WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed to the meeting the members of the Senate, those colleagues who were in attendance, and Professor Ian Wall attending as a member of the Court.

Noted Those members who had submitted to the Clerk their apologies for the meeting.
MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING [Paper SENP/16/001]

Received
The minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2015.

Approved
The Senate approved the minutes as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

Noted
Arising from minute 15/84, the Senate noted that the Secretary of the University intended to present to the Senate in March 2016 the initial report of the effectiveness review of the Senate and the Senate committees. The Secretary of the University thanked those members of the Senate who had responded to the effectiveness survey.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

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

Noted
The Principal drew attention to a number of recent achievements including the appointments of Professor David Lane and Professor Steve Chapman as Commanders of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire; the award of the Queen’s Anniversary Prize for Innovation to the Institute for Petroleum Engineering; and the announcement that both the School of Engineering and Physical Sciences and the School of Mathematics and Computer Science had received Athena SWAN bronze awards.

The Principal noted that 2016 marked the 50th anniversary of the University being granted its Royal Charter and achieving university status. A number of events to mark the anniversary would take place in the UK, Dubai, and Malaysia and these would include a special summer staff party to be held at the Edinburgh campus 4 June 2016.

The Principal invited the Senate to join with him in thanking Sir Bob Reid who in December 2015 had stood down as Chair of the Edinburgh Business School. The Principal noted that Dr Shonaigh Macpherson had been appointed as Acting Chair.

The Principal noted that he had invited the Deputy Principal (Learning and Teaching) to look at ways in which the University could improve student retention and the mentoring and support of undergraduate students. The Principal provided the Senate with an update on student recruitment for the 2016-17 academic year and noted that at a future meeting the Senate would be invited to consider student programmes, admissions systems, and processes.

Finally, the Principal drew attention to external developments including expected reductions in the university sector’s funding from the Scottish Funding Council and the progress of the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Bill through the Scottish Parliament. The Principal concluded by noting that at a future meeting the Senate would be invited to consider strategic issues relating to the University’s future vision.

SCHOOL OF LIFE SCIENCES: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REORGANISATION [Paper SENP/16/002]

Considered
A paper setting out a proposal to reorganise within other Schools the academic activities of the School of Life Sciences.

Noted
That the Senate in October 2015 had agreed in principle that the School of Life Sciences should be disestablished and that, firstly, its psychology department should be reorganised within the School of Management and Languages and, secondly, that working groups should be established to prepare recommendations as to how its biological sciences department might be reorganised within other Schools.

Approved at the meeting on 23 March 2016

SENM-16-01-27-Approved
The working groups, through a coordinating steering group chaired by the Deputy Principal (External Relations), had in December 2015 presented their findings to the University Executive. The University Executive had agreed that the Senate should be invited to endorse recommendations that:

1. environmental science and marine science research activities (including those research activities undertaken within the International Centre for Island Technology) should be reorganised within the School of Energy, Geoscience, Infrastructure, and Society;

2. food and drink research activities (including those research activities undertaken within the International Centre for Brewing and Distilling) and health sciences research activities should be reorganised within the established research institutes within the School of Engineering and Physical Sciences – namely, the Institute of Mechanical, Process, and Energy Engineering (food and drink research activities) and the Institute of Biological Chemistry, Biophysics, and Bioengineering (health sciences research activities);

3. all biology undergraduate programmes and environmental and marine science taught postgraduate programmes should be located together within the School of Energy, Geoscience, Infrastructure, and Society; and

4. other taught postgraduate programmes and research degree supervision and training should be aligned with research activities as described in (1) and (2).

The Senate considered the recommendations and, in the course of that discussion, noted that:

1. the reorganisation would present a number of opportunities in respect of both student experience and research capacity consistent with the University’s Strategy;

2. biological sciences would continue to be an important part of the University’s academic activities and the reorganisation provided opportunities to develop and enhance biological sciences taught programmes and revitalise its disciplinary identity; it would be important that the reorganisation process and its outcomes were monitored to assess their effectiveness;

3. the recognised trades unions had been fully consulted as part of the development of the recommendations and that there had been representatives of the recognised trades unions on the working groups; the Student Union had also been represented on the learning and teaching working group and had been pleased with the recommendations relating to learning and teaching;

4. the working groups had not made any recommendations as to the units of assessment to which individual members of staff would be assigned in the next Research Excellence Framework exercise; a Research Excellence Framework steering group had been established to coordinate preparations for that exercise;

5. the physical separation of academic activities was not expected to act as a barrier to interdisciplinary working and that, in the near future, the opening of the Sir Charles Lyell Centre would facilitate some co-location of cognate activities and that later phases of the current capital investment plan would focus on enabling interdisciplinary research;

6. following the reorganisation, it would be a decision for the relevant Schools as to whether the University should seek to join the Scottish Universities Life Sciences Alliance, but that more important in the immediate term was the need to maintain the University’s distinctiveness in those areas where it had specific strengths and expertise and that a decision to join the Alliance would be dependent on there being a clear understanding of the benefits that could arise from this;
The Senate endorsed the recommendations and agreed that the Court should be invited to approve these. The Senate noted that the Principal would lead a meeting with staff from the School of Life Sciences to advise them of the Senate’s decision. Letters would then be sent to all affected staff with indicative advice on the School in which they would be based from September 2016.

The Senate agreed that the Deputy Principal (External Relations) should develop a process and schedule by which the reorganisation would be systematically monitored and evaluated. The review would address both the extent to which the reorganisation had achieved its objectives as well as any lessons that might be learned for managing change within the University. It was agreed that the Quality and Standards Committee should consider the implications of the reorganisation for the rolling programme of academic quality assurance reviews and whether those reviews might inform the overall review of the success of the reorganisation.

M16/006  DEAN OF THE UNIVERSITY (SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING): EXTENSION TO TERM OF OFFICE [Paper SENP/16/003]

Considered  A paper setting out a proposal to extend the term of office of the Dean (Science and Engineering) from 31 March 2016 to 31 July 2016.

Noted  That the current effectiveness review of the Senate and Senate committees would consider the roles of the Deans of the University and that the extension would provide time for the review to be completed. The current Dean (Science and Engineering) would, following the end of the extension to the term of office, be eligible to seek by election a further three year term of office.

Approved  The Senate approved an extension to the term of office of the Dean (Science and Engineering) from 31 March 2016 to 31 July 2016 and thanked the Dean (Science and Engineering) for his work in support of the University’s academic governance processes.

M16/007  STUDENT ACADEMIC APPEALS: REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES [Paper SENP/16/005]

Considered  A revised version of Regulation 36 (Student Academic Appeals), a revised version of the associated Policy and Procedures, and nominations for the role of Assessor of stage two academic appeals.

Noted  It was proposed that stage two academic appeals, which had previously been considered by the Senior Dean, should be considered by a pool of Assessors appointed by the Senate. Assessors would be members of academic staff with experience of handling stage one academic appeals.

Approved  The Senate approved the revised Regulation 36, the revised Policy and Procedures, and the nominated Assessors. The Senate thanked the Deputy Principal (External Relations) and the Deputy Principal (Learning and Teaching) who had been considering stage two academic appeals since the Senior Dean had demitted that office in 2015.

M16/008  SENATE BUSINESS COMMITTEE [Paper SENP/16/006]

Received  The minutes of the meeting held 21 January 2016.

Noted  Arising from minute 16/006, that an error in the record of honorary titles approved for conferral would be corrected in the approved version of the minutes.
M16/009 UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE [Paper SENP/16/007]
Received The minutes of the meeting held 17 December 2015.
Noted That the Chair, on behalf of the Committee, had approved the introduction from September 2016 of the BSc Psychology programme at the Dubai campus.

M16/010 POSTGRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE [Paper SENP/16/008]
Received The minutes of the meeting held 8 December 2015.
Noted That the Chair, on behalf of the Committee, had approved the introduction from September 2015 of the MSc in Urban and Regional Planning programme at Approved Learning Partners and, from September 2016, of the MSc Network Security programme at the Edinburgh and Dubai campuses.
Noted That the Committee had approved the appointment of external examiners for specified taught postgraduate programmes and approved the award of research degrees.

M16/011 QUALITY AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE [Paper SENP/16/009]
Received The minutes of the meeting held 16 December 2015.
Noted Arising from minute 15/70, the Senate noted that the Committee had considered the teleconferencing needs of bodies such as Boards of Examiners and academic appeals panels. The Senate agreed that the enhancement of teleconferencing facilities for academic governance purposes should be considered as the University's capital investment programme was developed.

M16/012 THE UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE [Paper SENP/16/010]
Received A briefing report of the meetings held in December 2015 and January 2016.
Noted The academic-related matters which had been considered by the University Executive, including the future allocations of James Watt PhD studentships; the allocation of funding to support Research Council capital equipment bids; the schedule for processes relating to the 2016 academic promotions round; and the brief for an initial review of virtual learning environments which would inform a subsequent thematic review of technology enhanced learning to be led by the Learning and Teaching Board.

M16/013 LEARNING AND TEACHING BOARD [Paper SENP/16/011]
Received The minutes of the meeting held 9 December 2015.
Noted That the 2016 National Student Survey had opened and that Schools had an important role in encouraging the participation of final year undergraduates. The Student Union would support the University's efforts to promote the survey and achieve a high response rate.
Noted

That the next meeting of the Senate would be held 23 March 2016.

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

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