

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

SENATUS ACADEMICUS

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 FEBRUARY 2024

Present: Rasha Abu Eid, Waheed Afzal, Sanaa Al-Azawi, Scott Allan, Joanne Anderson, Sumeet Aphale, Euan Bain, Simon Bains, Martin Barker, William Barras, John Barrow, Harminder Battu, Nigel Beacham, Daniel Berg, Siladitya Bhattacharya, Thomas Bodey, Jason Bohan, George Boyne, Alex Brasier, Ainhoa Burgos Aguilera, Fred Byrne, Andre Justin Carpio, Alessandra Cecolin, Aarushi Chakraborty, Delma Childers, Sandie Cleland, Chris Collins, Matthew Collinson, Irene Couzigou, Rebecca Crozier, Chantal den Daas, Muhammad Faraaz Dheen Mohamed, Ian Greener, Andrew Dilley, Pete Edwards, Marie-Luise Ehrenschwendtner, Nick Forsyth, Karin Friedrich, Toni Gibson, Kevhvan Graham, Aravinda Meera Guntupalli, Peter Henderson, Richard Hepworth-Young, Constanze Hesse, Jonathan Hicks, Niels Imrie, Gareth Jones, Dragan Jovcic, Kirsty Kiezebrink, Kate Kostick, Rhiannon Ledwell, Karl Leydecker, Beth Lord, Vasilis Louca, Laura McCann, David Mcgloin, Michelle Macleod, David McLernon, Alan Macpherson, Sam Martin, Martin Mills, Samantha Miller, Heather Morgan, Khalifa Muhammad, David Muirhead, Jo-Anne Murray, Mintu Nath, Sam Newington, Nir Oren, Adelaja Israel Osofero, Shane Painter, Graeme Paton, Ekaterina Pavlovskaia, Stuart Piertney, Bettina Platt, Amudha Poobalan, Ann Rajnicek, Brice Rea, Joost Rommers, Miles Rothoerl, Thereza Raquel Sales de Aguiar, Joachim Schaper, Karen Scott, Charlaine Simpson, Diane Skåtun, John Skåtun, Anne-Michelle Slater, Alan Speight, Valerie Speirs, Srinivas Sriramula, Mary Stephen, Lorna Stewart, Fiona Stoddard, Bert Timmermans, Steve Tucker, Neil Vargesson, Rebecca Walker, Jennifer Walklate, Ursula Witte, Ilia Xypolia, Zeray Yihdego

Apologies: Lesley Anderson, William Barlow, Greg Gordon, Beatriz Goulao, Gary Macfarlane

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- 23.1 The Principal opened the meeting. 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 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. Members were reminded that, while all staff and students are welcome to attend Senate, only members are permitted to contribute to debate. They were also reminded that, as laid out in the Standing Orders, any motions for discussion must be related to items already on the agenda. Any voting would take place using the auditorium functionality for those in the room and Forms within the chat for those on Teams.
- 23.2 Diane Skatun, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition requested that the routine report from the University Research Committee (URC) be moved up the agenda for discussion.
- 23.3 Ilia Xypolia, School of Social Science requested that the Honorary Degree voting be removed from the agenda as documentation had not been accessible to those not using Decision Time. After it was established that other members had encountered similar issues accessing the webpage, it was agreed that the honorary degree nominations would be deferred until a later date.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF 8 NOVEMBER 2023 AND
THE ADDITIONAL MEETING OF 6 DECEMBER 2023**

- 24.1 Senate approved the minutes from the meetings held on 8 November and 6 December 2023.

GRADUATION LOCATION DECISION

- 25.1 Tracey Slaven, University Secretary reported, and Senate noted, the outcome of the vote by circulation taken to expedite graduation planning for summer 2024. Senate had voted 71 to approve the proposal, 2 not to approve with 6 abstentions and the vote was therefore carried.

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

- 26.1 In addition to his usual written report, the Principal expressed his pleasure at seeing so much educational and research achievement at a time of such challenge for the sector and the Institution. The Principal indicated his willingness to take questions on the written report and commented on the situation in Higher Education globally as well as the University's own circumstances. He noted that restricted international student recruitment to the UK had been discussed at the previous meeting of Senate and expressed his disappointment to see this happening in other countries too. Across the globe there seemed to be a swing against international student recruitment. He noted his expectation that flows of international students would continue to be suppressed, at least in the short term. He also noted the even more troubling possibility that this could be construed as being part of a move against internationalisation, something he considered to be troubling for the academy nationally and for the University in particular, given its high ranking on international outlook. He stressed that the University, individually and collectively must strive to remain open to internationalism, and international student recruitment, in particular.
- 26.2 The Principal highlighted the disposition of the UK governments', and others, attitudes towards higher education. He noted that the UK government appeared to be hostile towards higher education and that the Scottish Government, while being more benign in its words, was a little hostile in its funding decisions to the extent that in real terms funding declined year after year, and in 2024/25 would decline in cash terms also. He noted a range of global movements and governmental dispositions that the University must do its best to navigate through. He further noted local circumstances, as detailed in his update to the University community earlier in the week, which explained revenue-raising efforts and short-term constraints on costs which together were intended to ensure the University remained financially sustainable. He noted the many moving parts to the situation: the enhanced early-retirement scheme (with voluntary severance available on the same terms) being run, with the closing date for expressions of interest being Friday 16 February meaning that the University would start to be better informed of the possible outcome from the scheme in the following week. Information on this, and all the other aspects of the financial circumstances would be provided to Court at its meeting on 28 February. As the judgement on finances was one for Court to make, the Principal indicated that he would be in a better place to provide an update after Court had met on 28 February. He noted his optimism, seeing applications for voluntary severance and early retirement coming in, regarding financial sustainability although remaining very disappointed that the University found itself in the current circumstances of losing colleagues and the size of the workforce declining. The Principal indicated he was happy to take questions on the written report and his update bearing in mind, however, he was not in a position to make financial decisions at the current time. He noted decisions were, quite properly, the preserve of Court.
- 26.3 Jen Walklate, School of Social Science commented that she felt it was important to acknowledge the depth of concern amongst the university community. She noted that throughout her university career, both as a student and staff member, she had never been part of an institution which had the sort of sense of community that Aberdeen does and how much she had appreciated this. She added that since she joined in 2019, she had also become aware that the community also had a collective 'trauma' related to change

and disruption. The psychological and social implications of the last twenty years within the University were still being felt. Given this, she noted that it was important to acknowledge the sense of fear, and also acknowledge everyone who is part of that community needs to commit to the restoration of the sense of community otherwise the University was heading down a tunnel that was not filled with goodwill. She noted that she was not expecting a response to her statement but that she felt it important to acknowledge the current position.

- 26.4 The Principal thanked Jen for her statement which he commented seemed to reflect current concerns accurately across the Institution. He noted his wish that the University would stabilise soon and be able to move to a more positive position. He recognised the position described in her statement and shared the sentiment.
- 26.5 Alessandra Cecolin, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History asked a question in relation to the bad press the University had received in connection with issues around the School of Language, Literature, Music & Visual Culture. She queried what the Senior Management Team was thinking in terms of reparation to repair the reputational damage done to the University in terms of the possible closure of Languages.
- 26.6 The Principal asked Karl Leydecker, Senior Vice-Principal to provide an update on where that work had moved, noting that he believed things were now looking more positive.
- 26.7 Responding, Karl confirmed that Modern Languages was not to be closed. This had been very clear since the December meeting of Court, when it had been agreed that the consultation would focus on the option to retain the combined honours UG programmes together with other programmes within languages, and he noted that this message had been communicated very clearly. He indicated that, since January, there had been a very strong engagement from within the School with the new approach to the consultation. This had led to a proposition from the staff within the School which set out some very positive ideas in relation to both income growth and rationalisation of the curriculum including in partnership with other schools to deliver the programmes in the future. He indicated that this had been received in the previous week and there had been regular meetings of the Standing Group, chaired by the Head of Modern Languages, and the Steering Group which he chaired; there had been weekly meetings throughout January and a meeting following the submission of the consultation document, where the document was welcomed. He indicated that a paper would be put to Court and work was currently ongoing to submit that document within the next few days. The paper would broadly welcome the response to the consultation from Languages and ask for the reaffirmation of the decision of Court that the University should continue to offer Modern Language degrees at joint honours level, Masters' and PhD. He noted that good prospects for growth in income had been identified, starting next year, but predominantly following in future years. At the same time, he noted there had been a considerable number of expressions of interest in voluntary severance from staff in Modern Languages and from across the School as part of the attempts to address the savings targets of each school. He expressed his optimism that really good progress had been made with discussions and that it would be possible to take a document to Court which was broadly the product of that Standing Group within Modern Languages and that it had been possible to endorse the majority of the proposals from the Standing Group although there was still work to be done to ensure that everything remained sustainable into the future. He thanked the staff in Modern Languages who had worked hard in difficult circumstances to produce the proposal and he noted his optimism about being in a much more positive place than we had been. He stressed the importance of the role of the community, if it wanted Modern Languages to thrive, not to perpetuate stories about Modern Languages being closed as that was very far from the truth. He noted the importance of the community's role in giving languages the best possible chance of recruiting students in September, by changing that narrative both within the University and outside it.

- 26.8 Karin Friedrich, School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History (DHPA) noted that there had been a meeting between DHPA and the School of Language, Literature, Music & Visual Culture (LLMVC) that week with the two Heads of School to present them with plans a possible merger of the two schools and the constituency of DHPA was wondering when Senate would receive any such merger plans to discuss and give its view and recommendations? She noted that it was Senate's role to strategise and make recommendations to Court about any restructuring of the academic units of the University. In addition, the constituency was wondering what the benefits would be for DHPA to merge with LLMVC, a School identified as having a large deficit? She asked if there were any risk assessments attached to this and had they been undertaken to assess the impact on REF etc?
- 26.9 Responding, the Principal indicated that if a formal proposal for merger were to come forward from the schools, it would of course come to Senate. Due process would be observed, and Senate would have an opportunity to comment on any proposals made. He noted that he would not expect these proposals to come forward unless they were supported by staff within the Schools, and unless very clear academic benefits could be demonstrated. Before any such proposals could be considered at Senate they would need to be developed as described.
- 26.10 Brice Rea, School of Geosciences commented that he was very happy to hear that any mergers would be driven by the schools concerned. He noted that Geosciences had been involved in some of the information circulated and that there seemed to be some confusion as to where this would be driven from, but he was pleased to hear that this would be under the direction and decision of the schools concerned. He noted that he was pleased to hear it was a matter for the schools concerned and he would gladly take this back to his School. In relation to the situation discussed in Modern Languages he noted that he had made a request at the extraordinary Senate in December that an agreed dataset be developed, and asked if data had been agreed between the Steering Group and the School and also, as Senate saw the numbers originally in December, if there was an agreed dataset, would it be possible for Senate to have sight of it, whether the figures were better or worse?
- 26.11 Karl confirmed that Hulda Sveinsdottir, Director of Planning was asked to lead a group to look at the data and she has produced an extensive set of data, independent of the Steering Group, working closely with staff in Languages and he would be pleased for that to be circulated to Senate as an independent document from Planning setting out all sorts of data about student load and applications etc and REF. He confirmed the document existed and that he had not had any input into the shape of it. It stood as an independent document agreed by the staff of Modern Languages.
- 26.12 Noting an element of element of being pedantic, Brice acknowledged that Hulda had produced the figures but queried whether these had been agreed by the staff in languages?
- 26.13 Karl confirmed that data produced by the Director of Planning was beyond doubt and that the dataset would form an appendix to the report to Court. He noted that the 'heat' had gone out of the data issues and there was a set of data which everyone trusts because it had been produced independently by the Planning Team. **Action: KL/RB**
- 26.14 Alan MacPherson, School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual culture asked if given the Principal's statement on Monday that 'we are doing absolutely everything possible to prevent compulsory redundancies', would successful University-wide cost-saving and income generating measures as outlined in the statement issued on Monday mitigate the need for compulsory redundancies in MLTI, LLMVC more broadly, or other Schools? And, if not, was it true that absolutely everything possible was being done to prevent compulsory redundancies?
- 26.15 *It is hoped that the measures set out by the Principal, including financial support for the enhanced retirement scheme and voluntary severance, the continuing staff recruitment freeze, the operational savings, and the rigorous strategic drive to generate extra income across the full range of sources will allow Schools to achieve the savings required.*

[Clerk's note: due to technical issues with the sound link to Teams, Alan Macpherson's question (26.14) was raised in Teams chat at the request of the University Secretary and answered outside the meeting]

- 26.16 Richard Hepworth-Young, School of Natural & Computing Sciences asked a question to follow up Alessandra's (26.5 above) about reputational damage and how the University could act to repair that.
- 26.17 Noting that he thought this had been answered, the Principal asked Karl if there was anything further he wished to add to his answer.
- 26.18 Karl reiterated that by speaking with a clear voice to the external world about the position with Modern Languages was the best way, in his view, to repair the damage done. He noted that things had moved on very considerably in the discussions with the school and that was not necessarily always reflected in what was seen in the external environment and it was very important that this was addressed collectively as a team.
- 26.19 Alex Brasier, School of Geosciences noted that there were some interesting and exciting things going on within the University in the sciences at present with schools looking at how better to integrate, at whatever level within research and teaching. There were exciting ideas coming out from Reimagining the Campuses, for example a science quarter and an arts quarter and he wondered how strategic oversight of those was ensured. He asked if it would be appropriate to consider having a champion for each area within the Senior Management Team (SMT) to ensure coordination? He noted that conversations were going on at various different levels and perhaps there was a way to integrate this better?
- 26.20 The Principal replied highlighting everyone in the SMT had cross-University responsibility to take into account the needs of every discipline. He asked Pete Edwards, Vice-Principal (Regional Engagement) to expand further as he was leading the Reimagining the Campuses project.
- 26.21 Pete responded indicating he felt it was completely correct to say that there were some very creative and imaginative ideas emerging from the Reimagining the Campuses work which he was leading with Morag Beers, Director of Estates. He noted that the appropriate place for those ideas to be discussed was at SMT in the first instance, and then a report would be taken to Court in June which would outline key recommendations and actions which should flow from the Reimagining the Campuses work. It would be at that point that it would be appropriate to look at who the most appropriate champions were for taking forward the strands from the Reimagining the Campuses work.
- 26.22 Responding to Alex, the Principal noted that while he could see his point, he felt it was important not to add another layer to the structure. Heads of School were trusted to ensure that staff were talking to each other within cognate disciplines, something which seemed to be happening; there were Deans whose responsibilities include connecting across the disciplines and similarly, as he had mentioned previously, it was also the responsibility of SMT to look for those connections and strengthen them. If weaknesses were identified then they would be strengthened but the Principal indicated that he was not willing to devote further academic time to this currently.
- 26.23 Sam Newington School of DHPA noted there had been reference to institutional reputation and asked:
- To what extent is there an outreach strategy by SMT to external bodies in order to form partnerships, commercial enterprise and drawing upon potential donors to support particular activities (such as research, education etc..)? and
 - Also, is a further strategy being considered to negotiate with sector and government bodies?
- 26.24 *A renewed focus on commercialisation of academic research is at the heart of a new institutional innovation strategy, supported by Research & Innovation. This targets growth in consultancy, contract, and collaborative industry research, CPD activities and formation*

of spin-out companies. Schools recently developed their own action plans in support of growing such activity.

Through the activity of the Development & Alumni Relations directorate we proactively engage with potential donors through regular alumni annual giving appeals, individual giving (major gifts), legacy giving, trusts and foundations and corporates. Over the last two financial years, over £9M has been disbursed to the University to support scholarships, student hardship, capital projects and academic endeavour. We are planning to launch a phased fundraising campaign that will support the University in achieving the goals and commitments outlined in Aberdeen 2040.

Proactive engagement with sector and government bodies is undertaken on a regular basis. The University is represented on key University Scotland committees including the Funding Policy Group and directly engaged with Universities UK networks, as well as through direct engagements by the Principal and Senior Governor with Scottish and UK Ministers. In support of this, the Public Affairs team in External Relations engage with local and central government as well as representative bodies in the private and public sector, to promote the University's research and education.

[Clerk's note: due to technical issues with the sound link to Teams, Sam Newington's question (26.23) was raised in Teams Chat at the request of the University Secretary and was answered outside the meeting]

- 26.25 Joanne Anderson, School of DHPA, returned to the issue of potential mergers between schools. She thanked the Principal for his outline of the process and assurance that the consent of the schools involved would be expected before any proposal would go to Court.
- 26.26 The Principal indicated that it would be the support of the schools rather than the consent.
- 26.27 Joanne continued noting that the idea had only been conveyed to the two schools in question that Monday she noted that this seemed a short lead in time to the Court meeting on 28 February and she queried the timeliness of this and whether, as it was expressed, an aspect of the austerity measures at the moment but rather an outcome and whether due time would be given to schools should they wish to consider for longer the merits of decisions just to make sure they are not the wrong thing to do because decisions are having to be made so rapidly at present.
- 26.28 The Principal confirmed that time would be given. He noted that at the current time, however, there was no proposal going to Court for its meeting of 28 February that schools should merge. This was not in the paper, he indicated that he was aware that discussions were going on, but he wouldn't expect a fully formed proposal to be going to Court before, possibly its June meeting. There were at least four months to reflect on these ideas and if they were considered to have merit, most importantly academic benefit for education and research, they would be taken forward.
- 26.29 Rhiannon Ledwell, Vice-President (Education) noted that the students also had concerns about mergers, and it seemed from the most recent presentation this this was more than a discussion, given that it had referred to structures 'will be' as if it were a foregone conclusion. Given within the presentation it had been indicated that the structure of the school was not known, or the timeline, yet it seemed like it was being discussed as something which would happen, she asked how it was anticipated that this would improve the student experience and how it was more than a mechanism to facilitate cuts in humanities disciplines. She also asked how students would be able to make representations in respect of any planned restructuring as this had been a massive problem during the Modern Languages consultation where there was only one poorly conducted online focus group and that unfortunately ended in an undergraduate student being poorly treated. She noted a need for much greater student representation than had been allowed in the most recent process and requests from the Minister for Higher Education for inclusion in the Steering Group, had been pushed aside so she was seeking assurance that everyone had learned from that.

- 26.30 The Principal indicated that Rhiannon's final point was simply wrong as the Minister for Higher Education's requests were not pushed aside. The Principal noted that he had already responded to her previous points in terms of what the purpose of any potential merger would be and that would be improvements in education and research, and he would expect that students would be involved directly in those discussions. He was unable to set out what the arrangements would be as it would depend partly on how the proposals developed. He indicated that he was aware Chris Collins wished to speak next.
- 26.31 Chris Collins, Head of School, LLMVC, confirmed that students would be involved in the process, noting that there was no proposal at that time. He noted that the Heads of the two Schools wanted people to begin to think about the possibility before any proposal was developed. He stressed the importance of the stage of the process currently, noting it was very early days. He highlighted a system existed within the University to ensure proper consultation around any such business case developed, and those procedures would be followed to the letter if required.
- 26.32 Ainhoa Burgos, Vice-President for Communities, AUSA noted that approaches to international student recruitment would be discussed at Court, but queried whether the University would be taking a passive approach to the UK Government's policies on immigration or would the University be adopting a more active approach and use its influence to get rid of the hostile environment and offer a fair international student experience?
- 26.33 Responding, Alan Speight, Vice-Principal (Global Engagement) indicated the University's commitment to its international students, and it was disappointed by the changes to visas for international students when they were announced and the impact that those have had in a wider sense. He noted that in the previous week, Scotland had released its International Education Strategy which had confirmed Scotland's commitment to International students, and international staff and its internationalisation agenda. He noted that a number of actions were in hand, for example scholarships, intended to try to overcome some of the consequences of the visa and other policy changes, however these are challenging to overcome.
- 26.34 Diane Skatun, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition (MMSN) returning to school mergers from the position of someone who had started in the School of Medicine, which had then had Medical Sciences added before having Nutrition added. She noted that, before the Principal had arrived, she did not recall ever having been asked or there being any consultation before they became the big school that they are. She queried that the Principal had said school 'consent' would not be sought, but 'support' would be asked for, and asked how support would be gauged?
- 26.35 The Principal noted that the stage of having worked out a detailed process to assess the level of support, had not yet been reached. This was partly because no proposals had been seen, certainly not at SMT. He noted that if there were not support within the schools concerned for a merger, he would not expect the merger to succeed. Without staff enthusiasm for a different structure, he could see no prospect for the merger to produce any positive benefits. He noted that was clearly a task for those who saw the positive benefits for merger, and he had no doubts there would be some or even many, to put those benefits forward and judge the level of enthusiasm for realising those benefits. He noted this would need to be a carefully structured process within each school, to elicit views and draw them together, and then make some formal proposals. He noted his surprise that this had not happened previously.
- 26.36 Fred Byrne, School Convenor for DHPA, AUSA noted that at December's additional meeting of Senate he had read some direct quotes from DHPA students doing joint degrees with languages or who had or are taking electives in languages and these quotes had shown that languages teaching staff were invaluable to students across the University and to the community beyond. The voices he had quoted, and other important voices, had been left out of the ongoing consultation between University Management and students. This was why around 14 students, supported by Student Council, had written an open letter

to the Principal, the Heads of School and the Senior Vice-Principal. He noted the open letter, available on The Gaudie website, had contained several requests: for students to be consulted in the languages consultations, not just those who are single honours language students, but also joint honours and those who had or could take electives in the future. He noted these were all important stakeholders who should be consulted in a meaningful manner. He also noted that they had requested that in any steering group an undergraduate and a postgraduate student should be included and, in light of recent news of further funding cuts and possible redundancies and mergers in other schools, including Geosciences, Biological Sciences, Social Science and DHPA that the student body should be similarly consulted. He further noted that, at that point, no response had been received to the open letter, he acknowledged that it had been sent less than one week previously but asked if there could be any comment? As a separate question, he asked if there could be comment on how the merger between LLMVC and DHPA would impact students?

26.37 Noting that he would ask Karl to respond, but in the context of the second question, he was unable to comment on a merger for which he had seen no proposals, and which had not been decided on.

26.38 Karl Leydecker, Senior Vice-Principal, noted that, in the context of the last point about mergers, he had already discussed the open letter with the Heads of School earlier that day the importance of involving students in any discussions which, as it had been made very clear, are in their infancy. He suggested that it might be helpful for the Student Convenors in those schools and the Heads of School to liaise. He had asked the Heads of School to do that in order that it might be determined how this might be achieved. With reference to the Languages consultation, he noted that a channel had been opened for ideas and thoughts to be submitted. A large number of those had been received and they were all considered. He noted that the open letter had included a number of positive endorsements of joint honours across the University. This had been listened to and was one of the reasons that continuation of joint honours degrees was a commitment that had been made. To say that the student feedback had not been taken on board was not accurate. The feedback had been taken on board and played a part in shaping the recommendation which had been taken to Court in December. He further highlighted that a focus group had been organised, together with an additional meeting and within the new arrangements for the governance of the consultation in January students had been added to the Standing Group in Modern Languages so they had had a direct input into the process of producing the response to the consultation. In addition, a number of students were involved in the sub-groups which operated within Modern Languages. He acknowledged that the process may not have been perfect, but efforts had been made to involve students and lessons would be learned about how this might be done more effectively in the future. He noted that the University was completely committed to a culture of partnership working with students. He suggested that one of the parts of the response to the open letter would be to suggest a meeting with Jo-Anne Murray, the new Vice-Principal (Education) to include all School Convenors as a number of the signatures to the letter had been the School Convenors and others from AUSA, in order that lessons could be learned and good dialogue between student representatives and the University could be ensured. He noted that this would be vital for the process in the future. He apologised that a response had not yet been made, but confirmed it was being worked on.

26.39 The Principal confirmed that it was time to move on with the agenda.

COURT REPORT

27.1 Diane Skatun, on behalf of the Senate Assessors noted that there were two Court meetings to report on, 21 November 2023 and 12 December 2023. The first meeting in November was the scheduled meeting which had covered a broad agenda including Education, Research, Finance and reports from the Court Committees. She noted that the minutes for this meeting had been published and were accessible from the Court website. The second meeting had been an additional meeting which had discussed two items: an

updated financial recovery plan and the consultation in relation to Modern Language teaching. She noted that the financial recovery plan had been in draft form and would be presented to Court again at the end of February. She further noted that the University had been updated on the position in relation to the Modern Languages consultation with the press release which had gone out on the day of the Court meeting. She reassured Senate that Court were having frank, robust and honest discussions. She referred Senate to point 11.2 of the Court Report which articulated Court's appreciation of the concern shown by Senate, and Court's awareness of the governance structure and its place within it. Court recognised the importance of constructive dialogue between the various elements of the structure. She noted that the Senate Assessors were always willing to talk to members who wished anything clarified.

- 27.2 Karin Friedrich, School of DHPA noted that Senate had not received the Monthly Management Reports (MMR) for December and January and she asked when these would be made available?
- 27.3 Tracey Slaven, University Secretary confirmed that the reports would be circulated shortly but an extra step had had to be added to the process because the internal, confidential document had been shared outside the immediate University community. As a result, she was having to make sure that references to any commercially sensitive information, or third-party information and such, were redacted before it was shared.

INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

- 28.1 Nick Forsyth, Vice-Principal (Research) and the recently appointed Interdisciplinary Research Directors gave a [presentation](#) to Senate.
- 28.2 The presentation provided an overview of activities around the five themes:
- Energy Transition
 - Social Inclusion and Cultural Diversity
 - Environment and Biodiversity
 - Data and Artificial Intelligence
 - Health, Nutrition and Wellbeing
- 28.3 Senate noted that, since the establishment of the themes, the University had appointed 14 Interdisciplinary Fellows and established 12 PhD studentships.
- 28.4 Senate noted that funding awards made to date associated with the interdisciplinary themes amounted to £107,544,105. The forward focus of the Institute would focus on the production of impactful and high-quality research publications feeding into REF2029. Senate further noted that impact was emerging from the themes in areas with strong linkages to industry and to policy makers. The future work of the Institute was noted to include intentions to:
- Reinforce original brand as Interdisciplinary Institute creating equal balance across research and education;
 - Provide University-wide interdisciplinary leadership promoting joined-up thinking;
 - Be a source of influence and guide policymakers – emphasis on external engagement;
 - Support REF via interdisciplinary insight into Environment Statements, providing lateral thinking to Impact Case Studies, and broadening scope of outputs;
 - Identify interdisciplinary research and teaching opportunities and foster cross-school collaborations;
 - Create opportunities and links with key internal and external stakeholders;
 - Enable more and broader collaborations and support interdisciplinary bid development;
 - Play an active and continuing role in University citizenship;

- 28.5 Following the presentation the Principal invited questions.
- 28.6 Joachim Schaper, School of DHPA asked about the Interdisciplinary Lounge, referred to in the presentation, and queried what could be done to turn the space into one that could be 'dropped into'. He noted that at the start of the meeting he had asked Nir whether he had five minutes as he had a scientific question and was such a forum available where people could meet at regular times and drop-in, hoping the colleague they needed was there. He noted that the serendipity of such things was often very helpful, and he asked what could be done to help serendipity and encourage people to do creative stuff and talk to people and get ideas?
- 28.7 Nick noted it was a good point and asked Georgios to respond.
- 28.8 Georgios Leontidis, Director, Interdisciplinary Centre for Data & Artificial Intelligence detailed that the space was located within Crombie Hall and had just been refurbished. The intention was to use this as a space for colleagues across the university to come together in a neutral space. He noted that, during the day, students had been using the space and had been engaged in a grand challenges competition. He noted that they were happy to arrange for others to use the space and to host this sort of thing. It was not intended to become another siloed space it was intended to be a space for the community to come together. He encouraged anyone with ideas about using the space to let them know.
- 28.9 John Underhill, Director, Interdisciplinary Centre for Energy Transition noted that there had been an interdisciplinary forum and they had been unsure how many people to expect and were delighted when 160 people attended including students with their posters. The event had been a crucible for discussions and the sort of serendipity Joachim had referred to leading to proposals which otherwise might not have been written. He noted that the more this was done, the better the opportunities would be, in terms of the national competitions Nick referred to, and proposals being relevant and credible for bids but this was something which needed to be made to happen. The Forum would be repeated in the current year, and he encouraged staff to attend.
- 28.10 The Principal asked Georgios whether free coffee was available in the Interdisciplinary Lounge?
- 28.11 Georgios indicated he was making plans and if the Principal wished to come he would make him a coffee.
- 28.12 The Principal added that he thought it was well established in the literature that high quality coffee was one of the best attractors for interdisciplinary discussions and he encouraged the Directors to make this an evidence-based exercise.
- 28.13 Kate Kostick, School of Engineering Convenor, asked, from a postgraduate perspective, what was planned to engage undergraduates? Would there be an increase in electives working in other schools for them to gain experience of the interdisciplinary environment?
- 28.14 Responding, David Burslem, Director, Interdisciplinary Centre for Environment and Biodiversity, indicated that this was something he had alluded to before. He suggested that the University should be undertaking a root and branch look to determine whether a more attractive and relevant model could be offered to undergraduates and postgraduate taught students. He noted that discussions with the new Vice-Principal (Education) would be important as if we became too fixed in what we already deliver we risked not being relevant to the employment market or to industry in terms of students being engaged in the key topics. He noted his view, that the five interdisciplinary areas should be opportunities to look at the connections and synergies. However, he noted, that this would mean changing some of the current structures where the FTE goes to the school where the undergraduate's programme is located, and they cannot necessarily change programme. He noted that this was maybe the time to ask the difficult questions and seek the best outcomes that face the undergraduates and help us to recruit the best talent in the country.

- 28.15 The Principal indicated he would take a few more questions before moving on to Research Impact.
- 28.16 Alex Brasier, School of Geosciences highlighted that one of the issues within the University was funding the research labs which are expensive. He noted that when he saw external collaborators on the slides, he saw dollar signs. This could offer ways to bring people in to use our facilities and would help to keep facilities open, keep research going and help get students into the labs and be exposed to external collaborators. He expressed the view that there were definitely opportunities for the interdisciplinary centres to link up a bit more with the core facilities of the University that are increasingly open to commercial work. He noted that he had asked locally about Geosciences labs which were potentially open to working with, for example the James Hutton Institute. A few years ago, working on a commercial collaboration in these labs would not have been considered, whereas now it was a possibility. He suggested that it was a good time to start having this type of discussion and to get the interdisciplinary leaders of the research groups talking to the research facilities.
- 28.17 Georgios Leontidis, Director, Interdisciplinary Centre for Data & Artificial Intelligence noted that he was part of the core facilities working group and he hoped that through himself they were starting to embed what they do. There hadn't been any engagement with the working group in the last few months due to the transition. For some ongoing projects partner universities could be using our facilities and we could be using theirs. There wasn't a divide between our facilities and those of others, but this should be about maximising what we all have access to. When proposals were being put together it should be more collaborative rather than being competitive in terms of facilities.
- 28.18 David added that the discussion about collaboration with the James Hutton Institute was looking to develop joint proposals using both institutions' facilities to maximum advantage.
- 28.19 The Principal indicated that questions would be taken from Karin, Brice and Ilia before moving on to Research Impact.
- 28.20 Karin Friedrich, School of DHPA asked how the interdisciplinary fellows had been distributed to the various areas as some had received two while others had five. She asked whether it was an opportunity currently, or in the future, to strengthen humanities. As had been alluded to by the Principal, within a sector generally under attack, it was particularly the humanities being attacked.
- 28.21 Responding, David noted that part of the challenge when the Directors had gone out to advert, had come from all the recruitment having been undertaken at the same time and the large number of applications which had been received had not been equally well calibrated across the areas. This would be considered as part of the future strategy for the Institute.
- 28.22 John noted that in time, the directors were committed to evening out distribution of fellows within the Institute.
- 28.23 David added that although the Fellows were notionally badged to one of the Challenge areas they do, in many cases, cross-over between them. He noted that one of the Environment and Biodiversity Fellows is based in DHPA and is a humanities scholar, who has an interest in the environment, in the areas she works in. The nature of interdisciplinarity means it is not a strict classification.
- 28.24 Brice Rea, School of Geosciences noted slight concern that Biodiversity and Energy Transitions had larger 'booster rockets' available to them in terms of their resource bases.
- 28.25 The Principal noted that from the presentation this did not appear to be hampering the areas unduly.
- 28.26 Ilia Xpolia, School of Social Science asked about the costs and benefits associated with restructuring into the Institute. She noted that Nick had shown a slide showing a single Institute rather than five separate areas and she asked how this would help and what the cost or risk associated with this was? Secondly, she asked how the Institute was working

with other research areas already in existence within the University? She further asked how open the Institute was to adding or changing, the challenges in response to shifts in global priorities?

- 28.27 David, responding to the first point about working with other research areas, noted that the Institute saw itself as the linkage and bridges between other research centres and they would be open to working with any area who saw possibilities.
- 28.28 Georgios noted that the Institute was working together closely and part of the challenge facing them was being able to promote themselves more cohesively both internally and externally. Presenting themselves as a single entity did not incur costs it was about how they are positioning themselves and their branding. He noted that the Institute was talking to other research centres and hosting them, but it was not physically possible to cater for every single person or entity within the University but the main premise they were working under, was to bring people in and add value where possible.
- 28.29 The Principal thanked the Directors for their presentation and for answering questions. He noted the importance of interdisciplinarity within the University, as one of the four core pillars of Aberdeen 2040, noting it was pleasing to hear of their progress as a team and the way they had been working together to secure funding, publications and create research impact. He added that interdisciplinarity would be such a major part of the University's narrative for the next REF so it was good to be able to substantiate these achievements. He noted that references to REF moved the meeting neatly on to the next item.

RESEARCH IMPACT - AN UPDATE ON IMPACT CASE STUDY DEVELOPMENT FOR REF2029

- 29.1 Nick Forsyth, Vice-Principal (Research) gave a [presentation](#) to Senate updating them on the development of impact case studies (ICS) for REF2029. Senate was provided with data quantifying the projected expectations for the number of ICS required per school and the numbers currently in preparation.
- 29.2 Nick detailed the considerations researchers should be addressing to maximise potential impact from their research. He noted that a 4* world-leading impact case study was worth more than £100k in Research Excellence Grant (REG) income per year to the Institution. The help and support available for ICS development was also detailed.
- 29.3 He went on to give details of the sorts of case studies from within the University that illustrated impactful research. (Full details were included in the [presentation](#)).
- 29.4 The Principal thanked Nick and noted how helpful it was to see the exemplar case studies. The Principal opened the topic for questions.
- 29.5 Chantal Den Daas, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition (MMSN) noted that Nick had shown the required numbers and the predicted long-list and asked whether it was feasible that the University would be submitting more impact Case Studies (ICS) or was the decision to submit a minimum number but of high quality. She also asked how long was it expected to take to determine which case studies would go through given the workload associated with building a case study? In addition, she asked whether the leaders of the case studies would be able to look forward to receiving a portion of the income they generate?
- 29.6 In response, Nick noted that, ultimately, REG income is received by the Principal who makes the REF submission on behalf of the University. In terms the number of case studies needed and the question about whether a bare minimum would be submitted, he noted that there would be REFs to follow REF 2029 and as impact did not happen overnight, there may be impact case studies which might not be quite ready for submission in 2029, but which may be ready for subsequent submission. To have ICS in a position that they could be used in 2029 but weren't needed, because there are others which were being used, would be the perfect position. The preferred position would be to have more

than were needed. In relation to the points about workload he noted that the impact team were there to help and that there was good engagement across areas as seen from the examples he had just shown. He highlighted that impact was part of research, being the logical extension and culmination of research. As such, it fell within the time afforded by an individual's school, noting that they would be supportive of the adoption some of the best practise illustrated earlier, where it was appropriate and applicable to do so.

- 29.7 In addition, the Principal noted that the Institutional Research Leave scheme was also intended to support impact, as well as publications, and was another form of support individuals could apply for.
- 29.8 Dragan Jovicic, School of Engineering, noted that the Research Committee report referred to discussions connected to the University paying for individual membership of professional bodies. He highlighted that such professional body membership within Engineering was very important. He noted he had a strong impact case included in the previous (Research Excellence Framework) REF and he was now preparing one of the 20 from Engineering, which was directly related to activities within the professional society and standardisation of work in industry. He expressed the wish that a way could be found to permit professional body membership to become an allowable expense.
- 29.9 Nick noted that while this had been discussed no conclusion had been reached other than to take the issue away to ascertain why this position had been adopted in the past.
- 29.10 Karl noted that there had been a lot of discussion of this over many years, including with Engineering. He noted that, his belief that the University's position of not paying professional fees, for example for being a fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh was a legitimate position for the University to adopt and was a position widely adopted in the sector.
- 29.11 Sanaa Al-Azawi, Postgraduate Student Representative noted her involvement in the research highlighted in the presentation around the impact on the fish industry from decommissioning activity, She noted that crises are permitted to happen and then moves are made to assess the impact of measures when there was an opportunity to avoid crises happening in the first place. She felt ethically and morally compromised sitting looking for the impacts of research. She asked why it was right to wait for a hundred years to look for impacts of crises happening now, such as with the events in Gaza.
- 29.12 The Principal noted that an important point was being made on an important topic that went way beyond the terms of the Senate agenda for the current meeting.
- 29.13 Sanaa indicated that the students had sent an open letter seeking support for the stance the Students' Association was taking in standing in solidarity with students and academics in Gaza and that by not taking the opportunity to stand with them the University had failed them.
- 29.14 The Principal suggested that if there was a wish for the inclusion of this item on the agenda for the next meeting of Senate she should get in touch with the Senate Business Committee.
- 29.15 Sanna indicated that although she had been in touch she had been ignored. She noted that, on 30 January, the Student Council had adopted a motion in solidarity with the people of Gaza and she had written to ask that this was included in the meeting of Senate. She noted that she had received a letter on 5 February indicating that as it was not 4 weeks before the meeting it would require the Principal's approval to include it. She had waited until the day of the meeting, and it was not included. The motion had been ignored and the situation of academics and students living in abnormal circumstances had been ignored.
- 29.16 The Principal noted that Sanaa's statement, particularly the last part, was true and correct and distressing. He indicated that the point about process would be followed up and Karl would be in touch to follow this up. However, he indicated that for the present Senate was focussed on Research Impact for the next REF while recognising the deeply troubling set of circumstances described and that everyone was aware of.

- 29.17 Drawing discussion of Research Impact to a close. The Principal noted the importance of Impact and further noted that in the previous REF this had been by far the weakest element of the University's submission. He noted that this gave a fantastic opportunity to put this right for next time and raise the impact case rating, to at least the same rating as the research output rating, which would raise the rating overall and improve revenue by the levels outlined by Nick.

ABERDEEN 2040 GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES & SKILLS

- 30.1 Ahead of the education items, Tracey apologised for those attending on Teams for the sound problems which were unfortunately not going to be resolved before the end of the meeting, she acknowledged that there had been questions from Samantha Newington and Alan Macpherson. She noted that there would be answers to both questions which would be shared with Senate.
- 30.2 As part of introducing the item on Graduate Attributes and Skills, the Principal introduced Professor Jo-Anne Murray, Vice-Principal (Education) to her first meeting of Senate.
- 30.3 Jo-Anne thanked the Principal for his welcome and noted how pleased she was to have joined the University.
- 30.4 John Barrow, Dean for Employability and Entrepreneurship noted that the Graduate Attributes paper had been discussed extensively across the Institution and was now at Senate for approval. He highlighted two main areas: the actual list of attributes and skills in section five of the paper; and the expected implementation plans detailed in appendices C and D. He noted that this was all he wished to highlight from the paper at that stage but was willing to answer and questions.
- 30.5 Noting that it was the third time the proposal had been at Senate, the Principal highlighted that a lot of work had gone into the paper refining the proposals and to incorporate feedback from Senate and the wider community.
- 30.6 Jen Walklate, School of Social Sciences, noted that, in connection with section 4 of the report, it was good to that there was a commitment to providing work-based learning across the University. She noted, however, that current support, specifically monetary, to enable travel to placements particularly outside Aberdeen city, was difficult to come by at an institutional level. She suggested that it would seem prudent to ensure there was support for existing programmes as well as developing this further.
- 30.7 Agreeing, John noted that the work-based learning stream of the Employability Committee, being headed up by himself and Tracey Innes, were already looking into that topic and acknowledged that there would be little point in securing placements if students were unable to engage with them.
- 30.8 Jen asked if feedback would be provided about this as, despite having previously been a member of the working group she had not been aware of any communications in that regard. She commented that it would be good to have information and a strategy, together with knowing the financial scale of what was proposed.
- 30.9 John confirmed that this would be forthcoming in the future.
- 30.10 Ilia Xypolia, School of Social Science thanked John for the refined proposals in the paper. She noted, however, that the world and the University were very different from when the work had commenced in 2022. She noted the current recruitment freeze and the lowering of headcount associated with early retirements and voluntary severance and further noted that most of the workload implications outlined in the paper had been assessed as low to moderate. She argued that in the current circumstances nothing could be assessed as anything other than high. She commented that she considered adding to the workload at the current time would likely lead to health issues for staff.
- 30.11 Responding John noted the workload implications were well documented in the paper and stressed his previous responses at Senate when he had indicated one this that would be

monitored closely for colleagues across the University. As he had stated previously, as an academic, he was aware of what was being asked and assured Ilia that the impact on workload would be monitored closely.

- 30.12 Jo-Anne added her thanks to Senate for their contribution to shaping the attributes, and for thinking about the future of the workforce and how important that was. She noted the value of the approach and acknowledged the challenges around workload and confirmed this was at the forefront of everything that was planned.
- 30.13 Aravinda Guntupalli, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition commented that she had been in India in December talking to various recruitment agencies and consultants and the vast majority of the questions she had received were connected to employability and what the University was doing in that regard. She had responded that a platform was in preparation, and this had provoked positive responses and queries about how this could be used to help students gain employability skills. This had made her realise that the tool could be used as for marketing too. It could be used to highlight to prospective students how they might build personal marketing skills.
- 30.14 The Principal noted the importance of the work and its potential for use in that way.
- 30.15 Matthew Collinson, School of Natural & Computing Sciences, suggested that the consideration of workload implications should go further than just academic workload but should also include workloads for school offices. He also noted that the development of such a new system would require input from software engineers to build and maintain it, along with the costs of data entry. Although this was not directly related to Senate's role, he stressed that this was still an important factor and sought reassurance that this had been accounted for.
- 30.16 In response, Jo-Anne agreed that this was an important point and noted that, if approved by Senate, she felt it important that a communication plan was developed alongside the system, as a marketing tool for prospective students and the appropriate training for staff. She noted that the platform was a managed service and would not require software development. Although the platform could be said to be intuitive, she recognised the importance of training for all staff.
- 30.17 Fred Byrne, School Convener for the School of Divinity, History & Art History, noted that he had asked previously about the sustainability attribute listed under 'Citizenship' and the University's continued investments in fossil fuels and he queried when the University would be divesting from these investments to align with the 2040 attributes?
- 30.18 The Principal indicated that, as he had said previously, the correct route would be for a request for fuller debate of this issue to come via the Senate Business Committee, however, Karl would provide an answer at this stage.
- 30.19 Karl Leydecker, Senior Vice-Principal noted that the University had committed to working with the Students' Association closely when it had undertaken to divest from fossil fuels fully by 2025. The University was well on track to achieving this, and this was monitored closely by the Investment Committee. He noted that divestment was already nearly complete and that this was something which needed to be updated on the website.
- 30.20 Euan Bain, School of Engineering returning to the point raised by Matthew (minute 30.15) noted he had raised a good point. He noted that the community still did not have sight of the Digital Strategy Committee (DSC) on the website and so it was not known whether this had been discussed at DSC or where it sat on the list of priorities for software investment and so he asked for reassurance about where on the list of priorities this sat.
- 30.21 Pete Edwards, responding as convener of DSC, undertook to investigate why the papers weren't on the website. He noted that committees such as DSC and Estates, chaired by Karl, were, in the current climate, having to look closely at their commitments for spending and were prioritising where possible. He indicated that he expected that the next meeting of DSC would be looking at prioritisation to identify what would be progressed and what would be put on hold at the current time.

- 30.22 Euan thanked Pete for his response but noted that the transparency of DSC had been raised several times previously and it would be very helpful if this would be acted on this time.
- 30.23 Pete confirmed that this would happen.
- 30.24 Martin Barker, School of Biological Sciences, asked, in the context of the introduction of a new set of graduate attributes and skills, whether staff would receive support from the Centre for Academic Development (CAD) or other sources, to bring them up to speed.
- 30.25 John confirmed that this would be done in conjunction with the school specific Careers Advisors.
- 30.26 The Principal noted that the proposal had now been considered at Senate for the third time, and refined in response to the previous discussions and asked whether Senate were content to approve the proposals without the need for a vote?
- 30.27 Iliia Xypolia, School of Social Science asked for Senate to vote. Jen Walklate seconded the request.
- 30.28 Senate voted 73 to approve, 4 not to approve with 16 abstentions.

QAC UPDATE ON CHANGES TO ENTRY TARIFF

- 31.1 Steve Tucker, Chair of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) updated Senate on the change to the published entry requirements which QAC had approved on behalf of Senate.
- 31.2 Steve noted that the proposal had been approved by the Student Recruitment Committee (SRC) on the 17 January, endorsed by the Heads of School on 18 January before being circulated to QAC for comment.
- 31.3 Two comments had been received from QAC both of which had had responses on the same day by himself and the Director of Student Recruitment. No objections had been raised and so the paper was approved by Convenor's Action.
- 31.4 The change had been made within a quick timeframe to ensuring the deadline for printing of the University Prospectus was met.
- 31.5 Steve confirmed that the change approved lined up the published entry requirements with the reality of what is done in practise, and thereby improved consistency and transparency in the admissions process.
- 31.6 Alex Brasier, School of Geosciences noted that within Geosciences admissions is seen as a bit of a black box: student numbers are not known on the first day of term. He noted his agreement with widening the net in terms of recruitment and asked if there was any possibility of getting any academic insight into the process, in terms of the people who are not accepted, in order to understand why people are rejected so that this might be addressed for the future?
- 31.7 In response, Alan Speight, Vice-Principal (Global Engagement) noted that quite a lot of discretion was exercised in looking at the applicants who were rejected, particularly where there were contextualised features. He confirmed that he considered looking at the profile of the applicants rejected in comparison with those who were accepted, was a reasonable request.
- 31.8 Tracey Slaven, speaking as Chief Operating Officer, noted that the key motivation from the admissions team was not about changing the profile of those who were admitted but rather a concern that, by not being transparent, we were discouraging applicants, who might be qualified, from applying. This was being done with the intention to change applicant behaviour.
- 31.9 Brice Rea, School of Geosciences, noted the change was about increasing transparency about the grades accepted rather than the grades we said we would accept he noted that he was supportive of the reasoning but wondered if the 'headline' of the change in terms of

publicity e.g. University of Aberdeen lowers entry requirements, had been considered? He queried whether there were plans to ensure that this was communicated as being about increasing transparency in what we accept, rather than a lowering of standards, to turn the change into something positive.

- 31.10 The Principal confirmed that this had already been considered and that the Communications Team were prepared. He noted the view that this was entirely consistent with being 'open to all' in widening the set of applicants able to come to Aberdeen.
- 31.11 Jo Hicks, School of Language Literature, Music & Visual Culture asked for confirmation that the changes were not just applicable to the MA and BSc?
- 31.12 Steve confirmed that it was applicable to the MA and BSc.
- 31.13 Joe asked whether it might be applicable to consider the same change in other degrees?
- 31.14 Alan confirmed that the change applied to the MA, BSc, Engineering, Education and Music (BMus) degrees but not to the higher tariff degrees such as Medicine.
- 31.15 Karin Friedrich, School of Divinity, History Philosophy and Art History stressed the importance of getting recruitment numbers right as the University was penalised for both under and over recruitment, and asked whether there was a danger of the change resulting in over-recruitment and therefore being penalised.
- 31.16 The Principal noted that his view that, in the current climate, the risk of overrecruiting was very small and he was comfortable that the change would not lead to such a penalty. He confirmed that the current penalties were for under recruitment and that there were quite a lot of places to fill before penalties for over recruitment were a concern.
- 31.17 Miles Rothoerl, Undergraduate Education Vice-Chair, AUSA asked whether the change would impact on international entry requirements?
- 31.18 Alan confirmed that although it would not be impacting international admissions currently, a review of international admission requirements would be undertaken.
- 31.19 The Principal suggested that Senate may be aware that most UK Higher Education establishments were review entry requirements.

URC REPORT TO SENATE

- 32.1 Noting there had been a request to move the URC Report up the agenda for discussion the Principal asked Diane Skatun to raise her issue.
- 32.2 Diane Skatun, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition (MMSN) noted that in section 4.1 of the report, where the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture (LLMVC) was being discussed in the context of research in the school:
'URC noted the late paper circulated on this issue and, following a summary discussion, agreed to schedule an extraordinary meeting of the URC (on Tuesday 30 January 2024) to enable further consideration of the issues raised'
Diane noted that there was nothing further in the paper that indicated what happened at the meeting and she further noted that there was no agenda or papers on the website for this meeting. She asked whether what happened in the meeting could be reported to Senate?
- 32.3 Nick Forsyth, Vice-Principal (Research) confirmed that an informal extra meeting had taken place to discuss an extra paper which had been submitted too late for the meeting referred to in the Senate papers. A note of the meeting went back to the attendees for attendees to affirm the note. The note had not yet come back in following consideration by the attendees. The note would then be passed to the chair of the Steering Group and would then be included with the minutes of URC. He noted that URC had met the previous day and the note had not come back from everyone at the meeting and so it had not yet been included.

- 32.4 Diane indicated that, from a procedural perspective, she was not comfortable with a note being produced for an extraordinary meeting. There should be minutes and they should be on the website. She noted that whenever she had been in an extraordinary meeting, whether it had been an additional meeting of Senate or Court, a minute had been produced and put on the website, so she was uncomfortable with this.
- 32.5 The Principal indicated he would ask Tracey to respond as she had oversight of University Governance.
- 32.6 Tracey Slaven noted that what was included in the Senate papers was an accurate minute of what was discussed at URC. What was proposed after that meeting, and after the minute had been generated, was a discussion which was around URC taking a specific position which wasn't going to be within its authority, and she had therefore advised, that an informal discussion was held rather than an extraordinary meeting of URC. An additional or extraordinary meeting did not happen rather it was an informal discussion of issues that had been raised and a note taken of that.
- 32.7 Diane suggested that the papers were inaccurate as they indicated that there would be an extraordinary meeting and there hadn't been.
- 32.8 Tracey indicated that it would be appropriate to add a Clerk's note to clarify things.
- 32.9 Jo Hicks, School of Language, Literature, Music & Visual Culture, noting that he was aware there were things that Tracey would not be able to share, asked why the meeting had stretched beyond the remit of URC?
- 32.10 Responding, Tracey confirmed that URC had been asked to take a position which was not fully within its remit in terms of commentary around the consultation on Modern Languages at that time.
- 32.11 The Principal asked Diane if she was content that a note would be added?
- 32.12 She confirmed she was but added she felt more discussion was needed about the remit of the committee in terms of the response to the consultation on Modern Languages. Diane confirmed that this was something she would pick up with Nick and Tracey outside the meeting.
- 32.13 Euan Bain asked if it was correct to summarise that an informal, extraordinary meeting wasn't a thing which existed within the University's Governance structure?
- 32.14 Tracey confirm that that was correct.
- 32.15 Scott Allan, Business School added that he was not comfortable for the same reasons as others, and asked how the meeting had gone ahead at all if it wasn't within the remit of that Committee.
- 32.16 Tracey confirmed that it was perfectly appropriate for members of any committee to meet informally and have a discussion about something which sat outside their formal agenda, that was just a discussion. She indicated that she had needed to ensure that the discussion was not being treated as a formal occurrence of that committee. She noted she was similarly uncomfortable with the position but given the desire for a discussion around an issue amongst those individuals, the discussion went ahead as it would not be appropriate to stifle discussion.
- 32.17 Scott suggested that it wasn't a meeting of the committee?
- 32.18 Tracey confirmed it was an informal discussion.
- 32.19 Jen Walklate suggested there were some semantic issues associated with the situation: there were people who were adamant that a formal meeting had taken place, and noted that there were Directors of Research who were members of URC who were concerned about implications of the discussion for Research, and she wished for that concern to be noted.

- 32.20 Tracey noted that she was entirely sympathetic to the suggestion that it was entirely appropriate for URC to have discussions around any individual discipline issues with the proposition. The reason for the shift from it being an extraordinary meeting to an informal discussion, were related to the way in which it had been proposed and the position the committee was being asked to take which was not within its power to do.
- 32.21 Ilia Xypolia, School of Social Science, suggested for transparency, as nobody present at Senate was aware, or almost nobody was a member of the Committee, if, together with the Clerk's note, an understanding of what was proposed which was outside the remit of the Committee could be shared. She noted she had no understanding of what people on the Committee wanted that was outside the remit and suggested that a summary be provided.
- 32.22 The Principal asked if Ilia would want this for every informal discussion which took place within the University?
- 32.23 In response, Ilia noted that it was in the papers for Senate, and it referred was referred to as an Extraordinary Meeting not an informal meeting.
- 32.24 Responding Tracey noted that she had articulated and agreed a response to Diane's concerns and that a clerk's note would be added to the minute. The minute was accurate but does not reflect what took place after the meeting was held, when the proposition for the additional meeting was put forward and it then changed its nature to become an informal discussion. Because it was not a formal meeting of a subcommittee of Senate, she confirmed that she did not think it appropriate to start pulling other papers forward to Senate. She indicated that she would be happy to have a discussion with Ilia, and anyone else, around the detail of her decision.
- 32.25 The Principal thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions to debate focused on education and research. He suggested that it would be that focus that would get the University through the months ahead, and the next few years, so that the University could continue to flourish.

ROUTINE BUSINESS:

UEC REPORT TO SENATE

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

QAC REPORT TO SENATE

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