

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SENATUS ACADEMICUS

Minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2022

Present: Akua Agyeman, David Anderson, Joanne Anderson, Mervyn Bain, Simon Bains, Murilo da Silva Baptista, William Barras, John Barrow, Siladitya Bhattacharya, Jason Bohan, George Boyne, Alex Brasier, Abbe Brown, Marion Campbell, Alessandra Cecolin, Delma Childers, Chris Collins, Matthew Collinson, Chantal den Daas, Andrew Dilley, Pete Edwards, Marie-Luise Ehrenscheidtner, Karin Friedrich, Aravinda Guntupalli, Paul Hallett, Malcolm Harvey, Richard Hepworth, Contanze Hesse, Amelia Hunt, Dragan Jovicic, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Lesley Lancaster, Amanda Lee, Karly Leydecker, Beth Lord, Alasdair MacKenzie, Pietro Marini, Ben Marsden, Kathryn Martin, Laura McCann, Samantha Miller, Mintu Nath, Gareth Norton, Nir Oren, Graeme Paton, Ekaterina Pavlovskaja, Tavis Potts, Brice Rea, Justin Rochford, Arash Sahraie, Thereza Raquel Sales de Aguiar, Joachim Schaper, Diane Skåtun, Ann-Michelle Slater, Matteo Spagnolo, Scott Styles, Ruth Taylor, Neil Vargesson, Sai Viswanathan, Sara Woodin, Ilia Xypolia, Zeray Yidhego and Alexandros Zangelidis.

Apologies: Flora Alapy, Irene Couzigou, Cheryl Dowie, Gareth Jones, David McGloin, Colin North, Michelle Pinard, Tom Rist, Mary Stephen.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- 1.1 The Principal opened the meeting, welcoming members of the Senate to the new academic year.
- 1.2 The Secretary reminded members of procedures. Members were reminded that 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. A break had been scheduled at around 2.20pm. Senate was also reminded that debate should be respectful and inclusive, and a wide engagement with subjects was encouraged. No fire alarms were planned during the meeting.
- 1.3 David Anderson, School of Social Sciences, suggested that there was an item missing from the Routine Business section of the agenda as there was no reference to elections for Senate representation on the University Education Committee (UEC). The Secretary highlighted that the additional meeting of Senate on 28 September would be approving the composition of the Senate sub-committees. Ruth Taylor, Vice-Principal (Education) confirmed that no meeting of UEC was scheduled before the Senate meeting on 28 September and that pending the formal decision of Senate on composition, the pre-existing membership of UEC was being used which included Senate representation.
- 1.4 Members of the Senate approved the agenda and the meeting proceeded.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 2.1 Members of the Senate approved the minutes 11 May 2022 subject to minor amendments to the attendance.

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

- 3.1 The Principal highlighted specifically two items in the news: the ongoing cost of living crisis, and the Government announcement earlier in the day that the University energy bill, which

was already 60% higher than previous years, would not be rising further until at least the spring. He further noted news was expected later in the week that National Insurance contributions may change to further lighten the burden, but also the expectation that the economy would move into recession. Since the last meeting of Senate, the publication of the National Student Survey (NSS) results had taken place and the Principal thanked Senate members for their contribution to the University's impressive performance, moving from fifth place to fourth place overall, signalling that students recognise the quality of the education and support provided by the University. Also related to the NSS results, the University had retained its top twenty position in the Times and Sunday Times rankings, where the University had risen from 20th to 19th. and that the Guardian league table results would be published on Saturday.

REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COURT

- 4.1 Neil Vargesson, on behalf of the Senate Assessors, noted that the two major topics for discussion at the meeting of Court on 28 June, had been the REF outcome and the planned way forward from that and the restructuring of the Court subcommittees, with both these items scheduled for Senate discussion either at the current meeting or the additional meeting on 28 September.
- 4.2 David Anderson, School of Social Science, requested clarification regarding the intersection of the Court Governance Review and the Senate Effectiveness Review, and how the recommendations of the Effectiveness Review would be taken forward. The Secretary confirmed that the two reviews were not being taken forward separately but it had been useful from a management perspective to look at the initial outcomes of the reviews separately before reflecting on areas of overlap. The position of the Digital Strategy Committee, which was previously a subcommittee of the Policy and Resources Committee and would now be moving to become an Executive Group, was highlighted specifically and the fact that mechanisms for academic representation on the Group would receive further consideration. It was further highlighted that consideration was ongoing in terms of opportunities for a joint meeting of Court with Senate, and the reintroduction of a wider stakeholder meeting which would provide an opportunity for staff, students, and regional representatives to meet with Court.

ITEMS FROM EDUCATION COMMITTEE – PASTORAL SUPPORT REVIEW

- 5.1 Abbe Brown, Dean for Student Support, provided Senate with a brief overview of the recommendations contained in the report and the initial proposals for implementation. Abbe noted specifically that resource, both human and IT, would be significant factors in any implementation of the recommendations in the report, and noted that this is a future looking plan at this stage. Senate's input was sought specifically on the proposals at 4.5 and 4.7.
- 5.2 Alexandros Zangelidis, Business School, highlighted that in the Business School with over 2,600 students (UG and PG) the proposals have tremendous workload implications for staff, both academic and administrative. Academic staff would be required, with administrative support, to schedule over 5,000 one to one meetings on top of the existing workload. In addition, significant training for staff would be required for staff new to systems. He also noted that with research needing to be reprioritised following REF 2021 the workload implications of the proposals must be understood.
- 5.3 Brice Rea, School of Geosciences, queried whether the proposal for Personal Tutors to support students in curriculum choice signalled a return to the previous system of Advisers of Study. If this were the intention, staff who had not previously undertaken advising duties would have significant work to do to become familiar with degree pathways and regulations. Brice also queried whether the development of a new workload allocation model would be completed

ahead of any implementation of a revised Personal Tutor system noting that if this did not happen first the result would be academic staff becoming overloaded. The development of supporting materials also requires staff to have time to engage with the material. In addition, he highlighted that the proposals implied that both staff and students would have their engagement in the system monitored digitally and queried whether staff were to be somehow penalised for their allotted students failing to engage with the system. He further noted that there was confusion within the document around whether meetings should be with individual students or with groups. Brice also highlighted the relatively small number of respondents to the survey (209) and queried the validity of changes being proposed based on such a low number of respondents.

- 5.4 Ekaterina Pavlovskia, School of Engineering noted that in terms of the proposed inclusion of PGT students in the system it was difficult to see how this could be achieved without the addition of significant numbers of extra staff. She also raised concerns about the proposal to include online/on demand students as many of these students might only be taking very low numbers of courses and therefore she queried whether we would be allocating Personal Tutors to these students.
- 5.5 Colleagues in the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition were reported to have expressed similar concerns around workload implications as well as the undergraduate pastoral support model, which can result in staff in the school being allocated students from academically very different branches of the school, and this not really working. It was suggested that staff should be allocated tutees from areas close to their own disciplines. It was, however, noted that programme coordinators already provide significant support to students and that a proposal to share this burden would be welcomed especially if the academic guidance and pastoral roles could be decoupled.
- 5.6 Amanda Lee, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition highlighted feedback from within the school seeking a definition of what the pastoral support role should include and where the boundary is between what is expected of Personal Tutors and where signposting should begin.
- 5.7 Joanne Anderson, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History noted that one of the most valuable things a Tutor can do is to schedule their own appointments as being seen to reach out to tutees directly is important in terms of creating a sense of community. With increased numbers of tutees this ability inevitably becomes diminished, and the value to the student of being seen to be an individual, is lost. Joanne also noted that the balance of power within small programmes is another area of potential conflict of interest between the Tutor role and the programme coordinator.
- 5.8 Diane Skåtun, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition commented that the workload issues created by the inclusion of PGT students had generated a lot of concern in the school. She noted that the move by the University of Edinburgh to a model of support not being provided by academic staff, and which was acknowledged in the paper to be very costly, and that keeping the role with academic staff does not recognise that this is costly in terms of academic time and therefore potentially more 'expensive' in terms of opportunity costs.
- 5.9 Alessandra Cecolin, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History asked whether the proposed system was intended to be pastoral or disciplinary. There is a tension inherent in any system which seeks to do both things. Attendance recording should be separated from pastoral support; she questioned whether monitoring high-level academic events and invoking disciplinary action really supports student mental health and wellbeing.
- 5.10 Joachim Schaper, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History, raised three issues: colleagues are not sure of the benefit of seeking consistency across schools for students at levels one and two and this might lead to repeated appeals; the assertion that there are major

educational events across the term which are more important than lectures and tutorials seems odd and surely raises the potential for selective attendance at different events; and asked how are these events to be identified.

- 5.11 Scott Styles, School of Law, suggested that the first meeting for first year students with the Tutor should be made compulsory. Under the previous system of advising, students could not access their timetables until they had seen their advisor and been registered for courses. If the first meeting were made compulsory, staff and students would inevitably get to know each other right from the start.
- 5.12 Justin Rochford, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition noted three points: that to advise students appropriately on academic matters in a programme, staff really need to be teaching on the programme and this would likely cause students to be uncomfortable approaching the same staff for pastoral advice. Colleagues felt the two roles needed to be separate; proportionately there are many more PGT students than staff teaching on PGT programmes and student numbers can vary dramatically between years making workload planning particularly difficult; that under increased workload pressure, the activity likely to suffer would be research.
- 5.13 In response, Abbe noted that the points raised had not come as a surprise and that the Group recognised the concerns, particularly regarding workload and hence this was why the Report suggested that this may be an area which the University should be looking to invest in technology to support the Tutor role. In connection with the proposals around PGT support, Senate were reminded that PGT support was identified in the ELIR report as an area the University should be seeking to implement consistently. In the area of academic advice, the Group is not recommending a return to Advising rather is seeking to build on the work to date with MyCurriculum but acknowledges the role of training in this area. Abbe highlighted the difficulty in reconciling a desire to make meetings compulsory with any penalty to be imposed where students fail to keep the meeting. She noted that any move to penalise a student through some method of academic exclusion would not be something the Group could recommend. The aim of any IT solution would be to help support staff and students, and not to use it for disciplinary purposes. In terms of support for PGT students it is about formalising what is often occurring informally so staff and students may benefit consistently and in a way that is reflected in workload modelling.
- 5.14 In summary, the Principal highlighted three points from the paper and the discussion:
- That support needs to be available to both undergraduate and postgraduate students and that this is especially important as the institution shifts its focus from being primarily focused on undergraduate provision to a more balanced undergraduate/postgraduate population
 - The need to minimise any workload pressures associated with any change, with the point from the Business School being required to schedule 5,000 extra hours of work being particularly powerful in this regard.
 - The results of the NSS indicate that our students are the fourth most satisfied in the UK with the education and support they receive. This does raise the question of what problem are we trying to address.

ITEMS FROM EDUCATION COMMITTEE – MONITORING, ABSENCE AND ENGAGEMENT REVIEW

- 6.1 Abbe Brown, Dean for Student Support, presented a draft report from the Monitoring, Absence and Engagement Task and Finish Group (TFG) which included some draft recommendations on which the Group were seeking feedback from Senate.
- 6.2 Abbe outlined the recommendations which fell under four broad aims:

- The Group concluded that it is very important that the university can identify when a student is experiencing difficulties, either academic or pastoral, and that the monitoring system is an important part of delivering this
 - That it is important that the University is able to provide support to staff who are supporting students.
 - That any system must have the ability to function in a school specific way, but that consistency for students is important and hence there must be a community of practice located centrally in support of any system.
 - Any system must be both agile and effective.
- 6.3 The work falls into three areas: enhancing what we do already; a suggested approach for the medium term; and a suggested approach for the future which would require significant investment and change.
- 6.4 The proposed work seeks to ensure that: students feel part of a community; that students feel supported to take responsibility for their own learning; that students always feel supported even if there are external constraints on the options which are available; that the system is informed and fair, and clearly communicated in order that it is streamlined and effective.
- 6.5 The TFG has been able to identify some immediate actions in support of these aims and has streamlined the webpages, shared guidance and set up a community of practise through which the Group learned a lot about the various ways schools are delivering the current system. This has enabled the Group to intervene and offer guidance on ways to make the system less burdensome for academic and professional services staff.
- 6.6 A dialogue has begun around the growing requirements of the visa system and how we can best work within its constraints, together with working to provide the current disability provisions and informing work on academic appeals, specifically in the context of frontline appeals.
- 6.7 The Group has made requests for some IT changes which have been scheduled for consideration through the Digital Strategy Committee, as well as looking to change internal names to remove 'C6, C7 etc'.
- 6.8 The Group have identified some schools which operate a system utilising a Student Support Coordinator which has been found to be extremely valuable. Whilst the Group appreciate that to roll this out more widely has cost implications, their view is that this could be of significant value in supporting delivery of the current system.
- 6.9 The Group felt that the option of live dashboard communications should be explored, recognising the potential constraints in terms of privacy law etc., but that this could be a very effective method of providing support.
- 6.10 Looking forward, the Group is suggesting a new system, recognising that this would not be possible for a considerable period of time. Any new system should be delivered as a package rather than in a phased approach and the introduction of a new student management system might be an appropriate time for this to be considered. The Group were of the view that early identification of any student problems would be the key to offering effective help. It was felt that first identifying that a student is having difficulties in week six of a course is too late. By this stage the amount of work required to support a student in difficulty can be enormous. Training and support for colleagues to deliver any system was identified by the Group as crucial.
- 6.11 Abbe clarified that the aim of the system is not to remove students from courses, and that any perception that when students have been through the system and reinstated to the course, the system has been a waste of time is entirely wrong. The aim of the system is to

identify students in need of support and to provide it in order to bring the student back on track.

- 6.12 Aravinda Meera Guntupalli, School of Medicine, Medical Science and Nutrition, welcomed any changes to the system which reduced the associated workload as, particularly for large courses, there can be a lot of work associated with C6 and C7. Also, that there needs to be more consistency between schools in terms of C6 being supportive rather than a punishment. She also proposed the inclusion of PGR students in a revised system.
- 6.13 Scott Styles, School of Law welcomed the report. He raised the question of whether the creation of a 'community' referred to in the paper is intended to be for staff or students or both and how this should be created as it wasn't clear from the report how this was to be done. He welcomed the move to rename C6/C7 and also stressed the importance of the language used in communications. He noted the tone of current communications can cause unnecessary alarm for some students who think they are about to be removed from their courses. He also noted that the most sensitive cases are often the students who are least likely to respond. It is these students who pose the biggest challenge to any system seeking to support students.
- 6.14 Alessandra Cecolin, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History noted that the current system of providing extra support for students joining the University through widening access routes goes against the idea of inclusion. Some students have reported that they feel this system of extra support is not really helping and is possibly creating issues rather than solving them.
- 6.15 David Anderson, School of Social Science, welcomed the report but noted he was unclear how the paper moves us towards the idea of creating a supportive community. He noted that interaction with the system is often carried out through professional services staff rather than by academics directly, Student Support are often involved, and that the system proposed in the paper seemed to be very similar to the existing system in terms of the involvement of very many different staff.
- 6.16 Thereza Raquel Sales de Aguiar, Business School, noted that any implementation would be particularly challenging for the Business School, given the high numbers of international students in the school, and would require significant resource input. She commented that the majority of C6/C7 seen in the School relate to personal issues rather than academic, requiring students to be signposted on to support services rather than being dealt with by academics in the school. If academics are meant to be providing the support Thereza queried what training was going to be available to facilitate this.
- 6.17 Sarah Woodin, School of Biological Sciences, noted that a new integrated system would be key to the success of any changes.
- 6.18 In response to the points raised Abbe noted the continuing importance of keeping messaging under review in order to ensure it isn't seen as a system for punishment, and that it is a difficult balance to be struck between punishment and being too flexible. She noted that these proposals only apply to any taught elements for PGR students, but the group is in dialogue with the PGR School. Abbe noted that some hold the view that provided assessments are passed there should not be any requirement to come to class. However, there is an argument against this in terms of achieving the learning outcomes and the sense of community; there is also evidence to suggest that students who do not attend class are more likely to disengage. She also noted that the new system proposed would generate some notifications automatically as it is no help to students if some academics opt not to engage, but the automatic interventions need to occur alongside human ones. The system for support is complex and involves many different parties who all have different supportive roles to play.

- 6.19 In summary the Principal noted that there was significant support for the proposals in the report from Senate. In particular, Senate appeared supportive of a change to the terminology in use. Concerns had been expressed around the concept of student community and whether more work was needed in this area, as well as recognising the workload implications which would require work to resolve.

**ITEMS FROM EDUCATION COMMITTEE –
ACADEMIC YEAR ARRANGEMENTS 2023/24**

- 7.1 Alan Speight, Vice-Principal, Global Engagement provided an outline of the rationale for seeking to continue the arrangements in place for 2022/23 into 2023/24. He noted this was being proposed to allow sufficient time for the Aberdeen 2040 Curriculum Group to complete its work on the structure of the academic year and to bring forward proposals for implementation from 2024/25. In general, the year structure adopted since the start of the pandemic had permitted a later start date for teaching and reduced half-session lengths. Decisions around the structure of 2024/25 are required now to permit clarity for applicants and to enable offers to include start dates.
- 7.2 Alan noted that while pandemic conditions in the UK have eased considerably, the same is not true across the world. The pandemic continues to be highly disruptive in some parts of the world in some of our key student recruitment markets, for example China, but logistical constraints continue to operate on a number of other fronts including visa processing delays, restrictions on travel etc. He also noted that international students are increasingly applying and making decisions later in the recruitment cycle, reflecting a global change in practise. The University's increasing diversification of its markets means that more students come from markets where results are issued later. Students also need adequate time to complete the visa application process and to book their travel. Moving to an earlier start date would make the University less attractive to international students which would in turn impact on our cultural diversity and our financial sustainability. Moving to an earlier start date would also lead to increased numbers of students arriving on campus after the start of teaching. He highlighted that there are, therefore, strong reasons to recommend continuing with the arrangements we have had. In addition, it was also noted that domestic students are also applying later, with many applying for the first time through clearing. This has permitted us to substitute some of the EU students who we have lost, with Scottish domiciled students through clearing. The move to later applications makes it beneficial to continue with the current arrangements.
- 7.3 Ruth Taylor, Vice-Principal (Education) highlighted educational factors for continuing with the current arrangements. The key issue in this context was identified as the several ongoing workstreams associated with the educational side of Aberdeen 2040 and the need to make progress on these ahead of making more permanent changes to the structure of the academic year. Initial work on the structure of 2024/25 would be making its way through committee structures and would come to Senate in the future. Continuing with the interim arrangements would permit the Aberdeen 2040 work to feed into the work that is being undertaken on the academic year in a coherent way. Ruth noted that the institution needs to be able to continue to deliver on both the educational side and the recruitment side while discussions continued, and continuation of the interim structure would permit that. Ruth reiterated that the academic view of Senate was being sought at this time and revised formal proposals would return to a future Senate.
- 7.4 Kathryn Martin, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition, drew to Senate's attention the imbalance within the proposed structure for January start PGT students. The typical two 13-week sessions with 12 weeks over the summer for projects and three weeks for the spring break for September start students, means that spring break falls into first half-session of teaching for the January start students. Overall, the distribution of teaching and holiday is very mismatched between September and January start models. The School have

noted that the January start students are being adversely affected by the imbalance with students feeling unable to take any holidays and consequently becoming exhausted. Kathryn highlighted that with the success of recruitment to the January start programmes means that consideration needs to be given to how the structure aligns with the traditional September model.

- 7.5 Aravinda Meera Guntupalli, School of Medicine, Medical Science and Nutrition agreed with everything highlighted by Kathryn and noted that the January start students having ten weeks of teaching followed by three weeks of holiday, are not able to take advantage of the holiday as they have assessments coming up. She further highlighted that looking at the numbers of students required to undertake resits, the majority were January-start students and so the other two-week break was also not a break, as many students were preparing for resits. There were January-start students on the school's programmes who became unwell, some serious enough to require hospital admission, as a result of the stress associated with the structure of teaching.
- 7.6 Richard Hepworth, School of Natural and Computing Sciences noted that the current academic year is the first time in three years where we have been permitted to have examinations. He further noted, however, that it is not a full exam diet as there is no revision week which limits the proportion of material that students can be examined on. Richard stated that within his discipline there is a strong desire to return to a full exam diet and that he did not see any reason to delay this for another year by prolonging the interim arrangements for a further year.
- 7.7 Ekaterina Pavlovskia, School of Engineering noted there is a strong view within Engineering that 13 weeks of teaching and assessment is insufficient to hold examinations. The School are bringing back examinations and are now able to timetable approximately 25% of the pre-pandemic exams on campus. Going back to fourteen-week terms would be beneficial to their students as it would permit more time for students to learn, revise and then have assessments. In addition, she commented that the time available for marking seems to have been shortened with time available for marking and processing now only two weeks. With examinations not being possible, the time available is insufficient to deal with the processing required for alternative assessments.
- 7.8 Ruth indicated that the points raised would be taken away for consideration but wanted to stress that the structure identified was an eleven plus two weeks to permit exams to take place and so this would be the model which would be taken forward. She further stressed that there are insufficient weeks in a year to permit three 14-week terms, however as work is taken forward in considering the new academic year the comments, and the sentiments behind them, will be very helpful in framing thinking. Ruth also reminded Senate that the 13-week teaching structure does include a 'floating' week that can be used as appropriate by courses as reading week or similar. It is this component which is not included in the summer teaching period. Ruth reiterated that this is the interim position but that comments would be taken away both in this current context and also for the next piece of work.
- 7.9 Alan reiterated that this was an interim arrangement and also made the point that it would not be helpful for us to have a sequence of changes to the structure over the coming years, as this could be destabilising to our markets.
- 7.10 The Principal noted that it was been our success in student recruitment which has permitted us to recruit additional teaching and research staff (up from c600 to 700, over the last three years) and it is this funding which also enables us to address our escalating costs. In order to sustain our position, the Principal highlighted the ongoing requirement to ensure that the institution remains at least as attractive to students as our competitors.

ROUTINE REPORT

- 8.1 Ruth Taylor, Vice-Principal (Education) highlighted items from the report for information:
- Institutional action planning is ongoing around assessment and feedback, in the context of the NSS where, despite overall improvement in the survey rankings, there is still work for the University to undertake in this area.
 - In the work around the Enhancement Theme, led by Steve Tucker, the University has just submitted its third annual plan for work. Ruth recorded her thanks to Steve and colleagues for their hard work on taking this work forward

ITEMS FROM RESEARCH COMMITTEE – RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (REF) RESULTS

- 9.1 Marion Campbell, Vice-Principal (Research) presented the results from the most recent Research Excellence Framework (REF) which covered research output between 2014 and 2020. A copy of the full presentation is available with the principle copy of the minutes.
- 9.2 Following the presentation Marion sought input from members of Senate in terms of their wider reflections on the process and thoughts on moving forward.
- 9.3 Matteo Spagnolo, School of Geosciences noted that he had become aware of a number of colleagues who were not particularly engaged with REF, some of whom were not aware of the criteria for categorising output for REF. In order to address this, he suggested including REF within PURE so that individuals see the income associated with research output. This, he suggested, would make everyone become more aware of the REF process and of the income individuals bring to the University.
- 9.4 Murilo da Silva Baptista, School of Natural and Computing Science highlighted issues on behalf of David Anderson from the School of Social Science. David's view that the REF process placed too much responsibility on individual members of staff, and he noted the increased workloads on individuals not arising from research related activity. In particular, teaching activities over the last two years, have impacted negatively on research activity. He further noted that the REF process was informed by the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and while meetings had taken place at different levels within the organisation there was not good communication between the various groups. This had been, in part, responsible for the low outputs in some areas.
- 9.5 Murilo also stated that he felt the emphasis should not be on a light touch process requiring everyone to produce an assessment of a single paper for next year, rather that the focus should be on the whole process of evaluating outputs. In his view, the process had not been agile enough to incorporate changes from the Ethics Committees about what should be considered good quality. Within interdisciplinary units it was not possible to incorporate all the many changes without an agile process as recommended by DORA. Also, staff were required to identify selections for submission without having seen the agreed marks. The process was not transparent.
- 9.6 Zeray Yideho, School of Law, noted that the focus of the last two years had been on monitoring and external review rather than trying to support colleagues to produce outputs. In his view it would be better to focus on supporting colleagues to produce high quality outputs rather than on monitoring and review. The implementation of some sort of mentoring system would help colleagues to plan the production of output, rather than waiting for output to be judged. Support to produce high quality outputs and impact studies is what is required.
- 9.7 Joachim Schaper, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History observed that in his time as a College Director of Research he had introduced a system of research leave for

colleagues. This meant that colleagues were able to take one in every six half-sessions solely to focus on research. He noted that the system began to be eroded as soon as it had been introduced and as a result the extent to which it still exists in the schools within the former College, is very mixed. He noted, however, that a system for research leave is a good thing. He further noted that the University should be encouraging all staff to be striving to submit a piece of four-star research and not to be aiming for a lower level as this is not sufficient. Joachim also highlighted the need for an improved system of communication and engagement between institutional-level planners and the staff within the individual units of assessment. In addition, he highlighted the importance creating the right research culture which is both an institutional responsibility, and the responsibility of schools and departments.

- 9.8 The Principal noted his support for the development of a university-wide research-leave scheme, while acknowledging the challenges this presented within the budgetary framework, he was supportive of the sort of scheme described by Joachim.
- 9.9 Alexandros Zangelidis, Business School whilst being supportive of comments so far, noted that the crux of the issue lay with generating high quality research output and that there was no easy solution to do this. He welcomed the significant growth of academic staff numbers in recent years and noted the importance of retaining these staff for the future. In terms of how to approach a reduction in the administrative burden placed on academic staff, he highlighted that this was needed across the board and there was not a single task that could be reduced and have any significant positive impact. In his view it is substantial amounts of focused time which is missing for most staff.
- 9.10 Ilia Xpoloia, School of Social Science welcomed the Report and stressed the importance of addressing the workload issues to take forward actions to tackle the issues identified. She asked for details of how the misjudgement of output identified in the Report had occurred, and whether the discrepancy had occurred elsewhere in the sector?
- 9.11 Ralph O’Conner, School on Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture, agreed with the points made by others in terms of the need to address the workload issues. He highlighted the need for the Institution to acknowledge its role in the underestimation of the impact that the disinvestment in staff and the workload pressures had had on the remaining staff and their research productivity. He noted that research had become the task undertaken when time permitted rather than being at the core of staff roles. The need for staff to be able to recognise a piece of research as being four-star rather than three-star was highlighted as particularly important and that the published definitions were not helpful in this context. Institutionally he was of the view that this was an area which needed to be addressed as a matter of the highest priority. Ralph acknowledged the ‘blindness’ of the process in terms of not knowing how output had been rated and how this was not helpful to working towards improvements for the future. It would be helpful for researchers to know how research had been rated in the past, in order to know what they were aiming for in the future.
- 9.12 Bettina Platt, School of Medicine, Medical Science and Nutrition added to the points already made that in her view staff, in her area, were not returned to the correct unit of assessment and this needs to be accounted for in any judgement of excellence. For example, in her area of medical sciences output was returned within the clinical medicine unit and this poor fit will have impacted on the scoring. It is critical that this is rectified for the future in order that output and impact studies can be evaluated within the appropriate framework.
- 9.13 The Principal noted that this is something which is being re-examined actively already.
- 9.14 Neil Vargesson, School of Medicine, Medical Science and Nutrition noted that four-star papers within his discipline take between four and five years to produce and so addressing the workload issues already identified is of paramount importance. Neil also highlighted issues around many staff not knowing what ‘impact’ really is. Writing good impact studies is very

difficult and so perhaps this an area where examples and assistance would be helpful for staff as this is an area which is likely to increase in importance in the future.

- 9.15 Mintu Nath, School of Medicine, Medical Science and Nutrition, stressed the importance of working in an interdisciplinary and multinational way for producing highly rated outcomes. It is important for the University to pool its resources in this regard to take best advantage of the opportunities in this area.
- 9.16 The Principal noted that it is known that multinational papers tend to be more highly cited- which can lead to work being more likely to be built on by others.
- 9.17 In response to the discussion, Marion thanked colleagues for their contributions and engagement. She noted that many of the points made were issues that are raised repeatedly, for example that of workload, which Karl is already working with the Workload Review Group to ensure that time is available for these important activities. Work is underway to align university systems to support the type of high-quality research being sought. The point made about moving support from assessment of output to come earlier in the process is already under discussion and it is acknowledged that putting support into production offers the chance to make changes that are not possible once research is published.
- 9.18 Marion further noted that colleagues across the sector have all reported a degree of discrepancy between internal assessments and the final external scoring. She suggested that for the future perhaps the approach should be to involve externals who have already had extensive involvement in the process so that we may benefit from their experience of recognising high quality requirements and understanding what the differentiators are between the categories of output. Regarding the selection of units of assessment Marion stressed that this is an area in which dialogue is encouraged to ensure that in future submissions best match the institution's profile at the time.
- 9.19 The Principal noted the importance of maintaining a balance between recruiting more staff and investing in time for existing colleagues to do more research and financially we are unable to do everything immediately.

ITEMS FROM RESEARCH COMMITTEE – OPEN ACCESS RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS POLICY

- 10.1 Simon Bains, University Librarian, noted that the paper provided is for input and discussion and is in connection with a well-established model begun by Harvard University in 2008. Simon highlighted that the Policy asks staff to retain their rights over publications in line with Intellectual Property (IP) policy rather than signing rights over to publishers as often happens when copyright transfer agreements are signed. Staff are asked to ensure papers acknowledge the University to guarantee any subsequent citations are associated with the University. The University will continue to deposit papers into PURE and make sure they are discoverable. Retaining individual rights ensures that everything remains entirely under the control of the University rather being dependant on a third-party organisation to allow us to comply with requirements of funding bodies who require open access publishing. This is particularly important where funding bodies require there to be immediate open access availability. Several funding bodies already require this and there is a view that this may become a requirement of being REF eligible in the future and so the drive to be open access research is likely to rise in the future. Simon noted that this affects publishing in journals and conference proceedings, which hold an ISSN, but is not yet a requirement of long format publishing although this is likely to become the case in the future. Consequently, the Policy would be kept under review and amended as necessary in the future. The University would provide wording for individuals to use to inform co-authors of the University's approach. He noted the Library is seeking to ensure that the administrative requirements on individual

academics is minimised. Simon highlighted that the option to opt out of these arrangements will exist where required by a third-party, although he did not anticipate that this would be a common occurrence.

- 10.2 The importance of the Policy was highlighted, and it was noted that the Policy would save money in terms of ensuring automatic compliance with funder mandates. Simon noted that for a University which is 'open to all', open research should be at the heart of activities. It was also noted to be one of the recommendations from the Research Culture Task and Finish Group. Research has shown that open access will increase citations and, in line with our theme of inclusion, will increase citation diversity.
- 10.3 Dragan Jovicic, School of Engineering, expressed concern that the policy does not consider sufficiently the interests of academics who as authors, will be put in a difficult position. He asserted that publishers would not be happy with the policy and would send copyright infringement notices to academics as the authors who transferred the copyright at the time of submission. Individuals transfer copyright, not the University, and this is something which academics wishing work to be published do not have a choice over. It is the authors who have a contract with publishers and so it will be the individuals who face legal action or will be banned by individual publishers. He also noted that open access is not yet a requirement of many funding bodies and only impacts on a small proportion of publications.
- 10.4 In response, Simon sought to reassure Senate around any issues arising from copyright: the University will put in place mechanisms for academics to engage with publishers to publish and retain copyright; where this isn't possible academics may opt out of the policy and transfer copyright to the publisher. He stated that there are a growing number of publishers who will not prevent authors retaining copyright; over 80 institutions in the world are already doing this and Simon was not aware of any instances of legal action. The greatest risk comes from not following the processes put in place and inadvertently ending up breaching copyright. Simon reiterated that he would be happy to engage with individuals to provide reassurance around the processes and stressed that there would be a reputational risk to any publisher seeking to take legal action against an academic or an institution.
- 10.5 Iliia Xypolia, School of Social Science expressed concern that in the future publication in books would become subject to this process and welcomed the opportunity for members of Social Science to be involved in future discussions.

ITEMS FROM RESEARCH COMMITTEE – ROUTINE REPORT

- 11.1 Marion Campbell, Vice-Principal (Research) invited members of Senate with comments and queries related to the routine report from the Research Committee to raise them with her directly outside the meeting.

UPDATE FROM ACADEMIC PROMOTION REVIEW WORKING GROUP

- 12.1 Karl Leydecker, Senior Vice-Principal presented an update from the working group looking at academic promotions. He reminded Senate that the Group are seeking to align the promotions system with the Aberdeen 2040 strategy. The work includes several elements: procedural, criteria and the framework. He noted that the Group had not yet developed detailed criteria for academic promotion; the Vice-Principals are leading discussions across the University around their development currently. Karl asked for feedback from Senate on the appropriateness of the work undertaken to date.

- 12.2 Ilia Xypolia, School of Social Science noted that, in terms of inclusivity, the update did not address entirely issues of anonymity. Whilst some documents were anonymised, others include applicants' surnames, and this had been raised as an issue within her constituency. She queried whether the Group have considered making the process completely 'blind' in terms of diversity characteristics. In addition, she sought further details around the role of the 'social observer'.
- 12.3 Richard Hepworth, School of Natural & Computing Sciences noted that the proposed policy for the research and teaching track seemed to favour research over teaching with levels not being aligned. He noted that while some of the imbalance is pre-existing in the current procedures, the proposals create additional imbalances. He hoped that the University values teaching and research equally and wished that this be reflected in the policy.
- 12.4 Scott Styles, School of Law, queried whether there were any plans to take the consultation to schools directly enabling all staff to contribute.
- 12.5 In response Karl noted that applications were already anonymised in the current process, and that there was no intention to move away from this. He highlighted that staff who did not feel comfortable declaring special circumstances to the whole panel would be able to do so in a much more controlled way to a small subset of the panel. In terms of the role of the Social Observer he noted that this was not a new introduction, and he would be happy to clarify details further if required. He noted that one of the biggest debates to date had centred around the framework and expectations of the community, particularly around the Reader and Chair levels. He stated that one of the important areas for feedback was to determine what being a professor at this University means – the Group had concluded that it should not require both research and teaching at the highest levels but that it was not appropriate to excel in research but not be above the lowest levels in terms of education. This would send the wrong message in terms of relative values of education and research. Karl noted that this was an area the Group were particularly keen to receive feedback on. Karl noted that through publication to members of Senate the document had also gone to all staff in the University and encouraged feedback to him directly from across the institution.
- 12.6 The Principal noted that it was entirely appropriate for the Institution to be seen to be giving equal weight to education and research, and whilst discussions are ongoing to find more time for research, this does not change the balance between the two. We value both equally as symbolised by there being an equal prospect for promotion on either the teaching or research tracks.

REVISIONS TO HONORARY DEGREE PROCEDURES

- 13.1 Tracey Slaven, University Secretary, presented the refreshed procedures approved by the Honorary Degrees Committee. She noted that the main issues the changes were seeking to address, were improving transparency and inclusivity within the process whilst remaining clear about the values placed on our honorary degrees and the expected number awarded each year. Tracey noted the recommendation that there be two active calls each year was intended to improve the accessibility and transparency of the process by encouraging all staff to nominate individuals; in addition, the introduction of a due diligence stage to be carried out on all nominations ahead of any recommendations being put before Senate.
- 13.2 The Principal noted that processes to date had not encouraged diversity in nominations, but the revised procedures did seek to improve this.
- 13.3 Neil Vargesson, School of Medicine, Medical Science and Nutrition noted that the forms for completion were lengthy and queried whether this might prove off-putting for some staff.

- 13.4 Tracey acknowledged that the forms were lengthy and indicated she would be content to revisit them, whilst noting that details were required in the forms to ensure that full due diligence can be undertaken.

SENATE NOMINATIONS TO THE DICK BEQUEST TRUST

- 14.1 Tracey Slaven, University Secretary outlined the background to the University's link to the Dick Bequest Trust highlighting that the terms of the Trust included two Trustees nominated by the University Senate. The University had been notified by the Trust that it wished to extend the University nominations when their current five-year terms end in June 2022 and 2023. She noted that if the University opted not to nominate Trustees, the power to do so would revert to the Trust. Tracey highlighted recent local press coverage around links between the Trust's founder, and the funds originally used to establish the Trust, having their origin in slavery and that both Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils have adopted positions on their continuing involvement with the Trust. Tracey noted the paper did not contain an explicit recommendation, but her personal recommendation was that Senate should not make any further nominations with power to appoint these two Trustees reverting to the Trust. Tracey highlighted the ongoing, active process within the University to look at the relationship between the area and historical links to the slave trade and noted that the nominations to the Trust proceeding to Senate ahead of the completion of the work due to the timings of the nomination process.
- 14.2 Ralph O'Connor, School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture, noted that research within the University had confirmed that James Dick's fortune was almost exclusively derived from trade in slave labour. Ralph noted that if the University were to cut all ties to the Trust, then it would lose any ability to influence any changes for the way the funds are used in the future. He noted it has been suggested in the press that one possibility would be for the Trustees to amend the terms of the Trust to benefit the people of Jamaica in ways similar to the ways in which people of the North-East had benefitted. He asserted that it might be ethically more appropriate to seek to exert influence from within the Trust rather than cutting ties completely.
- 14.3 The Principal noted that the two approaches could be combined and the University could cut ties with the Trust and write to the Trustees urging a change to the way the funds are used.
- 14.4 Ralph voiced the opinion that the University would stand a better chance of changing the way the Trust is used from a position within the Trust rather than as an outside body.
- 14.5 Diane Skatun, School of Medicine, Medical Science and Nutrition noted that, whilst she understood the position expressed by Ralph, by appointing Trustees the University was not able to instruct them in how they should act as they would be appointed as individuals.
- 14.6 Scott Styles, School of Law spoke in favour of the view articulated by Ralph, that the University should not simply walk away but should be seeking change from within. Scott proposed that Tracey should become a Trustee and further noted that it is relatively straightforward in legal terms to amend the purpose of a Trust through the Court of Session. He suggested that the University should be seeking to establish scholarships to the University from Jamaica through the Trust.
- 14.7 Akua Agyeman, Vice-President for Education, noted the student view that the University should continue involvement with the Trust and should appoint new Trustees. Continued involvement would present the best opportunities to push for change and to permit international students to benefit from the Trust.

- 14.8 The Principal reminded Senate that it would not be lawful for the University to seek to influence the actions of a Trustee and that there could be no expectation that any change in the terms of the Trust would result in funds coming to the University.
- 14.9 In conclusion Tracey outlined the two options open to Senate: to decide actively not to appoint to the Trust (option A) or the suggestion that an alternate Trustee is appointed (option B).
- 14.10 Brice Rea, School of Geosciences, clarified that option A should also include an offer to the Trust to assist in exploring possible changes to the terms of the Trust.
- 14.11 Senate then voted 45 in favour of option A and 8 in favour of option B. Senate therefore decided not to appoint Trustees but to write o the Trust offering support to amend the terms of the Trust.

ANY OTHER ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

- 15.1 The Principal reminded Senate of the additional meeting scheduled for 28 September and offered his apologies for missing the meeting due to attendance at the Scottish Parliament where he would be representing the sector in Higher Education budget discussions.

SENATE ELECTION RESULTS

- 16.1 Senate noted the results of the Senate Elections held in May.

SENATE ASSESSOR ELECTION

- 17.1 Senate noted the arrangements approved by the Senate Business Committee for the election of a Senate Assessor to court

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SENATUS ACADEMICUS

Minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2022

Present: David Anderson, Joanne Anderson, John Barrow, Alex Brasier, Abbe Brown, Marion Campbell, Delma Childers, Sandi Cleland, Chris Collins, Matthew Collinson, Murilo da Silva Baptista, Marie-Luise Ehrenschwendtner, Greg Gordon, Paul Hallet, Malcolm Harvey, Peter Henderson, Richard Hepworth, Amelia Hunt, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Karl Leydecker, Laura McCann, Kathryn Martin, David McGloin, Colin North, Graeme Paton, Ekaterina Pavlovskaia, Michelle Pinard, Brice Rea, Tom Rist, Thereza Raquel Sales de Aguiar, Diane Skåtun, Matteo Spagnolo, Alan Speight, Scott Styles, Ruth Taylor, Neil Vargesson, Sai Viswanathan, Zeray Yidhego and Haina Zhang.

Apologies: Simon Bains, Jason Bohan, George Boyne, Irene Couzigou, Lynda Erskine, Contanze Hesse, Gareth Jones, Amanda Lee, Gary Macfarlane, Ben Marsden, Iain McEwan, Yukie Tanino.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- 18.1 The Senior Vice-Principal opened the meeting, welcoming members of Senate to the meeting on behalf of the Principal who sent his apologies as he was attending a meeting at the Scottish Parliament.
- 18.2 The Secretary reminded members of procedures: 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.
- 18.3 Members of the Senate approved the agenda and the meeting proceeded.

REVISED SENATE STANDING ORDERS

- 19.1 Tracey Slaven, University Secretary, introduced the paper detailed proposed changes to the Senate Standing Orders. Tracey reminded members that following the discussion at Senate in May, Senate had delegated responsibility for review and finalisation to the Senate Business Committee (SBC). Following discussions at SBC and further input from individual Senate members a revised paper was now presented.
- 19.2 Tracey highlighted that one of the key areas for discussion had been the issue of recording the meetings. She noted that there had been significant debate and consideration of the data protection elements. It had been agreed that while the very detailed minutes continue to be produced, recognising the contribution of individual senators, that it remained appropriate and helpful to have a recording to support that production. A recording also supported transparency of process by senators having reassurance that the recording was there for the Governance Team to check if there were any concerns about the draft minute. It was noted

that in order that the University stays well within the data protection regulations that the recording would not be published or circulated and would be deleted following the approval of the minute at the subsequent Senate.

- 19.3 There were also some concerns around more minor elements and on clarity around the intent to seek academic input from Senate not being adequately covered in the old standing orders. This is now addressed with a very explicit commitment for those items of academic oversight and policy change to come to Senate for academic input before coming back in a later cycle for approval.
- 19.4 There is also a proposal to extend the timing of Senate meetings, recognising the richness and substantive nature of the business that Senate needs to address, and to return to the core hours of the university. Tracey recommended Senate discuss and to approve the revisions which were intended to offer increased accessibility in terms of the language used.
- 19.5 Scott Styles, School of Law, while welcoming the revisions noted that Standing Order four detailed meetings will begin at 1pm however the current meeting had been scheduled for 1.30pm. Scott asked that this be strengthened to make it clear that meetings would begin at 1pm except for in exceptional circumstances.
- 19.6 Scott also noted that whilst the Standing Orders provide for the SBC to approve the Senate agenda there was no provision to publicise the draft Senate agenda. Scott requested that this is amended and that the draft agenda be published one week before the date chosen for SBC to meet.
- 19.7 In response Tracey agreed the importance of the University being 'family friendly' in its scheduling of meetings and determined to look at the language used in this regard in the standing orders. She noted, however, that whilst meetings would normally be scheduled for 1pm the current meeting was an exceptional addition and hence it had not been possible to adhere to the normal schedule.
- 19.8 Tracey also undertook to add a commitment to the Standing Orders that the draft Senate agenda be circulated to members at the time it is made available to the SBC.
- 19.9 David Anderson, School of Social Science welcomed the clear paper but queried the inclusion of the reference to normal 'core business hours' and how this related to the Flexible Working Policy. Specifically, David queried whether the University had core hours as he was not aware of where these were defined. It was his view that the language used in this context did seem overly restrictive. He pointed out that this was an area which had been discussed many times previously by Senate and, as such, would be detailed in the minutes.
- 19.10 In addition, David highlighted the references to the Data Protection issues as they relate to the recordings and queried why these would preclude an elected senator requesting a fragment of a recording, and whether this could be made available on a password protected site.
- 19.11 In response the Senior Vice-Principal reminded members that the Workload Review Group had discussed and determined the core hours, which were agreed as 9.30 a.m. until 4.30 p.m., as

part of the development of the Flexible Working Policy and that these had been published to the whole University. He further noted the need for the University to operate across these core hours and noted that staff need to make their arrangements to make that possible.

- 19.12 Tracey Slaven, University Secretary, in responding to the points made around the recording, clarified that the Data Protection issue does not relate to making the recording to aid with the production of the minutes, but to any publication of the recording.
- 19.13 Tracey raised concern with consent being required for any publication of the recording and the impact this might have in terms of such consent acting as a deterrent to individuals volunteering to stand for Senate. The intention is for Senate to be as inclusive as possible, and any video or audio recording being routinely published could be a disincentive to participation.
- 19.14 Diane Skåtun, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition, noted that if the governance team needed a recording in order to produce accurate minutes, then members should be allowed also to hear specific extracts, in order to satisfy themselves the minute is accurate. Diane suggested that members should have the facility to ask for a specific part of the recording knowing that everybody who has spoken has already given consent for that to be released to the person for checking if required.
- 19.15 Tracey thanked Diane for her helpful clarification and noted that in terms of the distinction between release and publication, her input was especially helpful. Tracey highlighted that in terms of the resolution of any challenge to the minute, she would expect there to be an ongoing conversation between the Governance Team and the individual making that challenge in which details of a specific element of the recording could be shared. This was highlighted as being different from routinely releasing the entire recording. Tracey noted this compromise as helpful.
- 19.16 Tom Rist, School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture noted that the Senate minutes from the 21st of February 2018 noted in minute 52.4 Senate passed a motion 'that recording of the Senate would be made available on the Senate web pages. He further highlighted minute 52.4 which stated that 'Professor Martin had noted that Professor Anderson's question regarding Senate recordings had gone unanswered. Professor Martin asked whether these were available as agreed on the Senate web pages. The clerk, responding, stated that they would be made available within 10 working days along with the draft minutes.' Tom questioned whether or not Senate actually had the power to change the previous decision which had been voted on.
- 19.17 Matthew Collinson, School of Natural and Computing Sciences, highlighted that the decision from the University's Data Protection Officer, which elected senators had not had the opportunity to scrutinize fully, contrasted with practise elsewhere. Other organisations articulate the legal justification of public task for their senates and other governing bodies and in this context, his view was, that this aligns with the points made already by David Anderson and Diane Skatun. Matthew sought clarification as to why the lawful basis of legitimate public task was not appropriate in the context of making audio recordings of Senate meetings. There is a reasonable expectation that being part of a recording is part of being a member of Senate
- 19.18 The Senior Vice-Principal suggested that the issues around recordings were not going to resolved as part of the current discussion and that a full report from the Data Protection Officer should be brought to a future meeting. He queried whether Senate could approve the

Standing Orders noting that the issues around recording would be discussed further. The Secretary confirmed this was a possibility.

- 19.19 Brice Rea, School of Geosciences, noted confusion as to whether or not comments could be provided at this point or whether they needed to be brought to a future meeting but wished to note in the current context that it did not seem appropriate for the Governance Team to have access to the recording but not individual member and that in order to expediate production of the minutes, members should be able to access the recordings.
- 19.20 The Senior Vice-Principal confirmed that it had been agreed that a vote would be taken on the Standing Orders but excluding the revisions to Standing Order 32 which, pending further discussion, would remain as currently.
- 19.21 Senate voted 53 in favour, with no one voting against, to approve the Standing Orders excluding Standing Order 32.

REMIT & COMPOSITION OF SENATE SUB-COMMITTEES – SENATE BUSINESS COMMITTEE

- 20.1 Tracey Slaven, University Secretary, noted the review of remits and composition formed part of the normal annual process, which encourages all committees and groups, to review their remit and report to its parent committee on any changes proposed. Tracey noted the only change proposed related to the composition of elected senators on Senate Business Committee (SBC) to indicate that subject area should also be considered, as well as other equality issues. The main change discussed related to Recommendation 17 from the Senate Effectiveness Review which was to reduce size of the committee which was much larger than comparable committees elsewhere. With this in mind, the SBC recommended that membership is reduced from 19 to 10. Reducing the number of elected members from eight to four, and by reducing the numbers of vice-principals, deans and committee chairs attending from eight to four, enables the same balance between elected and ex officio members within the committee. It was suggested that a smaller group would be more able to have effective discussion on the agenda in what is a relatively short time frame available to that meeting. Senate Business Committee recommended to Senate to endorse the paper as presented.
- 20.2 Tom Rist, School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture, sought clarification of what difficulties were being encountered by the Committee and therefore what problems the changes were seeking to solve.
- 20.3 The Senior Vice-Principal confirmed that the changes were being proposed in response to the recommendations of the Effectiveness Review. The Review had recommended streamlining the Committee as the amount of time being taken up by such a large committee for so many staff was not an efficient use of time.
- 20.4 Diane Skåtun, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition queried whether the relative balance of elected to ex officio members on SBC reflects the balance on Senate.
- 20.5 Tracey confirmed that it does not, but also confirmed that the balance would be unchanged from the current balance. The proposed composition would be a slimmed-down version of the current Committee.

- 20.6 David Anderson, School of Social Science, suggested that as the committee does not reflect the proportions of Senate currently, maybe some further elected senators should be added to the committee.
- 20.7 The Senior Vice-Principal noted that he would not object to a further elected member. He further noted that the Committee is intended to be representative: it would have four elected senators and a Senate assessor. The four elected senators will be drawn from across the groupings that we have in order to ensure that Senate is fully represented. He highlighted to keep adding members would run contrary to the Effectiveness Review recommendation to reduce the size of the Committee.
- 20.8 Neil Vargesson, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition confirmed that as a member of SBC it can take significant time to reach decisions in the Committee and that streamlining the membership is sensible. He further noted the difficulties which have occurred when seeking volunteers from amongst elected members to sit on the Committee and reminded members of the need to volunteer when members are sought.
- 20.9 The Senior Vice-Principal confirmed that no further ex officio Senate members would be added and that he would be content with there being five elected members. He noted that the number of members would be determined by the number of volunteers. If elected members did not volunteer the membership would remain at four.

REMIT & COMPOSITION OF SENATE SUB-COMMITTEES – UNIVERSITY RESEARCH COMMITTEE

- 21.1 Marion Campbell, Vice-Principal (Research) introduced the proposed changes to the University Research Committee (formerly Research Policy Committee). Marion highlighted that the changes were relatively minor relating to the title of the Committee and reporting lines. No other changes were proposed.
- 21.2 Murilo da Silva Baptista, School of Natural and Computing Sciences queried whether there was a requirement to be a professor to be on the committee and whether there were elected senators on the Committee.
- 21.3 Marion confirmed that many members were professors but that this was determined by the School appointments of Directors of Research. Marion further confirmed that elected senators are not part of the committee as it does a lot of the early business before items are brought to Senate for comment. The committee does the technical work behind policies and then takes to for Senate discussion. It would duplicate work for Senate if they were involved at the Committee stage also.
- 21.4 Brice Rea, School of Geosciences, confirmed that as a member of the Committee and an elected member of Senate he did not feel that elected members were also needed on the Committee as anything substantive would be brought to Senate in a refined form for discussion and/or approval.
- 21.5 The Senior Vice-Principal confirmed with Senate that given the discussion they were content to approve the changes. No objections were raised.

REMIT & COMPOSITION OF SENATE SUB-COMMITTEES – UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEES

- 22.1 Tracey Slaven, University Secretary introduced the paper which detailed the revised University Education Committee (UEC) remit. Tracey reminded Senate that discussion had been begun at Senate in May 2022, but that there had been insufficient time at the meeting to conclude discussion
- 22.2 Tracey reminded Senate that the key items discussed at the May 2022 meeting included the temporary continuation of Senate representatives on the Education committee to reflect the transition from the previous position to the UEC becoming a full committee of Senate with the same relationship previously discussed in relation to the Research Committee. The very positive change of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) moving to be a direct subcommittee of Senate had also been welcomed at the May meeting.
- 22.3 Tracey noted that the other key area of discussion related to the chairing of UEC and QAC, with the Senate taking a formal vote to propose that the chairs of those two committees were kept separate, with an articulation of some concern of conflict of interest.
- 22.4 Tracey highlighted that the revised paper reflected some developments since the discussion in May, and that the Senior Management Team (SMT) had agreed the reintroduction of the role of Dean for Quality Assurance in addition to the investment being made in a professional role as a Head of Quality. Given that change, two options for the chairing of UEC and QAC were presented in the paper.
- 22.5 Tracey set out the two options with option A reflecting the will of Senate in the May meeting with the proposal that the Dean of Quality assurance chairs QAC with the subsidiary group being chaired by the Head of quality. The alternative, option B, was presented, with the Vice-Principal (Education) chairing QAC and the subgroup being chaired by the Dean for Quality Assurance. Tracey reminded Senate of the importance of separation of roles between the two direct subcommittees of Senate and noted that previously items from QAC came via UEC but under the new structure both UEC and QAC would report to Senate directly. This, together with the different committee compositions, provides sufficient separation of duties between the two committee roles and chairs in governance terms.
- 22.6 Tracey also highlighted that the change to the composition of UEC to now include representation of all schools as well as QAC having all schools represented, resulted in both committees have full school representation and being direct subcommittees of Senate. The revised structure has reduced the number of layers
- 22.7 Brice Rea, School of Geosciences commented that the paper might be considered to be leading to the view that option A is less desirable than option B. He noted that the potential conflict of interest with the Vice-Principal (Education) chairing both committees was not explored fully in the paper and sought clarity on why it was not a conflict of interest for the Vice-Principal to chair both Committees.
- 22.8 Tracey confirmed that Quality Assurance and Education provision were both explicit components of the Vice-Principal (Education) portfolio and hence the role required oversight of both activities.

- 22.9 The responsibilities of UEC and QAC are significantly different. Whilst there was connectivity, one should not be subsidiary to the other. Tracey noted that this was what the new structure was attempting to address. The proposed new structure, with QAC reporting directly to Senate, avoided that conflict of interest because it is the committee as a whole which would be reporting under a chairmanship rather than an individual presenting a view. The concern expressed previously was that there might be lack of transparency when issues flowed from QAC, through UEC and only thence to Senate. In addition, being a joint committee, had meant there was even less direct of a direct line to Senate.
- 22.10 Diane Skåtun, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition asked whether the academic policy and regulations group was new and asked why it had not existed under QAC previously. Diane noted her view that option A seemed preferable as keeping two different chairs to two very important Committees kept the independence. In addition, she commented that she was not content to have the Head of Quality chairing the academic policy and regulations group
- 22.11 In response Tracey confirmed that the Academic Policy and Regulations Group was an articulation of work that happened previously but now was formalised into a Group. She stressed that this was not a Committee but a Group and as such would not have delegated authority. Such a group carried out work on behalf of its parent committee, but the authority remained with the parent committee. Tracey further stressed that a professional Head of Quality would possess an appropriate skill set to develop technical aspects of the role.
- 22.12 Following confirmation that there were no further contributions, the Senior Vice-Principal proposed that Senate should vote on the matter.
- 22.13 The Secretary confirmed that the initial vote in front of Senate was to decide between option A or option B for the chairing of the quality assurance committees. Senate voted 26 in favour of option A and 19 in favour of option B resulting in option A being selected.
- 22.14 Murilo da Siva Baptista, School of Natural and Computing Sciences queried why it was appropriate for there to be members Senate in the composition of the Education Committees but not the Research Committees
- 22.15 The Secretary clarified the proposed structures reflected the historic position which had included Senate representation on the Education Committee. It had been agreed at Senate in May that representation would be retained for a transitional period to ensure that Senate was content that everything necessary was being brought to it for discussion
- 22.16 Following agreement from Senate that a further vote on the education committee structures was not required, it was agreed that the full package of Education Committee structures was approved, and the meeting closed.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SENATUS ACADEMICUS

Minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2022

Present: Rasha Abu Eid, Kaitlin Agius, Waheed Afzal, Julia Allan, Scott Allan, Sumeet Aphale, Joanne Anderson, Lesley Anderson, Euan Bain, Simon Bains, William Barlow, William Barras, Siladitya Bhattacharya, Harminder Battu, Thomas Bodey, Jason Bohan, George Boyne, Alex Brasier, Abbe Brown, Marion Campbell, Alice Calesso, Isla Callander, Alessandra Cecolin, Delma Childers, Chris Collins, Matthew Collinson, David Cornwell, Irene Couzigou, Rebecca Crozier, Chantal den Daas, Mirela Delibegovic, Andrew Dilley, Pete Edwards, Marie-Luise Ehrenscheidtner, Tom Escuti, Karin Friedrich, Isla Graham, Malcom Harvey, Peter Henderson, Richard Hepworth, Constanze Hesse, Jonathan Hicks, Alison Jenkinson, Gareth Jones, Dragan Jovicic, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Karl Leydecker, Beth Lord, Laura McCann, Catriona MacDonald, David McGloin, Gary MacFarlane, Nicola McIlraith, Michelle MacLeod, Alasdair MacKenzie, Andrew McKinnon, Vanessa Mabonso Nzolo, Kathryn Martin, Samantha Miller, Thomas Muinzer, David Muirhead, Mintu Nath, Graeme Nixon, Adeleja Israel Osofero, Nir Oren, Amudha Poobalan, Graeme Paton, Ekaterina Pavlovskaja, Michelle Pinard, Bettina Platt, Tom Rist, Justin Rochford, Miles Rothoerl, Thereza Raquel Sales de Aguiar, Karen Scott, Diane Skåtun, Benjamin Liviu Stefan, Ann-Michelle Slater, Alan Speight, Valerie Speirs, Mary Stephen, Lorna Stewart, Ruth Taylor, Dawn Thomson, Neil Vargesson, Jennifer Walklate, Adelyn Wilson, Tracey White, Ursula Witte, Ilia Xypolia, Zeray Yidhego.

Apologies: John Barrow, Sandi Cleland, Kate Gillies, Greg Gordon, Georgios Leontidis, Pietro Marini, Martin Mills, Jonathan Pettit, Brice Rea, Joachim Schaper.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- 23.1 The Principal opened the meeting, welcoming members of Senate to the meeting and in particular the new members attending for the first time.
- 23.2 The Secretary reminded members of procedures: 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.
- 23.3 Members of the Senate approved the agenda and the meeting proceeded.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 24.1 Members of the Senate approved the minutes of 21 September 2022 subject to minor amendments to the attendance.

- 24.2 Matthew Collinson, School of Natural & Computing Sciences, raised a query in relation to the minutes of 28 September and a point he had made in relation to audio recordings (minute 19.17 refers). He had sought clarification as to why the lawful basis of legitimate public task was not appropriate for audio recordings of Senate. The Secretary agreed the minute would be amended to include this point. Subject to this amendment, and minor amendments to the attendance, the minutes of 28 September 2022 were approved.

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

- 25.1 In addition to the written report on developments within the sector, the Principal noted that he was approximately half-way through his schedule of school visits. The visits undertaken so far had been very constructive and collegial. The Principal highlighted that student recruitment for the current academic year had not been as strong as expected and consequently the University was behind the expected revenue. It is hoped that some of this would be made up through the January student intake, however, it is not anticipated the shortfall would be reversed entirely and hence planned spending would be slowed down. Details would be confirmed once numbers in January are known. He noted that members of SMT and others had been working hard to rectify the difficulties encountered in September, some of which were external, and some were internal. He noted that there would be an Open Session on 14 November, and this would provide an opportunity for the whole community to be updated on the planned actions in this context. The Principal also highlighted the adverts for the 20 interdisciplinary fellows had resulted in 420 applications which were being taken forward by the Interdisciplinary Directors and Heads of School.
- 25.2 Karin Friedrich, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History, queried whether the recruitment shortfall had been created by recruiting fewer students than last year or fewer students than the University had been aiming for.
- 25.3 The Principal clarified that the University had generated more revenue from student recruitment than last year. If the January intake went well, revenue would be 15% ahead of last year but with fewer students.

REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COURT

- 26.1 Diane Skåtun, on behalf of the Senate Assessors, provided an update on the October 2022 meeting of the University Court which had preceded the Court Strategy Day. In addition to the written report included in the Senate papers, Diane highlighted that some of the papers considered at Court were available from the committees' [website](#). Diane noted that, following the recent election, all four Senate Assessors had been present for the meeting as Ilia had joined them for the meeting. Diane reminded Senate that anyone wishing further information in relation to Court should feel free to contact the Assessors.

PROMOTIONS REVIEW

- 27.1 Karl Leydecker, Senior Vice-Principal, introduced the papers detailing the fully revised and reworked promotions system, at Senate for approval. He reminded Senate that much of the process had been considered at Senate previously. The papers now also included the detailed criteria. Karl highlighted areas which had changed following feedback received at Senate. Specifically, the discussion around the need for parity across the various career tracks had resulted in scrutiny of the framework to ensure this was the case. Karl noted that a Research+

track had been introduced to reflect that staff on research contracts may have less time to provide evidence under other pillars and this could be used to compensate for lower levels elsewhere.

- 27.2 Karl also highlighted that further clarification had been added in response to feedback received, for example the possibility of applying in a subsequent promotion round had been added. He noted that the discussion at Partnership & Negotiating Consultative Committee (PNCC) on 1 November had led to additions to indicate that the inclusion of high-quality research applications, regardless of the success of the application, was a valid criterion in recognition that not all applications could be successful, particularly in the current funding climate.
- 27.3 Karl noted that, with approval from Senate, it was anticipated that the new framework would be used in the next round of promotions, to be launched in December, that would take effect from 1 August 2023. He confirmed that there was still the possibility of making further amendments if required to meet the approval of Senate.
- 27.4 Abbe Brown, Dean for Student Support, queried whether there was specific recognition of the role of Personal Tutor in the framework? She also noted that Trademark should be one word and not as appeared in the documentation.
- 27.5 Karl confirmed that if the Personal Tutor role had been omitted this was an error which would be rectified.
- 27.6 Iliia Xypolia, School of Social Science, queried the procedures to be utilised in terms of anonymity. She noted that although the current system was anonymous and gender blind the inclusion of surname on the top of forms conveys gender for some cultures. She queried whether surnames would be included on the paperwork for the new process.
- 27.7 Karl confirmed that the new process would not be anonymised in the same way as the current system, which was only anonymous at the Role Analyst stage. Instead, the inclusion of the Social Bias Observers/Trade Union Observers in the revised system was designed to counteract the possibility of social bias, hence the process would not be anonymised.
- 27.8 Iliia went on to detail concerns raised by constituents with the inclusion of the 'research income' criteria and the associated wording. She gave the example of Grant Income and queried whether this related to applications for grants or actual income received. She requested that the language used is made more explicit to ensure that staff are not discouraged from applying for promotion on the basis that high quality applications had been unsuccessful in being awarded funding due to the nature of the funding environment.
- 27.9 Karl responded to say that feedback had already been received on this point and revised wording had already been prepared.
- 27.10 Marion Campbell, Vice-Principal (Research), confirmed the revised wording as 'high quality grant applications leading to grant income acquisition or high-quality fundable level funder scores' to address the issue raised. Marion further noted that the Chief Executive of the British Academy had confirmed that randomisation of awards would only be partial and would only apply above a certain threshold.
- 27.11 Diane Skåtun, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition, noted the paper referred to approval but the agenda indicated an academic view was sought which was confusing.
- 27.12 Karl confirmed the paper was for approval as it had been considered by Senate on a previous occasion.

- 27.13 Diane further noted references to the workload model in the paper noting this was at Senate for an academic view and so queried how the promotions paper could be considered for approval before the workload model had been discussed.
- 27.14 Diane highlighted a variety of points raised by constituents: more than half of research only contract staff were in her school many of whom viewed this as their career. These staff had welcomed the inclusion of the Research+ criteria; queries had been received from staff who had been working towards promotion using the current criteria and how the new system would interface for these staff; section 4.5.4, in defining who would be on the promotions committee, refers to 'senior colleagues' which is subsequently defined in 4.5.9 as 'professorial level' however elsewhere the Committee could include Vice-Principals or Deans. As Deans could be appointed at all levels it was suggested that any Deans included should be at least the same level as those being assessed. Diane further highlighted references in Appendix Two to proposed changes to job titles for research track staff which are not referenced elsewhere in the documentation; the proposed implementation date of 2022 being tight given the workload model changes had not yet been agreed; queries had been received around the inclusion of an academic CV in the required documentation; in the context of colleagues going through the new process ahead of any evaluation of the operation of the process – how would these colleagues benefit from the implementation of any process changes identified by the evaluation?
- 27.15 Responding, Karl highlighted that any changes to a promotions system inevitably had to include a cut off in judging applications using the new system. This is unavoidable. He noted that there would be a further meeting of the Review Group to discuss the application documentation and how a narrative CV is integrated to this rather than requiring two separate documents as currently. The new documentation would have two parts. The main part setting out the case, and a supplementary part to detail factual information. Karl noted that changing to the new process would require a change in nomenclature around the various career tracks and that discussion was already underway with trade union colleagues on the Group around a Collective Agreement to change, for example, references to 'teaching' in contracts to 'education'. He further noted discussion around titles for grade seven research staff which had been considering whether these should change from Research Fellow/Senior Research Fellow to Lecturer (Research). This discussion was still ongoing and hence the paper does not include formal proposals in this regard. In terms of promotion panel membership Karl noted the intention to include a good balance of staff to ensure members are able to make the relevant judgements; hence the proposal is four members of professorial staff on each of the two committees to set a level of seniority; an Interdisciplinary Director to help ensure interdisciplinarity is assessed appropriately; Vice-Principals or their representatives, noting that as with the current role analysts, these may not be at professorial level.
- 27.16 Diane clarified that in terms of changing systems colleagues may have acted differently if they felt the system change beneficial/less favourable and that the swift implementation denied the opportunity for that judgement to be made.
- 27.17 Ekaterina Pavlovskaja, School of Engineering, queried how the two systems would run in parallel? Colleagues applying in September won't have received decisions before the new system comes in, in December, and how should unsuccessful applicants be advised in terms of the system changes.
- 27.18 Karl noted that this aspect had not yet been considered and undertook to take this point back to the Group.
- 27.19 Richard Hepworth, School of Natural & Computing Sciences, requested that variations between disciplines be recognised more uniformly throughout the document. In terms of the process, he observed that the current process includes subcommittees looking at subsets of

school(s) enabling a degree of subject specialisation in the committee. This will not be the case in the new process, and would the new committees be qualified to make judgements on the staff they are considering; the new process risks making Heads of School even more of a bottleneck than they are currently. He queried the possibility of incorporating breadth of subjects within the choice of senior academics for the committees in addition to increasing the number of these individuals.

- 27.20 Karl confirmed the possibility of school-level committees had been discussed by the Group but rejected as too heavy a process with too much bureaucracy. The Group do expect Heads of School to draw on expertise of senior colleagues within the school to ensure specialist discipline knowledge has been considered. Vice-Principals and Interdisciplinary Directors also have a subject background and thus would further augment the range of disciplines within each committee. Ultimately, committees will be guided by the External Referees who will provide specialist advice as to whether candidates meet the criteria expected. The Group acknowledged that if the balance on committees transpires not to be correct this would be reviewed, however, it had been the view that having one committee to look at all applications would provide better consistency in the decisions taken. Karl also agreed that the language in the documentation would be strengthened in terms of expressing the need for representation from a range of disciplines.
- 27.21 Tom Rist, School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture, was supportive of the points made by Richard in terms of the range of disciplines included on committees. Tom was also supportive of the point made by Diane regarding the interdependency of the promotions proposals with the, as yet, unapproved workload model. Tom sought clarity around references in the documentation to 'line manager' and whether this should be 'academic line manager' and also queried what training would be available to this individual to evaluate and advise potential candidates regarding promotion. Tom queried what consideration had been given to simplifying the Promotion Application Form to make it more usable for 'time-pressed' academics.
- 27.22 Karl reconfirmed that the form would be receiving further consideration with a view to simplification and consideration would also be given to which evidence was already available in other formats, for example in PURE, and how this could be utilised and supplemented as part of the process. Karl acknowledged the significant amount of training and briefing which would be required for everyone involved in the new process and also acknowledged the need for senior colleagues' involvement in the rollout of such a significant change. He noted that the new system was intended to address deficits within the existing system, for example inequalities of access to certain grades in some areas, and as such the magnitude of the change required should not be underestimated. Karl reiterated the importance of the change in supporting individual career alignment with the institutional aims and values detailed as part of Aberdeen 2040. Karl confirmed there would be a significant level of detail in the implementation plan which would clarify intentions behind the changes being made but work with the implementation could only proceed once the details of the framework and criteria had received approval.
- 27.23 Aravinda Guntupalli, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition, had received a query in connection with citizenship and whether some research risked being double counted as the same examples might be used as evidence in support of interdisciplinarity in addition to other parts of the portfolio. She also queried the extent to which some equality protected characteristics, not explicitly detailed in the documentation, might be accounted for in the process and how statistics from the sector might be taken into consideration. Also, in connection with equality and diversity she had received a query in relation to unconscious bias training which questioned whether Human Resources were the correct providers for this

training and whether further clarification could be provided regarding conflict of interest and who the conflict is considered to relate to.

- 27.24 Marion Campbell, Vice-Principal (Research) clarified that in the context of citizenship the criteria do not relate to the 'doing' of the research or teaching but rather the promotion and building of synergies and networks of wider examples in support of the promotion of interdisciplinarity as part of Aberdeen 2040.
- 27.25 Karl confirmed that he would ensure appropriate consideration was given to who should provide unconscious bias training; that conflict of interest should apply to anyone who feels they are conflicted in any way with a particular application and that if this was not clear in the documentation, he would be happy to revisit.
- 27.26 An elected member noted the difficulties associated with generating research income in some especially competitive disciplines; she also welcomed the reduction in the weighting of administration in the new system but questioned how this could be achieved without the recruitment of additional support staff.
- 27.27 Karl confirmed that the earlier discussion (minute 27.11) had already dealt with the issue of competition for research funding and that the issues with amount of administration would be addressed in the discussion of workload models.
- 27.28 Nir Oren, School of Natural & Computing Sciences, raised two points. Firstly, section 4.1 highlighted the importance of the annual review process within the promotion process and suggested that there might be value in incorporating the annual review documentation as part of the promotion documentation. Secondly, he noted the importance of the wording used in making a promotion application and suggested that there would be the potential to disadvantage non-native English speakers because of this. He noted that he had previously contacted Marion in this context to suggest support should be made available for writing grant proposals and that this could be widened to include promotion applications for non-native speakers. He suggested that the relative success of application might be monitored to see if this was an issue.
- 27.29 Karl confirmed that the intention was to ensure that everyone applying receives the best possible support, and that schools and line managers all have a role to play in this whether it is support for grant or promotion applications. Karl noted that he was unsure whether having all annual review documentation available as part of a promotion application was appropriate given the annual review was a private conversation between the individuals. He further noted that work was also required to train academic line managers carrying out annual reviews – this work had been paused during the pandemic but the need for training remained to ensure that line managers are aware of their responsibilities both in terms of supporting annual review and promotion applications. The intention is that there should be a seamless process of supporting staff from appointment through to promotion. With such a process there should be fewer people being turned down for promotion as there will be a common understanding within the institution of exactly what is expected at each career stage.
- 27.30 Rasha Abu Eid, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition, requested clarity between choice of tracks in terms of clinical or scholarship and how this relates to contracts. Additionally, she had received a query regarding postgraduate qualifications in a specialist area being required for level two on the clinical track and noted that this might put clinicians from some areas at a relative disadvantage because of the difficulty associated with gaining access to some specialties.
- 27.31 Karl clarified that the details referred to were not requirements but were criteria for candidates to bring evidence towards – there is no expectation that anyone meets all the

- criteria in one area. The system is designed with maximum flexibility in mind for colleagues to apply under the pillars they feel most appropriate to their individual circumstances.
- 27.32 Malcolm Harvey, School of Social Science noted the conflation of the promotions item with the workload item and sought clarification on procedure if the workload item did not gain approval from Senate but the promotion review had already been passed.
- 27.33 Tracey Slaven, University Secretary, noted that policy development in this area is always an iterative process and that if further work were to be required on the workload model it would not undermine decisions made regarding the promotions process but rather the promotions process must be implementable in the context of the current workload model.
- 27.34 Euan Bain, School of Engineering, noted that constituents had raised similar concerns with him in terms of the disciplinary mix of panels and also in terms of the number of committees and that, as it stands currently, the procedure does not place any limit on the volume of applications which might be considered by a committee and that this might have a negative effect on the quality of decision making of the committee. He also noted that a professorial colleague had already intimated that they would not wish to be considered as one of the senior panel members because of the threat of information overload for panel members. Setting a maximum to the number of applications considered by a panel would mitigate against this.
- 27.35 Karl responded that he did not think this would be possible as there is no notion of there being a quota for the number of promotion applications which could be considered in any particular year and that he hoped that senior colleagues across the university would recognise the privilege of being involved in the academic promotions process and therefore be willing to take this on. He noted that this had been his experience in other institutions where the role was seen as very important.
- 27.36 Euan confirmed that the intention had not been to limit the number of applications but rather to increase the number of Committees.
- 27.37 Karl expressed a preference to ensure an appropriate amount of time for the task rather than increase the number of committees. He noted that at other larger institutions and at the funding councils, where a significant number of applications are scrutinised, the expectation can be that up to two days be spent on the task. The group had considered this issue and concluded that the proposal represented the most efficient and effective use of the resource available.
- 27.38 The Principal noted that, subject to Senate's endorsement of the proposals, there was a further step in the process. The proposals would be considered by PNCC and so there is space in the process to incorporate the feedback from Senate's discussion and comments.
- 27.39 Tom Rist, School of Language, Literature, Music & Visual Culture expressed his concern that the workload paper had not been considered prior to the promotion paper.
- 27.40 Following some discussion and clarification that responsibility for final approval rests with PNCC, Diane Skåtun, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition, formally proposed a motion to delay the decision on endorsement of the promotions processes until after the discussion of the workload paper. The motion was widely supported and so was carried by consensus.

WORKLOAD REVIEW FINAL REPORT

- 28.1 Karl Leydecker, Senior Vice-Principal, introduced the revised and updated report from the Workload Review Group noting this was anticipated to be the final report from the group. He indicated that the covering paper detailed the changes made since it was last considered by

Senate, and that these were highlighted in green within the document for ease of reference. For example, the issue raised at Senate previously regarding transparency and what this equates to in practise; the inclusion, at the request of the trade unions, of reference to contracted working hours; the introduction of time for those with very large grant applications or those carrying out significant work around impact or engagement together with several other aspects. Karl picked up a point from the previous discussion highlighting that the model does not prescribe ten percent for administration but refers to citizenship and wider contributions to Aberdeen 2040. The twenty percent allocation, which some colleagues had for administration, had been moved to be incorporated within research and teaching rather than it being a separate item to recognise that all colleagues carry out administration associated with those activities. In effect the move is from a notional 40:40:20 model to a 45:45:10 for those with Education and Research contracts with the 10% being for citizenship and wider activities, to link back to the promotions criteria.

- 28.2 Jen Walklate, School of Social Science, noted concerns about how this would be implemented, shifting from existing contracts.
- 28.3 Karl clarified that the 40:40:20 split is not in fact contractual rather it is a policy matter and so the change does not require any contractual amendments. This was also noted when the paper was discussed at PNCC.
- 28.4 Matthew Collinson, School of Natural & Computing Sciences, noted that in connection with work accrued for the delivery of courses, under 3.7, the adoption of one of three models is prescribed across the institution which seems to be indicating that one size will fit all. He highlighted that even within a school there is a huge range of variation between disciplines. To move from the current model to a more theoretical model requiring estimation of parameters is difficult, particularly without a track record to draw on. Estimation of parameters can cause significant upset where this is done incorrectly.
- 28.5 Karl acknowledged the amount of work associated with such an implementation and the need for the implementation to be preceded by a modelling process. Thus, the paper was seeking to first agree a set of principles before moving on to implementation. Karl highlighted the number of workload models in use within the university currently and noted that most were agreed that it would be good to move to a reasonably consistent method for assessing workload, while still having the flexibility to recognise the variety of types of delivery.
- 28.6 Richard Hepworth, School of Natural & Computing Sciences supported the comments made by Matthew Collinson (minute 28.4 above) and noted that the School of Natural & Computing Sciences had already undertaken work to model workloads within the School during the last academic year with the conclusion that the model needed in depth revision due to the complexity of the exercise. Richard suggested that the document did not make it clear why option three is the preferred option: benefits and difficulties are noted with all options, but it is not clear why option three is the best. Richard highlighted that under option two (the light touch model) it was noted that one downside to the model might be disparities between schools in allocations made for the same activities which might cause concerns, however this is normal. It might be argued that there would be consistency expected between schools for some activities, for example being an elected senator, while other activities, for example PhD supervision would vary enormously between disciplines and this should be treated as a fact rather than a downside.
- 28.7 Karl noted that the document did explain why option three was considered the preferred option and suggested the experience of the School of Natural & Computing Sciences would be useful. Karl noted that different schools were in different places in terms of workload modelling. What is being sought is the establishment of some broad principles which would permit progress to be made with the next stage of the process. The allocation of work

associated with teaching activities is the most complex and is the aspect which is of highest priority for most staff. For this reason, cognisance needs to be taken of the work done to date and School Administration Managers need to be involved to determine what works before any rollout across the University.

- 28.8 Karin Friedrich, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History, echoed the points made about differences between disciplines and noted that the administrative effort which had been included within the blocks of education and research activities has the effect of wiping out a lot of teaching hours leading to teaching hours being very difficult to allocate under the new model. The current model of heaping administration on top of teaching had led to the current sense of everyone being over worked, which leads to the conclusion that we will either need more staff or to reduce the number of hours taught.
- 28.9 Karl suggested that an alternative approach would be to make administration more efficient.
- 28.10 Peter Henderson, School of Natural & Computing Sciences, noted his support for the proposal and raised a concern expressed by colleagues that while the intention would be to balance hours, workloads also needed to be balanced across terms. Some staff, particularly those teaching postgraduate courses, have very bunched-up teaching and do a lot of teaching across the summer while this isn't the case for others. If there is no recognition of this, it can create problems finding time for research and taking leave. He also noted issues with time for personal tutoring particularly if this were to be expanded to include postgraduate students.
- 28.11 Karl highlighted that the need to spread work across the year is included at the end of section two of the documents, where Heads of School are asked to take this into account.
- 28.12 Thomas Muinzer, School of Law, noted that discussions in the School of Law had identified issues with the reconfiguration of allocation of administration. He cited himself as an example noting that he directed year three, co-directed a research area and he would be coordinator of two large courses next term and noted that everyone has similar large administrative loads. The quantification of these administrative roles would be extremely important in developing a workload model colleagues would be able to accept. He noted that staff may run courses on which they deliver no teaching which highlighted the need to ensure administration would be incorporated appropriately in any model developed.
- 28.13 Bettina Platt, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition, noted that the approach to have university-wide guidelines categorised broadly as proposed, is the correct approach. To ensure that everyone is clear on what the overarching expectations are, while still having flexibility at the school level, she suggested that examples should be school specific. Academic line-managers should be the ones making the judgement as to whether there is a reasonable balance for an individual as there will be activities which the document does not recognise explicitly. She queried how it would be possible to quantify and assess the proportions and whether the TRAC system would continue. How would the system measure workload and what would the consequences be if a Head of School or line-manager felt someone did not have an appropriate workload?
- 28.14 Alessandra Cecolin, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History, while recognising that the model aligns with institutional goals, noted that there would be the possibility that for staff in schools with large numbers of undergraduates the gap might widen between staff with large research grants and those required to cover teaching for them on account of the grant. This might be a particular issue for younger staff at the start of their research careers being expected to pick up excessive quantities of teaching to cover for staff with large grants. She queried whether this inclusion had the potential to further widen inequalities.
- 28.15 Zeray Yidhego, School of Law also welcomed the model and in particular the principles but noted that if there was a serious intention to quantify the jobs done, every effort needed to

be made to capture as many of the jobs done as possible. He cited, for example, writing references for students and graduates, an important and time-consuming task, and queried whether this was captured as part of teaching or research. He noted that there were many such tasks, which would be missed as part of a workload model.

- 28.16 Karl noted his expectation that writing references for current and graduated students would be included as part of teaching-related administration. In terms of queries raised around large grants, Karl clarified that this was only intended for the largest grants and was done with the intention of incentivising research activity following the recent REF outcome. The intention was to provide colleagues in receipt of the largest grants with recognition which would stand the University in good stead in the future.
- 28.17 The Principal highlighted that Senate was asked to approve the principles and direction of travel with workload planning not all the details surrounding implementation and suggested that this should be voted on.
- 28.18 Tracey confirmed the mechanisms for voting and the question asked together, with the options to approve, not approve or abstain.
- 28.19 Senate voted to approve the proposals for workload modelling with 72 votes in favour, 12 votes against and 11 abstentions.

PROMOTIONS REVIEW

- 29.1 Having voted to approve the proposals for workload modelling so clearly, Senate returned to the decision regarding the promotions review (minute 27.41 above refers). Senate agreed by consensus that the paper should proceed to be considered further by PNCC.

ITEMS FROM THE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH COMMITTEE - INSTITUTIONAL POLICY ON THE RESPONSIBLE USE OF METRICS

- 30.1 Marion Campbell, Vice-Principal (Research) introduced the draft institutional policy on the responsible use of metrics noting that the draft policy had already been discussed by the University Research Committee (URP) and that it was coming to Senate for an academic view. Marion noted that the University had signed up to the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) which commits the University to fairness and transparency around how metrics are used to assess research output. Therefore, the draft policy had been developed and was in front of Senate for comment.
- 30.2 Marion highlighted the overarching principles underpinning the document together with the responsibilities of the University to meet these responsibilities. The University is committed to the use of expert judgement and peer review to assess research outputs, recognising the various metrics which can aid that judgement and that the metrics should not be the sole drivers for judgement. The draft policy commits to expert judgement being the primary method of assessment augmented by a range of metrics. Marion noted that the paper included examples of what the 'basket' of metrics might include and that some of these might be useful in different contexts, for example in making an application for promotion.
- 30.3 Richard Hepworth, School of Natural & Computing Sciences welcomed the draft policy noting the paper referred to some common bibliometric measures, which included the instruction that they should be accessed via Scopus or Web of Science. Richard highlighted that these are not necessarily the best tools for all disciplines and requested that this might be rephrased as a suggestion rather than a direction.

- 30.4 Marion confirmed that there was no intention to be prescriptive and that this would be changed.
- 30.5 Iliia Xpolia, School of Social Science, provided feedback from her school who had raised concern with the use of 'experts' which were not defined in the paper.
- 30.6 Marion confirmed that this would be clarified to make it clear that this was intended to mean experts in the disciplinary field.
- 30.7 Aravinda Guntupalli, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition, raised the issue of bias in some of the metrics highlighting evidence that female researchers are less likely to be cited and that the potential exists for bias on the basis of other characteristics. She noted the importance of there being an equality and diversity perspective included in the policy.
- 30.8 In noting the importance of this point Marion reiterated the importance of not focusing on one single metric but rather including a spectrum of metrics to augment expert review.
- 30.9 Bettina Platt, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition, noted a particular issue with the use of Altmetrics as online media are particularly bad for citing things that are outrageous, and in some instances wrong, leading to these metrics potentially being biased and not a good indication of esteem.
- 30.10 Marion noted that this is not just an issue with online metrics and often the most highly cited references are those that are wrong. This adds to the need to take measures collectively and not as a single source of truth and this aspect would be strengthened in the paper.
- 30.11 The Principal noted that the paper would return to the next meeting of Senate.

**ITEMS FROM THE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH COMMITTEE –
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONCORDAT FOR RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT**

- 31.1 Mirela Delibegovic, Dean for Industrial Engagement in Research and Knowledge Transfer, provided a brief presentation on the University's progress with implementation of the Concordat for the Career Development of Researchers.
- 31.2 Mirela reminded Senate that the University had signed up to the Concordat in July 2020 and that as a signatory the University had committed to improving the development of our researchers, their employment and wider support for researchers.
- 31.3 Consultation on implementation had been undertaken via the Concordat Steering Group and the Postdoctoral Research committee from November 2021 to develop an action plan. The Steering Group had identified the need for institutional agreement on a set of high-level principles needed to fulfil institutional commitments. In addition, in March 2022, recommendations had been made by the Research Culture Task and Finish Group (TFG) under the headings of a) Research Careers b) The Experience.
- 31.4 The TFG had recommended that early career research staff should be helped to develop research independence through being provided with:
- access to development opportunities, resources and support
 - a minimum expectation for 10 days development per year
 - mentoring and career guidance
 - an explicit promotions pathway
 - and representation as part of institutional decision making

- 31.5 Mirela further noted that the Group had acknowledged that some of the recommendations would have workload and financial implications, but that there were significant reputational risks associated with not proceeding with this work as we seek to strengthen Institutional potential.
- 31.6 Jen Walklate, School of Social Science queried how staff on teaching fellow contracts would fit into these proposals.
- 31.7 Mirela confirmed that consideration of this aspect fell within the remit of the Research Culture discussions and that inclusion of Teaching Fellows would be brought into those discussions.

**ITEMS FROM THE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH COMMITTEE –
RESEARCH PUBLICATION POLICY**

- 32.1 Simon Bains, University Librarian introduced the Research Publications Policy now in front of Senate for approval following discussion at Senate in September. Simon noted that the revised paper included specific responses, in section 4.1, to issues raised by Senate members previously.
- 32.2 Simon reminded Senate that the purpose of the policy was to ensure that staff retained their rights over publications to help in ensuring the University can comply with funder mandates in terms of Open Access. The policy sought to help to support aims within Aberdeen 2040 around access to research findings.
- 32.3 Simon noted that some publishers' systems made it impossible not to sign over rights as part of the submission process. Having sought legal advice on the matter, Simon confirmed that it was still possible to retain rights in these circumstances and advice indicated that a prior declaration to retain rights would take precedence. If necessary, the Library would step in and contact a publisher directly on behalf of any academic experiencing issues in this regard. Simon highlighted that the issue did not apply only to Aberdeen and that the University was working with several partners on this including JISC who are lobbying publishers to ensure that systems work in the way they are needed to for universities.
- 32.4 Simon confirmed that the Library would handle discussions on behalf of any academic contacted by a publisher directly regarding rights retention and, if necessary, would remove a publication from public access pending the outcome of discussions. Simon reassured Senate that this was considered low risk and that the sector, as a whole, was reporting few issues in this context.
- 32.5 Regarding issues raised around costs, Simon noted that this approach was one way of contributing to reducing costs. The more manuscripts are available in open access repositories, the less the University has to pay to publishers to facilitate this. He cited the example of the journal Nature which currently charges £9,000 to place an article on open access. If the University were to have to use limited resource to keep paying for open access in this way, there would be a risk that resource would be exhausted and therefore the University would be unable to comply with funder requirements.
- 32.6 Simon highlighted his expectation that immediate Open Access would become a requirement of the REF, in order to be eligible for inclusion in REF.
- 32.7 Dragan Jovicic, School of Engineering noted he was supportive of moves towards immediate Open Access and thanked the Library for their work in this area. Dragan suggested two amendments: drafting currently reads as if permission to opt out needs to be granted by the Library; that REF does not currently require immediate Open Access so he suggested these statements should be removed from the policy

- 32.8 Dragan further raised a query around the requirement to include a statement in submissions advising publishers of University policy. He noted it was not possible to include such a statement as part of the paper and this would require a separate communication which the policy seems to suggest would be the responsibility of the authors. Authors do not know where to direct these communications and doing so would take up significant amount of time. Dragan suggested that the Library should take on this responsibility and inform publishers on behalf of all University authors.
- 32.9 Simon confirmed that authors would not require permission to opt out from the policy and the Library just needed to be aware of individual exceptions to ensure publications are handled appropriately; regarding the query whether it should be an individual author's responsibility or the Library's, Simon suggested that experience elsewhere suggested this should be done by both parties. The Library, working with the University's solicitors, would be contacting publishers to advise them of the University's policy but that authors should do this also. Simon indicated that, if the paper received approval, his next priority would be discussions with SMT around the timeline for implementation.
- 32.10 Marion Campbell, Vice-Principal (Research) confirmed that the ability to opt out of the Policy would only be available to authors if this would not lead them to be in contravention of their funding conditions.
- 32.11 An elected member queried with Simon his statement about 'risk being low' and sought clarification of who was at risk: if the risk to the University is low what is the risk to the author?
- 32.12 In response, Simon noted a lack of case law and that he had been advised there would be no risk provided the publisher could not reasonably claim that they had not been made aware of the policy and hence the proposed approach of writing to publishers together with authors drawing their rights retention to the publisher's attention at the time of submission. Such a dual approach would make it impossible for any claim of not being aware of the policy to stand. Simon further noted the practise had been in place globally since 2007 with no reported difficulties.
- 32.13 An elected member noted that the workflows used by publishers made it very difficult to make a submission without signing away rights. In response, Simon acknowledged this was where it was particularly important that the community worked together and with JISC to ensure publishers' processes do not require this and the Library would offer support in this context.
- 32.14 Members confirmed their wish to hold a vote on the proposed policy. The Secretary confirmed the processes. Senate voted 61 in favour of the proposal, with 9 against and 13 abstentions. The Policy was approved.

ITEMS FROM THE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE -

DECOLONISING THE CURRICULUM

- 33.1 Ruth Taylor, Vice-Principal (Education) introduced the paper proposing the roadmap for the work to be undertaken over the following years to decolonise the curriculum. She noted the paper focused on process and did not seek to prescribe how individual schools should achieve this and rather focused on the timelines the community might adopt. Ruth noted that the paper had been discussed by the Education Committee and included some feedback from that discussion.
- 33.2 For new Senate members, Ruth outlined that the Steering Group had been meeting since 2021 noting that school leads had been engaged and had worked as a collaborative, energised

- group. The Group had been informed by the work of the external Anti-Racist Curriculum Group which had arisen from work by QAA Scotland and AdvanceHE.
- 33.3 Ruth highlighted the need for the University to address the issue of the degree awarding gap which exists for our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students and noted that this process was part of that. The Group were developing resources, including a toolkit, to help schools at different stages of the process to take work forward. There were not intended to be prescriptive, and development would continue with these.
- 33.4 Ruth further highlighted that the principles for the timeline outlined in the paper were intended to be supportive, acknowledging that good work is already underway in some parts of the institution.
- 33.5 The principles focus on school education committees taking ownership of the process ensuring that the work is taken forward in a way that works for individual schools and disciplines. The timelines proposed in the paper suggest, where work has not already begun, it should do so in the current academic year and that by the end of 2023/24 schools will have looked across their provision and that by 2024/25, where not already achieved, content and assessment changes can be taken through school and university quality assurance processes with the aim of having the University implement all the curriculum changes by 2025/26.
- 33.6 Aravinda Guntupalli, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition, welcomed the concept that this would not be a discrete process and would evolve through time. She noted that colleagues in the School of Social Science had established three groups to review the curriculum. There was clearly good work being undertaken and she asked whether this work could be shared.
- 33.7 Jen Walklate, School of Social Science welcomed the document and stressed the importance of decolonisation within the 'hidden' curriculum, in terms of making structures and mechanisms supporting the process, accessible. Work cannot focus solely on the curriculum.
- 33.8 Ilia Xpolia, School of Social Science suggested that the definition in the paper should become a working definition to reflect the dynamism of the process. She also noted the importance of ensuring inclusion of the Qatar campus in the process and how we articulate the inclusion of colleagues in Qatar within the process.
- 33.9 In response, Ruth acknowledged the importance of sharing good practice and noted one of the aims of the Group was to provide case studies and publications from the work across the institution. Ruth noted that there isn't a single thing to be done to address all the issues. She noted the Race Equality Strategy Group and the Anti-Racism Strategy aims to take forward our university ambitions on antiracism through a holistic approach. One of the workstreams for decolonising the curriculum is seeking to articulate all the work going on across the University. The work is seeking to address all University curriculum which includes the curriculum delivered in Qatar. The Qatar curriculum is the same as that in Aberdeen and so is definitely part of this work. Colleagues in Qatar are part of the Group.

ITEMS FROM THE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE –

ACADEMIC YEAR 2023/24

- 34.1 Alan Speight, Vice-Principal (Global Engagement) introduced the paper seeking approval for the continuation into 2023/24 of the arrangements in place currently for 2022/23. The paper was revised to include responses to the feedback from the previous discussion at Senate. Alan noted the proposed extension would provide sufficient time for the Aberdeen 2040 Curriculum work to be undertaken to inform any changes to the future structure of the academic year from 2024/25 onwards, together with consideration of relevant student recruitment requirements.

- 34.2 Alan noted that the recruitment cycle is already in progress and clarity is required on the start date to permit its inclusion in offers being made to students. He noted the importance of providing the best opportunities possible for students to complete all required processes ahead of their arrival and of minimising late arrivals. The continuation of arrangements into 2023/24 enables support to be provided to international students who are still facing both direct and indirect pandemic-related disruption. The start date also aids with recruitment of students from countries where academic results are not available until later in the cycle, for example, from South Asia. He also noted that there is an increasing number of UK students opting to join through the Clearing process once their grades are known. He noted that the final stages of the conversion process, the period between offer making and registration, had become increasingly complex and therefore it is important that we provide as much time as possible for this stage. Increased diversification has brought increasing checks within the process which we must accommodate in our procedures. This will maximise our chances of reaching recruitment and tuition fee targets for September 2023.
- 34.3 The later start date would permit the University to remain competitive with comparator institutions. Alan noted the relatively late start date for Aberdeen was still comparatively early when viewed against our comparator set. To adopt a start-date any earlier than that proposed would very seriously constrain and compromise our ability to recruit students with attendant financial consequences.
- 34.4 Ruth Taylor, Vice-Principal (Education) drew Senate's attention to the feedback received in September and to section eight of the paper which lays out each item with a response. Ruth noted the overarching work ongoing around the structure from 2024/25 and noted that five models were under consideration currently and that there would be opportunity for discussion of these as work progresses. Feedback received previously which has not been incorporated for 2023/24 would be drawn into the work on 2024/25.
- 34.5 Ruth highlighted the structure proposed: the eleven plus two teaching and assessment weeks, with the 'floating' week for revision, does provide some flexibility for implementation in discipline areas.
- 34.6 Ruth noted that the proposal was not seeking approval at this time for marking deadlines as these were now the responsibility of the Quality Assurance Committee and would come back as part of the usual processes.
- 34.7 The Principal reiterated his comments from the discussion previously to note the essential requirement that the University has a competitive start date. He highlighted the significant investments planned for 2023/24 and the requirement the University gives itself the best possible opportunity to recruit students in support of that.
- 34.8 Diane Skåtun, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition sought clarification of whether approval of marking deadlines was a matter for Senate that couldn't be approved without reference to Senate.
- 34.9 The Secretary clarified that with delegated authority to approve, the subcommittees of Senate had the power to approve business unless something was considered particularly contentious, for which Senate's input was required.
- 39.10 Neil Vargesson, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition, sought clarification around whether teaching would still be considered on days categorised as falling into school holidays to permit staff to take annual leave.
- 39.11 Ruth confirmed that this is an area being considered closely and hence the public holidays are highlighted. Ruth confirmed that wherever possible teaching would be avoided on public

holidays however, where this was not possible, it must be made clear that staff were entitled to a day's leave in lieu which they should be encouraged to take.

- 39.12 Joanne Anderson, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History supported the point made by Neil and noted the challenges associated with accommodating local school holidays. She noted that the University not having a fixed reading week further complicated matters for staff when planning annual leave.
- 39.13 Ruth noted an understanding of the issue and highlighted that the 'floating' week is available for schools to use in whatever format is most appropriate in their disciplines. Going forward, this was a principal included in considerations. She noted the situation is further complicated by the nonalignment of school holidays between Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire.
- 39.14 The Principal noted the complexities of the situation and confirmed that Ruth was committed to taking these into account. Senate approved the proposal by consensus.

ITEMS FROM THE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE –

UEC REPORT TO SENATE

- 40.1 Ruth Taylor, Vice-Principal (Education) drew Senate's attention to the routine report from the Education Committee and highlighted the items for approval in particular the amended Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Non-Academic). Ruth highlighted the strong focus the Committee had had on Aberdeen 2040 together with Assessment and Feedback as Institutional priorities. Ruth also drew Senate's attention to the beginning of the new approach to quality enhancement within the sector, noting that the documentation to be submitted to the Quality Assurance Agency Scotland (QAAS) was currently being finalised prior to submission to QAAS at the end of 2022, in preparation for the visit taking place in 2023. As part of this preparation a joint meeting of UEC and QAC had been scheduled to consider the documentation.
- 40.2 Senate confirmed its approval of the amended Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Non-Academic).

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS TRAVEL

- 41.1 Gary MacFarlane, Dean for Interdisciplinary Research and Impact, highlighted the importance of domestic and international business travel in underpinning many key activities across education, research and student recruitment. Given the importance of travel, the University has taken a fresh look at how these essential activities are conducted due to their environmental impact and the commitment to be Net Zero before 2040.
- 41.2 The Sustainable Business Travel Working Group was set up by the Sustainable Development Committee to lead the work. The Group undertook an extensive consultation process including an online survey, focus groups and a confidential mailbox for written submissions. Gary noted the Working Group Report and recommendations had already been considered by SMT and PNCC. The Group had proposed a set of guiding principles and a Travel Hierarchy which are presented to Senate ahead of wider communication to the University.
- 41.3 Gary encouraged members of Senate to promote the principles in their constituencies and to encourage colleagues to make use of the principles when considering travel on University business.
- 41.4 Gary highlighted the four principles established by the Group as being:

Guiding Principle 1

Informed choices about what travel is required, and the way in which it is undertaken, will be made within a framework which takes account of the importance of business travel, its environmental impact, and consideration of alternative ways of undertaking the activity.

Guiding Principle 2

Informed choices about business travel will be taken within the context of the Aberdeen 2040 strategy and our commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions before 2040. We will adopt a fair and transparent approach to monitoring our progress to meeting this commitment.

Guiding Principle 3

Our business travel procedures will be underpinned by a fair, transparent, inclusive and accessible process that takes account of the needs of the individual, teams and the University.

Guiding Principle 4

We will ensure that our approach and expectations in relation to sustainable business travel are communicated in an open and transparent way.

- 41.5 Gary noted that the Group had taken a balanced approach to recognise the need for business travel but also the need to reduce carbon emissions, taking account of the University's location and the associated travel challenges.
- 41.6 The Group had also sought to ensure parity in the approach taken to all categories and grades of staff.
- 41.7 The Principal noted the importance of the report as part of the University's commitment to sustainability and thanked the Group for their work in developing the set of proposals.
- 41.8 Matthew Collinson read a statement of behalf of Nir Oren, School of Natural & Computing Sciences who, while noting support for the proposals, had raised concerns with the apparent inflexibility of some, in particular the reliance on line managers and individuals to take decisions and the expectation that individuals would rationalise the need for travel; Nir encouraged the University to establish a carbon budget and establish a pathway for this to 2040; Nir had queried the origin of the six hour journey time specified in recommendation 19 and suggested it was purely arbitrary. Nir had expressed his support of the goals and noted the opportunity to become sector leaders in this area and suggested that the University might set more challenging targets.
- 41.9 Karl confirmed that Gary would pick these points up with Nir. He also encouraged others to engage with this significant change and to promulgate and discuss it, to ensure everyone buys into the Policy.

ANY OTHER ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

- 50.1 The Principal reminded members that noon on Monday 7 November was the deadline for volunteers for various Committees which include Senate elected members: Senate Business Committee, Honorary Degrees Committee, University Education Committee & Quality Assurance Committee.
- 50.2 Diane Skåtun, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition suggested the Senate Business Committee should reflect on the time available to Senate when setting the agenda to ensure important papers were afforded sufficient time for discussion.

- 50.3 Tom Escuti, School Convener for Law asked if it would be possible for new student members to receive an induction to Senate.
- 50.4 The Secretary confirmed that she had recently run four such sessions and would be happy to do a similar session for students. The materials from the previous sessions were also available on the Senate [website](#).

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH COMMITTEE REPORT TO SENATE

- 51.1 Senate noted the routine report from the University Research Committee.

QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE REPORT TO SENATE

- 52.1 Senate noted the routine report from the Quality Assurance Committee.

SENATE ELECTION

- 53.1 Senate noted the arrangements approved by the Senate Business Committee for the election of new Senate members.

SENATE ASSESSOR ELECTION RESULT

- 54.1 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.

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 Akwaaboa 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.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SENATUS ACADEMICUS

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 APRIL 2023

Present: Rasha Abu Eid, Adetayo Adeyemi, Waheed Afzal, Kaitlin Agius, Akosua Akwaboaa Akyem-Pepira, Julia Allan, Scott Allan, Joanne Anderson, Sumeet Aphale, Euan Bain, Simon Bains, Martin Barker, William Barlow, William Barras, John Barrow, Nigel Beacham, Daniel Berg, Siladitya Bhattacharya, Thomas Bodey, George Boyne, Alex Brasier, Isla Callander, Marion Campbell, Alessandra Cecolin, Delma Childers, Chris Collins, Matthew Collinson, David Cornwell, Irene Couzigou, Rebecca Crozier, Mirela Delibegovic, Chantal den Daas, Andrew Dilley, Pete Edwards, Marie-Luise Ehrenschwendtner, Karin Friedrich, Kate Gillies, Greg Gordon, Isla Graham, Ian Greener, Aravinda Meera Guntupall, Malcolm Harvey, Peter Henderson, Richard Hepworth-Young, Jonathan Hicks, Alison Jenkinson, Gareth Jones, Dragan Jovcic, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Lesley Lancaster, Karl Leydecker, Colin Lumsden, Catriona MacDonald, Alasdair MacKenzie, Michelle MacLeod, Andrew Alan MacPherson, Laura McCann, David McGloin, Nicola McIlraith, Andrew McKinnon, David McLernon, Pietro Marini, Sam Martin, Javier Martin-Torres, David Mercieca, Samantha Miller, Heather Morgan, David Muirhead, Thomas Muinzer, Mintu Nath, Graeme Nixon, Adelaja Israel Osofero, Graeme Paton, Ekaterina Pavlovskaja, Shantini Paranjothy, Bettina Platt, Amudha Poobalan, Tavis Potts, Tom Rist, Justin Rochford, Joost Rommers, Miles Rothoerl, Arash Sahraie, Thereza Raquel Sales de Aguiar, Karen Scott, Diane Skåtun, Benjamin Liviu Stefan, Mary Stephen, Fiona Stoddard, Ruth Taylor, Dawn Thompson, Steve Tucker, Neil Vargesson, Jennifer Walklate, Ilya Xypolia

Apologies: Lesley Anderson, Harminder Battu, Jason Bohan, Amanda Lee, Beth Lord, Gary MacFarlane, Nir Oren, Brice Rea, Charlaine Simpson, Alan Speight, Valerie Speirs, Lorna Stewart, Bert Timmermans, Adelyn Wilson, Ursula Witte, Haina Zhang

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- 75.1 The Principal opened the meeting, welcoming members of Senate to the meeting being held at Foresterhill.
- 75.2 The Secretary reminded members of procedures: there were no planned fire alarms; the meeting would be recorded; members present in the room would be provided with a handheld microphone if they indicated that they wished to speak; members were asked to state their name before contributing to discussion. Members joining by Teams were asked 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 either in the room or using Forms within the chat for those on Teams.
- 75.3 The Principal advised Senate that the presentation on the Digital Strategy (agenda item 9) would be deferred until the June meeting. He advised Senate that he would be leaving the meeting following the break and that Ruth Taylor, Vice-Principal (Education) would chair the meeting for the workload discussions on his behalf.
- 75.4 Ilya Xypolia, Senate Assessor, requested that item ten on the agenda (Decision Time Rollout the Senate) be raised from Routine Business to be for Discussion as there were concerns over laptop

access and voting processes. The Secretary withdrew the paper from the agenda for consideration at a future meeting.

- 75.5 Tom Rist, School of Language, Literature, Music & Visual Culture noted that the room did not provide facilities to plug in computers and asked that this is taken into consideration for selection of future venues.
- 75.5 Subject to the amendments noted, members of the Senate approved the agenda and the meeting proceeded.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 76.1 Members of the Senate approved the minutes of 8 February 2022

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

- 77.1 in addition to matters detailed in his written report on developments within the sector, the Principal highlighted specifically, the current promising position with international PGT acceptances for September 2023 which were approximately 30% ahead of the equivalent position in 2022. He further highlighted that, notwithstanding this positive situation, the combined effects of the cost of living increases and the reduction in SFC funding arising from the REF results, would leave the University with an expected £12 Million gap to fill with extra revenue for the new academic year. He noted that the general funding situation was not unique to Aberdeen and was common across the sector. The Principal commented that the recent change in First Minister might result in a more favourable approach to higher education funding than previously, and certainly provided for the opportunity to seek a change in approach. He also confirmed that extra University investment in research, previously outlined to Senate, was locked into next year's budget and this would not change.
- 77.2 Karin Friedrich, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy & Art History queried, in relation to section 5.2, whether the notion of 'Returnerships' offered a possible source of income from opening-up individual courses to make them available to the general public. Some courses would provide opportunities for skills development. Ruth Taylor, Vice Principal (Education) confirmed that she expected there to be opportunities, and that work around skills development was already underway.

REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COURT

- 78.1 Diane Skatun, on behalf of the Senate Assessors, provided an update on the March 2023 meeting of the University Court. In addition to the written report included in the Senate papers, Diane recorded her thanks to the AUSA members of Senate for their presentation to Court. She also noted the appreciation of Foresterhill based staff for the opportunity to host a meeting of Senate. She highlighted that Court were continuing to take a particular interest in the issues which had surrounded student recruitment previously, and the need to support financial planning. She noted that Court continued to be supportive of supporting staff to ensure academic workloads permitted staff to undertake high quality teaching and research. She highlighted that there had been discussion at Court around the Decolonising the Curriculum

project and its impact on workloads, and Senate's support of the initiative had been confirmed to Court.

STRUCTURE OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2024 AND BEYOND

- 79.1 Ruth Taylor, Vice-Principal (Education) gave a brief presentation (slides available from the [website](#)) of the main discussions and conclusions contained in the report looking at options for restructuring the academic year. Ruth highlighted, that in view of feedback received to date, that the three-term principle had been adjusted to have the teaching periods named Term One, Term Two and The Summer Teaching Period for areas where teaching and assessment take place. She noted the proposal offered four options and that the intention of the discussion at Senate was to seek feedback and to return to the next meeting of Senate, via all the various committees, with a single proposal. Ruth highlighted that, of the four options detailed in the paper options one and two were preferred to options three and four: Option one aligns with all desired principles underlying the academic year, as well as permitting a later start date, in contrast to option two, which does not allow for optimal recruitment.
- 79.2 A wide ranging discussion followed with contributions from across the University, the main tenets of which included:
- By focusing on the start date for the academic year, there was a risk that students would be disadvantaged, in terms of employment opportunities, by the consequent later end date;
 - Clarification was sought and provided on the impact on employment for international students subject to visa constraints;
 - Concern about the three-term structure was noted from the humanities and social sciences due to conflicts with the research agenda, and it was agreed that the paper would be considered by the Research Committee;
 - It was clarified that the adjustments made to the structure, during discussions since the paper was made available to Senate, referred to the name of Term Three being changed to Summer Teaching Period and that the intention was to produce some consistency in this teaching period for programmes making use of it for in-person teaching;
 - There was discussion of various naming conventions with Term, Semester and Trimester being suggested as possibilities;
 - The need for a break between cohorts was highlighted with teaching through the summer there needed to be some sort of break before the new cohort starts;
 - Overwhelming support from the student body for exams remaining prior to the Winter break was noted;
- 79.3 In drawing discussions to a conclusion, the Principal noted it had not been possible to hear from everyone who wished to contribute and confirmed that contributions should be emailed to Ruth following the meeting.
- 79.4 The Principal guaranteed that the paper would be considered by the Research Committee and that workload issues would be addressed in the next phase of the paper's consideration and reflected in the minutes. Karin Friedrich accepted this formal guarantee and agreed that bringing the submitted motion forward would not be required.

[Clerk's Note: this minute summarises the discussion, pending reflection from contributors on specific comments]

ITEMS FROM THE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH COMMITTEE

RESEARCH CULTURE

- 80.1 Andrew Dilley, Dean for Academic Partnerships & Research Governance, gave a brief presentation (slides available from the [website](#)) updating Senate on work being undertaken around Research Culture, much of which is threaded through a number of other activities. In particular, he highlighted to Senate that the University was one of several institutions which had been invited to bid for up to £1M from the Wellcome Trust for proposals for projects that address research culture. In terms of Aberdeen, this is about developing something distinctive to the University which also offers something distinctive back to the sector. The University had established a cross university working group to develop a bid around advancing inclusive, interdisciplinary research. He asked Senate for their input to help identify some of the barriers to developing interdisciplinary research.
- 80.2 Jen Walklate, School of Social Science commented that as someone working in an interdisciplinary subject, from a department not in a single disciplinary area, this was a particularly welcome project. She commented specifically that it would enable more interdisciplinary communication across departments within the University as a whole. She noted that one of the current best ways for this to take place was through the Museums and Special Collections Forum. She also noted that interdisciplinary research often does not receive appropriate recognition in exercises such as the REF stocktake.
- 80.3 Alessandra Cecolin, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History noted that working in her field of the Middle East she shared some of the concerns expressed about expressing interdisciplinary research in publications, particularly as some overseas journals do not rate as highly as others, leading to individuals having to make difficult decisions regarding where to submit for best REF return.
- 80.4 Karin Friedrich, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy & Art History sought clarification that both the Research Culture paper and the REF stocktake paper were referring to the same Wellcome Trust bidding round. Andrew confirmed was the case. That being so, Karin queried whether the bid would only support the specialist area of History of Medicine or be supportive of research culture more generally.
- 80.5 Ilia Xpolia, School of Social Science noted that there was only one session planned for gathering inputs to support the bid and expressed the view that this was not sufficient time for such as exercise.
- 80.6 Responding, Andrew confirmed that Lisa Collins from Special Collections and Archives was one of the individuals involved already; he further confirmed that the references to Wellcome in the two papers did refer to the same bid and the bid was not focussing solely on the History of Medicine; he confirmed the Group were aware already of the difficulties encountered in terms of REF for interdisciplinary research and international publications. He concurred that the single session might be an issue for those unable to attend at the scheduled time and encouraged any members in that position to get in touch with the co-ordinator, Hazel Hay. He noted that if there was a strong need for a further evidence-gathering session, this could probably be arranged bearing in mind the timeline constraints.

REF STOCKTAKE AND UPDATE

- 81.1 Marion Campbell, Vice-Principal (Research) provided summary details about the conduct of the REF Stocktake and also about what is known about the next REF exercise, expected to take place in 2028 (slides available from the [website](#)). The first formal information is expected to be received during the summer. Marion detailed that at this stage the expected assessment

window is 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2027; outputs are expected to be from a minimum of one to a maximum of five. The main message learned from REF2021 has been that, in order to generate maximum funding, the focus should be on increasing the proportion of publications of the highest quality and impact rather than volume.

- 81.2 Marion thanked everyone who had participated in the stocktake exercise. The outcome of this exercise, based on one output and scoring mechanisms from REF2021, indicated that approximately 80% of output had an indicative score of 3* or above, with approximately 20% at 4*. The exercise had been useful in helping to identify areas for focus in the future and the need for continued and active support for research going forward. She noted the delaying impact that covid had had on a lot of research output. Marion highlighted that Court had now approved a package to support investment in research worth up to £11M over the next three years. The Action Plan agreed with Court includes a competitive programme of Research Leave for up to 100 academics each year; a visiting scholar scheme; support for developing impact case studies and also an Impact Support Officer within Research & Innovation; up to 100 centrally supported awards for conference attendance; enhanced administrative support for REF and also calibration and impact support training. This support is provided in addition to the work already underway seeking to support a research environment which provides time, resources and the culture to support quality outputs.
- 81.3 Marion gave details of the research leave scheme, due to be launched shortly, intended to support leave from the second half-session of 2023/24. The scheme would run biennially commencing in the late spring.
- 81.4 Karen Scott, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition queried the difference between the Research Leave scheme and the Pump-Prime Funds, noting the Pump-Prime Funds could also be key for a lot of people.
- 81.5 Katie Gillies, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition asked whether the Research Leave Scheme could also be used to 'buy-out' clinical academics from NHS responsibilities? She also noted that many of the research projects, which will form the basis of the outputs for the next REF, have already been funded and she queried how the production of quality outputs from these would be supported?
- 81.6 Iliia Xypolia, School of Social Science, asked for a comparison of the current standing, of 80% 3* and 20% 4* outputs, with the similar point in the previous cycle.
- 81.7 Chantal den Daas, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition, asked how, given that staff are already covering for colleagues who have left and are not being replaced due to the recruitment freeze, will the programme of research leave operate in understaffed groups? Will staff members in these areas be less likely to be awarded research leave as it would create difficulties in covering teaching?
- 81.8 Justin Rochford, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition, queried what the actual start-times for the research leave, associated with the autumn and spring application rounds, would be?
- 81.9 Jen Walklate, School of Social Science, asked how the proposals would support everyone working in interdisciplinary areas?
- 81.10 Karin Friedrich, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy & Art History queried how long it was anticipated that the visiting professorships would be for? Marion indicated that two per school per year was planned but no indication was given as to how long individuals would stay.
- 81.11 Euan Bain, School of Engineering, noted the intention to backfill a significant proportion of the Institution's teaching staff and queried how the quality of the backfill was going to be maintained so as not to impact on the outstanding and sector leading teaching?

- 81.12 An elected member from the Business School, asked how it would be guaranteed that different people would benefit from sabbaticals? There is an impression that it is the same group usually benefit from sabbaticals. She also queried what the institution was doing to support competitiveness with other Scottish Universities in terms of support for maximising research impact evaluation; time allowed for this at Aberdeen is nothing close to that allocated elsewhere.
- 81.13 Diane Skatun, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition, noted that it had been acknowledged that some staff had not managed to get a publication, and the possible reasons for that. She queried whether the exercise had any performance management aspect to it in identifying individuals in need of support, or whether the exercise was purely taking stock recognising that many quality publications are not achieved until late on in the REF period?
- 81.14 Responding to the questions; Marion highlighted that Pump-Prime funds (81.4 above) were definitely available for upgrading a 3* to a 4* publication if funding were needed to support, for example, an additional piece of research. She indicated that queries in this context should be directed to Liz Rattray, Marlis Barraclough and herself; in the context of the query regarding buyout of clinical NHS staff (81.5) Marion and the Siladitya Bhattacharya (Head of School, MMSN) confirmed that although they did not know the answer to this they would find out, however it was noted that the issue in the NHS currently is capacity and that money on its own would not be sufficient; in terms of how support would be given to ensure outputs are 4* prior to publication, Marion noted that this can only be achieved through an open, collegiate research culture which encourages authors to seek comment from peers, internally and externally. The achievement of this open culture is something she discussed regularly with Heads of School; in terms of the comparison with 2018 (81.6) Marion noted that exactly comparable data for 2018 was not available, however that were more staff at this point with no papers than there were in 2018 – the Principal asked that the heavily caveated comparison data be made available for members; in the context of the issue raised around capacity (81.7), Marion confirmed that the research leave proposal expects that Teaching Fellow backfill is costed into the proposal and, linking to the quality query (81.11), that it would be for Schools to ensure that the backfill appointed was appropriate to the courses and programmes involved; responding on the expected timelines (81.8) Marion noted that the full paperwork was to be considered by SMT imminently, but the indicative timings for the current round would be for applications submitted by mid-June, decisions would be back to schools by the end of July for research leave during second half-session 2023/24, the system is intended to operate a year ahead; Marion confirmed that there was no fixed term in mind for visiting professors (81.10), but the model in mind was similar to the Fulbright model of one or two months for discussions; Marion noted that the data indicated that some groups were further behind than others (81.12) and that applications would be sought from these groups in particular; the issue of interdisciplinarity in REF (81.9) is acknowledged as a sector wide issue and is core to discussions at the sector level to ensure that it is addressed in the next REF. Marion undertook to speak to those whom she had not had time to answer during the break, but quickly noted the stocktake exercise had been intended to be supportive (81.13).
- 81.15 In closing the discussion, the Principal highlighted the importance of the research agenda in defining the institution as research-intensive and noted that the topic would be returning to Senate regularly in the future.

Karl Leydecker, Senior Vice-Principal chaired this section of the meeting.

ITEMS FROM THE QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE
EXTERNAL EXAMINING ACADEMIC REVIEW – RECOMMENDATIONS

- 82.1 Steve Tucker, Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement, presented a summary of work undertaken by a task and finish group which had been set up to review Institutional External Examining processes. These fell into four broad categories: the roles and responsibilities of External Examiners; the training and induction of External Examiners; External Examiner fees and expenses; and communication with External Examiners. Work had included significant research around practises across the Institution, including a questionnaire. The recommendations of the Group together with revised documentation were included in the paper for Senate's approval. In general, recommendations centred around improving and maintaining consistency, transparency and sharing of practice across the Institution. He thanked the Group, chaired by Jason Bohan, for their work on the subject.
- 82.2 Jen Walklate, School of Social Science, in connection with the third bullet point in section 7.3 of the paper queried the notion of a flat-fee and noted that this might prove problematic where a set proportion of papers had to be reviewed for particularly large courses. Steve asked Gillian Mackintosh, Director of Academic Services & Online Education to respond. Gillian noted that the flat-fee model is adopted quite commonly across the sector and recent information shared across the Academic Registrars' Council on the subject would be used to inform the detail for implementation.
- 82.3 Senate approved these recommendations by consensus.

RESOLUTION FOR CHANGES TO VARIOUS DEGREES

- 83.1 Steve outlined the changes being introduced in the draft Resolution to amend degree regulations. The changes fell into four broad categories: replacing Summer School for Access with its new title Access Higher Education; the establishment of a timeline for eligibility to attend an in-person graduation ceremony of one-year following completion of studies; changes required as a result of changes to the articulation agreement with South China Normal University (SCNU) arising as a result of changes required by the Chinese Service Centre for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE) for the agreement to become a 2 plus 2.5 model to comply with the requirement that students complete at least two thirds of study in Aberdeen; the creation of a Master of Business (MBus) degree which will be an undergraduate degree, similar to the MA but with a requirement that one year is spent abroad.
- 83.2 Senate approved these recommendations by consensus.

CODE OF PRACTICE ON STUDENT DISCIPLINE (ACADEMIC)

- 84.1 Steve outlined the changes being introduced in the draft Resolution to amend the Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic), intended to address recent developments in Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools such as Chat GPT to ensure that unacknowledged use of AI tools is captured in the definition of plagiarism.
- 84.2 Richard Hepworth-Young, School of Natural & Computing Sciences, queried paragraph 4.2.1 which referred to Chat GPT having 'acquired' but noted that fundamentally AI 'understands' nothing. Steve responded to confirm the language used would be tidied up.
- 84.3 Karin Friedrich, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy & Art History questioned how such tools could be included in the definition of plagiarism when, as was noted, their use was not detectable? In reply, Steve noted that significant work was ongoing with various tools and pilots which may be able to detect it. Guidelines are available on ways of spotting AI authored work

within the Institution and the University is participating actively in sector-wide discussions in the area and Senate would be kept apprised as the situation develops.

- 84.4 Dragan Jovicic, School of Engineering welcomed the definition, but suggested removing 'unacknowledged' as it is authors that are normally 'acknowledged'. As a robot, AI cannot be acknowledged in this way and hence the word should be removed. Kirsty Kiezebrink, Dean for Educational Innovation, explained that 'unacknowledged' had been used as guidance is due to be published on how to acknowledge use of such tools, to confirm this should be undertaken in the same way as referencing, for example, a blog post which later disappears. The change being proposed aligns with both the sector and institutional guidance on how such sources should be acknowledged. She noted that Libraries are providing further guidance on how use of the tools should be referenced. She further noted that AI tools themselves may be plagiarising and in these instances the onus is on the student to reference the original source correctly.
- 84.5 Greg Gordon, School of Law noted a similar point to that of Dragan. Kirsty reiterated that the University Guidance states explicitly how use of the tool should be referenced, with a set of words provided to indicate the tool used and identify what was done with the information generated. She confirmed that the proposed change needed to read alongside the Guidance provided on the webpage. Acknowledgment of use of the tool across the sector, is being developed using guidance developed by Monash University.
- 84.6 Nicola McIlraith, School of Education Convener, commented on an article on the BBC highlighting where the technology had given false information and concluded that use of the technology should be discouraged as it does not encourage critical thinking. Steve noted that AI seemed likely to be a tool which would persist and therefore ways to incorporate it into teaching, learning and research were required, rather than seeking to outlaw its use which seemed likely to be an impossible task. Kirsty noted that the tools do produce false information in addition to producing true information making it important that the University engages with the tools to enable staff and students to use them appropriately and effectively.
- 84.7 in drawing discussion to a conclusion, Karl noted that this was clearly an area for significant debate but noted continuing discussions did not invalidate consideration of the changes being proposed. Senate confirmed by consensus that they were content with this view and approved the changes.

Ruth Taylor, Vice-Principal (Education) chaired this section of the meeting.

**PRESENTATION: STAFF SURVEY RESULTS AND ACADEMIC WORKLOADS:
IDENTIFYING THE ISSUES AND PLANNING ACTIONS.**

- 85.1 Karl Leydecker, Senior Vice-Principal gave a brief presentation (slides available from the [website](#)) updating Senate on the workload issues both positive and negative highlighted by the staff survey and the actions identified to address them. Karl noted that the Staff Survey results had been presented to staff by Heads of School and Directors and Schools and Directorates were developing and implementing plans to address specific feedback. Both SMT and UMG had reflected on the results with various University Committees and Groups undertaking in-depth analysis of various areas of specific relevance. In addition, a new University level Staff Experience Committee was being established, which Karl would chair, to oversee the Staff Survey follow up. Karl highlighted the response from 91% of academic staff that they frequently worked more than their contracted hours as being the most significant finding from the survey. Although similar problems were identified for professional services staff, the problem was

significantly more widespread among academic staff. In response to the survey the Workload Review Group had met to review the results in detail and an Academic Workload Engagement Exercise has been launched, details of which had been sent to all staff. The Group would be seeking to identify the key factors impacting on workload and how they could be overcome as well as the key system/process barriers being faced. Karl noted the relationship between academic workloads and those of professional services staff and the importance of addressing professional service workloads too in order to avoid shifting the pressures from one part of the University to another. Karl highlighted the need to do things differently as there is insufficient funding within the sector, and consequently in the University, to appoint enough staff to carry out current activities and continue to grow.

- 85.2 Richard Hepworth-Young, School of Natural & Computing Sciences, observed that the underlying assumptions seemed to be that we could continue doing what we are despite the funding situation and raised the possibility that maybe we were trying to do too much and rather than keep trying to make things more efficient whether we should be acknowledging that there are some things we just can't do? Karl agreed that this is exactly the approach we should be taking moving forwards.
- 85.3 Karin Friedrich, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy & Art History noted that the issue of over assessment had been identified previously, as well as teaching too many courses. She highlighted that one and a half years to change course assessments was too slow and processes were not agile enough and hampered changes to processes. Karl confirmed that this sort of issue is exactly what the process is seeking to identify and gather together information on.
- 85.4 Euan Bain, School of Engineering commented, in response to Karin's point, that currently we are able to respond very quickly to requests for assessment changes and it was not the case that these take a year and a half. For example, changes to assessment for first half-session of next academic year just needed to be submitted by the end of June this year. Ruth confirmed, as Vice-Principal (Education), that Euan was entirely correct in terms of changes to assessment.
- 85.5 Alessandra Cecolin, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy & Art History noted that the email exchanges required as part of the monitoring system were particularly time consuming and that some sort of automatic system for reinstatement would seriously improve things.
- 85.7 Karen Scott, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition noted that certain tasks are undertaken by academics very infrequently, resulting in them being particularly time consuming whereas, someone using a system more frequently would undertake the same task much more quickly. As an example, she highlighted the recruitment systems. Karl noted that this was an aspect which had been heard many times across different systems; those staff using a system regularly were able to do so much more quickly when compared with infrequent users. And this was something which would be considered.
- 85.8 Iliia Xypolia, School of Social Science, queried whether TRAC data was taken into consideration, and also noted that there had to be an element of managing expectations as part of the exercise. She noted the importance of defining who should be undertaking specific tasks and that this would be particularly important with the move to a 35-hour working week pattern. In welcoming serious discussions about the workload issues highlighted by the Staff survey she added that there were other concerning figures, such as around bullying and harassment, and she asked what was planned to address these?
- 85.9 Euan Bain, School of Engineering noted that the monitoring system had been discussed extensively in other arenas and highlighted that the legacy systems in use for this are not fit for purpose and permit students to be missed. Due to the widespread impact of the system, it has to be a high priority for action.

- 85.10 Jen Walklate, School of Social Science, concurred with the views of Euan entirely and in addition stated that it isn't just a system problem but also a function of processes and procedures. She noted there were also issues with the Worktribe ethics system resulting in projects being sent to the wrong ethics committees and substantial delays occurring in anthropology and other subject areas.
- 85.11 Responding to the points made, Karl confirmed that the focus on workload did not mean that the other issues identified in the Staff Survey would be ignored and that they would be looked at under the auspices of the Staff Experience Committee, in addition to Schools and Directorates. Karl noted that TRAC data is not gathered for the purposes of assessing individual workloads, it is gathered for part of the return required for the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and discussions are underway looking at whether this could be replaced with data from the workload model. He noted this was the intended direction of travel but that a significant amount of work would be required before this could be achieved. Karl noted that the issues identified in this Senate discussion were exactly the sorts of things which need to be raised and sorted out, and encouraged members to feed into the process either through the face to face sessions or via the email address.

MOTION ON CONSIDERATION OF WORKLOAD IN SENATE PAPERS

- 86.1 Richard Hepworth-Young introduced the motion calling for the inclusion of a specific section in papers for Senate to identify associated workload specifically. The intention behind the motion was to ensure that in approving any proposal Senate was fully aware of any explicit workload implications.
- 86.2 Kirsty Kiezebrink, Dean for Educational Innovation, noted that in the context of the motion's call for papers to include an estimated number of hours of work associated with proposals was quite a complicated task, and queried whether guidance should be made available to assist with this?
- 86.3 Martin Barker, School of Biological Sciences noted that the motion seemed quite logical and queried why it hadn't been done previously.
- 86.4 Karl Leydecker, Senior Vice-Principal, noted that that the proposal seemed entirely appropriate but queried what the workload associated with implementing the proposal would be, and also suggested that it did not align with plans for future workload measurement. He noted the intention was to move away from measuring workload down to the last hour and suggested that nothing would be added to proposals by paper authors trying to calculate precise workload requirements leading to discussions at Senate becoming lengthy and complex. His preference would be for papers to highlight possible workload implications, as Ruth's earlier paper had, rather than trying to exactly quantify time implications.
- 86.5 Chris Collins, School of Language, Literature, Music & Visual Culture suggested the proposal was only half of a possible solution but he suggested taking the approach might lead to Senate voting on proposals on the basis of the time something would take rather than whether it was an important thing to do. The motion ignored consideration of what could be done differently or stopped entirely to accommodate it.
- 86.6 Neil Vargesson, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition agreed with Chris and noted that the intention of the motion had been to recognise that papers had a workload aspect and that the approach taken in the Academic Year paper was really what Senate was seeking. Papers need to account of the other things staff need to do.
- 86.7 Diane Skatun, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition noted the intention was to recognise that most papers at Senate add to workload rather than decrease it. She noted that the recent proposal for extending personal tutoring to PGT students would have benefitted from

detailed consideration of the number of hours involved. She highlighted that it was only when a colleague in the Business School provided an estimate of the number of hours involved, that minds were focussed on exactly what would be involved. She suggested that the authors of some papers put forward to Senate do so without thinking of the actual work involved with the proposal and this is why an indication of hours involved was included in the motion.

86.8 Mirela Delibegovic, Dean for Industrial Engagement in Research & Knowledge Transfer commented that including an estimate of hours would be a very personal estimate. She noted that a lot of things being done to improve culture for early career researchers, for example, are queried in terms of how much they will add to workload and the response has to be, the amount of time put in, is a personal choice. In this context Mirela's personal opinion would be that including prescriptive indications in proposals would not be a helpful thing to do.

86.9 Summing up, Ruth suggested that there was general support for the inclusion of an indication of workload implications in papers for Senate. She suggested to the motion proposers that in light of the discussions just had, workload implications should be included in papers but not in terms of hours. Ruth suggested that this approach would allow discussion of the real issues associated with proposals and include consideration of any workload issues. Ruth suggested an amendment to the motion to that effect and queried whether this would be acceptable. As proposer of the motion, Richard Hepworth-Young confirmed he was content for this suggestion to be tried.

(Clerk's note: an amended version of the motion was supplied subsequent to the meeting and was filed with the papers as a replacement SEN22:55)

86.10 Ruth confirmed that this would be taken forward and the meeting closed.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SENATUS ACADEMICUS

MINUTES OF THE ADDITIONAL MEETING HELD ON 24 MAY 2023

Present: Adetayo Adeyemi Waheed Afzal, Kaitlin Agius, Akosua Akwaboaa Akyem-Pepra, Sumeet Aphale, Euan Bain, Simon Bains, William Barlow, William Barras, Harminder Battu, Nigel Beacham, Siladitya Bhattacharya, Jason Bohan, George Boyne, Alex Brasier, Isla Callander, Marion Campbell, Alessandra Cecolin, Delma Childers, Chris Collins, Matthew Collinson, David Cornwell, Rebecca Crozier, Irene Couzigou, Chantal den Daas, Andrew Dilley, Lauren Dorward, Pete Edwards, Marie-Luise Ehrenschwendtner, Greg Gordon, Isla Graham, Ian Greener, Malcolm Harvey, Peter Henderson, Richard Hepworth-Young, Jonathan Hicks, William Jackson, Gareth Jones, Dragan Jovicic, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Julia Kotzur, Lesley Lancaster, Karl Leydecker, Beth Lord, Catriona MacDonald, Gary MacFarlane, Michelle MacLeod, Alan MacPherson, Ben Marsden, Kathryn Martin, Javier Martin-Torres, Nicola McIlraith, David McGloin, David McLernon, Heather Morgan, Thomas Muinzer, David Muirhead, Mintu Nath, Sam Newington, Graeme Paton, Ekaterina Pavlovskaja, Bettina Platt, Amudha Poobalan, Tavis Potts, Brice Rea, Joost Rommers, Joachim Schaper, Hossa Skandary-MacPherson, Ann-Michelle Slater, Tracey Slaven, Alan Speight, Mary Stephen, Lorna Stewart, Fiona Stoddard, Ruth Taylor, Bert Timmermans, Steve Tucker, Neil Vargesson, Sai SS Viswanathan, Jennifer Walklate, Adelyn Wilson, Ursula Witte, Ilia Xypolia.

Apologies: Rasha Abu Eid, Julia Allan, Scott Allan, Lesley Anderson, Joanne Anderson, Martin Barker, Daniel Berg, Karin Friedrich, Aravinda Meera Guntupall, Alison Jenkinson, Amanda Lee, Colin Lumsden, Alasdair MacKenzie, Sam Martin, Andrew McKinnon, Pietro Marini, Samantha Miller, Graeme Nixon, Colin North, Adelaja Shantini Paranjothy, Nir Oren, Tom Rist, Justin Rochford, Thereza Raquel Sales de Aguiar, Karen Scott, Charlaine Simpson, Diane Skåtun, Valerie Speirs, Dawn Thompson, Haina Zhang.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- 87.1 The Principal opened the meeting, welcoming members of Senate to the additional meeting to consider proposals aimed at mitigating the impact of the marking and assessment boycott on the relatively small percentage of students who would be affected by it. He noted that these students are being treated unfavourably by the marking and assessment boycott. He acknowledged the legal right of union members to engage in industrial action in whatever form they deem to be most appropriate.
- 87.2 Senate approved the single item agenda and the meeting proceeded.

INTRODUCTION BY THE PRINCIPAL

- 88.1 The Principal noted that there were several reasons why the sector more widely, and the University, found themselves in the current predicament. Some of these reasons were long-term and others more recent.
- 88.2 The long-term situation has arisen from the structural underfunding of the sector and the need to find money to subsidise research; the need to cross-subsidise undergraduate education with

the revenue per undergraduate student having been frozen for around 13 years. He noted that it was hardly surprising that the sector finds itself under financial challenge.

- 88.3 The Principal proposed a *position*, that he hoped Senate would feel able to endorse, that Senate calls on the UK and Scottish Governments to provide sustainable funding for Higher Education so that the sector is more easily able to address the cost-of-living pressures being faced by colleagues. Senate confirmed this was a position it felt comfortable endorsing.
- 88.4 The Principal noted that, in addition to the long-term pressures, the marking and assessment boycott had been determined by members of the University and Colleges Union (UCU) as the appropriate action to be pursued at the current point. Unfortunately, the terms of reference which were agreed at ACAS between the national union negotiators, the five sector trade unions and UCEA on behalf of universities, cannot currently be taken forward. This is work on pay gaps, precarity, workload pressures and the pay spine. The Principal noted his deep regret that this work was not able to be taken forward at the current time. In addition, he outlined a further position that he was seeking support for: that all relevant parties, including UCEA and UCU, return to national negotiations on precarity and pay gaps, workload pressures and the pay spine.
- 88.5 Jo Hicks, School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture noted that the motion he had given notice of called for pay also to be included in the list and suggested that this be added to the Principal's position. The Principal noted his wish to come to the motion as a separate item, and so Senate confirmed its support for the position suggested on work on pay gaps, precarity, workload pressures and the pay spine.

MARKING AND ASSESSMENT BOYCOTT ADDITIONAL MEASURES TO ENABLE GRADUATION

- 89.1 Ruth Taylor, Vice-Principal (Education) indicated she would introduce the paper from Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) and that the details would be handled by Steve Tucker, Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement and Chair of QAC.
- 89.2 Ruth highlighted that the aim of developing the exceptional additional measures for the few students likely to be affected by the marking and assessment boycott (MAB) was to ensure that as few students as possible were affected negatively by the MAB in terms of their degree classification, their future employability, and their overall well-being. Ruth noted that the paper described how the proposed exceptional additional measures would maintain academic standards and highlighted that School meetings were taking place to determine, as far as possible, the impact of the MAB on individual students. These meetings had begun. The dates listed in the paper were those internal dates by which Schools require all their marking to be concluded. Ruth noted that, if approved, the additional measures needed to be in place prior to most of the Examiners' Meetings taking place, with particular reference to the large number of joint degree programmes in existence.
- 89.3 Steve Tucker, Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement and Chair of the QAC outlined the minor policy amendments proposed to offer the award of a classified degree in time for graduation. Steve noted that the measures were discussed positively at a meeting of the QAC on 18 May at which staff and students had approved the proposals for further consideration by Senate.
- 89.4 Steve highlighted the first recommendation to relax exceptionally the requirements for double marking, with moderation continuing; the second recommendation related to extending the use of compensatory credit to cover completed assessments missing marks rather than just borderline fails; the third was a return to the 70% rule (rather than 75%) used as part of the Comprehensive Measures processes where an overall mark could be awarded for achieving 70% of assessment along with meeting the intended learning outcomes for a course. He noted the intention that these measures would go some way towards permitting marks to be returned for the small number of students impacted by the MAB.

- 89.5 Before beginning discussions of the proposals the Principal reminded Senate of its responsibilities including the requirement for 'ensuring that appropriate and effective arrangements are in place for student support (academic and non-academic)' and commented that these proposals are aimed at doing exactly that for students who are at risk of suffering disadvantage as a consequence of the MAB.
- 89.6 Thomas Muinzer, School of Law queried the context of compensatory credit being based on General Regulation 21 (a) with the paper detailing that 21(a) 'outlines where the award of compensatory credit may be used where a student has achieved at least 90 credits at level 4, has completed the assessment but has achieved a marginal fail grade of E1 to E3 inclusive, they shall be awarded the same amount of unnamed specific credit, not exceeding 30 credit points in total, at level 1.' Thomas queried the extent to which the regulation was relevant as it refers to awarded grades rather than missing grades.
- 89.7 In response, Ruth Taylor confirmed that the regulation did deal with different circumstances, the current regulations deal with students who have failed assessments while the proposal would apply to students who have submitted assessments, but the mark is not available. It is anticipated that most of these students would go on to pass the assessment. This would be a further opportunity to support those students whose work had not been marked by applying the same sort of approach as is used when awarding compensatory credit to other students.
- 89.8 Thomas confirmed that while this response answered the query, he was not clear exactly how the proposed provision maps on to the existing regulations but acknowledged that a degree of flexibility was being provided.
- 89.9 Ruth confirmed that it was the principle behind the existing regulations that was being used to award compensatory credit and that there was nowhere else in the regulations that offered a suitable framework. It was acknowledged that the existing regulations were for borderline fails but it was expected that most students impacted by the MAB in this way would in fact have passed the assessment.
- 89.10 Akua Agyeman, Vice-President for Education, AUSA, queried the timelines given for the return of marks and noted that some international PGT students would have less than a month to apply for post-study visas. She questioned whether these students would have the necessary confirmation that they had completed their studies and whether the Home Office would accept this and permit them to progress to the next stage of the visa process. She asked what arrangements were being made for students who found themselves in this category.
- 89.11 Responding, Ruth confirmed that the additional measures do not impact on the situation outlined by Akua for international students differently from what would normally be in place for students reaching graduation. The key factor for students in this category was that work was marked and, where it was not, the measures would support their situation. Ruth noted, additionally, that she had been in contact with Sai, the Vice-President for Welfare, and that they would be discussing further matters relating to resits more generally.
- 89.12 Sai Viswanathan, Vice-President for Welfare, AUSA noted that while students were generally supportive of the proposed measures, they would still welcome separate guidance targeted specifically at international students who may have visa issues because of the MAB.
- 89.13 Ruth indicated that she would be happy to have further discussions but reiterated that the additional measures should not impact negatively on international students and that perhaps what is needed, as part of future work, is a more general discussion about how resits are handled for international students.
- 89.14 Alessandra Cecolin, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History, noted that a colleague from the School had phoned the Scottish Government and the Home Office and that neither had been able to confirm whether an unclassified degree, or one that was not fully marked following the proposed procedures, would qualify under visa requirements. The Citizens' Advice Bureau had then been consulted and they had confirmed that it was the University's duty to detail how these degrees would meet international visa requirements and

where this requirement was not met there was an online form to enable students to complain. Alessandra asked how the University was going to ensure that these degrees qualified? She also noted issues with accrediting bodies and cited the example of the Institute for Physics who would not accept these degrees. She noted that this was a further issue for all students, not just international students, particularly those intending to pursue postgraduate qualifications.

- 89.15 Ruth confirmed that one of the aims of the additional measures paper was to enable as many students as possible to graduate with their degrees, but it was acknowledged that there may be professional or statutory body requirements which may make that not possible with the additional measures. The way to address the issues raised by Alessandra is for all students' work to be marked and taken through Examiners' Meetings.
- 89.16 The Principal noted that, even with the additional measures, not all students would be protected from disadvantage.
- 89.17 Alex Brasier, School of Geosciences, raised questions regarding wording on pages 15 and 16 of the paper. He queried whether, in the context of appeals (pg15) where it was detailed that, for students appealing, GPA should be reviewed and that degree classification may be adjusted upward, stay the same or adjusted downwards but elsewhere in the document it was stated that degree class may only be changed in an upward direction. In addition, he asked that assurance be provided that current third year students would not be disadvantaged by their final GPA and degree class being pulled down as a result of the boycott. Alex further noted that on page 16 of the document where progression from programme year two to three is referred to as requiring 210 credits it should make it clear that this was the requirement for non-honours progression and not into an honours programme which requires 240 credits. He also sought clarity on the maximum credit shortfall which would be permitted for progression. He highlighted an example where a student could be waiting for marks for resits from courses failed last year and, together with fails from this year, might find themselves short of seven 15 credit courses and going in to level three might find themselves effectively doing levels two and three side by side. Hence, he noted that guidance from the Student Progression Committee should be available.
- 89.18 In response, to the query concerning appeals Ruth Taylor noted that a student who chose to appeal needed to be aware that a mark may go up or down and she would check and ensure that the document was consistent in this respect. She would also ensure wording was consistent around progression between years. Steve Tucker confirmed that a meeting of the Students' Progress Committee was being convened very shortly to discuss matters relating to progression, resits and the thresholds required.
- 89.19 Before confirming he was content with the responses, Alex noted that a student appealing needs to be able to demonstrate that they have been disadvantaged however if their mark goes down as a result of the appeal, how is it possible to argue they have been disadvantaged at the outset of the appeal. He queried whether a student could submit a request rather than an appeal i.e. do they require to demonstrate disadvantage to submit a request?
- 89.20 Ruth clarified that students have the option to accept the mark awarded based on the percentage of assessment available or they may opt to have the outstanding work marked, however it needed to be understood that marks may go up or down as a result of the completion of the marking. Ruth noted that the intention was not to undertake marking prior to a student deciding to appeal rather that it would happen if requested by the student.
- 89.21 Sam Newington, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History, raised two issues from her School: some of the current student cohort have had their studies impacted detrimentally by Covid and she queried what the possible impact of the proposed policy would be to such students in terms of degree classification going forward; in addition she queried the possible impact on those students seeking to move on to postgraduate study.
- 89.22 Responding, Ruth noted that the measures were intended to prevent students suffering detriment arising from the action being taken. The measures were intended to be supportive

to students ensuring their ability to receive their degree classifications and exit the University at the time anticipated, and progress to further study or employment.

- 89.23 Brice Rae, School of Geosciences, noted he had received comments from several School members which he would endeavour to summarise. The School had expressed concern on the impact on degree standards; there were concerns about consistency of application in particular within joint degree programmes; a member of the School had indicated they thought the proposed policy would impact negatively on degree standards and felt it was inappropriate to compare the situation with Covid. Brice noted that, in section 5.1, the paper referred to proposals 'to appropriately enable the students to meet the requirements of their degree programme and receive a classified degree, where appropriate, ahead of graduations, whilst ensuring that quality assurance requirements are not negatively impacted.' Brice contended that if the University was able to set aside the standards which had been rigorously developed over time, and which form our quality assurance protocols and say that we are still maintaining our quality standards, either the University has overengineered everything and should continue with these relaxed standards once the action is over, or the University is relaxing its quality control with the introduction of this policy. Brice noted that, in addition to the inconsistency noted by Alex, he had identified other inconsistencies amongst the details in particular around the differences between courses with more than 75% of assessment compared to those with more than 70%. He noted the potential for multiple individuals to fall into a variety of traps and this was contrary to the part of the rationale for having moved to the Grade Point Average (GPA) being to ensure that students had consistency between degree programmes and schools. He noted that the 'devil would be in the detail' of any implementation. He further noted that if the document was comprehensive then there would be no need for anyone to have to contact mab@ as everything would be covered by the policy.
- 89.24 The Principal noted that the only solution to all the issues raised by Brice would be for the MAB not to take place, but the University recognised that it was taking place and therefore some compromises needed to be made.
- 89.25 Ruth reiterated that it was anticipated that the measures would be needed for a very small number of students, although it was too early to give numbers on this. She restated the aim, as expressed by the Principal, that the intention was to produce a level playing-field for students within groups who are having differing experiences as a result of the MAB. The aim in such circumstances would be that all students would be able to exit with a classified degree. Ruth noted the comments around academic standards and indicated that these would be the subject of discussions going forward in terms of how the University does things, for example moderation, and how this compares with the rest of the sector. This would give the opportunity for review after which there may be a decision to change. In terms of standards overall, the intention was to apply the principles which are embedded. The comparison with Covid was to highlight that the approach had been used previously and it had supported students with the difference being this time that students will have completed all their assessment, which they may not have done during Covid. Ruth conceded the point made about the email and noted it was there to give an opportunity to ensure knowledge was available across the institution and wasn't intended to circumvent any regulations previously approved.
- 89.26 Jen Walklate, School of Social Science, echoed Brice's concern with how the use of MAB@ was detailed in the documents and welcomed the addition of further clarification of its intended use. Jen queried how the internal deadlines had been determined? She also queried whether the alternative markers would have relevant expertise, based on the understanding, that in some instances, alternative markers would be Heads of School while in others they would be PG students.
- 89.27 Ruth confirmed the email issue would be clarified; the internal deadlines had been supplied by the Heads of School working with the Academic Managers to permit Ruth to go into Schools at an appropriate point to determine what the issues might be for individual students; Ruth reiterated that alternate markers should be identified as having relevant expertise and this was something the Head of Schools would be able to do. Ruth confirmed that the current

regulations already permit a variety of individuals to undertake marking and in the current context it was crucially important that students are afforded every possible opportunity to have their work marked.

- 89.28 Ilia Xpolia, School of Social Science, followed up on the point made by Jen and queried whether the University would be open to challenge in appeals in terms of those undertaking marking not being appropriately knowledgeable. The main concern within her School was that the measures would be unfair on students: students whose work is all marked may actually end up being at a disadvantage to students whose work was not marked. There was also concern about the potential reputational damage which might be done as a result of the proposed measures. The School had also raised the issue of students potentially having problems with visa schemes.
- 89.29 In terms of the point about appeals, Ruth indicated that the expectation was that students would rather have their work marked and get their degree classification than waiting for an unspecified period for it to be marked. Ruth noted, in terms of fairness, that these measures would only be applied to a small proportion of an individual's degree classification and while there might possibly be one or two students who may be advantaged as a result of the 'no detriment' approach, the policy was aiming to address the wider issues of the students who are impacted and ensuring they were able to be awarded their classifications in a timely manner.
- 89.30 Lorna Stewart, School of Education, spoke on behalf of a few colleagues who were UCU members within the School who wanted their views to be heard. Many of the issues had already been raised so did not need a response rather she raised them to add weight to the previous points. Colleagues were concerned about the possible erosion of academic standards; the serious possibility of devaluing of degrees; and also the serious implications for immigration compliance. Colleagues' main request was that the University reopen negotiations with the relevant professional bodies. Lorna confirmed that Ruth had addressed the points made already.
- 89.31 The Principal noted that the ultimate erosion of standards would be for a student not to be awarded their degree and that that was the problem being faced and what the proposed measure were seeking to address.
- 89.32 Jo Hicks, School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture noted that Examiners are responsible for standards and accreditation and hence subject level expertise is important, however, the document shifts responsibility to the Head of School for making important decisions. No Head of School could be expected to have the knowledge of an Examiners' Meeting. He noted various instances in the document where the Head of School is expected to take on responsibility for appointment of Examiners, or exercise discretion and queried whether this represented a shift away from subject experts having responsibility for making decisions to Heads of School, who are generally more compliant with management policy.
- 89.33 Karl Leydecker, Senior Vice-Principal, responded to clarify that Heads of School have ultimate responsibility for everything in their area and that is why they are given the responsibility in the document. The Heads of School work in conjunction with other officers in the School. He refuted the idea that Heads of School are brought in to ensure compliance with management and noted that this was not language he would accept.
- 89.34. Ruth added that, from an education perspective, the Head of School is ultimately responsible, but it was recognised that there would be discussion within Schools to ensure the correct decisions were being made by the Head of School in consultation with the relevant subject experts. There was no intention to undermine the role of subject expertise.
- 89.35 Jo noted that the document appeared to give rise for more concern than necessary, in terms of Heads of School acting in isolation from subject expertise, and requested that the document be amended to reflect the expectation of consultation as appropriate?

- 89.36 Ruth confirmed that she was happy to amend the document in a way that makes this expectation clear.
- 89.37 Jo highlighted the positive aspect of the document in terms of the acknowledgment that the MAB would end and that this might not be that far away. Jo noted that the meeting had begun with Senate welcoming the intention to return to negotiation and noted that this had been detailed in the all-staff communication from the Senior Vice-Principal issued previously, and he understood why this had not included reference to pay. Jo indicated his wish to move a motion but stressed this was in addition to the paper and not instead of it.
- 89.38 The proposed motion moved that: *'in order to expedite a conclusion to the marking and assessment boycott, being realistic about how that might happen, the University of Aberdeen publicly commits to apply pressure to UCEA to move to move towards negotiations on pay and working conditions as quickly as possible.'*
- 89.39 Tracey Slaven, University Secretary, clarified a technicality that the motion should call for 'Senate' not the 'University' to commit to apply pressure. Such a statement from the University would require engagement from Court.
- 89.39 The Principal confirmed that this might be a position Senate would wish to support, but as he had highlighted to elected members at the meeting prior to Senate, the University could not afford to move on pay without jeopardising jobs. The Principal acknowledged, nevertheless, that it was correct to put the motion and to vote on it.
- 89.40 Tracey Slaven, University Secretary confirmed the arrangements for voting stressing that those in the room should vote only in the room and not using the Teams form.
- 89.41 Senate voted to pass the motion proposed: 46 votes in favour, 14 votes against with 16 abstentions.
- 89.42 The Principal noted the position of Senate but confirmed that the position of the University remained unchanged, subject to any direction he might be given by Court.
- 89.43 Brice Rea sought clarification on the situation regarding the desire to provide classified degrees to permit international students to meet the requirements to apply for post study visas, given the advice received from the Scottish Government, the Home Office and the Citizens' Advice Bureau that it was the responsibility of the University to provide the information to students about how they met the requirements. Brice indicated that his understanding was that the University did not know how students would be able to meet the requirements. He queried whether support should be given to the proposal if it was unknown whether the measures proposed would meet visa requirements.
- 89.44 Ruth Taylor confirmed that were the proposals to be accepted there would be very few unclassified degrees awarded, the main intention of the measures was to ensure that a majority of students were able to graduate with a classified degree.
- 89.45 Tracey Slaven, University Secretary again confirmed the arrangements for voting, stressing that those in the room should vote only in the room and not using the Teams form.
- 89.46 Senate voted to approve the policy changes: 48 votes in favour; 26 votes against and 7 abstentions.
- 89.47 The Principal closed the meeting thanking members for a productive, constructive, collegial and respectful discussion in a very trying set of circumstances. He expressed his gratitude to everyone for doing their best to protect the University's students.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SENATUS ACADEMICUS

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 JUNE 2023

Present: Rasha Abu Eid, Adetayo Adeyemi, Kaitlin Agius, Akosua Akwaaboa Akyem-Pepa, Waheed Afzal, Scott Allan, Joanne Anderson, Euan Bain, Simon Bains, Martin Barker, William Barlow, William Barras, John Barrow (Teams), Nigel Beacham, Daniel Berg, Thomas Bodey, George Boyne, Alex Brasier, Marion Campbell, Alice Calessio, Isla Callander, Alessandra Cecolin, Delma Childers, Chris Collins, Matthew Collinson, David Cornwell, Rebecca Crozier, Chantal den Daas, Andrew Dilley, Lauren Dorward, Pete Edwards, Marie-Luise Ehrenschwendtner, Karin Friedrich, Fatima Garcia Bernal, Beatriz Goulou, Aravinda Meera Guntupalli, Malcom Harvey, Richard Hepworth, Jonathan Hicks, Alison Jenkinson, Gareth Jones, Dragan Jovcic, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Karl Leydecker, Beth Lord, Colin Lumsden, Laura McCann, Catriona MacDonald, Gary Macfarlane, Nicola McIlraith, Michelle MacLeod, David McLernon, Alasdair MacKenzie, Alan MacPherson, Vanessa Mabonso Nzolo, Pietro Marini, Sam Martin, Javier Martin-Torres, Samantha Miller, Heather Morgan, David Muirhead, Thomas Muinzer, Mintu Nath, Sam Newington, Paul Okoe, Nir Oren, Shantini Paranjothy, Ekaterina Pavlovskaja, Tom Pizarro-Escuti, Amudha Poobalan, Tavis Potts, Justin Rochford, Diane Skåtun, Thereza Raquel Sales de Aguiar, Joachim Schaper, Karen Scott, Hossa Skandary-Macpherson, Benjamin Liviu Stefan, Charlaine Simpson, Alan Speight, Valerie Speirs, Lorna Stewart, Fiona Stoddard, Ruth Taylor, Bert Timmermans, Steve Tucker, Neil Vargesson, Jennifer Walklate, Ursula Witte, Ilia Xypolia.

Apologies: Sumeet Aphale, Lesley Anderson, Harminder Battu, Siladitya Bhattacharya, Jason Bohan, Irene Couzigou, Kate Gillies, Greg Gordon, Ian Greener, Constanze Hesse, Lesley Lancaster, David McGloin, David Mercieca, Martin Mills, Graeme Nixon, Graeme Paton, Brice Rea, Tom Rist, Joost Rommers, Ann-Michelle Slater, Adelyn Wilson, Haina Zhang.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- 90.1 The Principal opened the meeting, welcoming members of Senate to the final meeting of the academic year. 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. The Secretary also noted that the University's Senior Governor was joining the meeting on Teams as an observer. It was also highlighted to members that that item nine on the agenda would be brought to a future meeting to permit technical issues within the paper to be addressed.
- 90.2 Subject to the noted change to item nine Senate approved the agenda and the meeting proceeded.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF 19 APRIL 2023

- 91.1 Jen Walklate, School of Social Science noted that the point made in minute 85.10 didn't just reference the situation of matters being directed to wrong Ethics Committees but also related to substantial delays occurring within anthropology and other interdisciplinary areas. The secretary agreed to amend the minute accordingly.

- 91.2 Subject to this minor change members of the Senate approved the minutes from 19 April 2023.

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

- 92.1 In addition to matters detailed in his written report on developments within the sector, the Principal highlighted topics covered in the Open Session which had taken place earlier in the day and which were particularly relevant to Senate. He highlighted the continuing positive progress being made with rebuilding research capacity: the number of staff on a T&R contract continued to rise; research income had risen by eight percent; a number of interdisciplinary fellows had been appointed and interdisciplinary PhD studentships had been advertised. Within education he noted that there had been an increase of 14% in work experience opportunities for students which was anticipated would improve employability levels in the future.
- 92.2 The Principal also noted that he had covered some challenges and opportunities around the financial position, international student recruitment and workload.
- 92.3 Ilia Xypolia, School of Social Science asked for an update on the situation with the buildings which had been closed for structural reasons the previous week.
- 92.4 Responding, the Secretary confirmed that the actions had been taken as part of a proactive process looking for occurrences of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) within the estate. Staff had been trained to identify RAAC following advice from the UK Government on the incidence of its use in construction dating from between the 1960s and 1980s. The University has been undertaking the process and following a second investigation, to ensure it had all been found, four buildings had been closed one of which was the boiler house at Hillhead so not subject to regular access. The buildings were closed while external specialist structural surveyors were brought in to look at the structural integrity of the affected buildings and to advise on the required next steps. The specialist report was currently being prepared which would determine what would be required next. It was confirmed that any activity in the affected buildings had been rehoused appropriately to permit required work to be carried out.

REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COURT

- 92.1 Ilia Xypolia, on behalf of the Senate Assessors, provided an update on the April 2023 meeting of the University Court. In addition to the written report included in the Senate papers, Ilia highlighted that the meeting had taken place at the Rowett Institute and had included a presentation from Brian Henderson, Director of Digital and Information Systems on the future direction of the University's digital strategy and the associated modernisation of processes. Court had also discussed financial reports and the deficit and received update on the two major estates projects.

HONORARY DEGREE NOMINATIONS

- 93.1 Senate voted to approve the nominations circulated as separate confidential papers.
- 93.2 The Secretary noted that the Honorary Degrees Committee had noted concern over the relative lack of diversity in the nominations coming forward to the Committee. When the new process had been introduced it had already been decided to introduce proactive calls for nominations and this would be continued but would in the future include articulation of the aspiration to encourage more diversity amongst the nominations being brought to the Committee. The Committee had also agreed to introduce a diversity matrix for tracking diversity of the nominations being put forward to Senate.
- 93.3 Ilia Xypolia, School of Social Science noted that the nominations did not always make clear the candidates' connection with Aberdeen and also requested that the name of the nominating staff member be included for Senate.

- 93.4 The Secretary responded and explained that permission from the individual nominating would be required before they could be identified as part of the process before a degree is approved and accepted, and that by not including these details ensured that nominations were considered on their own merit and without any 'reaction' to the person making the nomination. With regard to the request for better identification of a candidate's connection with Aberdeen the Secretary agreed that this would be possible, however, Senate were reminded that sometimes the connection is aspirational and so this would take different forms in different cases.
- 93.5 Thomas Bodey, School of Biological Sciences, queried whether the Committee could not broaden the pool of nominations themselves if it considered the nominations to be particularly lacking diversity.
- 93.5 The Secretary confirmed that it was possible for a member of the Committee to submit a nomination, but they had to be brought forward on the same basis as any other nominations. She further noted that one of the aims of the new process was to widen the pool of staff bringing forward nominations and to move away from the situation where two or three individuals put forward most of the nominations.
- 93.6 The Principal confirmed that the intention was to seek assistance from Senate to improve diversity amongst nominations rather than any suggestion that it was a task for Senate alone.

STRUCTURE OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2024 AND BEYOND

- 94.1 Ruth Taylor, Vice-Principal (Education) noted that there had been a lot of discussion of the proposals at the April meeting but, due to insufficient time during the meeting to complete discussion, with the permission of Senate, she had invited the submission of written comments outside the meeting. Owing to Senate not having had the opportunity to hear all these views she had decided to bring a single proposal back for further academic discussion before returning in September with a firm proposal.
- 94.2 Ruth noted that the previously presented four proposals had been refined following further consultation which had, as requested at the last meeting of Senate, included discussion with the University Research Committee. The paper presented one proposal which had been developed in response to discussions.
- 94.5 From the detailed feedback included in the paper, Ruth indicated that her [presentation](#) would highlight where adjustments had been made to the proposal, or had not been required as there was consensus on the proposed principles. The presentation would also set out the principles underpinning the proposed structure.
- 94.6 In her presentation, Ruth highlighted the particular areas of the revised proposal where Senate was asked to provide academic input. These were:
- Teaching should commence w/c 23 September 2024 (week 9 of AY) with Welcome Week w/c 16 September 2024 (week 8 of AY) to optimise student recruitment activity.
 - Put in place a three-term structure for the academic year (AY), with 'term' as the terminology for the teaching periods. Adjust the naming of the current Term 3 to Term 3 (PGT) to identify it clearly it as PGT-only teaching (noting that some UG fieldwork currently takes place during that time-period)
 - Implement 13-week terms for terms 1 and 2, including one floating week; and a 12-week term 3 with no floating week (PGT teaching in term 3)
 - Align University holidays, as far as possible, with school holidays in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire for the Winter break and the Spring break.
 - Implement an 'Induction/Transition and Employability Week' (ITEW) at the beginning of terms 1 and 2 for continuing UG students with this time being used for a Welcome Week for new UG and PGT entrants.

- 94.7 Following the presentation, the Principal noted the amount of careful consideration and reflection which had been paid to the views expressed at the previous meeting of Senate.
- 94.8 Karin Friedrich, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History raised some points made within her School:
- Recognition from the School that term 3 was designated for PGT teaching and this was supported within the School, however, concern remained that there was still a possibility that this would become an expected term of full teaching for all, with the potential to impact those with school-age children at home for the summer, and research staff finding time needed for research activities being impacted if a Head of School were to decide that the new structure provided the opportunity to introduce a full extra term of teaching.
 - Concern was also expressed that if term 3 became a further term of expected teaching, this would impact negatively on workloads. She noted that the Research committee had said the proposed new structure 'could' be neutral in workload contexts not that it 'would' be neutral.
- 94.9 Responding, Ruth noted that the points made in the paper were intended to address the issues raised by Karin. The intention behind the proposed structure was to provide something which was understandable to all staff and students and was not intended to increase workloads within Schools. She noted that the nature of PGT structures was different from the majority of UG teaching and therefore she did not expect that the proposed structure would lead to changes to delivery of teaching. She noted that the development of new January start programmes and staff associated with them was a different and separate matter for discussion between Schools and Admissions / Recruitment colleagues.
- 94.10 The Principal acknowledged the hypothetical risks but asked the Senior Vice-Principal to comment on the latitude available to Schools to make the sort of changes being discussed without strategic oversight.
- 94.11 Karl Leydecker, Senior Vice-Principal, confirmed that this was not the intention. It was anticipated that the University would work together as a community recognising the actions of an individual School had impacts across the institution for associated services. He confirmed that in the context of workload discussions Heads of School had been asked to consider teaching allocations across the full year. Factually he noted that the University had moved from being predominantly an undergraduate institution to one with a strong PGT element and associated with this a different pattern of teaching. He noted that this was already well embedded in some parts of the University. He acknowledged the potential for anxiety amongst sections which had not yet had experience of January start programmes. He noted that the reality of the situation was that the University was reliant on international PGT student recruitment in order to remain financially viable, and required the associated clarity for international student recruitment. This was a transition which the university was required to make, and the intention of the proposal was to provide clarity around a framework which everyone was able to work within.
- 94.12 Aravinda Guntupalli, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition, noted that colleagues had been pleased to see PGT teaching recognised as it was in the proposed model. She noted a desire for the three terms all to be equal rather than the 13:13:12 in the model. This made the structure particularly unequal for January start students for whom the timing of the dissertation aligns differently.
- 94.13 In reply, Ruth clarified that if term 3 also was a 13-week term (12 weeks of teaching with one 'floating' week), the need for a three-week Spring Break had the effect of pushing teaching even further into the summer. The compromise suggested still provided for equal lengths of teaching in each term but protected a little more time for research.
- 94.14 Neil Vargesson, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition, reported support from his School for recognition of Term 3 mainly due to a perception that current PGT students studying in this period do not feel recognised within the system. He also welcomed the recognition that

the formal third term provided potential for workload allocation of teaching to two of the three terms.

- 94.15 Karen Scott, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition, reiterated support for the third term being designated as PGT and suggested that rather than the phrasing used on the slide it would be preferable for Term 1, Term 2, Term 3 (PGT) to be used. She also queried the flexibility within the structure for projects on some programmes to begin at times different to the published term dates.
- 95.16 Ruth acknowledged the intention to appropriately maintain the flexibility offered currently for individual programmes to operate in a way different from the published dates and indicated her willingness to pick the discussion up outside of Senate to ensure she understood the issue completely.
- 95.17 Ekaterina Pavlovskaja, School of Engineering noted the three-week spring break had been welcomed by the School together with the proposed 12-week summer term which aligned well with the PGT teaching within the school. She queried the rationale for moving the start of the Spring Break forward from its usual position in week 36 to week 35.
- 95.18 Responding, Ruth clarified that change had been made to ensure the period of teaching after the Spring Break was sufficient for students to recognise the need to return to campus. Concern had been expressed that if the period was too short students might feel encouraged to break accommodation contracts and not return for the teaching.
- 95.19 Ekaterina expressed the view that it might be preferable to leave the teaching where it was currently, as with the return to on-campus exams students would be required to return to complete their exams and providing a longer teaching period before the break offered better opportunities for continuity in teaching.
- 95.20 Thomas Muinzer, School of Law, noted the three-term structural change had not been particularly well received in the School. Within the School there was a feeling that staff were teaching too much already, with limited research time, and that the perception of the introduction of the third term would exacerbate this further. He suggested a possible way forward for overcoming this perception might be for the Head of School to reach out to staff in the School directly to explain the rationale.
- 95.21 Euan Bain, School of Engineering, queried whether section 8.1 in the paper could be updated prior to its next iteration, to include explicit reference to consideration of the School of Engineering's TNE partnership with Harbin University. He further noted, from a staff wellbeing perspective, that the loss of the clear week for marking in week 21, prior to the Winter break, might inadvertently lead staff to feel the need to use some of their annual leave for marking as they feel the pressure not having been able to clear marking prior to the break. He suggested that the institution should commit to keeping the three weeks after the break clear for marking and not begin to fill the weeks with other activities. In addition, he queried whether consideration had been given to reducing the three-week break between Term 2 and Term 3 in order to create more separation prior to the start of the new academic year.
- 95.22 Ruth confirmed that the points made by Euan would be reflected on but noted that moving the weeks as described created overlap with other activities and consideration had to be balanced with the consequences for other activities.
- 95.23 Alex Brasier, School of Geosciences, noted a feeling amongst colleagues that the current proposal was a substantial improvement from previous suggestions and the School particularly welcomed the three-week Spring Break. He further noted a concern that the third term might lead to pressure for more teaching to be undertaken rather than for research projects for postgraduate students. In general, the School welcomed the proposal.
- 95.24 Sam Martin, School of Biological Sciences noted support from the School particularly for the structure offered by the third term and the three-week Spring Break.

- 95.25 Joanne Anderson, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History, echoed the point made by Alex (95.23) about the nature of the teaching during the third term differing from the rest of the year as the majority of teaching took the form of one-to-one supervision. However, it was noted that annual leave alone is not sufficient to cover the six-week period of school holidays for those with young children and other caring responsibilities, and this must be taken into account in any moves towards more structured teaching over the summer, together with the impact on research output.
- 95.26 Commenting on the research aspect, Marion Campbell, Vice-Principal (Research), noted that the Research Committee had commented that there were a number of aspects of activity typically undertaken in the summer, including fieldwork, but that this had been accounted for in the revisions made. The Committee had discussed the need to ensure that there were clear periods across the year for each member of staff to focus on research and that this did not necessarily need to be the summer. The Committee had been cognisant of the need for Schools to recognise the need for research time and to balance this appropriately with teaching to ensure research and teaching are balanced across the year.
- 95.27 Responding to Marion's points, Joanne Anderson, highlighted that many staff were responsible for UG and PG teaching. Staffing was such in many parts of the University that meant it was not possible to release staff from either area and that flexibility must be maintained to enable everything to be undertaken.
- 95.28 Diane Skatun, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition, queried whether data were available to quantify the level of face-to-face teaching taking place over the summer? She suggested it might be useful for Senate to be able to monitor the degree to which lecture-based teaching was being undertaken during the period.
- 95.29 Ruth confirmed that this was something she would explore.
- 95.30 The Principal noted that the feedback provided gave a good basis for further revisions and that a final proposal be brought forward at the next meeting.

PRESENTATION: DIGITAL STRATEGY

- 96.1 Senate received [presentation](#) updating them on the Digital Strategy from Pete Edwards, Vice-Principal (Regional Engagement) and Chair of the Digital Strategy Committee, and Brian Henderson, Director, Digital & Information Services (DIS) . Pete Edwards noted that he would provide an overview of the Digital Strategy and some of the aspects the Committee would be looking at in the coming year and that Brian Henderson would provide some detail of the work ongoing within the Directorate to support the Digital Strategy.
- 96.2 Pete highlighted the close relationship of the Digital Strategy in supporting the implementation of Aberdeen 2040 particularly in relationship to the modernisation of the physical estate and the part digital technology plays within this. Pete also indicated the importance of Artificial Intelligence, automation of workflows and classroom evolution in coming years.
- 96.3 Brian highlighted the operational organisation of the Directorate into 12 workstreams and how these support the Digital Strategy. In particular, he highlighted five areas of priority work for the immediate future and the challenges associated with them:
- Applications transformation
 - Student Management System
 - Security & Governance
 - Sustainability
 - Service Improvement
- 96.4 Euan Bain, School of Engineering thanked Brian and his team for their work and in particular the work done to support his School. Euan noted that during a recent School away day, he had posed one of the Principal's questions: 'In relation to the delivery of education, what is the most

value destroying activity academic staff are asked to undertake?'. Those present had unanimously responded with Student Monitoring and specifically the systems used around it most notably the MyTimetable system. Euan asked for assurance and timelines around plans for the Student Monitoring system, MyTimetable and the Student Record system. He noted that the systems were having a negative impact on staff and potentially a negative impact on students who are not being picked up in academic or welfare terms when they should be.

- 96.5 Responding, Brian noted that Jason Bohan had picked up the work started by Abbe Brown in relation to Student Monitoring. He confirmed that Digital Strategy Committee (DSC) had approved a proposal in relation to 'C6/C7' process change and that the budget was in place to take this work forward. The work package was in the process of being defined and the list of prioritised work would be commenced shortly. He noted his wish to see the work continue beyond the immediate priorities to the secondary list of changes needed.
- 96.6 Aravinda Guntupalli, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition noted that in addition to C6/C7 colleagues had requested that Annual Leave booking was another source of frustration as the manual nature of processes were frustrating and time consuming and suggested this was something suited to digital enhancement. The other subject discussed had been around induction and the frustrations experienced by course coordinators, and those teaching at the start, with students arriving late and not realising the need to use their university email address and so the school was making a plea for students to be made aware of this as part of the induction process. Aravinda also asked for details of the strategy in relation to equality aspects within the University.
- 96.7 In reply, Brian confirmed that the 'Zellis' system for annual leave was already in use within DIS. Debbie Dyker, Director of People confirmed that work was already in progress to enhance the Staff Portal to enable booking and tracking of annual leave. Brian confirmed that the Digital Accessibility Workgroup, which he chaired, and which had started off working on captioning, had moved on to consideration of wider aspects of accessibility to digital services and content. He noted that, while the group focussed currently on neurodiversity, it would welcome comments or membership to take forward the work of the group. In relation to the comments connected to induction, Brian confirmed he would follow up the comments as they would be useful within current work looking at the registration process.
- 96.8 Dave Cornwell, School of Geosciences, queried the extent to which solutions to problems were being sought internally within the University. He noted that digital skills were evident across the university and questioned whether the possibility existed to create the University's own student record, for example.
- 96.9 Brian noted that DIS were keen to work with schools and also to offer work placements for students in this sort of area and would be interested to hear of anything specific within the school in this context. He noted that, particularly in terms of sustainability, the world has moved away from internal development of solutions in the increasingly complex area of software development.
- 96.10 Thomas Bodey, School of Biological Sciences questioned how the digital estate could be entirely integrated without relying on a single provider who, because of the need to supply multiple universities would not provide sufficient agility to respond to any one individual institution's needs.
- 96.11 Brian replied detailing that the technical level which was currently being implemented was API driven to ensure that data could be passed easily between systems in real-time to replace the University's previous systems which relied on overnight processing for the movement of data. Brian noted that there were currently 52 different data flows in and out of the student management system and as such integration work required a significant amount of resource to ensure its maintenance. Brian stressed the need to ensure thorough and robust tender and procurement processes were used for the replacement system. He highlighted the strength of

the sector working together (through UCISA for example) to challenge providers over systems provision and poor behaviour.

- 96.12 Thomas sought further clarity regarding the strategic opportunities already in existence which Pete had referred to in his presentation.
- 96.13 Pete replied using automation as an exemplar. He noted that automation was already widespread with some being used in the University already. In this area the future was focused on hyper-automation, AI and machine learning which would orchestrate lots of different systems from different suppliers and interfaces as a replacement for the current requirement that this is done by an organisation itself. Brian provided the example of the Fresh helpdesk system which uses a chatbot which it was anticipated would be further developed. He added there was similar work ongoing within recruitment and that the Directorate of People were seeking to expand their use of chatbots too.
- 96.14 Michelle MacLeod, School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture, noted the comments made by Pete regarding the recruitment of four members of Senate for the DSC and requested that amongst these non-technical members of staff were included to ensure balance and accessibility is maintained for non-IT staff.
- 96.15 Pete confirmed that this was very much the intention for DSC.
- 96.18 Martin Barker, School of Biological Sciences sought clarification on whether the University was playing a waiting game for major innovations such as Student Management Systems and was observing others in order to learn from their experiences and if so, was there not a danger that the University risked being left behind.
- 96.19 Pete confirmed that this had always been the case in the world of software. He noted that part of the 'horizon scanning' process involved a lot of communication with other institutions and also noted the need to look beyond hype from suppliers trying to sell a product. Pete noted that on several occasions during the previous 20 years the University had thought it was going to replace the student record system but had paused and noted that this could not happen again. Brian noted the Institution was not an early adopter in the student management system area but highlighted the immaturity of the market.
- 96.20 Dragan Jovicic, School of Engineering, questioned, as a previous member of DSC, how to ensure that the Committee is aware of the needs and concerns of staff across the institution. He noted that as a committee member he had often received feedback from colleagues which focused on interactions with Helpdesk however Dragan suggested the work of DSC rarely touched on the subject. He suggested the work of the Servicedesk should be a standing item on the DSC agenda. He highlighted the need to close the feedback loop to ensure academics were reassured that problems were being looked at. He also queried how, in the climate of budgetary pressure, cost effectiveness of DIS could be monitored.
- 96.21 Pete confirmed in terms of staff representation on DSC that in addition to four members of Senate there would be two Heads of School, a wide range of representation from professional services. He also highlighted that the Digital Forum provided a further opportunity for engagement with the strategy and operational matters. Pete noted that Dragan's intervention at DSC had been instrumental in moving the Helpdesk service up the agenda and he confirmed as convener it was now a standing item on the agenda.
- 96.22 In the context of 'Return on Investment' Brian noted the significant progress made in preparation and evaluation of business cases within the University. He noted that with a project of the size of the Student Management System it would not only be scrutinised by DSC but also, because of its size, would require consideration at senior management level.

ITEM FROM THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE
RESEARCH IMPACT

97.1 Senate received a [presentation](#) from Gary Macfarlane, Dean for Interdisciplinary Research and Reach Impact. Gary updated Senate on work being undertaken to maximise research impact at an institutional level in connection with Aberdeen 2040 and also the next Ref. Following his presentation, he sought input from Senate members about how best to support that work.

97.2 Neil Vargesson, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition queried whether the school impact leads referred to during the presentation and if they had he asked whether it would be possible for the list to be circulated to Senate members.

97.3 Gary confirmed that the information would be circulated.

Clerk's note: The provided list was circulated by email to members following the meeting.

97.4 Jen Walklate, School of Social Science, noted that Anthropology had held an away day the previous day at which they had discussed impact and so raised two queries: firstly, what support would be available to the staff writing up impact case studies and secondly, what the thinking around long-term impact was as anthropological projects often have far reaching impact over a longer period of time, than might be accounted for by REF.

97.5 Responding Gary noted the importance of ensuring effective systems were in place to record relevant activities which might be useful in terms of impact. These were not always apparent at the outset of research and so it was important that all outputs were recorded. This was something the Impact Team are working on. Gary noted how important it was that, as well as looking forward, time was spent looking back as impact happening currently had inevitably come from past research. With regards to the issue raised regarding workload, Gary recognised that assessing impact and writing up case studies did take time and noted that these were able to be recognised in the workload model.

97.6 Karl Leydecker, Senior Vice-Principal added that the revised workload model, seen by Senate previously, did include provision within it for the allocation of additional time above and beyond the standard allocation of time for research, for people either making significant contribution in terms of impact or running especially large grants. The extra time was available to heads of school for allocation as appropriate. Karl noted that the information provided by Gary highlighted the economic importance of impact work, and hence the need to create a culture which values impact related activity as part of workload.

97.7 The Principal noted that the institutional Research Leave Scheme contained provision for undertaking impact work as well as outputs.

97.8 Marion Campbell, Vice-Principal (Research) confirmed that impact activity was recognised through the scheme. Marion also highlighted that money was available to support activity promoting impact.

97.9 Karl reiterated that Impact was now included as a separate pillar within the promotions system and that impact was now recognisable in its own right, alongside the other pillars of Education, Research, Scholarship and Clinical Service.

97.10 Thomas Muinzer, School of Law raised energy specific issues, noting the specific favourable position occupied by the University and the City as a hub for energy transition. He noted the special place offered by this in terms of potential impact activity and queried the plans for making best use of this opportunity?

97.11 Replying Gary noted the importance of the University establishing the position of its research in this context as impactful research has to be underpinned by excellent research. He noted that energy research is an area the University is focusing on in terms of the interdisciplinary challenges. He noted that this should provide the potential impact resulting from this work. He further noted that engagement with stakeholders at an early stage of research was important in terms of facilitating impact. As such, work in this area was a good example of what is being done.

- 97.12 The Principal noted the possibility of a wide range of impacts offered by energy transition research from policy impact to behavioural impact by energy consumers, to efficiency impacts in the production of energy. The area was a fantastic opportunity.
- 97.13 Pete Edwards, Vice-Principal (Regional Engagement) noted the huge number of opportunities offered by the regional energy sector and funding made available, for example, to the Energy Transition Zone (ETZ) by Scottish Enterprise and discussions around how the University was able to be part of this work were already quite advanced. He highlighted that the University had opened many channels, but it was important that these were used and engaged with. Through listening to partners the potential was available to maximise impact.
- 97.14 The Principal highlighted the ultimate impact in this area would be to speed up the rate at which the transition was occurring and noted that, if the University were able to evidence that, it would likely be a four-star impact case study.
- 97.14 Thereza Raquel Sales de Aguiar, Business School asked what lessons could be learned from the previous REF exercise in terms of supporting impact cases and what were the barriers? She also noted that impact is included in promotions criteria and queried whether promoting impact formed part of the assessment of Heads of Schools and Disciplines performance measurements?
- 97.15 Responding to the first question, Gary noted one of the lessons learned from the last REF in terms of impact was that the University started too late. This was something being addressed currently. He noted however many case studies were eventually required as part of REF that, in order to ensure provision of sufficient at a high enough level, it required many more to be followed at this early stage due to the difficulty in predicting exactly what would happen within the timescale required.
- 97.16 Thereza commented that individual schools may have faced specific difficulties and queried what had been done to determine what these were.
- 97.17 Gary confirmed that the Impact Team had been round and met with school REF and Impact Leads to determine what exactly these problems were, and this had identified some common issues which would be addressed. The school specific issues would be addressed by the school tailored plans.
- 97.18 Regarding the query about monitoring performance of Heads of school in promotion of impact, Karl confirmed he was currently undertaking Annual Reviews for Heads of Schools and they recognise that impact is as important as environment and output in terms of research, and schools need to have a very clear plan around all three elements in terms of REF. Karl confirmed that this was included in Heads of Schools' objectives, and he expected these to be shared with school academic line managers to give clarity to what is being sought. Karl indicated that if individuals still had issues which they did not feel had been addressed it was important these were submitted to Marion or Gary.
- 97.19 Simon Bains, University Librarian noted that dissemination had been highlighted as an important criterion in terms of impact and that this was something he was committed to the Library assisting with. He queried whether there would be value in connecting the Library's Open Access Team more with the Impact Leads in order that the Library was involved in any discussions about dissemination or any barriers to it.
- 97.20 Gary replied to say that it was intended that training and information events would be held up until the next REF and dissemination would be part of this and the library would be a key player in its delivery.
- 97.21 The Principal noted the importance of dissemination as part of impact but highlighted that dissemination alone did not create impact. There had been cases previously which had been based on dissemination to demonstrate impact.

- 97.22 Sam Martin, School of Biological Sciences noted that he had attended sessions on impact which had been very useful. He raised a query around evidence gathering and the fact that staffing at partner organisations might change during the REF cycle. He asked whether gathering evidence at the current time was worthwhile or whether it would be better regarded if it were from 26/27 closer to the next REF, similarly with publications.
- 97.23 Gary advised that this was an area where a single approach did not suit all areas and noted that judgments were needed all the time. He suggested that if a single contact was particularly valuable and judged likely to move on then gathering evidence now might be a good move but generally it would be better to wait and see what the focus was, what was being claimed and where evidence gaps might need to be plugged. He acknowledged that in some cases it might be better to add evidence now rather than waiting.
- 97.24 Marion Campbell, responding as a REF Panel member, noted that it was less about the timing of when the evidence was gathered and more about the fact that the evidence was available. She noted that from previous experience it was difficult to gather evidence retrospectively and recommended collecting evidence whenever it was available. She further noted that there had been a debrief with all schools following the last REF which had discussed particular issues that had been encountered, and these were being fed into the process this time. One issue from last time was around the balance between output and impact and she noted that this was much clearer now with all schools appreciating the importance of impact and the challenge of bringing this into everyday life within a school.
- 97.25 Waheed Afzal, School of Engineering asked about partnership with industry and consultancy work where policy on consultancy can be quite restrictive. He queried whether any work was underway to reevaluate these policies for them to be improved.
- 97.26 In response, Pete Edwards, Vice-Principal (Regional Engagement) acknowledged the need to look at the policies around company formation and consultancy. He noted that at the last meeting of Senate, through the Enterprise and Innovation Committee these policies would be reviewed and that a task and finish group had already been established and had begun work looking at the IP and Revenue Sharing Policy. He anticipated that once this was complete work would begin on the Consultancy Policy.
- 97.27 Karen Scott, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition, commented that she welcomed the current focus on impact and that she had noted within the presentation that a 3-star impact was worth more financially than a 4-star paper. This was something she felt was important and suggested staff had not been sufficiently aware of in the past.
- 97.28 Gary noted that he was taking the opportunity to share the figures at every impact meeting he attends as he considered it so important. He added that it was also important to emphasise that impact was not something for a few individuals rather it was for all researchers.
- 97.29 Dragan Jovicic, School of Engineering, welcomed the recognition of the importance of impact. He noted the importance of early engagement, when in receipt of a large grant, with the Principal Investigator (PI) in order to understand the routes for developing impact cases as this requires to be supported by excellent research. From a PI perspective, getting part way through the work and getting good outputs creates choices about how to prioritise time and resources: should the focus be on excellence or impact? He provided the practical examples from engineering of engagement with standardisation or engagement with professional bodies which may not necessarily bring excellence but are very important from an impact perspective. He noted that sometimes it may not be possible to justify resources from a grant to go down the impact route. In these cases, he stressed early engagement and support were vital.
- 97.30 Gary agreed that impact should not just be thought of at the end of a piece of research work. Impact needs to be considered from the beginning of the design process for a piece of research. Hence engagement of the PI with the Impact Team from the very beginning was crucial.

- 97.31 Michelle MacLeod, School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture, like Dragan, welcomed the 'normalisation' of impact as one of the pillars of work that should be undertaken. She noted that the requirement of REF still focussed on impact case studies and she asked how the University could encourage individuals who have never previously considered impact, to engage with the process prior to the stage of case studies.
- 97.32 Gary noted that the REF impact case studies are clearly very important to the University financially, however, he noted that impact had to be about more than just REF. The University should be seeking to undertake research that made a difference. He acknowledged that not everyone was familiar with the process but noted that this was where the training could make a difference. He also noted the formation of cohorts for support, particularly amongst early career researchers, was especially helpful as specific training packages could be delivered focussing on ensuring maximum research impact could be delivered.
- 97.33 Karl Leydecker, Senior Vice-Principal noted that in terms of the promotions criteria all three of Engagement, Innovation and Impact were included. All three criteria were important. A lot of engagement with the external environment was important in creating the overall research environment. He noted, however, that although environment is important it does not detract from the need to deliver impact.
- 97.34 Neil Vargesson, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition suggested that those who had contributed impact case studies in the last round could be used to lead workshops to help staff understand what a case study should be and/or to discuss what impact is.
- 97.35 Gary confirmed that this was exactly what was planned. Those who had submitted a case study would share how they had gone about it and the lessons they had learned. The intention was that sessions would be delivered, as far as possible, in a subject specific way.
- 97.35 In drawing discussion to a close, the Principal noted the importance of the topic for the University and how the 'normalisation' of impact had to become part of research culture. He highlighted that, from a REF perspective, excellence of outputs and impact were both keys to success. He noted that the institution was in a better place culturally in terms of the recognition of the significance of impact while still needing to focus on making the most from case studies as possible. The intention must be to submit a small number of very high quality impact case studies. The University needed to be tactical in its next submission to ensure that it receives the maximum it can from its submission.

ITEMS FROM THE QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

MBUS HOOD

- 98.1 Steve Tucker, Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement and Chair of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) introduced the graduation hood for the previously approved new Degree of Master of Business. The hood combined elements of the MA hood with the lilac border to provide distinction for the MBus students.
- 98.2 Senate agreed by consensus to approve the proposed hood.

CHANGES TO REGULATIONS FOR VARIOUS DEGREES

- 99.1 Steve outlined the proposed changes to both the Supplementary Regulations for the Award of All Degrees in Science and the Award of All Master of Arts (MA) Degrees which arose from the requirement for Qatar-based programmes to offer Academic Skills courses as either Arts or Science. The requirement to take these courses is included in both MA and BSc programmes and as such it was felt appropriate to classify these as 'Academic Skills' and to count them towards the Group A courses for both Degrees.
- 99.2 Senate agreed by consensus to approve the proposed changes.

100.1 In drawing the formal discussions of the meeting to a close, the Principal noted the meeting was the final meeting of the academic year and thanked members for their contributions throughout the year. He commented that one of the most important attributes of a regular meeting such as Senate was not that everyone should always agree but rather that members should disagree well. He noted that, with the odd exception, this had been achieved in the current academic year and he looked forward to welcoming members back for next year and to continuing to disagree well.

ROUTINE BUSINESS:

URC REPORT TO SENATE

101.1 Senate noted the routine report from the University Research Committee

UEC REPORT TO SENATE

102.1 Senate noted the routine report from the University Education Committee

QAC REPORT TO SENATE

103.1 Senate noted the routine report from the Quality Assurance Committee

SENATE & ASSESSOR ELECTIONS

104.1 Senate noted the outcomes of the recent elections and the timeline for the ongoing Assessor elections.