

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SENATUS ACADEMICUS

Minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2017

Present: Principal, Professors Kilburn, McGeorge, Paterson, Ross, MacGregor and Hannaford, Ms AM Slater, Professors Morrison and Welch, Dr Bain, Mr M Whittington, Professors Paton, Sahraie, Skakle, Jolley, Guz, Kee, Pavlovskaja, Masthoff, Brown and Campbell, Dr R Neilson, Professor Shennan, Dr J Lamb, Professor Wells and Akisanya, Mrs L Tibbetts, Dr L McCann, Professor Hutchison, Dr A Sim, Professor Schaper, Dr P Sweeney, Dr R Shanks, Dr A Lewis, Dr B Tribout, Dr A Simpson, Dr Z Yihdego, Mr S Styles, Dr M Mills, Professor Anderson, Dr D Lusseau, Professor Pinard, Dr J Baird, Dr M Barker, Dr A Rajnicek, Dr K Kiezebrink, Dr M Macdiarmid, Dr A Jenkinson, Dr D MacCallum, Professor Barker, Dr S Fielding, Dr K Foster, Professor Lee, Dr E Nordmann, Dr D Ray, Dr K Pilz, Professor Jovicic, Dr E Pavlovskaja, Professor Kashtalyan, Dr O Menshykov, Dr J Oliver, Dr A Ebinghaus, Dr C North, Professor Feldmann and Grebogi, Dr B Martin, Mr L Fuller, Mr D Kaminek, Mr M Hickman, Mr L Budrass, Miss C Henssen, Mr N Lazaroz

Apologies: Professors Glover, Haites, Irwin, Heys, Mr E Usenmez, Dr T Fahey Palma, Mrs D Bruxvoort, Professors Nimmo, Dr H Pierce, Dr P Ziegler, Dr D R Smith, Mrs M Stephen, Dr A Bryzgel, Dr T Rist, Professor Mealor, Dr A Oelsner, Dr T Argounova-Low, Professor Johnson, Professor J Jayasinghe, Dr M Delibegović, Dr G Macfarlane, Dr D Scott, Dr N Vargesson, Dr R MacKenzie, Dr N Mody, Dr A Venkatesh, Dr I Cameron, Dr F Thies, Dr B Rea, Dr N Schofield, Professor Coghill, Dr da Silva Baptista, Dr W Vasconcelos, Professor Brittain, Dr C Black, Dr N Oren, Mr C Anucha, Miss A Boerkoel, Miss M Leskovska, Mr K Thomson-Duncan, Miss K Metcalfe, Miss K Halop, Miss D Passinke, Miss D Parsons, Miss L Rossi, Miss A Hall, Mr A Edirisooriya, Miss E Harding and Miss J Killin

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- 40.1 The Principal opened the meeting, welcoming members of the Senate. The Principal invited members to approve the agenda as presented.
- 40.2 Mr Styles requested that when the Committee arrived at agenda item 6, Report from the University Court that proposals regarding the election and composition of Senate Assessors to Court be open to discussion.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 41.1 The Principal invited members to confirm that they were content with the minutes of the meetings held on 25 January 2017 and 14 March 2017.
- 41.2 Dr Oliver and Professor Jovicic noted that they were present at the meeting of 14 March. Professor Martin confirmed that he was not present at the meeting of 25 January 2017.

MOTION FROM SENATE TO COURT ON THE NAMING OF THE NEW SCIENCE BUILDING

- 42.1 Members noted the proposal by Mr Styles that Senate recommend that the new Science Building be named after James Clerk Maxwell, who held the Chair of Natural Philosophy and Marischal College between 1856 and 1860. Mr Styles made the case that Professor Maxwell was an outstanding scientist who contributed much to the unifying of the understanding of physics through his work on electromagnetism.
- 42.2 Professor Hannaford suggested that whilst he understood the sentiment behind the proposal, many distinguished scientists had been at the University of Aberdeen and it was hard to pick one over another. Further, he suggested it might be prudent to consider having a sponsor for the building, after whom the building could be named.
- 42.3 A student member suggested that, given the predominance of campus buildings named after men, it might be opportunistic to name the new Science Building after a woman.
- 43.4 Professors Wells suggested that it might be more appropriate to engage the whole University Community in this debate, an in particular to cavass interest and from those within Sciences disciplines.
- 44.4 Professor Schaper supported the use of Professor Maxwell's name, but suggested a joint naming might also be appropriate.
- 45.4 The Principal thanked Senators for their input and confirmed a vote would now be taken on the motion presented.

In favour of the motion:	31
Not in favour of the motion:	22
Abstaining from the vote:	10

As a result of the vote, the Principal confirmed that Senate would recommend to the University Court that the new Science Building be named the 'James Clerk Maxwell Building'.

UPDATE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

- 43.1 The Principal, in providing an update to the Senate, acknowledged the current political context, and related political developments within the UK, specifically noting the announcement of the General Election to be held on 8 June 2017. He acknowledged that the impact of such developments was as yet unknown. The Principal informed the Senate that it was also not yet known if the Higher Education Bill, which primarily concerns the Teaching Excellence Framework and UK Research and Innovation, would pass before the election. He noted that within Scotland, the Enterprise and Skills agency review had now concluded and the Student Funding Council (SFC) would remain in existence but, that it had also been agreed that a supervisory board would sit above the SFC. He confirmed that their role in regards to Higher Education funding remained unclear. The Principal noted that the Scottish Government's finances remained tight but welcomed the clarity provided regarding the funding position for European Union (EU) students in 2018. The Principal informed the Senate that he and others were continuing to seek early clarity regarding the post-Brexit position for EU students. Finally, the Principal noted that political movements relevant to the University were not confined to the UK. He informed the Senate that the Rwandan Government had put a temporary hold on the development of international campuses pending clarification of their own funding position. He confirmed that the University's Transnational Education (TNE) project in Rwanda was currently on hold, pending further reports in this regard.

HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING

- 44.1 The Principal moved to the agenda item of Health, Safety and Wellbeing.
- 44.2 Dr Mills queried whether the University's Travel Policy and Risk Assessment was concerned only with overseas travel. While it was confirmed that it is concerned only with overseas travel, the Principal, acknowledging the recent terrible events on London Bridge, emphasised the importance of the University being aware as to where its staff are on University business.
- 44.3 The Principal highlighted the Mental Health Strategy. Noting the plaudits the University has received for its inception, the Principal reminded Senators that the strategy can work only if staff and students engage with it and are concerned for the welfare of each other. Professor Ross, Vice-Principal for People Strategy noted that a number of members of staff had undertaken the mental health first aid training and that opportunities for staff to undertake this would continue. Professor Ross reminded Senators that any concerns they or their colleagues may have regarding students or colleagues could be discussed with Student Support or Human Resources (HR). Professor Ross confirmed that further communication (in a variety of forms) regarding the strategy would follow, as the University seeks to embed it into the work of the University on a daily basis.

HONORARY DEGREE NOMINATIONS

- 45.1 A member of the Senate raised concern that feedback was not being provided to the nominees for Honorary Degrees when they had been considered unsuccessful by the Honorary Degrees Committee. The Principal confirmed that the Honorary Degrees Committee acts on behalf of Senate and that nominees are unaware of their nomination. He agreed that he was content that feedback should, however, be sent to the nominator to explain views of Honorary Degrees Committee when nominations were rejected. This was accepted as an appropriate course of action.
- 45.2 Mr Styles requested that a review of the criteria for Honorary Degree nominations be undertaken. While noting that Senior Vice-Principals and Court members are often nominated, he noted that a rule prevents the nomination of University Staff. Dr Bernard confirmed that serving members of staff not normally considered unless their employment is coming to a conclusion (i.e. in advance of retirement). The Principal proposed that a paper regarding the criteria for nominations be considered at the Honorary Degrees Committee and at the next meeting of the Senate. Mr Styles agreed that this was a satisfactory course of action.

REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COURT

- 45.1 The Senate received an update from Professor Hutchison on behalf of the Senate Assessors on the meeting of the University Court held on 28 March 2017 (copy filed with the principal copy of the minute). Professor Hutchison specifically noted that this had been the first meeting of the Court attended by the newly appointed Senior Governor, Mr Martin Gilbert, of Aberdeen Asset Management. Professor Hutchison noted the Court had discussed the following:
- (i) Further to their discussion and approval at meetings of the Senate, Professor Hutchison confirmed Court approval of the University's proposed campuses in Rwanda (minute point 43.1 above refers) and Qatar. Professor Hutchison reflected on comments made by the Senior Governor that it was important to ensure the University's first TNE campus was successful and while accepting that the University must be opportunist in securing new ventures, that the University must

be careful not to overstretch itself. Professor Hutchison further noted that subsequent to Senate discussions of timing and capacity for TNE ventures, new posts had been approved in the Business School to meet the challenging timetable for the campus in Qatar.

- (ii) Professor Hutchison informed the Senate that the Court had received the final report from the Good Governance Institute on its effectiveness review of Court, He noted the interesting recommendations made and that further review of these would follow.
- (iii) Professor Hutchison reminded the Senate of the transition to the new composition of Court, to be introduced in October 2017. He stated Court agreement that the transition be phased. Regarding the reduction in Senate Assessors from 6 to 4 specifically, he stated that a phased changeover in this regard, rather than an immediate re-election of the remaining four positions would be the desired view of the assessors.

45.2 Professor Hutchison invited any questions from the Senate regarding the Court update. A brief discussion ensued as follows:

- Professor Anderson sought clarity with regards the representation of the Senate minute on TNE to the Court, noting that while the Senate had approved the campus in Rwanda it had done so on the basis that the specific proposals and academic provision in relation to it come back to the Senate for discussion and approval. The Principal confirmed that this had been represented to the Court by way of verbal report.
- Mr Styles proposed an amendment with regards to the composition of Senate Assessors. On the basis of the proposed removal of Colleges (minute point 46.1 below refers), Mr Styles proposed that of the 4 assessors, 2 be drawn from Science and 2 from Arts and Humanities, with an appropriate gender split. Mr Styles further proposed fresh elections to fill these positions without a phased changeover, in the spirit of the legislation.
- Dr Lusseau stated his support for Mr Styles' proposed amendment but noted the importance of continuity during the period of transition.
- Professor Anderson offered his support for Mr Styles' proposal noting the cascading changes brought about by the removal of Colleges in the University.
- Professor Wells agreed that the proposal would mirror the split already identified by the University's teaching Deans.
- The Principal confirmed a vote would be taken on Mr Styles' proposed amendment, the results of which were as follows:

In favour of the proposal:	40
Not in favour of the proposal:	21
Abstaining from the vote:	4

- Professor David Anderson, on behalf of a member of his constituency, raised a concern regarding the remuneration Committee report, stating that in this time of financial crisis, having money ring fenced for rewards for Grade 9 (and above) colleagues was inappropriate. He further stated that in order to support equality of pay and diversity, there should be equal pay rewards for academic and administrative staff at lower grades levels. Professor Anderson stressed that his constituent felt strongly that the efforts of administrative and support staff be rewarded and this proposal was an example of why staff morale is so low. Mrs Inglis clarified that Grade 9 (and above) covers senior administrative staff and all Professors (approximately 240-250 staff), the vast majority of whom are not on a salary scale and therefore are not entitled to an increment in recognition of exceptional performance. This pot of up to £100k would be used to reward the exceptional performance of these staff and to address gender equality issues. The

Principal further stated that exceptional performance at lower levels must be also be rewarded by way of increments or other appropriate means.

ACADEMIC STRUCTURES

46.1 Mrs Inglis, University Secretary, presented the paper on Academic Structures (copy filed with the principal copy of the minute). Acknowledging the decision taken approximately 2 years ago to move to a School based planning and budgetary approach, Mrs Inglis noted that these changes were now embedded and that there was acknowledgement that decision-making was now being taken at School level and that it was now appropriate for the residual College structure to be removed. Mrs Inglis stated that further detail, including the resolution required to accompany the proposal, was provided by way of the paper circulated. She further explained that following circulation of the papers amendments to the paper had been proposed, namely:

- (i) A change to the draft Resolution to take account of the particulars of the Business School structure;
- (ii) An amendment to the text of section 5 from 'There shall be a Head of each School who shall be appointed by the University Court for such period as may be determined by the Court and will be responsible to the Senior Vice-Principal.' to state: 'There shall be a head of School who shall be appointed by the University Court for such period as may be determined by the Court.'

46.2 The Principal invited any questions from the Senate regarding the paper. A detailed discussion of various aspects of the change ensued as follows:

- Mr Styles stated his disagreement with the proposal to amend section 5 (minute point 46.1 (ii) above refers). While welcoming the abolition of the Colleges, Mr Styles stated that it was reasonable for the heads of School to remain responsible to the Senior Vice-Principal. Mrs Inglis confirmed that the change was intended only to allow for future flexibility in line management structures. Mr Styles stated the importance of transparency within the resolution and that the proposal would lead to a lack of clarity. He stated that the Senior Vice-Principal represented a logical line of accountability. It was agreed that the resolution would remain as circulated in regards to section 5.
- Dr Shanks noted concern that the removal of the College structure may incur a loss of cross-school collaboration. The Principal reassured the Senate that the role of teaching deans was designed to ensure best practice across different schools and across the University as a whole. He further stated the important challenge for the Vice-Principals for Research and People Strategy in cross-University collaboration and the critical importance of best practice across the piece. The Principal referenced Athena Swan as an example of the importance of ensuring best practice and its successes.
- Professor Anderson stated that the proposal had attracted some anxiety and much correspondence from his constituents. In summarising the thoughts of his constituency, he noted that while the majority of people were open to the dissolution of Colleges, they felt the proposal to be premature. Professor Anderson proposed a working party be established to look at how the specific arrangements for devolution would work. He noted that the resolution made no provision for the amendment of statutory obligations such as Discipline or Promotion etc. He further noted that each of the University's major Committees (including Court, minute point 45.2 above refers) have memberships on the basis of the College structure. Professor Anderson stated that it would be reassuring to have a revised paper to consider providing answers to these questions and clarity around these issues. Professor Anderson read two extracts from feedback from his constituents as follows:

- Mr Styles informed the Senate that with regards the structure of University Committees; a grandfather clause to the appropriate resolution(s) would cover the required amendments.
- Professor Welch stated that following discussions of the Heads of School with the Principal and at the University Management Group (UMG) it was felt that the proposal was the appropriate direction of travel. Professor Welch, however, expressed concern that the University remain able to discuss the key strategic issues faced. He stated the importance of the clarification of roles such as those of the teaching Deans in ensuring such discussions and appropriate engagement would continue.
- Professor Masthoff noted concern as to the lack of administrative support for the Teaching and Research Deans. She stated the importance of this support for these roles in ensuring the effectiveness of new structures.

46.3 The Principal acknowledged the concerns raised by members of the Senate over the dissolution of the College structure, specifically the potential loss of strategic oversight amongst schools and the level of power afforded to Heads of School. He stated the appointment process for such positions would remain to be transparent and that the University would work tirelessly for cross-school engagement.

46.4 The Principal confirmed a vote would now be taken on whether or not the University should move towards a programme of the dissolution of the College structure. He stated that if passed, a working party as proposed would be establish to consider the detail of the change.

In favour of the dissolution of the College structure:	34
Not in favour of the dissolution of the College structure:	18
Abstaining from the vote:	6

A vote having been taken, the Principal confirmed that the decision taken by the Senate was to move forward with the dissolution of the College structure.

46.4 The Principal confirmed a vote would now also be taken on whether or not the University should move to change the name of 'Schools' to 'Faculties' as proposed by Professor Schafer. Professor Kilburn cautioned the Senate that such a change might re-introduce a level above Schools and create a similar structure to that which exists. Professor Masthoff and Dr Mills noted the cost and workload implications of such a change at this time. Dr Shanks, however, acknowledged that renaming the School of Education would ease confusion often experienced as a consequence of their dealings with primary and secondary schools.

46.5 A vote having been taken, the results were as follows:

In favour of the renaming of Schools as Faculties:	25
Not in favour of the renaming of Schools as Faculties:	41
Abstaining from the vote:	2

SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL: INDICATIVE FUNDING ALLOCATION FOR 2017-18

47.1 Mr Beattie, Director of Finance, presented the Indicative Funding Allocation for 2017-18, commencing 1 August 2017 (copy filed with the principal copy of the minute).

47.2 Mr Beattie reminded the Senate that the letter was an indicative position only, however, that the feeling amongst the Sector was that the final position would likely be unchanged. He confirmed that the final position was expected to be confirmed at the end of April or

beginning of May. Mr Beattie informed the Senate that the allocation represented a 1.2% of £811k cut in funding. Coupled with the current year's cut of 3.9% or £2.7 million this represented a £3.5 million reduction in funding in the last two years.

- 47.3 Dr Lusseau noted the importance of explicitly stating the difficulties faced by the University. The Principal noted his agreement with the Universities Scotland response, which stated that they understood the challenges faced by the Scottish Government but that it should be realised that this agreement was not providing for a sustainable teaching framework. The Principal further stated that the Education and Skills Committee at Holyrood had also noted this and the report of HE funding from audit Scotland last year and had noted the current position as unsustainable. The Principal noted concern that the Cabinet Secretary's response had been to suggest that the funding represented a contribution. It had not been clarified what the contribution means or indeed where Universities are supposed to acquire the rest of the required contribution from. The Principal informed the Senate that the Scottish Government projections do not suggest that things will improve in the short to medium term. He acknowledged that while the University, and Sector as a whole, are doing everything possible to mitigate the effects, there may come a time when it is no longer sustainable. The Principal commended the work of the University to maintain excellent staff: student ratios, comparable with other Institutions, however, stated the importance of making the case for an improved position.

RESEARCH POSTGRADUATE COMPLETIONS

- 48.1 The Senate received the paper on Research Postgraduate Completions (copy filed with the principal copy of the minute). Professor Mashhoff, introducing the paper, informed the Senate that the completion data included was determined on the basis of students completing within 4 years of full time study (or equivalence) and that completion is defined by submission of a thesis. She noted that if a student does not complete on time, this does not mean no completion at all and that suspensions have been taken into account. Professor Mashhoff noted that in order to calculate the data provided, information going back many years had been gathered and student data analysed to determine a) when they were supposed to submit and b) when they actually did.
- 48.2 Professor Mashhoff acknowledged that a lot of very good supervisory work was ongoing across the University and recognised that a 100% completion rate could not be achieved. She did, however, note room for improvement in work in this regard. Professor Mashhoff noted the importance of analysing the data to determine what could be done to improve completion figures and the Postgraduate Research (PGR) student experience as a whole. Professor Mashhoff referenced the following examples included in the paper:
- An increase in the number of funded PGR students
 - Better considering how to recruit high quality PGR students
 - Determining what makes a high quality PGR
 - Supervisory training and tracking
 - The monitoring of the supervisory relationship and clear expectations (on both sides)
 - Reducing feelings of loneliness and isolation
- 48.3 Professor Mashhoff invited any questions from the Senate regarding the paper. She noted that the paper was for an academic view only at this time, with more detailed proposals to come back to the Senate following further discussion by the PGR Committee. A brief discussion ensued as follows:
- Professor Skakle noted the importance of concentrating discussion on the general figures rather than % alterations. She stated a review of PGR provision within Natural and Computing Science had been undertaken and highlighted the reluctance of students to suspend during periods of illness, as a consequence of the financial impact

this would have for them, as an issue would could potentially be helped by supporting these students through University funding.

- It was recognised that completion rates are often higher where a community of PGR students exists.
- Professor Schafer, on behalf of a constituent, raised the issue of measuring completion by a similar means across different subject areas.
- Professor Anderson further noted concern with regards to the link the paper makes between insufficient support and completion rates. Professor Anderson stated that this was not a valid assumption and that the suggestion of closer monitoring was concerning, given the extent to which this was already required. He asserted that another layer of monitoring would likely only decrease the student experience.
- Dr Oliver queried whether work had been undertaken to capture monitoring processes followed within individual schools on top of required monitoring. Professor Masthoff confirmed the practices of individual Schools had been recently audited.
- Dr Mills questioned whether any steps could be taken to support supervisors working with students 'going slowly' and not moving to complete or withdraw. Professor Masthoff confirmed this was an area that should be investigated further. Dr Mills and Professor Masthoff agreed to discuss the issue further outside of Senate.
- Professor Kee echoed concerns over the issue over students being reluctant to suspend their studies when unwell. Professor Kee proposed consideration be given to 'sick leave' as an option for students in this position. Professor Kee further questioned whether Research Council expectations were for students to complete within 4 years. Professor Masthoff confirmed that Research Councils use 4 years for full time students and 7 for part time students.
- Professor Jovicic commented that the report was comprehensive but lacked information or analysis on background qualifications accepted for entry to the PhD. Professor Masthoff noted that while more data would have been great, this particular data can be difficult to gather.
- Professor Anderson noted concern regarding the role of Registry in handling suspension documentation. He further noted that supervisors are not sent confirmation of suspensions and suggested that communication could be improved.
- Dr Barker acknowledged the academic aspects of non-completion but also stated the importance of focusing on the welfare of PGR students. Dr Barker suggested the improvement of accommodation for overseas students and their families, mixing with people of their own culture and religion.

AOCB

- 49.1 Mr Styles noted the difficulty for members of the Senate when meetings are scheduled on days other than a Wednesday afternoon. The Principal confirmed that every effort is taken to schedule meetings on a Wednesday afternoon and will only be scheduled at an alternative time as a last resort.

REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Senate noted the recommendations arising from the meeting of the University Committee on Teaching & Learning on 8 March 2017.

1. Proposal to introduce a deadline for student s requiring Specific Exam Arrangements

- 50.1 Senate noted that the Committee had noted the lack of a formal deadline which had resulted in a lack of clarity for both students and staff about what arrangements were possible, reasonable and manageable, often at very short notice, for forthcoming

examination diets. The Committee approved the introduction of the proposed deadlines (copy filed with principal copy of the minute).

2. Partnership Activity in Qatar – AFG Limited: Proposed Qatar (Doha) Campus

- 50.2 On the recommendation of the panel and the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), the Committee, for its part, was content to approve AFG as a provider of Education on behalf of the University, subject to the strict adherence of the University's Quality Assurance processes (copy filed with principal copy of the minute).

3. Institutionally Verifiable Co-Curricular Activities

- 50.3 Senate noted that the Committee had approved the proposal from the Careers Service that both the InternPlus and Leadership Academy be included within the Enhanced Transcript as accredited activities from September 2016. The Committee had further approved the inclusion of the role of Athena SWAN Self-assessment Team student member as a recognised activity from September 2016.

4. Student guide to support Online Professionalism and Employability: Outcome from the University of Aberdeen Learning and Teaching Enhancement Programme

- 50.4 The Committee received the student guide to support Online Professionalism and Employability, an outcome from the University's Learning and Teaching Enhancement Programme (copy filed with principal copy of the minute). Senate noted that the Committee had noted the successful output from the project and was content to endorse its use and wider circulation across the University.

5. Dates and allocations for June 2017 graduations

- 50.5 The Committee noted the dates and allocation for the June Ceremonies as summarised [here](#) and as approved by the Convener of the UCTL by way of Conveners Action.

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

- 51.1 The Senate noted that the Senate Business Committee had approved the timeline for election of non ex officio members to the Senate as detailed in the attached paper (copy filed with principal copy of the minute).

ELECTION OF SENATE ASSESSORS TO THE UNIVERSITY COURT

- 52.1 The Senate noted that the Senate Business Committee had approved the timeline for election of Senate Assessors to the University Court as detailed in the attached paper (copy filed with principal copy of the minute).

ELECTION OF A RECTOR 2017

- 53.1 The Senate noted that the Senate Business Committee had approved the timeline for election of a Rector to replace Maggie Chapman, whose term of office comes to an end in December 2017, as detailed in the attached paper (copy filed with principal copy of the minute).

ACADEMIC STAFFING LEVELS

- 54.1 The Senate noted Appendix 5 (copy filed with principal copy of the minute). This paper provided a summary of Academic staffing levels across the University over the past two years following a question posed at the Senate meeting of 25th January 2017 (minute 2801 refers).