



# THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

## SENATUS ACADEMICUS

### UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE SENATUS

**ACADEMICUS** held in Lecture Theatre G.03, 50 George Square

Wednesday 2 October 2019

Present: The Principal, Professors C Abbott, J Ansell, L Bradley, J Calvert, J Cruz, J Danbolt, P Davies, J Dorin, R Fisher, L Florian, C French, T Gillingwater, D Gray, D Grumett, C Harmon, E Harper, C Heycock, T Harrison, S Kelley, S Kirby, D Messina, C O'Bradaigh, M Schmid, A Sorace, S Tierney, A Thompson, Weir; J Ainslie, D Cavanagh, D Evensen, A Maciocia, E El-Manstry, L Hamilton, S Lamont-Black, J Menzies, F Narumi-Munro, K Nash, P Navarro, M Novenson, C Phillips, P Smith, D Tse, J Turner, N Tuzi, S Warwick

Associate Members: S Vallencey, A Wilson

In Attendance: H Alexander, S Ballentyne, J Beaujouan-Marliere, L Bhullar, C Brady, G Campagnolo, A Campbell, C Caquineau, C Colesie, J Cusiter, N Cuthbert, A Findlay, P Fitch, J Freuhwald, M Geddes, S Green, M Hoeve, A Guazzelli, V Guerrieri, E Hall, O Kupinska, L Laumenech, D Livingstone, T Lola-Luz, M Luciano, K McClatchey, A McCormick, S MacGregor, M McLaughlin, M McMinn, S Maguire, D Marlow, Y Matuskevych, J Maybin, K Miller, K Nicoll Baines, B Nowok, O Ogunbayo, A Peden, G Peru, C Pope, A Rae, V Rajasekaran-Sutherland, P Reay, M Ross, M Scerri, M Schouwstra, L Schumacher, I Sharma, S Smith, C Stafford-Walter, A Stevens, P Tennant, S Thomas, L Thompson, K Traill

## 1. CONVENER'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Principal welcomed colleagues to the start of the new academic year

Among his communications, the Principal noted the following:

- The University has received a generous donation from the author J.K. Rowling, primarily to support neurological research. The Principal congratulated everyone involved in this contribution to the University's work in this area.
- The [University Strategy 2030](#) is now published and available online and in hard copy. This strategy is deliberately high level and focused on strategic goals. One element of the Strategy is work on the University 'size and shape' and the Principal noted that growth is expected to slow and plateau over the next 10 years, and involve a population shift from undergraduate to postgraduate taught student cohorts. There will be opportunities to learn more about and engage with the Strategy, and the Principal encouraged everyone present to get involved.
- The University is continuing to develop detailed risk mitigation strategies and plans for all possible outcomes of Brexit, and the University aims to send further information to staff and students before 31 October 2019.
- Balloting is currently underway for possible industrial action in relation to pay and pensions. The outcome of the ballots will be available in early November and the period of possible industrial action under the ballot is mid-November 2019 until April 2020.

- [Audit Scotland](#) have released a report on finances in the Higher Education sector in Scotland. This is a sector-wide report, and notes that Higher Education funding in Scotland has been reduced in real terms between 2014-15 and 2017-18. The University has contributed to an upcoming Scottish Government spending review in which the sector is requesting a 2% real terms increase.

## **2. SENATE PRESENTATION YEAR-ON UPDATE: STUDENT EXPERIENCE ACTION PLAN (S 19/20 1 A)**

Senate noted the update paper. The review of student support was highlighted as a particularly substantial area of work and an options analysis is currently taking place: an 'all-staff' update on this will be circulated shortly and information can also be found on the [Personal Tutor and Student Support Review](#) intranet site. Further comments on the paper can be sent to Gavin Douglas, Deputy Secretary (Student Experience).

## **3. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION: SUPPORTING EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS**

### **Introduction and Overview**

Dr Paddy Hadoke, Director of Postgraduate Research and Early Career Research Experience, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine

Early Career Researchers (ECRs) are essential to the output of the University, contributing to research, postgraduate student support, and teaching. Dr Hadoke noted the following challenges and risks associated with support for these staff:

- ECRs are often funded externally, on fixed term funding, in a poorly understood or developed career structure. ECRs may be identified by a wide range of job titles and are a complex cohort to identify and to engage with.
- Lack of action on ECR support is unsustainable and could create risks for the recruitment of excellent researchers, for the wellbeing of staff, and risks to access to funding in a context where funders are now requiring institutions to demonstrate better support for ECRs.

### **Early Career Researcher Societies**

Dr Marlène Magalhaes Pinto and Dr Marie-Louise Monaghan, Research Assistants, Centre for Cardiovascular Science, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine

Dr Magalhaes Pinto highlighted the challenges of initiating, developing and sustaining ECR societies, and described work on developing a Postdoctoral Society in the BioQuarter. Key challenges included:

- Identifying relevant staff as ECRs when University data does not identify these staff as a group.
- Rapid turn-over of ECR staff means that it is difficult to sustain a society when key members depart and there are often gaps in activity and continuity.
- Limited or no funding provided by Schools.
- Limited time for ECRs to devote to the development and continuity of a society due to the intensity of research work.

Dr Magalhaes Pinto also highlighted the value of ECR societies as sources of intellectual and collegiate community, providing peer support and supporting career development, particularly for ECRs new to the University. Societies also support networking of ECRs across and out with the University.

Dr Monaghan reported on the outcomes of a survey conducted among ECRs in the BioQuarter, which focused on availability of resources to ECRs and their sense of being valued in the University. Dr Monaghan noted that:

- It was challenging to gather up to date information on current ECRs so the survey was relatively small (29 subjects).
- The survey results indicated that most ECRs did not find it easy to find relevant support resources, and that a substantial minority reported not feeling valued in their role
- Reasons given for not feeling valued included lack of future career options, job insecurity, feeling underpaid (or that their role and required career development is not feasible within a 37 hour week), finding the University structure too complex to navigate, variability in the quality of supervision, lack of clarity about maternity rights and a culture in which maternity leave was considered to have a negative impact on career progression, no guaranteed time for training, and limited opportunities to gain teaching experience.
- Dr Monaghan also reported positive comments from the survey, including praise for the training opportunities provided by the Institute for Academic Development (IAD), ECRs valuing opportunities to be involved in University committees, and reports by ECRs of feeling valued and well supported in their particular teams / units.

Dr Monaghan summarised that ECRs are committed to their research and to contributing to the University, and that they deserve recognition for this in the form of institutional support for more secure employment and availability of support resources, in order to continue to produce high-quality research outputs.

### **The Early Career Researcher Perspective**

Dr Alexander Martin, Research Assistant, Centre for Language Evolution, School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences

Dr Martin described experiences of ECRs who have given him feedback, and noted in particular:

- Differences in 'research' and 'teaching' focused posts leads to divergent opportunities to pursue teaching and research.
- Schools may not identify ECRs as a cohort, making it difficult to contact them to encourage networking.
- Supervisor variability and limited or no opportunities for mentoring.
- Limited or no School-level funding for ECRs for research or conference expenses.
- Teaching fellows in particular may be on short term contracts and may have particularly heavy workloads that impact on their ability to network, engage and represent themselves.

Dr Martin called on the University to achieve more consistency in the level of support and opportunities for ECRs across subject areas and Schools.

## **Engaging Early Career Researchers**

Dr Caroline Proctor, Graduate and Staffing Services Manager, School of Biological Sciences

Dr Proctor noted that an element of her role is specifically to provide support for ECRs, including support for the 'BioDocSoc' ECR society. Dr Proctor noted that former committee members of the BioDocSoc are now experienced staff at the University, or have moved on to a wide-range of international careers, highlighting the potential value of this network for the University.

Dr Proctor reported on a College of Science and Engineering initiative to create the role of a 'Postdoctoral Champion' in every School. These roles provide leadership within Schools and help Schools to surface and engage with ECR issues and act to address these. In response to focus groups organised by the Postdoctoral Champions, the School have created a 'Postdoc Advisor' role, developed ECR-specific webpages, created School guidelines for the management of ECRs, and established a 'Postdoc career development day'. The School are now working on embedding and further developing this support. Dr Proctor invited any colleagues wishing more information to contact her.

## **Models for Early Career Researcher Support**

Dr Sara Shinton, Head of Researcher Development, Institute for Academic Development

Dr Paddy Hadoke, Director of Postgraduate Research and Early Career Research

Experience, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine

Dr Hadoke summarised some key points from the discussions above:

- There is currently some excellent support available, but there is a lack of awareness about this support.
- ECRs can be a challenging group to engage and engagement with these staff needs to be actively pursued.
- Some improvements have the potential to be quite straightforward, such as improved welcome and induction to highlight the support resources already available, and maintaining a School database of ECRs.

Dr Hadoke noted an initiative in the Deanery of Clinical Sciences to trial a Performance and Development Review (P&DR) for ECRs which provides an opportunity to engage and share information about support and resources for career planning. Responses to this trial have been very positive.

Dr Hadoke also suggested that there is very valuable development work that can be done within the current structure and resources and without adding additional burden to managers. More mentoring conversations, and developing and sharing good practise between Schools and Colleges, has the potential to enhance the contributions of ECRs to the University and enable the University to continue to attract high quality researchers and build a positive research culture.

Dr Shinton then set the presentation in the context of the publication, in September 2019, of a new [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#). The publication of the Concordat has been accompanied by a call for work to be done across the sector to improve support for ECRs. The Concordat has three core principles:

- Excellent research requires a supportive and inclusive research culture.

- Researchers are recruited, employed and managed under conditions that recognise and value their contributions.
- Professional and career development are integral to enabling researchers to develop their full potential.

Dr Shinton noted that funding bodies are included as a stakeholders under the new Concordat, and that major funding bodies have already signed the Concordat, which is a strong indication that funding bodies will expect institutions to engage with the Concordat.

Dr Shinton reported that the University is working towards signing the Concordat, and is currently engaged in analysis to support this. Gap analysis so far has highlighted some key areas for development:

- Effective signposting to key support services and activities;
- Development of a single events calendar;
- Enhanced support for career consultations and support for academic managers;
- Promoting and supporting increased ECR society activity;
- Dedicated spaces for researchers to provide a focal point for ECRs.

Dr Shinton also highlighted opportunities for support for managers:

- Using P&DR more effectively, both to deliver support for staff and to generate meaningful data;
- Providing 'short guides' for managers on diverse career paths;
- Develop research staff on fellowship tracks to support grant writing;
- Develop research staff through delegation and opportunities.

Dr Hadoke summed up the presentation, emphasizing the ambition that staff see the University as a place to improve and develop their careers, and that failing to do this entails reputational risks. Dr Hadoke called for action by the University to achieve this ambition.

## Discussion points

- The publication of the Concordat indicates improving career structures and support for ECRs is a sector-wide issue.
- The University of Edinburgh has a role to play in developing the sector, and there are also actions that the University can take without waiting for sector-wide developments, and which may lead to competitive advantages for the University.
- It was agreed that better data and definitions are required to identify ECR staff and their support needs, including better knowledge and use of PURE.
- Teaching fellows and staff in longer-term postdoctoral positions should not be excluded from the definition of ECRs.
- Available support must be signposted clearly and be easily accessible. The [Code of Practise for the Management and Career Development of Research Staff](#) was highlighted: this will be revised and updated as part of the work towards signing the revised Concordat.
- ECRs may require support to pursue a range of career paths.
- While maternity leave is supported, this does not necessarily include extensions to short term (for example three year) contracts. It was noted that this involved funding bodies as well as the University as an employer, and that better data is required to understand the impact of a break on a grant. ECRs called for the University to take a more active role as the employer in supporting ECRs in relation to maternity leave.

- Administrative support and some financial support may help to sustain and develop ECR societies run by ECR staff. It was noted that the Law School has an ECR staff representative and that funding and administrative support is made available by the School, and that this might be an example of good practice. [Information provided by IAD for research staff societies was highlighted](#). It was noted that budgets which may support this are devolved to Schools.
- Visa support from the University solicitor was identified as very helpful for ECRs. The cost of visa application fees was noted as a potentially significant expense for ECRs.
- It was noted that there is now a [collective agreement](#) between the University and UCU to phase out by 2020/21 the use of nine or ten month recurring contracts with annualised pay.
- It was reconfirmed that the University is working towards signing the Concordat but also that the University should have ambitions to go beyond the requirements of the Concordat.
- Leadership at School level will be required to implement any action plans resulting from the Concordat.
- It was noted that funding models such as short term contracts may have a significant impact on ECR experience, and that funding bodies have signed the Concordat but have not yet indicated an intention to revise their funding models. The University was called on to use its influence in the sector to raise this issue.

Dr Hadoke noted that the discussion showed that there is a great deal of activity occurring around ECR experience, but that this activity requires greater coordination and greater consistency and that this may involve thinking beyond the School as the organising unit for activity. Dr Hadoke also noted that there appears to be a significant issue of communication of information rather than provision of information, and that better coordination and centralisation of information could address this.

IAD, led by Dr Shinton, will lead work on preparing to sign the Concordat.

The Principal thanked the presenters, and everyone who contributed to the discussion, for their engagement.

## **FORMAL BUSINESS**

### **4. Report of Electronic Business 10 – 18 September 2019 (S 19/20 1 B)**

The report of e-business conducted between 10 and 18 September 2019 was approved.

### **5. New members: Dr Lorna Hamilton, Moray House School of Education and Sport**

Senate noted this new member.

### **6. Student Partnership Agreement update (S 19/20 1 C)**

The update was noted.

## **7. Senate Election Regulations (S 19/20 1 D)**

Dr Sue MacGregor presented the paper, and paper S 19/20 1 E below, and noted that the Election Regulations and Communications Plan are the next steps in the implementation of the changes required under the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016.

Senate members queried how postgraduate research students and early career research staff will be represented within the new Senate composition. PGR students will be elected through the usual Students' Association election processes, and this will include a PGR student representative and 6 postgraduate School representatives (drawn from postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students). It was noted that effective communications will be required to reach and engage early career researchers in the nomination and election process.

It was noted that the composition of Senate from 2020/21, at 300, is still quite large. This composition was approved at the previous meeting of Senate, and was arrived at after extensive consultation and discussion.

Senate approved the Senate Election Regulations.

## **8. Senate Election Communications Plan (S 19/20 1 E)**

Senate approved the Election Communications Plan.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

## **9. Edinburgh University Students' Association Priorities for 2019/20 (S 19/20/ 1 F)**

Senate noted the Students' Association Vice-President Education's priorities for the 2019/20. These included the following:

- Promoting quality and constructive feedback
- Ensuring students have access to the support they need
- Improving the accessibility and inclusivity of academia

## **10. Resolutions (S 19/20 1 G)**

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

### Establishment of Chairs

Draft Resolution No. 67/2019:	Foundation of a Chair of Chemical Engineering Technology
Draft Resolution No. 68/2019:	Foundation of a Chair of Infectious Diseases and HIV
Draft Resolution No. 69/2019:	Foundation of a Personal Chair of Education
Draft Resolution No. 70/2019:	Foundation of a Jason Reese Chair of Multiscale Fluid Mechanics
Draft Resolution No. 71/2019:	Foundation of a Chair of Behavioural Sciences

**11. Membership of the Library Committee 2019/20 (S 19/20 1 H)**

Senate noted the membership.

**12. Membership of the Knowledge Strategy Committee 2019/20 (S 19/20 1 I)**

Senate noted the membership.

**RESERVED BUSINESS**

**13. Conferment of degree**

Senate agreed to admit the graduand listed in the paper to their degree.

It was noted that the paper indicated potentially wider issues about the timing of graduation ceremonies and the long delays currently faced by some students, particularly postgraduate students.