

- In the Chair: Professor Richard A Williams, Principal and Vice-Chancellor
- Present Also: Professor Julian Jones, Vice-Principal
Professor Robert Craik, Vice-Principal (Malaysia)*
Professor Ammar Kaka, Vice-Principal (Dubai)*
Professor Duncan Hand, Interim Deputy Principal (Research and Knowledge Exchange)
Professor Gill Hogg, Deputy Principal (External Relations)
Professor John Sawkins, Deputy Principal (Learning and Teaching)
Professor Gavin Gibson (Mathematics and Computer Sciences)**
Professor Stephen McLaughlin, Head (Engineering and Physical Sciences)
Dr Peter Morris, Interim Head (Life Sciences)
Professor Gareth Pender, Head (Energy, Geoscience, Infrastructure, and Society)
Professor Fiona Waldron, Head (Textiles and Design)
Ms Ann Marie Dalton, Secretary of the University
Mr Andrew Menzies, Director of Finance
- In Attendance: Mr Richard McGookin, Director of Planning
Mr John McDermott, Officer to the Secretariat
Mr Brett Dodgson, Clerk
- Apologies: Mr Alick Kitchin, Acting Head (Edinburgh Business School)
Professor Robert MacIntosh, Head (Management and Languages)
-

* Indicates member participating remotely

** For Professor Beatrice Pelloni

MINUTE REF

M16/147

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed to the meeting the members of the UE and those colleagues who were in attendance.

M16/148

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

In a verbal report the Principal and Chair noted that he had recently attended a meeting of the Scottish University Principals. The meeting had also been attended by representatives of the Scottish Government and the Scottish Funding Council as well as the Chief Executive of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service who had delivered a presentation on undergraduate application rates and trends and differences between Scotland and the other UK nations. The Principal noted that materials from this presentation would be circulated to the UE for notice. The implications of the recommendations of the Commission on Widening Access [minute 16/141] had been discussed as had changes to the funding for undergraduate places for widening access and college articulation schemes [minute 16/063].

The Principal also drew attention to the likely future priorities of Scottish Enterprise and the growth in the number of degree apprenticeship programmes at English universities.

M16/149 EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW OF THE SENATE AND THE SENATE COMMITTEES [Paper: UE/16/098]

The UE considered a report on the recently completed review of the effectiveness of the Senate and the Senate committees.

It was noted that the review had been led by the Secretary of the University and had been the first such review of the University's academic governance structures. The review had concluded that the University's academic governance structures could be judged as being reasonably effective. A number of possible enhancements had been identified that could bring benefits in terms of governance standards, quality and nimbleness of decision making, and enabling a more strategic approach.

It was noted that the review had recommended a number of modifications to the structure of the Senate committees. It was proposed that there should be three main Senate committees responsible for quality and standards, learning and teaching, and research and innovation with the last two of these reporting to both the Senate and the UE and replacing the existing Learning and Teaching Board and Research and Knowledge Exchange Board. Recommendations regarding the terms of reference and composition of the Senate committees were still being developed and it was noted that there could over time be scope for further simplification in the structure of the Senate committees. The review also made a number of other recommendations to support the effective working of the Senate and the Senate committees including the development of a statement of primary responsibilities and statement of delegated authority for the Senate; a programme of induction for new members of the Senate and the Senate committees; a forward work plan for the Senate and the structuring of agendas to give meetings a clearer strategic focus; and improved reporting and communications arrangements between the Senate committees, the Senate, the Court, and the wider University. It was noted that the implementation of these recommendations would be underpinned by a number of defined principles for effective academic governance.

The UE welcomed the report and agreed that it should be presented to the Senate in May 2016. It was agreed that the report should be strengthened through the inclusion of a clearer executive summary, answers to frequently asked questions, and an articulation of the likely implementation schedule should the recommendations be approved. The UE agreed that it should have the opportunity to consider the amended report before its presentation to the Senate. Members who had any further questions or comments on the report were invited to raise these with the Secretary of the University.

It was agreed that clarity in the communication of the findings of the review and the recommendations arising from these would be important given their scope and complexity. In particular, it was agreed that the report should clearly delineate between executive and academic governance responsibilities. It was noted that the Senate and the Senate committees could play a constructive role in discussions on relevant executive matters, but that responsibility for decisions on strategy and resources would continue to rest with the Court, the Court committees, and the UE. It was intended that members of the UE would chair the three main Senate committees and it was noted that such an approach was typical at other Scottish universities; it was agreed that specific proposals in this respect should be included within the report. More broadly, it was noted that the Senate committees would need to reflect leadership structures within the Schools and that their composition should include the relevant academic directors.

It was further agreed that the report could be strengthened through the inclusion of specific examples, related to the defined drivers for the review and its objectives, of the types of improvements that could be achieved as well as an articulation of the suggested attributes of a successful academic governance structure. It was noted that anticipated improvements should be quantifiable where possible and that the experience and attitudes survey of Senate and Senate committee members completed as part of the review could be used to define quantifiable measures. More broadly, it was noted that cultural and behavioural changes would be needed to achieve the anticipated improvements and that a major challenge would be to

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

better reflect the University's international campuses and operations in its academic governance structures and processes.

It was noted that a related review of the role of the Deans of the University was underway and that it was not intended to present the findings of that review at the current time. It was agreed that an indicative schedule should be agreed for the next steps in this review.

M16/150 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The UE noted that its next meeting would be held 25 April 2016.

Signed by Chair

Date