SENATUS ACADEMICUS

UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE SENATUS ACADEMICUS
held online Friday 12 November 2021

Members Present: MATHIESON Peter (CHAIR), AFZAL Barza, ANDREANGELI Arianna, ANDREWS Richard, BALTARETU Ioana, BARAKAT Ammir, BARANY Michael, BAXSTROM Richard, BECKETT Chris, BENNETT Stuart, BLYTHE Richard, BOND Helen, BRANIGAN Holly, BUDD Adam, CALVERT Jane, CAQUINEAU Celine, CAVANAGH David, CHANDRAN Siddharthan, CHAPMAN Karen, CHIGUMBA Mukai, CHUE HONG Neil, CONNOR Andrew, CONVERY Alan, COOMBES Sam, CRANG Jeremy, CRUZ Juan, DANBOLT Jo, DESLER Anne, DIMARTINO Simone, DONOVAN Kevin, DUNLOP James, EFERAKORHO Jite, ELLIS Heather, EUSA VP Activities, EUSA VP Welfare, EUSA VP Communities, EUSA VP Activities, EVANS Mark, EWING Suzanne, FRENCH Chris, FRIEDRICH Daniel, GILFILLAN Stuart, GRAY David, HALLIDAY Karen, HAMILTON Lorna, HARDY Judy, HARMON Colm, HARRISON Gareth, HARRISON Tina, HAY David, HENDERSON Sarah, HIGHTON Melissa, HOLLOWAY Aisha, HOLT Sophie, HOPGOOD James, HOY Jenny, HUDSON Andrew, IBIKUNLE Gbenga, HILLSTON Jane, JENKINS Kirsten, KHATTAR Medhat, KINNEAR George, KIRSTEIN Linda, LLORENTE PRADA Jaime, LLOYD Ashley, LORETTO Wendy, MACIOCIA Antony, MACPHERSON Sarah E, MARSLAND Rebecca, MAVIN Emma, MCLACHLAN Gavin, MEIKSIN Avery, MENZIES John, MIELL Dorothy, MORAN Carmel, MORAN Nikki, MORRISON Tara, MORROW Susan, NAVARRO Pau, NEWTON Michael, NGWENYA Bryne, NICOL Robbie, NORRIS Paul, NOVENSON Matthew, OOSTERHOFF Richard, PANTOULA Katerina, PATON Diana, PHILLIPS Claire, RICE Ken, RILEY Simon, SCHWANNAUER Matthias, SCHWARZ Tobias, SHAW Jo, SHEIKH Aziz, SMITH Sarah, STORRIER Rachel, STRATFORD Tim, TAYLOR Paul, TERRAS Melissa, TERRY Jonathan, TUFAIL-HANIF Uzma, TURNER Adam, UPTON Jeremy, WALSH Patrick, WARRINGTON Stephen, WEIR Christopher, YILDIRIM Alper

Apologies: BOMBERG Elizabeth, BOSWELL Christina, BOWD Stephen, CAMERON Ewen, CHAN Annie, CONVERY Alan, CRITCHLEY Hilary, CRUZ Juan, DAVIES Mia Nicole, du PLESSIS Paul, EVANS Jay, EVENSEN Darrick, FORBES Stuart, GENTZ Natascha, GOLD Tara, GRAY Gillian, HAYCOCK-STUART Elaine, HUNTER Emma, KENNY Meryl, KENWAY Richard, LIKONDE Samantha, MACKAY Fiona, MACRAE Ellen, MARTIN Catherine, McARA Lesley, MCKIE Linda, MOLE Damian, MORRIS Andrew, MULHOLLAND Neil, MURRAY Jonny, NAYDANI Cynthia, PULHAM Colin, REYNOLDS Rebecca, REYNOLDS-WRIGHT John, ROBBINS Jeremy, ROLLE Sabine, SAKOVICS Jozsef, SECKL Jonathan, SEMPLE Robert, SHIPSTON Mike, SIMM Geoff, STOCK Sarah, TAYLOR Emily, TURNER Neil, TUZI Nadia, WAHI-SINGH Pia, WHYTE Moira

In attendance: DOUGLAS Gavin, MACGREGOR Sue, NICOL Kate

Convener's welcome

The Convener welcomed Senate members to the meeting, and noted that this was a Special meeting convened to complete the Senate business that was not closed at the Senate meeting on 20 October 2021.

The Convener confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

1.   **Report from E-Senate (S 21/22 2 A)**

To approve the minute of E-Senate held from 21 – 29 September 2021

At the meeting on 20 October, the membership decided that item 3 below (the E-Senate process) required discussion before the E-Senate minutes could be approved. This was specifically in relation to the E-Senate item on the Knowledge Strategy Committee membership. Therefore, discussion of this item was deferred after item 3, to allow for discussion of the Senate Standing Committees and the E-Senate process. See item 3 below.

2.   **Senate Standing Committees: Discussion (S 21/22 2 B)**
      To discuss

The Convener noted that the paper recommends that no substantial changes are made to the Senate Standing Committee remits at this time, and that Conveners are encouraged to continue to improve the effectiveness of the committees. An externally-facilitated review of Senate is scheduled to take place in 2023/24.

Senate members were invited to discuss the paper and made the key points below:
- A proposal was made that there needs to be work on how to effectively review the function and organisation of the Standing Committees, and that work on this now could usefully feed into the upcoming externally-facilitated review. Senate is a very large body, so thought is required on how it can effectively contribute to such a discussion. Senate includes individuals with expert knowledge on governance issues, and this expert knowledge should be put to good use. Could a task group be created, including Senate members, to develop an informed view on the challenges of and solutions to Senate governance, informed by the views of Senate members and the Executive?
- Should some smaller-scale change be put into effect in the short term, to address the risk that change is continually delayed? Some Senate members have expressed concerns for some time about lack of dialogue between the Standing Committees and Senate, and lack of representation of 'at large' Senate members on Standing Committees. Could one 'at large' Senate member be added to each Standing Committee, to act as a member of the committee and to report back to Senate on the work of the committee?
- Senate is given opportunities to comment on proposals and projects via Standing Committee reports and as part of the Senate presentation and discussion sessions, but it is not clear where these comments go or what impact they have: the discussion of the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) Action Plan at the 20 October 2021 meeting was noted as an example: Senate provided detailed comments. Will there be information on how these have been implemented or otherwise?
- An issue is that Senate should not be seen as 'rubber stamping' proposals that arise elsewhere, and it is not clear where proposals for new University initiatives and policies come from. These initiatives lose legitimacy unless they are seen to have been considered under the academic governance structure.
- The previous review of Senate Standing Committees was focused on matching individual relevant expertise to the committee remits, which has resulted in the Standing Committee membership being largely ex-officio, and members of Senate who are members of Standing Committees are often ex-officio members of Senate. Has this focus on expertise been to the detriment of the academic governance role of Senate? Senate is composed of set proportions of elected academic staff, elected professorial staff, ex-officio roles, and student members. This composition is set out in the relevant legislation. To ensure academic governance, should Senate Standing Committees have the same compositional structure?

The points below were raised in response:
- It could be useful to create a group to reflect on the current structure and provide advice on continuously improving effectiveness, and this could also feed into the upcoming externally-facilitated review.
- Before any short-term change is made, it is important to understand what the specific issues are, and to ensure that any changes made will resolve these issues. This includes allowing time to identify and consider risks and benefits, and any Equality. Diversity and Inclusion issues.
- Is one short-term answer to look at how to strengthen communication between Senate and the Standing Committees?
- The Senate Standing Committees are part of the academic governance structure, because they act under delegated authority from Senate. The committees include members of Senate, key professional services colleagues, and representatives from related College committees.

Paper S 21/22 2 B recommended that Senate Standing Committee Conveners are encouraged to continue to improve the effectiveness of the committees. In this meeting, the Conveners committed to work to improve communications between Senate and their committees, and committed to putting together a group, including members of Senate, to review what future improvements to the structure / function of Senate Standing Committees may be required. Professor Colm Harmon (Convener of the Senate Education Committee) stated that he and the other Conveners will consult, including with Senate members, on how best to proceed and the Standing Committee Conveners will bring a paper forward to Senate at a future date.

Senate voted to support the recommendations in the paper.

No further specific motions were presented by Senate members.

3. **E-Senate Process (S 21/22 2 C)**
   To discuss and approve

   Paper S 21/22 2 C and a response were briefly presented. It was noted that the key issues were:
   a) whether treating a nil response from members as approval of an item is an appropriate standard for approval of business by e-Senate
   b) whether e-Senate should take decisions on contentious business.

   The paper proposed that in future the only business to be approved by e-Senate should be the appointment of Emeritus Professors. This would represent a significant change to current e-Senate business. An alternative proposal in response had also been tabled by a Senate member that would mean e-Senate could not approve any business but E-Senate could be used to advance a consent agenda for expedited approval in meetings. It was noted that if Senate were to conclude that no business can be approved via E-Senate, the main impact will be on the timely approval of nominations for the award of Emeritus status. This impact is balanced against concerns about counting non-response as presence for the purposes of quorum.

   Senate voted on whether to accept the recommendations in the original paper, including an amendment to extend e-Senate deadlines to two weeks instead of one. The recommendations, as amended, were supported.

Senate also voted on the response proposal, including the amendment to two weeks. The response proposal was also supported.

The Convener noted that Senate had now approved two contradictory proposals. This will be minuted and the next steps will be considered outside this meeting.

The Convener now moved to consider item 1 above: **Report from E-Senate (S 21/22 2 A)**

The Convener invited Senate to approve the E-Senate minutes, with an amendment that the approval of item 7, Membership of the Knowledge Strategy Committee, has been rescinded.

Senate approved the minutes without requiring a vote.

The Convener then moved to consider item 7 from the E-Senate agenda, the **Membership of the Knowledge Strategy Committee (KSC)** (paper e-S 21/22 1 F). Senate members were invited to make comments on the nominations for a new Senate member of KSC and the nomination of an interim Chair. Senate members considered the paper previously circulated to members via e-Senate.

The points below were made:
- Objections to this paper do not reflect opinions on the individuals concerned, but are about the process for nominating new members to this committee.
- New Senate members of KSC are nominated by KSC. The Convener of KSC is nominated by the Court Nominations Committee, and approved by Court and Senate, because KSC is a joint Court and Senate committee. Therefore, it is not in Senate's gift to propose alternative individuals for nomination. If Senate does not approve these nominations, this will be reported to KSC and new nominations from KSC and Court will be presented to Senate at a future date.
- The arrangements for nomination of KSC members are set out in the KSC Terms of Reference.
- There are 5 Senate positions on KSC, and these are usually filled by the three Conveners of the main Senate Standing Committees, and two Assistant Principals with specific remits that overlap with the work of KSC. This is intended to ensure useful links with Senate Standing Committees.
- Some concerns were raised that all of the Senate members on KSC are ex-officio members of Senate, rather than elected members.

Senate voted on whether to approve the nominations to KSC in paper e-S 21/22 1 F. Senate voted to approve these nominations. 5 members asked for abstentions to be noted.

The decision will be reported to the Secretary of KSC.

4.   **Senate Effectiveness Review 2020/21 (S 21/22 2 D)**
       To comment

       No comments were received.

5.   **Senate Elections 2021 (S 21/22 2 E)**
       To note and comments

       A query was raised on whether it would be useful to extend the nomination period, if there were fewer nominations than available positions. It was noted that nominations are open for a month, and that it would be difficult to extend this and complete the elections before

the Spring break. Senate members were encouraged to contact the Senate Clerk with any suggestions on how to advertise the elections more effectively, including how they might use their networks to advertise the elections.

ITEMS FOR FORMAL APPROVAL OR NOTING

6.   **Conferment of the Title of Emeritus Professor (S 21/22 2 F)**
     To approve

     Senate approved the conferment of these titles.

7.   **Library Committee membership (S 21/22 2 G)**
     To approve

     Senate approved the membership. It was noted that the Library Committee should be encouraged to fill outstanding vacancies as soon as possible.

8.   **Edinburgh University Students' Association Priorities for 2021-22 (S 21/22 2 H)**
     For information

     The paper was received.

9.   **Student Partnership Agreement (S 21/22 2 I)**
     To note

     The paper was noted.

10. **Research Strategy Group update (S 21/22 2 J)**
     For information

     The paper was received.

11. **Senate Standing Committees' Annual Internal Effectiveness Review Report (S 21/22 2 K)**
     For information

     The paper was received. It was noted that some of the comments made under item 2 above are relevant to the continuous improvement of the Committees, in addition to the action points identified in this report.

12. **Senate Standing Committees – upcoming business (S 21/22 2 L)**
     To note and comment

     The paper was noted. No comments were received.