



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

SENATUS ACADEMICUS

UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE SENATUS ACADEMICUS held in West Court, Edinburgh College of Art Wednesday 6 February 2019

Present: The Principal, Professors Abbott, Ansell, C Boswell, Cowan, Cox, H Critchley, Danbolt, Dunlop, Fawcett, French, R Ganeshram, J Gentz, Gisborne, I Gordon, Grohmann, Harrison, Jarvie, C Jeffery, L Kirstein Larkman, Lyall, McLachlan, Mole, Murray, Norman, Pearce, Pulham, Reid, Schwannauer, Sorace, Trew, Unciti-Broceta, Wardlaw, Warwick, Wild, R Williams, Woodhouse; D Aitken, A Aydin-Aitchison, T Bak, R Baxstrom, S Benjamin, C Caquineau, A Daza Vargas, G Duursma, D El-Manstrly, I Fyfe, K Goodall, E Haycock-Stuart, M Highton, Hillston, J Hosie, J Hoy, W Kwon, S MacPherson, J Menzies, S Morley, P Norris, F Narumi-Munro, N Pak-Shiraz, S Rodgers, S Rolle, Seckl, P Sheail, E Stevenson, N Treanor, S Trill, U Tufail-Hanif, S Warrington,

Associate Members: F Battaglia, E Connick, D Mukherji, S Davis-Williams, M Hall, G Harris, V Thamboo, X Zaoui

In Attendance: K Banas, D Banda, E Barlow, J Barnhart, R Bartlett, J Barnes, G Blair, M Boddie, C Brady, J Broadhurst, F Brown, A Bunni, E Buxton, L Carlton, E Corboz, M Cox, M Coyle, M Craft, P Davies, R Deighton, T Dismore, G Douglas, H Ellis, V Farrar, K Farrow, S Fijalkowski, J Fruewald, P Gerrard-Abbott, P Graham, K Hanson, K Harkin, F Harvey, S Harvey, M Holmes, S Holt, S Horrocks, S Hunter, S Ivory, L Jack, P Jones, N Kay, E Kazakeou, L Kelly, C Kemp, Y Kim, R King, L Lally, A Laurins, C Lennie, C Lord, D Ma, G Macdougall, G Machtsiras, J Maclean, A Macrae, H Mateer, J McGregor, S Morrison, O Murray, M Nelson, A Newman, A Nicolson, E O'Neill, R Panesar, C Pope, K Przybycien, A Pulijic, B Reid, R Rice, H Robertson-Dick, L Ross, H Sang, A Shanks, T Sheppard, P Smith, S Smith, H Stringer, D Tate, H Tracey, T Ward, D Williams, F Wood

PRESIDENT'S COMMUNICATIONS

Senate noted that the University Executive had approved a change in the name of the 'Moray House School of Education' to the 'Moray House School of Education and Sport.'

The Principal thanked all those who had engaged in the Town Hall Meetings for the Strategic Plan Refresh.

Among his communications, the Principal noted the following: a senior away day had taken place, to discuss the University's internationalisation activity; a project on capital prioritisation was underway; the Principal had contributed to discussions with the Treasury around the Augur Review, which would have significant implications for HE funding; the senior team would be exerting pay restraint, following the ongoing dispute around pay in the sector; the University's Strategic Plan was likely to include a statement around freedom of speech; the search for the new Vice-Principal for Students was going well; and the Principal had recently attended an Education Forum on Widening Participation.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

Research Excellence Framework (REF)

Introduction and Overview

Professor Jonathan Seckl, Vice-Principal Planning, Resources and Research Policy

Professor Seckl provided a brief overview of the purpose and process of the REF, emphasising that achieving highly in the REF exercise was critical to the University's reputation and ability to attract funding for investment in research.

In the 2014 REF, the University of Edinburgh had achieved highly, coming fourth in the UK by the main measure, and would receive £80m in the current year from the Scottish Funding Council in Research Excellence Grant funding as a result of its achievement. The University was in the top 20 for almost all subject areas. Of the three assessed areas, (Output, Environment and Impact), the University performed least well on Impact.

The key lessons learnt from the 2014 exercise were as follows: bigger submissions do better than small ones; joint submissions raise the University's research power; and there is room for improvement in all areas.

Professor Seckl noted the timetable for REF2021 and the headline principles, emphasising the importance of 4* case studies, which would be worth up to £200k per annum.

Implications of the REF for University strategy

Pauline Jones, Head of Strategic Performance and Policy Research

Pauline Jones noted that the University was developing a code of practice around the implementation of the rules and guidelines for REF2021. These include the following:

- All staff with significant responsibility for research will be submitted (research only staff would be classified as 'independent').
- Submission will be made across a broad range of disciplines (Units of Assessment)
- There is no expectation that all staff members will have the same number of outputs and all types of output will be treated equally
- Subjects published after April 2016 must be open access compliant.
- There will be greater weighting on the Impact metric (25 per cent); each Impact case study contributes a high percentage of the Impact score and will be a key factor in demonstrating how the University's research will make a difference.
- Scores on the Environment metric will be an important indicator of how the University supports research.

Pauline Jones emphasised that REF preparations could not work in isolation from the rest of University activity; how we carry out research and how we do our other activities affect how we do in REF.

College Perspective on Preparing for the REF

Professor Christina Boswell, Dean of Research, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS)

Professor Boswell outlined key information on the CAHSS's submission:

- The College was leading on 18 Units of Assessment

- Academic staff FTE was considerably greater for 2021 (1,030) than in 2014 (720)
- The College had prepared for the exercise in two phases: in the first phase it supported staff to produce their 'personal best' and in the second phase staff worked on Impact case studies, the Environment template and also prepared for the Mock REF in Autumn 2019.

Professor Boswell emphasised that REF should not be seen as a bureaucratic burden, but as an opportunity to support outputs for research staff generally, to showcase the impact of research, and to enhance the University's research environment. Furthermore, as a performance measurement, REF is as good as the University can expect: it is designed and reviewed by academic peers, and has a focus on outputs, impact, and the environment which aligns with University goals.

Implications of the REF for the academic role

Professor Jane Norman, Vice-Principal People and Culture

Professor Norman emphasised that the REF itself had no implications for the career progression of individual academics at the University of Edinburgh, outlining the following key principles for staff members:

- For each Category A staff member, there would be a maximum of five outputs. The link between the academic and their output had been 'decoupled' in this REF; meanwhile outputs would be attributable to members of staff who had made a substantial research contribution.
- Those on teaching-only contracts would not be included in the return.
- Research England and the Funding Councils had recently published rules on handling special circumstances for the REF. Special circumstances would need to be self-declared by staff members, and submitting institutions would need to develop robust processes to support staff declaring individual circumstances.
- Early career researchers would qualify for a reduction in outputs; early career researchers are defined as those who started as independent researchers on or after 1 August 2016.

Professor Norman noted the following implications of REF for the academic role:

- The code of practice which the University was developing would allow individuals to self-declare special circumstances
- The REF returns are an institutional exercise and should remove implications for individuals returned/not returned
- REF itself would not change performance measures applied for those in research/research and teaching roles.

Discussion

In discussion, the following points and questions were raised:

- The Code of Practice would clarify the definition of the early career academics who would be included in the return.
- While Senate noted that there was some concern that institutions could include in their REF submissions academics who have been made redundant, it is unlikely, in practice, that the University will return outputs from staff who are deceased, retired, or have left.

- When asked what funding methodology the Scottish Funding Council would apply to translate the outputs of the 2021 REF into funding decisions, Professor Seckl noted that the tariffs applied to research outputs in different subject areas was still unclear.

Student Experience Plan (S 18/19 2 A)

Gavin Douglas, Deputy Secretary, Student Experience
Professor Charlie Jeffery, Senior Vice-Principal

Professor Jeffery noted the recent call for a culture shift by the Principal, following the University's performance in the last National Student Survey. While the University's research was valued highly, teaching and learning were also core elements of its mission. Furthermore, everyone across the University should make a contribution and be accountable for making improvements to the student experience.

The University is now developing a single plan which will include all aspects of the students' experience, across learning, teaching, academic advice and professional services, and which would involve students in finding solutions. The plan will also recognise that staff experience has an impact on student experience. The current aim is to seek approval for the definitive plan at the meeting of Court in April 2019.

Gavin Douglas outlined the key elements of the draft plan which included the following:

- Ensuring that students are consistently taught by expert, engaged teachers
- Reviewing the curriculum to ensure that it is inspiring and challenging
- Reviewing the student support "ecosystem" so that students have consistent access to high quality support in all areas
- From the first point of contact, ensuring that student-facing services are welcoming, friendly, accessible and professional
- Plans for high quality learning spaces, learning resources, facilities and transport
- Putting structures and processes in place to ensure students feel part of a strong academic community within their disciplines, department, school, the wider University and the city of Edinburgh
- Ensuring that systems and processes run smoothly

Much of this work has already been planned or is underway, meaning that the plan should not involve a large increase or change in activity.

Professor Jeffery noted that the staff experience was inextricably linked with the student experience, and that some aspects of the student experience plan highlight this. These aspects include leadership development, using data to support management accountability, and ensuring that messages across the University are communicated consistently.

A sub-group of the University Executive would have oversight of the development of the plan, the evaluation of activities, timescales, accountabilities, budgets, and benefits.

Discussion

Senate welcomed the action plan, and raised the following points in discussion:

- Professor Norman provided a brief update on the productive dialogue between the University and recognised trade unions on members of staff on Guaranteed Hours contracts. The University was clear that members of staff should be paid for all the work the School requires them to undertake.

- The University plans discussions about approaches to Workload Allocation Models.
- Activity to widen participation would focus not only on attracting disadvantaged students but also on ensuring that they could flourish while at University. The Widening Participation Strategy, which had been launched recently, focused on providing funding and engaging the alumni community as an additional support mechanism.
- Improvements in the digital infrastructure would be key to enhancing the student experience in the longer term.
- Work to enhance the student experience should reach beyond learning and teaching and focus on students' place in the community as well.

FORMAL BUSINESS

1. Report of E-Business conducted 15 – 23 January 2019 (S 18/19 2 B)

The report of e-business conducted between 15 and 23 January 2019 was approved.

2. Teaching and Academic Careers Project (S 18/19 2 C)

Professor Charlie Jeffery updated Senate on the work of the Teaching and Academic Careers Project, following the discussion at Senate at its October 2018 meeting. The Teaching and Academic Careers Task Group had consulted widely across the University and had produced a final set of Principles as a result of this, which had been approved by the University Executive. The Task Group had now approved a plan for Semester 2 which involved three main strands of activity: a technical review of HR policies and procedures; a technical review of support/expectations for professional development in teaching; and a technical review of how we evidence excellence in teaching.

In discussion, Senate members raised the following points:

- Discussion around the importance of teaching should be supported by data highlighting the monetary value of teaching to the University (as discussions around research do).
- At present, not all staff members are confident that academic staff could be promoted on the strength of excellence in teaching alone. While current policies already facilitate this and individual staff members have been promoted on this basis, the project should aim to communicate evidence of this. A priority for the work would be to explore how the University would translate research excellence into quality teaching; this is likely to require investment in more formalised professional development.
- One of the key elements of the Principles is that career pathways up to Professorial level (UE10) are open to all academic staff from grade UE07.

3. Enhancement-led Institutional Review 2020 – update and discussion of contextualised themes (S 18/19 2 D)

Professor Tina Harrison updated Senate on the University's preparations for its 2020 Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) and asked members for their views on the proposed contextualised themes.

In response, Senate members commented that it was important for the themes to include an outward-facing focus, and suggested that Widening Participation be added as a

further theme, and that the 'Student Skills and Employability' theme be broadened to incorporate a focus on students and global citizens. . Members also considered health and wellbeing support as a priority.

COMMUNICATIONS

4. Resolutions (S 18/19 2 E)

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 a Personal Chair

Draft Resolution No. 6/2019: Foundation of a Personal Chair of Fluid Mechanics

5. Report from Central Academic Promotions Committee

Senate noted the out of cycle Personal Chair recommendations of the Central Academic Promotions Committee.