THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

**Senatus Academicus
Reconvened Meeting**

Tuesday 18 June 2024 at 9:45-10:45am
Microsoft Teams

Confirmed Minute

Attendees: Peter Adkins, Gill Aitken, Mteeve Amugune, Arianna Andreangeli, Jonathan Ansell, Kate Ash-Irisarri, Michael Barany, Laura Bickerton, Richard Blythe, Catherine Bovill, Holly Branigan, Aidan Brown, Rory Callison, Jeremy Carrette, Leigh Chalmers, Neil Chue Hong, Juan Cruz, Sarah Cunningham-Burley, Sumari Dancer, Luigi Del Debbio, Chris Dent, Charlotte Desvages, Simone Dimartino, Claire Duncanson, Murray Earle, Tonks Fawcett, Samantha Fawkner, Manuel Fernandez-Gotz, Chris French, Vashti Galpin, Soledad Garcia Ferrari, Benjamin Goddard, Richard Gratwick, Colm Harmon, Gareth Harrison, Tina Harrison, David Hay, Pia Helbing, Melissa Highton, James Hopgood, Jenny Hoy, Emma Hunter, Gbenga Ibikunle, David Ingram, Jakov Jandric, Meryl Kenny, Linda Kirstein, David Kluth, Andy Law, Tom Leinster, Ashley Lloyd, Antony Maciocia, Peter Mathieson, Steven Morley, Chris Mowat, Simon Mudd, Lyndsay Murray, Rupert Nash, Pau Navarro, Emmanuel Okunlola, Natalia Penar, Jon Pridham, David Quinn, Rebecca Reynolds, Ricardo Ribeiro Ferreira, Ken Rice, Eberhard Sauer, Bernd Schroers, Geoff Simm, Stewart Smith, Tim Stratford, Alex Thomson, Tamara Trodd, Uzma Tufail-Hanif, Nadia Tuzi, Patrick Walsh, Christopher Weir, Ben Wynne, Alper Yildirim

In attendance: Adam Bunni, Olivia Hayes, Cristina Matthews, Dean Pateman, Nichola Kett, Richard Kenway, Sinead Docherty

Apologies: Clark Barwick, Sian Bayne, Shereen Benjamin, Clare Blackburn, Richard Blythe, Christina Boswell, Olivia Eadie, Laura Bradley, Mary Brennan, Tom Bruce, John Cairns, Jane Calvert, Celine Caquineau, Kevin Collins, Martin Corley, Sharon Cowan, Chris Cox, Jeremy Crang, Jo Danbolt, Jamie Davies, Ricardo De Oliveira Almeida, Chris Dent, John Devaney, James Dunlop, Agata Dunsmore, Jite Eferakorho, Darrick Evensen, Anne-Maree Farrell, Susan Farrington, Valentina Ferlito, Emily Ford-Halliday, Stuart Gilfillan, Iain Gordon, Patrick Hadoke, Elaine Haycock-Stuart, Thorunn Helgason, Gavin Jack, Laura Jeffery, Itamar Kastner, Jim Kaufman, Tobias Kelly, George Kinnear, Steff Lewis, Jason Love, Sophia Lycouris, Lorna Marson, Catherine Martin, Lesley McAra, Alistair McCormick, Gavin McLachlan, Heather McQueen, Avery Meiksin, John Menzies, Carmel Moran, Andrew Morris, Susan Morrow, Rachel Muers, Bryne Ngwenya, Diana Paton, Josephine Pemberton, Sarah Prescott, Colin Pulham, Simon Riley, Aryelly Rodriguez Carbonell, Hollie Rowlands, Maximilian Ruffert, Ewelina Rydzewska-Fazekas, Tobias Schwarz, Pablo Schyfter Camacho, Robert Semple, Mike Shipston, Sue Sierra, James Smith, Emily Taylor, Melissa Terras, Jeremy Upton, Stephen Warrington, Michele Weiland, Iain Wright, Ingrid Young, Marion Schmid, Lisa Boden, Tom Booth

The Convener, Principal Professor Sir Peter Mathieson, opened the meeting and noted that Senate had not reached quorum. The Convener confirmed that the meeting would proceed and Senate would be able to consider any non-contentious items of business, indicating that the Senate Clerk would continue to monitor quorum for the duration of the meeting.

The Convener invited the Senate Clerk to provide an update on the attendance of student representatives. The Senate Clerk confirmed that there were fewer student representatives in attendance as many had concluded their term at the end of May and the new student Sabbatical Officers were unable to attend the reconvened meeting due to a prior engagement. The reconvened meeting falls between two student membership cycles with many new undergraduate representatives to take up their positions in early October.

The Convener informed members that there was a strong wish from some members that the meeting take place ahead of the next academic cycle to conclude the incomplete business from the 22 May meeting and expressed his regret that the student involvement will be limited due to the timing of the meeting.

ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

1. **Award of degrees: delegation of authority to Boards of Examiners – S 23/24 3J - CLOSED**
   For approval

   Dr Adam Bunni, Head of Academic Policy and Regulation, Registry Services introduced the paper. He provided an outline of the paper and noted that degrees are currently conferred by graduation meetings of Senate, which take place immediately prior to graduation ceremonies, with the decisions based on the recommendation of the Board of Examiners. He explained that the graduation meetings do not have arrangements for quorum and do not provide any scrutiny of the decisions made by the Board of Examiners. The paper proposes to permanently delegate the powers for the awarding of degrees to Boards of Examiners. From a student perspective, this would not change their experience of graduation. From an operational perspective, this would not change the operation of Boards of Examiners and would remove the requirement for graduation meetings of Senate to take place prior to graduation ceremonies.

   Dr Bunni explained that there is precedent for the delegation of authority; degree awarding powers were delegated to Boards of Examiners during Covid. He also confirmed that if Senate approved the delegation, this would require an amendment to the Senate Standing Orders which would be brought to the next Ordinary meeting of Senate.

   The Convener informed Senate that the Students' Association representatives had been in touch prior to the meeting to express their support for this item.
   He explained that Senate can proceed to approve this item if they consider this to be uncontentious.

   Senate members made the following points:

   - A member expressed their agreement with the desirability of reducing the timelines around conferral of awards but highlighted concerns regarding the removal of a time lapse between Boards of Examiners and graduation meetings to resolve any administrative errors which may occur.

   - A member stated they felt that the item was highly contentious and should be considered by a quorate meeting of Senate. The member also felt the issue should be referred to the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group for consideration. The member expressed a view that the delegation of authority used

during Covid should not be considered precedent and that there is dissatisfaction among some colleagues with how delegation was managed during this period. The member also expressed a view that scrutiny is not adequate at Boards of Examiners and there needs to be an independent scrutiny function, which Senate should fulfil. The member expressed a view that awardees and their families appreciate the graduation meetings of Senate and that there is a process in place for handling the small number of exceptions which arise during the year and which require consideration sooner than the next graduation cycle.

- Another member felt that the proposal to permanently delegate authority was contentious, and expressed a preference for delegating the authority on a trial basis and then looking to amend the Standing Orders following a trial period during which any issues could be ironed out. The member expressed a view that the ceremonial function of a graduation meeting was nice as a performative piece for students.

- The Deputy Secretary Students, Ms Lucy Evans acknowledged that the item was considered contentious and that a decision would not be taken today. She acknowledged the comments made regarding processing errors and that work will take place to review the process and work to reduce errors. She explained that the proposal is seeking to improve the student experience for students, by not allowing it to be impacted by a small number of isolated errors.

- In response to comments made, Dr Adam Bunni explained that a delay could be built into the process to allow for errors to be captured and resolved ahead of award publication. He also acknowledged that the delegation could be undertaken on a trial basis for a year, though highlighted that the Senate Standing Orders would be contradictory to practices during that time.

  Dr Bunni highlighted that the current process for holding a graduation meeting of Senate does not provide for any scrutiny of Board of Examiner decisions and therefore these would not pick up any errors or corrections. He stated that Senate could still carry out an oversight role by receiving reports of errors where these occur. Finally, he noted that if Senate has wider concerns regarding the robustness of Board of Examiner measures, these are broader than the proposed delegation of authority and greater discussion including identification of the issues would be required.

- A member stated they were unclear on the purpose of Senate graduation meetings and that they believed that students are unaware these take place prior to graduation. They noted that many attendees at these meetings are not members of Senate.

- The Dean of the Edinburgh Medical School, Professor David Kluth, stated that the proposal is an essential change to allow large cohorts of students to graduate outside the standard-graduation cycle. Professor Kluth noted that forthcoming changes to medical education would require large cohorts of medical students to receive their awards in a timely fashion and these would have to continue to be managed by exception if the delegation was not approved.

The Convener explained that as the item was considered contentious and Senate was not quorate a decision could not be taken on the paper. Therefore, Senate did not reach a decision on this item.

2. **Senate Committee Administration**

For approval:

- **Senate Exception Committee Membership & Terms of Reference - S 23/24 3K**

Senate was invited to approve the Senate Exception Committee Membership and Terms of Reference. No comments or objections were raised and therefore this item was deemed uncontentious and Senate approved the item.

- **Senate Standing Committee Membership - S 23/24 3L**

The Convener explained that a series of amendments had been received for the Senate Standing Committees' Membership paper. Accordingly, this item was considered contentious and a decision could not be taken as Senate was not quorate. However, the Convener allowed a short discussion on this item to take place, ahead of the paper returning to a future meeting of Senate.

The Conveners of Senate Standing Committees were invited to introduce the paper. Professor Colm Harmon, Convener of the Senate Education Committee highlighted that the paper acknowledges the work of the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group and that changes to Committees may come forward in the future and that the Committee membership had been formed in line with current practice. He also acknowledged the amendments to the paper had been received. Additionally, Professor Harmon noted that the elected Senate members on Standing Committees had been confirmed in the previous 24 hours, however those members are not named in the paper presented to Senate today.

Senate members made the following points:

A member invited the committee conveners to explain what they considered contentious about the amendments that had been available to them since before the May meeting, and why they did not consider incorporating the amendments ahead of this meeting so that the papers could pass as uncontentious. The member expressed the view that the amendments were all in the spirit of clarification and in line with the paper, and did not understand why the committee conveners opposed them. The member also asked for an explanation of why there were unfilled elected member vacancies on the Senate Committees and queried whether the timing of the elections for these could have been a contributing factor.

The Convener confirmed that the presence of amendments deemed the item contentious. He explained that Senate is asked to reach a decision on the amendments, ahead of a decision on the item, and therefore this would require a vote be taken. This cannot take place outwith a quorate meeting of Senate.

- A member suggested that the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group be asked to establish why there remain unfilled elected member positions on Senate Committees. The member highlighted the focus of the Committees on teaching-related matters, and noted this may exclude staff who hold research-focussed positions.

- A member highlighted Standing Order 22 which states that members of Senate would be invited to submit nominations for the members of the Committees. They explained that compliance with Standing Order 22 has been raised previously

however no changes to the process for establishing Committee membership had taken place. The member expressed a view that some interesting perspectives could be sought from the wider University community by implementing the process outlined in Standing Order 22.

The member later explained that some individuals who could usefully serve on Committees include staff who are not members of Senate and therefore would not be included in the opportunity to stand for election to a Senate Committee.

- Professor Tina Harrison, Convener of the Senate Quality Assurance Committee explained that Senate members are invited to self-nominate for membership of the Committee via the election process. She also highlighted that the Committees require relevant expertise and individuals with responsibility for defined areas within Colleges and Schools to ensure that any actions or decisions taken by Committees can be implemented at a local level.

  In response to comments regarding the individuals who could usefully serve on Committees, Professor Harrison highlighted the presence of co-opted spaces on the Senate Quality Assurance Committee and welcomed suggestions from members for individuals who could fill co-opted positions. She explained that the paper and associated amendments did not require consideration or approval for co-opted positions to be filled.

- Two members stated that paper authors had had an opportunity to incorporate revisions in response to amendments prior to the paper returning to Senate.

  In response to comments regarding incorporating amendments to the paper, Professor Colm Harmon agreed to consider with the Standing Committee Conveners whether this could take place ahead of a future meeting.

- One member acknowledged the importance of adhering to procedure and referred to the Convener's statement that the item is considered contentious.

  In response the Convener reiterated that the practice and procedure of Senate is that amendments require a decision be taken this would require a vote. This cannot take place out with a quorate meeting of Senate.

- Another member referred to Standing Order 15 and requested that as the meeting was not quorate, further discussion on this item be held over until Senate can reach a decision.

As the item was considered contentious and Senate was not quorate, a decision could not be taken on the paper.

- **Senate Standing Committee Priorities - S 23/24 3M**

The Convener explained that a series of amendments had been received for the Senate Standing Committees Priorities paper and therefore this item was considered contentious and a decision could not be taken as Senate was not quorate. A short discussion on this item would take place, ahead of the paper returning to a future meeting of Senate.

The Conveners of Senate Standing Committees were invited to introduce the paper. Professor Harmon explained that establishing priorities for the Standing Committees is an annual process, and that these have been discussed by the full Committee with revisions made in response to Committee member comments. Professor Harmon also acknowledged the presence of an amendment to the SQAC priorities.

Professor Harrison explained that the proposed amendment to the SQAC priorities raises a specific ask of SQAC which relates to student support. Professor Harrison explained that oversight of student support is already a priority area for SQAC and the Committee provides oversight and evaluation through this. She explained that this remains an ongoing priority for the Committee and therefore does not require a separate and additional priority to be established.

Senate members made the following points:

- A member reiterated their earlier query on which amendments were deemed contentious and asked whether the paper and the amendments could be considered as uncontentious.

- A member stated that paper authors had had an opportunity to incorporate revisions in response to amendments prior to the paper returning to Senate.

- Another member referred to Standing Order 15 and requested that as the meeting was not quorate, further discussion on this item be held over until Senate can reach a decision.

As the item was considered contentious and Senate was not quorate, a decision could not be taken on the paper.

For information:

- **Senate Standing Committee Upcoming Business - S 23/24 3N**

This paper was provided for information and no comments were raised.

3. **Senate Task and Finish Group Update & Proposals - S 23/24 3O**
   For approval

The Convener explained that there are a series of proposals regarding meeting format that Senate has been asked to consider and decide on. He explained that discussion of this item would identify whether there were areas of contention and whether a decision could be taken on these.

The Senate Clerk, Olivia Hayes introduced the item. She explained that the Task and Finish Group had held two meetings to date. At these meetings, the group has discussed the prioritisation of recommendations and is working through these in order of priority. She also explained that the group identified a series of practical measures that are intended to enhance meetings and the procedures surrounding these. These proposals are presented in the paper. She explained that consultation was undertaken via the Members Portal with a 15% response rate. The group strongly encourages member feedback and engagement with future consultation on proposals to help aide the group to formulate proposals for Senate to consider and approve.

Ms Hayes explained that Senate was asked to decide between a 4x3 hour or 6x2 hour meeting format, and whether meetings should take place in semester time or across the entire academic year. She highlighted that there is a gap in student representation during the period May-September and that meetings which take place during this period may exclude student representation. She also noted previous challenges in reaching quorum for meetings held outside the standard University semester.

Finally, she explained that the group is seeking in-principle support for the recording of meetings to support the drafting of minutes. If supported, then a formal proposal for recording meetings will return to a future meeting of Senate.

The Convener invited Senate to consider each of the proposals in turn and asked members to raise objections where they felt these were contentious.

The Convener invited Senate to consider increasing the overall meeting time to 12 hours. No comments or objections were raised and therefore this proposal was approved.

The Convener invited Senate members to raise comment on the 4x3 and 6x2 hour meeting format. No comments were raised.

The Convener stated that his view is that a meeting format of 4x3 hours is uncontentious and invited Senate to approve this format. No comments or objections were raised and therefore a 4x3 hour format was approved.

The Convener invited Senate members to raise comment on confining meetings to a standard University semester or holding these across the entire calendar year. No comments were raised.

The Convener stated that his view is that a meeting held within the standard university semester is uncontentious and invited Senate to approve this proposal. No comments or objections were raised and therefore this format was approved.

The Convener invited Senate members to raise comment on revising the meeting time to 1-4pm. One member requested that meetings commence at 1:10pm in line with the standard University timetable. The Senate Clerk confirmed that this change was uncontentious.

The Convener stated that his view is that holding meetings from 1:10-4pm was uncontentious and invited Senate to approve this proposal. No comments or objections were raised and therefore this was approved.

The Convener invited Senate members to raise comment on meetings taking place in hybrid format as standard.

The Convener stated that his view is that meetings taking place in hybrid format as standard was uncontentious and invited Senate to approve this proposal. No comments or objections were raised and therefore this was approved.

The Convener invited Senate members to raise comment on meetings being recorded for the purposes of taking minutes.

The Convener stated that his view is that in-principle support for meetings being recorded was uncontentious and invited Senate to give in-principle support for this proposal. No comments or objections were raised and therefore this in-principle support was given.

Ahead of the conclusion of the meeting, members raised the following points:

- Several items were unable to be considered due to amendments being raised. It was requested that paper authors work with proposers of amendments to refine papers to be returned to Senate.

- A member requested that e-Senate be used to clear any business unable to be considered at the inquorate meeting. The Convener reminded Senate that items for approval cannot be taken through a meeting of e-Senate.

- Members of the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group explained that the group has been discussing measures to engage and consult with membership on papers prior to these being brought to Senate and the group will continue to work towards establishing measures to help facilitate papers being presented in their final format for future meetings.

ITEMS TO COMMENT

Members were invited to comment on the following items via an e-Senate meeting which took place from Monday 3 June - 12pm, Friday 14 June.

People & Money Improvement Plan 24-26 - S 23/24 3Q
To comment

Eight members provided comment on this item.

One member expressed their content with the plan outlined, with another stating it is useful to receive the report though expressing that there appear to be ongoing issues which are not covered in the report.

Four members expressed dissatisfaction with the plan and that the plan did not provide clear deliverables or target dates for addressing the known issues. Members expressed concern that the plan did not sufficiently take account of the impact of staff working with the current system. Two members expressed discontent with the Impact Assessments summary provided within the paper with one member expressing concern regarding the workload implications and impact on staff morale. One member also felt that the plan did not adequately outline the prioritisation process for improvements, however noted that the paper may not be an appropriate avenue for conveying this detail.

Two members queried the absence of detail around what the University is doing in relation to Human Resources related matters and queried whether this indicates that no specific action is taking place.

Three members provided feedback and technical examples on specific issues experienced in relation to the People and Money system. Members provided examples of technical issues experienced within the system which included but were not limited to: challenges with basic functions for end users, feedback on user-functionality of the system including search functions, budget coding and search fields, approval processes, communications with users and access for staff located overseas. Members also expressed concern regarding the ongoing impact of these technical issues on staff workload and morale with particular concern expressed regarding impact on professional services and research staff.

One member stated their concern that the report does not address motions previously approved by Senate.

The comments were passed to the author of the paper.

Court Resolutions – Personal Chairs - S 23/24 3R

To comment

Four members provided comment on this item.

Two members expressed their support for the creation of the Personal Chairs.
One member queried whether the paper was complete and one member expressed their congratulations to the staff successfully nominated for Personal Chairs.

The comments were passed to the author of the paper.