In the Chair: Professor G Hogg

Present Also: Prof J Sawkins Mr A Hanif
  Prof D Hand Mr A Harper
  Prof L Galloway Dr H Hastie
  Prof J Ritchie Dr B Jamieson
  Prof G Gibson Prof K McKendrick
  Dr P Morris Dr Y McLaren-Hankin
  Prof G Pender Dr G Medero
  Prof P John Prof G Michaelson
  Prof A Macdonald Dr R Mochrie
  Ms H Frances Prof R Ocone
  Ms M Matoshi Dr A Paterson
  Dr D Ball Prof I Perez
  Prof P Corbett Ms J Priest
  Dr A Forster Dr J Richards
  Prof I Galbraith Mr B Roberts
  Dr S Gao Dr D Sun
  Prof N Gilbert Prof N Taylor
  Dr A Gow Dr R Van Dijke
  Dr M Gul

In Attendance: Ms AM Dalton Mr C Priest (Observer)
  Mr M Roch Mr B Dodgson (Clerk)

Apologies: Prof RA Williams Dr L Galbrun
  Prof J Jones Dr L Georgieva
  Prof R Craik Dr F Ghaith
  Prof A Kaka Dr S Houston
  Prof K Lumsden Dr S Keith
  Prof S McLaughlin Dr T Lansdown
  Prof R MacIntosh Prof O Laghouache
  Prof F Waldron Dr J Ma
  Dr C Annabi Mr D Mothiram
  Dr A Bell Ms V Northway
  Dr F Bosch Dr G Stretaris
  Dr G Buckingham Dr O Ogwuda
  Dr A Cuthbertson Dr M Winters

* Indicates member participating remotely

MINUTE REF M15/82  WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair of the Ordinances and Regulations Committee proposed that, in the absence of the Principal and the Vice-Principal, the Deputy Principal (External Relations) should act as Chair for the meeting. The Senate approved the proposal.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting the members of the Senate and those colleagues who were in attendance.
PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Noted Those members who had submitted to the Clerk their apologies for the meeting. The Senate noted that those members who were based in Dubai were unable to participate as the meeting coincided with a public holiday in the United Arab Emirates; it had not been possible to reschedule the meeting, but future meetings would be scheduled to avoid coinciding with public holidays.

M15/83 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Received The minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2015.

Agreed That minute 15/65 should be amended to clarify that student concerns regarding the reorganisation of the School of Life Sciences had been raised through the Student Union.

Agreed That minute 15/66 should be amended to clarify the role of the Academic Council (West London College).

Approved The minutes were approved as a correct record subject to the agreed amendments to minutes 15/65 and 15/66.

M15/84 MATTERS ARISING

Noted Arising from minute 15/67, the Senate noted that the effectiveness review of the Senate and the Senate committees was underway. The review team was interviewing chairs of the committees and boards which reported to the Senate, interviews with Heads of Schools were planned, and an online survey was being used to capture the views of members of the Senate and Senate committees. It was anticipated that the Senate would receive an update report early in 2016 and that the review would be completed by spring 2016.

M15/85 REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

Received A verbal report from the Principal and Chair of the Senate.

Noted That short online summaries of the meetings of the Senate and the Court would be posted to the University’s website to help raise the profile of the work of these bodies.

That in November 2015 graduation ceremonies had been held at the Edinburgh, Dubai, and Malaysia campuses as well as in Singapore. A graduation ceremony had been held earlier this day in Hong Kong.

That Professor Beatrice Pelloni, currently of the University of Reading, had been appointed as Head of the School of Mathematical and Computer Sciences and would take up her appointment in April 2016.

M15/86 SCHOOL OF LIFE SCIENCES: UPDATE FROM THE STEERING GROUP

Considered A verbal report on proposals to reorganise within other Schools the academic activities of the School of Life Sciences.

Noted That in October 2015 the Senate had agreed in principle that the academic activities of the School of Life Sciences should be reorganised within other Schools and that the School of Life Sciences should be disestablished [minute 15/65]. The Senate had agreed in principle that the School's psychology department should be reorganised within the School of Management and Languages; the academic unit created as a result of that process would be a reconstituted School rather than a new School, but it would be given a new name to reflect its reconstituted form. The Senate had agreed that working groups should be established to consider how the School's biological sciences department could be reorganised within other Schools and that
the steering group should in December 2015 present recommendations for the endorsement of the Senate.

That following a meeting of the Combined Joint Negotiating Consultation Committee held in November 2015 it had been agreed that the making of a final decision should be deferred to allow additional time for consultation. It was intended that the steering group would now present recommendations for the endorsement of the Senate in January 2016.

The Senate questioned whether the number and constitution of Schools following the reorganisation of the academic activities of the School of Life Sciences would reflect the full variety of the University's academic disciplines and whether some disciplines would be masked in the new structure. The Senate questioned whether the current reorganisation reflected an overall plan, whether there was a risk that it would result in less diversity of academic activity, and whether the processes of smaller academic units would be lost as part of their reorganisation within a larger School. The Senate noted that, although the University did not have a defined process for establishing or disestablishing a School or other academic unit, the working groups were acting on the Senate's decision to approve, in principle, the disestablishment of the School of Life Sciences and were working to identify the best way of reorganising the School's academic activities. The Senate noted that both the current effectiveness review and the Academic Registrar's review of the Registry had highlighted variations in academic processes across Schools and that greater consistency would support coherency and efficiency. It was noted that the review of the University's academic regulations proposed by the Ordinances and Regulations Committee could help to achieve greater consistency in approach.

That the recommendations being developed by the working groups and which would be presented to the Senate by the steering group would be aligned to criteria which had been developed and approved by the working groups. The Senate questioned whether the criteria covered teaching quality and student experience as well as improved management structures and research intensification. It was noted that teaching quality and student experience had always been a key criteria in considering the reorganisation of the School's academic activities. The Senate noted that should a similar exercise be needed again, the Senate would welcome the opportunity to consider in advance of a decision the criteria to be used. The Senate noted that the criteria which had been used in the current process would be reported in January 2016 when the steering group presented recommendations for the endorsement of the Senate.

LEARNING SPACES AND SYSTEMS: DEVELOPMENTS

Considered A verbal report on the programme of planned investments in campus learning spaces and academic and corporate information systems.

Noted That architects had been appointed to undertake an options appraisal with respect to the Edinburgh campus library building. It was expected that the appraisal report would be completed in spring 2016.

That recently refurbished learning spaces on the Edinburgh campus were being used intensively. The Senate noted that in some cases the capacity of individual rooms had been reduced as a result of refurbishment, but that the refurbished rooms offered greater flexibility in the types of teaching models they could accommodate and that they would support innovative models of teaching delivery. It was recognised that there was still some way to go with the refurbishment programme and that, in the meantime, it would be necessary to make use of rooms which were not suitable for some subjects or which were in need of new equipment. Substantial progress had though been made and developments such as the opening of the James Watt Study Centre had proved extremely popular with students.

That a governance structure was now in place for the delivery of the planned information systems developments. This work would be overseen by a portfolio board chaired by the Secretary of the University and individual projects would be coordinated by an academic systems sub-group and a corporate systems sub-group. There would be around twelve...
workstreams some of which were already underway while others would commence in the 2016-17 academic year. The Senate noted that work to develop the underlying enabling technology would underpin several of the other workstreams and that of these priority would be given to development of the student admissions systems.

The Senate questioned whether tele-conferencing systems which supported inter-campus communications should be accorded a higher priority within the development programme. The Senate noted that such systems were part of the estates capital investment programme rather than the information systems development programme. It was noted that reliable inter-campus communications for meetings and other similar events were dependent on fixed equipment and that this was now in place in many of the main meeting rooms on the Edinburgh campus. There was now a need to identify other rooms where built-in tele-conferencing infrastructure was needed but also a need to consider broader issues such as the scheduling of meetings to ensure that meetings took place at times which were appropriate for colleagues regardless of the campus at which they might be based.

The Senate sought reassurance as to the possible risks which could arise from commencing multiple workstreams within the proposed timeframe. It was noted that the resources for these developments had become available owing to a reallocation of resources originally allocated to the iHR system development and that this presented an opportunity to deliver much needed system developments and a consolidation of systems that would support efficiency of operations across the University’s campuses. The Senate noted that many of the projects were self-contained and that this reduced the risk that problems with one workstream would have an impact on other workstreams. Additionally, the workstreams involved strong teams that were academically-led but included key colleagues from within Information Services and the Registry while the University’s established project and risk management methodologies provided further assurance as to the University’s ability to complete these projects successfully.

Agreed

That the Senate should receive an update report in May 2016.

M15/88  REPORT ON RECENT IT DISRUPTION

Noted

That on 18 November 2015 there had been an unplanned distribution of new software resulting in disruption to around 370 University computers including some 250 staff computers. The Senate noted that this had been a serious incident arising from human error and that it had resulted in the loss of some files on the computers affected. All computers were now operational and work was underway to resolve any outstanding issues. The Senate noted that staff affected by the disruption had been contacted as soon as possible following the incident and that there had been further notices to all staff on 20 November 2015 and 27 November 2015.

M15/89  REPORTS TO THE SENATE

That for this meeting and subsequent meetings the Senate would receive the full minutes of the committees and boards which report to it rather than an edited report. The Senate noted that minutes would be presented with a cover sheet indicating matters which the Senate was invited to endorse or approve; matters which the Senate was invited to note; and other matters which had been considered.

M15/90  SENATE BUSINESS COMMITTEE [Paper: SENP/15/055]

Received

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2015 including a report of business which the Committee had approved by correspondence and a report of honorary degrees approved for conferral on behalf of the Senate by the Honorary Degrees Working Group.
Noted That the Committee, on behalf of the Senate, had in November 2015 approved the conferral of honorary titles.

M16/091 UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE [Paper: SENP/15/056]

Received The minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2015.

Noted That the Committee had approved the withdrawal of the BEng in Automotive Engineering with Diploma in Industrial Training programme.

M15/092 POSTGRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE [Paper: SENP/15/57]

Received The minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2015.

Noted That the Committee had approved two new programmes – the MSc in High Speed Train and Track Systems and the MSc in Petroleum Engineering Project Management. The Senate noted that the Committee had approved the withdrawal of the MSc in Environmental Interactions of Marine Renewable Energy programme.

Noted That the Committee had approved the appointment of external examiners for specified taught postgraduate programmes and approved the award of research degrees including the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy jointly with the Ecole de Mines de Paris.

M15/093 QUALITY AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE [Paper: SENP/15/58]

Received The minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2015 including the Committee’s terms of reference for the 2015-16 academic year.

Noted The Committee’s approval of changes to the academic review process for programmes delivered at the Malaysia campus.

The Committee had endorsed amendments to Regulation 9 (Assessments and Examinations) and the amended regulation had in November 2015 been approved, on behalf of the Senate, by the Senate Business Committee. The Senate noted that the amended regulation prohibited students from leaving an examination in the first hour or the final 30 minutes and restricted the bringing of drinks into an examination venue to clear, non-alcoholic, and non-carbonated drinks with a volume up to 500ml. The amendments were designed to reduce opportunities for academic dishonesty and had been proposed in response to concerns raised by students through the Student Union. The Senate noted that some students had subsequently questioned the need for the changes and that there may be a need to communicate the rationale for amending this regulation.

Endorsed The Committee’s recommendation that the University should continue in its current practice of not recording on certificates and transcripts the details of where the programme was delivered. The Senate agreed that this practice reflected the University’s approach that a programme would be of the same academic standards regardless of where it was delivered. The Senate noted that the role of the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Studies Committees was to ensure that new programmes for delivery across multiple campuses were approved only where they would be delivered to the same standards at each campus. It was noted that there could be differences in respect of external accreditation and cases where a programme delivered across multiple campuses was accredited only for delivery at a specific location. It was noted that different forms of the programme title would not be used to distinguish differences in accreditation status, but that care was needed to be clear as to a programme’s accreditation status and to be clear where a programme was accredited only for delivery at a specific location. The Senate noted that more UK professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies were moving to a position where they would examine UK university programmes delivered internationally; the University had been a leader in encouraging that approach and
engagement between its Schools and accrediting bodies had been of real value in this respect. The University would continue to work with accrediting bodies rather than approve different forms of programme titles or similar means to distinguish a programme’s accreditation status.

Approved

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

M15/094 INFORMATION SERVICES COMMITTEE [Paper: SENP/15/59]

Received

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2015.

Noted

That academic staff were reminded of the need to deposit copies of research papers and other research outputs in the University’s electronic repository (PURE). Academic staff were reminded that only deposited outputs would be eligible for submission in the next Research Excellence Framework exercise and that deposit in an institutional repository was now a requirement of many research funders. The Senate noted that the Research and Knowledge Exchange Board had established an Open Access/Open Data Working Group and that this would be looking for ways to make the process for depositing research outputs easier for users.

Noted

The Senate questioned the take-up of “gold” open access (that is, access through the publisher’s website for which an article processing charge is normally payable by the researcher). It was noted that for the past three years, around £180,000 had been spent each year to support University’s researchers with the costs associated with gold open access and that the average cost had been around £2,000 for each publication. The Senate noted that “green” open access was the University’s preferred option (that is, access through a repository such as PURE). It was noted that financial support for gold open access was available only for Research Council funded work and that green open access would normally be the only option with respect to work supported by other funders.

M15/095 ORDINANCES AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE [Paper: SENP/15/60]

Received

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 October 2015 including the Committee’s terms of reference for the 2015-16 academic year.

Endorsed

Amendments to Ordinance B9 (Joint Committees of the Court and the Senate) and Ordinance C4 (Standing Committees of the Senate). The Senate noted that the amendments to Ordinance B9 would make the requirements with respect to voting and quoracy consistent with those prescribed in the Statutes; the amendments to Ordinance C4 would give Court-appointed members the same standing as Senate-appointed members with respect to quoracy. The Senate agreed that the amended Ordinances should be presented to the Court for approval.

Approved

Minor amendments to Regulation 48 (Higher Taught Masters Degrees) and the rescinding of Regulation 26 (Traffic Control and Parking). The Senate noted that Regulation 26 had from August 2015 been superseded by the Policy on Traffic Management and Parking on the Edinburgh Campus.

Approved

The Committee’s terms of reference for the 2015-16 academic year. The Senate approved the Committee’s minutes for onward presentation to the Court.

M15/096 THE UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE [Paper: SENP/15/061]

Received

A report of the meetings held on 22 October 2015 and 10 November 2015.

Noted

The contents of the report including the analysis of research proposals and awards at September 2015.
Noted

That in November 2015 the UK government had published its green paper on higher education – “Fulfilling Our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility, and Student Choice”. The green paper had contained proposals to introduce a Teaching Excellence Framework; further widen participation to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly those from ethnic minority backgrounds; establish an Office for Students to champion value for money and student interests; and enable students to choose from a wider range of higher education providers by making it easier for institutions to gain degree awarding powers and university status. Members of the Senate were encouraged to consult the green paper and the questions asked in the associated consultation and to report feedback to the Deputy Principal (Learning and Teaching); feedback would be used to prepare the University’s response to the consultation which would be agreed and submitted by the Learning and Teaching Board. The Senate noted that, although higher education was a devolved matter, the green paper would have implications for Scottish universities and noted also the need to ensure alignment between the University’s key performance indicators and the metrics to be used for the Teaching Excellence Framework.

M15/097

LEARNING AND TEACHING BOARD [Papers: SENP/15/062 and SENP/15/063]

Received

The minutes of the meetings held on 21 October 2015 and 11 November 2015.

Noted

The contents of the minutes and, arising from minute 114, that the Board’s Retention Working Group had completed its work and had identified four key principles which would underpin the development by the Board of a University student retention strategy and operational plan. The Board had agreed that, in advance of the approval of the strategy and operational plan, a new working group chaired by the Deputy Principal (Learning and Teaching) would focus on measures which could be introduced quickly to support improved student retention rates. The Senate noted that it was planned that such measures would include the:

1. development of a consistent University-wide approach to student mentoring;

2. analysis of courses with higher than average failure rates, with a focus on first year undergraduate students from SIMD 0-40 domiciles, to better understand the reasons for higher failure rates and possible remedial measures with respect to this specific category of students;

3. development of an online “thinking of leaving” notification system whereby students who indicated that they were thinking of withdrawing from their programme would be contacted within 48 hours and offered support and guidance.

The Senate questioned whether students would be willing to use a notification system of the type proposed and suggested that they might be more willing to speak with the Student Union. The Student Union President advised that the Student Union agreed that students intending to withdraw from their programme should continue to notify the University, but that the Student Union had a role in providing advice and guidance to such students. The Senate noted that it was hoped that students using such a system would be more likely to continue with their programme if they received a quick response and were directed to appropriate sources of support and guidance.

M15/098

RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE BOARD [Paper: SENP/15/064]

Received

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2015.

Noted

The contents of the minutes and, arising from minute 15-09/05, the results of the 2015 Postgraduate Researcher Experience Survey.
Noted  That this had been the final meeting of the Senate in 2015 and that the next meeting of the Senate would be held on 27 January 2016. The Chair wished all members an enjoyable Christmas break.

Signed by Chair ............................................

Date ..........................................................