SENATUS ACADEMICUS

UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING
OF THE SENATUS ACADEMICUS
held online Wednesday 10 February 2021

OPEN SESSION
This section of the meeting is open to all members of staff. 403 members of staff attended this open session.

1. **Convener's Communications**
   An update from the Convener, Principal Professor Peter Mathieson

   The Convener gave a short update followed by a Q&A.

   The Convener opened by thanking staff for the extraordinary efforts, resilience and innovation that they have shown over the last year.

   Regarding University planning assumptions for 2021/22:
   - Some form of social distancing requirement will likely be in place.
   - As a result, all in-person graduations in 2021 have been cancelled, although the final decision on November graduations is being reviewed.
   - The delivery model will continue to be hybrid.
   - It is likely that Covid-19 restrictions will be sufficiently eased and facilities will be sufficiently open for there to be valuable reasons for students to want to be in Edinburgh in person.
   - The focus will be on delivering in person what is absolutely essential.
   - It will be critical that staff and students are given clear expectations.

   In response to questions, the Convener and other senior staff noted:
   - The 'best endeavours' approach was formulated in order to recognise and address the impacts of the pandemic on staff and particularly on staff with caring responsibilities. It is recognised that many staff are balancing competing demands. Managers have been asked to work with colleagues to try to adapt workloads to circumstances. There are no simple answers to the possible longer-term impact on the career progression of individuals.
   - ISG can provide support such as laptop loans and wifi dongles for students struggling with working from home.
   - The Convener had been quoted (inaccurately initially) in an article in The Guardian on aspects of teaching. The article had been rapidly corrected by The Guardian to clarify that the statement was specifically in relation to levels of in-person teaching. The Convener felt that the corrected statement, that there had not been much in-person teaching for undergraduates, was in line with communications that have been sent to students. The Convener rejected the idea that anything in his comments implied that he did not value online teaching or the work and expertise of colleagues delivering online teaching.
   - In relation to university finances: the impact of the pandemic on international recruitment was less severe than predicted, but the impact on income from conferences, accommodation, catering and events has been longer and more severe than expected. This has included both the cancellation of the Fringe and the University's (correct, and sector-leading) decision to release students from

accommodation contracts without penalty if they are not living in their accommodation.

- The University's current financial position is reasonable. However, costs have been rising more quickly than income over the last five to six years. This disparity is unsustainable and must be addressed. This situation predates the pandemic but the impact of the pandemic on income has not helped.

- In response to a concern that suspending promotions affects mostly younger staff and colleagues at the end of pay scales, while others will receive incremental increases, it was noted that suspending promotions was a short-term response to immediate pressures on cash-flow, and it was hoped that this would not be a lever used in future years, but also that planning for the next financial year is still in progress.

- It was noted that although there was an operating surplus last year, the majority of this surplus is ring-fenced and cannot be spent on staffing costs, and the surplus represents only around two weeks' worth of running costs.

- The University is considering offering staff respite days around Easter [these have since been confirmed]. Staff were encouraged to take annual leave to give themselves breaks.

- The University has not currently made plans to allow students to self-isolate in university accommodation instead of private hotels, but there is awareness of this issue.

- A query will be raised with the Study and Work Away Team on whether any support can be offered to year abroad students who are required to self-isolate.

- In relation to a query on whether line management responsibilities are appropriately accounted for in work allocation models, to allow staff appropriate time to be effective line managers, it was agreed that this question, and specifically the issue of some staff having a very large number of direct reports, might be usefully raised at the Staff Experience Committee chaired by the VP Strategic Change and Governance.

- The VP Students hopes to provide an update in the near future on the status of the Personal Tutor and Student Support Review, but noted that it has not been practical to attempt to implement the recommendations of the review in the current circumstances.

- The UKRI announcement that from 2024 all recipients of funding will be asked to demonstrate that they are sustainable was noted.

- In response to a question on how input on University planning is elicited from staff, the Convener noted that staff can contact senior leadership or the leaders of the Adaptations and Renewal workstreams by email, that there are regular staff surveys, and that meetings such as this, and Townhall meetings, provide opportunities for colleagues to share their views. The Convener noted that some staff surveys have indicated that colleagues don't feel adequately consulted or informed about change, that this is a cause for concern, and he encouraged colleagues to make use of the communication channels available to contribute constructive thoughts or new ideas.

The Convener thanked colleagues for their contributions and closed the Q&A.

2. **Strategic Presentation and Discussion**
   Adaptation and Renewal: Research and Innovation

Senate heard presentations on the following topics:

- **Research in the time of corona** by Professor Jonathan Seckl

- **Enriching our research culture** by Dr Sara Shinton

Professor Seckl spoke on the impact of the pandemic on the work of researchers in the University, steps taken by the University to support researchers, and the contributions of University researchers to research on Covid-19.

Key points included:
- During the first period of lockdown research productivity was at around 40%, but there were significantly different levels of impact in different areas.
- Research restarted quickly when the lockdown was eased in July, though this was an extremely complex and difficult process requiring huge effort from colleagues, particularly in Health and Safety, and Estates.
- Research outputs in 2020 were only 10% down on 2019.
- Grant applications increased in 2020 compared to 2019.
- The ART: Research and Innovation team has brought together Heads of College, College Deans of Research, College Postgraduate Deans, representatives from Human Resources, Research Offices, Estates, Data Driven Innovation, Information Services, the Institute for Academic Development, and Edinburgh Innovations. These groups are continuing to plan, revise and reprioritize in order to support continuing research activity as we move forward in the changing situation of the pandemic.
- Emergency funding to support research activity was received from the Scottish Government, UK Research and Innovation, and the University.
- Emergency funding was used to extend the funding of final year PhD students and to extend the contracts of around 150 post-doctoral researchers.
- This funding was also used to award 40 Chancellors' Fellowships. Targets were set for 50% of awards to be to women and 20% of awards to be to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) appointees, and these targets were broadly achieved, with 19% BAME appointees and over 50% female appointees.
- University researchers have won significant funding for Covid-19-related research, with all three Colleges being around 5th in the UK for the amount of funding won.
- Around 5% of the research outputs on Covid-19 in the UK have come from this University, and University colleagues have been involved in advising members of the UK Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and the Scottish Government, and communicating with the public via the media.
- The University has drawn down funding from the Data Driven Innovation City Deal and outcomes from the project so far include securing over 1000 new jobs in international companies and start-ups, providing digital and data skills development to over 50,000 people, and starting up 15 high-growth ventures. Very considerable research funding has been secured and a large number of companies have engaged in the project, bringing in external investment. This work is vital for this region of Scotland and particularly now looking towards post-pandemic recovery.
- Engagement with industry by the University has increased significantly, and Edinburgh Innovations has played an important role in this.

Professor Seckl also gave a brief update on REF 2021.
- The REF submission will be made at the end of March.
- There will be 28 units of assessment submitted.

- As in past REFs, there will be a large number of joint submissions, possibly the highest for any Higher Education institution.
- Research income has increased since the last REF submissions by two thirds per annum, and the number of PhDs has increased by 50% per annum.
- Professor Seckl congratulated colleagues on these are significant achievements.

Dr Sara Shinton spoke on the decisions made on the allocation of emergency research funding, and on other priorities that have been put forward in the last year to foster a more inclusive research culture.

Key points included:
- Work this year has been in the context of a previous grant award from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council to look at the lack of diversity in large strategic grants and research projects, and also work undertaken to implement the UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, which was signed by the University a year ago.
- An action plan has been developed and will be published shortly. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is a key driver in this work.
- Key challenges identified through this process were: improving communication of information about available support for researchers; support, resources and training for managers of researchers; researcher security; gathering better information on the research population to enable better decision-making.
- A research culture survey was run in July 2020 by Professor Malcolm MacLeod and has been benchmarked against a UK-wide Wellcome Trust survey. This highlighted three areas for attention: institutional commitment to diversity and inclusion; reported levels of experiencing or witnessing bullying; different experiences of research culture for different groups of staff.
- This research informed decisions on distributing Scottish Funding Council funds, including funding 40 Chancellors' Fellowships. The Institute for Academic Development (IAD) are also working with people who narrowly missed out on this funding, to support future applications.
- Online and flexible training materials have been developed, including a tailored programme for women of colour, and programmes for early career researchers. Programme information will be released soon, and staff are encouraged to contact the IAD for further information.
- Work will continue of the action plan, and outcomes from this work will be reported to the Research Integrity Reporting Group, and then to the Research Policy Group.

In response to questions, the presenters and senior staff noted:
- One aim of the development of resources and support for managers of researchers is to foster a research environment that is free from bullying. A race action plan is also forthcoming. The 'Respect at Edinburgh' web-hub was also highlighted as a source of guidance and training opportunities (https://www.ed.ac.uk/equality-diversity/respect). The introduction of a 'behaviours charter' is also being considered.
- Some data has been gathered on the impact of covid-related caring responsibilities on researchers, and guidance has been developed for individuals whose research has been disrupted by these challenges. This is intended as a tool for discussions with line managers to produce a statement of the extent to

which research has been disrupted, which can then be used in reviews and decision-making. Data will also be tracked by a newly-formed Research EDI Committee which will be chaired by Professor Jane Hillston.

- There is not currently a programme of training for professional services staff who support research activity, but staff were encouraged to contact IAD if they would be interested in this.
- There are no plans to create nursery facilities at the BioQuarter. There was some discussion on the accessibility of the nurseries at King's Buildings and Easter Bush, and the past success of the University in running nurseries.
- The CAHSS Research Hub was noted as a resource for researchers in that College (https://www.ed.ac.uk/arts-humanities-soc-sci/research-ke/serch-research-hub)
- Discussions are taking place on the use of narrative CVs by researchers that may allow for a broader and more inclusive representation of research contributions.
- The new Research Staff Hub will be developed over the next six months.

The Convener thanked the presenters and all participants for their contributions to the presentation and discussion.

The Convener closed the open session of Senate, noting that Senate members were invited to join the formal meeting of Senate at 4pm.

Break

FORMAL MEETING OF SENATE – from 4pm
This section of the meeting is open to Senate members only

Members Present: P Matheson, (Chair), F Abou Jawad, R Andrew, R Andrews, M Barany, C Beckett, S Benjamin, S Bennett, S Bowd, H Branigan, M Brennan, D Byrne, D Cavanagh, U Chan, S Chandran, N Chue Hong, A Connor, A Convery, S Cooper, H Critchley, J Crook, J Cruz, S Cunningham-Burley, J Danbolt, L De Mets, A Desler,L Dritsas, L Duncan-Karrim, J Dunlop, J Esteves Craveiro De Oliveira, M Evans, D Evensen, S Ewing, M Fernandez-Gotz, C French, D Friedrich, S Gilfillan, I Gordon, S Grant, G Gray, L Hamilton, J Hardy, C Harmon, T Harrison, D Hay, E Haycock-Stuart, S Henderson, M Highton, J Hillston, A Holloway, J Hopgood, K Jenkins, J Jarrett, N Kahuam Lopez, S Kelley, L Kirstein, S Lamont-Black, W Loretto, S McCaffery, G McLachlan, F MacKay, S McMahon, S MacPherson, E MacRae A Maciocia, C Martin, E Mavin, D Miell, N Moran, S Morley, T Morrison, N Mulholland, A Murray, J Murray, P Navarro, R Nicol, P Norris, C Naydani, A Ngobeni M Novenson, R Oosterhoff, I Omah, C Phillips, R Reynolds, J Reynolds-Wright, S Riley, J Robbins, S Rolle, C Sayer, T Schwarz, A Scully, M Shipston, M Siddiqui, S Smith, L Snellgrove, S Stock, A Swan,T Stratford, E Taylor, P Taylor, J Terry, R Thomas, A Trew, S Tudhope, N Tuzi, B Wahi-Singh, P Walsh, S Warrington, M Whyte

In attendance: K Nicol, P Ward

Apologies: E Bomberg, K Chapman, K Collins, S Dimantino, R Irwin, R Kenway, C Martin, L McAra, N McCrossan, L McKie, A Morris, M Napierska, P Onyemaechi, D Robertson, G Ross, G Simm, J Smith, J Turner, M Whyte

3.   **Welcome to new members**

Senate welcomed the members below who have joined Senate since the last Ordinary meeting on 7 October 2020:
- Claire Johnson - Student Carers' Representative
- Lara De Mets - Commuter Students' Representative
- Steve Anderson - Student Parents' Representative
- Ifeanyi Omah - Postgraduate Taught Representative
- Martyna Napierska - Postgraduate Research Representative
- Emma Mavin - Divinity Postgraduate School Representative
- Pierre Ezard - Economics Postgraduate School Representative
- Joana Esreves Craveiro De Oliveira - Health in Social Sciences Postgraduate School Representative
- Nicholas Kahuam-Lopez - Clinical Sciences Postgraduate School Representative
- Cynthia Naydani - Veterinary Postgraduate School Representative

4.   **Senate members' feedback on presentation and discussion topic**

No comments were made.

SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

5.   **Report from E-Senate (S 20/21 2 A)**
     To approve the minute of E-Senate held from 19 to 27 January 2021

No comments were received and the minutes were approved.

6. **Titles for Teaching-dominated roles at Grade 8 and 9 (S 20/21 2 A)**
   To discuss

   Professor Alan Murray presented the paper. The paper proposes that :
   - Grade 8 roles that include an element of teaching be re-titled 'Lecturer' (replacing the title 'Teaching Fellow');
   - Senior Teaching Fellows that are promoted to Grade 9 obtain the title 'Senior Lecturer'.

   The following comments and questions were raised by Senate members:
   - Many members of Senate supported the proposal, noting in particular support for the intention behind the proposal, which is to support institutional recognition of the importance of teaching. Several members indicated that the proposals in the paper are already standard practise in their Schools.
   - Queries were raised about the use of the title 'Reader': this is not affected by the current proposal, but there was some discussion about the use of this title and whether this should also be under review.
   - The change proposed will potentially effect a significant number of staff in CAHSS. It was also noted that in CSE 'Teaching Fellow' posts are often offered as temporary contacts, for example to cover parental leave: would these posts need to be re-badged as 'Lecturer' appointments?
   - Some Senate members spoke in favour of retaining the titles 'Teaching Fellow' and 'Senior Teaching Fellow', arguing that these titles are preferable to 'Lecturer' from a pedagogical point of view.
   - Some Senate members expressed concern that the title of an individual currently employed as a Grade 8 'Senior Teaching Fellow' will change to 'Lecturer', which may be seen as being downgraded.
   - Some Senate members spoke in favour of using the titles 'Associate Professor, Assistant Professor and Professor', on the basis that these titles are widely understood in international contexts.
   - It was noted that a small number of staff are in hybrid roles involving teaching, research and professional services roles. It is possible to be promoted within hybrid roles, but this can be very challenging within current University structures.
   - Job titles require clear and shared definitions, with clear promotion requirements and clear expectations for the person in the role. Greater consistency across Schools and Colleges was encouraged.
   - The implications of the title change must be clearly understood and managed, including managing expectations of staff affected by the change. How will the change in title be communicated to staff involved? It must be made clear whether the change in title indicates any change in role, or any change in employment status.
   - Questions were raised about whether or not staff in teaching-centred roles are eligible for any equivalent to research leave, and whether any time for research (including supporting research-led teaching) will be built into the Workload Allocations Models of these staff.
   - It was noted that while the proposal may result in the same titles being applied to teaching-focused roles and roles that involve both teaching and research, these roles will still have different role descriptions. Therefore there will continue to be different 'types' of Lecturers, for example: this will not be recognised in the job title, but in the role description. The proposal before Senate does not consider role descriptions.

- It was noted that the University has clear grade descriptors to be used in aligning roles and grades, and that the annual review process should be used by staff and line managers to discuss and agree promotion requirements, training needs, requests for development opportunities or changes to current roles.
- Some Senate members suggested that making changes to titles in isolation is not sufficient, and that a more comprehensive review of titles, role descriptions, promotion requirements, and Human Resources policy and guidance is required. Such a larger-scale review has been identified as a requirement by a university working group, but this review has not yet started. It was suggested that the change in titles is not an urgent requirement and could wait for a more comprehensive review. Alternatively, it was suggested that this change could be an interim measure, pending a more comprehensive review.

The Convener summarised the discussion, noting that there appeared to be broad support for the proposal, with some qualified support and many suggestions for further thinking. There was clear support for equity in recognition of people's contributions to the University. The Convener will review the collated comments of the discussion with the Vice Principal Students, and the proposal will be taken forward for discussion at the University Executive.

ITEMS FOR FORMAL APPROVAL OR NOTING

7. **Conferment of the title of Professor Emeritus / Emerita (S 20/21 2 C)**
To approve

Senate approved the conferral of these titles.

8. **Senate Election Arrangements 2021 (S 20/21 2 D)**
To approve

Senate approved the election arrangements as presented.

9. **Senate Standing Committees – upcoming business (2 20/21 2 E)**
To note and comment

The paper from the Senate Committees was welcomed as a useful regular addition to Senate's agenda. It was noted that if the Senate Committees could provide further details on the issues coming before them, this would assist Senate in framing their comments. However, it was also noted that this paper is forward-looking and that more detailed information may not be available in advance of the Senate Committees' own discussions. Senate members were reminded that they could contact the Senate Committee conveners if they wish to explore an issue in more detail.

Senate commented on upcoming or recent work on Course Enhancement Questionnaires and attainment measures (Quality Assurance Committee), developments in academic and pastoral support policies (Senate Education Committee), and work on fully-taught postgraduate Masters programmes in College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (Senate Education Committee).