

**MINUTE OF THE STATUTORY HALF-YEARLY MEETING OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL  
HELD ON SATURDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2016 AT 10.30am  
IN PARLIAMENT HALL, SOUTH STREET, ST ANDREWS**

Professor Sally Mapstone was in the Chair. Welcoming 48 members to the meeting, she introduced herself as the new Principal and Vice-Chancellor and conveyed apologies from the Chancellor, Lord Campbell of Pittenweem, who was unable to attend the meeting.

**1. Minute of the last statutory half-yearly meeting of the General Council held on 25 June 2016**

The minute was received and agreed as a correct record. There were no matters arising.

**2. Report of the Convener of the Business Committee**

The Principal called upon Mr Graham Wynd to present his report.

On behalf of members, the Convener welcomed Professor Sally Mapstone to her first General Council meeting and wished her a very happy and fulfilling time in St Andrews.

**Committee Meeting:** Since the last meeting in June, the Committee had met in September in St Andrews. All elected members had attended, including two via Skype from China and London. The draft minute of the meeting was contained in the billet.

Roger Knox had been tasked with taking a watching brief on Brexit to advise whether there might be a useful role for the General Council to play in supporting the University in relation to the impact on EU funding of research projects and on the retention and recruitment of staff and attraction of students, and their funding, from EU member states.

The Committee had been invited to make representations on behalf of the General Council on the review of the Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance, adopted by Universities Scotland in 2013. The Committee had supported the University's position that the Code was already fit-for-purpose and pleaded for it not to become over prescriptive. The Committee had argued for the Code to require two places to be retained on each institution's governing board for members elected by their alumni association i.e. in St Andrews parlance, for there to be two General Council Assessors elected by General Council members, thus preserving the status quo stipulated by ordinance at St Andrews.

The Convener acknowledged that the University is already doing a great deal to increase its income by traditional methods and by targeting its core costs. He recognised that there was also significant activity in relation to exploring non-traditional sources of income, such as spin-off businesses. However, as this represented a relatively small percentage of the University's income, Alistair Galloway had been tasked with exploring with relevant University staff whether the General Council might be able to help the University to realise such potential by utilising the business and entrepreneurial talent of its graduate community.

**Committee membership:** Since the last General Council meeting, the Convener had held introductory meetings with two new *ex officio* members – the Principal and the new Chancellor's Assessor, Adrian Greer. Annette Ashton-Redlin's resignation in September had brought the total number of vacancies on the Committee to three, leading to the decision at the last meeting to co-opt two new members, Taylor Carey and Robert Gelb. Endorsement of these appointments would be sought under the next item. The Convener also reported that six members would reach the end of their term of office next summer and that most would be eligible to stand for a second four-year term in elections in the spring. He invited anyone interested in serving on the Committee to contact him. He took the opportunity to thank current members for their time and commitment.

**Ordinances and Resolutions Sub-Committee:** In anticipation of there being an increase in the number of new or changed ordinances following the implementation of the Higher Education Governance Act, membership of the Sub-Committee convened by Alan Frith had been increased to include Annabel Hamid, bringing the total membership to four. In the past month, two new resolutions had been considered – one for the new Chairs in Biology and History and the other for a new Master of Studies degree. Both had been accepted, although some reservation had been communicated with regard to the title of the new degree and the supervision to be provided.

**General Council meetings:** The Committee was continuing its attempts to increase participation at the twice-yearly meetings of the General Council through better publicity and the addition of an informal lunch following the meeting at the Byre Theatre restaurant. Over the last two years, the agenda had included a presentation on a current issue of major importance to the University. Today, the Rector, Catherine Stihler MEP, would talk on the hot topic of Brexit. The Convener thanked all staff involved in organising and participating in General Council meetings, paid tribute to those providing ongoing support to the Committee between meetings and thanked members for their attendance.

***The Principal thanked the Convener for his report and invited questions from the floor.***

In response to a question about seeking gender balance in the Committee's membership, the Convener confirmed that the call for new candidates would specifically invite women to stand. From the Chair, the Principal recommended that a more proactive approach be taken to address the issue involving an active search for and engagement with suitable candidates, including discussion of the requirements of the role – an approach which the Convener fully endorsed.

Another question related to the possibility of holding a General Council meeting in Edinburgh. The Convener confirmed that this was still under discussion.

### **3. Co-option of Mr Taylor Carey and Mr Robert Gelb to serve on the Business Committee until 30 June 2017**

The Principal sought approval for the co-option of Taylor Carey and Robert Gelb to serve as Business Committee members until 30 June 2017. Approval was granted.

### **4. University Address – Professor Sally Mapstone, Principal and Vice-Chancellor**

***Mr Alastair Merrill, Registrar and Clerk to the General Council, invited the Principal to address the General Council.***

The Principal said that she had had a very busy first three months and was grateful for the warm reception she had received. Getting to know constituencies within and outwith St Andrews had included a series of visits to each of the 18 academic Schools to meet staff and students to gain a sense of key issues, before embarking upon a series of visits to service units to be completed by the end of second semester. She had also enjoyed a fascinating visit to the Living Links facility at Edinburgh Zoo, a visit to the proposed site of the Kenly wind farm and to Guardbridge. She had spent time with the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards at Leuchars, with members of the R&A (and was pleased to report that she had been made an extraordinary member) and with members of Fife Council. In the broader political world, she had been developing relationships with Scottish Government ministers, including Shirley-Anne Somerville, the Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science, and the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon. She had also met with opposition parties and with several local MPs and MSPs to discuss matters such as university funding, higher education reform and regulation, widening participation, Brexit and international students. In addition, the Principal had been travelling extensively, fundraising and engaging with alumni, including trips to the US and a nine-day trip to Beijing, Hong Kong, Dubai and Abu Dhabi. The Hong Kong leg of the trip had been a good opportunity to build on the work of the Hong Kong Foundation that the University established there just over a year ago.

The Principal was in regular touch with the staff and students of the University through regular emails reporting on her activities. These had been well received and she was grateful for the feedback. Listing the values that would set the tone for her Principalship as excellence, inclusivity, and fairness, she highlighted the opening of the first proper University nursery for children of staff and student parents in February 2017 as an

example of one of her priority initiatives. She would also be chairing a workstream on considering approaches to admissions policy across the HE sector on behalf of Universities Scotland and had agreed to join the Growing Value Scotland Legacy Advisory Board of the National Centre for Universities and Business to look at how universities and businesses can maximise their interactions.

Brexit and its implications featured strongly on the University's strategic agenda and there had been a Court awayday on the topic and open fora planned for members of staff and students. The Principal was working hard to influence decision-making in matters affecting the HE sector with both the Scottish and the UK governments in the key areas of staff and student mobility, research funding and fee status. She illustrated the importance of the outcome of negotiations by providing some headline figures: 21% of our research funding over the last five years had come from the European Union, with funding from European Research Council sources making up approximately 50% of the current portfolio. 22% of our academic staff and 31% of our research staff are from EU countries. Over one-third of all our postgraduate taught course entrants in 2015-16 were from the European Union. We have 46 Erasmus+ partners, 30 involving undergraduate exchanges. Last year, EU or EEA destinations accounted for 43% of our total Study Abroad cohort.

Against this background, it was important for the University to retain its good position in the league tables and to continue to attract good numbers of high quality students. Our student population (8,786) was up by 4.4%, with a particularly strong growth in postgraduate taught numbers, many from overseas. While such growth provided some financial stability, it also represented a challenge in terms of maintaining our prized student satisfaction rating. The St Andrews student experience had achieved first place in the National Student Survey and it was a tremendous achievement to have also shared the top position in the UK with Keele University. St Andrews had also been named UK University of the Year for Teaching Quality by *The Times and The Sunday Times University Guide*.

On the research front, the Principal's Office were already planning and budgeting to ensure critical research mass and/or succession planning for our academic Schools ahead of the REF2021.

Financially, the University's approach was necessarily prudent and strategic. For the current financial year ending July 2017, just over 17.5% of income outside research will have come from the Scottish Funding Council; just over 42.5% from teaching; around 19.4% from research, and 20.5% from other income. Salary expenditure would continue to rise and the University's underlying surplus of around £2m was much lower than desired for funding investment in infrastructure. The Principal anticipated a 3% efficiency cut of c. £1m in Scottish Funding Council income. While currently only £7,000 is received per home/EU student, it had been possible to increase the Rest of the UK tuition fee (to £9,250) and overseas fees (to £20,570) for 2017 entry. The Principal pointed out that one benefit of the sliding pound had been the significant reduction in our fees from an overseas perspective. While there was not much room for manoeuvre, the Principal was as confident as she could be that all the appropriate measures were being taken to increase the surplus the University needed to generate.

The Principal proceeded to highlight the following achievements:

- St Andrews remains Scotland's most international university, with 45% of our students coming from outside of the UK and with students and staff coming from over 140 countries.
- Scottish domiciled students account for 27% of the total student population, with over a third of the entrant class of Scottish domiciled students having one or more access qualifications. Nearly 60% are state educated.
- St Andrews is one of Scotland's smallest universities and yet currently admits approximately 10% of all suitably qualified pupils from Scotland's most deprived areas.
- An average of 11 applications per place are currently received at undergraduate level, although in some subjects demand can be as high as 30 applications per place.
- The University is investing £70m to provide an additional 900 bed spaces and to refurbish existing accommodation provision. By 2019, the capacity will have risen from 4000 to nearly 5000 spaces.
- A Mental Health Coordinator is to be appointed within Student Services, while the Students' Association will split the Director of Representation role into two to have a Director of Education and a Director of Wellbeing.

- Raising Weekend passed off relatively peacefully in 2016 with fewer complaints. The Principal paid tribute to the efforts of the Proctor and the Students' Association for their efforts in this regard.
- In January the University opened a new eight-court sports arena, ten new changing rooms and a new reception area built adjacent to the original Sports Centre building. Our sports facilities continue to be a tremendous boon for students.

Turning to teaching, the Principal reported that the University was carefully considering the implications of the TEF for universities in England. Given the University's strong performance in other teaching and learning indicators, it was felt there would be a good chance of St Andrews receiving an excellent rating. It would therefore be strongly in the University's interests to register for TEF as this will feature in league tables and most of our major competitor universities in England will be taking part.

In relation to research, the Principal highlighted that five members of staff had been elected to the Royal Society of Edinburgh Young Academy of Scotland, six academics joined the Royal Society of Edinburgh, two professors were elected Fellows of the British Academy and one was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. She also commended Women in Academia Now, a new initiative to inspire women to strive for the top jobs in higher education led by female academics of the University and supported by the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the Wellcome Trust.

In terms of league tables, St Andrews continues to perform exceptionally well, consistently coming out as top in Scotland in *The Guardian*, *The Times* and *The Sunday Times University Guide*, and in *The Complete University Guide*, although in a number of the world rankings, our place had gone down this year. In the very seriously taken QS University World Rankings, St Andrews had dropped down to 77 from 68. The Principal said that it should be borne in mind that there is a tremendous amount of clustering with very minor changes affecting places upwards or downwards in any given year, and that the same applied to the Leiden World Scientific Ranking where St Andrews was ranked 64th, down from 45th. The significant point was that this year marked ten years of St Andrews being one of the world's top 100 universities in the QS University World Rankings. Also noteworthy was that in the *Times Higher Education's* World University Rankings, St Andrews was placed top in Scotland and 22nd in the world of the most outward-looking institutions. It was extremely important in the context of Brexit for the University to be known to be internationally focused but still very Scottish. The Principal went on to point out that St Andrews was the only Scottish university to have featured in the top ten of the three major UK league tables for well over a decade. Over the last five years, it had ranked consistently in the top five in the UK. That being the case, she felt that for some it was a surprise and an issue that St Andrews had not to date been admitted as part of the Russell Group of leading UK universities – something she would be taking forward over the next few years.

Turning to future developments, the Principal reported that the University is very close to completing planning and starting work on the renovation of the Gatty. The new state-of-the-art marine biology laboratory to be built at East Sands would provide a global hub for marine research focused on conservation and understanding the effects of climate change on the world's oceans. The University was also in the final stages of bringing to fruition the biomass facility at Guardbridge. This would supply heat to residences and laboratories in St Andrews and reduce exposure to power company price hikes. The redevelopment of the Sports Centre was ongoing, involving the refurbishment of the current building, a new 130-station fitness suite and reallocation of space to create a new strength and conditioning suite which will be amongst the best in Scotland. The University was also seeking to take forward its ambitious plans for a new purpose-built University Music Centre, funded largely by philanthropy, to be positioned in St Mary's Quad.

The Principal closed her address with some remarks about philanthropic giving. She had inherited a University transformed in this respect by her predecessor Louise Richardson and the Development Office team in terms of the extraordinary work that had been undertaken in relation to the 600th Anniversary Campaign. There had been an aspiration to raise £100m and we were close to the £72-3m mark. There was still more to be done. Her challenge and responsibility would be to close off that Campaign and open up new prospects of philanthropic donation. She would be looking very closely at imaginative projects for scholarship funding, at the University's endowment and the endowment of academic posts and chairs. She would set about her next few years at St Andrews with tremendous optimism and enthusiasm, buoyed up by the wonderful support of members of staff and our community here. She ended by giving her word that she would do her absolute best for the University.

**Mr Alastair Merrill, Registrar and Clerk to the General Council, thanked the Principal for her address and invited questions from the floor.**

The Principal was asked about her commitment to engage with the University's alumni. The Principal reiterated that, since her arrival, she had been engaging extensively with alumni both locally and overseas. She had been struck by the warmth, affection and abiding loyalty and commitment of St Andrews alumni for the University and gave her assurance that she regarded alumni engagement as an essential part of her relationship with the University. She would be very happy to look at future opportunities for alumni contributions to be recognised.

The Principal was asked to comment on discussions with Fife Council about a new secondary school in St Andrews. The Principal said that she appreciated the strength of feeling surrounding the issue and asked for it to be borne in mind that discussions were active and ongoing and very sensitive and complex in nature. Personally she believed universities have civic responsibilities, particularly to their local communities, and she did not see any reason not to remain optimistic.

The Principal was asked about plans concerning the University Library and providing adequate central facilities for all students. The Principal said that she had requested an options analysis to be undertaken to look at the whole situation. She would then have discussions with the various interest groups. This was high on the Principal's agenda and she hoped to have something to report at a future meeting.

#### **5. Presentation by the Rector, Mrs Catherine Stihler MEP: "Brexit – smooth path or rocky road? The challenges ahead for universities in Scotland".**

The Rector began by stating that there are obviously great challenges ahead. Introducing the subject, she commented on the results of the 23 June 2017 election: 51.9% of the 72.2% who voted had voted to leave, while 48.1% voted to remain. It was interesting that younger people had wanted to remain in the EU, while the older generations wanted to leave; that in Scotland, London, Northern Ireland and Gibraltar, people voted to remain; and that the locations of universities around London – Oxford, Cambridge and Bristol – may have influenced the result there. The Scottish vote, with 62% voting to remain and 38% to leave, was also important when reflecting on the particular context we find ourselves in as a Scottish university in relation to the comment made shortly after the result by the First Minister about a second Scottish independence referendum being highly likely.

On 13 July, we had a new Prime Minister in Theresa May. In terms of the new UK Government, we saw the creation of two new ministries: The Department for Exiting the EU and the Department for International Trade. We then heard on 2 October about Article 50 being instigated at the end of March 2017. The High Court ruling on 3 November that Parliament had to be consulted and the Government's subsequent challenge of that meant that we then had until 5-8 December when the Supreme Court would look at the appeal and when the Scottish and Welsh governments would also be permitted to provide their reflections on the issue.

Looking at Article 50 itself, the Rector described it as a divorce of a country from the European Union and a divorce in which the future relationship was unclear – would it be friendly terms or frosty neighbours? She also raised the question of how the new constitutional arrangements would affect the UK's devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, especially with Northern Ireland having a border with an EU member state.

The Rector noted the beginning of a change in the language being used; where once it was the EU27 versus the UK that was being talked about, it was now the EU27 plus the European Parliament versus the UK. In other words, the role of the European Parliament in the deliberations, with a yes or no vote at the end of what is negotiated in Article 50, was now being recognised.

The significance of the date of instigation of Article 50 around the end of March next year was then mentioned in relation to pressure not to have European elections in 2019. Under Article 50, there is a two-year negotiation period which can be extended if the 27 member states agree, or can be shorter if it is a "quickie divorce" and there is nothing to discuss.

Turning to the particular situation for Scottish universities, the Rector shared some interesting EU statistics: 16% of academic staff and 23% of research staff in Scotland are from the EU. 24,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students in Scotland are of EU nationality. A total of £88m research funding was received last year. £636 million came from previous research funding (FP7) and the current programme, Horizon 2020, with discussions now taking place about the shape of the future programme. 1,600 students in Scotland currently benefit from Erasmus exchange programmes which create wonderful opportunities for students to study abroad.

Reflecting on the current situation in education, the Rector noted that EU student fees are guaranteed for 2017-2018. There had also been a significant commitment made to scientific research on Monday by the Prime Minister, of £2 billion a year by the end of the UK Parliament. In terms of staff, the issue was how to ensure that EU staff are supported and for institutions to do their utmost to ensure that talent is retained. It was really important to consider the future of research and what the research programme would look like if we are not part of the EU? There are three categories of members of Horizon 2020: EU members states, associated countries and third countries. 14 associated countries - plus Switzerland now considered partially associated - have a status. If you move to third country status, then you have to put in all the money yourself. This is something that is important to reflect on when we are thinking about universities and the future moving forward.

With regard to the future for students, although fees have been guaranteed for the next academic year, will they be guaranteed for 2018-19 and beyond for EU students? For EU staff, if it is a hard Brexit with no freedom of movement, then those including ourselves, who have enjoyed EU citizenship until now, will move to become third country nationals with implications on our status and how we move around the other EU27. We also have to consider Erasmus programmes and the value we place on these - who and how will we fund student exchanges in the future?

In summing up, the Rector concluded that we face a very uncertain future and definitely one that is more rocky road than smooth path. What we can do is support our EU students and staff as outlined by Professor Mapstone in her address earlier. We need to ensure continued access to research funding and Erasmus programmes. Now that Universities UK are coming out regularly to make sure that all universities, not just in Scotland but in the rest of the UK, are still having influence on these programmes, we need to make sure our voice is heard when they are debating the set-up of the new programmes post Horizon 2020.

***The Principal thanked the Rector for the benefit of her expertise and experience, and her openness, and invited questions from the floor.***

Questions from the floor included how much input MEPs have on the Prime Minister and the Brexit team; whether Brexit could be stopped and what a no vote would mean; and whether there was a sense of declining interest overseas in the UK as a destination for study following the result of the referendum and perhaps a preference for studying in the US. An observation was also made from the floor that huge cuts had already been made to the European funding of social science projects in the UK even before Brexit and that there was concern that UK applications to Horizon 2020 now had little chance of success.

In reply to the first question, the Rector said that the UK Government was talking to some people and David Davis had spent some time in Parliament to talk to MEPs. Whilst acknowledging that the Department was still in the process of being created, she did feel that much more needed to be done and concerns needed to be genuinely listened to. Internally, it was a time of change with a new President of the European Parliament due to be appointed and with the question of whether British chairs would retain their chairmanships of European Committees. Ultimately, once Article 50 was instigated, it would be down to the EU27 and the European Parliament.

The Rector said that personally, and from the higher education perspective, she felt that it would be better to remain within the European Union, but the UK as a whole had voted otherwise. Timing was important, there being a tendency at the end of a mandate for votes to be lost.

Acknowledging that uncertainty has consequences, the Rector felt that the UK was still regarded positively as a destination for study. The Principal added that, despite competition from a number of very good universities across Europe that are delivering programmes in English, particularly at Masters level, St Andrews was in a very strong position as it is identified as a university of quality. She would be surprised if applications fell dramatically but recognised this could be more challenging for other universities.

The Rector acknowledged that the migration crisis on top of the financial crisis, the rise of the far right in politics across Europe and the desire of a member state to withdraw from EU were all testing and presenting huge challenges for the EU.

#### **6. Any Other Competent Business**

In the absence of any motions having being received by the Registrar and there being no other competent business, the Principal drew the meeting to a close.

***Mr Alastair Merrill***  
**Registrar and Clerk to the General Council**