

MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE SENATUS ACADEMICUS held in the Debating Hall, Teviot Row House, 1 February 2017

Present: The Principal, Professors D Argyle, J Amis, J Ansell, D Arnot, D Arvind, S Bayne, S Brown, A Bundy, E Cameron, H Cameron, R Cann, S Clark, S Cooper, H Critchley, J Crow, S Cunningham-Burley, J Danbolt, R Dunbar, C Duncan, T Fawcett, D Finkelstein, R Fisher, P Foster, M Fourman, C French, I Fyfe, M Gallagher, R Ganeshram, D Gasevic, J Gentz, N Gentz, N Gisborne, H Goddard, K Goodall, I Gordon, A Grohmann, T Harrison, J Hearn, E Hollis, S Howie, A Jackson, S Karamanos, S Lawrie, D Leach, W Loretto, L McAra, F McLachlan, W McLeod, M Massimi, D Miell, A Mount, A Murray, A Newman, J Norman, C Pulham, G Pullum, I Ralston, J Ravenscroft, D Reay, G Reid, K Rice, D Scaltsas, M Schwannauer, A Sheikh, J Silvertown, A Sorace, J Sproule, R Sparks, A Tate, A Thompson, R Thomson, A Trew, A Tudhope, C Weir, K Whaler, M Whyte, W Whyte, Drs S Chan, C Chandler, G Duursma, J Harrison, T Kaminer, S Kheria, J Lowrey, K McCall-Smith, S Morley, M Michou, J Murray, A Maciocia, F O'Hanlon, P Norris, G Pearson, C Phillips, S Rhynas, S Riley, S Rodgers, P Sheail, P Smith, E Stevenson, P Walsh, , Ms S Boyd, Ms S Clough, Mr H Dingwall, Ms M Highton, Mr A Verhoeven

Associate Members: Mr A Edgecliffe-Johnson, Mr P Garratt, Ms J Husbands, Mr J Vercruyse, Mr M Wildasin

In Attendance: Mr S Bottomley, Ms F Boyd, Dr M Brennan, Mr A Bunni, Mrs C Campbell, Ms L Chalmers, Ms R Claase, Mr B Connolly, Ms A Conroy, Mr A Crossland, Dr P Docherty, Dr M Donaldson, Mr G Douglas, Dr P Erskine, Miss V Farrar, M Forde, Ms M Gibson, Ms K Gilliland, Ms J Grier, Ms S Harvey, Ms L Henderson, Mr D Hills, Dr K Hughes, Ms A Jones, Mr G Jebb, Ms J Kelly, Mrs J Kemp, Dr L Kendall, Ms L Ketchion, Ms C Lennie, Ms M MacKenzie, Miss S McAllister, Miss S McBain, Mrs C McGrath, Mr R Miller, Mr D Mole, Professor Emeritus R Morris, Ms J Murray, Mrs J Nicholson, Ms R O'Neill, Ms S Padaruth, Ms J Paterson, Professor Emeritus D Porteous, Ms S Renton, Dr S Rolle, Mr R Sargeant, Ms R Shade, Miss T Sheppard, Professor P Smith, Ms S Smith, Dr N Speirs, Ms S Spielman, D Stevenson, Mr N Summers, Dr J Thompson, Dr N Tuzi, Ms C Wallace, Ms P Ward, Mr S Warrington, Ms S Williams,

The moment of reflection was delivered by Ms Jenna Kelly, Students' Association Vice-President, Services who used the words of Michelle Obama to express the importance of striving for excellence.

PRINCIPAL'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Principal reported that Tam Dalyell, alumnus, rector and parliamentarian, had died. The Principal had written on behalf of the University to his widow and would speak at his memorial service about the important contributions he had made to the University.

The Principal emphasised the extremely good relationship that the University had with the Scottish Government.

The Principal noted that this was his last meeting of Senate and that the announcement of the new Principal would be made the following day.

FORMAL BUSINESS

1. Report of E-Business (S 16/17 2 A)

The report of the e-business conducted between 10 and 18 January 2017 was noted.

2. Development of a Policy on Learning Analytics (S 16/17 2 B)

Professor Dragan Gasevic addressed the Senatus on the institutional policy on Learning Analytics which was being developed by a Task Group appointed for the purpose by the Knowledge Strategy Group and the Learning and Teaching Committee.

The policy would support the collection and analysis of data relating to learning with a view to improving the learning environment and the student experience. The data analysis would also support the planning of resources.

Professor Gasevic emphasised that, as part of the development of the policy, measures would be put in place to ensure that the data was used ethically and transparently to support and optimise learning, that its use had full consent, and that A consultation exercise of Colleges, Schools and students was underway and a student survey was also planned. Stakeholders would also be given the opportunity to provide written submissions on the draft policy.

In discussion, the following points were made:

- Use of the data was potentially controversial, and a consensus would need to be reached across the stakeholder groups as to when, and in what situations, the data could be acceptably used.
- The policy should explain how the University would identify and address any potential bias (eg gender bias) in the data.
- Information about the learning process might be obtained from a variety of data environments, such as the enrolment process, and unstructured data, such as click streams, tags, and data on library usage.

3. Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act – Options for the Senatus Academicus (S 16/17 2 C)

The University Secretary noted that the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Bill had been amended following feedback from the sector, and that the Act had been passed in 2016. A Task Group appointed in May 2016 had reviewed the implications of the Act for the composition of Senatus and had devised five possible models of membership on which Senatus was invited to comment.

The Director of Academic Services provided an outline of each of the models set out in the paper. It was noted that under the Act, more than 50 per cent of the Senate's members must be elected.

In discussion, preference was expressed for both Model 1 (large Senate reaching a membership of around 1,400) and Model 2 (Medium-sized Senate of around 250, with the University specifying separate pools for election for Professors and for other academic staff categories).

It was noted that the large membership of Model 1 would reflect the diversity of the institution which in turn would offer security in uncertain times and would better enable the University to confront big challenges in the coming years. A large membership, however, would not necessarily guarantee representation, for example across staff grades, gender and ethnicity, and consideration should be given as to whether the current composition should reflect the composition of the University as a whole.

It was felt by those who supported Model 2 that the composition of Senate under this model would reflect current levels of attendance, and would be sufficiently large to be reasonably representative of the University's community.

It was felt that the revision of Senate membership would provide the opportunity for democratic renewal, possibly leading to increased engagement with the wider community and ultimately a more active Senate.

There was no support for a smaller Senate (Model 3) or the Council of Senate and Congregation of Chairs models (Models 4 and 5) which would not reflect the diversity of the institution.

The following wider points were made with regard to the membership of Senate:

- The members of Senate would have equal status and voting rights.
- Clarity was sought as to whether 'membership' implied representation of constituencies or delegation of responsibility.
- Election to Senate should be public and membership should be time-limited and rotational.
- Under a reduced membership, a random ('sortition') method of selection for Senate might be a desirable means of appointing a representative sample of non-elected members.
- The Act would require no more than 30 student members but, given the size of the student body, the reconstituted Senate should not necessarily be limited by such a number. It would be important for students to have a direct voice rather than being represented by the University staff.
- Membership of Senate was a big responsibility and the University should feel challenged to make it more engaging and more important.

The Principal thanked Senatus for a helpful discussion and it was noted that further comments by email would be welcomed.

The discussion would be relayed to the Task Group which would take it into account when developing more detailed proposals.

4. Communications from the University Court (S 16/17 2 D)

The Senatus noted the content of the report.

5. Resolutions (S 16/17 2 E)

Court presented to Senatus draft Resolutions in accordance with procedures for the creation of new chairs, renaming of existing chairs and the process for personal chairs. The Senatus, having considered the draft Resolutions below, offered no observations.

Draft Resolution No. 9/2017: Foundation of a Chair of Environmental Law

Draft Resolution No. 10/2017: Foundation of Additional Chairs of Finance (2 chairs)

Draft Resolution No. 11/2017: Foundation of a Chair of Infection Medicine

Draft Resolution No. 12/2017: Foundation of a Chair of Interdisciplinary Science

Draft Resolution No. 13/2017: Foundation of a Chair of Software Engineering

Draft Resolution No. 14/2017: Foundation of a Chair of Quantum Technology Innovation

Draft Resolution No. 15/2017: Alteration of the title of the Chair of Classroom Learning

COMMUNICATIONS

6. Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)

The Director of Academic Services informed the Senatus that the decision had been taken by Court that the University would not enter the Teaching Excellence Framework on the basis that Scottish Higher Education already had a strong quality enhancement framework which currently suited the Scottish context better than the TEF. The majority of Scottish Higher Education Institutions had also decided not to enter the TEF, although five had taken the decision to enter.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION: Student Disability Services Review and Mental Health Services Review

Non-Senate members who were in attendance for the presentation and discussion section of the meeting were welcomed.

The focus of the presentation and discussion section was the Student Disability Services and the Mental Health Services Reviews.

Seven members of staff and one student addressed Senatus on the reviews, which focused on how reasonable adjustments for students were made and implemented, the accessibility of the University estate and the promotion of wellbeing in the student population generally.

Student Disability Services Review

Introduction: overview, summary of action plan and timescale

Professor Jane Norman, Vice-Principal, People and Culture

Professor Norman introduced the work of the disability review panel which had been appointed following concerns raised by students about the University's current arrangements for supporting students with disabilities. The review had focused on the accessibility of the estate, and implementation of reasonable adjustments and the policy and practice around interruptions of studies. The Student Disability Service and the Estates and Buildings Department had been invited to produce a commentary, the panel had met individual disabled students, and the panel had discussed the implementation of adjustments with School staff. Recommendations focused on implementation and communication of adjustments and an action plan to address areas of inaccessibility in the estate.

Student perspective

Ms Jess Husbands, Students' Association Vice-President, Societies & Activities

Ms Husbands reported that students had made a valuable contribution to the panel. From the student perspective, the Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy was regarded as a positive development, promoting an inclusive environment while making students feel less conspicuous. Non-implementation of some adjustments remained an issue, however, and was a cause of stress for students. The lack of systematic engagement with disabled students had also led to issues across the estate, which met statutory requirements but remained inaccessible in some areas.

Ms Husbands indicated that it was unclear where the responsibility lay for accessibility in the estate and it was recommended that accessibility champions be appointed to drive access issues in a coordinated and strategic way. The University should also consider whether its approach was to be one of minimum compliance or whether it would set the sector-wide standard for disability issues.

Mainstreaming of adjustments

Professor Tina Harrison, Assistant Principal Academic Standards and Quality Assurance
Professor Iain Gordon, Head of School of Mathematics

Professor Harrison introduced the Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy which sought to improve learning by mainstreaming a small number of adjustments to support those with disabilities. The University had an anticipatory duty towards its students and part of the University's strategy was to create an inclusive environment which would support all students achieve their full potential. The aim of the Policy was to reduce the number of individual adjustments to implement by mainstreaming a range of adjustments, which account for around 25 per cent of all adjustments recommended by the Student Disability Service.

The propensity to declare a disability was not distributed equally across all student cohorts, however, and the policy would need to support the increasing diversity of the student body.

Professor Gordon outlined the ways in which the policy had been implemented by the School of Mathematics. Efforts had been made by the School to embed its own pedagogy into the process of mainstreaming adjustments and significant value was placed on liaison between staff and students in order to help the School identify where the Policy was not being implemented effectively. The School had used Learn to communicate with whole classes regarding reading lists/lecture outlines, while Path had been used to enable students to identify reading lists for the following year. This had the added benefit of allowing the School to provide details on courses well in advance of the academic year. Microphones in lectures were found to be useful and the School had held ongoing discussions on the efficacy of providing lecture notes.

Implementing adjustments

Professor Sandy Tudhope, Head of School of Geosciences

Professor Tudhope reported that a key concern for the panel was the lack of communication between the Student Disability Service and Schools and a lack of clarity over where the authority lay to determine and implement 'reasonable' adjustments. While Schools and the Student Disability Service both had specific roles in supporting students with disabilities, there was no one individual with overall authority to ensure that adjustments were implemented. The IT systems were also inadequate to support the necessary communication of learning profiles setting out students' recommended reasonable adjustments.

The panel had made a number of recommendations to address these issues:

- That the University change the status of agreed adjustments from a recommendation to a necessary requirement to implement, with the Student Disability Service, as the professional service with specific expertise in relation to disability, having the ultimate authority with regard to identifying what is a 'reasonable' adjustment.
- That the Student Disability Service must forge closer relationships with Schools and engage in a programme of communication, so that Disability Advisors understand the context of adjustments in order to make them feasible and optimal.
- Schools should appoint a single point of contact for students with disabilities.
- Schools should undertake an annual review of adjustments and report to the Disability Committee.

- IT systems, which will be updated in 2016/17, should include a single portal listing all the adjustments for any individual student and assemble information throughout the entire student journey.

Improving accessibility of the estate

Mr Gary Jebb, Director of Estates

Mr Jebb focused on the accessibility of the estate and improvements which were planned and underway. While most of the new estate was reasonably accessible, a quarter was currently not accessible.

While it would not be possible to have a fully accessible estate in the near future, progress over the last few months had included the drafting of an accessibility policy which was out for consultation and an access review of the site had also started, with access guides available during Welcome Week from September 2017.

It was planned that £15m would be spent on the estate over five years, with £2m being spent in 2016/17. Access proposals for major developments were currently under review; proposals for six schemes had already been reviewed and a number of enhancements had already been implemented. A programme of Disability Awareness training was underway for key staff in the Estates Department and a helpdesk had been introduced to tag maintenance issues.

Student mental health strategy

Overview, summary of action plan and timescale

Mr Gavin Douglas, Deputy Secretary, Student Experience

Professor Helen Cameron, Director of the Centre for Medical Education

Professor Cameron introduced the work of the Student Mental Health Strategy Group which had noted the growing demand for mental health services among young people. At the outset, a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats analysis had been undertaken: the University's strengths lay in the scale, scope and quality of its services to support students' mental health, such as counselling, disability and residential services and the Chaplaincy. The University's focus of attention, however, had been on reacting to demand rather than adopting proactive well-being strategies and communication on provision of services had been fragmented. Threats lay in changing factors such as under-capacity in the NHS and the risk of universities attempting to backfill NHS services. Following the SWOT analysis, the Group had conducted desk-based research, including an examination of strategies at comparable universities and had consulted a wide range of stakeholders.

Professor Cameron noted that the Group's vision was to create an environment which enabled and supported students to flourish. The two-fold aims of the strategy were to treat all students with respect and empathy while promoting good health, and to help students overcome mental health problems by supporting them through services.

Mr Douglas emphasised the importance of communicating the support that was available to students throughout the student journey and of promoting well-being at an early stage by developing specific material and guidance. There were various initiatives around the University which were already having a positive impact and pilots would be assessed and scaled up if necessary. A strong focus was on building a sense of community and supporting students who experienced mental health illness.

In terms of supporting the mental health of students, the University would need to consider where its resources should be invested.

Discussion

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- Recommendations should take into account the current capacity of the Student Disability Services; the Service was currently operating at full capacity and had extended to evening appointments, but there was a limit to its capabilities.
- Recommendations should be mindful of transient, as well as permanent disabilities.
- The recommendations around communications of reasonable adjustments for disabled students were potentially challenging to implement and sufficient time should be allowed for this, especially since not all adjustments were currently being implemented, such as use of microphones in lectures.
- Design of assessment was an important issue for both disability and mental health: thought should be given to assessments which were more inclusive; moreover, examination stress was a common cause of mental health issues and consideration should be given to the effect of certain modes of assessment on mental health.
- When consulting key stakeholders regarding the mental health strategy, it would be important to distinguish between undergraduate and postgraduate students since there was a difference between the integration and campus support available to these two cohorts.
- Waiting times for accessing NHS provision were an issue for mental health patients and should be addressed either through more in-house support or greater connections with the NHS.
- The social environment was important for students' well-being since issues around mental health were frequently associated with the pressures of being far from home. A strong community structure was essential and initiatives such as the buddy scheme run by the Students' Association were effective in this regard.
- In addition to providing support to students with short-term mental health issues, the University should develop ways of supporting students in the longer-term, including supporting students to become more resilient.

The Principal expressed his appreciation for the serious and considered presentations given and noted that the commitment of the University was very strong in the face of a demanding set of issues.

Senate Clerk
10 February 2017