

ROBERT GORDON UNIVERSITY

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

Minute of the meeting held on 19 November 2019 (2.00pm – 4.05pm).

Present: Professor J Harper (Chair), Dr I Agouris, Mr E Akerele, Dr I Arana, Mr J Buckley, Professor D Cairns, Dr D Cockburn, Dr N Connon, Ms L Curtis, Dr G Droubi, Mr E Eke, Dr N Emmison, Ms I Fairley, Professor E Gammie, Professor P Hagan, Professor E Hancock, Dr D Hill, Mr W Jackson, Mr R Leven, Professor J McCall, Professor D McClean, Mrs D Mitchell, Ms H Ohanusi, Dr A Oke, Dr E Rey-Marmonier, Ms J Royle, Mrs L Sharp, Mr M Shepherd, Professor J Steel, Mrs V Strachan and Professor S Vertigans.

Apologies: Dr H Ahriz, Ms J Bisset, Dr P Bremner, Dr S Cunningham, Mr T Dounas, Dr A Lamb, Dr M Leon, Professor K Mackinnon, Ms L Meng, Professor I Murray and Ms J Tait.

In Attendance: Mr F Antoniazzi, Mr J Dunphy and Mrs F McLean Whyte (Secretary).

Welcome: Mr E Akerele, Dr N Emmison, Ms I Fairley, Mr W Jackson, Mr R Leven, Ms H Ohanusi and Dr A Oke were welcomed to their first meeting of Academic Council.

1. MINUTE

Action

Academic Council **approved** the *Minute of the meeting held on 18 June 2019 [AC/19/3]*, and noted a *Matters Arising Report*.

2. COMPOSITION AND REMIT

Council noted an extract from *Organisational Regulation O3* relating to its composition and remit.

The Chair informed Council that it was an appropriate time to reflect on its operation as this meeting marked its first year since the introduction of its new composition, revised to meet the requirements of the *Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016*, and that required more that 50% of the membership to be elected staff and students, and at least 10% to be elected students. Much of Council's business derived from its Standing Committees, and their Sub-Committees in turn. As a consequence, the majority of issues presented in papers submitted to Council had already been scrutinised in considerable detail and, as this ensured effective consideration of issues, there was no desire to change this approach. It could, however, seem that Council was just processing much of its business.

As a consequence, Council **endorsed** a proposal that, in future, a section of Council's meetings would be dedicated to discussion of themes of key institutional importance such as *microlearning*, the *RGU Learning and Teaching Framework*, online learning, and Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR). Effectiveness of discussion would be dependent on the active engagement of members, and ensuring recommendations to Council had been subject to appropriate consultation.

Mrs F McLean
Whyte

Academic Council
Members

3. CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair reminded Council that the purpose of his report was to provide a brief update to Academic Council on key in-session activities and performance indicators, primarily considered by the Board of Governors.

The Board had held its Board Strategy Workshop on 2 October 2019 at which it receiving briefings on the current status of the University since its last meeting in June 2019 in respect of the University's finances, the *Business Plan, Performance Indicators and Risk Register*, and the University's *Communications Strategy*. This had been followed by a Board meeting at which it:

- approved the *Business Plan 2019/20 – 2021/22, Key Performance Indicators and Risk Register for 2019/20*, adjusted as necessary based on discussions in the Board Strategy Workshop;
- considered the *Business Plan 2018/19 – end of year report*;
- endorsed the *Annual Report to the Scottish Funding Council: 2018/19 Institution-Led Review of Quality* prior to its submission;
- approved the *Students' Union Annual Report and 2019-20 Budget*;
- approved, subject to minor amendment, the draft of *The Robert Gordon University (Scotland) Order of Council 2019* and accompanying *Policy Note*, required as a consequence of the *Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016*, for onward submission to the Privy Council;
- approved applications for membership of the Board of Governors, and extensions to the periods of office of some existing governors;
- received updates on the appointment of new Lay Chair of the Board, and the appointment of a new Principal and Vice-Chancellor.

The Board would next meet on 27 November 2019.

The Chair also wished to highlight and commend the following achievements:

- the substantially improved performance in the *National Student Survey*, as recorded through the *Annual Appraisal Process* (see item 5.1.1 below) which was tribute to the commitment of staff;
- the prestigious 2019 *Herald Education Award for 'Outstanding Business Engagement in universities'* for its development of 'Innovation@RGU', which embedded entrepreneurship and innovation across the University and supporting the economic growth and diversification of the region;
- the establishment of the National Subsea Centre, that built upon the strategic alignment with the Oil and Gas Technology Centre (OGTC), and had emanated from the *City Region Deal*. It was announced that Professor John McCall would, from 1 January 2020, be seconded to the National Subsea Centre as lead academic researcher for a period of three years. The Centre would be launched in the second quarter of 2020 and would be based in Dyce.

The external environment was also presenting challenges to the higher education sector, particularly in relation to the uncertainty with Brexit in light of the forthcoming UK general election.

The University was responding to the current climate change agenda, with initiatives being led on campus by Professor Paul de Leuww, director of the Energy Transitions Institute, as part of the region's ambition to be a zero percent carbon zone. This was taking advantage of the University's extensive expertise that was proving transferable to the transition to and adoption of other energies and technologies.

In respect of the University's marketing activities, and its targeting of different audiences, the University Management Group had recently received an update, and it was **agreed** the presentation would be circulated to Academic Council members.

Mrs F McLean
Whyte

4. STRATEGIC PLANNING

4.1 University Strategy, Business Plan and Risk Register

Academic Council noted the *Business Plan 2019-20 – 2021-22* (incorporating a summary of high-level risks for 2019-20), and the *Business Plan 2018-19 – End of Year Report (including Key Performance Indicators)*. The former was aimed at returning the University back to surplus within the three years of the *Plan* with actions within the *2019-20 Business Plan* designed to address the financial indicators by increasing revenue-generating activities. The latter confirmed that whilst, as predicted, the University had not met its financial indicator targets in 2018-19, it had enjoyed significant success in its non-financial indicators including student retention, satisfaction, employability, research outputs, and business and economic development.

Due to the earlier Council meeting, the *Business Plan 2019/20 – 2021/22 First Quarter Report* was not yet complete and would be circulated to members once it was ready.

Dr D Cockburn

The Board would be considering the *Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2019* for approval at its next meeting, prior to its publication on the University's website. The *Annual Report* contained a succinct summary of the University's strategy, and it was **agreed** this would be circulated to Council members once approved by the Board.

Dr D Cockburn

4.2 Outcome Agreement

Council noted the *Outcome Agreement 2018-19 - 2020-21 Self-Assessment Report* that was submitted to the Scottish Funding Council for 31 October 2019. Following the council's guidance, the *Report* had been structured around the seven key priority areas: access to education; high quality, efficient and effective learning; right learning, right place; a developed workforce; internationally competitive research base; greater innovation in the economy; and sustainable institutions.

As part of the University's commitment to access to education, access thresholds had been introduced in seven Schools, in liaison with the Heads of School.

The draft *Outcome Agreement 2020-21 to 2022-23* was still in preparation ahead of the Board of Governors meeting on 27 November 2019. It would include three annexes: the first associated with additional Health Outcomes the University was committed to as a result of its controlled nursing and midwifery student numbers; the second was the University's Innovation Fund, in return for which the University received a separate identifiable grant; and the third outlined the three year targets against the fourteen national performance measures.

4.3 Academic Development Committee

Council noted a report of the Academic Development Committee meeting held on 3 October 2019 which highlighted the following:

- *Semester 1 Applications and Enrolments*: the University was likely to meet intake and continuing targets for Scottish Funding Council undergraduate places. Outcome agreement targets for MD20 students and STEM subjects, however, had not been met; strategies to address these were discussed. In other market segments there were some missed targets [notably Home/EU PGT on campus and international on campus] but also some cause for optimism [Home/EU+rUK online and International online].
- *Marketing Plans*: recent marketing campaigns and future marketing plans were outlined for all market segments. The 2019 Clearing campaign had been well coordinated and effective, resulting in a 56% increase in applications and a 69% increase in Unconditional Firms while the spend was reduced by 27%. Open Day in September had been widely commended. Widening access messages would be incorporated across the marketing for all Schools in 2019-20. A co-ordinated University marketing campaign dedicated to online courses had run for the first time, and international online applications were the highest they had been since 2015, while UK applications continued to rise. Cost per 'acquisition' data was now available for campaigns and this would enable year-on-year analysis and refinement of marketing activity.
- *Major business and economic development opportunities*: the Director of Business and Economic Development had outlined progress with major projects in Mexico and Algeria, as well as opportunities in Senegal, Ghana and Morocco. Arising from successful recruitment to Graduate Apprenticeships, 120 collaboration agreements had been signed with local companies which opened the door for other opportunities beyond the Graduate Apprenticeship offer.
- *Course Portfolio Analysis 2019/20*: courses which had not meet the institutional thresholds for student numbers had been identified and meetings between Heads of School, the Vice-Principal for Academic Development and Student Experience and the Director of Planning and Policy took place after enrolment had closed to confirm which courses should be ceased or suspended.
- *Course Portfolio Developments*: approval of one new course proposal and several course changes.

5. ACADEMIC QUALITY AND STANDARDS

5.1 Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee

Council considered a report of the meeting held on 8 November 2019.

5.1.1 Annual Appraisal Process: 2018-19

Academic Council considered and **endorsed** the *Annual Appraisal Process for Session 2018-19: Annual Report*, for onward reporting to the Board of Governors. Council was reassured the *Annual Appraisal Process* provided a sound evidence base for it and the Board of Governors to have confidence in, and be satisfied with, the quality and standards of award-bearing courses.

Board of
Governors
[27.11.19]

In respect of the completeness of the quality assurance processes of the 11 Schools, the following was highlighted:

- all required *School Academic Board Appraisal Reports* had been submitted to the satisfaction of the Committee, with the exception of two and action was being taken to address these;
- all *External Examiner Annual Reports* had been received and responded to, with the exception of three, and the Committee was satisfied appropriate action was being taken.

Academic Council welcomed the considerable evidence both of outstanding work and innovative activities across Schools and Departments, as well improvements across many measures related to the *Annual Appraisal Process* which, in turn, had demonstrated the value of the *Insight Dashboards*. In particular:

- the 3% improvement in *overall satisfaction levels* in the *National Student Survey* that meant the University had achieved its Business Plan target of 88%. It also placed the University third highest amongst Scottish institutions. All other question scales had also improved, and were above the Scottish average;
- *Assessment and feedback* was a key satisfaction measure in the *National Student Survey*. The University had pursued an institutionally agreed and planned enhancement agenda in the area of assessment and feedback, supported by the Department for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Access (DELTA), to enhance consistency of practice. This had delivered demonstrably positive results with a 4% improvement in satisfaction, which had risen to 76.6%. The University was now 6.35% above the Scottish *National Student Survey* result on this measure. The Teaching Excellence Fellows would be leading work across the University to improve the consistency of approach to, and timeliness of, feedback to students.

Council also welcomed the significant number of achievements and examples of good/innovative practice identified by the School Academic Boards in their *Appraisal Reports*. Those considered worthy of wider dissemination across the university community would be disseminated in themes by the Department for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Access.

The evidence of the extensive partnership between students, Schools and services, and the increasingly significant role of the Student School Officers (SSOs) was also particularly welcome.

The Committee acknowledged the effectiveness of the engagement of Schools and Departments undertaking the *Annual Appraisal Process* that had led to demonstrable evidence of extensive improvement actions that were either already complete or well advanced. Furthermore, the Committee was satisfied the *Annual Appraisal Process* had confirmed these actions were adequate and appropriate.

The following key observations had been made by the Committee:

- *Retention and Continuation*: The University had consistently had a continuation rate that was higher than its HESA benchmark, and a non-continuation rate below its HESA benchmark. Two other retention measures were included in the Outcome Agreement guidance by the Scottish Funding Council:

- the number and proportion of full-time first year Scotland-domiciled undergraduate entrants (SDUE) who were continuing in higher education or who qualified with an exit award from the same HEI (i.e. not including transfers) [measure 6]. The University was the top performing Scottish post-92 institution in the most recent data available;
- the number and proportion of full-time first year Scotland-domiciled entrants from different protected characteristic groups and care experienced students who were continuing in higher education or who qualified (i.e. including transfers) [measure 5]. Overall, the University had performed well at the Scottish sector level with regard to the continuation of students with protected characteristics. For the majority of measures included, the University ranked as the top Scottish post-92 institution and second only to one other university in the measures relating to SIMD20 and SIMD40.

An additional *Insight Workbook* that tracked retention/continuation performance would shortly be launched to Schools and briefings would be provided.

- *Policy Compliance: Student Handbooks:* The 2019 *Assessment and Feedback* scale in the *National Student Survey* had improved by over 4%, to 76.76%, and the University was now 6.35% above the Scottish *National Student Survey* result on this measure. Improvements had also been demonstrated in the *Student Experience Questionnaires*. The timeliness of issue of feedback, however, appeared to have remained a concern. Although *Student Handbooks* were required to provide students with details of the timing of assessments, it was believed that variable practice had led to varying levels of satisfaction.

The Learning Infrastructure Sub-Committee had highlighted concerns with variable practice across Schools in respect of the *University Policy on Personal Tutoring*, leading some students not to be aware they had a personal tutor.

It was agreed the Department for Governance and Academic Quality would undertake an audit of *Student Handbooks* across the University to ensure compliance with the minimum content of *Student Handbooks* as specified by Academic Council. In particular, whether they contained calendars of assessments, identifying dates/weeks of all summative assessments and feedback deadlines, and adequate descriptions of appropriate arrangements to meet the requirements for the *University Policy on Personal Tutoring*.

- *Satisfaction in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Students:* It was agreed the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Sub-Committee would explore likely contributory factors to poorer satisfaction levels reported by BAME students, the President of Communication and Democracy agreed to assist by coordinating a student focus group, and the outcomes be reported to the Committee's next meeting on 12 February 2020.
- *Gender Balance in the Student Population:* The Committee agreed the issue of gender imbalance in the student population, and the appropriate measures to be taken to address this in marketing, student recruitment and admissions practices, be referred to the Vice-Principal for Corporate Operations, in her role as Convener of the University's Equality and Diversity Advisory Group, for action/response, and with a request that an outcome be reported to the Committee's next meeting.
- *Annual Appraisal Process:* It was agreed the *Action and Enhancement Plan* template and the appraisal forms would be reviewed by the Department for Governance and Academic Quality to capture more effectively the differentiation between improvements in service and enhancements to the student experience.

5.1.2 *Quality Events*

Academic Council **endorsed** the *Validation, Review, Approval and Professional Body Event Outcomes* for onward submission to the Board of Governors.

Board of
Governors
[27.11.19]

5.1.3 *Wednesday Afternoon Teaching Policy*

The Committee had endorsed recommendations made by its Learning Infrastructure Sub-Committee, relating to concerns with the significant increase in timetabled activities on Wednesday afternoons contrary to the University's *Wednesday Afternoon Teaching Policy*. This had been designed to allow students time to participate in "sporting, artistic and other social/society activities". The Committee initiated a consultation with Schools to determine the reasons why the *Policy* and associated procedures were not being followed.

Academic Council **approved** the following two recommendations from the Committee that addressed concerns with the impact on students and staff of inconsistent practice across Schools in relation to the scheduling of *Reading Weeks*, and the recent practice of timetabling of formal teaching during the *Induction/Freshers' Week*, which impacted on some students' ability to engage with induction or freshers' activities, including student representative training and job fairs:

Heads of School

- (i) From September 2020, no formal timetabled teaching be permitted within the *Semester 1 Induction/Freshers' Week*.
- (ii) From September 2020, the semester 1 and semester 2 *Reading Weeks* be standardised across the University, and not be at the Heads' of School discretion to determine which week would be designated Reading Week for their respective School/courses.

Council was reminded that the reading week was originally introduced as a 'consolidation week' immediately prior to the end of semester assessments. Inconsistency in the scheduling of the *Reading Weeks* by Heads of School was impacting negatively in cases of cross-School teaching, on the student experience and on staff. It was acknowledged that Heads of School had the discretion to approve annual leave for staff if they were satisfied that duties were adequately covered without impacting detrimentally on the student experience. It was acknowledged, however, that some students had reported a preference for a mid-semester break. The Student President of Communication and Democracy had been asked by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee to support focus groups to establish the majority view of students.

5.1.4 *Items for Noting*

Council also noted the following:

- *Outcome Classification Descriptions*: the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Sub-Committee had been asked to consider the adoption of the *Outcome classification descriptions for FHEQ Level 6 and FQHEIS Level 10 degrees*, published on 10 October 2019, as helpful guidance for staff. These provided degree outcome classifications for bachelor's degrees with honours - 1st, 2.1, 2.2

and 3rd, and build upon the descriptors within *The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland (FQHEIS)*;

- *University Policy on Personal Tutoring*: the Committee's discussion of the *University Policy on Personal Tutoring*;
- *Guidance on Recording of Lectures*: the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Sub-Committee had been reviewing the existing *Guidance on Recording of Lectures*, and had been asked to review this further to change the guidance to a policy, and incorporate a parallel policy on lecture capture.

5.2 External Examiner Appointments

In respect of nominations received from the School Academic Boards, Council:

- **approved** one new appointment, one extension to duties and two re-allocation of duties; and
- **ratified** ten new appointments, two extensions to duties, two re-allocation of duties, and one termination of appointment.

Governance &
Academic Quality

6. RESEARCH

6.1 Research Committee

Council noted a report of the meeting held on 23 October 2019 covering the Committee's discussions of recent developments and issues, including:

- *Research Excellence Framework (REF)*: the Committee's discussion of ongoing preparations prior to the submission date of 27 November 2020, including a second round of external review of the University's output. The University's *RGU Code of Practice for Equality and Diversity* had been examined and approved with no changes by the external Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel which, in turn, advised the UK funding bodies' REF team. Only 25% of Codes submitted across the UK had been approved with no changes.

Key dates for REF 2021 included:

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| December 2019 | Survey of submissions intentions complete; final deadline for requests for multiple submissions, case studies requiring security clearance, and exceptions to submission for small units; publication of approved codes of practice |
| Early 2020 | Formal release of the submission systems and accompanying technical guidance; invitation to HEIs to make submissions; invitation to nominate panel members and assessors for the assessment phase; deadline for staff circumstances requests |
| Mid 2020 | Appointment of additional members and assessors to panels |
| 31 July 2020 | Census date for staff; end of assessment period (for research impacts, the research environment, and data about research income and research doctoral degrees awarded) |
| 27 November 2020 | Closing date for submissions |
| 31 December 2020 | End of publication period (cut-off point for publication of research outputs, and for outputs underpinning impact case studies) |

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| 29 January 2021 | Deadline for providing further details for outputs pending publication; redacted versions of impact case studies; and corroborating evidence held for impact case studies |
| Throughout 2021 | Panels assess submissions |
| December 2021 | Publication of outcomes |
| Spring 2022 | Publication of submissions, panel overview reports and sub-profiles |

- *School Research Plans*: the decision to request School Research Plans, in a revised short format, now that the University's planning cycle was complete;
- *Orkney Development*: the Committee had considered the Orkney Project Annual Report 2018-19 and commended Mrs Kelly Fraser, Research Funding Manager, and Mrs Elsa Cox, Orkney Project Development Manager, for the significant progress made over the past year;
- *Key performance indicators*: there was increased evidence of productive interdisciplinary research across the University;
- *Research Week*: participation by staff and supervisors had been disappointing, and it was vital to the University's research culture that doctoral students felt valued and important.

6.2 Research Degrees Committee

Consideration was given to a report of the meetings held on 3 July 2019 and 16 October 2019.

6.2.1 Conferral of Awards

Academic Council **approved** the awards to the undernoted students, and **agreed** the students and their supervisory teams be congratulated:

Graduate School

- (i) The degree of PhD be conferred on Ms Bridget Adeboye, School of Pharmacy and Life Sciences with effect from 12 November 2019, in recognition of a programme of work entitled: "Effectiveness and acceptability of two dietary interventions in African women in diaspora".
- (ii) The degree of PhD be conferred on Mr Abdulelah Aljohani, Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and Built Environment, with effect from 8 November 2019, in recognition of a programme of work entitled: "Cost overrun causality model in Saudi Arabian public sector construction projects".
- (iii) The degree of PhD be conferred on Mr Peter James Barron, School of Health Sciences, with effect from 5 August 2019, in recognition of a programme of work entitled: "The demands of vertical ladder ergometer climbing relating to the wind energy industry".
- (iv) The degree of PhD be conferred on Ms Isra'a Fardous, Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and Built Environment, with effect from 12 November 2019, in recognition of a programme of work entitled: "Adaptation of an architectonic tradition for a sustainable future in the Middle East: A case study of three building typologies in Riyadh City".

- (v) The degree of DPP be conferred on Ms Catherine Goodhand, School of Health Sciences, with effect from 5 November 2019, in recognition of a programme of work entitled: "Transfer of learning from simulation to clinical practice in pre-registration healthcare student education".
- (vi) The degree of PhD be conferred on Ms Linda Grieve, The Law School, with effect from 16 August 2019, in recognition of a programme of work entitled: "A socio-legal case study of advocacy and non-advocacy mechanisms established to support the participation of children and young people in non-judicial decision-making processes in Moray".
- (vii) The degree of PhD be conferred on Ms Pamela Johnston, School of Computing Science and Digital Media, with effect from 2 August 2019, in recognition of a programme of work entitled: "Beyond the Pixels: Learning and Utilising Video Compression Features for Localisation of Digital Tampering".
- (viii) The degree of PhD be conferred on Ms Jincy Johny, School of Engineering with effect from 9 August 2019, in recognition of a programme of work entitled: "Investigations towards the development of a novel multimodal fibre optic sensor for oil and gas applications".
- (ix) The degree of PhD be conferred on Ms Michelle Lawrie, School of Creative and Cultural Business, with effect from 17 September 2019, in recognition of a programme of work entitled: "National Identity and 'Muslim Immigrant' Representation in the British and Danish Press, 2005-2015".
- (x) The degree of PhD be conferred on Ms Holly Lear, School of Nursing and Midwifery, with effect from 16 September 2019, in recognition of a programme of work entitled: "Defining Preparation and Preparedness for Nursing Study Abroad Trips".
- (xi) The degree of PhD be conferred on Ms Penny Lewis, Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and Built Environment, with effect from 10 October 2019, in recognition of a programme of work entitled: "The impact of ecological thought on architectural theory".
- (xii) The degree of PhD be conferred on Mr Alexios Makropoulos, Aberdeen Business School, with effect from 7 October 2019, in recognition of a programme of work entitled: "Firm Failure Processes and Determinants of Failure in EU countries and UK regions: A quantitative analysis of SMEs".
- (xiii) The degree of PhD be conferred on Mr Calum McNerney, School of Pharmacy and Life Sciences, with effect from 16 September 2019, in recognition of a programme of work entitled: "Exploring the potential resource recovery from pot ale utilising microalgae and novel LED photobioreactors".
- (xiv) The degree of PhD be conferred on Ms Marta Miguel, Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and Built Environment, with effect from 7 November 2019, in recognition of a programme of work entitled: "Explorations on an Urban Interventions Management System: A reflection on how to deal with urban complex systems and deliver dynamic change".
- (xv) The degree of MRes be conferred on Ms Mary Munro, School of Nursing and Midwifery, with effect from 14 October 2019, in recognition of a programme of work entitled: "An exploration of the experiences of support for informal adult carers of individuals with substance use issues in North East Scotland".

- (xvi) The degree of PhD be conferred on Mr Chimere Obodo, The Law School, with effect from 8 August 2019, in recognition of a programme of work entitled: "Realising the Effective Enforcement of Civil and Political Rights in Africa: An Analysis of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights".
- (xvii) The degree of DPP be conferred on Ms Zoi Papadatou, School of Health Sciences with effect from 30 July 2019, in recognition of a programme of work entitled: "Exploring Occupational Irritant Hand Dermatitis Amongst Healthcare Workers in NHS Grampian".
- (xviii) The degree of PhD be conferred on Ms Athina-Evera Qendro, Aberdeen Business School, with effect from 15 October 2019, in recognition of a programme of work entitled: "A study of Albanian and UK consumers' identity creation within food shopping experiences: A Consumer Culture Theory approach".
- (xix) The degree of PhD be conferred on Mr Matteo Scipioni, School of Pharmacy and Life Sciences, with effect from 5 July 2019, in recognition of a programme of work entitled: "Synthesis of novel vanillin derivatives: study of their antioxidant and potential neuroprotective properties".
- (xx) The degree of PhD be conferred on Mr Akshay Shashidhara Nagaraghatta, School of Engineering, with effect from 24 October 2019, in recognition of a programme of work entitled: "Algorithms and Methods for Video Transcoding".
- (xxi) The degree of PhD be conferred on Ms Maha Shedid, Aberdeen Business School, with effect from 6 November 2019, in recognition of a programme of work entitled: "Employee Empowerment and Customer Satisfaction: An investigation from a UAE Banking-sector perspective".
- (xxii) The degree of PhD be conferred on Ms Rachael Sibson, School of Pharmacy and Life Sciences, with effect from 26 August 2019, in recognition of a programme of work entitled: "Exploring the obesogenic environment: Understanding the health impact of contemporary living".
- (xxiii) The degree of PhD be conferred on Mr Konstantinos Tsattalios, School of Nursing and Midwifery, with effect from 29 October 2019, in recognition of a programme of work entitled: "An exploration of the use of theory and visualisation in behaviour change interventions to help healthcare staff prevent and control healthcare-associated infections".
- (xxiv) The degree of PhD be conferred on Mr Martin Jose Vilela Ibarra, School of Engineering, with effect from 8 November 2019, in recognition of a programme of work entitled: "A holistic approach to assessment of value of information (VOI) with fuzzy data and decision criteria".
- (xxv) The degree of PhD be conferred on Ms Cecilia Zecca, Scott Sutherland School of Architecture and Built Environment, with effect from 9 September 2019, in recognition of a programme of work entitled: "Challenges and opportunities in the reuse of abandoned urban space".

6.2.2 *Research Degree Appraisal*

Council noted the Committee's consideration of the *Research Degree Appraisal*, prior to its onward reporting to the Board of Governors.

Board of
Governors
[27.11.19]

6.2.3 *Research Degree Applications*

The University's current requirement to request research proposals from all applicants was discussed, particularly in relation to it being a deterrent to applicants from STEM areas. The difference in practice across sciences and humanities was acknowledged, and it was **agreed** the Graduate School and the Research Degrees Committee would be asked to consider the viability of this requirement, as opposed to requiring this for self-funding applicants only.

Prof P Hagan,
Dr A Lamb &
Research
Degrees
Committee

6.2.4 *Research Student Profiles*

Academic Council **agreed** to a recommendation that the profiles of research students should be added to the University's website to demonstrate areas of expertise.

Prof P Hagan,
Dr A Lamb &
Research
Degrees
Committee

6.2.5 *Items for Noting*

The following items that the Committee had considered were noted:

- *Research Student Applications*: a research proposal template had been revised to assist applicants in preparing a research degree application. It was hoped this would increase the quality of applications as well as the number of enrolments in the longer term;
- *Briefing on Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR) 2021*: the Committee considered the potential discussion themes which might take place around the University's research degree provision following the last ELIR visit in 2016, in particular the implementation of a single Graduate School and the outcome of the Research Degree Internal Review event in 2018;
- *Revalidation of Postgraduate Certificate Researcher Development – 26 September 2019*: the Committee considered the revalidation panel outcome from the above event, which subsequently commenced delivery in November 2019;
- *SITS Continuous Improvement Project/eVisioning the PGR journey*: the Committee reviewed the current state of progress of the project following departure of a key member of the development team, the challenges sourcing a suitable replacement and the need for the project to be re-scoped in 2019-20.

Strategic discussions were ongoing with the Department for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Access (DELTA) to progress plans to develop a process to support the development of supervisors through a mentoring scheme, that would include a *CampusMoodle* mentorship area.

7. **ACADEMIC APPEALS, MISCONDUCT AND COMPLAINTS**

Council noted a brief analysis constituting the *Annual Report of Complaints: August 2018 – July 2019* report and, a further brief summary as part of the *Annual Report on Academic Appeals and Misconduct: Session 2018-19*. Council was informed that a fuller analysis of complaints for 2018-19, and of academic appeals and misconduct cases for 2018-19 would be completed, as far as was possible for consideration by the Academic Regulations Sub-Committee at its meeting on 15 January 2020.

8. **ACADEMIC COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP**

Council noted the *Academic Council Membership List: 2019-20*, updated following the recent nominations/elections for School representatives in accordance with the revised composition.

9. **HONORARY DEGREES**

The following honorary degrees would be conferred at the graduation ceremonies:

10 December 2019:

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| Rachel Corsie | MUniv (<i>honoris causa</i>) |
| Jon S Baird | Hon DLitt (<i>honoris causa</i>) |

11 December 2019:

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| Dave MacKay | DTech (<i>honoris causa</i>) |
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Academic Council members were invited to indicate to the Assistant Chief Academic Officer and Secretary to the Board if they had an interest in representing Council on the Honorary Degrees Committee.

Academic Council
Members to
Mrs V Strachan

Secretary's Note: Subsequent to the meeting Dr Duncan Cockburn and Mr Emmanuel Eke were confirmed as the Academic Council members on the Honorary Degrees Committee.

10. **ACADEMIC REGULATIONS – CHAIR'S ACTION**

A paper detailing approval of exceptions to the *Academic Regulations* was noted.

11. **DATE OF MEETINGS**

Tuesday 10 March 2020 at 2.00pm in H230, The Ishbel Gordon Building
Tuesday 9 June 2020 at 2.00pm in H230, The Ishbel Gordon Building

12. **VALEDICTORY**

On behalf of Academic Council the Chair thanked Ms Dawn Mitchell, Head of the School of Health Sciences and who would shortly be leaving the University after 14 years, for her valued contributions in several roles, and offered her best wishes for the future.

Professor John Harper, C
16 December 2019

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