

CONFIRMED

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SENATUS ACADEMICUS

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 JUNE 2024

In Person:

Rasha Abu Eid, Waheed Afzal, Sanaa Al-Azawi, Joanne Anderson, Euan Bain, Simon Bains, Martin Barker, John Barrow, Nigel Beacham, Jason Bohan, George Boyne, Alex Brasier, Ainhoa Burgos Aguilera, Delma Childers, Sandie Cleland, Chris Collins, Matthew Collinson, David Cornwell, Rebecca Crozier, Marie-Luise Ehrenschtendner, Malcolm Harvey, Peter Henderson, Richard Hepworth-Young, Constanze Hesse, Jonathan Hicks, Gareth Jones, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Rhiannon Ledwell, Karl Leydecker, Beth Lord, Vasilis Louca, Andrew McKinnon, Michelle Macleod, Alan Macpherson, Doug Martin, Martin Mills, Heather Morgan, David Muirhead, Jo-Anne Murray, Mintu Nath, Nir Oren, Adelaja Israel Osofero, Ekaterina Pavlovskaja, Stuart Piertney, Bettina Platt, Amudha Poobalan, Ann Rajnicek, Brice Rea, Tom Rist, Justin Rochford, Thereza Raquel Sales de Aguiar, Karen Scott, Diane Skåtun, Anne-Michelle Slater, Tracey Slaven, Alan Speight, Mary Stephen, Steve Tucker, Neil Vargesson, Rebecca Walker, Jennifer Walklate, Ursula Witte, Iliia Xypolia, Zeray Yihdego

Online:

Finn Abou El Magd, Sumeet Aphale, Irene Couzigou, Muhammad Faraaz Dheen Mohamed, Toni Gibson, Aravinda Guntupalli, Niels Imrie, Laura McCann, Catriona Macdonald, David McLernon, Sam Newington, Joost Rommers, Miles Rotherl, John Skåtun, Valerie Speirs, Bert Timmermans.

Apologies:

Scott Allan, Lesley Anderson, Siladitya Bhattacharya, Andre Justin Carpio, Alessandra Cecolin, Pete Edwards, Nick Forsyth, Greg Gordon, Beatriz Goulao, Kevhvan Graham, Mark Kurz, Lesley Lancaster, Colin Lumsden, David McGloin, Samantha Miller, Graeme Paton, Joachim Schaper, Lorna Stewart, Fiona Stoddard, Ben Tatler

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- 55.1 The Principal welcomed members to the summer meeting of Senate and noted it was the final meeting of the academic year. To ensure those leaving before the end of the meeting did not miss the statement, he thanked members for their contribution during the year. He noted that for elected members, Senate was an additional role undertaken with the best interests of the academic community at its heart. He acknowledged that there were times where there was disagreement about what the best interests might be due to the different vantage points of schools or disciplines; or because individuals might hold different information. He noted that there was, nonetheless, a common desire to do the best for the Institution. He highlighted that some members had been on Senate for a long time and noted that some members were completing eight years. Several members were identified as having completed eight years, and Senate recognised their years of service with a round of applause.
- 55.2 Tracey Slaven, University Secretary, reminded members of procedures: there were no planned fire alarms; the meeting would be recorded to enable production of the minutes; members were asked to state their name before contributing to discussion and those attending on 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. She reported that a request had been received for the chat to be shown on screen in the auditorium, but it had been decided not to do this to prevent members in the room from being distracted. Members were reminded that, while all staff and students are welcome to attend Senate, only members are permitted to contribute to debate. Any voting would take

place using the auditorium functionality for those in the room and Forms within the chat for those on Teams.

- 55.3 Jen Walklate, School of Social Science noted that the agenda for the meeting seemed incredibly packed and that it had taken her eight hours to read the materials. She suggested that item 9 Minimum Course Enrolments and item 12 Reimagining the Campuses, be moved into the first half of the agenda as they were of importance to the whole University.
- 55.4 Tracey confirmed that the options open to Senate were to proceed with the agenda as presented or to consider whether there were any alternative motions in the room.
- 55.5 Karl Leydecker, as Chair of the Senate Business Committee (SBC), confirmed the Committee's rationale for the agenda as circulated. He noted that there were a number of items for approval, ahead of items for an academic view and that SBC had decided on this structure to ensure the items requiring approval were considered at the meeting and hence the items were ordered as they were.
- 55.6 Iliia Xypolia, School of Social Science registered her support for Jen's view and suggested that a vote be held.
- 55.7 Tracey confirmed the request for a vote was properly made and reminded Senate of the processes for voting. Senate voted on the proposal that items nine and twelve were lifted up the agenda, to be taken after the Court Report.
- 55.8 When the online and in-person votes were combined Senate voted to keep the agenda unchanged.

In favour	29
Not in favour	30
Abstain	11

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF 27 MARCH AND 8 MAY 2024

- 56.1 Jen Walklate, Social Science noted a couple of points in relation to the minutes of 8 May where some members felt the minute was not entirely representative of discussions. In particular she highlighted 50.3, 51.7, 51.9, 51.11, 53.4 & 53.11. She noted that Standing Order 32 suggested that recordings would be taken to support accurate minuting and she suggested that it shouldn't be difficult to fix.
- [Clerk's Note: Following the meeting, and an email to the community from the Senior Vice-Principal, the requests for amendments 51.7, 51.9 and 51.11 were withdrawn.]*
- 56.2 The Principal queried with Jen whether she had already indicated that corrections were required.
- 56.3 Jen confirmed that she had not yet had the opportunity to forward the alterations, but she would be able to do so as soon as possible.
- 56.4 Tracey confirmed that normal processes required amendments to be sent in advance of meetings but indicated that she was sure matters might be resolved outside the meeting given the minutes were near verbatim. She asked that the minutes be approved subject to these minor changes being agreed.
- 56.5 Malcom Harvey, Social Science raised a query connected to minute 51.38 from the 8 May meeting which recorded the motion he had proposed. He had proposed that two elected members of Senate be elected to the Financial Recovery Group (FRG) which had been passed by 56 votes to 13 with 2 abstentions. He sought clarity regarding the subsequent changes and noted his understanding that the original FRG had been replaced by a new group with 21 members from across the University and asked for an explanation of the rationale for this and the expectations in terms of deliverables.

- 56.6 Karl Leydecker, Senior Vice-Principal noted that this had been set out at the Open Session where it had been confirmed that a more 'Campus Planning Group' approach would be taken to the financial recovery and a full terms of reference and membership would be published imminently following the all-staff communication sent the previous week. The plan was for an inclusive group bringing together the whole community in order to work as a single university community on the financial recovery. As was agreed two Senate representatives had been elected for the Group.
- 56.7 Tracey drew Senate's attention formally to the matters arising from the meeting of 27 March. An update on the motions passed that day in terms of the University's support for scholarships for academics and students impacted by events in Palestine had been posted on the Senate website for information and that this continued to be a work in progress.

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

- 57.1 Noting that his usual written report had been circulated with the papers, the Principal further noted that his normal practise would be to update Senate on current developments in public policy but that was in abeyance as the General Election period had commenced. Although there were no new policies, he noted there were still announcements being made but that it would be inappropriate for him to comment on these due to the restrictions placed on universities during an election period. He suggested that, in the meantime, the University focussed on its own work, and the progress of the FRP in particular, which was essential for supporting education and research. He commented that happily the university was now at the phase of the FRP that focused on increasing revenue, having restructured debt and reset the cost base the University was set to move into the more positive phase of continuing with existing revenue streams and expanding Transnational Education (TNE), Online Education, Commercialisation and Fundraising whilst still focusing hard on getting students on campus including Scottish students, rest of UK students and international students. The Principal noted that the University would have an indication of how this aspect was going when figures became available in the autumn. He suggested that it was important that time was freed up to take advantage of the opportunities available. That meant, in turn, that no opportunity to reduce workload or alter working practises to mitigate workload pressures should be missed in order free up time to pursue new opportunities while maintaining the quality of education and research.
- 57.2 Jo Hicks, School of Language Literature, Music & Visual Culture (LLMVC) asked for further information on section 7.1 of the written report which detailed a possible reclassification being considered by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Jo asked, acknowledging that there were aspects that the Principal was unable to comment on, what the possible implications of the proposal was for the University and the sector.
- 57.3 Responding, the Principal indicated that the change would mean that universities would be much more closely regulated as public sector bodies. In some respects, universities would become like further education colleges: unable to run periods of temporary deficit during financially challenging periods and unable to borrow, none of which would be good. The Principal reported that Universities UK and Universities Scotland were across these issues and were lobbying to ensure universities maintained their independence and autonomy which were crucial to everything the University was trying to achieve.
- 57.4 Tracey confirmed that there was no formal update on the matter, but she reported that feedback across the sector suggested a distinction between those institutions dependant on public sector funding for undergraduate teaching and them having fewer options as a consequence of that. She also suggested that there may be a further distinction within ONS between the Scottish, and other devolved administration policy areas, and that in England. She noted her view that the outcome, if and when it was reached, was likely to be complex which was why it had been stood down when it had been considered previously.

- 57.5 The Principal noted his wish that the proposed change would be stood down again and further noted this was a very significant issue. He thanked Jo for raising it and stressed the need for vigilance at all times to protect the University's autonomy as an independent institution.
- 57.6 Joanne Anderson, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy & Art History (DHPA) asked that 16.1.1 of the written report be corrected to detail the correct value of the grant awarded to Dr Isabelle Gapp. She requested that the report be corrected to read 'Dr Isabelle Gapp, Interdisciplinary Researcher - Environment and Biodiversity Challenge - aligned to the School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History (DHPA), has received £259,117 from the British Academy Knowledge Frontiers scheme for a community-led project entitled 'From the Floe Edge: Visualising Local Sea Ice Change in Kinngait, Nunavut.' Partners: University of Oregon and Kinngait Studios, West Baffin Eskimo Co-op.'

REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COURT

- 58.1 Ilia Xypolia, on behalf of the Senate Assessors, provided an update on the 24 April 2024 meeting of the University Court. Ilia noted that there was not much to add to the written report. Court had signed off the Annual Accounts as had been made available internally and externally. She noted that Court had spent some time discussing TNE proposals that would be brought formally to the next meeting of Court. She noted that Court had received a report from Senate, but this had been written before the additional meeting of Senate in May. She expressed her thanks to the sub-group of independent members of Court, which had been formed some months previously to sign-off the amended covenants and financing agreements, and who had undertaken a significant amount of unpaid work on behalf of the University.
- 58.2 Ilia noted that she had been asked by many Senate members for details of the Financial Recovery Plan. She had even been asked if it existed and how many pages were in it. She noted that in the extraordinary meeting one of her fellow Assessors, Joachim Schaper, had indicated that in the June meeting of Court he would ask if it would be possible to share a heavily redacted copy of the Recovery Plan with Senate
- 58.3 The Principal asked Ilia whether this was part of the Court Report or something separate she was adding.
- 58.4 Ilia confirmed that it related to the Financial Recovery Plan referred to in the report and the fact that members of Senate had asked to see the Plan and she had omitted to add this comment when delivering the Report.

POLICY & PROCEDURES ON STUDENT APPEALS

- 59.1 Steve Tucker, Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement, outlined proposed changes to the appeals procedures intended to simplify and clarify the processes for dealing with appeals, particularly given the workload often associated with dealing with cases. He also noted processes were last updated in 2011 and so it was timely to do so now. He summarised the main changes proposed as being:
- the introduction of a competency test when appeals were submitted to determine whether the appeal was solely questioning academic judgement. In such cases the appeal would not be permitted to proceed. This would reduce workload within schools as these cases would be filtered out at an early stage and would also avoid raising student expectations.
 - The procedures for handling appeals submitted as part of a group had also been clarified, mainly with regard to identifying a lead appellant for appeal related communication.
 - Frontline resolution being the preferred approach for dealing with the huge number of appeals being received against C7s. He noted that over the last few years, approximately three quarters of the appeals received had been upheld creating a huge amount of work for all. Frontline resolution within schools would improve the experience for all involved.
 - It was also proposed that the timeline from receipt to initial response be lengthened from three working days to enable full consultation with appropriate staff.

He noted the supporting documents and glossary had also been updated to in line with the proposed changes.

- 59.2 Alex Brasier, School of Geosciences noted he broadly welcome the proposed changes to process which would save a huge amount time without impacting on the process detrimentally. He asked, however, regarding the four grounds for appeal 1. That University procedures were not followed, 2. That the person or body making the decision did not have the authority to do so, 3. It is believed that the person or body taking the decision did not act impartially, and 4. That the student considers that they have suffered a material disadvantage as a result. He asked about the situation where University procedures were followed, the person did have the authority to do so, the person acted impartially but student feels the policy itself was unfair and they have suffered a material disadvantage as a result. He asked what should a student do in such a circumstance?
- 59.3 Responding, Steve noted the complexity of the situation described by Alex and suggested that some discussion was needed to clarify the exact process for such a case.
- 59.4 Tracey confirmed that a concern about the appropriateness of a policy could not be handled under the appeals process. She suggested that such a matter could be referred and explored and explored as an issue but would not be able to be progressed as an appeal and would be looked at as part of ongoing policy review.
- 59.5 Martin Mills, School of Social Science asked whether in such circumstances. As a matter of natural justice, a student would be able to bring an appeal to Senate.
- 59.6 Tracey confirmed that disagreeing with a Policy does not provide grounds for an appeal to Senate as the body with oversight. It may be a piece of information needed to feed into a review of policy by Senate but not in itself be grounds for appeal.
- 59.7 Martin sought clarity that if a student felt they had been harmed personally then a review process would be undertaken going forward i.e. it would do them personally no good?
- 59.8 The Principal confirmed that Tracey was purely outlining the process in terms of procedures to be followed and not making any judgement on a hypothetical case. He noted that it was important to move on to ensure that the other items on the agenda were covered also.
- 59.9 Martin suggested that there seemed to be a fundamental issue with process. Senate, despite its omniscience, was capable of making an error in the formation of a policy which might be unjust for a specific student. If it were to emerge, as a result of a specific policy, that a student had been discriminated against, a method for this to be addressed was needed.
- 59.10 Tracey agreed that a separate conversation on the matter outside of the meeting might be appropriate and confirmed that if discrimination were confirmed that would be grounds for appeal. She confirmed that it was not possible for individuals to bring dissatisfactions with policy on an individual basis as appeals.
- 59.11 Senate confirmed that it was content to approve the changes without a formal vote.

[Clerks Note: subsequent to the meeting, section 11.7 Appeals against decisions taken by the Student Case Management Group (SCMG) under the support for Study Policy was added for further clarity]

VARIOUS RESOLUTIONS, PROPOSING CHANGES TO DEGREE REGULATIONS

- 60.1 Steve outlined the key updates to degree regulations being required, since the Omnibus Resolution, for three key areas: the double degree run with Harbin Engineering University; simplification to the nomenclature within the MBChB, the BDS and Physicians Associate degree regulations; and updates required following the review of postgraduate research regulations.
- 60.2 Diane Skatun, MMSN noted that two of the three appendices did not contain tracked changes and commented that consequently, she had found them difficult to follow in terms of what was being changed and asked why this was the case? She also asked, in the context of section 9,

point 1 of appendix B which referred to 'fitness to sit an exam' and stated that in 9.2 that a student was assumed fit to sit and exam but in 9.3 went on to explain the process to be followed if they were not fit to do so and suggested that this seemed contradictory.

- 60.3 Steve confirmed that tracked changes had not been included for the two appendices as the changes were so extensive that tracked changes had made the document unwieldy and difficult to read. In terms of the comments about fitness to sit, it was structured as it was to align with the Fitness to Sit Policy.
- 60.4 Acknowledging the complexity of the documents Diane commented that tracked changes would have been helpful for cross referencing in the Senate papers.
- 60.5 Steve confirmed these would be made available in future papers.
- 60.6 Euan Bain, School of Engineering highlighted that in Appendix A, under the degrees relating to the partnership with Harbin University under bullet point two, where the awards currently available were listed, and there was reference to the BEng (Civil Engineering), there had been discussion over the past four working days with Harbin and the Chinese Ministry of Education regarding the formal title of this degree and the resolution to this may result in a title change for this degree.
- 60.7 Steve confirmed that there were plans for resolving this issue which had arisen due to a conflict between the title of the already accredited degree, and the name desired by the Chinese Ministry of Education. He noted that degree certificates and transcripts were being investigated currently to establish whether there was the option to include 'non-accredited' on awards to enable differentiation between the various degrees.
- 60.8 Senate approved the changes by consensus.

RESOLUTION PROPOSING CHANGES TO THE CODE OF PRACTICE ON STUDENT DISCIPLINE (ACADEMIC)

- 61.1 Steve outlined the changes proposed to the academic discipline code for programmes with Professional or Statutory Body Regulations. Where these were more stringent than University requirements, the Code had been changed to permit the external requirements to be given precedent.
- 61.2 Senate approved the changes by consensus.

SUPPORT FOR STUDY POLICY

- 62.1 Jason Bohan, Dean for Student Support outlined the changes proposed to the Support for Study Policy, introduced originally in 2016. The updates had been made as the original policy was quite broad and lacking in detail. The proposed updates provided greater detail for implementation and around the various stages, and included details of who was responsible for which actions and details of possible outcomes from each stage. Steve highlighted that the new version of the policy focused more on the prevention stage than the original version, with schools collaborating with Student Support to help identify students who may be at risk with the aim of earlier intervention improving retention. He also outlined that there was more detail around what might happen in later stages, if a student was considered to be disengaging from studies, when Student Support might be required to intervene to liaise with internal or external support services to ensure students receive the support they require. It also contained information for instances when students require to take a break, and how they were introduced back to their studies. He confirmed that the policy had been discussed at a number of different committees.
- 62.2 Euan Bain, School of Engineering queried section 18 which dealt with appeals and the four bullets which seemed to replicate the appeals policy which had just had changes approved, and noted these were no longer consistent with the amended appeals policy.
- 62.3 Jason confirmed this would be looked at and updated appropriately to ensure consistency.

62.4 Senate approved the changes by consensus.

REVISED MODERATION PROCEDURES

63.1 Steve Tucker, Dean for Quality Assurance & Enhancement summarised the changes made to the procedures in response to the previous discussion at Senate on 27 March. He recorded his thanks to Senate for their contributions to shaping the policy and noted that the updated policy had received further consideration by School Education Leads and through them School Education Committees, as well as the Academic Policy and Regulations Group, the University Education Committee and finally the Quality Assurance Committee. The main changes were summarised as:

- Provision of a clearer definition of moderation within the policy and moderation guidance, developed in consultation with school leads, as an Annex. Examples of possible process were also included within the Annex. Steve highlighted that the Annex was provided with the intention it would be an evolving document which schools would be able to feed into over-time.
- In response to the concerns raised at Senate that the proposed guidance represented an increase in workload rather than reducing it, the process had been simplified to provide a more marked reduction in workload.
- Where double marking was taking place and there was a disparity between marker of a single CGS grade, Senate had raised concerns around grade inflation with the proposal to utilise the higher grade, and so the policy had been amended to require all marks be agreed.
- In terms of workload savings Steve highlighted the reductions in workload in double marking and moderation generated by the new policy.

63.2 Steve also detailed the constructive discussions that had taken place with the Students' Association who had been concerned that the changes might reduce the rigour of the assessment process. These had been countered with assurances that there were additional checks and balances within the process, including External Examiners etc, and also the reassurance that the changes brought the University into line with comparator institutions within the sector.

63.3 Martin Barker, School of Biological Sciences asked firstly, if there would be a review of the actual impact on workloads and on academic standards at the end of a suitable review period to ascertain whether the policy was working and secondly, as discussed at Senate in March, the differential impacts between disciplines and whether the drive for consistency was necessarily a good thing.

63.4 Steve confirmed that a consultation would be undertaken in one or two years' time to see how the policy was operating. Steve commented that within the University's structure, with the variety of disciplines, consistency was difficult to achieve and hence the guidelines had been designed to be as flexible as possible to fit across the structure. He highlighted that the moderation guidance had been developed in consultation across schools and was anticipated to provide a range of practises which could be adapted across the University.

63.5 Martin sought clarification of whether a degree of autonomy was permitted within schools with the new procedures.

63.6 Steve confirmed that the way the policy had been written, allowed for a degree of flexibility.

63.7 The Principal added that any policy also needed to ensure a degree of reduction in workloads across the University.

63.8 Jo Hicks, LLMVC noted that the provision of the Annex was particularly useful. Jo queried a statement on one of the slides 'is the distribution of marks across the overall assessment appropriate and consistent with what you would expect/have experienced' which he had read as meaning across the whole assessment but it had been indicated previously that only a sample with a spread of grades would be available and Jo suggested that this might be a

potential mismatch, and noted that if it was the case that it was the whole course this might offer a workload saving for those completing the Annual Programme Review which required the whole spread of marks to be considered.

- 63.9 Steve confirmed that the expectation was that the distribution of the overall course grades would be considered but that there was scope to look at individual assessments also and that would not involve moderation in terms of scanning individual assessments rather to look at the overall distribution of grades and that in certain circumstances, for example assessments which were marked automatically, that would be a moderation process which would look at the spread of marks across the assessment rather than taking a sample. Steve confirmed the expectation that the guidance was sufficiently flexible that it might be interpreted to ensure alignment with the requirements of an individual course co-ordinator or External Examiner.
- 63.10 Euan Bain, School of Engineering noted that in paragraph 5.2 'External Examiners should be asked to comment on the general standard of marking and assessment' suggested that the External Examiners' Report template should be updated to include this question within Part B Academic Standards.
- 63.11 Steve confirmed that this was already being done.
- 63.12 Karen Scott, MMSN noted that at the last meeting she had raised the issue of anonymous marking within MyAberdeen and had been assured that this was possible but noted that this had not happened in the current year and stressed the view that this was something important.
- 63.13 Steve confirmed that the e-learning team within the Centre for Academic Development (CAD) were working on guidance for anonymous marking that would be disseminated across the community. Assurance had been provided that anonymous marking was possible within MyAberdeen.
- 63.14 Rhiannon Ledwell, Vice-President (Education) noted her support for a formal vote on the policy.
- 63.15 This was seconded.
- 63.16 Tracey confirmed that the request was in order and confirmed the processes for voting.
- 63.17 When the online and in-person votes were combined Senate voted to approve the revised marking and moderation policy and procedures.

In favour	62
Not in favour	9
Abstain	7

- 63.18 The Principal noted that Senate had approved a proposal which would maintain academic quality while reducing workloads and suggested that this was one of the most significant decisions of the year and one that the whole university community would be grateful for.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES ON EXTENSIONS / LATE SUBMISSION

- 64.1 Jason introduced the paper proposing an institutional policy on coursework extensions which would sit within the existing policy on late submission of coursework. He summarised the need for such a policy as being: a demand from students who found it difficult to navigate the differing policies and procedures across schools; and introducing a clear institutional policy would help with this. He also noted that colleagues within Student Support had identified a need for the policy to aid them when approaching schools with requests for extensions and an institutional policy would help with the workload associated with these requests. In addition, he reported that research across the sector had highlighted that Aberdeen was out of step with other institutions by not having such a policy. He indicated that the starting point for the policy had been with schools being asked to provide details of their existing policies and that this had revealed a confusing picture across schools and in some instances between discipliners withing schools. This had been followed up with meetings with key stakeholders including Directors of

Education and AUSA, who were asked to detail their expectations of what might be included in such a policy. The draft policy was developed by a cross-school working group including academic, administrative and student support staff with the draft policy again going out for consultation. Following this feedback, the policy had then been considered at committees including the Quality Assurance, Student Support & Experience and University Education Committees. Jason thanked everyone for their considerable input to the policy. He highlighted a couple of key aspects to the policy: it included an indicative list of extenuating circumstances for which an extension would or would not be considered; he also highlighted that the process included timelines for the process to aid clarity. Requests for extension may be submitted seven days prior to a deadline and was normally limited to an extension period of seven days although shorter extensions may be granted depending on the type of assessment. The policy also stipulated that extensions would not be granted beyond the advertised feedback date and also the types of supporting evidence required. In response to student feedback which had indicated difficulties in identifying the appropriate individual within different courses and schools, the policy also requires that requests be submitted using a centralised tool. It was also anticipated that this would aid students needing to disclose personal information. Such a centralised tool was also expected to help manage associated workloads. Jason noted that the centralised absence reporting tool already used by some schools, may be adaptable to provide this added functionality in addition to making amendments to improve the usability of the existing tool. Options for changes to the system had been provided by the Applications Management Team and had already been discussed with schools and it was anticipated that an updated tool might be available for use from January 2025.

- 64.2 Bettina Platt, MMSN noted that with PGT and Honours students, key staff were sometimes not available to meet required feedback deadlines and staff would therefore advise these students to seek an extension and she asked what would happen in those circumstances.
- 64.3 Jason confirmed that the policy was not seeking to dictate internal school processes for managing extensions. What would be provided was a tool for managing the process more effectively and making the process clearer for students. He suggested there was a discussion to be had within schools around how the process was managed. This was not contained within the policy as it was recognised that one process did not fit all schools. He noted that part of the documentation to support the process would include examples of good practise. For example, it might be that a member of administrative staff would be responsible for monitoring requests submitted and there being school specific processes in place for managing situations where an individual staff member was unavailable.
- 64.4 Bettina sought confirmation that Jason was indicating that there would be flexibility for schools to operate in different ways within the process and suggested an example within the policy was quite harsh.
- 64.5 Jason confirmed that the example Bettina was referring to was drawn from the existing Senate approved policy on late submission which had been in operation for some time. He further confirmed that no changes to the penalties in the existing policy were proposed, rather the proposal was about putting a structure in place around the management of extension requests.
- 64.6 Dave Cornwell, School of Geosciences highlighted feedback from students indicating issues with getting documentation from GPs who did not provide written information in the way it had been done previously and asked how this would be handled as currently staff not qualified .to do so, where making decisions on medical circumstances which sometimes included mental health issues. As a school Disability Coordinator, he noted that a gap existed between the training received as an academic and that required to make some of these decisions, and how the gap in knowledge might be addressed by the policy. He suggested that either training or further guidance was required to address the gap.
- 64.7 Jason confirmed that the guidance, in line with the Student Absence Policy, detailed evidence requirements and possible alternatives where this was not available and, also confirmed that in some instances, this might be a statement from the student detailing the event and the impact it had had on them. He highlighted that one of the recurring issues had been found to be how to

ensure schools reached consistent conclusions, noting some schools had developed detailed rubrics outlining how decisions were reached. As part of developing the policy it had been agreed to share school guidance as part of an aid to address these concerns and to promote consistency across schools.

- 64.8 Rhiannon Ledwell, Vice-President (Education) thanked Jason for his hard work on the policy and suggested it was one of the best examples of student partnership work they had been involved in during the year and suggested the new policy would promote equity in student experience. She suggested that the extension policy, when paired with the absence policy, might be seen to represent a shift in policy development and noted her support for the development.
- 64.9 Martin Barker, School of Biological Sciences asked if online courses would be incorporated within the policies. He noted his understanding from the Online Education team that online students often struggle to reach the end of a course within the allocated year, often due to a deterioration in personal circumstances and that the advice from the centre was that students should not suspend studies but should be given an extension and he suggested that one week would not be appropriate for these students who were more likely to need two or three months. He asked if this should be included in the policy or should be dealt with separately?
- 64.10 Jason confirmed that the Online Education Team had been included in the consultations and the policy was intended to apply to online students. Jason suggested that there may be additional ways to support online students for whom an extension might not be appropriate. He noted that the Online Education Forum had been discussing issues connected with how best to support struggling students and whether this should be done in different ways.
- 64.11 The Principal noted that the policy was at Senate for an academic view which would normally require it to return to a further meeting for formal approval. He noted, however, the option to approve the policy at the meeting did exist and suggested that there had been a lot of support for the policy being expressed by staff and students.
- 64.12 Tracey confirmed that the process detailed in the Standing Orders expected that papers came to Senate for Academic input and then returned having addressed the input for formal approval. She noted that Senate had the ability to set this to one side and, if there were no issues to be addressed, to approve in a single sitting. She asked if Senate were willing to set the requirement aside and to approve within the single meeting.
- 64.13 Euan Bain, School of Engineering, following a meeting with Directors of Education highlighted that there might need to be further discussions between the Group and specific Directors of Education and asked whether these discussions had taken place.
- 64.14 Jason confirmed that discussions were ongoing with LLMVC around concerns with use of the absence reporting tool within their school structure and that, following a demonstration of the system, the School had been reassured it was fit for purpose and would work for them.
- 64.15 Diane Skatun, MMSN expressed concern that a precedent was being set for approving papers at their first meeting of Senate. She noted that there had been a request to approve something at its first consideration at the March meeting and Senate had voted not to consider this. She reminded Senate of the reasons for requiring two meetings.
- 64.16 The Principal confirmed that he did not view the current request as creating a precedent and noted that it was Senate's decision, each and every time, to take a decision about how it wished to proceed. The only precedent was that it was Senate's decision on how to proceed.
- 64.17 Jo Hicks, LLMVC noted that one benefit of the two-stage process was that work was undertaken between the two meetings and so what was approved at the second meeting was closer to what was required for implementation rather than taking on trust that things would be done and therefore Senate would be more likely to be voting on something which was closer to the final working version.

- 64.18 Tom Rist, LLMVC echoed the points made by Jo and Diane, especially with the information that there was still an ongoing discussion with his school, and suggested that it was premature to be voting to be approving something which included unfinished business.
- 64.19 Richard Hepworth-Young, NCS asked about the role of SBC if the agenda kept being changed in this way. He noted the Committee considered timings carefully and factored in whether there would be a vote or not.
- 64.20 Karl Leydecker, as Chair of SBC, confirmed the Committee did work hard on the agenda and noted that the policy would normally come twice but highlighted that the view from the students was that this was very welcome, and there was no dissent within the room. He noted that if it were approved at the current meeting it could be in use from the start of the next session, or earlier for some student groups. Set in the context of how it would benefit students, and seeing a paper which demonstrated such a huge amount of consultation, he was supportive on that occasion, not on all occasions, of proceeding to a vote as it was in the best interest of the University and its students.
- 64.21 The Principal noted that he had not heard sufficient consensus in the meeting to support, what he personally considered, the better decision move forward with a vote at the present time. He respected the view that some members had reservations and would like to come back to the policy at a future date. He expressed regret that there was insufficient consensus to move forward with, what in his view, was a sensible decision.
- 64.22 Euan Bain, School of Engineering suggested that the current process of requiring this to come to Senate twice devalued the work of the subcommittees when they had worked effectively. Senate should be expecting that this had happened and where papers had been through EEC, SSEC, UEC and School Education committees to come to Senate and then be required to go back out to the committees again and then come back to Senate for approval was really wasting time and would be a recognition that the committee processes did not work. He wished this to be recorded formally, as someone who sat on the committees and working groups responsible for putting these papers together, this was hugely frustrating. He highlighted that this came from himself, colleagues in Engineering and more widely. He suggested that ensuring the committee structure was working effectively should be the priority and there were ways to do this including the way papers were shared. He noted schools and committee members were hindered currently when trying to do this and if a better way could be found, then the whole system would be better, and the current discussion would disappear. He noted that there may be times when, as when the No Detriment Policy had been developed, at a time when the University was working very quickly and the current practise had started in exceptional circumstances. He suggested that the academic view followed by approval, if the University was working effectively, should be the exception rather than the norm.
- 64.23 Jo-Anne echoed Euan's sentiments and noted she was trusting of colleagues across the University, and it was important to promote a culture of trust noting that there were sufficient checks and balances in place to assure everyone that by the time this point was reached there had been sufficient consultation and that there had been input from a huge amount of knowledge and experience on the various committees. She noted that the University existed for the benefit of students, and this was an issue of huge importance to students which she would be supportive of taking an agile position on to put things in place for the benefit of the student community. This was an issue not just benefitting the student experience, but also their mental health and well-being. If students did not have a clear understanding of policies and procedures around extensions, then this had a potential impact on their anxiety and stress levels and their wellbeing as well.
- 64.24 Diane added that she understood that there might be frustration around Senate and the process but asked that when things were being considered for introduction in the new academic year, that consideration was given to the time required for this and to which Senate meeting the issue needed to be brought to in order to allow this to happen. She noted that the reason the issue was occurring was because the matter had been brought to the last Senate meeting of the year and, if it had been brought to a previous Senate for an academic view, it could have

been brought for approval to this meeting. It was not just Senate blocking this on the day, it was the fact that it was being brought at the particular point in the cycle, and suggested that more thought should be given to when things should come to Senate.

- 64.25 Brice Rea, School of Geosciences noted that he accepted Euan's view as being absolutely correct but noted, however, that there had been evidence in the past that the committees were not working as would be wished and when things were brought to Senate problems were identified. This had been seen repeatedly over several years. He suggested the key point related to the sharing of material and that there was a broad breadth of experience in schools and often things were not looked at outside the main committees and most staff in schools do not see things until the Senate papers come out. This was often the first opportunity staff had to see things and problems were identified. He noted his agreement with the points made about the need to be nimble but suggested that Senate passing something that needed revisions, was possibly more detrimental to students. He commented that the system in operation was fine and that the option existed for the Chair, or anyone on the floor, to move to pass a policy at its first reading but that the standard operating procedure, until things were seen to have improved, should remain as Senate seeing things twice.
- 64.26 The Principal noted that there still did not appear to be consensus. He suggested that Senate might move to a vote, but this would require a formal suggestion.
- 64.27 Sandie Cleland, School of Psychology proposed that a vote was held, noting concerns for the timeline for implementation of something the students were clearly in favour of if this did not occur.
- 64.28 Tracey confirmed that the request had been seconded by members online. She confirmed that Senate were being asked to approve or not at a single vote.
- 64.29 Jo Hicks recalled that previously there had been a vote to decide whether a vote on approval should be held, and queried whether the vote was to approve the paper or to approve that a vote be held.
- 64.30 Tracey confirmed that the previous situation had been more complex, and she was hoping matters could be dealt with in a single vote with anyone not approving the vote, voting not to approve the policy.
- 64.31 Jo confirmed his wish for two votes to avoid any suggestion of confusion.
- 64.32 Tracey confirmed that the first vote was to confirm whether, or not, the paper would be considered for approval at its first consideration by Senate.
- 64.33 When the online and in-person votes were combined Senate voted to hold a vote to consider approval of the paper.

In favour	40
Not in favour	27
Abstain	7

- 64.34 Tracey confirmed that the second vote was to consider approval of the policy and procedures on extensions & late submissions.
- 64.35 When the online and in-person votes were combined Senate voted to approve the policy.

In favour	55
Not in favour	11
Abstain	10

- 64.36 The Principal thanked Senate for choosing to exercise flexibility on something which was clearly the preference of students.

GUIDANCE ON MINIMUM COURSE ENROLMENTS

- 65.1 Jo-Anne Murray, Vice-Principal (Education) introduced the guidance noting that amazing work was underway to develop new programmes with 42 new programmes due to be introduced in September. She highlighted that some were brand new programmes and others were variants of existing programmes however all contributed to workloads. She detailed that the guidance was aimed at courses with small student numbers and provided the opportunity for the withdrawal of these.
- 65.2 Ilia Xypolia, School of Social Science, commented that it was not clear from the paper who the author the paper was. She also highlighted a procedural issue noting that the Guidance had been announced in January however it had not been considered at Senate which would have been the correct place to have started discussions. She suggested, that as with the previous discussion, she had procedural concerns with a paper being brought to Senate without an author, and in connection with workload. She highlighted that the workload group had not met for more than a year with March 2023 being the last meeting recorded. She asked for details of the drafting of the paper and its status.
- 65.3 Karl Leydecker, Senior Vice-Principal clarified the background to the paper. He detailed that the request for the paper to be included at Senate had come from the Senate Business Committee (SBC) earlier in the year following an email he had sent on workload to the whole University which referred to this guidance as one of the ways high workloads were being tackled. He detailed that the guidance, which was not a policy and hence had not been to Senate, had been developed and issued to schools by Ruth Taylor back in October last year to indicate the opportunity that existed to review the portfolio of courses, and where schools were minded to withdraw courses how they should go about that, in what circumstances it was appropriate to do so and in what circumstances it would not be appropriate and the things that should be considered. He confirmed it was guidance and that it had emerged in February that the guidance was not as widely known about in some schools as others, where it had been discussed and action taken. He reconfirmed that this was guidance and not policy and had been included for information at Senate at the request of SBC.
- 65.4 Martin Mills, School of Social Science commented that this was an opportunity which had always existed to undertake this type of revision and that the issues detailed in part two were the sorts of things which were considered as part of standard procedure. He noted that, if this were guidance, it was incomplete, in particular section two, which detailed the issues which should be considered and noted these were largely internal considerations and are discussed within the context of the programme. He suggested that there were at least three issues which should be considered when dealing with a small course: firstly, the wider national and international responsibilities that a university has; secondly, the responsibilities to PhD students and the REF environment and the third would be the use of specialised staff skills. He highlighted these three aspects existed outside the purely numeric considerations. In the context of international matters, he recalled the instance of when the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) had famously cut Farsi in 1975, as there were only three or four students enrolled each year. In 1979, when the Iranian revolution had occurred, the Foreign Office found it had no UK nationals who could read or write Farsi and consequently were severely crippled. He noted that the University had specialisations that required small courses: medical and language courses for example, the training in Ugaritic offered by a member of the University who was the only member of staff able to offer this in the hemisphere and if that class were removed an almost global heritage would be removed from research capacity. These are aspects of a larger argument: the presence of a course in fourth year may lead onwards to more specialised areas of PhD recruitment that wouldn't be expected to recruit more than two or three people and those courses, particularly at PGT level, may be vital components of a REF environment statement. He summarised the need for such larger

considerations to be taken into account and noted that, if the document was a guidance document, the Heads of School should be guided towards these issues.

- 65.5 The Principal suggested that these sorts of point could be taken into consideration and weighed against all the other considerations that needed to be included.
- 65.6 Ekaterina Pavlovskaja, School of Engineering welcomed the document and noted that many things were already being done. She noted that in 3.2 the School of Engineering was not mentioned despite being actively involved and that the contact details should be included.
- 65.7 Karl acknowledged this oversight.
- 65.8 Joanne Anderson, DHPA noted 1.6 referenced guidance based on previous course enrolments with the threshold being set at 15 and if there was an historic situation for the course this should be looked at. She suggested that this would be a disaster zone for her discipline. She acknowledged that this was not what the guidance was aimed at but the way the guidance was worded suggested that this might be a severe problem particularly for some humanities teaching. For example, she highlighted in her discipline that at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London, the benchmark for the hallmark of quality teaching, the threshold was set between 10 and 12 students and asked for more context for the selection of 15 as the threshold.
- 65.9 Karl confirmed the number was widely used in the sector as a minimum and noted he had seen it used in a range of other institutions. He highlighted, however, that the figure was given as guidance and factored into the overall situation – were there large numbers of overseas students on the course making it more viable in terms of staff effort compared with the financial outturn? He highlighted the need for recognition that workload pressures were absolutely intense and when asked what was being done about it the guidance was being offered as something to think about acknowledging that it would not work for every area and that for some areas, like languages there is recognition that there may be one or two smaller courses inevitably because for example, the decision had been taken to retain Gaelic language degrees. He added that there was an acceptance that there would be some smaller degrees but, as a general rule, providing the data to schools for use in considering their programmes and courses to enable decisions to be taken based on that was in the best interests of staff to preserve research time and to offer the best student experience possible.
- 65.10 Rhiannon Ledwell, Vice-President (Education) noted that the paper was one of the more disturbing ones to be brought to Senate. She noted she had not yet found a student who would argue larger class sizes were better in terms of student experience. She acknowledged that at the extremes, classes of one or two were probably not great but eight or ten was viable. She asked where the data came from suggesting 15, other than it being from the sector. What defines this as an ideal number rather than it being a top-down business-case? Where was the research into the student experience of class size? Who was consulted? She suggested that the figure did not take account of the teaching needs of different disciplines and Senate had not been consulted, despite it having a large impact on teaching. She further suggested that there were a lot of things which might be done instead to look at why there were fewer enrolments on certain courses – was the pre-requisite path not ideal? Something as simple as the course name may attract more students or were there ways to make a course feel more relevant within a programme. She suggested that the figure of 15 students as a minimum set a dangerous precedent particularly for the humanities as well as other disciplines. This might remove diversity and choice and one of the reasons that students wish to come to Aberdeen.
- 65.11 Euan Bain, School of Engineering commented that in 3.3 where it stated that registrations would be provided annually in October and suggested that providing data in October with a Planning Cycle deadline of 30 November did not give schools much time to be able to undertake the types of consultation required. In effect, the document was stating that Heads of School, Directors of Education, Programme Leads, PSRB representatives etc needed to look at the courses, come up with a plan, look at learning outcomes, look at accreditation, come up with changes to programmes, formulate the paperwork for the Quality Assurance Committee in terms of course and programme modifications and new courses etc when the course

registration data had been known since January or February of the same year. He suggested that maybe there was a good reason for this from the planning side of the University for waiting to circulate these data in October but from an operational perspective within schools the data on course registrations could be shared much earlier allowing schools to undertake the correct consultations to generate the right answers rather than rushed and risking getting the wrong answer.

- 65.12 Jo Hicks, LLMVC noted that, like Rhiannon, he found the document shocking and raised, starting with data, that he had previously raised the issue of spreadsheets that were not provided to Senate which had received the response that it hadn't been possible for those to be shared with Senate but those data were offered as the justification for the figure of 15. He noted he had responded that if that were the rationale then Senate needed to be able to see it and could not see why it couldn't be shared in full, the onus being on the individual bringing the proposal forward, to present it in a way that it might be shared. He had then been told there would be a presentation at Senate. But there hadn't been a presentation today. There had been an introduction from someone who had not authored the paper and had been given a hospital pass in this case, making it really hard to see where the policy originated from and suggested the big question about when was a policy not a policy seemed to be when approval from Senate was not wanted.
- 65.13 The Principal noted again it was guidance and not a policy and recorded his objection to the use of the phraseology 'hospital pass'.
- 65.14 Jo apologised and retracted the phrase. He rephrased and asked which committee structure would be able to review and scrutinise the figure of 15 in perpetuity and establish how well it was operating. He suggested that it was clear other institutions had a figure but not necessarily 15 and not only one figure for both undergraduate and postgraduate taught. He suggested that the one figure would not be capable of capturing everything required in term of the work associated with courses in terms of staff hours, credits etc. He stated that it was a blunt tool which had been brought in as something which seemed much like a policy. He noted that in the Court paper on the future of Modern Languages the line 'while also ensuring that courses have no fewer than 15 students' had been included. He suggested that this did not seem like a possibility for consideration, and it was being treated as something which would be done. He stated that if it were to be used in that way or there was a possibility it would be used in that way then it was incumbent that Senate should have the opportunity to vote on it and for the undergraduate education committee to have the chance for proper scrutiny to ensure that everyone up to the V-P (Education) was able to feed into the process before it was passed to them after the fact.
- 65.15 Jo-Anne, noting it did not impact her directly, stressed that she wished to see this implemented by colleagues and Senate to be content with it as this was about responding to staff concerns. She noted that it did not impact her workload as she did not teach the courses. She stressed the intention was genuinely about helping and there was no hidden agenda. She noted that, like many others present who had worked at other institutions, she was aware that many other places did not have this as guidance, and it was something which just had to be complied with. Jo-Anne reiterated the need for trust and respect for colleagues and noted she was being respectful and explaining what happens in other institutions. She reiterated that it was guidance within Aberdeen but in other institutions where she had worked numbers had been required to exceed 20 and this hadn't been guidance. The reason it was guidance was because it was for colleagues in the room to have conversations with line managers about workload; it was for Heads of Schools to review portfolios. The accountability for programme portfolios lay with schools and the document was providing guidance around sector standards. She supported the point made by Rhiannon around student engagement and, whether or not students attended classes, and that this had to be taken into account also. She noted that the Guidance seemed to be landing in a controversial way and she was struggling to understand the concerns, as it was up to individual schools to make the decision.

- 65.16 Jen Walklate, School of Social Science noted that guidance or policy was essentially just semantics but noted that it was not about some sort of hidden agenda or anything like that but suggested that when something was written down that it may be instrumentalised and utilised in very specific ways and that this was what underlay some of the concerns. In the context of online and on-demand learning, and the six entry points each year, she questioned how a minimum course requirement of 15 aligned with entry that would happen every two months and suggested she was unable to see how this would reduce her particular workload and requested some feedback and information on this.
- 65.17 Jo-Anne confirmed that the on-line developments were still in their very early stages and discussions to date had focussed on establishing what worked and what did not work within the UK, and globally, and she confirmed that this was something for discussion. In the context of online programme numbers, she noted she had great ambitions for this, based on the amazing work undertaken by the Institution and would certainly be expecting far in excess of 15 students to be joining per intake. From her experience she noted that hitting the market in the right way, with the right programmes, and that were providing a great student experience, 15 students was very, very achievable. Associated with that was consideration of how staff workloads were managed and how those students were supported, but she noted that was a separate conversation but to attract those numbers was achievable.
- 65.18 Jen asked whether the guidance was being applied to on-demand courses as well?
- 65.19 Jo-Anne confirmed that, although there were some different considerations for online courses, in general, 15 was a principle to be applied across the board.
- 65.20 The Principal noted that perhaps Jen's final point was something which required further reflection. He commented that arithmetically it was inevitable that workload would rise with the number of courses on offer and being delivered at any point in time went up, so the question became how to manage that. He suggested there was a collective responsibility to ensure that workload was allocated fairly and that meant that if a disproportionately large number of small courses were being run there must be a disproportionately large number of large courses being run, and therefore workloads were inevitably excessive and unequal. He stressed the need to provide the course portfolio that worked best for the University as a whole. He therefore requested that members took account of the collective interest, not just of Senate, but that of the whole academic community, the whole professional services community, the student community which needed to be sure it was receiving a fair and high-quality level of instruction. He further stressed that all of these factors needed to be taken into account when making a judgement about the applicability of the guidance within individual schools.

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH VISION

- 66.1 Stuart Piertney, Dean for Postgraduate Research gave a [presentation](#) to Senate. In the presentation he updated them on characteristics of the current research student population and factors impacting it. He also outlined plans for future arrangements for administration and support for postgraduate research students. Following the presentation there was an opportunity for discussion and questions.
- 66.2 Israel Osofero, School of Engineering commented that the first experience that a PGR student would have of the University was when they applied and suggested that it might be worthwhile to look again at the application process in order to determine how long it was before prospective students received a response and noted that this took a long time with files being sent to various individuals and that this all took time. The system of application itself potentially delays any response which already does not present the Institution well to potential PGR students. He also noted that PGR students formed a strong part of the University's research community and them having the opportunity to interact, not just with their supervisors, but others in the school in a regular yearly symposium or workshop, or other informal opportunities, was good for them which returned to the theme of space which would form part of Reimagining the Campuses. He suggested the need for spaces where students and staff were able in interact on a regular basis as, from his experience, as potentially working well.

- 66.3 Dave Cornwell, School of Geosciences asked, in the context of the highlighted 20% disabled students, he suggested that the figure was potentially much higher as many PGR students did not disclose things for various reasons, and noted, in terms of the processes for supporting disabled students, much of it was focussed on undergraduate students and asked whether the future plans included having definitive support for disabled PGR students?
- 66.4 Diane Skatun, MMSN noted, moving to the end of the PGR process, that there had been an email within her School in November which had stated that due to cost implications all PGR vivas would be held online unless there were extenuating circumstances. She noted that from her reading of the Regulations this was not correct and that vivas should be held in-person and she asked for clarification of this.
- 66.5 Aravinda Guntupalli, MMSN commented that, from her experience in the context of training and development, students reported that the training provided was too general and not discipline specific enough. For example, literature reviews were undertaken so differently in Sociology when compared with MMSN and so students were not being provided with the tools expected of them and this was being reported as a consistent frustration. She suggested that in undertaking the exercise lots of students nearing the end of the process should be included. She highlighted the potential impact this sort of thing might have on reputation.
- 66.6 A member suggested that when students were admitted an online training platform should be activated for them so that they were able to make use of this prior to the start of term. She also noted that, in the context of disabled students, a commitment had been given to providing scholarships to Palestinian students and asked whether this would be honoured. She further commented on the knowledge gap between the research proposed by students applying and those students who had been assigned to existing funded projects. She suggested that the latter group should not be challenged regarding knowledge gaps as this had already been acknowledged when the funding had been granted.
- 66.7 Responding to the comments made, Stuart noted that there was recognition that the application process was complicated which was further complicated by the different routes into PhD study having different requirements. He noted that it was hoped to develop a single portal which would make these routes clear and have the appropriate support in place to ensure students have the best chance available to them regardless of the application route. He noted that the aspect of interacting across disciplines was already recognised as being an important part of the PhD journey and central to the 2040 ambitions and ways were being sought to enhance this. He noted that it was rewarding to see the numbers of students identifying disability needs that required support was rising, signalling increasing confidence within the student body to enable them to do so and that required the University to ensure inclusive adaptations were available to match this. He agreed that much support was UG focussed and that this was not necessarily appropriate for research students. He suggested more consideration was required for adjustments to make sure PhD vivas were inclusive. He noted that from his scrutiny of Viva Regulations there was no requirement that vivas be held in-person, but that the university was required to ensure that students were not disadvantaged as a result of that. He stressed that where vivas were online the guidance was that the Internal Examiner and the student should be on campus in Aberdeen, except in the situations where the student was off campus. He acknowledged that increasingly there were a lot of off-campus students, and this required the regulations to operate to accommodate this.

IP, EQUITY & REVENUE SHARING POLICY

- 67.1 Heather Morgan, Dean for Enterprise & Innovation provided an update on the Policy due for consideration by the Court Commercialisation Committee. She highlighted that the revised policy was the outcome of the Intellectual Property Exploitation and Revenue Sharing Policy Task & Finish Group which had been established as a Sub-Group of the University Enterprise and Innovation Committee. The overarching purpose of the Group had been to review the University's current policy to ensure that it was fit for purpose and aligned with Institutional ambitions around commercialisation of intellectual property in support of the Aberdeen 2040 strategic objectives,

the Regional Economic Strategy, Scotland's National Innovation Strategy and Entrepreneurial Campus Blueprint.

- 67.2 She highlighted the key changes proposed in the revised policy as being a proposal to move away from the University's current Policy of an equity stake in its spin-out companies that was not less than 21% pre-investment, to a position of between 5 & 25% and also incentivising commercialisation by providing inventors and contributors to IP development with a more generous share of licensing income than the current fixed level of 33.3%. The revised document also integrated the information, formerly within a separate annex to the Policy, into a single document.
- 67.3 The Principal noted the position of the revised Policy was generally more favourable to university staff and ensured a better return.
- 67.4 Bettina Platt, MMSN asked for clarification regarding the share taken. She noted, for example that some institutions like Cambridge took a 0% share and queried why staff were being asked to give away such a significant portion of their ideas and research suggesting that the universities with the biggest successes in terms of spinouts seemed to take the smallest percentages.
- 67.5 Responding, Heather noted that practises at other institutions had been considered as possible alternative models to the current blanket approach at Aberdeen and so it was suggested that between 5 and 25% would be taken depending on the sector and the University's investment. She exemplified with a case of software which had been developed in University time, the University would take a low-level cut in order to secure investment. However, with something which the University had invested in and underwritten over a twenty-year period, would require a much larger share in recognition of this. She noted that this would be considered on a case-by-case basis and that the University was following the guidance from HM Treasury based on a review of all models offered by universities.
- 67.6 Martin Mills, School of Social Science commented that prior to the revised policy Aberdeen had had a particularly parsimonious revenue sharing approach and suggested that the revisions were moving in the right direction. He noted that this was an evolving area with the revisions being better than the previous policy. Martin further noted that the University retaining the rights on PG research aligned with charity law which required protection of IPR in order that they may be used for its charitable purposes. He added that this also prevented large companies coming in and using university facilities as part of a PhD and then taking the patent away. In that context, he noted that where research students felt the need to take their IPR away in order to achieve the charitable goals, they should negotiate that.

REIMAGINING THE CAMPUSES UPDATE

- 68.1 Karl Leydecker, Senior Vice-Principal highlighted that the paper set out clearly the recommendations which would be taken forward to Court later in the month. He stressed that the recommendations in the paper were those pertaining most explicitly to Education and Research while delivering a clean and efficient estate. He noted that there had been a lot of consultation on the recommendations already and asked for members to provide an academic view on the paper.
- 68.2 Malcom Harvey, School of Social Science noted that Karl had alluded to the consultation and asked for details of the number of responses received and the key themes which had emerged through the consultation and how these would be fed into the plan.
- 68.3 Morag Beers, Director of Estates & Facilities responded to confirm that there had been over 600 visitors to the three locations, together with approximately 130 online responses. She confirmed that every single submission had been read and had been taken into account by the four working groups putting together the recommendations. The recommendations had received a lot of scrutiny from the Project Board. She noted that the comments had fed into the recommendations which reflected a balance between the Legal & Technical Group within the Estates and Digital Teams, married up with the consultations and the work of the Work Groups

and hence there was a good balance of preferences with actions which were sensible for the Estate.

- 68.4 The Principal confirmed that the numbers sought by Malcolm were contained within the paper.
- 68.5 Morag confirmed that the information was available, and she would send it on if required.
- 68.6 Karen Scott, MMSN noted that she had attended the Scottish Government Group on Sustainability and Net Zero Development which had included an interesting presentation on retrofitting buildings and commented that due to the age of many university buildings this seemed something that should be being considered and asked if this was the case.
- 68.7 Jen Walklate, School of Social Science asked for more details of the pilot studies referred to within the report and what they were expected to look like and how staff's already articulated view would feed into these?
- 68.8 Diane Skatun, MMSN asked about the 'out of hours zone' noting that she often worked after 6pm and that the idea of needing to get up from her desk to find a hot-desk to continue working was a concern. She noted that she understood that it did not make sense to have all University offices available at all times, but suggested that the 6pm deadlines suggested in the paper seemed to be very early.
- 68.9 Euan Bain, School of Engineering noted that the comments he was supplying came from the School's education away day which had taken place in April, and he was representing the views of 52 staff members. From that session held in the School, there were significant concerns around the parts of the consultation which had related to offices and that then formed part of the recommendations. Members of academic staff were very concerned and eager to ensure that as the consultation progressed the Board was proactive in consulting with all members of academic staff within schools. He suggested that taking roadshows around schools would be one way to ensure that those involved in making decisions understood all elements of the academic role as it related to education and research and pastoral care and how office space fitted into that. Office space was seen as a sanctuary for deep thought which was necessary for education and research and a safe space for confidential discussions and to support students or academic staff in crisis. He asked that as the process went forward these consultations took place. He also noted, like Diane, that since the release of the report there had been a lot of concern around the proposed 'late-working zones' and the 6pm deadlines. He elaborated, noting he operated an open-door policy to colleagues and students and that this often led to his 'working day' starting after 5pm and that part of the policy possibly impacted on that and the degree to which it was possible to have an open-door policy. On behalf of the Directors of Education he noted that the group had a significant amount of experience of responding on behalf of schools, and therefore requested that they be consulted with directly on proposals for education spaces. He also asked that the matter of large computing lab space availability be addressed as part of the review as there were insufficient large spaces currently which required the scheduling of additional teaching sessions.
- 68.10 Responding on net zero and retrofitting, Morag confirmed that a Net Zero Strategy would be developed and that it made sense to determine how to best use the buildings already in existence which would be about improving buildings and included reaching net zero standards. She highlighted that to be an efficient estate included looking at utility costs and energy emissions and that some facilities were very costly to run, and it was particularly inefficient to keep them open for one person wishing to work late. She noted that the pockets of need for these facilities had to be understood better in order to become more efficient and that this need for understanding, was reflected in the report. She suggested that academics were producing the output that sells and that the Estates role had to be to produce the spaces to facilitate that output, and there would be a lot of consultation to ensure the fit required could be delivered. She suggested that staff would see a change in the way the estates service was delivered. She confirmed that the Directors of Education would form part of developments and also that there was an awareness of the need to look in detail at IT space requirements. She also

confirmed that the issue of individual offices would form part of the discussions around the types of spaces required. Morag added that decisions would not be made by her personally but within the governance framework of Estates Committee, the Senior Management Team and Finance and Resourcing Committee.

- 68.11 Drawing discussion to a close the Principal reminded members that this was a long-term project and nothing would happen quickly. He noted that the main outputs from the papers under consideration were sets of reviews, working groups and workstreams and that there would be plenty of opportunities for staff to get involved with these. Noting that the meeting was the last of the academic year the Principal closed the meeting.

[Clerk's note: subsequent to the meeting closure, Iliia Xypolia requested an extension to the meeting. It was confirmed that the meeting had concluded at its scheduled time and no extension could be accommodated.]

ROUTINE BUSINESS

SENATE ELECTIONS

- 69.1 Senate noted the outcomes of the Senate elections held in May 2024

ELECTION OF THE RECTOR

- 70.1 Senate noted the timeline approved by the Senate Business Committee, to be forwarded to the University Court, for the election for University Rector, to take up office on 1 January 2025

UEC REPORT TO SENATE

- 71.1 Senate noted the routine report from the University Education Committee

URC REPORT TO SENATE

- 72.1 Senate noted the routine report from the University Research Committee

QAC REPORT TO SENATE

- 73.1 Senate noted the routine report from the Quality Assurance Committee