

UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE SENATUS ACADEMICUS held in St Cecilia's Hall, Wednesday 4 October 2017

Present: The Principal, Professors T Bates, S Bayne, M Brennan, C Breward, E Cameron, M Chrisman, S Cooper, J Crook, G Crow, S Cunningham-Burley, J Danbolt, A Djikeng, M Evans, D Finkelstein, B Fisher, P Foster, C Jeffery, J Garden, J Gentz, I Gordon, T Harrison, J Hillston, J Kallestrup, R King, J Lee, W Loretto, J Love, C Lyall, L McKie, L March, A Meredith, J Moore, A Newman, J Ouenniche, D Robertson, C Sangwin, M Schwannauer, J Silvertown, J Sproule, A Thompson, C Weir, T Worrall; M Highton, C Aftab, A Convery, R Baxstrom, S Benjamin, S Boyd, G Duursma, L Hamilton, T Kaminer, S Kheria, F O'Hanlon, S MacPherson, A Meredith, C Moran, C Phillips, J Quenniche, J Quaia, S Riley, S Rolle, P Smith, P Sheail, E Stevenson, N Treanor, S Trill, R Valsan, S Woodman, M Carson, S Clough, C da Costa Filho, A Hennessy, L Kendall, S Samaras

Associate Members: E Dominy, P Kilduff, K O'Doherty,

In Attendance: B Barreto, C Black, G Blair, J Broadhurst, F Brown, L Buchanan, A Bunni, A Burford, G Campagnolo, A Carter, N Chisholm, V Christie, L Connelly, M Corey, D Coxon, L Dobson, M Dozier, L Dutnell, R Ewins, A Farrall, L de Ferrari, G Ferris, W Filingier, S Fokt, J Fyfe, C Gallagher, N Goddard, S Graham, H Gray, A Greig, L Halliday, D Hampton, M Hart, D Henty, Y Hu, A Hughes, E Hunter, T Ironside, A Isaac, S Iskander, D Jackson, L Johnston-Smith, D Jones, P Kelly, C Keltie, N Kett, M Khattar, Y Kim, J Knox, A Laidlaw, S Laing, P Larkman, I Lavers, O Lawrie, M Lawson, A Lindsay, K Lingstadt, K Lyszkiewicz, G MacDonald, S McEwan, C Matthews, S McAllister, L McCreath, L Dobson-McKittrick, C McLaughlin, P Melone, C Merrick, L Middlemass, B Morse, B Munro, S Nicol, S Ogle, S Orr, M O'Toole, S Pearson, D Petrova, S Porter, F Puller, C Pusceddu-Gangarosa, A Rebotto, J Roberts, E Rowson, D Ruddy, A Scott, E Serafin, I Seiferheld, A Shanks, T Sheppard, F Shields, , S Smith, H Stocks, G Thompson, Y Tsai, U Tufail-Hanif, K Urquhart, T Valtin, B Verdon, N J Vielma, T Ward, R Watson, E Welsh, S Williams, M Wright

The moment of reflection was delivered by Professor Appolinaire Djikeng, Director of the Centre for Tropical Livestock Genetics and Health, who offered reflections on the University from an international perspective.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION: The Future of Distance Learning

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

The focus of the session was the University's current position and future objectives for expanding its distance learning provision, exploring the opportunities and implications in terms of pedagogy, assessment and student experience.

Introduction – Distance Learning: where we are now

Ms Melissa Highton, Assistant Principal Online Learning and Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Services, Information Services Group

Ms Highton introduced the session by highlighting key statistics on the current provision of online programmes, which included the following:

- There are 2,920 online students on 65 programmes with CMVM operating the largest number of online programmes.

- Online students comprise an older demographic than on-campus students, with 88 per cent being over 25
- 60 per cent of students reside outside the UK, which is not very different from the domicile of on-campus students
- Over 90 per cent of MOOC learners are domiciled outside the UK. While there are over 2 million MOOC learners, only 80 applied for Edinburgh's online Master's programmes for 2017 entry
- 1.4 per cent of online students are Edinburgh University alumni.
- The landscape of online learning is competitive, and, despite having a wide range of online programmes, the University is only twelfth in the UK in terms of online student numbers.
- The number of applications to online programmes has risen exponentially, but the number of entrants has not increased at the same rate. While data on this is scarce, the possible reasons might include the cost of programmes, the capping of student numbers in some cases, and lack of promotional activity.

Work to increase the number of online students will focus on the promotion of programmes and on improving the ability of prospective students to search for courses online. Enhancing the online student experience, from matriculation onwards, will also be a priority.

The University would be building on its successful MOOC strategy to promote entry to online programmes, the ultimate aim being to produce an ecosystem of digital learning opportunities which is self-supporting and mutually enhancing.

Designing for high quality distance teaching

Professor Siân Bayne, Assistant Principal, Digital Education

Professor Bayne provided an overview of the components which constitute high quality online teaching, demonstrating that these had a strong basis in research. She indicated that literature on the subject has shown that quality teaching may be defined by visibly engaged teachers who are experts in their fields, and students who feel part of the learning community.

Professor Bayne emphasised that the 'distance' element of distance learning does not only relate to geography and time but also communication and the level of contact between teachers and students. For distance learning at scale, the University should plan to front-load teacher engagement in order to build a sense of 'nearness' among students early in their studies, allowing this to drop off as students' confidence and sense of autonomy grows.

Students should also have a sense of being 'at' the University and within a strong learning community. To achieve this, the University will need to commit resource to meaningful staff moderation and participation in course discussion, as well as to providing real-time community events. Proactive support is important and learning analytics can help identify students at risk of disengaging.

Action Plan for Distance Learning in CMVM

Professor Anna Meredith, Director of Postgraduate Taught Programmes

CMVM operates the largest portfolio of online programmes at the University: 35 of its 62 postgraduate taught programmes are online. The College has an action plan to grow its online learning provision, in line with the University Strategic Plan and the Learning and Teaching Strategy.

The plan includes the following:

- Growing student numbers from 1504 to 2730
- Doubling postgraduate taught income
- Launching at least four new programmes in the next session
- Creating CPD and blended learning opportunities (programmes which incorporate a mixture of online and on-campus learning)
- Increasing scholarships for online learning.

To reach these targets, the College will invest in infrastructure and ensure that the options for online learning are flexible.

Plans for expanding distance learning in the Business School

Professor Wendy Loretto, Dean of the Business School & Professor of Organisational Behaviour, University of Edinburgh Business School

Professor Loretto reported that the Business School had developed its online provision significantly, and its current activity was as follows:

- Building on existing offering, including a MOOC on the topic of marketing which was launched in September 2016 and had had over 26,000 registrations
- Building engagement with business stakeholder communities, including the provision of an online MSc in Accounting and Society
- Developing interdisciplinary collaboration in line with the Business School strategy, including online courses linked to CMVM
- Conducting market research to establish the demand in the area of online learning and developing provision to meet demand.

The School is currently investigating several areas for growth. Professor Loretto advised that provision should be flexible and agile, that market research was extremely useful in understanding the competition, and that all those involved in distance learning should take advantage of the significant amount of expertise across the University.

Distance Learning for Data Science

Professor Dave Robertson, Professor of Applied Logic, Head of College of Science & Engineering

Professor Robertson focused on the potential to develop online programmes for Data Science. He indicated that there is an increasing demand for these programmes for several reasons: the data science industry is very large and growing; and there is widespread interest in the governance of data, and also in the future of Artificial Intelligence and its implications for employment.

The University's existing Data Science Master's is extremely varied and involves courses from across all three colleges. Students are attracted to the eclectic nature of the programme and the amount of choice on offer. In view of the cross-college structure, Professor Robertson emphasised the importance of the strong cross-University administrative support which the programme received.

The College is at an early stage in establishing its distance learning provision, and distance learning at scale is included in its development plan, to enable more extensive provision in the future.

Discussion

In discussion, the following points and questions were raised:

- With regard to admissions, it is valuable for the University to offer scholarships, since this not only provides support for the successful students but can also generate applications from other students who may find alternate sources of funding. It is important, however, that, where students have applied unsuccessfully for scholarships, the University make it clear to them that they will be unable to participate in the programme unless they are in a position to pay their fees. When considering investment into attracting students globally, consideration should be given to access to internet costs in some countries.
- Consideration should be given to English Language requirements for online distance learning programmes; these currently mirror the requirements for on-campus programmes, but could potentially be more flexible for online learners. The Centre for Open Learning is in the process of developing a pilot English Language testing programme to enable online students to meet English Language requirements without taking IELTS or equivalent.
- Fees for online distance learning programmes should be competitive and reviewed regularly by Fees Strategy Group in conjunction with the offering in the rest of the market.
- Investment in infrastructure is vital in promoting innovation for online programmes, and this should take account of the diversity of the online student population and the creation of learning opportunities which do not simply cater for the traditional student.
- Thought should be given to ways to engage alumni who might be instrumental in promoting distance learning programmes.
- With regard to students with disabilities, while many aspects of using digital materials make programmes more accessible, a strategic commitment to growing the numbers of online learners should be accompanied by a commitment to ensuring an appropriate level of availability of support services across the institution.

The Principal thanked those present for their contributions to the discussion.

PRESIDENT'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Senior Vice-Principal reported that the National Student Survey (NSS) results had improved on the previous year in terms of overall satisfaction and the University's relative position, although it remains important to make further progress. Reflection and discussion would take place in the coming year, in consultation with the Students' Association, on areas where the University had received lower scores. He also noted that it had been a record year for research funding, alongside growing student numbers, and also highlighted the City Deal, announced in July, which would bring a large tranche of investment to the University.

FORMAL BUSINESS

1. Report of E-Business conducted 12 – 20 September 2017 (S 17/18 1 A)

The report of e-business conducted between 12 and 20 September 2017 was noted.

2. Student Partnership Agreement (S 17/18 1 B)

Professor Tina Harrison and Ms Esther Dominy introduced the item. The paper proposed the first ever Student Partnership Agreement for the University. The document was an agreement between the University and the Students' Association to work in partnership

towards enhancing the student experience and the key priorities were the student voice, academic support, and mental health and well-being.

In discussion, Senate members responded enthusiastically to the agreement, noting that it would enrich and strengthen the relationship between staff and students. Specific comments included the following:

- While the partnership agreement was about working with students, it was important to reflect on the implications for staff members' workload and how it would be possible for them to engage with students more fully. The Senior Vice-Principal agreed to raise some specific issues with the Head of the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, while noting that other issues would be considered within individual Schools, and that the issue of academic staff workload was also being addressed via the Service Excellence programme.
- Changes in class representation arrangements should acknowledge the differing requirements for large courses, while acknowledging that processes should be streamlined as much as possible.

Senate approved the Student Partnership Agreement.

3. Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act

The Director of Academic Services noted that, at its last meeting, Senate had agreed that the University should consult on a proposed new model for its future composition in order to align with the requirements of the Act, and noted that a consultation would be held shortly with the wider University. Senate members were asked to encourage academic colleagues to engage with the consultation.

The University Secretary updated members on the proposed changes to the composition of Court, in light of the requirements of the Act. Changes will include four new positions on Court: a Senior Lay Member elected by all staff and students; two trade union nominees, one of whom will be an academic member of staff; and a Court member elected by all academic staff, including those who are not members of Senate.

Court had agreed its new composition in principle at its meeting on 25 September 2017. Under this composition, four elected academic staff members will be maintained on Court through three Senate assessors and one academic Trade Union assessor. The Senior Lay Member will be elected by staff and students, including academic staff, and one of the Senate Assessors will be elected by all academic staff for the first time, both of which appointments will strengthen the democratic participation by academic staff in the membership of the University's governing body.

A paper will be presented to the February meeting of Senate, setting out proposed changes for initial comment. There will be a formal consultation with Senate at a later date, once the formal Ordinance has been drafted.

4. Membership of Senate

Senate noted the updated membership of Senate.

5. Conferment of the title of Professor Emeritus

Senate agreed to confer the title of Professor Emeritus on those professors listed who had recently retired, or whose retirement was imminent.

6. Special Minutes (S 17/18 1 C)

Senate adopted the Special Minutes for Professors J Dawson, K Fearon, M Fransman, S Frith, J Hopkins, N Hunter, T O'Shea, and L Yellowlees.

COMMUNICATIONS

7. Edinburgh University Students' Association Priorities for 2017/18 (S 17/18 1 D)

The Students' Association Vice-President, Activities and Services introduced the paper. With regard to Education, the priorities focused on reducing the pressures of Semester 1, improving support for those undertaking joint degrees, and establishing coherent representative structures and transparency in communications to amplify the student voice within the University and the Students' Association.

8. Resolutions (S 17/18 1 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. 76/2017: Foundation of a Personal Chair of Fire and Structures

Draft Resolution No. 77/2017: Foundation of a Personal Chair of Medicine

9. Rectorial Election 2018 Date (S 17/18 1 F)

Senate noted the approved date of 26-27 February 2018 for on-line voting in the Rectorial election.

CLOSED

10. Report of the Senate Exception Committee (S 17/18 1 G)

Senate noted the content of the report.