University of Strathclyde

SENATE

Minutes: Wednesday 21 April 2010

Present: Principal (in the chair)
Professor D Birch, Mr P Booth, Dr S Butler, Professor S Carter, Dr R Chapman,
Professor G Coombs, Professor J Corney, Professor J Darby, Dr P Davies,
Professor J Finch, Professor R Finlay, Dr D Goldie, Dr M Grant, Mr B Green, Dr
D Grierson, Dr D Harle, Professor T Bedford, Ms A Hughes, Dr N Hunt,
Professor C Huxham, Professor A Incecik, Professor D Judge, Professor R Land,
Dr J A McInnes, Dr P McKenna, Dr A McLaren, Professor J McNally, Dr D
MacKenzie, Professor A Marshall, Professor C Mason, Professor K Miller, Dr R
Murray, Dr D Nash, Professor D Nickson, Professor D Nicol, Professor M
Poultie, Dr P Riches, Dr R Rogerson, Mrs S Sexton, Dr J Smith, Dr S Tagg,
Professor J A Thomson, Professor A M Wilson, Professor S Wilson.

Attending: Mr H Hall, Dr V O'Halloran, Mr P Whyte, Ms A Davies, Dr C Coles, Mr G Mann,
Professor J Love, Ms J Whitley, Ms S Hansen, Ms R Kochanska

Apologies: Dr A Agapiou, Professor V Belton, Dr G Connelly, Professor B Conway,
Professor M Dawson, Mr B Dickson, Dr C Eschle, Professor J Farrell, Professor
M Fox, Professor D Gani, Professor S Hart, Professor B Kalin, Professor W Kerr,
Dr N Langford, Professor S MacGregor, Professor S Marshall, Dr K O’Gorman,
Professor A Paterson, Dr C Schaschke, Professor K Swales, Dr R Tate, Dr D
Willison, Dr D McGhee

11386 Minutes of the meeting of 17th March 2010

The Minutes were approved subject to the correction of the title of the Merger
Implementation Group in Minute 11379.3.

11387 Principal’s Report and Correspondence

.1 The Principal drew members’ attention to the recent communication about travel
disruptions caused by the volcanic eruption in Iceland. Staff and students should
keep Deans and Heads of Department advised of any difficulties. Business critical issues
should be reported to the Centre.

.2 The Principal welcomed Mr Hugh Hall, the Chief Operating Officer and Acting Secretary
to his first meeting of Senate.

.3 The Principal informed Senate that Professor Anthony McGrew, currently Professor of
International Relations and Head of the School of Social Sciences at the University of
Southampton, had been appointed as the Dean of the new Faculty of Humanities and
Social Sciences. As a result of current commitments he will not be able to take up his
post formally until 1st October 2010 but would engage with the University and the new
Faculty between now and then. This prior engagement was particularly important given Senate’s requirement that he be fully involved in the decisions on the structure of the new Faculty. Professor McGrew would continue to be research active.

.4 Senate members were advised that, sixteen nominations having been received for ten vacancies, it would be necessary to hold an election. Candidate details would be circulated to electors before the end of the week and ballot papers would be sent out on Monday 26th April 2010.

.5 A Deputy Principal for Learning and Teaching was being sought to succeed Mrs Anne Hughes from 1 August 2010. An advertisement would be placed shortly and internal interest was encouraged.

.6 The SFC funding letter had now been received. The University had seen a decrease of 0.3% as against an average increase in the sector of 1.2%. This was largely due to the removal of transition funding and was a consequence of the University’s performance in the last RAE. This emphasized the need to improve the University’s performance for the REF. While future funding and the comprehensive spending review were dependent on the result of the election on 6th May, the HE sector should not anticipate any increase in funding. It would be more a question of the size of the decrease.

.7 The Principal and Vice-Principal had had an informal meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning in the Scottish Government and this would be followed by a formal meeting in June. The Cabinet Secretary was pressing for a Scottish solution to current funding issues. The Cabinet Secretary had made a commitment at the NUS conference not to introduce top up fees for the term of the current government in Scotland. However, it would appear that a graduate endowment approach was a possibility. The Knowledge Transfer Grant was still under discussion.

.8 Since the last meeting of Senate, the first Teaching Excellence Awards had been made. Three hundred nominations had been received from the student body and two specific awards had been made. These awards would be a regular feature of the University calendar. The Principal thanked the organizers and the students on Senate’s behalf.

.9 The University would shortly be going to market for five new academic posts in the new Faculty. The majority of these would be Professors. Appointments would be made to the Law School and the Departments of English, History, Government and Sport, Culture and the Arts. The Heads of Department had done an outstanding job and their approach would be used as models for future appointments. It was clear that the University needed to be proactive in identifying possible candidates and encouraging them to apply. The University is currently preparing the business case for Court for a further one to two tranches of staff investment with a view to appointment between eighty and a hundred staff by the end of 2011.

11388 Outcome of Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR)

The Deputy Principal for Learning and Teaching reported that the initial report from the Quality Assurance Agency indicated that there could be confidence in the University’s current, and likely future, management of the academic standards of its awards and the quality of the student learning experience it provided.
This report had highlighted a number of positive features of the University’s provision – specifically: the productive partnership the University had developed with USSA to improve the student representative arrangements and the extent to which the University drew on student feedback to inform strategic developments; the development of the REAP project; the Student Transition Framework; the work of CAPLE; and the University’s unambiguous clarity of purpose about its Strategic Plan and communication of the strategic approach to staff and students. The report also recognized the pivotal role of Vice-Deans (Academic) and Faculty Officers. However, the initial report also addressed areas where the University could improve its performance – specifically: the need to identify and introduce more systematic arrangements for supporting the learning and teaching needs of international students and the development needs of academic staff supporting the international student population; the approach to managing collaborative activity including the particular risks associated with this type of activity; review of quality assurance arrangements in order to ensure that these meet the needs of the new structures and revised institutional strategies; reflection on the balance between cross-institutional consistency and flexibility that within the University’s devolved approach to quality management; and reflection on the nature and location of consultation, deliberation and associated decision-making inside and outside the academic committee structures.

Mrs Hughes thanked Ms Whitely and Ms Hansen and their team for their work in preparing for the Review and staff and students for their participation in preparation and meetings with the Review Team. The Principal thanked Mrs Hughes on behalf of Senate for her leadership.

11389 Structure for the new Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Professor Love advised Senate that there would be a full report coming to the next meeting of Senate on 2nd June 2010. The purpose of this interim report was to advise members of the response made by the Merger Implementation Group (MIG) to issues raised at the last meeting of Senate.

The MIG had incorporated Senate’s advice on graduate attributes and the need to continue to encourage single discipline research and had started to address the issue of institutional coherence. The incoming Dean had been fully informed about developments to date, had received a full set of the papers which had been discussed by Senate and Court and would be fully involved in discussions about budgetary matters. The macro level organizational arrangements and the job descriptions for Heads of School and Vice-Deans had been discussed with the incoming Dean who was happy with these. The attention of Senate members was drawn to organizational arrangements in the Faculty of Life Sciences at the University of Manchester which were similar to those proposed for the new Faculty and which differed from arrangements for other faculties at Manchester.

Some concern was expressed about the late start date for the new Dean and the amount of time he was likely to be able to invest in the development of the new Faculty in the interim. It was very important, given the timelines for the merger of the two existing faculties, that he should get progressively more involved between now and his arrival at Strathclyde. The nature of his involvement in the interim period was to be discussed by MIG at its next meeting and would be raised with the new Dean.
11390 Proposed Closure of the BA in Community Arts

The Joint Board of Studies had recommended in January 2010 that recruitment to the BA in Community Arts should be suspended for 2010-11 and had referred the future of the programme to the Merger Implementation Group for consideration. The MIG’s Investment and Disinvestment Group had subsequently recommended that the BA in Community Arts should be withdrawn with effect from 2010-11. The Faculty and the Department are mindful that this is a significant step and recognize that they have an ongoing commitment to ensure the quality of the student experience for the current student group.

The President of the Students’ Association informed Senate that the student body condemned the decision. They had been hopeful that when the proposal was referred to MIG it would be considered in the same way as other programmes. The academic merit of the programme has been consistently recognized by External Examiners. If the vision of Strathclyde as ‘the place of useful learning’ meant anything in this day and age, this course must surely fit the criteria. It provided engagement with the local community and offered students access to opportunities which they could not get elsewhere. The decision clearly demonstrated a bias towards research activity rather than an excellent student experience.

Senate was assured that this course had been subject to the same considerations as other programmes in the Faculty. The link between research and teaching was important and this was not the only area of the University that needed to improve its record on research.

Senate considered the suggestion that a decision should be deferred until the new Dean and senior management team for the Faculty were in place, and further consultation had taken place with external stakeholders. As part of the review of all activities in the two faculties the Investment and Disinvestment Group had looked at areas where there should be further investment. This course was seen as a low priority given its research and knowledge exchange record. It was at the lower end of all activities in the Faculty. Members had to recognize the direction of travel of the University and the fact that it was refocusing on certain areas. It was not possible to invest in everything. The Faculty Leadership Team had reluctantly accepted that this was the right thing to do. The paperwork before Senate reflected the discussions which had taken place. Senate recognized the need to take hard decisions in the light of the need to improve performance and be sustainable.

Consideration of issues in the Department had started with the Excellence Review in 2007. This had provided clear signaling and clear objectives as had been the case with Excellence Reviews in other departments. The Investment and Disinvestment Group had looked at how departments had responded to that agenda set two years ago in reaching their recommendations. The recommendation to withdraw the BA in Community Arts had not been made lightly and consideration had also been given to the University’s direction of travel and alignment for the future. It may well be that the new Dean might identify other areas for disinvestment.

The Student President stated that he was disappointed with Senate’s consideration of this issue. In his view, this was not a hard decision, it was a wrong decision. In taking it the University appeared to be focusing entirely on research teaching linkages and not on
the merits of the course. This was a unique area of study. It was the only course of its kind in Scotland and one of only a handful in the whole of the UK. In taking this decision Senate was letting down students, staff and the external community.

The Principal reminded Senate that the decision had its roots in the response to the Excellence Review and that there was a substantial amount of evidence underpinning the decision. In his view it was the right thing to do for the new Faculty.

Professor Land asked if there had been any consideration of whether the course might move to an area where there was less of a research focus. For example, had any consideration been given to whether or not one of our FE partners might be interested in taking over the course. This was seen as a useful intervention and it was agreed that there would be time over the next year or so for discussions to take place with possible interested parties with the involvement of the new Dean.

The recommendation to withdraw the BA in Community Arts was put to the vote and was carried by 35 votes to 3, with 5 abstentions, Senate therefore resolved to withdraw the course.

11391 Items for Recommendation to Court

.1 Senate resolved to recommend to Court for approval the appointment of Professor Anthony McGrew, currently Head of the School of Social Sciences at the University of Southampton, as Dean of Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

.2 Senate resolved to recommend to Court for approval the appointment of Professor Andy Marshall as Head of the Department of Accounting and Finance, BP06 B1

11392 Recommendations for Approval nem con

Senate resolved to approve the following without discussion:

.1 Revised remit and composition of the Information Strategy Committee, BP02 99
.2 Suspension of recruitment to the MSc Forensic Informatics in 2010-2011 and the relaunch of the degree as the MSc Digital Forensics from 2011-2012, BP04 A1
.3 Addendum in respect of the BSc (Hons) Biomedical Science and the BSc (Hons) Forensic Biology to the Collaborative Agreement between the University (Strathclyde Institute of Pharmacy and Biomedical Sciences) and the International Medical University in Malaysia, BP04 A2
.4 Confirmation of the continuation of Dr David Nash as Vice-Dean (Knowledge Exchange) in the Faculty of Engineering to 31 July 2011 and of Professor Alex Duffy as Vice-Dean (Research) in the Faculty of Engineering to 31 July 2012, BP05

11393 Items for Information

Senate noted the following items:

.1 Appointment of Professor Fox as an adjunct researcher at the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute in California, BP04
.2 Election of Professor Tim Bedford as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, BP06 C
.3 The Development of the Business School Strategy, BP06 C
.4 Report from the Education Strategy Committee, 4th February 2010, BP08
.5 Report from the Ordinances and Regulations Committee, 23rd March 2010, BP10
.6 Report from the Quality Monitoring Committee, 24th February 2010, BP11
.7 Report from the Senate Discipline Committee, 19th February 2010, BP17 SDC 131

11394 Reserved Area