

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SENATUS ACADEMICUS

Minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 11 September 2017

Present: Professor I Diamond, Professor M Greaves, Professor P McGeorge, Professor J Paterson, Professor M Ross, Professor BD MacGregor, Dr G Gordon, Professor R Irwin, Dr M Bain, Mr M Whittington, Professor G Paton, Professor A Sahraie, Professor S Heys, Professor I Guz, Professor H Hutchison, Professor C Kee, Professor E Pavlovskaia, Professor J Masthoff, Professor M Brown, Professor M Campbell, Dr R Neilson, Professor K Shennan, Dr M Ehrenschtendner, Dr P Bishop, Professor A Akisanya, Mr E Usenmez, Mrs L Tibbetts, Dr J Lamb, Dr L McCann, Professor N Hutchison, Professor P Nimmo, Professor J Schaper, Dr G Hough, Dr H Pierce, Dr P Ziegler, Dr R Shanks, Dr D R Smith, Dr H Martin, Mrs M Stephen, Dr A Bryzgel, Dr T Rist, Dr A Lewis, Dr P Glover, Dr A Simpson, Dr Z Yihdego, Mr S Styles, Dr M Mills, Dr A Oelsner, Dr A McKinnon, Dr T Argounova-Low, Professor D Anderson, Dr D Lusseau, Professor M Pinard, Professor J Jayasinghe, Dr A Rajnicek, Dr M Delibegović, Dr A Jack, Dr G Jones, Dr P Murchie, Dr N Mody, Professor R Barker, Dr S Fielding, Dr I Cameron, Professor G Nixon, Dr E Nordmann, Dr D Ray, Dr K Pilz, Professor D Jovicic, Professor M Kashtalyan, Dr B Rea, Dr N Schofield, Dr J Oliver, Dr A Ebinghaus, Dr C North, Professor J Feldmann, Professor G Coghill, Professor C Grebogi, Dr M da Silva Baptista, Dr B Martin, Dr W Vasconcelos, Mr L Ogubie, Miss D Connelly, Mr J Brown, Miss K Paterson-Hunter, Miss M Jensen and Mr N Johansson,

Apologies: Professor A Glover, Professor N Haites, Professor P Hannaford, Dr P Sweeney, Professor E Welch, Professor J Skakle, Professor D Jolley, Professor A Jenkinson, Dr M Beaton, Dr M Hole, Professor R Wells, Dr T Fahey Palma, Mrs D Bruxvoort, Dr A Sim, Dr B Tribout, Professor P Mealar, Dr J Baird, Dr M Barker, Dr K Kiezebrink, Dr J Macdiarmid, Dr M Brazzelli, Dr G Macfarlane, Dr D Scott, Dr N Vargesson, Dr D MacCallum, Dr J Hislop, Dr A Venkatesh, Dr K Foster, Professor A Lee, Dr F Thies, Professor H Wallace, Dr M Jackson, Dr O Menshykov, Professor C Brittain, Dr C Black, Dr N Oren, Miss M Leskovska, Mr K Thomson-Duncan, Miss K Metcalfe, Miss I Ewart, Mr L Budrass, Miss I Donaldson, Mr K Rzetelski, Miss A McSeveney, Mr Y Dmitrov and Miss K Smith

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- 1.1 The Principal opened the meeting, welcoming members of the Senate to the extraordinary meeting and, in particular, extended this welcome to all new Senators.
- 1.2 The Principal invited members to approve the agenda. No objections or comments were raised and the meeting proceeded.
- 1.3 The Principal confirmed the format of the meeting and explained to the Senate that he would provide an update to Senators after which he would leave the meeting and Professor Greaves, Senior Vice-Principal, would assume the Chair to allow for discussion regarding his successor.
- 1.4 The Principal welcomed Mr James Hall, University Court member, Convener of the Governance and Nominations Committee and Senior Independent Governor. The Principal thanked Mr Hall for his attendance and his agreement to address Senate during the course of the meeting.

UPDATE FROM PRINCIPAL

- 2.1 The Principal, in providing an update to the Senate, began by thanking everyone and, in particular, the Students' Association, for an outstanding Fresher's week. He noted the importance of bringing a sense of belonging to new students and colleagues and thanked all those across the Institution for their efforts in doing this.
- 2.2 The Principal noted the release from Research England on the rules for the next Research Excellence Framework (REF). He acknowledged that the release covered issues including units of assessment, what they will look like and how they will be governed and the percentage of marks which go towards impact (confirmed as 25%). He also noted, however, that issues including the exact rules on the number of outputs that would be called for remained unanswered. The Principal acknowledged the work of Professor Campbell and her team over the summer in a dry run and in preparing a plan for preparing for the REF. The Principal noted that the report also remained silent on the issue of portability or non-portability and that further consultation on this would take place. He stated that his expectation was that Institutions would agree that for the REF, portability would be such that if you leave an Institution after a certain agreed date, a publication can and would be counted in two places. The Principal stated that the importance of the REF should not be understated and noted the importance of the University ensuring its outputs were organised.
- 2.3 Finally, the Principal acknowledged Brexit and informed the Senate that there was little else to update them on with regards the status of European Union (EU) staff or students post-Brexit. He noted reassurance from negotiators that they were taking the issue very seriously. The Principal reminded Senators that should any EU nationals require advice or support with regards applying for British citizenship, Mrs Dyker, Head of Human Resources, and her team would be happy to help. The Principal urged Senators to read documentation from the Department for Exiting the EU regarding science. He stated it was clear the department had listened to the Universities UK Research Policy Network and others who had lobbied strongly. He noted the document was a negotiating one, but that it was negotiating from the right base. With regard to students, the Principal stated that many EU students had been welcomed to the Aberdeen family over the past week and reminded Senate that there was no policy for the status of EU students post Brexit. The Principal informed the Senate that he continued to advocate for an early decision in this regard.

QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPAL ARISING FROM THE UPDATE

- 3.1 The Principal invited questions from the floor following his update. No questions were raised and the Principal left the meeting. Professor Greaves assumed the Chair.

TABLING OF THE WRITTEN REQUEST FOR AN EMERGENCY SENATE ON LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE SECTION (2) OF THE STANDING ORDERS

- 4.1 Professor Greaves introduced the Written Request for an Emergency Senate on Leadership and Governance under Section (2) of the Standing Orders. Professor Greaves noted that this followed a letter, dated 30 August 2017, with 42 Senator's names attached. It was confirmed due protocol had been followed following receipt of the letter. Professor Greaves noted the key points in the letter as reference to announcements relating to the Principal and Senior Vice-Principal, alleged removal of Senate Assessors from Court, perceived lack of transparency and communication on the way forward and a request to postpone a scheduled meeting of the Governance and Nominations Committee until after the current meeting of the Senate. It was further

requested that the Senior Governor address these issues. Professor Greaves informed the Senate that the Senior Governor's diary did not permit his attendance, however, as noted in section 1.4 above, Mr James Hall the Chair of the Governance and Nominations Committee was in attendance.

STATEMENT FROM THE CONVENER OF THE GOVERNANCE AND NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

- 5.1 Professor Greaves invited Mr Hall to address the Senate. Mr Hall thanked Senators for the opportunity to speak with them. He introduced himself and his role to the Senate. He noted his experience in the private and public sector and informed the Senate that he had been a member of Court for six years and more recently, he had been asked to Chair the Governance and Nominations Committee, one of Court's sub-committees, with responsibility for key appointments, such as the Senior Governor of Court, Principal and Court members, and overseeing processes for these appointments. He stated that the Committee had an open and transparent approach to seeking the best possible candidates. Mr Hall stated that he had also taken up the role of Senior Independent Governor.
- 5.2 Addressing the matter in hand, Mr Hall informed the Senate that following the Principal's announced intention to retire, the Committee had been giving some thought to the process of appointing his successor. He noted there were numerous codes of conduct issued by both Universities UK and the Scottish Government, such as the recent Higher Education Bill in Scotland, which also redefined the composition of Court, which governed the appointment process. Mr Hall noted that the Governance and Nominations Committee would meet immediately after the current meeting, at which process discussions would begin, with a view to putting a paper together for the meeting of the Court on 4 October 2017. He stated that he hoped the Court would approve a process and Selection Committee to allow movement towards the appointment of a successor as fast as was reasonably possible in a transparent manner, compliant with due process.
- 5.3 Mr Hall welcomed questions from the Senate and the expression of opinion on issues of process or qualities desired in a new Principal. He assured Senate that he would note each of these and, where possible, incorporate them into process. He stated his desire to understand where Senate was coming from and what, in the view of the Senate, would represent a good outcome.

QUESTIONS TO THE SENIOR VICE-PRINCIPAL AND THE CONVENER OF THE GOVERNANCE AND NOMINATION COMMITTEE

- 6.1 Dr Lusseau asked Professor Greaves, given the critical timeframe during which a new Principal would be sought, for reassurance that key decisions would continue to be taken. Professor Greaves assured Dr Lusseau and Senate as a whole that he had accepted the role of Senior Vice-Principal for a period of a year to do exactly that. He recognised the need for development, not merely maintenance of momentum and stated he hoped to be able to deliver that. Professor Greaves informed the Senate of his own experience both internally within the University and externally in aiding him to do this.
- 6.2 Professor Anderson addressed Mr Hall and in so doing noted a number of vacancies, including that of a Senate Assessor given they are not currently in office, on the Governance and Nominations Committee. Professor Anderson suggested the meeting

be postponed until the election of the Senate Assessors or, in the meantime, a member of Senate be co-opted to attend the Committee. Mr Hall acknowledged that discussions had taken place regarding whether a postponement would be appropriate, however, stated that in recognition of this meeting of the Senate, there was an infinitely more powerful means of gathering Senate input and opinion. Mr Hall reminded Senate of their decision to have all Senate Assessors to step down and be reappointed rather than a transitional arrangement. He assured Senate that no decisions would be taken at the meeting to be held immediately after the meeting of the Senate and that its focus would be on understanding the legislation governing the recruitment process.

- 6.3 Dr Rea sought clarification from Mr Hall on the intended makeup of the Governance and Nominations Committee and whether, once elected, a Senate Assessor would be expected to attend. Mr Hall confirmed there had always and would continue to be, a Senate Assessor on the Committee. Mr Hall further noted that a Selection Committee must be determined for the appointment process and there will be academic, non-academic and student representatives on that panel. He stated the importance of appropriate representation of all the University's constituencies while remaining of a manageable size. Mrs Inglis, University Secretary, confirmed the makeup of the Committee and the membership of a Senate Assessor on it. Dr Rea sought further clarification on how the Senate Assessor is chosen. Mrs Inglis confirmed that this had previously been decided by the Assessors themselves, going forward, it may be, that Assessors will be asked to put themselves forward for consideration before decisions are taken as appropriate, although it will be for the Court to determine.
- 6.5 Professor Schaper noted that on previous occasions, there had been a lack of transparency in the appointment process. He therefore suggested a bigger a selection panel, of perhaps 12, comprised of an equal ratio of academic and independent members. He stated that no Vice-Principals should be members of the Panel. He continued to state that the academic members should represent all levels of seniority, went on that students should be present and that full, and not fake, transparency should be maintained. Mr Hall queried what to Professor Schaper would represent full transparency. Professor Schaper noted that he had heard the word used many times and not always appropriately. He proposed that the selection panel report to Senate at regular intervals during the period of recruitment. Professor Schaper queried whether the role would be openly advertised. Mr Hall, responding, confirmed the position would be publically advertised. With regards to transparency, he noted that some things could not reasonably be reported. Subject to this, however, process updates could be reasonably provided. Professor Schaper agreed with the confidentiality surrounding some aspects of the recruitment process. He further requested specific updates regarding the attributes the Panel sought and the reasoning behind decisions taken, thus the transparency of process. Mr Hall reminded the Senate that the role of Principal was multi-faceted and that no individual could feasibly be outstanding in every desirable attribute. He stated, therefore, that identifying the most important attributes would be important and that the Senate had a role in informing decisions of the Panel in this regard.
- 6.6 Mrs Inglis, in the interest of transparency, referenced the guidelines (minute point 5.2 above also refers) the University is bound by in terms of the recruitment process. She noted that a student and staff member are required by such legislation to sit on the selection panel. Mrs Inglis informed the Senate that she had already been approached by members of support staff, requesting that their voice not be lost in the recruitment process.
- 6.7 Dr Mills, on behalf of his constituency, stated that the best type of Principal that could be sought, in light of local and national changes such as Brexit and the changes in the

Oil and Gas sector, would be a significantly outward facing Principal. He noted that such an individual would seek to build external alliances, bring in philanthropic donations and to be a strong public figure who sees their role as being to support the academic community. Mr Hall asked Dr Mills if the Principal had to be an academic. Several members of the Senate responded 'yes'.

- 6.8 Dr Oelsner also noted the importance of the active participation of academic members of staff in the recruitment process. She noted the vacancies on the Governance and Nominations Committee (minute point 6.2 above also refers). Mr Hall reiterated that, normally, the Committee included of a Senate Assessor but as a consequence of the current election of new Assessors, there is at this time, a vacancy. Dr Oelsner noted that it was not a good start, to convene a meeting of the Governance and Nominations Committee without academic representation. Mr Hall stated that he hoped his presence at the Senate went some way to recompense for that. Dr Oelsner also noted that colleagues had requested a new Principal have 'an evidence based approach to management, working patterns, policies, research and pedagogy'.
- 6.9 Professor Greaves stated his understanding that there had been the opportunity for the Senate to appoint someone to attend the Committee meeting, on an interim basis, prior to the election of the Senate Assessors. He noted no nominations had been received.
- 6.10 Dr Oliver reiterated the comments of colleagues and stated in UK academia today, that there is a culture for management procedures to be out of kilter with basic academic and educational values. With respect to moving forward with the selection process, he noted that it should be ensured that the person appointed is on board with these values. Dr Oliver noted the dangers of placing too much emphasis on issues of management, finance or control. Dr Oliver stated the need for a vote, by way of representation or other means, to ensure the academic voice is heard. Mr Hall sought clarity regarding the request for a vote. Dr Oliver confirmed the request could be for Senate to take a vote between shortlisted candidates. Dr Oliver continued to note concern over the use of head-hunters and the potential for head-hunters to play into a competitive economy. Dr Oliver referenced recent outcries from the Scottish Government and media regarding the salaries of Principals within Scotland and the UK. Professor Greaves and Mr Hall noted the exceptional nature of a request for the Senate to vote on this issue, and the risks such an approach could have. Furthermore, they noted the other constituencies comprising the University including trade unions, non-academic staff, students and the Court, the trustees of the University who are legally responsible for the probity and success of the organisation.
- 6.11 Professor Delibegovic also queried the use of head-hunters and referenced excellent internal talent already within the University. She further raised the issue of pay for Principals and suggested the university may wish to lead the way in no longer paying extortionate salaries. Professor Greaves confirmed nominations could be received from the Senate for the role. Mr Hall agreed and stated there would be an advertisement for which any individual, internal or external to the University, could apply. Mr Hall confirmed salaries could and would be discussed at the appropriate time, with the initial step required being to gather an appropriate list of candidates who have the potential to be outstanding leaders of the University.
- 6.12 Dr Rea acknowledged the work of the Committee in identifying the qualities required by an appropriate candidate for the role. He noted that within the School of Geosciences, candidates for positions give a presentation to staff and meet and discuss with students. He suggested that potential candidates be asked to present to Senate and to meet with students and student bodies. Mr Hall asked how candidates with existing jobs might feel about that process and the making public of their intention

to change role. Dr Oliver confirmed this as standard procedure in academia and also stated the Senate, students and other constituencies could handle such presentations in a confidential manner.

- 6.13 Dr Schofield, responding to Dr Delibegovic’s suggestion that an internal candidate may be best placed for the role, acknowledged there were many esteemed academics and potentially good candidates within the University but suggested that many staff would be uncomfortable with an internal appointment and that a clean sheet would be desirable for the avoidance of bias etc. and the maintenance of transparency.
- 6.14 Dr Ebinghaus sought clarification as to when head-hunters become involved in the process. Mr Hall stated that evidence suggests there are a number of potential candidates who wouldn’t necessarily respond to an open call, for a number of reasons, and need to be encouraged that move to Aberdeen would be a positive step for them and for their career. In such instances a head-hunter can help. He stated the intention must be to assemble the best possible list of candidates, not necessarily limited to the UK.
- 6.15 Professor Anderson, with regards to minute point 6.9 above, proposed that an academic member of staff could still be co-opted to attend the Governance and Nominations Committee. Mrs Inglis confirmed there was space for one Senate member to attend.
- 6.16 Professor Greaves confirmed a vote would now be taken on whether or not Dr Oliver should be elected to attend the Governance and Nominations Committee on an interim basis.

In favour of Dr Oliver being elected to attend the Governance and Nominations Committee on an interim basis:	63
Not in favour of Dr Oliver being elected to attend the Governance and Nominations Committee on an interim basis:	4
Abstaining from the vote:	2

A vote having been taken, the Clerk confirmed that Dr Oliver had been elected.

MOTION ON THE PROCEDURES AND CRITERIA FOR SELECTING A NEW PRINCIPAL

- 7.1 Professor Greaves noted that discussion had moved largely to addressing the procedures and criteria for selecting a new Principal. He therefore asked Mr Styles to speak to his motion.
- 7.2 Firstly, with reference to sections 1 and 2 of the motion, Mr Styles noted and thanked both the Principal and Professor Kilburn for their service, wishing them the best for the future.
- 7.3 Mr Styles then moved to present sections 3 of the motion to the Senate, the main points of which were as follows:
- That the Senate has a significant say in both the procedure and actual selection of the next Principal. Mr Styles noted that academic staff had previously been excluded from the process.

- That the Governance and Nominations Committee fully consults with the Senate at all stages.
- The composition of the procedure and selection panel should be subject to approval by Senate prior to Court approval. Mr Styles clarified that this would require Senate's consideration and approval of a selection panel prior to its consideration at Court. Mr Styles stated that it is the lives of academics and students which will heavily affected by the new Principal and therefore it is only right that the Senate have a significant say.
- There will be a regular standing item at each Senate providing an update to Senators on the progress of recruitment.

Furthermore, Mr Styles added that shortlisted candidates should be invited to present to the Senate. He stated that an ability to present to a meeting of the size of Senate is a core skill. Likewise, Mr Styles noted the importance of candidates being able to mingle in an informal manner. With regards privacy, Mr Styles stated that assessment of these attributes is standard practice within academia. Mr Styles referenced practice at University College Dublin where the Principal is elected, from candidates forming a shortlist, by all members of staff. He noted the importance of staff being able to watch candidates perform.

- 7.4 Finally, Mr Styles raised the issue of salaries for Principals (minute point 6.10 above also refers) and stated the importance of the Senate sending a message to the Court that genuine moderation must be exercised in setting the salary of the next Principal.
- 7.5 Mr Hall noted that the proposal to ask shortlisted candidates to address Senate was not included in the motion. Mr Styles therefore proposed a motion from the floor to include this in the motion.
- 7.6 Professor Greaves invited Senators to discuss the motion.
- 7.7 Professor Masthoff requested that the motion also take into consideration Professional Services staff, noting that they deserve the same respect as academic staff. She proposed that should there be a presentation to the Senate that they also be invited to attend.
- 7.8 Mrs Tibbetts confirmed that despite her initial surprise that academic practice is for shortlisted candidate to present to staff before appointment, it is standard practice amongst all grades of academic staff. Mrs Tibbetts noted the issue of confidentiality and proposed a closed session be convened for such practice. Mrs Tibbetts further noted a concern as raised by a constituent, regarding the appropriateness of decisions being taken regarding issues such as capital expenditure in the interim period. Mr Hall confirmed that the appointment process for a new Principal was likely to take several months and that it was not possible to place the University in a position of abeyance until an appointment is made.
- 7.9 Professor Ross, Vice Principal for People, raised the importance of Equality and Diversity in the appointment process and an issue for the Committee. Professor Greaves confirmed the issue as central to every discussion in which he had been engaged to date.
- 7.10 Professor Coghill, for the purposes of clarity, queried that should a presentation be approved as appropriate by the Senate and the Court, that only one presentation to a broad range of staff, would take place. Mr Hall confirmed that if it were to go ahead, it should be made open to as many constituencies as possible, simultaneously.

- 7.11 Dr Shanks proposed a potential term limit for any appointed Principal, practice in place at Queen's University Belfast, where a Vice-Chancellor is appointed for a 5-year term and can apply for only one further term.
- 7.12 Professor Greaves confirmed a vote would now be taken on Item 3 of the motion on the Procedures and Criteria for Selecting a New Principal, as proposed by Mr Styles and including the proposed presentation to the Senate and staff representatives.

In favour of item 3 of the motion on the Procedures and Criteria for Selecting a New Principal:	64
Not in favour of Item 3 of the motion on the Procedures and Criteria for Selecting a New Principal:	7
Abstaining from the vote:	1

A vote having been taken, the Clerk confirmed that the motion was passed and would therefore be forwarded to the Court.

- 7.13 Professor Greaves confirmed a vote would now be taken on Item 4 the motion on the Procedures and Criteria for Selecting a New Principal, as proposed by Mr Styles.

In favour of Item 4 of the motion on the Procedures and Criteria for Selecting a New Principal:	62
Not in favour of Item 4 of the motion on the Procedures and Criteria for Selecting a New Principal:	8
Abstaining from the vote:	2

A vote having been taken, the Clerk confirmed that the motion was passed and would therefore be forwarded to the Court.

DEBATE AND DISCUSSION ON THE QUALITIES DESIRED IN A NEW PRINCIPAL

- 8.1 The Senate noted that many of the points made throughout the meeting had covered the issue of qualities desired in a new Principal. Professor Greaves invited any further comments from the floor.
- 8.2 Professor Hutchison stated the importance of appropriate processes being in place and also suggested that the debate so far had been revealing in terms of the priorities and concerns held as an academic community. She further noted Court is only one constituency within the University community and the evident wariness amongst the constituencies. Professor Hutchison noted her experience of the tension between areas of the University and suggested the importance of a new Principal being fully aware of the different areas which make up the Institution and having the ability to ensure the University community works together to be more effective. Professor Hutchison suggested the word University was worth considering as a unifying word. Mr Hall noted the importance of these points and the wider opinions of Senate with regard the qualities required of any suitable candidate. He further noted the critical role of the Senate Assessors in taking note of these opinions and passing these to the Court and in a wider context, with regard effective communication between the Senate and Court.

- 8.3 Dr Jackson asked what consideration is given to gender balance in terms of the selection panel and applicants. Mr Hall confirmed his commitment to equal gender balance in regards to both, where possible.
- 8.4 Professor Greaves thanked Senators for their attendance at the extraordinary meeting and for their contributions to discussions held.