The Senate

Approved minutes of the meeting held 7 October 2015

Chair: Prof RA Williams

Present:
- Prof A Kaka
- Prof G Hogg
- Prof J Sawkins
- Prof L Galloway
- Prof J Ritchie
- Prof S McLaughlin
- Dr P Morris
- Prof R MacIntosh
- Prof F Waldron
- Prof P John
- Prof A Macdonald
- Ms H Frances
- Ms M Mitoshi
- Dr C Annabi*
- Dr D Ball
- Dr A Bell
- Prof P Corbett
- Dr A Forster
- Prof I Galbraith
- Dr L Galbrun
- Dr S Gao
- Dr L Georgieva
- Dr F Ghaith*
- Prof N Gilbert
- Dr A Gow
- Mr A Hanif
- Mr A Harper
- Dr S Houston
- Dr B Jamieson
- Dr S Keith
- Prof O Laghrouche
- Dr T Lansdown
- Prof K McKendrick
- Dr Y McLaren-Hankin
- Dr G Medero
- Prof G Michaelson
- Dr R Mochrie
- Mr D Mothiram*
- Ms V Northway*
- Dr O Ogwuda*
- Dr A Paterson
- Prof I Perez
- Ms J Priest
- Dr J Richards
- Mr B Roberts
- Dr G Streftaris
- Dr D Sun
- Prof N Taylor
- Dr R Van Dijke
- Dr M Winters
- Mr B Dodgson (Clerk)

In Attendance:
- Ms AM Dalton
- Mr P Travill
- Mr R McGookin
- Ms AM Dalton
- Mr M Roch
- Prof P Wookey**
- Mr G Watson

Apologies:
- Prof J Jones
- Prof R Craik
- Prof D Hand
- Prof G Gibson
- Prof K Lumsden
- Prof G Pender
- Dr F Bosche
- Dr G Buckingham
- Dr A Cuthbertson
- Dr M Gul
- Dr H Hastie
- Dr J Ma
- Prof R Ocone

* Indicates member participating remotely
** For the business recorded under 15/65

1. Formal Matters

15/61 Welcome and Announcements

The Chair welcomed to the meeting the members of the Senate and those colleagues who were in attendance. The Chair welcomed to the meeting Mr Watson who, as a member of the Court, was attending as a guest.
Noted: Those members who had commenced their term of membership in August 2015; those former members who had completed their term of membership in July 2015; and those members who had in June 2015 been elected to represent the Senate at the meetings of the Court.

Noted: Those members who had submitted to the Clerk their apologies for the meeting.

15/62 Minutes of the Last Meeting

Received: The minutes of the meeting held on 13 May 2015.

Noted: That the Vice-Principal, as Chair for that meeting, had approved three minor amendments to the version that had previously been circulated.

Approved: As a correct record.

15/63 Matters Arising from the Minutes

Noted: There were no matters arising from the minutes that were not already on the agenda as circulated.

15/64 Principal’s Briefing to the Senate

Noted: The Principal noted the welcome that had been extended to him since he had taken up office in September 2015. The Principal noted that he had met with colleagues at the Edinburgh, Galashiels, and Dubai campuses and had been impressed with the excellence of the work he had seen and the shared interest in making the University stronger. The Principal noted that he had plans to visit the Orkney and Malaysia campuses in the near future.

The Principal noted the continuing financial uncertainty ahead of the announcement, due in November 2015, of the results of the UK Government’s latest spending review. The Principal noted that, given the likelihood that the review would lead to the further tightening of public expenditure and reductions in the budgets of the Research Councils and other bodies, the University would need to consider and plan how it could maintain and strengthen its financial position.

The Principal briefed the Senate on issues discussed at the Universities UK annual meeting held in September 2015 and noted the UK Government’s proposed Teaching Excellence Framework; the new rules on counter-terrorism and Prevent guidance; and continuing concerns as to the UK’s immigration and visa rules.
The Principal was pleased to note that the University had improved its position in a number of recent national and international rankings.

2. Matters for Presentation/Discussion

15/65  School of Life Sciences: Disestablishment of the School

Considered: A report on a proposal to disestablish the School of Life Sciences and to reorganise its academic activities within other Schools [SENP/15/39].

Noted: That

a. a review of the School of Life Sciences had been commissioned in May 2015 and had concluded that the School had made significant progress since its last review five years previously, but that its relatively small size and the diversity of activity for its size meant that it could not deliver the quality of student experience or the intensity of research that was required under the University’s strategic plan;

b. in response to the findings of the review, it was proposed that the School of Life Sciences should be disestablished; the School’s psychology department should be reorganised within the School of Management and Languages; and that working groups should be established to consider the reorganisation of the School’s other research activities and taught programmes within other Schools;

c. there was no intention to disengage from the School’s current research areas or to withdraw the School’s taught programmes;

d. the review process had involved the Students’ Union and the recognised trades unions and it was hoped that that dialogue would continue; the Senate noted that the review process had been characterised by a positive approach from all sides and a recognition that all sides were trying to achieve the same aims;

e. the findings of the review had been considered by the Combined Joint Negotiating and Consultation Committee, but the full proposals had not been available at that time; the Universities and Colleges Union had not been opposed to the review or to the process that had been followed, but it believed that the consultation process could have been more transparent, risks could arise if actions were taken precipitately, and that some staff did not feel that their views were always heard; the Senate noted that the Secretary of the University would convene an extraordinary meeting of the Combined Joint Negotiating and Consultation Committee should the recognised trades unions request it;
f. Some members suggested that communications to School staff regarding the review could have been clearer; the Senate noted that this would be addressed in future communications;

g. Some members suggested that it could have been made clearer why a recommendation as to the School’s psychology department had been made in advance of a recommendation as to its biological sciences department and that this had led to some uncertainty among the School’s staff and a perception that the psychology department had been prioritised; the Senate noted that this had not been intended – the psychology department formed a more coherent unit and, as a result, recommendations with respect to it had taken less time to develop; the Senate noted that the proposed working groups would develop recommendations with respect to the biological sciences department;

h. Should the components of the biological sciences department be reorganised within more than one School, measures should be taken to avoid disruption to the delivery of taught programmes and ensure the reorganisation did not inhibit collaborative research projects;

i. Opportunities to enhance the identity and raise the profile of the University’s biological sciences activities should be identified and exploited so as to counter any impression that the University was seeking to disengage from that area;

j. The proposed reorganisation of the School’s academic activities could have implications for the overall composition of the other Schools; the Senate noted that no decision had been taken as to the future constitution of the Schools, or on the need for any new Schools, and that these would be issues for the proposed working groups to consider;

k. More use could be made of the Orkney campus through new research programmes in areas such as cultural heritage; the Senate noted that the Orkney campus was valued and that it was recognised that staff based there had in recent years experienced several changes in affiliation; staff based at the Orkney campus had been consulted as part of the review and had expressed appreciation that the value of the Orkney campus had been recognised;

l. Some students from the School had, through the Student Union, raised concerns as to the schedule for any reorganisation of the School’s academic activities and the possible implications of this with respect to the title and status of the degrees for which they were studying; the Senate noted that any relocation of taught programmes would take effect from the start of the 2016-17 academic year to avoid disruption to the studies of continuing students – current final year
students would graduate from the School of Life Sciences and the proposals would not lead to any change in the recognised status of the degrees awarded by the University; and

m. the purpose of the report was to inform the Senate as to matters arising from the review and to give members of the Senate the opportunity to share their views in advance of more detailed proposals being prepared; following further discussions the Senate suggested that at this time the proposals should be approved in principle and that the Senate should be invited to consider detailed recommendations at a subsequent meeting to ensure that they were academically appropriate.

Approved: That, in principle,

a. the School of Life Sciences should be disestablished; and

b. the School’s psychology department should be reorganised within the School of Management and Languages.

Agreed: That

a. working groups should be established to consider the reorganisation within other Schools of the School of Life Science’s other research activities and taught programmes and that the working groups should include members from all of the current Schools;

b. detailed recommendations, including the findings of the working groups and recommendations with regards to the biological sciences department, should be presented for the approval of the Senate at its meeting in December 2015; and

c. an appropriate communication to students should be issued following the meeting and that this should include advice as to what the Senate had agreed and what would happen next as well as seeking to address the types of concerns that had been raised by students.

15/66

West London College: Disestablishment of the Academic Council

Considered: A report on the proposed disestablishment of the Academic Council (West London College) [SENP/15/40].

Noted: That

a. the University and West London College had a longstanding partnership;
b. owing to changes in the rules regarding visas for students from outside the European Union, the University Executive had agreed that the University should withdraw from its partnership with West London College;

c. in order for the University to fulfil its academic obligations to current students based at West London College, the University Executive had approved a three year “teach-out” period starting in October 2015; and

d. the Academic Council (West London College) had provided oversight of academic and quality assurance arrangements in relation to programmes delivered at West London College; the University Executive had agreed that an alternative model would better deliver the management of the teach-out arrangements and had approved the establishment of a Management Oversight Committee, chaired by the Deputy Principal (Learning and Teaching), to perform that role.

Agreed: That the Academic Council (West London College) should be disestablished with immediate effect and that the Management Oversight Committee should report to the Senate through the Quality and Standards Committee.

15/67 Effectiveness Review of the Senate

Considered: A report on the planned mid-point review of the Senate and its committees [SENP/15/41].

Noted: That

a. the report provided an update on the report that the Senate had considered in May 2015 [minute 15/45];

b. the review process would provide assurance that the University’s academic governance arrangements remained appropriate, identify ways in which the effectiveness and efficiency of those arrangements might be improved, and demonstrate compliance with the Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance;

c. the planned mid-point review would commence in October 2015; full reviews would take place every five years and would be complemented by smaller annual and mid-point reviews; the schedule of reviews would be coordinated with the equivalent reviews of the Court;

d. the review would cover the Senate, the Senate committees, and related processes; the responsibilities of the Senate, as defined in the Charter and Statutes, would form the basis of the criteria against which effectiveness would be assessed;
e. the review would be informed by a survey of members of the Senate and the Senate committees together with an analysis of academic governance structures and practices at other comparable UK universities; and

f. the review would be led by a project board comprising the Chair of the Senate, the Secretary of the University, the Chairs of the Senate committees, and a representative of the Students' Union.

Agreed: That

a. the review should take account of the international nature of the University’s activities and should consider the extent to which its academic governance arrangements were appropriate with respect to both current and possible future needs; and

b. the proposed project board should include members of the Senate and the Senate committees.

Endorsed: The proposed review process and reporting schedule.

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15/68 Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Bill

Noted: That in October 2015 the Secretary of the University had, with other representatives of the Scottish higher education sector, given evidence on the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Bill to the Education and Culture Committee of the Scottish Parliament.

Agreed: That the Senate remained extremely concerned about many aspects of the Bill. That the Senate hoped that the Scottish Government would take account of the significant concerns that had been expressed, but that the University would work to ensure that new legislative requirements did not impede the achievement of its strategic objectives.

15/69 Learning Spaces and Student Systems Developments

Considered: A verbal report on recent and planned investments in campus learning spaces and student information services systems.

Noted: That

a. the University Executive had agreed that planned expenditure within 2015-16 Information Services capital fund should be reallocated to enhancements of student-related systems;
around £700,000 had been spent on improvements to teaching and learning spaces at the Scottish campuses; works completed in 2015 had included the

i. refurbishment of a number of teaching areas and study spaces to support collaborative student working and improve access to learning technologies;

ii. opening up of new study spaces in the main library building on the Edinburgh campus – the third consecutive year in which capacity had been increased;

iii. introduction of improved lighting and wi-fi access in the main library building on the Edinburgh campus; and

c. a working group had been established by the Research and Knowledge Exchange Board to support the development of procedures and systems with respect to making research data openly accessible.

Agreed: That

a. the open data working group should consider opportunities for the University to become a leader within the sector for making research datasets openly accessible; and

b. the Senate should be presented in December 2015 with a further report that included a summary schedule of the work to enhance student-related systems.

15/70  Academic Interview Panel

Considered: The proposed membership of the appointment panel for the position of Deputy Principal (Research and Knowledge Exchange) [SENP/15/55].

Agreed: That the gender balance of the appointment panel should be more even and that the panel should include additional members from non-science subjects.

3. Reports from Committees of the Senate

15/71 Senate Business Committee

Considered: A report of the meeting held on 1 October 2015 [SENP/15/44] - including
a. degrees and awards and honorary titles approved for conferral by the Committee on behalf of the Senate;

b. appointments to the membership of the Senate committees approved by the Committee on behalf of the Senate;

c. honorary degrees approved for conferral by the Honorary Degrees Working Group on behalf of the Senate;

d. terms of reference for the 2015-16 academic year.

Noted: That in October 2015 a revised Ordinance E3 (Graduates’ Association) had been endorsed by the Committee on behalf of the Senate and had been recommended to the Court for approval.

Approved: The Committee’s terms of reference for the 2015-16 academic year.

15/72 Undergraduate Studies Committee

Received: A report of the meetings held on 20 May 2015 and 26 August 2015 [SENP/15/45] – including

a. approved external examiner appointments to undergraduate programmes; and

b. terms of reference for the 2015-16 academic year.

Approved: The Committee’s terms of reference for the 2015-16 academic year.

15/73 Postgraduate Studies Committee

Received: A report of the meetings held on 27 May 2015, 18 August 2015, and 15 September 2015 [SENP/15/46] – including

a. approved external examiner appointments to taught postgraduate programmes;

b. approved research degrees awards; and

c. terms of reference for the 2015-16 academic year.

Approved: The Committee’s terms of reference for the 2015-16 academic year.
15/74 **Quality and Standards Committee**

Received: A report of the meeting held on 17 June 2015 [SENP/15/47].

Noted: That “significant” changes to programmes/courses delivered at the Malaysia campus could require approval from the Malaysian Qualifications Agency and that Schools should be aware of the implications of this and take account of the additional time needed.

15/75 **Information Services Committee**

Received: A report of the meeting held on 17 June 2015 [SENP/15/48].

Noted: That a Virtual Learning Enhancements Manager had been appointed and had taken up office in September 2015.

15/76 **Academic Council (Dubai)**

Received: A report of the meetings held on 27 May 2015 and 12 August 2015 [SENP/15/49].

Noted: That Ramadan would not coincide with the 2015-16 examination period but could do so in 2016-17; the Senate noted that the Academic Council (Dubai) would seek advice from the Academic Registrar as to the implications of this for future planning.

15/77 **Academic Council (West London College)**

Received: A report of the meeting held on 3 June 2015 [SENP/15/50].

Noted: That in accordance with the Senate’s decision to disestablish the Academic Council (West London College) [minute 15/66], the report would be the final one presented to the Senate.

4. **Reports from Committees of the Court and the Senate**

15/78 **Ordinances and Regulations Committee**

Received: A report of the meeting held on 16 June 2015 [SENP/15/51].

Noted: That in August 2015 the Senate Business Committee had, on behalf of the Senate, approved revised versions of Regulations 1, 36, and 50; approved the rescinding of Regulations 17, 19, 20, and 40; and endorsed revised
versions of the Ordinances – with the exception of Ordinance E3 which had
been endorsed separately by the Senate Business Committee in October
2015 [minute 15/71].

Approved: For onward presentation to the Court.

5. Reports from the University Executive and Boards

15/79 University Executive

Received: A report of the meetings held on 3 July 2015, 27 August 2015, and 24
September 2015 [SENP/15/52].

Noted: The

a. results of the 2015 employee engagement survey;

b. draft research strategy for the Dubai and Malaysia campuses and
continuing work to develop the global nature of the University’s
research activities;

c. success of the School of Mathematics and Computer Sciences in its
Athena SWAN application for Bronze Award status; the Senate noted
that the School of Engineering and Physical Sciences had not been
successful in its application on this occasion but that it would use the
feedback received to develop a further application; and

d. record of academic staff appointments, promotions, and leavers over
the period 1 March 2015 to 31 August 2015.

15/80 Learning and Teaching Board

Received: A report of the meetings held on 6 May 2015, 10 June 2015, and 16
September 2015 including a report of the Board’s annual strategic review for
2014-15 [SENP/15/53].

Noted: The annual strategic review had identified areas for development in 2015-
16 that would support the continuing implementation of the Learning and
Teaching Strategy.

15/81 Research and Knowledge Exchange Board

Received: A report of the meetings held on 15 May 2015, 18 June 2015, and 8
September 2015 [SENP/15/54].
Noted: That

a. more than £40m in research awards had been received in 2014-15;

b. an open data working group had been established; and

c. a working group had been established to support preparations for the 2020 Research Excellence Framework.

Agreed: That to support preparations for the 2020 Research Excellence Framework the Board should develop preparedness plans similar to those that had been developed for the 2014 Research Excellence Framework.

6. Date of Next Meeting

Noted: That the next meeting of the Senate would be held on 2 December 2015.

Signed and Dated:

Professor Richard A Williams, Principal and Chair of the Senate