

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SENATUS ACADEMICUS

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2018

Present: Professor G Boyne, Professor P Hannaford, Professor R Wells, Professor M Campbell, Dr M Bain, Professor G Paton, Professor A Jenkinson, Professor E Pavlovskaja, Professor G Nixon, Professor M Brown, Dr M Ehenschwendtner, Mrs L Tibbets, Dr J Lamb, Dr A Sim, Professor P Nimmo, Professor J Schaper, Dr A Cecolin, Dr R Shanks, Dr H Martin, Dr A Bryzgel, Dr T Rist, Dr F Jürgensen, Dr A Simpson, Mr S Styles, Dr M Mills, Dr A McKinnon, Dr I Xypolia, Dr M Barker, Professor M Pinard, Professor P Hallett, Dr G Norton, Dr S Woodin, Dr M Delibegović, Professor G Brown, Professor L Erskine, Professor I McEwan, Dr F Murray, Dr J Pettit, Dr J Rochford, Professor A Lee, Dr D Skåtun, Dr S Miller, Dr D Watts, Dr A Rajnicek, Dr J Macdiarmid, Dr M Brazzelli, Professor N Vargesson, Dr J Hislop, Dr G Jones, Dr P Murchie, Professor H Wallace, Dr E Nordmann, Professor D Jovcic, Professor D Pokrajac, Professor A Akisanya, Dr Y Tanino, Dr N Schofield, Dr J Oliver, Dr M Spagnolo, Dr C North, Professor J Feldmann, Professor G Coghill, Professor C Grebogi, Dr R Hepworth, Dr N Oren, Mr L Ogubie, Mrs D Connelly, Mr O Kucerak, Miss I Drdakova, Miss M Jensen, Miss J Paneva, Miss R Chowdhury, Mr J Lumsden, Mr Kirectepe and Mr H Chalklin.

Apologies: Professor P McGeorge, Dr G Gordon, Dr P Sweeney, Professor E Welch, Dr DR Smith, Professor B MacGregor, Professor A Sahraie, Professor S Heys, Professor P Edwards, Professor D Jolley, Professor I Guz, Professor C Kee, Professor G Macfarlane, Dr R Neilson, Professor K Shennan, Mr D Auchie, Dr M Hole, Dr J Bohan, Professor W Naphy, Mr E Usenmez, Dr T Fahey Palma, Professor H Hutchison, Dr L McCann, Dr G Hough, Dr SJ Kim, Dr RB Taylor, Dr D Lusseau, Professor C de Bari, Dr D Scott, Professor J Jayasinghe, Dr K Kiezebrink, Dr D MacCallum, Dr A Jack, Dr M Jackson, Professor M Wiercigroch, Dr B Rea, Dr M da Silva Baptista, Dr P Henderson, Miss K Richie-Lawless, Miss L Bacon and Mr K Graham.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- 1.1 The Principal opened the meeting, welcoming members of the Senate to the first meeting of the 2018/19 academic year. Mrs Inglis, University Secretary reminded members that the meeting would be audio recorded and asked that they introduce themselves before contributing to discussion to allow for an accurate minute.
- 1.2 The Principal invited members to approve the agenda and the reordering of items to allow the REF Update to be taken earlier than scheduled. Mr Styles stated that he had submitted an emergency motion for consideration. It was agreed that this would be considered along with the Report from the University Court (*agenda item 5 further refers*). No further objections or comments were raised and the meeting proceeded.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 2.1 The Principal invited members to confirm that they were content with the minute of the meeting of the Senate held on 16 May 2018. No objections or comments were raised and the meeting proceeded.

UPDATE FROM PRINCIPAL

- 3.1 The Principal, in providing an update to the Senate, began by thanking all members for their excellent advice and support since he undertook the role. He noted that his arrival at the University had coincided with the good news of the University's higher standing in league table results in the Times, Sunday Times and Times International global league tables. The Principal stated that these results stood the University in good stead to make further progress. He acknowledged that he had previously spoken with some members regarding the role of the Senate in the University's governance structure and took the opportunity to reiterate to the Senate as a whole, the importance of building on the University's successes by focussing hard on teaching and research, the purpose of the Senate. He noted his gratitude to all members in taking seriously their responsibility to oversee teaching and research within the Institution. With reference to the Outcomes of the Annual Senate Survey (*minute point seven further refers*) he expressed his desire to hear the full ranges of voices in contributing to the governance of teaching and research.

HEALTH, SAFETY & WELLBEING

- 4.1 Mrs Dyker, Director of People, provided the Senate with an update regarding Health, Safety and Wellbeing. Mrs Dyker thanked all those who had responded to the staff survey and noted that approximately 1300 (39%) responses had been received. She informed the Senate that an analysis of the responses was currently being undertaken and that communication on this would follow in the next two to three weeks. Mrs Dyker stated that an Institutional analysis and individual School analyses would be provided and that School visits to discuss outcomes were anticipated to be undertaken.
- 4.2 Mrs Dyker reminded the Senate of the Health and Wellbeing days scheduled for Thursday 25 October 2018 in Old Aberdeen and Thursday 8 November at Foresterhill. Mrs Dyker encouraged the attendance of as many people as possible.
- 4.3 The opportunity for Senators to raise any further issues regarding health, safety and wellbeing was provided. No issues were raised and the meeting proceeded.

REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COURT

- 5.1 The Senate received an update from Dr Shanks on behalf of the Senate Assessors on the meeting of the University Court held on 27 June 2018 (copy filed with the principal copy of the minute).
- 5.2 Dr Shanks informed the Senate of the key issues arising from the meeting as follows:
- The Court received an update on the Research Excellence Framework (REF) as provided to the Senate (*minute point 6 further refers*). Dr Shanks informed the Senate that the Court has noted the reduction in academic staff currently at the University, in comparison to the number at the time on the last REF. Dr Shanks reassured the Senate that this was an issue the Court was acutely aware of and that there were proposals to recruit more staff. Concerning the REF, Dr Shanks noted that the Court had also discussed the importance of individual face-to-face feedback for staff on their submissions, following their scoring.
 - The Court received a paper regarding budgets and the proposed reshaping of the University but not wholesale redundancies.

- The Court, along with members of the Senior Management Team (SMT), will hold strategy days in November at which the shape and academic size of the University will be considered. Dr Shanks noted Court discussions in regards to culture change and the reshaping of the University with as much consultation as possible.
 - Finally, Dr Shanks informed the Senate, regarding the student occupation, which no disciplinary action was taken against staff or students as a result.
- 5.3 Further to Dr Shanks' report from the University Court, Mr Styles was invited to present his emergency motion. Mr Styles informed the Senate that his motion was a response to communication received on 9 October 2018, informing the University community that the Senior Governor would be standing down from his role in due course, on appointment of a successor. Mr Styles stated the importance of the role of the Senior Governor, referred to by the Scottish Governance Higher Education Act (2015) as the senior lay member, in the leadership of the Court.
- 5.4 Mr Styles informed the Senate that the procedure for the appointment of a Senior Governor is new, laid down by legislation and, as yet, untested. He expressed that the process is very complicated, however, in summary; the University must setup an 'eligibility committee', which will specify the criteria of the role, advertise the role and advertise any candidates who apply for the role. Mr Styles informed the Senate that if a candidate meets with the approval of the 'eligibility committee' an election will take place. Mr Styles acknowledged that correspondence had referred to this work being carried out by the Governance and Nominations Committee of the Court, however, given the importance of the role for the University as a whole, stated his belief that the Senate and student body should be appropriately represented on any such 'eligibility committee'. Mr Styles noted that the motion, recommending wide involvement in the process, if approved by the Senate, should be forwarded to the Governance and Nominations Committee.
- 5.5 The Principal thanked Mr Styles for the presentation of the motion and asked Mrs Inglis, University Secretary to clarify the legal context and process required of the University in the election of a new Senior Governor. Mrs Inglis confirmed the intentions of the existing Senior Governor to step down from the role and his willingness to continue in office until a successor is elected. Mrs Inglis informed the Senate that the Senior Governor's office runs until December 2019. Setting the context the University is required to work within, Mrs Inglis informed the Senate that until now, the Senior Governor was an appointment made by the Court and governed by the Code of Governance (2013) which placed requirements on the University including the publication of a role specification. In broad terms, this required advertising to be undertaken widely and an appointment Committee, including five members of the Court, to be setup and to be responsible for the recruitment process. Mrs Inglis acknowledged Mr Styles' motion in its recognition that the University must now comply with revised legislation and a significant number of requirements of the University. Mrs Inglis stated there are three broad stages; selection, election (based on first past the post) and appointment.
- 5.6 Mrs Inglis confirmed the requirement of the Court to establish a Committee to devise the criteria for the role and to ensure the efficiency and fairness of the process of filling the position. In terms of the composition of the Committee, Mrs Inglis informed the Senate that the act stipulates that there must be at least one staff member and one student member. Mrs Inglis informed the Senate the following the announcement, the Court had an initial discussion at which it was agreed that the Governance and Nominations Committee, with appropriate adjustments to its current membership to ensure gender balance, should consider the process and provide an initial report with recommendations to the Court meeting to be held in December 2019. Mrs Inglis

confirmed the approach as consistent with the remit of the Governance and Nominations Committee and with past practice. Mrs Inglis stated that she expected the Governance and Nominations Committee to meet initially in late October 2018. If endorsed by the Senate, Mrs Inglis proposed the motion be remitted to the Governance and Nominations Committee for their consideration.

5.7 Mr Styles thanked Mrs Inglis for the clarification of the required process. He stressed that the motion was a request to the Governance and Nominations Committee, accepting that the jurisdiction over the election and appointment of a Senior Governor was not within the power of the Senate. Mr Styles further stated the importance of the role for the University as a whole.

5.8 Following introduction by Mr Styles and the clarification by Mrs Inglis, a short discussion regarding the motion ensued. The main tenets of the discussion were as follows:

- Dr Oliver expressed his support for the motion and the spirit of a process of democratisation, sought by the Senate. He noted that, in the past, the Senate and the Court had failed to work cooperatively and that this represented stronger channels of communication.
- Dr Mills acknowledged that much of the eligibility criteria was set out in the published legislation. With reference to the motion, Dr Mills expressed concern over the term 'eligibility committee' and sought clarification, as he understood the legislation to also assign the oversight of the election to this committee.
- Responding Mrs Inglis stated that the term is not used in the legislation or accompanying guidance notes. Mrs Inglis confirmed that the guidance is simply that the Court must delegate to a committee the responsibility for (i) devising the criteria and (ii) ensuring the efficiency and fairness of the process. Mr Styles further confirmed that the legislation does not provide a name for the committee and that 'eligibility committee' had been used within the motion to reflect the fact that the committee was not intended to be an appointment committee. Mrs Inglis stated that it would be for the Governance and Nominations Committee to determine the appropriate title.
- Dr Watts stated that he was a member of the Court and proposed the amendment of section 6.2 to read 'two of the four elected Court members', to avoid the exclusion of a category of Court member. Mr Styles acknowledged the proposed change and agreed to make the change to include reference to members of the Court elected by the Trade Unions.
- The Principal acknowledged the question over the extent to which the motion should be finessed in Senate or to take the general point forward to the Governance and Nominations Committee.
- Dr Martin expressed her contentment, as seconder of the motion, to adapt section 6.2 as requested. No objections were raised to this proposed change.
- Professor Brown asked whether the Senate was comfortable in having the current Senior Governor form part of the committee tasked with the election of a successor. Mrs Inglis confirmed that this was not permissible under section 74 of the published legislation. Mr Styles stated the reference within the motion should be deleted.
- Ms Chowdhury with regards all election processes, stated the importance of ethnic minority representation.

5.9 The Principal sought the support of the Senate in passing the motion, subject to the required amendments, to the Governance and Nominations Committee. No objections were raised and the Principal confirmed that the motion would proceed in this way.

REF UPDATE

- 6.1 Professor Campbell, Vice-Principal (Research), introduced the paper on the progress of the University's preparations for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021. Professor Campbell stated that the paper was largely self-explanatory and provided the Senate with information on the progress taken internally concerning the REF over the summer, in addition to information on external developments, including information on the funding councils' consultation exercise on the REF2021 draft guidance and sub-panel criteria and working methods.
- 6.2 Professor Campbell highlighted the publication of the updated guidance by the REF team over the summer. Professor Campbell acknowledged these as the final set of draft guidance, which will drive the organisation of the REF return. Professor Campbell stated that the paper highlighted the main issues arising from these, including staff returns and eligibility criteria.
- 6.3 Professor Campbell informed the Senate that Universities had been asked to provide feedback on a small number of elements in regards to REF planning. Professor Campbell stated that feedback was required for submission by Monday 15 October 2018. One of the key areas on which the REF team sought feedback was the process for identifying individual staff circumstances. Professor Campbell informed the Senate that this was an area which had been expected to change significantly from that employed for REF 2014, to make the process less intrusive and administratively burdensome. Professor Campbell noted that flexibility had been put into the system to allow for between one and five papers to be returned, however, last minute suggestions from the REF team saw movement back to more detailed descriptions of staff circumstances. Professor Campbell informed the Senate that, along with the other Scottish Higher Education Institutions, the University intended to feedback to the REF team that whilst it is good in principle to seek all individual staff circumstances, the proposed process remains intrusive and administratively burdensome. She further informed the Senate that the tariff is not applied at the individual level and thus the obvious benefit to the individual is not apparent.
- 6.4 Finally, Professor Campbell informed the Senate of the requirement of the Institution to create a Code of Practice and submit it to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). Members of the Senate noted that they would be invited to discuss the draft institutional Code of Practice before its submission to the Court for approval prior to its final submission to the SFC.
- 6.5 Members of the Senate were invited to raise any comments or questions with Professor Campbell. No comments were raised and the meeting proceeded.

OUTCOMES OF THE ANNUAL SENATE SURVEY

- 7.1 Professor Hannaford, the Acting Senior Vice-Principal, presented the outcomes of the Annual Senate Survey. Professor Hannaford highlighted that the survey had received a 45% response rate, with the breakdown of respondents detailed within the paper. He acknowledged the difficulties presented by attempting to summarise disparate views, however, noted the key issues arising from the survey as:
 - (i) That the responses indicated that although there was an improvement on previous years, there was a low number of respondents who believed that Senate used its time efficiently.

- (ii) That only 46% of respondents felt that meetings and the business of the Senate were effectively conducted.
- (iii) That 38% of respondents felt that there was effective communication between the Senate and the Court.

Professor Hannaford acknowledged that while these figures were improvements on previous years, they still represented less than 50% of respondents and were therefore areas for reflection. Professor Hannaford drew the attention of the Senate to the questions included in the paper for their consideration as follows:

- (i) How to encourage wider engagement from members in debate to counter the view that meetings are being dominated by a small number of members?
- (ii) How to better manage the timing of agenda to avoid meetings overrunning and too much time being spent on less consequential items?
- (iii) Ways to further enhance the communication between Senate and Court?

7.2 Following introduction by Professor Hannaford, a discussion regarding the Annual Senate Survey ensued. The main tenets of the discussion were as follows:

- With reference to the point raised regarding communication between the Senate and the Court, Dr Shanks confirmed the willingness of the Senior Governor to attend a future meeting of the Senate to speak to members. Dr Shanks stated that the meeting scheduled for Wednesday 20 March 2019 was a suitable date for him to attend.
- Regarding the survey itself, how it can be read and how it can be interpreted, Dr McKinnon noted that a number of questions are intended to be answered by elected or student members. Dr McKinnon expressed concern that the number of responses to these questions totalled more than eligible respondents in these categories. Dr McKinnon stated that it was easy to create a survey preventing this from happening. Concerning the comments made within the survey, many of which are repetitive, Dr McKinnon advised caution in the reading of these, noting that they could have been made by the same respondents in response to several questions contained within the survey. He again stated that it was straightforward to set up a survey, which could ensure this does not happen, without compromising anonymity.
- The Principal acknowledged the useful information contained within the survey results and proposed a more formal response, allowing for appropriate reflection and the consideration of how practice might be adjusted in order to respond effectively. In so doing, he proposed that it might be appropriate for the Senate Business Committee (SBC) to further consider the outcomes and propose recommendations as necessary.
- Dr Martin expressed her agreement with this suggestion. She further stated her concern that discussions at Senate are often so lengthy because of the fact issues only come to Senate at the end of their consideration. Dr Martin proposed that issues be considered first by the Senate before their wider consultation.
- Dr North added to the comments made by Dr Martin and stated his concern that communication across the University is not effective and that Senate is often unaware of the discussion of issues at other committees. Dr North expressed concern that members of the Teaching and Learning Committees are not aware that they are representatives of their Schools.
- Dr Nordmann expressed that the comments made within the survey should not be discounted and drew on her own experiences of the Senate and in

speaking with other members of the Senate in stating that, the comments raised are reflective of the experiences of Senate members.

- Dr Jurgensen stated that difficulties are often presented to the Senate as a consequence of members only having the opportunity to amend existing proposals and not being part of early discussions in regards to policy development etc.
- Professor Lee, addressing the point raised regarding Senate being dominated by a small number of individuals, stated that over the last few years this had very much been the case. Professor Lee acknowledged the importance of open discussion, however, added that efficient meetings are those where the Chair ensures comments made must be new points and not simply reiterations of earlier comments. Professor Lee stated that the same individuals, raising the same points, who upon a vote being undertaken, can be seen to be in the minority in their beliefs, often dominate long discussions. Professor Less stated the importance of the guidance from the Chair.
- Dr Martin acknowledged that some Senators do not feel comfortable in speaking. The Principal stated that this was regrettable and that widespread participation was encouraged, in order that every voice could be heard and view could be expressed.
- Professor Jenkinson stated that all Schools are represented on the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Committees and members are encouraged to disseminate information. Professor Jenkinson acknowledged issues regarding communication exist centrally and within Schools and expressed her view that work be undertaken to address this.
- Dr Shanks stated that open sessions with Senate Assessors could be held in order to allow members of the Senate to better understand the role.
- Dr Mills asked for feedback on the induction provided for new Senators.

7.3 In drawing discussion to a close, the Principal stated that the issue and those points raised by members of the Senate would be referred back to the SBC for their consideration.

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

8.1 Senate approved the timeline for election of non *ex-officio* members to the Senate. (copy filed with principal copy of minute).

REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Senate noted the actions taken by the University Committee on Teaching and Learning by circulation on 5 September 2018.

1. Latest Dates for the Return of Examination Results 2018/19

9.1 Senate noted that the University Committee on Teaching and Learning had approved the latest dates for Return of Examination Results 2018/19 (available on the University's webpages [here](#)).

2. Term Dates for Academic Year 2019-20

- 9.2 Senate noted that the University Committee on Teaching and Learning had approved the Term Dates for Academic Year 2019/20 (available on the University's webpages [here](#)).

3. Dates of Term to 2028

- 9.3 Senate noted that the University Committee on Teaching and Learning had approved the Dates to Term to 2029 (copy filed with principal copy of minute).

4. Dates and allocations for November 2018 graduations

- 9.4 The Committee noted the dates and allocation for the November Ceremonies as summarised below and as approved by the Convener of the UCTL by way of Conveners Action.

Thursday 22 November at 11.00 a.m.

Higher and First Degrees in the Business School and School of Law.

Thursday 22 November at 3.00 p.m.

Higher and First Degrees in the School of Engineering, School of Natural & Computing Sciences and School of Biological Sciences.

Friday 23 November at 11.00 a.m.

Higher and First Degrees in the School of Education, School of Divinity, History & Philosophy, School of Social Science, School of Psychology and School of Language, Literature, Music & Visual Culture.

Friday 23 November at 3.00 p.m.

Higher and First Degrees in the School of Geosciences and School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition.

ENHANCEMENT-LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW (ELIR)

- 10.1 The University's Reflective Analysis and Advance Information Set were signed-off by the Principal and submitted to QAA Scotland on the 10th August. The ELIR Team will be visiting for a day long planning visit on the 10th October and then for the main 5 day visit the week beginning 19th November. As part of the planning visit the ELIR Team have asked to speak to a group of students, including student representatives and those who have been involved in Internal Teaching Review; the Education Officer is helping gather volunteers. The Team will also meet with a group of subject-level staff who have experience of UOA quality processes. The final version of the Reflective Analysis can be accessed via https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/documents/Aberdeen_ReflectiveAnalysis.pdf.

SENATE ELECTIONS

- 11.1 Senate noted the outcome of the Senate elections conducted at the end of last academic year as detailed below:

The following have been elected to serve on the Senatus Academicus from 01 October 2018 to 30 September 2022 (except where indicated otherwise):

Business School

Dr A Sim

School of Divinity, History & Philosophy

Dr A Cecolin

School of Language, Literature, Music & Visual Culture

Dr F Jürgensen
Dr SJ Kim

School of Law

Dr RB Taylor
Mr S Styles

School of Social Science

Dr I Xypolia

School of Biological Sciences

Dr M Barker (until 30 September 2020)
Professor P Hallet
Dr G Norton
Dr S Woodin

School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition

Professor G Brown
Professor C de Bari
Professor M Delibegovic
Professor L Erskine
Professor A Lee
Professor I McEwan
Dr S Miller (until 30 September 2020)
Dr F Murray
Dr J Pettit
Dr J Rochford
Dr D Scott (until 30 September 2020)
Dr D Skåtun
Dr D Watts (until 30 September 2020)

School of Engineering

Professor D Pokrajac (until 30 September 2020)
Dr Y Tanino
Professor M Wiercigroch

School of Geosciences

Dr C North
Dr M Spagnolo

School of Natural & Computing Sciences

Dr M da Silva Baptista
Dr P Henderson
Dr R Hepworth

AOCB

- 12.1 The Principal invited Mrs Connolly, Education Officer, to make a statement to the Senate regarding the student experience within Scandinavian Studies. Mrs Connolly stated that members of the Senate would likely be aware of the issues in the School of Divinity, History and Philosophy (DHP) specifically regarding Scandinavian Studies. Mrs Connolly expressed to the Senate her concerns for students on this degree programme, affected by the situation who feel let down, lied to and unsure as to who they can trust. She stated that she had personally heard their accounts of their experiences and informed the Senate that they were not something she had expected to hear within the University. Mrs Connolly expressed concern that references are continuously made to the 'Aberdeen Family' while these students are neglected and that in the future when staff leave the Institution, impact assessments are undertaken to avoid such an impact on a group of students.
- 12.2 The Principal thanked Mrs Connolly for her contribution and stated the importance of the situation. He informed the Senate that he had met with the group of students concerned and would do so again. The Principal further stated he had met with Professor Brink, with a view to reaching a successful conclusion on the supervision arrangements for the affected students. The Principal asked for patience while the meetings continued.
- 12.3 Mr Ogubie, Student President, sought clarification on for how long the students affected should remain patient. The Principal informed the Senate that further meetings were scheduled for the following week, with an outcome anticipated by the end of the week. He stated the complex and delicate nature of the situation.
- 12.4 Dr Oliver stated the impact on the Department of Archaeology of the issues in Scandinavian Studies. Going forward, in such instances of restructuring, Dr Oliver sought members of the Senate be made aware in an attempt to mitigate such issues arising again.
- 12.5 The Principal thanked members of the Senate for their contribution to discussions and closed the meeting.