

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SENATUS ACADEMICUS

Minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2018

Present: Professor G Boyne, Professor P Hannaford, Professor R Wells, Professor M Campbell, Professor A Speight, Dr G Gordon, Professor E Welch, Professor G Paton, Professor P Edwards, Professor I Guz, Professor A Jenkinson, Professor E Pavlovskaia, Professor M Brown, Professor G Macfarlane, Professor K Shennan, Mr D Auchie, Dr M Ehrenschtndtner, Professor H Hutchison, Mrs L Tibbets, Dr J Lamb, Dr L McCann, Dr A Sim, Professor P Nimmo, Professor J Schaper, Dr G Hough, Dr A Cecolin, Dr B Marsden, Dr R Shanks, Dr E Curtis, Dr T Rist, Dr F Jürgensen, Dr SJ Kim, Professor R O'Connor, Dr RB Taylor, Mr S Styles, Professor D Anderson, Dr M Barker, Dr D Lusseau, Professor M Pinard, Dr G Norton, Dr S Woodin, Dr M Delibegović, Professor L Erskine, Professor I McEwan, Dr J Pettit, Dr J Rochford, Professor A Lee, Dr D Skåtun, Dr S Miller, Professor J Jayasinghe, Dr A Rajnicek, Dr K Kiezebrink, Dr M Brazzelli, Professor N Vargesson, Dr D MacCallum, Dr J Hislop, Dr G Jones, Dr P Murchie, Professor H Wallace, Professor D Jovcic, Professor D Pokrajac, Professor A Akisanya, Dr Y Tanino, Dr B Rea, Dr J Oliver, Dr M Spagnolo, Dr C North, Dr M da Silva Baptista, Dr P Henderson, Dr N Oren, Mr L Ogubie, Mrs D Connelly, Mr O Kucerak, Miss I Drdakova, Miss R Chowdhury, Mr Kirectepe and Mr H Chalklin

Apologies: Professor P McGeorge, Dr P Sweeney, Dr DR Smith, Dr M Bain, Professor B MacGregor, Professor A Sahraie, Professor S Heys, Professor D Jolley, Professor G Nixon, Dr R Neilson, Dr M Hole, Dr J Bohan, Professor W Naphy, Mr E Usenmez, Dr T Fahey Palma, Dr A Zangelidis, Dr H Martin, Dr S Thomson, Dr A Bryzgel, Dr I Couzigou, Dr A Simpson, Dr M Mills, Dr A McKinnon, Dr I Xypolia, Professor P Hallett, Professor G Brown, Professor C de Bari, Dr F Murray, Dr D Watts, Dr D Scott, Dr J Macdiarmid, Dr A Jack, Dr E Nordmann, Dr M Jackson, Professor M Wiercigroch, Dr N Schofield, Professor J Feldmann, Professor G Coghill, Professor C Grebogi, Dr R Hepworth, Mr A Vodentzis, Miss K Richie-Lawless, Miss S Littlejohn, Miss L Bacon, Miss M Jensen, Mr K Graham, Miss J Paneva, Mr T Theurar and Mr J Lumsden.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- 13.1 The Principal opened the meeting, welcoming all members and, in particular, newly elected members, to the meeting of the Senate. Members of the Senate were reminded that the meeting would be audio recorded and were asked that they introduce themselves before contributing to discussion to allow for an accurate minute.
- 13.2 The Principal noted that questions had been asked and added to the agenda. He proposed that these be moved on the agenda from item 12 to item four to allow for Professor Campbell (Vice-Principal (Research)) and Professor Hannaford (Interim Senior Vice-Principal) to provide answers to these, before having to leave the meeting early.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 14.1 The Principal invited members to confirm that they were content with the minute of the meeting of the Senate held on 10 October 2018. No objections or comments were raised and the meeting proceeded.

UPDATE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

- 15.1 The Principal, in providing an update to members of the Senate, began by informing the Senate of the recent Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) visit, noting it had provided a very positive outcome. He acknowledged that further information on ELIR would be provided later in the agenda. He stated that the outcome was a very happy one for the Institution. Secondly, the Principal informed members of the Senate of the recent University Court Strategy Day which included members of Senior Management, students, elected members of the Senate, Heads of School and Professional Services representatives. He noted that he felt discussion at the event had been very positive and further endorsing the importance of the University's foundational principle of being open to all and dedicated to the pursuit of truth in the service of others. He noted that the principle was the basis for the strategy to be developed. The Principal further noted that useful conversations around inclusiveness, internationalisation and interdisciplinarity had taken place. He informed the Senate that the outcome of the event would be used to scope work streams, likely to be publicised in early January, to which the University community as a whole would be invited to take part in. He stated that there would also be an opportunity to nominate further work streams that have not yet been identified, to ensure all important issues are captured. The Principal informed the Senate of a recent and very successful visit from Richard Lochhead MSP, Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science. The Principal noted that he had helped the University to announce its strengthened commitment to widening access and the intention to double the number of widening access students within the University. He stated this further emphasised the University's commitment to being open to all. Finally, the Principal informed members of the Senate that the University's tuition fee revenue had risen markedly and by approximately £7 million. He acknowledged that this would be further discussed later in the meeting but took the opportunity to thank everyone who had contributed to the achievement, in spirit of congratulation and encouragement, to keep momentum in this regard going to ensure the University can return to a financially sustainable position.

QUESTIONS FOR THE PRINCIPAL

QUESTION FROM DR NIR OREN

- 16.1 Dr Oren stated that his question was comprised of several sub-questions and agreed to ask these in turn to allow Professor Hannaford, Interim Senior Vice-Principal, to respond on behalf of Professor Peter McGeorge, Vice-Principal (Education). Dr Oren began by stating that there have been several demos across Schools of a Learning Analytics (LA) platform in order to track student engagement, identify students who might not be engaging and to provide assistance. He stated his support for this. He expressed, however, that some serious concerns had been raised in regards to the process followed to date. Firstly, with regards consultation, Dr Oren asked why, despite significant data science expertise within the University, there does not appear to be anyone with data science or learning analytics experience on the LA working group. He stated that everyone, with the relevant expertise, he had spoken to about the platform believes that the promises made by the software cannot easily be achieved. Responding, Professor Hannaford stated that he was unaware how Professor McGeorge had composed the working group, however, noted that when he himself had begun informal investigation into LA, Dr Oren had been invited to take part. Professor Hannaford confirmed that Professor McGeorge was happy to have a subject expert attend future meetings if a willing individual could be nominated. On Professor McGeorge's behalf, he stressed that to date, work on LA had not been about introducing a platform but about proof of concept and in answering questions including, does the University already hold the sort of data that would be useful in assessing

student engagement and do students themselves understand and agree with the type of data being identified for use. He again emphasised that the project remained at the proof of concept stage. Dr Oren confirmed that he would be happy to suggest names. He noted that staff in data science would be able to answer these questions.

- 16.2 Dr Oren noted that the work on LA was to identify an engagement measure to demonstrate whether students are or are not engaging and to allow for earlier interventions to occur. He expressed concern that the factors that appear to make up this measure have the potential for the creation of perverse incentives such as students signing in and out of the library repeatedly. He queried whether such measures were more effective than current monitoring processes and questioned whether or not the University was engaging with the right experts. Responding, Professor Hannaford stated that engagement is a strong predictor of success. He noted that the steps being taken centred on ensuring students achieve the best possible outcomes and not in adopting punitive measures. From his own experiences, Professor Hannaford informed Dr Oren that work elsewhere where feedback to students is provided on their engagement, engagement and outcomes are improved. He acknowledged that where students do attempt to game the system only they, and not the Institution, lose out. Dr Oren accepted this point, however, stated that the proposals to date were not monitoring engagement but a proxy thereof. Professor Hannaford stated that reliance should not be placed on one system and that several measures, including those of wellbeing, should be used. He noted that these discussions would be expanded on further in the implementation of the project, if the Senate agreed to pursue the LA agenda.
- 16.3 Dr Oren voiced concern as to whether due diligence regarding the supplier of the LA platform had taken place. He noted that many individuals from Stream appear to have come from HP Autonomy which, according to Wikipedia, was written off by HP after purchase for 'outright misrepresentations' of what their software suite could do. He voiced his concern in this regard. Responding, Professor Hannaford reiterated that the project was at a proof of concept stage and while the company was currently being used, there was no confirmation that this would continue. He further stated, however, the company was working with other Universities in this regard.
- 16.4 Dr Oren emphasised his concerns and noted that staff had been informed the rollout of a pilot exercise would take place in January 2019. He further stated that his overarching concern was that a decision on an LA platform would be taken without sufficient consultation with those who would be using the platform, and those who have expertise to evaluate the system, potentially resulting in a OneSource-like 'white elephant'. He stated his desire to see a system that worked and enhanced the student experience. Professor Hannaford agreed that the desire was to see a system to enhance the student experience. He informed the Senate that the draft policy would follow to the next meeting of the Senate and that engagement with students was being undertaken. He noted that only with Senate's agreement would a pilot be undertaken. Finally, Dr Oren requested further staff engagement.
- 16.5 The Principal thanked Dr Oren and Professor Hannaford for the discussion and emphasised the importance of using the University's internal expertise in the development of proposals and policies.

FROM PROFESSOR DAVID ANDERSON:

- 16.6 Professor Anderson began by informing the Senate that his question had arisen from a number of his constituents and other members of the Senate. He expressed concern that researchers who come to the end of their research contracts are abruptly stripped

of their university identities putting an end to our long-standing practice of arranging honorary positions which allow these researchers to remain active and engaged within their lifelong academic networks. Former employees are banned from being awarded honorary status until they have been unemployed for a minimum of three months. This abrupt annulling of their identities causes great emotional and logistical strain on all of those affected, but often to young early career researchers. It also harms our own research environments making it difficult to organize future collaborative work. Furthermore, a quick check of policies at other Scottish Universities revealed that the University of Aberdeen is unique in this regard. Professor Anderson specifically sought answers to the following questions:

- *Can the Principal explain the reasons for adopting this inflexible and strict policy, which is out of line with other universities?*
- *Can the Principal present the results of any impact study done on this change, and present the range of various options that HR was considering when they implemented this policy?*
- *Will the Principal organise a wide consultation and impact study of this recent practice and report back to Senate with recommendations on how to better respect academic identities and the investment that these researchers make to our community?*

16.7 Responding, Professor Marion Campbell, Vice-Principal (Research) began by noting that her response was being made in her capacity as the Chair of the Joint Consultative Committee on Redundancy Avoidance (JCCRA), a Committee set up within the University to manage and develop policy around the management of staff who are facing redundancy. She noted the work of the Committee included ensuing policy was in place across the Institution and that the composition of the Committee included academic and union representation. Professor Campbell informed the Senate that where an individual is identified as being a risk of redundancy, there is a five month process put in place ahead of that, around managing the arrangements for individuals and what might happen next. She stated that a JCCRA policy review was currently underway and being discussed in regards to being as facilitative as possible, particularly in regards to early career researchers, whilst ensuring the legal requirements around redundancy are upheld. She noted that the University was bound by the legal aspects of redundancy, however, was engaged in discussion as to how the University could still make contact with individuals, such as by way of short term email contact, without infringing the legal issues. Professor Campbell confirmed the Committee were trying to achieve smooth transition between employment and redundancy. Professor Anderson expressed concern that his questions had not been appropriately answered. Professor Anderson sought further clarity around awarding Honorary Status and not redundancy. Professor Campbell confirmed active policy review was ongoing and, at the Principal's request, agreed that the outcome of the review would follow to the Senate.

QUESTION FROM DR CECOLIN:

16.8 Dr Cecolin asked the following questions of the Principal:

Could the Principal explain why the Change Management Protocol was not used for these recent and disruptive changes?

The Principal asked Mrs Dyker to respond. Mrs Dyker noted that Professor Anderson had already alluded to a number of points rehearsed in various forums on the matter. She confirmed that the situation did involve individual staff members and some of the discussions ongoing within the School were employee led and some were employer

led. Mrs Dyker confirmed 7 members of staff were involved and that discussions all took place ahead of the finalisation of what a structure might look like and therefore happened out with the Change Management Protocol. She noted the concerns raised regarding the Protocol and the work to be done to address this going forward. Concluding, Mrs Dyker confirmed that the Principal had given commitment to that.

QUESTION FROM MR OGUBIE:

16.9 Mr Ogubie stated that he had been asked by his constituents to ask the following questions in respect of the School of Divinity, History and Philosophy.

1. *How much financial loss is this making the university through bought-in supervision, loss of Stefan's grant, not to mention no future PhD students and loss of reputation?*
2. *And what will be done about the imbalance in terms of gender among staff caused by the rest of the "restructuring" in DHP?*
3. *On the student experience in DHP, we understand that on 26 November 2018 an investigating committee returned its findings that the complaint of a wide group of doctoral students about the abrupt change to their supervision and work environment was unfounded. Could the Principal explain why the appendices rationalising this decision are confidential and are not available to scrutiny?*

16.10 Responding, the Principal informed Mr Ogubie and Senate as follows:

1. There has been no requirement for bought in teaching as a result of the restructuring and therefore no cost implication. Had the grant in question been submitted through the University then there would have been £90 000 over 3 years coming to the Institution.
2. The balance is no different before or after the staff changes. It was noted that this does not mean the balance is ideal but that it was unaffected by these changes.
3. The appendices contained confidential information in relation to staffing matters and are not for the public domain.

16.11 Mr Ogubie sought clarity around the position with regards the Research Funding Grant. The Principal reiterated that had that grant come to the University, it would have been £30,000 a year for 3 years. Professor O'Connor stated that he understood the grant in question to have been for over £300,000 and submitted through the University. The Principal stated that he had been informed that the grant had not been submitted through the University of Aberdeen. Professor O'Connor stated that he had seen the grant submitted and proposed the matter be further discussed outwith Senate. The Principal agreed with this proposal.

REPORT FROM THE UNIVERISTY COURT

17.1 The Senate received an update from Professor Delibigovic on behalf of the Senate Assessors on the meeting of the University Court held on 2 October 2018 (copy filed with the principal copy of the minute). Firstly, Professor Delibigovic echoed the sentiments of the Principal in noting the success of the strategy day, at which there were over 100 participants including 12 elected members of the Senate, Senate Assessors, staff members on the Court and students. She noted that informal feedback from Court members suggested they had been delighted with the event and that they had enjoyed meeting members of staff and students and to feel part of the University community.

17.2 Professor Delibigovic then informed the Senate of the key issues arising from the October meeting as follows:

- An address and report from the Principal was provided and well received, in addition to a further discussion on the priorities for the year ahead. These includes the risks posed by Brexit, growth in the University's international student recruitment, widening access, ELIR, investment in academic staff and REF preparations.
- The Court received a report on University league tables and was very pleased with the University's award as Scottish University of the Year 2019. The court issued their congratulations to the University Community as a whole for this achievement. The Court also issued their congratulations to the University community for being in the top 160 Institutions in the world in the Times Higher rankings.
- Members of the Court received an update on the REF and were informed of recent meetings with Heads of School on REF readiness. The Court will received regular updates on REF.
- An update on the University's finances for 2018 was received. Court noted the University's deficit on operational activities of £3.9 million.
- The Court received confirmation that the Senior Governor did not wish to seek reappointment, prompting a forthcoming election. The Court wished to stress the role of all staff in voting in the election.
- The Court also received updates on pensions, the proposed investment bond and Transnational Education (TNE) activity,

HONOURS WEIGHTING IN DEGREE CLASSIFICATION

18.1 Professor Shennan, Dean for Quality Enhancement and Assurance, introduced the paper on Honours Weighting Degree Classification, noting that it was to be considered by the Senate not for approval at this stage but for an academic view. Professor Shennan reminded members of the Senate that the issue had previously formed part of the wider paper on the use of the Grade Point Average (GPA) but had been postponed for discussion to allow for further evidence gathering. Professor Shennan noted that the evidence provided in appendix 1 had been gathered from other Scottish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) on their weighting and borderline practices while appendix 2 consisted of an analysis of all students who graduated in 2018 using the GPA as the sole method of classification and adjusting the weighting of years 3 and 4 to demonstrate the outcomes of this. Professor Shennan noted the questions, included in section 3.4 of the paper for discussion. She asked that members of the Senate discuss the borderline issues before moving to discuss weightings. Professor Shennan noted that the move to the GPA may result in more students being classed as borderline. She stated a need for a consistent approach across the University to students in this position. She questioned whether, in addition to the GPA, the wider profile of a student in this position should be considered. A discussion amongst members regarding the issues raised then ensued. The main tenets of discussion were as follows:

- Dr North stated the effectiveness of the Grade Spectrum and, as such, the importance of the consideration of a student's wider grade profile. He noted this as an indicator of a student's performance.
- Dr Shanks expressed that if using the GPA correctly then it should be trusted. Dr Shanks noted practice at Abertay University where there is no borderline and the numbers as generated by the GPA are used without further discussion. She warned of the risk of grade inflation through the use of borderlines.
- Mr Styles echoed the points made by Dr Shanks and stated that the logic of GPA, agreed for use, should be trusted. He noted that mitigation should continue be taken into account where appropriate, however, borderlines which may grade inflation were not required.

- Dr Kiezebrink stated her experiences of working at Abertay. She noted that in the absence of a borderline, mitigation is used in many cases to move a student up a classification. She urged caution at the subjective nature of this approach.
- Ms Chowdhury noted the importance of the student voice in taking this decision. She expressed that, in some circumstances, the borderline may prove to be important to students. She stated the effect of discussions around grade inflation on students.
- Ms Connolly stated the importance of transparency and consistency for students.
- Dr Pettit, with reference to his experience as an External Examiner elsewhere, noted the importance of anonymous examiners meetings in order to encourage rigour. He noted that mitigating circumstances meeting should be held beforehand. He expressed his opinion that in handling cases the GPA should be supplemented with other factors.
- Dr Rea expressed his opinion that following the Senate decision to move to the GPA model and in order to ensure clarity and transparency, it should be trusted.
- Professor Brown also drew on his experiences as an External Examiner and noted that the External is used to determine whether or not discretion should be used in cases of mitigation.
- Dr North stated that the decision couldn't be taken in isolation from the issue of weighting at levels 3 and 4. He noted that he might be more comfortable if issues such as progression were taken into account. He emphasised that the GPA is flawed and that he was uncomfortable using a flawed system in isolation.
- The Principal noted that the Senate had collectively agreed on the use of the GPA and that they should therefore work within that context.
- Professor Shennan expressed concern that a borderline be drawn and that anything above it be automatically promoted. She stated the importance of the issue of whether or not a borderline should exist and whether the existing borderline was too big.
- Dr Jürgensen stated that while she was not sure how to resolve the issue, it was concerning that an otherwise excellent student has the potential under the system to have their degree scuppered by one bad mark. As the wider academic profile suggests otherwise, some flexibility in applying discretion should be retained.
- Professor Pavlovskaia stated her understanding of the approval of the GPA system that it had been agreed on the basis that the borderline would subsequently be clearly defined. She expressed her concern at the possibility of there being no borderline. Professor Pavlovskaia expressed the importance of the use of a borderline in allowing for the mitigation of a numerical scale. She expressed that the borderline was, at the moment, was too big but that a borderline was still required to ensure transparency.
- A member of the Senate, representing the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition expressed concern that one poor mark achieved by a student impacts the GPA hugely. She expressed her concern for the wellbeing of students in such a position. She noted the system used as Stirling to allow for flexibility in the removal of a mark from the GPA in such circumstances.
- Professor Pinard noted the experiences of Biological Sciences and stated the difficulty in making decisions where mitigation occurs and hasn't been resolved at course level. She noted a problem faced by the University is ensuring consistency across Schools.
- Mr Theurar stated that a first class student should include the consideration of engagement and contribution and not just a number calculated by a GPA.
- Dr Rea expressed concern that discussions were revisiting old ground and that issues dealt with should not be discussed again.
- Dr North expressed concern that members of the Senate had voted for the GPA on the assumption that there would be borderlines.

Professor Shennan acknowledged the responses provided and agreed to amend the paper before it's recirculation through the University's Committee structure.

18.2 Professor Shennan moved to the issues surrounding the weighting of honours years. She informed the Senate that the School of Education was represented in Appendix 2 as a consequence of the peculiarities of their courses undertaken in years 3 and 4. Professor Shennan asked Senators to consider this proposal, not with the knowledge of existing practice but as though the University was starting again and with what would be best pedagogically, for students. Discussion amongst members regarding the issues raised then ensued. The main tenets of discussion were as follows:

- Ms Connolly, on behalf of Ms Jensen, stated:
'I've spoken to the Social Science class representatives about degree classifications and there's overwhelming support for the current 50/50 system instead of 30/70 or only 4th year. Some of the reasons I have been given are:
 - Mental Health: 4th year can already be stressful because you're thinking about your next step, and it's a lot to then feel like you truly need to excel in every assessment.
 - Course Size: In Social Science the vast majority of courses (all of Sociology and Politics and International Relations) are 30 credits that means in 4th year we do 4 courses and that's really not a lot to judge us on. If you're unwell on one occasion that can completely change your classification.
 - Capped Courses: Some students do not get their first choices since there's a cap, which could mean they get a point/grade less, so again, that would really affect them if 4th year only counts or if that counts for 70%
 - Overall Degree: A University degree is a full experience, not just 4th year. It's about combining everything you learn and while 1st and 2nd year are more introductory, we start specialising in different things in 3rd year, so 50/50 would illustrate our ways of thinking a lot more.

One rep wrote 'I think anything more would put way too much pressure on a year which is already very stressful (with planning for the future) and this alone could negatively affect students' mental health. I think it wouldn't also reflect the nature of the skills a social science degree gives. We're not cramming knowledge into our heads to work in a specific field, but acquiring a wide set of skills and knowledge in different topics. This also means that we might do better on some courses than others and since in politics we only do 2 courses per semester, the individual weighting of one courses is already pretty high with the current system. In this way, more emphasis on fourth year would mean that, for example, if you don't get your first choice capped courses you may do level 4 courses in areas you're not interested in and they would count a lot.'

I personally resonate a lot with their point about the future and especially if you are applying for scholarships. Despite having a GPA of 19.25 and straight As in my 3rd year and so far on all my assessments this year, I still feel like I always need to give it my best to get a scholarship, which in the first place is very time consuming and I really wouldn't like it if that all came down to 4 courses in my final year. But also in the sense that I firmly think that my 3rd year courses have contributed so much to my worldviews, writing skills and my way of formulating arguments. Sure, it's more in-depth in my final year, but I, and the reps think that both years are equally important. For example, in 3rd year, most of us do our research courses and theory courses both of which are central to us becoming critical thinkers and developing as sociologists/anthropologists/political scientists. The class eps and School Convener strongly support keeping the 50/50 weighting of degree classification.'

- Ms Chowdhury noted the feeling of students within Medical Sciences to begin to count level 3. Following a survey she had undertaken, she noted a majority response in favour of a move to a 30%/70% split.

- Professor Anderson informed the Senate that he had a surgery on the issue within Social Science. Echoing the views of the student convener, lecturers said that they wanted to keep the existing 50%/50% split. Professor Anderson expressed a failure of communication with the paper as the constituents didn't appreciate this was a continuation of the GPA discussion and therefore interpreted as additional change for which there was no need. He stated that constituents questioned the evidence that the current system is wrong. He further expressed the opinion that there was a push in the paper towards standardisation across the Institution and was concerned that the Humanities would be pushed into something by Medicine, for example. Finally, he noted feeling that the purpose of the paper was to inflate grades.
- Responding to Professor Anderson, Professor Shennan stated that the purpose of the paper was absolutely not to inflate grades and that the data reflected the grades students had achieved, reflected with different with different weighting models. She emphasised that she did not want grade inflation.
- Professor McEwan acknowledged that there was some merit in weighting level 3 in the final classification. He made the following points:
 - That the Honours year is significantly different and therefore a 50%/50% split was not appropriate. He stated that there are certain expectations of students in level 4 and that should be reflected in the final degree.
 - He expressed concern over how students undertaking placement years, a very beneficial experience, would be weighted.
 - He noted that he was not sure why the same approach across the University was required.
- Dr Oliver echoed the point made regarding the same approach across the University. He stated that the difference of disciplines and Schools reflected their specificities.
- Professor Wallace also expressed her support for the position that consistency is not required. She stated the importance of the difference in both disciplines and programme years. While in favour of some weighting for level 3, she suggested that in the Sciences this be 30%/70%.
- Dr Lamb expressed that he would normally argue against consistency, however, in this case, the position for joint honour students was problematic. He raised the issue of double weighting etc., in this regard.
- Dr Woodin informed the Senate of the experiences of the School of Biological Sciences in moving from a split weighting to 100% at level 4. Dr Woodin noted that as a consequence of the change, the School had experienced issues with engagement at level 3 and had, as such, reverted back to its previous position.
- Dr Jovicic expressed the feeling of staff within the School of Engineering, that a 50%/50% weighting model be applied. He noted concern within the School regarding grade inflation and, as such, ensuring fair and robust methods of degree calculation.
- With regards to the issue of grade inflation, the Principal assured the Senate that the University was roughly in line with the quality of its intake and subsequent output.
- Mrs Tibbetts informed the Senate of the 50%/50% split within the Business School. She did, however, raise the issue of widening access and articulating students and whether or not equal weighting is appropriate for them.
- Mr Gordon informed the Senate of the position within the School of Law, explaining that students in their third year undertake a mix of ordinary and honours courses in order to ensure all honours courses can be taken to achieve professional accreditation. He noted that all honours credits are equitable.
- Dr Lusseau expressed his support for a proposed 30%/70% split.
- Dr Henderson noted that discussions in Natural and Computing Sciences had resulted in support for equal weighting. He echoed comments made regarding the importance of some weighting of level 3 to ensure student motivation and engagement.

- Dr North agreed with comments that the University did not all have to use the same model. He noted that Geology is not taught in Schools and, as such, level 3 may only be a starting point for the discovery of many fundamental concepts.
- Mr Styles stated that Professor Shennan's request that Senators dispel with their knowledge of existing practice as both impossible and inherently undesirable. He noted that Schools teach very diverse subjects and that each subject has been developed in its own appropriate way. He stated that trying to introduce a standardised model was inherently unjust and unreasonable. He noted, in Law, the need to satisfy professional accreditation bodies and the split is determined accordingly. He stated this works well. Mr Styles requested that Schools be allowed to glory in the diversity of the Institution and not be forced into some platonic ideal of justice as seen by one person. He stated it was a bureaucrat's solution that created a problem. He requested that the position be left alone and that each discipline be allowed to determine what was best for it.
- Dr Curtis, on behalf of Education, concurred with much of what was said. She emphasised the importance of ensuring the advice issued is clear to ensure clarity and transparency.

18.3 Concluding, Professor Shennan stated that she was offended by Mr Styles' comments. She explained the reason for asking Senators to dispel their existing knowledge was to avoid a repeat of discussions held previously on this matter with each School defending their current position and instead discuss what was best for the student experience going forward. With regards consistency, Professor Shennan noted that an outcome of ELIR was a recommendation for increased consistency. As with the issue of borderlines, Professor Shennan agreed to amend the paper and include recommendations within it before its recirculation through the University's Committee structure. The Principal thanked Professor Shennan for her work on the issue.

STUDENT POPULATION AND BUDGETARY IMPACT 2018/19

19.1 Professor Speight, Vice Principal (Student Recruitment) began by thanking the Senate and the University community as a whole, for the warm welcome to the University and for the very useful discussions with Schools, Professional Service areas and the Students' Association. With reference to the paper on the Student Population and Budgetary Impact 2018/19, Professor Speight drew the attention of the Senate to the following key points:

- Improvement in growth since 2017/18 in almost all categories
- Institutional growth of 2.5%
- Postgraduate Taught (PGT) growth of 18.5%
- Postgraduate Research (PGR) growth of 6.5%, expected to improve further over the course of the academic year.
- Significantly, International recruitment growth of 21%, comprising a 42% increase in international PGT students, a 10% increase in undergraduate international students and 5% for PGR international students.
- Rest of UK (RUK) recruitment decreased by approximately 10%.
- Projected fee income is approximately £68 million, an increase of 12% on 2017/18.

19.2 Professor Speight informed the Senate that despite this good news, the overall budget targets had not been met and ambitious targets have led to a shortfall approaching £1.1 million. He noted that targets had not been met for UG RUK, PGR international and PGT home recruitment. He noted that Qatar and CPD provision were both above target. Professor Speight informed the Senate that recruitment and recruitment shortfalls had recently been discussed with all Schools in the recent planning round, mitigating actions discussed and cost savings of approximately £500 000 subsequently

identified. The remaining shortfall of £600 000 will be addressed, in part, through the University's contingency budget.

- 19.3 Professor Wallace asked how the University compares across the Sector. Professor Speight informed the Senate that such analysis forms part of work currently being undertaken. Professor Anderson stated that parts of the paper had caused a lot of concern across a group of members of the Senate and their constituents. Professor Anderson noted that, following a discussion with the Principal, it was likely that this was in the wording of the paper and not the substance. With reference to the section on mitigation, Professor Anderson questioned the implication of the paper that there is a direct link between student enrolment and School budgets, despite Schools having other sources of income. He also noted a reference in the section to consultation with Schools. Professor Anderson sought clarity that this in fact referred to Heads of School and not wider School consultation. Finally, he noted reference in the document to payroll savings. He noted that he now understood this did not refer to redundancies, however, noted this wording caused fear amongst the Institution given recent history. Professor Speight clarified that this was not what was intended by the wording. He expressed his apologies if this wording was misleading. Professor Anderson suggested reference be made in the document to the Change Management Protocol. Professor Speight confirmed there was no suggestion of redundancy. This was further emphasised by the Principal.
- 19.4 Professor Guz noted the savings referred to in the paper of £500 000. He stated that Engineering had identified savings of £515 000 and therefore asked whether the paper reflected savings identified only by the School of Engineering. Mr Beattie confirmed that he was working with Schools to identify savings in addition to those identified by Engineering. Professor Welch added that the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture had also identified savings in this regard.
- 19.5 Mr Ogubie, Student President, acknowledged and commended the growth of the student population. He noted, however, the importance of matching this growth with the requisite student support services. Professor Wells, Vice-Principal (International) emphasised the fantastic growth seen by the University, despite not all targets being met. He noted this in areas as PGT international recruitment and thanked all Schools and Professional Service for working extremely hard to achieve this. He further added that this was an achievement particularly in light of a very challenging international student market in the UK at the moment.
- 19.6 Dr Marsden noted that Appendix 2 was missing from the documentation. It was confirmed that this was an oversight and would be provided as a matter of urgency.
- 19.7 Dr North asked whether there were any insights as to why RUK recruitment was down. Professor Speight confirmed that work had commenced with an outside body some work to analyse the University's RUK performance. He noted that it was important that such a comparison is done on a like for like basis with other Scottish HEIS. Professor Lee asked whether the data provided would be available by School and whether or not where Schools had met or over-achieved on targets there would be investment back into Schools to allow for further growth. Dr Shanks asked for clarity around planning for the next year, to ensure targets were well disseminated. Professor Speight confirmed the process was under review. Dr Shanks stated that she hoped this wouldn't stay at the centre or Head of School level and would be disseminated appropriately. The Principal confirmed this was a matter for the dissemination of information within each School. Dr Martine reiterated Mr Ogubie's point around building appropriate student support systems for the growing population, particularly in recognition of supporting the mental health of students. Professor O'Connor noted that

it was good to hear congratulatory noises regarding recruitment. He noted tensions, however, in the Schools targeted for further savings (i.e. staffing, stipends etc.), there was a tension in being able to encourage recruitment. Professor Speight noted he didn't have the breakdown of where staffing affects recruitment. It was acknowledged that appendix 2 was important to better understand the position.

UPDATE ON THE EVALUATION OF TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

- 20.1 Professor Pavlovskaja provided the Senate with an update on the evaluation of the Taught Postgraduate Student Experience. She noted that proposal for an evaluation had been made approximately a year ago and that the PGT Committee had formed a Working Group to establish an appropriate way of doing so. Professor Pavlovskaja stated that the paper provided some detail as to how the experience will be evaluated and the identification of (i) the results of the Student Experience Survey, (ii) leavers destination data and (iii) degree attainment and retention rates.
- 20.2 Professor Pavlovskaja informed the Senate that an internal survey had been used in 2018 and that the response rate had been approximately 25%. She noted that results had been provided to Schools and responses were awaited. She noted that Schools would be asked to provide information on all their work on the PGT student experience.
- 20.3 The Senate were informed that given the flexible nature of PGT degrees and ability of students to graduate with PGCert, PGDip and MSc, PGT student non-continuation needs to be carefully defined. In general, the evaluation will look at the degree outcomes for these students and consider total number of students first registered on the programme in the beginning of the academic year and in the end of the year we will record the number of them who graduated with MSc, PGDip, PGCert and the number who were withdrawn altogether. Professor Pavlovskaja invited any questions. None were raised and the meeting proceeded.

ENHANCEMENT LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW INITIAL OUTCOME

- 21.1 Professor Shennan introduced the initial outcome of ELIR, culminating in a panel visit. She informed the Senate of the importance of the review. Professor Shennan informed the Senate that early outcomes were that the panel had confidence in the University and that the University has effective arrangements for maintaining academic standards and the student learning experience. Members of the Senate were informed that this is the highest level of endorsement and very positive news for the University, Professor Shennan noted that the panel had made a number of commendations in areas such as student support and widening access, in addition to some recommendations. On behalf of Professor McGeorge, Professor Shennan thanked all those for their involvement and engagement. In particular, Professor Shennan thanked Katja Christie. The Principal noted that the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) had been specifically commended. Professor Lee asked when the full report would be made available. It was confirmed this would be February 2019. Professor Lee proposed the wide circulation of the full report when it is available. Professor Jenkinson proposed that a congratulatory message should be issued to the University community.

EMERGENCY MOTION ON AVOIDING DISRUPTIVE INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

- 22.1 Professor Anderson introduced the emergency motion (copied below), noting it as linked to the earlier discussion on the Change Management Protocol. He stated that

the motion was designed to try and speak about recent events and to rebuild a sense of trust in the Institution about how consultation is done. He acknowledged that that paper had been borne out of the paper on the Student Population and Budgetary Impact 2018/19 and the perceived proposed reshaping of disciplines without following the protocols on consultation within the University. He informed the Senate that the emergency motion was deigned rebuild structures lost, through the removal of Colleges. He noted that without Colleges there was no procedure for the discussion of staffing issues amongst Schools. He noted that in recent circumstances the Change Management Protocol was not followed, leading to dislocations within Schools as a consequence. In some cases, he further noted, prompting drastic actions. Professor Anderson stated that the motion was therefore intended to ask Senate to request that the University follow its policies. Professor Anderson referred to the resolutions contained within the motion as follows:

SENATE RESOLVES that:

- 1. The recent reshaping/restructuring exercises which have led to the loss of large numbers of staff over an extremely short period of time has threatened the academic stability of this institution;*
- 2. The scale of these recent changes to staffing clearly invoke the Change Management Protocol and therefore should have triggered a wide consultation process;*
- 3. That the academic community using its representative voice in Senate and with their recognized trade unions can signal when the provisions of the Change Management Protocol must be applied;*
- 4. That SMG report back to Senate at its next sitting to examine and report on how the powers of heads of schools can be more clearly confined in the wake of the dissolution of colleges to ensure properly collegiate and circumspect action in future.*

22.2 Professor Anderson apologised that the motion had not been circulated but urged that the motions be voted on given the urgent nature of recent events and the need for Senate to discuss issues such as these and to avoid drastic circumstances, such as the forced withdrawal of programmes. Responding, the Principal noted item 4 and confirmed that he felt it was appropriate for the Senior Management Team (SMT) to reflect on an appropriate process to ensure connectivity and cohesion across the Institution and to bring a proposal to Senate which reflects those principles.

22.3 Professor Brown emphasised the difficulties experienced by Heads of School when trying to find saving and the tensions with other Schools where inter-disciplinarity exists. He noted that the process of negotiation is very difficult and agreed with the fact that something needs to be done in this regard. The Principal agreed with the sentiment that the University is small enough to connect, with the appropriate structures in place to ensure this happens effectively.

22.4 Dr Oliver reiterated that the motion seeks to emphasise that the University is a community and that Schools are not financial islands. He noted the important of emphasising community, interacting and communicating with one another about all issues, including financial matters. He stated his strong support for the motion and the role for Senate in it. The Principal emphasised that no structural change can happen in isolation in any one School. He stated that any change of that nature should be considered by the SMT in the first instance.

22.5 Professor Pavlovskaja expressed concern that the Senate was being asked to consider and vote on a motion that had not been circulated in advance of the meeting. She

stated that she would need to consider it and was not prepared to vote until such time as it could be appropriately considered by the Senate. The Principal proposed that the points in the motion be incorporated into a proposal to be brought back to the Senate for consideration at a later date. Professor Anderson confirmed he would be content with this. He pointed out that the motion also asks that the Senate be consulted on events to reflect recent events where this has not been taken and that the role of the academic community be addressed. The Principal stated that he was happy to support the view that the Change Management Protocol should consider how Senate would be consulted in the event of major change to be considered. It was agreed this would return to the Senate. Professor Anderson emphasised that both major and minor changes should be considered by the Senate. The Principal noted the importance of work to improve definitions and committed to generalise to all change.

- 22.6 Dr Lusseau, as a point of clarification, noted there was another point made regarding the dissolution of Colleges leading to difficulties in Schools working together and stated that he understood the fourth point to attempt to address this, now absent, role. Dr Lusseau asked whether this was part of the motion. The Principal acknowledged the question and noted that it was wider than the motion itself, however, was a reminder to ensure how integration and coordination will take place is appropriately explained.
- 22.7 Members of the Senate agreed that a proposal would follow to a future meeting of the Senate.

REPORT FROM THE UNIVERISTY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Senate approved and noted the actions taken by the University Committee on Teaching and Learning at its meeting on 31 October 2018.

1. Omnibus Resolution

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

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

2. Honours Weightings in Degree Classification

- 23.2 The Senate noted that the Committee had considered the paper on the Honours Weighing in Degree Classification and agreed for it to be discussed at Senate.

3. Learning Analytics Policy

- 23.3 Senate noted that members of the Committee had received an early draft paper on the Learning Analytics Policy. Members of the Committee provided feedback on the draft, ahead of a revised Policy being considered that the next Committee cycle.

4. Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) Update

- 23.4 The Committee received an update on the ELIR Planning Visit held on 10 October 2018. The Committee noted the draft review programme, themes to explore and list of requested documentation/additional information provided by the reviewing panel.

5. Update on the Enhanced Transcript

- 23.5 The Committee received an update on the Enhanced Transcript. The Enhanced Transcript is more detailed than a degree certificate and functions as a supplement to it, providing details of courses, marks and approved extra-curricular activities. Undergraduate and taught Postgraduate students, receive the Enhanced Transcript on graduation. The Committee approved three further roles, University Museum Volunteers, Scottish Innovative Student Award (SISA) Recipients and Music Interview Support Assistants be included within the Enhanced Transcript as 'recognised activities' from the academic year 2018-19.

6. Digital Badges: Online Accreditation of Students' Skills Development

- 23.6 The Committee discussed the use of digital badges for skills and graduate attribute-based recognition and approved two proposed digital badge pilot initiatives, using the digital badge functionally in MyAberdeen in the co-curriculum and curriculum as follows:

Co-curriculum: Reward and recognition of Career Mentors (volunteer employers) for supporting students over a six-month period in their career development learning, as part of the University's Career Mentoring Programme.

Curriculum: Embed in the *General Practice (GP Enhanced MBChB Programme)* which was recently funded through a Scottish Government initiative a progressive badge award. Students completing the 'GP options' will be eligible for the GP recognition Digital Badge Award. Requirements for the GP badge were devised as part of the proposal.

SENATE ELECTION OUTCOME

- 24.1 Senate noted the outcome of the recent additional Senate elections.

The following have been elected to serve on the Senatus Academicus with immediate effect until 30 September 2022 (except where indicated otherwise):

Business School

Dr A Zangelidis

School of Divinity, History & Philosophy

Dr B Marsden

School of Education

Dr E Curtis

Dr S Thomson

School of Language, Literature, Music & Visual Culture

Professor R O'Connor

School of Law

Dr I Couzigou (until 2020)

School of Social Science

Professor D Anderson

SENATE MEMBERSHIP OF HONORARY DEGREES COMMITTEE

- 25.1 Senate noted that the Senate Business Committee had approved the following to be members of the Honorary Degrees Committee for a period of four years:

Dr F Jürgensen
Dr S Miller
Professor M Pinard
Mr S Styles
Dr I Xypolia

AGENDA INFORMATION FROM THE SENATE BUSINESS COMMITTEE

- 26.1 At its meeting on 7 November the Senate Business Committee (SBC) received a motion for the meeting of Senate on 5 December. The Committee agreed that the motion regarding a 'Working Party to review the Composition, Operation and Procedure of the Senatus Academicus' should be deferred until the meeting of the Senate Business Committee (9 January 2019) where it will be considered together with a position paper on Senate Reviews.
- 26.2 The Committee noted that one of the outcomes from the last Senate Effectiveness Review, undertaken in 2015/16, was that subsequent reviews should be undertaken on a five yearly cycle and hence work is due to commence on preparations for this in order for it to be completed during 2019/20. The Committee agreed that a position paper, updating the committee on progress made in relation to the 22 recommendations from 2015/16 and a proposed methodology for the next review, should be brought to the next meeting of SBC. At that time the SBC will discuss the inclusion of the proposed motion on the agenda for Senate, in the wider context of the review process established previously.

AOCB

- 27.1 Dr Martin asked of the Principal, in order to avoid another situation such as that in DHP, will appropriate consultation take place. She further asked whether in the search for a new Librarian, a Librarian would make up the interviewing panel. Regarding the first question, the Principal stated that this would be incorporated into a response to Professor Anderson's motion to return to the Senate. Secondly he noted Dr Martin's suggestion and committed to check the position and respond to Dr Martin.
- 27.2 Regarding item 13, the Report from the University Committee on Teaching and Learning, Dr North sought clarity around the purpose of the Omnibus Resolution. Professor Shennan confirmed that the proposed changes to degree regulations reflected the change to resits previously approved by the Senate.
- 27.3 In relation to the question raised by Mr Ogubie regarding gender imbalance within DHP, Dr Cecolin stated that there is, as a consequence of the reshaping, an impact on

balance in terms of diversity given the removal of Religious Studies and, as such, the lack of inter-disciplinary diversity.

- 27.4 Dr Shanks, with regards to the minutes of the last meeting, requested a change in name from non ex-officio members to elected members. The Principal agreed to this proposed change.
- 27.5 The Principal thanked members of the Senate for their contribution and closed the meeting.

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