval of the document had been contentious and that much anxiety had been voiced, particularly with regards to areas such as the handling of due diligence about human rights and such substantial issues. He noted that this original working group had generated a new section of the handbook and were brought before Senate and not the Teaching and Learning Committee structure in its entirety. Professor Anderson added that he was disorientated, dismayed and confused by the debate and procedural issues. He noted that TNE was a controversial and potentially lucrative issue and that it is quite clear that Senate wishes to keep track of developments in this regard and it is therefore appropriate that papers be considered by the Senate. Professor Anderson reiterated Mrs Tibbetts' comments that he understood that the group was addressing section 2 of the handbook only and proposing principles as a result of a long consultation where the group felt policy could be improved. Professor Anderson asked the Committee Conveners to take the document in the spirit in which it is offered as a means of improving and ensuring the University's TNE meet the highest standards and are linked into the academic practice undertaken on a daily basis.
- The Senior Vice-Principal stated that there was no question of Senate's right to discuss TNE, and at every meeting, if appropriate. He stated that the document had been prepared following much discussion by a properly constituted Senate working group. He further stated that Dr Rist had acknowledged that the document should go through, and receive significant input from, the University's QA procedures but noted that that might not have happened well.
- Professor Schaper stated that he was a member of the working group and sought to draw the attention of the Senate back to the discussion of the content of the paper. He noted that the group had been set up in response to aspects of the TNE effort and to ensure mistakes were not repeated. He stated that his understanding mirrored that of Mrs Tibbetts and Professor Anderson.
- Professor Shennan noted that during his introduction Dr Rist had stated that the group had sought to develop a proper handbook. She noted that this implied the intention of the group to replace the existing document in its entirety. That said, she noted it was unclear how the revised section was to be added or to what extent the terminology would be amended to appropriately align the documents.
- Professor Wells stated that in the debate held in June 2017, the offer was made with the parties who raised objections to the handbook, however, this offer was not accepted on the basis that the document was so flawed it wasn't adequate.
- Dr Yihdego also informed the Senate that he had been part of the group and echoed previous comments regarding the remit of the group to look at section 2 of the handbook only rather than detail or operational procedures. Dr Yihdego noted that he had tried to engage with colleagues and provide feedback to them on progress. He informed the Senate that discussions amongst the group were open and all members were engaged. He stated the document was the by-product of measured, serious discussion and engagement by all members. He noted that the key principles highlighted were reasonable and appropriate and provided the focus on establishing links where there are existing personal or

research connections as an example of this. Dr Yihdego informed the Senate that the document, however, also allows for exceptions to this, if the opportunity arises. Dr Yihdego further informed the Senate that the document encourages and promotes full consultation amongst the University community on TNE ranging from teaching staff to the international office. He acknowledged the references to QA and that further discussion may be required in this regard. Finally, he acknowledged the principle of reward embedded within the document. He stated that he felt the focus should be on how to improve the document and to ensure the University's TNE agenda for the betterment of the University.

- Professor Hutchison informed the Senate that he had also been part of the working group. He noted he was in some ways disappointed with how the conversation had gone and noted that there were some excellent points in the document and also some gaps. He recognised the confusion and reiterated that the group was not attempting to rewrite the handbook in full. He drew attention, however, to the points made within the group's submission drawn from real discontent from members of the Senate and their constituents which, if introduced, would calm the academic community.
- The Senior Vice-Principal acknowledged that there were good points within the document but there were gaps and that its relationship to the existing document was unclear. He proposed that the document should go, with appropriate representation, to the relevant Committees and that the feedback from these be used to improve the document.
- Professor Hutchison noted that the document had been considered by the Committees and that feedback had been provided.
- Mrs Tibbetts added, however, that this review had lacked in appropriate context and in representation from the TNE group.
- Dr Lusseau proposed that a document emerge from the UCTL that represents discussion between the working group and the UCTL and its sub-Committees.
- Professor Shennan stated that if the document is intended to be an addition to the approved document, that the issue of common language must be addressed.
- Dr Oliver noted his involvement in the group and acknowledged the work undertaken by Dr Rist and the group as a whole in preparing the document. He suggested that it would be appropriate for parties to sit down together to discuss the issues and to do them justice.
- Professor Hutchison reiterated Dr Oliver's point and expressed the benefit of sitting down together to discuss and better understand what the document is intended to do and in order that input from Professors Shennan and Wells can be obtained.
- Professor Pavlovskaja acknowledged the valid feedback already provided by way of the minutes of the meetings of the UCTL and its sub-Committees at which the paper was considered and suggest that these be addressed.
- Dr Lusseau stated the importance of appropriate student representation and proposed the Senate receive the document from the UCTL emerging from all discussion.
- Dr Martin stated that the School of Education welcomed the idea of major initiatives coming from present expertise in areas of research and teaching that staff engage with. She commended the work of the group in preparing the document.
- Professor McGeorge sought clarification that the working group would now meet with Professor Shennan and the QAC to see how the draft fits within the more general handbook on delivery partners, in addition to look at the existing feedback generated by the Committees following their consideration of the

document. Once completed, a revised document will be considered through the Committee structure after which the document will proceed to Senate for consideration.

- The Senior Vice-Principal confirmed this was the suggestion.
- Dr Rist stated he would be grateful if Professor Shennan would meet with the TNE group as a whole. Responding, Professor Shennan confirmed she was happy to attend a full meeting but that those issues arising were more than just QA in nature and the importance of other expertise being drawn.
- The Senior Vice-Principal confirmed that while this might be an appropriate first step, the document should still proceed through standard Committee structures.

## **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 and Learning on 28 March 2018.

### **1. Code of Practice on Student Discipline**

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

The Senate further invited 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. Omnibus Resolution**

- 77.2 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 Regulation for Various Degrees' (copy filed with principal copy of minute).

The Senate further invited 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.

### **3. Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) Annual Report to the UCTL**

- 77.3 Senate noted that members of the Committee had received the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) Annual Report to the UCTL (copy filed with principal copy of minute).

### **4. Transnational Education (TNE) Procedures**

- 77.4 Members of the Committee received the paper on Transnational Education (TNE) Procedures. The Committee were concerned that the document presented could not be mapped to the UK Quality Code and would therefore place the University in breach of it. The Committee noted that the procedures outlined did not provide a required level of Quality Assurance and/or may be technically unworkable. The Committee further noted concerns over the lack of attention to ensuring equivalents of student experience

and a range of issues regarding the development of the document, including the level of consultation across the University in areas of academic and professional services expertise or from the student body. It was the Committee's view that the document did not match the sector wide expectations embodied in many documents dealing with these issues, including the UK Quality Code. The Committee recognised that the document appeared to be attempting to address issues, such as research or online education, beyond the initial motion approved by the Senate around overseas partners.

Having discussed the document provided on TNE procedures, UCTL, for its part, was unable to approve the document and felt unable to recommend it to the Senate or the Court.

#### **5. Honours Classification Method: Comparison of GS vs GPA**

- 77.5 The Committee considered the paper on the Honours Classification Method: Comparison of GS vs GPA and agreed it be discussed by the Senate.

#### **6. Careers Service Annual Report 2016/17**

- 77.6 The Committee approved the Careers Service Annual Report 2016/17.

#### **REPORT FROM THE RESEARCH POLICY COMMITTEE**

- 78.1 The Senate noted the information provided in the report from the Research Policy Committee (copy filed with principal copy of minute).

#### **REPORT FROM THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE**

- 79.1 The Senate noted the information provided in the report from the Student Experience Committee (copy filed with principal copy of minute).

#### **ELECTION OF NON EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS OF THE SENATE**

- 80.1 Senate is invited to note the arrangements for the election of non-ex officio members of Senate approved by the Senate Business Committee at their meeting on 27 March 2018 (copy filed with principal copy of minute).

#### **ONLINE EDUCATION**

- 81.1 At the meeting of Senate on 20 February 2018, the Senate received for approval three papers on Online Education as part of the report from the University Committee on Teaching & Learning. A Senator queried whether the proposals set out in the paper on Online Admissions Process contradicted the proposals in the separate paper on the Short Course Approach and Maximum Period of Study. It was agreed that the Vice-Principal (Teaching and Learning) would speak with the Senator outwith the meeting regarding this query and report back to the next meeting of Senate.
- 81.2 The Senator's query related to the proposal set out in the paper on Online Admissions Process which stated that those studying on a short course basis would be able to enrol on a maximum of two courses without the need for formal admissions scrutiny and they were concerned how this fitted with the proposal in the paper on the Short

Course Approach and Maximum Period of Study which proposed that those studying on a short course basis would have no maximum time period for completion whereas those registered on a programme basis would need to complete within a defined timeframe. The Senator was unclear whether the restrictions in the Admissions paper would mean that a student studying on a short course (CPD) basis would be forced to transfer to a programme after they had achieved 60 credits and therefore would then need to complete within a defined timeframe.

- 81.3 Following the meeting, it was clarified that the 60 credit threshold set out in the Online Admissions Process paper was set to enable online learners to start studying towards a programme without needing admissions scrutiny but this hurdle was imposed to prevent them continuing to build towards a specific degree where they have not shown their ability in their initial courses. Those meeting that criteria could continue to build on a short course basis without transferring to a programme registration having achieved the 60 credits but could switch to a programme registration at that point if they prefer. Those choosing to continue on a short course approach would not be time-limited in completing their studies but there would be no guarantee of their desired degree being still offered on completion. Those electing to transfer to a programme would be time-limited in completing their studies but would be guaranteed that they would be able to exit with their chosen award.
- 81.4 Dr North sought clarification with regard to the communication of clarity around 81.2 above. The Clerk confirmed that this would be progressed with the Online Team.

### **ELECTION OF THE RECTOR**

- 82.1 Senate noted that, following the election held in February 2018, Ms Maggie Chapman was re-elected to serve as Rector from 1 April 2018 until 31 March 2021.
- 83.1 The Senior Vice-Principal thanked members of the Senate for the debate and drew the meeting to a close.