

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SENATUS ACADEMICUS

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 FEBRUARY 2023

Present: Rasha Abu Eid, Adetayo Adeyemi, Kaitlin Agius, Akua Serwaa Agyeman, Akosua Akwaabooa Akyem-Pepira, Waheed Afzal, Julia Allan, Scott Allan, Sumeet Aphale, Joanne Anderson, Euan Bain, Simon Bains, Martin Barker, William Barlow, William Barras, John Barrow, Harminder Battu, Nigel Beacham, Daniel Berg, Fatima Garcia Bernal, Thomas Bodey, Jason Bohan, George Boyne, Alex Brasier, Marion Campbell, Nestor Carlsen-Devereux, Alice Calessio, Isla Callander, Alessandra Cecolin, Delma Childers, Sandie Cleland, Chris Collins, David Cornwell, Irene Couzigou, Rebecca Crozier, Mirela Delibegovic, Chantal den Daas, Andrew Dilley, Lauren Dorward, Cheryl Dowie, Pete Edwards, Marie-Luise Ehrenschwendtner, Tom Escuti, Karin Friedrich, Beatriz Goulou, Isla Graham, Charan Teja Gunisetty, Aravinda Meera Guntupall, Malcom Harvey, Richard Hepworth, Constanze Hesse, Jonathan Hicks, Alison Jenkinson, Gareth Jones, Dragan Jovcic, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Lesley Lancaster, Karl Leydecker, Beth Lord, Colin Lumsden, Laura McCann, David McGloin, Gary MacFarlane, Nicola McIlraith, Michelle MacLeod, David McLernon, Alasdair MacKenzie, Andrew McKinnon, Alan MacPherson, Vanessa Mabonso Nzolo, Pietro Marini, Kathryn Martin, Martin Mills, Thomas Muinzer, Mintu Nath, Graeme Nixon, Adelaja Israel Osofero, Nir Oren, Amudha Poobalan, Graeme Paton, Ekaterina Pavlovskaja, Bhuvneshwar Pindiga, Bettina Platt, Brice Rea, Tom Rist, Justin Rochford, Joost Rommers, Miles Rothoerl, Arash Sahraie, Thereza Raquel Sales de Aguiar, Joachim Schaper, Karen Scott, Diane Skåtun, Benjamin Liviu Stefan, Charlaine Simpson, Ann-Michelle Slater, Alan Speight, Valerie Speirs, Mary Stephen, Fiona Stoddard, Ruth Taylor, Steve Tucker, Neil Vargesson, Jennifer Walklate, Adelyn Wilson, Ursula Witte, Ilia Xypolia, Zeray Yidhego, and Sai Shraddha S Viswanathan in attendance

Apologies: Lesley Anderson, Siladitya Bhattacharya, Matthew Collinson, Kate Gillies, Greg Gordon, Peter Henderson, Catriona MacDonald, Gary MacFarlane, Javier Martin-Torres, David Mercieca, Samantha Miller, David Muirhead, Bettina Platt, Tavis Potts, Lorna Stewart, Bert Timmermans, Dawn Thomson, Haina Zhang

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- 55.1 The Principal opened the meeting, welcoming members of Senate to the meeting.
- 55.2 The Secretary reminded members of procedures: there were no planned fire alarms; the meeting would be recorded; members were asked to state their name before contributing to discussion and advised to use the chat function to state when they wished to ask a question. Members were reminded that the chat itself does not form part of the formal minute, and to remain muted when not speaking. Any voting would take place using the auditorium functionality for those present in person and Forms within the chat for those on Teams.
- 55.3 Members of the Senate approved the agenda and the meeting proceeded.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 56.1 Tom Rist, School of Language & Literature, Music and Visual Culture raised a query with minute 27.21, requesting that it be changed from 'form' to 'promotion application form'. The amendment was agreed.
- 56.2 Tom also raised a query with minute 27.38, noting that the minute omitted to record that the Principal had requested that the paper be approved in principle and that his response in 27.39 had been to indicate he was not happy to approve in principle. *[Clerk's Note: following the meeting it was confirmed that the draft minute was an accurate record of the discussion at the meeting and no amendment was required]*
- 56.3 Members of the Senate approved the minutes of 2 November 2022 subject the noted amendments.

ORAL REPORT FROM THE PRINCIPAL AND UPDATE ON HE SECTOR/UNIVERSITY DEVELOPMENTS

- 57.1 The Principal highlighted specifically, two matters from his written report: firstly, public funding for the education sector continuing to be deeply problematic and there being no sign of the situation improving in the next few years with the result that the University must continue to find ways to raise revenue for itself. He noted the final item on the agenda was linked to this theme explicitly, with a presentation from the Vice-Principal (Regional Engagement) on commercialisation; secondly despite the shortfall in international student recruitment in September and January of this year, at this stage figures for next year are looking encouraging. For the September intake applications are up 28% and offers are up 49% which is an indication that the University is processing offers more quickly than last year. He noted that he does not expect that the international student numbers will be up 49% by the time the autumn arrives as there is always a degree of attrition, however, an increase of around 20% would be a reasonable expectation. This would get us back on track financially but would not however do anything to address the negative wider context we are operating in currently. The Principal noted that several individuals had raised the issue of ChatGPT and its implications for assessment, with him. As this was not addressed in his report he invited Ruth Taylor, Vice-Principal (Education) to update Senate on the University's response to this new threat.
- 57.2 Ruth clarified that ChatGPT is an artificial intelligence (AI) system which provides answers generated in response to questions asked of it. It has the potential to generate an essay in response to a question, producing 'human-like' responses in addition to being able to undertake basic coding tasks. The system has widespread implications for the University, although there are some positives in addition to the concerns raised. Ruth noted that use of the system is difficult to detect, although the AI field is looking to develop ways of detecting cases where AI has been used in assessment.
- 57.3 Ruth noted the challenges for the University in terms of its use in assessment and how students are taught. She noted that discussions were already underway with schools and that work was already being undertaken to provide network events for discussion of the issues raised, and to

provide support in terms of assessment design with a focus on authentic assessment. This builds on previous work done in terms of assessment design during the pandemic. Ruth highlighted the upcoming discussion panel and open sessions being run on ChatGPT which would provide the opportunity not just to share concerns, but also good practise. Ruth also noted that the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) had produced guidance for the sector around this topic but is not, however, encouraging a move away from the assessment innovations introduced during the pandemic. The QAA remains committed to authentic assessment and the way students can demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways. QAA instead encourages assessment design to be such that the opportunity to use any of these systems is 'designed out'. In response to subject areas with specific concerns, Kirsty Kiezebrink and others are working closely with these areas to support them in undertaking assessment differently.

- 57.4 Ruth noted that issues had been raised in connection with the University's processes for the management of cheating. She stated that the view was that university regulations did not need to be amended to deal with instances where ChatGPT had been used. She highlighted that work was underway to develop clear institutional messaging for students around their learning and how to engage with these tools positively while conveying the message that they are not appropriate as a means for completing assessments.
- 57.5 Ruth further noted that there were also implications for research and that discussions were ongoing in this regard.
- 57.6 An elected member noted the value offered by such systems in terms of the possibilities provided in terms of metadata analysis and encouraged that consideration of such positive use is not lost in seeking to ensure assessment can remain authentic. Ruth confirmed that this was understood, and it had not been intentional that her update had not made more of this.
- 57.7 A student member noted that feedback had been received that a lot of students were not aware that taking information from such systems would be treated as plagiarism. Ruth noted that comms to students around this was already being worked on, and that the contribution of anything specific to aid clarity in the area was always welcome.
- 57.8 Jen Walklate, School of Social Science noted that such AI software is an area of rapidly evolving change and queried whether a long-term strategy should be developed to take account of this rapidly evolving field.
- 57.9 Ruth confirmed that this was the case and noted that the sector was collaborating closely to take a long-term approach.
- 57.10 Brice Rea, School of Geosciences, raised a query with the Principal in relation to the recruitment figures, requesting confirmation of how significant the under-recruitment had been for January and what the implications of this might be.
- 57.11 At the Principal's request, Karl Leydecker, Senior Vice-Principal responded to detail that discussions were still underway to ensure that the budget for the current year could still be met appropriately. Heads of Schools had been asked to look at the current position and identify any further savings which might be made to ensure the covenants are not breached. Karl noted that

further information would be available in the coming days with snapshot three which would provide a more accurate picture of actual income and any further steps required to ensure a good budget outcome for the year. Planning for student number targets for next year is already underway and will flow through to the budget setting meetings scheduled to take place in the coming weeks, ultimately leading to the budget which will be taken to Court in June. Karl confirmed that the budget had been based on recruiting 770 students in January. At the current time registrations were around 670 but until February 13 students were still able to register so the position would not be known until the snapshot.

57.12 The Principal confirmed that Court had approved a budget deficit of up to £1.9million for the year, but there was no authority to exceed this. Consequently, the budget must be brought in within this, which may require some vacancies to be held for longer, possibly into the next academic year, but that was as serious as the consequences would be.

57.13 Euan Bain, School of Engineering, raised a query regarding the Code of Practise (Academic) in relation to ChatGPT and whether it would be updated as it frequently refers to 'person' regarding plagiarism. He noted concern regarding the potential for appeals to be upheld as ChatGPT isn't a person.

57.14 Ruth confirmed her understanding that regulations did not need to be changed but that the matter would be looked at again to ensure they did what was required.

REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COURT

58.1 Iliia Xypolia, on behalf of the Senate Assessors, provided an update on the November 2022 meeting of the University Court. In addition to the written report included in the Senate papers, Iliia noted that Court had received an update from the Principal about the budgetary situation, as had just been given to Senate. Iliia also confirmed that, as had been agreed previously, Court had had a discussion with the Vice-Principal (Research) specifically focused on the REF outcome, the action plan and institutional strategic priorities in preparing for the next REF. Court had endorsed the direction of travel in this context.

MOTION ON THE PROTOCOL FOR THE APPROVAL OF PAPERS IN SENATE

59.1 Tom Rist, School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture, presented the motion calling for the cessation of the practise of voting to approve items 'in principle' at Senate. The motion called for papers which change substantially as a result of discussion, to be returned to Senate in their entirety, allowing Senate a further opportunity to discuss the proposal and, if appropriate, suggest further amendments.

59.2 Responding, Tracey Slaven, University Secretary, provided clarification of the current Senate Standing Orders and the previously agreed process of bringing papers to Senate for academic input initially before bringing them to a second meeting for approval or endorsement. Tracey confirmed that endorsement was appropriate where items had been brought to Senate for academic engagement but where the responsibility for formal approval lay elsewhere. Tracey noted that the current standing Orders make no provision for Approval in Principle and that the language used in Senate must be very clear and set out exactly what is being proposed. In presenting a paper to Senate for approval, Senate is receiving a motion to approve, and any changes agreed by Senate should be articulated explicitly as an amended motion by the

Convener before approval is sought. In the event, that there are so many changes being suggested that it was not possible to present a clear and concise motion for approval, the expectation would be that the proposer would withdraw the motion and return to a subsequent meeting with an amended motion for consideration. Tracey referred members to the slides provided in the papers for the meeting which clarify the process to be followed where amendments are requested.

- 59.3 Tracey noted that the submission of the motion had helpfully highlighted some additional challenges to which some mitigations were suggested with the intention that these would improve clarity. Senate was asked to endorse the suggestions that additional clarity be provided around the specific ask of Senate, and that additional support be provided for new members, who may not have been Senate members when a particular paper was discussed for academic input. Tracey also proposed that finalised versions of papers discussed at Senate are placed on the Senate webpages in order that members are able to view the final version alongside the original version, with the agreed changes clearly highlighted.
- 59.4 Tracey confirmed that her recommendation was that the motion be accepted with the detail as had been articulated.
- 59.5 Tom confirmed his delight in having the motion accepted in board terms at least. He queried the procedure outlined in the slide entitled 'No Approval in Principle', in particular the fourth bullet point which effectively puts the onus on a Senate member, together with another member to second a motion, to require that a paper is returned to Senate and suggested that this might not be the most appropriate approach. He suggested that this might be better done more routinely by the Chair rather than the onus being on elected members.
- 59.6 Tracey confirmed that intention had not been to place the onus solely on members but rather the intention was to ensure it was clear members were free to suggest this, if they felt it necessary, and this had not been identified by the Chair.
- 59.7 Tom confirmed his desire for the matter to be voted on and Senate voted to approve the motion with 79 votes in favour, 1 vote against with no members abstaining.

ITEMS FROM THE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DRAFT ABERDEEN 2040 GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES AND SKILLS: AN ACADEMIC VIEW

- 60.1 In addition to the report included in the papers, Senate received a [presentation](#) from John Barrow, Dean for Employability and Entrepreneurship, detailing the evolution of the current Aberdeen Graduate Attributes together with the ongoing work to align the Graduate Attributes to the Aberdeen 2040 Strategy being undertaken by the Aberdeen 2040 Graduate Attributes and Skills Working Group. Following the presentation, Senate were asked to discuss and provide feedback, and an academic view, on the draft set of fifteen Aberdeen 2040 Graduate Attributes and Skills detailed in the paper and the recommendations from the working group. John highlighted the proposals for further engagement following input from Senate on the draft attributes with students and external stakeholders, including alumni.
- 60.2 Iliia Xpolia, School of Social Science, noted that the attributes did not appear to address the civic mission of the University as citizenship did not appear explicitly in the attributes and further noted that critical thinking was not explicit either. Iliia sought clarification regarding the next

steps to be taken with the draft attributes in terms of the workload implications for undertaking any review of current courses to realign intended learning outcomes with revised attributes.

- 60.3 John confirmed that part of the ongoing work of the Group was looking at how the foundation level attributes could be put together into higher level groupings. John acknowledged that the Group were aware of the issues around workload and confirmed that at this stage the Group are simply seeking feedback as to whether or not the attributes were acceptable to the academic community and that at the current time plans had not been formulated around taking work forward and consequently any potential impact on workload. The aim would be that implementation should not impact hugely on workload.
- 60.4 Martin Barker, School of Biological Sciences noted that one of the attractions of the nineteen current attributes was the element of continuity contained in them from Curriculum for Excellence in schools through to the framework for postgraduate attributes and he expressed the wish that any revised attributes would maintain the continuity. He also questioned the extent to which the attributes resonate with students, both at the point of application to university and through the promotion of them in teaching.
- 60.5 John confirmed that the intention was that any revised attributes should continue to match up with other sections of the educational system. He noted that one of the issues which had been identified with the attributes currently is that students and staff do not engage well with them. Part of the ongoing work is to try to produce a simplified list of attributes which make sense to all as soon as they are looked at and don't require explanation of the intentions behind them.
- 60.6 Karin Friedrich, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History suggested that the University should be making more of the Scottish University system and the inbuilt interdisciplinarity within the first two years. She also queried whether there were practical suggestions to be made around internationalisation at a time when the current Erasmus scheme is ending to establish proper exchange relationships. Karin noted the historical practise of the inclusion of students from medical humanities within History classes, and its current decline, and queried whether more should be done to encourage students to participate in disciplines outside their own.
- 60.7 John confirmed his willingness to take these suggestions away and feed them into the work of the Group.
- 60.8 Sai Viswanathan, Vice-President for Welfare, queried whether the demographic breakdown of the students involved in the focus groups was available in order to ascertain the views of students coming from different regions of the world.
- 60.9 John confirmed that this information was available.
- 60.10 Miles Rothoerl, School of Social Science Convener noted that it would be helpful if the attributes could be integrated into course guides to make the relationship between the course and the attributes clear to all.
- 60.11 John confirmed that this was something he had alluded to earlier in the context of ensuring that the attributes were explicitly clear to all. Learning outcomes need to make clear the skills and attributes involved in reaching that outcome.
- 60.12 Irene Couzigou, School of Law noted surprise that the list did not include knowledge and expertise in any field.
- 60.13 John confirmed that while this was an important point the approach taken had been to try to ensure the attributes were as universal as possible and that these are captured in the transcript explicitly and are maybe not required to be stated in the attributes and skills also.
- 60.14 The Principal commented that the acquisition of knowledge by the University's graduates was a key attribute and that his view was that this should be captured in some way by the attributes.

- 60.15 Aravinda Guntupalli, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition queried whether the attributes should be divided into different levels in terms of relevance to employability. She noted that students are provided with feedback on communication skills in an academic context but when she had asked her postgraduate students to use these skills in a real-world example of a job cover letter, the outcome had not been encouraging. This led her to suggest that while some employability skills undoubtedly had to come from the course level, others were more appropriate coming from central University services.
- 60.16 John noted that the example cited exactly highlighted something which the Careers & Employability Service is able to offer through the system of individual school advisors. He noted that part of the next stage of the project would be to examine the support framework required behind the attributes and skills to facilitate signposting of students to specialist services for individual skills in order that students are able to articulate the specific skills gained.
- 60.17 Brice Rea, School of Geosciences sought clarification as to whether there would be some exercise as part of a programme of study to enable students to assess the attributes they have gained. Brice also expressed concerns around workload and the expectations about where the attributes should be delivered and linking the delivery of the attributes to every course would be a very significant addition to the existing workload. Instead, he suggested this should be done at the degree programme level.
- 60.18 John confirmed that it had not yet been determined whether the attributes should be expressed at the course or programme level and that this would be something to be considered as part of the next phase of work, but the Group were firmly sighted on workload issues and that these would form a key part of considerations.
- 60.19 Alex Brasier, School of Geosciences sought clarification around appendix B and the reference to validation and assessment, and whether this referred to assessment of the course or the student.
- 60.20 John confirmed that the intention is that students will take ownership of the attributes and skills and reflect on their own attributes and skills. Academic assessment of individual students and attributes would not necessarily be required. This may be different for programmes accredited by professional bodies which may require assessment and capture of the acquisition of specific skills, but this is not the general intention.
- 60.21 Euan Bain, School of Engineering, noted from a personal perspective, in the context of the discussion above (minute 6.17), that the idea of programme year should be added to the considerations around course or programme levels which would recognise that students exiting at different levels have gained different skills.
- 60.22 Diane Skatun, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition, returned to the workload issue and noted that colleagues are keen to determine what is going to be involved from the perspective of the individual academic. She queried whether, given the frequency with which workload implications were raised, future papers suggesting new initiatives should be required to provide an indication of workload implications in order that everyone is aware of exactly what is being agreed. She noted that there was no point developing wonderful proposals that would not be feasible to implement.
- 60.23 Nicola McIlraith, School of Education Convener, suggested that an easy way to implement would be to survey students at the beginning and end of their degrees to ascertain whether they consider themselves to possess the various attributes.
- 60.24 John confirmed that this aligns exactly with his points earlier in terms of students taking ownership of the attributes and that there are options to build approaches into the systems already in place.

DECOLONISING THE CURRICULUM

- 61.1 Ruth Taylor, Vice-Principal (Education) reminded Senate that the paper had been discussed by Senate previously and had been amended to take account of those discussions. Previous discussions, and the paper, focussed on the principles and timelines associated with taking forward the work around decolonising the curriculum. Ruth highlighted section 4.15 which recorded the feedback received from Senate previously. She further highlighted some of the particular points which had been helpful in terms of the development of the resources and toolkit being developed. None of the other comments at Senate previously had required any substantive changes to the paper. The proposal had subsequently been considered by the University Education Committee (UEC) again and approved. The proposal before Senate outlines the principles in sections 4.5-4.12 and the timeline in section 4.13. In terms of the timelines and workloads associated with the implementation, Ruth acknowledged the challenges in quantifying this, as some areas within the University were already quite far on in the process, while other areas were just at the beginning. This was recognised in the discussion at the various committees, and hence, achievement of the objectives by 2025 was considered to be appropriate. Ruth noted that the supporting work to develop the toolkit and web resources was proceeding at speed and that it was anticipated that these resources to support colleagues would be available throughout the University in the coming weeks.
- 61.2 Iliia Xpolia, School of Social Science noted that colleagues had raised concerns regarding the first principle and the compulsory nature for all courses having to undertake work to decolonise. Colleagues had queried whether there was any academic freedom/judgement permitted in deciding whether the work was required. However, the main concern of her constituents had been the workload associated with the work: a conservative estimate from the school suggested that at least 30 hours work would be required just to update one reading list. Iliia noted that the University currently offers over 1,000 undergraduate courses and hence over 40,000 hours would be required just to update reading lists and, as the paper notes, this would just be the first step towards decolonising the curriculum. It was the School's view that if this were to be carried out properly it must have an appropriate workload tariff attached to it.
- 61.3 Responding, Ruth acknowledged that the group were aware of the amount of work associated with the process and the timelines were extended to take account of this. As noted previously some schools and disciplines are already very far ahead with this work having started work well before the Decolonising Group was established. Ruth acknowledged that the work would take different forms in different areas and that several good models were in existence. She cited the example from Social Science using three interns to help support development of the curriculum around decolonisation and that this seemed to be working well. The aim of the resources being developed is to support colleagues to do the work well but in as simple a way as possible. The paper acknowledges that there are a series of small steps that can be taken over time to achieve the desired outcome. Regarding it being compulsory, it had been agreed in previous discussions that this is something the University should undertake – it is in line with the University's Anti-Racism Strategy, and the work being undertaken around the Race Equality Charter. The aim is to provide the support, resources, and guidance to support everyone to do this irrespective of where in the process individuals are.
- 61.4 Alessandra Cecolin, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History noted that her School had commented that in the minutes of the previous meeting (33.1) it was noted that the University did not seek to prescribe how individual Schools reach the end point of decolonising the curriculum. However, the paper presented today appears to go beyond this and prescribes how schools should achieve this. She questioned the extent to which the paper presented to the meeting aligns with what was agreed previously? The School also noted that decolonising is a method and paradigm of restoration and reparation noting that the restoration and reparation is very dependent on the historical context and geography of our institution.

Alessandra sought clarification of the methodology being adopted to restore the history and the lives of the marginalised in Aberdeen and how does this differ from what the institution does in the curriculum in Qatar? She also noted that because decolonising is a process that interdisciplinary work should be instigated across different schools and queried how this was being supported?

- 61.5 In response Ruth, reiterated that the paper is not prescribing how the process is undertaken in the curriculum it is about the timeline and the support sitting around that. The Group acknowledges that there are different approaches that can be taken to decolonising the curriculum and this is already in evidence across the University. Regarding process and interdisciplinarity Ruth commented that the Staff Survey had already highlighted issues with how work is undertaken in this context, however she noted that there were already good examples emerging from Social Science of courses which will be accessible to all students across the University in the coming year. Continuing support for emerging good practise is the key to dissemination in this area. In terms of the issues raised which were beyond the scope of the paper, Ruth highlighted that Qatar had already been involved in the process and will continue to be. Ruth also highlighted the work which had been undertaken by Richard Anderson in relation to the University's connections to slavery and noted that the work would be made available to the University in due course.
- 61.6 Irene Couzigou, School of Law reported colleagues' surprise at the wording in section 4.5 as it states that 'all courses will commence work to decolonise' and noted that some areas, for example contract law, may not be easy to decolonise. She queried whether it is acknowledged that it may not be possible to decolonise some courses? Concern was also expressed about the workload implied by the paper. She reported the school's request that there should not be forms to be completed and scrutinised by a committee as part of the process.
- 61.7 Richard Hepworth, School of Natural & Computing Sciences raised the issue of workload again, noting that it had been discussed in the context of the decolonising paper and also the previous paper. Richard acknowledged that the work of the Workload Review Group had been highlighted previously but commented that every paper which has workload implications should contain an estimation of the associated workload so that Senate is able to see clearly the impact on workload associated with accepting a proposal. He noted that until such a measure is brought in every paper approved by Senate will work actively against the efforts being made by the Workload Review Group. He suggested that one of the most meaningful ways Senior Management could tackle the workload issues was to acknowledge them and try to understand them whenever something new is requested.
- 61.8 The Principal noted that this had already been acknowledged in the current context as the timeline suggested was already extended. He noted the importance of paying attention to workload issues but expressed the desire that workload should not prevent the University from doing the right things. Sometimes there are initiatives which are so important that consideration should be given to lightening workloads in other ways rather than preventing a good proposal from being taken forward.
- 61.9 Akua Agyeman, Vice-President for Education noted how excited the Students' Association (SA) were with the paper and see it as a realistic roadmap for achieving the decolonised curriculum which has been under discussion for some years. The SA recognises the work associated with the requirements but believe the University would be contributing to societal change through its implementation. The SA are also very supportive of the development of the Toolkit to provide a graphical representation of how the University is going to achieve a decolonised curriculum.

- 61.10 Beth Lord, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History noted support for the initiative but asked for a definition of decolonising the curriculum and commented that it is difficult to commit to the principles without that.
- 61.11 Tom Rist, School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture expressed support for many of the comments already made and in particular the suggestion from Richard that every single proposal brought forward should contain a section explicitly addressing workload implications. Tom noted that the paper talks about the principles and timelines explicitly but noted that it is impossible to consider the timeline before the principles are fully understood in terms of what will be involved in bringing the principles to fruition. He also questioned the financial backing being given to the project; without real financial backing he suggested that the exercise may become a 'tick-box' exercise.
- 61.12 Aravinda Guntupalli, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition in her capacity as a Race-Equality Champion observed there is a lot of positivity associated with the proposal as for the first-time students feel that something is happening. Speaking from the perspective of staff and students coming from an ethnic minority background, or who have a particular interest in this, many are asking questions about when the process will begin. She noted the importance of students being involved actively in the process and suggested that an email address for contributions would help to make it an active process going forward.
- 61.13 Jo Hicks, School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture noted shared concern regarding workload but also noted a sense of enthusiasm from students. He queried where the University was accountable to in an external context? He noted that looking outwards was particularly important as part of the process.
- 61.14 Sai Viswanathan, Vice-President for Welfare noted from her perspective as an international student there was much within the curriculum that did not relate to her lived experience and a lot of people would relate to her experience in this context. She noted that despite the workload attached, making these changes would benefit a lot of people and would make sections of the community feel included promoting a healthy cultural exchange rather than assimilation.
- 61.15 In drawing discussions to a close, the Principal noted expressions of support as well as reservations around the proposal and therefore put matters to a vote. Senate voted to approve the proposals 57 votes in favour, 14 voting no and 12 abstentions.

ITEMS FROM THE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH COMMITTEE RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT CONCORDAT

- 62.1 Marion Campbell, Vice-Principal (Research) reminded Senate of the discussions at the previous meeting, noting that the substantive query taken away from that discussion related to how Teaching Fellows would fit into the Concordat for Early Careers Researchers (ECRs). Having taken this away from the meeting Marion confirmed that although Teaching Fellows are not included specifically by the Concordat it was accepted that training and development for Teaching Fellows would also be important to the University but that the required focus of the Concordat had to be early career researchers. Having clarified this matter, she highlighted the paper is being brought back to Senate for full approval of the of the recommendations under the Concordat.
- 62.2 Neil Vargesson, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition queried recommendation seven which stated that internal funds should be ring-fenced for ECRs and asked what level of internal funds are anticipated in this context?

- 62.3 Marion responded that one of the rounds of general pump-prime funds will be ring-fenced for ECRs and that this would be competitive.
- 62.4 Karin Friedrich, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History suggested that it be made clear to ECRs that they should associate themselves with one of the university's research centres and that this would be a good strategic move to develop ECRs.
- 62.5 Marion confirmed this would be incorporated into the implementation plans.
- 62.6 Iliia Xpolia, School of Social Science reported that her constituents were happy with the proposals but noted that many ECRs were on fixed term contracts and queried whether the University should commit contacting ECRs when contracts are about to expire and highlight the opportunities they could be applying for and could this be linked to recommendation seven around internal funding availability, just before and just after contracts end.
- 62.7 Marion confirmed that this tied in with the pump-prime funds and would need to be done earlier but that this might be something included as part of the mentoring role. Marion undertook to ensure this was reflected in the implementation plan.
- 62.8 Alex Brasier, School of Geosciences noted the indication that some large scale funding bodies such as UKRI and Wellcome Trust being signatories to the Concordat and are already providing some funds and that in order to maintain the University's commitment to inclusion, and in order to avoid a two-tier system, a contribution will need to be provided from schools or from central funds to ensure that all research staff have equal access to time and opportunities. Alex sought clarification of the extent to which schools may be exposed to this risk and will the level of risk vary between schools?
- 62.9 Marion confirmed that the exact details of this are unknown at the current time, but that this related to ensuring equality of access for all. Some central funds are available to help with providing development opportunities and that ECRs will be treated as a cohort rather than in individual school groupings.
- 62.10 Senate confirmed its approval of the proposals by consensus.

INSTITUTIONAL POLICY ON THE RESPONSIBLE USE OF METRICS

- 63.1 Marion Campbell, Vice-Principal (Research) reminded Senate that the Policy had been discussed at the previous meeting. Marion restated the University is a signatory to DORA and as such is committed to being fair and transparent in assessments of research and performance. Marion noted the discussion of section 4.4 of the policy at the previous meeting and the additions which had been requested in terms of clarity around experts and whether these were subject-based experts. Following the previous discussion, several extensions have been added to the policy. These are highlighted in yellow for ease of reference. Marion noted that with the addition of clarifications and extensions the policy was now being returned to Senate for approval. The policy had already been approved by the University Research Committee (URC).
- 63.2 Nir Oren, School of Natural and Computing Sciences queried whether the references to 'successful funding' applications would be better expressed as 'fundable' applications to make it clear that fundable but unsuccessful applications were also included.
- 63.3 Marion confirmed that this was the meaning and undertook to ensure this was made clearer.
- 63.4 Aravinda Guntupalli, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition sought clarification of the last sentence on page 8 and the references to the individual.

- 63.5 Marion confirmed that the expectation of this section was to indicate that all individuals should be able to thrive immaterial of background and Marion undertook to remove the words that were causing confusion rather than supporting the statement.
- 63.6 Subject to the minor amendments agreed, Senate confirmed its approval of the proposals by consensus.

CITATIONS PRESENTATION

- 64.1 Senate received a [presentation](#) from the Simon Bains, University Librarian highlighting the role citations play in determining league table performance and the services and assistance available from the University Library to assist with maximizing potential in this context.
- 64.1 Karin Friedrich, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History noted the particular problems associated with publishing in Arts and Humanities, and in particular when publishing in another language or in journals which are not part of open access arrangements. In the context of equality, diversity and inclusion referenced in the presentation, she highlighted that publishing in another language, by definition, this research is excluded from consideration. She notes this is a particular problem with the REF and queried whether these metrics have the effect of limiting where individuals should be publishing?
- 64.2 Simon clarified that his message was not intended to imply limitations on where individuals should be publishing, rather to highlight the extent to which we are beholden to the league tables and how they choose to collect and use data, and wherever possible we must try to ensure that we are represented in those data. Simon noted that in developing the service particular attention had been paid to equality, diversity and inclusion because there is an awareness that some of the ways citations are measured put certain communities at a disadvantage. These are issues that the Library is aware of and therefore individuals are encouraged to engage in conversations with the Library to establish what may be done in specific contexts to improve and measure exposure. Simon acknowledged that different approaches are required for different sort of publications.
- 64.3 Dragan Jovicic, School of Engineering noted that while most do not like the focus on citations, most are aware of their importance in determining league table performance. In the context of the previous discussions around workloads, Dragan queried how much help is available from the Library and whether the Library was able to be more proactive given their knowledge and interactions in this area? Dragan noted that the Pure system now works well but academics, particularly those who publish a lot of papers, have to spend a lot of time keeping the system up to date. Dragan noted that he is aware of errors relating to his own publications and how they appear in some of the large databases which can lead to citations being missed. He queried whether this would be an area the Library could help with.
- 64.4 Simon confirmed that this is something the Enquiry Service would be able to assist with and encouraged staff to submit questions of this sort to the Enquiry Service email. Simon confirmed that the intention is to take this side of work away from academics as far as possible, and that the Library are able to work with other sections of professional services, for example Research and Innovation in the context of Pure, to resolve issues. Simon did note that this team in the library is relatively small, but growing, and there may be a limit to the amount of help they are able to provide in the immediate future. Simon noted that there are handouts and training available around boosting profiles in some databases, for example Web of Science and Scopus.
- 64.5 Irene Couzigou, School of Law highlighted the School of Law and its five research centres but noted that not all publications were accessible on the website as, in their context, there is only

one member of staff with access to update the website. She suggested that maybe one solution would be to increase the number of individuals with access to the website.

- 64.6 Marion Campbell, Vice-Principal (Research) highlighted the ongoing review of research centres, one of the aims of which is to identify exactly how many centres there are in order to provide effective digital comms support to them. Marion confirmed this work was underway that there would be a meeting about this next week.
- 64.7 Mintu Nath, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition referenced the ongoing shadow REF exercises seeking to identify high quality REF publications. He queried the need for multiple ways of measuring outcomes or whether there should be a single integrated approach permitting a single submission at the university level.
- 64.8 Marion responded to highlight that this is in effect what Pure does and if Pure is accessed at the University level it gives access to all publications. This is the public portal for all work within the university and noted that all the work is done behind the scenes as soon as a piece of research is entered in to 'papers accepted'.
- 64.9 Simon reiterated the importance of checking individual profiles in the databases and Pure to ensure they are correct. Once a publication is entered into Pure, The Library team will be able to make it open access, where possible, through our institutional repository.
- 64.10 Brice Rae, School of Geosciences queried whether league table compliers take the total citations for the institution or is it normalised for the size of the institution? If the league tables are not normalising, then they are introducing a massive source of bias. Secondly, Brice queried whether in taking this work forward whether the Library would be undertaking some retrospective work in order to provide some context to the current citation levels.
- 64.12 Simon confirmed that the ability to see data over time was a key objective of the work in order to identify trends.
- 64.13 Karl Leydecker, Senior Vice-Principal replied to confirm that the league tables do normalise data and highlighted that the Times Higher League Table is currently undertaking a massive piece of work looking at how they do this for citations. They will be moving from one measure to three with the intention of being able to remove the outliers at either end of the spectrum. League tables are becoming more sophisticated, and this is something the University welcomes as being more robust. Karl noted the importance of the work being undertaken by the League Table Working Group in trying to understand the workings of the league tables in order to be able to improve institutional performance.
- 64.14 Simon noted that the Library is not working in isolation but works with the League Tables Working Group, Planning, and Research & Innovation to identify work which can be done to improve our standing.
- 64.15 Euan Bain, School of Engineering noted his constituency contains individual colleagues who have made a conscious choice not to use social media but this, and several other papers, have begun to refer to 'self-promotion' on social media. This results in some concern from colleagues wondering if opting not to use social media in their personal life may be a disadvantage as a result professionally. Euan queried whether support would be provided to such colleagues to allow them to continue to separate their personal and professional lives in this way.
- 64.16 Simon noted that his comment had been that social media is one way of profile raising but he was not mandating this as something people have to do. There are a variety of other ways to raise profiles, including press releases. Simon noted that using social media can be an effective way of profile raising. He further noted that the Library has a Twitter account, as does the University, and probably also Schools so it is maybe about connecting with the colleagues looking after these also to ensure papers are covered in this way.

- 64.17 The Principal noted that the University would support an informed choice, but that choice was down to the individual to determine how to best disseminate awareness of publications.
- 64.18 Marion echoed these comments and noted that this was very much a matter of corporate promotion of research and how the University best promotes its research. This is about the University raising awareness of its research, being joined up in its promotion and making it as accessible and as inclusive as possible through the various corporate mechanisms.

OMNIBUS RESOLUTION CHANGES IN REGULATIONS FOR VARIOUS DEGREES

- 65.1 Steve Tucker, Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement, outlined the regulatory changes to be introduced with effect from 2023/24 detailed in the draft Resolution 'Changes to Regulations for Various Degrees'. He emphasised that the Resolution contains the routine 'housekeeping' changes to degree regulations undertaken annually. The changes proposed are largely being made to improve clarity for those referring to the regulations. Steve highlighted the changes proposed in respect of progression requirements for students studying at the Aberdeen Institute the Aberdeen Institute of Data Science and Artificial Intelligence at South China Normal University (SCNU) which seek to clarify the requirements for English Language within the progression requirements. He also highlighted the proposed introduction of a new regulation regarding the Medical Licensing Assessment requirements in the Regulations for the Degree of Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBChB). This requires that graduating students meet appropriate thresholds in the Applied Knowledge Test (AKT). This is being introduced in response to the General Medical Council introduction of a Medical Licensing Assessment (MLA) that all students within the UK are required to pass in order to graduate with a license to practise from academic year 2024/25.
- 65.2 Following minor clarification around degree titles Senate, for its part, approved the draft resolution for onward transmission to Court.

ADDITIONAL DEGREES AVAILABLE TO SENATE FOR AWARD *HONORIS CAUSA TANTUM*

- 66.1 Tracey Slaven, University Secretary, outlined the changes to degree regulations, and the new degrees being introduced, following Senate's approval (5 February 2020) of the recommendation from the Honorary Degrees Committee to create further honorary degrees to allow greater differentiation at the subject level.
- 66.2 Rasha Abu Eid, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition queried whether the Degree of Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) might be confused with degrees of DDS awarded elsewhere as professional awards, both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Tracey confirmed that the key priority was for the University to ensure coherence within its own structures. Confusion already exists between the University's awards and those of other institutions, but this is not an issue so long as the internal structure is consistent.
- 66.3 Senate, for its part, approved the draft resolution for onward transmission to Court.

HONORARY DEGREE NOMINATIONS

- 67.1 Senate voted to approve the nominations circulated as separate confidential papers.

PRESENTATION – COMMERCIALISATION

- 68.1 Senate received a [presentation](#) from Pete Edwards, Vice-Principal (Regional Engagement) entitled ‘Commercialisation & Entrepreneurship: Context, Benchmarking & Next Steps’.
- 68.2 Pete outlined the national, regional and local policy contexts the University operates within in terms of commercialisation. He highlighted to Senate the University’s relative performance within the wider Higher Education sector in various contexts within his area.
- 68.3 Following the presentation the Principal noted that there are a number of individual Senate members who already contribute strongly to the commercialisation agenda but across the institution there is a wish to see more. He noted the intention to provide more time for those who wish to contribute to this agenda through ensuring recognition in the workload model, and also that those achievements are recognised through the promotion process.
- 68.4 Dragan Jovicic, School of Engineering noted the importance of the commercialisation and entrepreneurship particularly within the School of Engineering. He noted that, although the area may have been neglected historically, there have been positive developments within the last year. He highlighted the presence of the Entrepreneur in Residence, Paddy Collins, and the positive impact his presence has had. He noted the desire for more of this type of activity and asked whether we are learning from this at an institutional level? Will there be the possibility of this continuing after the end of Paddy’s term?
- 68.5 Dragan also commented on consultancies and the benefits they bring. He noted, however, the challenges associated with the distribution of income and this being hindered by the encouragement not to take income on a personal level rather to include it in the discretionary budget. The practise of budgets being reset in July results in funding being lost when it is not possible to spend it before the reset.
- 68.6 Pete noted his agreement on the points made by Dragan. He noted the hugely positive effects of having the Entrepreneurs in Residence and the support he would have for creating a much larger pool of them across the university. Pete further noted the work he was undertaking with Research and Innovation to reconfigure the support available for commercialisation activities. The intention is to increase the size of the support team. Pete confirmed that the planned review of policies and procedures would address the types of point Dragan had made around consultancy including the specific point made around resource.
- 68.7 Brice Rae, School of Geosciences noted the ongoing work to engage staff in commercialisation activities who have not been engaged previously. He suggested that in internal funding applications form for pump prime research and research networks refers explicitly to ‘academic staff buyout, replacement teaching staff costs to enable staff time for the development of grant bids’. Brice queried whether buyout to enable staff to spend a period of time with an industry partner could be added in this section, in order to determine exactly what industry is seeking from the University?

- 68.8 Pete agreed with the suggestion and noted that the desire for such industry secondments was already something he was aware of and that he would discuss this with the Vice-Principal (Research). He also noted that there would be an event in the Rowett Institute on 3 March which would be a food and drink industry facing event and this, together with other such events, would be about asking industry to come and see exactly the sorts of things the University can offer.
- 68.9 Jen Walklate, School of Social Science asked how the entrepreneurship activities at an institutional level would align with employability from a student perspective? She also queried what would be done to prevent the focus on commercialisation activities from impacting negatively on activity with not-for-profit organisations and charities and how these data are captured?
- 68.10 Responding, Pete noted that the Enterprise and Innovation Committee, together with the champions, would be focused on work around entrepreneurship and this would include looking to see what is needed in terms of support for entrepreneurial education. Employability would not be part of this work explicitly as that falls within the Vice-Principal (Education) portfolio although he acknowledged that there is clearly a close link between these two areas which will be monitored. He also noted the link to the previous discussions of Graduate Attributes. Pete noted that while talk is about commercialisation this should also include engagement with non-profit organisations where benefits can take other forms.
- 69.11 Karen Scott, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition noted that the various changes discussed were very positive, however as a researcher, while there is often recognition that opportunities for commercialisation might exist, individual staff members do not possess the appropriate knowledge or time to exploit this. Whilst the time to visit industry is one aspect there is also the need for time to develop ideas for commercialisation more fully.
- 69.12 Pete indicated that this was something he already recognised.
- 69.13 Martin Mills, School of Social Science noted the need to broaden the commercialisation goal and in particular the approach to answering Government. He observed that this is very much industry and STEM centred, currently focusing on large contracts and the part the oil industry has played in this historically. He noted the contribution to be made by Arts and Humanities, particularly in the part they can play within the region in contributing to improved standards of living and the consequent attractiveness of the area. He noted that the size of deals in these areas tend to be smaller and maybe was an area the University is less familiar with, but one which still must be captured. He commented that the University needs to provide more help and guidance for those in this area seeking to become engaged.
- 69.14 Waheed Afzal, School of Engineering, asked if there was a review of the consultancy policy coming up as it could be made more attractive to individual staff by decreasing the University and School share.
- 69.15 Pete reiterated his previous comments and confirmed that such a review was planned.

69.15 In drawing the discussion to a close the Principal acknowledged that this may not be an activity for everyone to get involved with and noted that there may be more specialisation in this area in the future. To support that, the University needs to ensure it has the right structures in place to ensure that it is able to take full advantage of the opportunities presented.

ROUTINE BUSINESS

QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE REPORT TO SENATE

70.1 Senate noted the routine report from the Quality Assurance Committee.

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH COMMITTEE REPORT TO SENATE

71.1 Senate noted the routine report from the University Research Committee.

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT TO SENATE

72.1 Senate noted the routine report from the University Education Committee

SENATE ELECTION

73.1 Senate noted the outcomes of the most recent elections for new Senate members and that members had been elected to serve on the Senatus Academicus until 30 September 2026 (except where indicated otherwise):

SCHOOL OF NATURAL & COMPUTING SCIENCES

Nigel Beacham

SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Sam Martin

Martin Barker (until 2024)

SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

Bert Timmermans

Joost Rommers (until 2024)

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Charlaine Simpson

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, MEDICAL SCIENCES AND NUTRITION

Colin Lumsden

Daniel Berg (until 2024)

SENATE ASSESSOR ELECTION RESULT

- 74.1 Senate noted that in the recent election of a Senate Assessor to the University Court Iliia Xypolia from the School of Social Science had been elected to serve with immediate effect until 30 September 2023.