

**MINUTE OF THE STATUTORY HALF-YEARLY MEETING OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL  
HELD ON SATURDAY 25 JUNE 2016 AT 10.30am IN PARLIAMENT HALL,  
SOUTH STREET, ST ANDREWS**

The Acting Principal, Professor Garry Taylor, was in the Chair. Welcoming 38 members to the meeting, he passed on apologies from the Chancellor who had been called away in the aftermath of the Brexit vote. Professor Taylor was delighted to inform members that over 1,700 students from 80 different countries had graduated that week, over 1,500 of them in person. The largest cohort were from England (480), followed by Scotland (460) and the US (260), with 170 from the rest of the EU.

**1. Minute of the last statutory half-yearly meeting of the General Council held on 28 November 2015**

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

**2. Notice of the result of the election of a General Council Assessor to serve on the University Court from 1 August 2016**

The Registrar to the General Council, Mr Alastair Merrill, reported that four candidates had stood in the election, which had taken place by means of the alternative vote system. A total of 1,020 votes were cast representing a 2.4% turnout of contactable members. After three rounds of counting, Mr Nigel Christie was duly re-elected to serve a four-year term from 1 August 2016.

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

Mr Graham Wynd was called upon to deliver his report.

**Meetings:** The Committee had met twice since the last meeting; in St Andrews in January and in Edinburgh in May. Minutes of both meetings were included in the billet. A third meeting was scheduled to take place in September in St Andrews.

**Committee membership:** Mr Wynd thanked Mr Michael Buchanan, soon to be completing his four-year term, for his contribution to the Committee and wished him well. Four members would come to the end of their four-year term in June 2017 and so, with the existing vacancy, there would be at least six vacancies to fill at the elections in 2017. Those retiring are eligible to stand for a second four-year term and it would also be possible to co-opt members. Mr Wynd invited General Council members interested in serving on the Business Committee to contact him. In addition, two or three new members were being sought to join Mr James Wallace on the Ordinances & Resolutions Sub-Committee, convened by Mr Alan Frith.

**Higher Education Governance Bill:** Mr Wynd remained concerned that the late removal of a clause requiring governing bodies to have two elected graduate representatives and the requirement to accommodate extra members could put pressure on Court to reduce the number of its General Council Assessors. He was, however, reassured by the fact that the General Council Assessors of the ancient universities are stipulated by ordinance.

**Participation in General Council meetings:** Mr Wynd and General Council Assessor Mr Ken Cochran had met with Director of Development Mr Robert Fleming and Director of Corporate Communications Mr Niall Scott to discuss the possibility of using technology to open up General Council meetings virtually. A number of difficulties remain to be overcome, including speakers feeling inhibited from speaking as frankly as they often do if they were to be recorded or broadcast; the possibility of spontaneous remarks on contentious issues attracting adverse publicity, and the potential for the length of meetings to increase. In addition, there was little evidence from universities who have tried this approach that it increased the level of participation. He concluded that further reflection on the most effective ways to engage with members of General Council (both at its meetings and elsewhere) was required.

**“Watching briefs”:** Committee members would continue to seek to identify areas of the University’s operation that might benefit from tapping into the skills and experience of the Business Committee and other General Council members.

**Meeting of ancient universities’ General Council representatives:** Earlier in June it had been St Andrews’ turn to host the annual meeting of those Scottish universities who have General Councils (Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee). Mr Wynd and Mr Merrill had attended. There had been more contact than usual as a result of the Higher Education Governance Bill and now, it was anticipated, as a result of the consequences of leaving the EU. Other topics discussed included the different methods of electing Rectors and General Council Assessors, the Government’s definition of deprivation with respect to widening access, and the need for excellence in teaching, including the award of chairs based on teaching.

Asked from the floor whether winter meetings of the General Council might be held outwith St Andrews, the Convener thought it unlikely that the University would contemplate incurring the expense of taking the maces and macebearers elsewhere for this style of meeting.

#### **4. Update on the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act – verbal report by Mr Alastair Merrill, Vice-Principal (Governance and Planning)**

The Bill was passed by the Scottish Parliament in March, received Royal Assent in April and is now an Act of Parliament. Once a timetable for the provisions to come into force is announced, a transitional period of four years in which to implement the main changes is expected. While some of the Bill’s more damaging proposals were dropped at Committee stage, including changes to the composition of Courts and Senates and the role of the Rector, a number of concerns remain, particularly around the new post of the “Senior Lay Member”, which Ministers envisaged could fulfil the role of Chair of Court (in St Andrews’ case, the Senior Governor). This Senior Lay Member, with statutory responsibility for leadership and effectiveness of Court and the balance of authority between Court and the Principal, would be appointed by a ‘first past the post’ election, the electorate consisting of all students, staff and members of Court. The overlap in terms of constituencies and responsibilities with the role of the Rector would be particularly problematic in terms of the potential this would create for confused lines of accountability.

The Act specifies a minimum number of posts that are required to exist on Court: two staff representatives; two student representatives; two trade union nominees; the senior lay member; and “such other persons are appointed in accordance with the governing document of the institution”. The main change for St Andrews is the introduction of two trade union nominees, one representing academic unions, one support staff. The Ordinance (121) prescribing the size and composition of the Court of St Andrews sets a maximum membership of 23 members and will have to be changed to accommodate this requirement. This risks disenfranchising those support staff who are not members of a trade union but currently elect one of the Court assessors. Related Ordinances specifying the arrangements for election of assessors will also have to be revisited to ensure consistency. Mr Merrill assured those concerned about the removal of any mention of alumni representatives from the list of required Court members that two General Council assessors exist under our Ordinances, as well as a requirement for at least two of the non-executive members of Court to be alumni of the University. The requirement of the Act for the Academic Board to have at least 50% of its membership elected by academic staff and students could require St Andrews to expand its Academic Council by nine members to a total of 54.

The University is considering, with other HEIs, how the Act’s requirements can be implemented with the least detrimental effect. The Committee of Scottish Chairs currently reviewing the Code of Governance to provide guidance has two St Andrews Court members on its steering group. Implementing the Act will take several years and involve revision of Court ordinances. Discussions would begin with the new Principal and new Senior Governor in the autumn and provide an opportunity to look more broadly at how Court can work more effectively. The General Council would be consulted to ensure that its

views are fed into the process. Mr Merrill concluded by acknowledging the part played by the General Council in ensuring that some of the worst measures proposed by the Bill had not made it on to the statute book.

There were comments from the floor in relation to trade union and student representation on Court and the inclusive nature of the St Andrews Court both in terms of student and non-academic staff representation was recognised. In response to a question about the implementation of the Act's requirements, Mr Merrill confirmed that this would be overseen by Court, delegated to its Governance and Nominations Committee which, at its Autumn meeting, would look at the options to be considered in order to demonstrate compliance, including taking legal advice if necessary. He reiterated that the General Council, through its Business Committee, would be formally consulted as part of the process to change any ordinances.

## **5. University Address – Professor Garry Taylor, Acting Principal and Vice-Chancellor**

Professor Taylor was happy to report that the University continues to excel in the league tables as the best university in Scotland and to share the top table in the UK with Oxbridge and London's best colleges. We maintained our position in the *Guardian University Guide* as top in Scotland and third in the UK, and were placed fourth in the UK in the *Sunday Times University Guide* and fifth in the UK in the *Complete University Guide*; in all cases we remain top in Scotland. Although dropping from 45th last year to 64th in the world in the Leiden World Scientific rankings, it was a remarkable feat for a small university to maintain its position in the world's top 100, particularly with the rise of Asian universities. As examples of excellence amongst St Andrews staff, Professor Taylor highlighted the election of one new Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh; six new Fellows of the Royal Society and the only two academics in Scotland to be chosen for the BBC's prestigious New Generation Thinkers scheme. St Andrews continues to excel in teaching excellence, with students nominating a record number of teachers for recognition in the annual teaching awards given by both the University and the Students' Association. Despite being one of the world's top universities, Professor Taylor emphasised that there is no room for complacency. The University faces a number of financial and political challenges in the years ahead and will need to continue to work hard in order to excel.

In his November address, Professor Taylor mentioned changes proposed in the UK Government's Higher Education Green Paper and the Nurse review of UK Research Councils. The recently published White Paper from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, "Success as a knowledge economy: teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice", has many implications for Scotland, including our ability to maintain our student numbers from the rest of the UK. In relation to the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), which seeks to measure the quality of teaching and learning and to link excellence to an ability to increase fees each year by the Retail Price Index (RPI), there was much debate as to which metrics can effectively measure teaching excellence and concern about the administrative burden this might place on universities. While in Scotland, the Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) method of teaching quality assessment is believed to have advantages over the assessment currently used in England, there is a sense that if TEF rankings are used by future students to decide on their universities, then St Andrews should engage in TEF. There is confidence that St Andrews would excel in TEF given its research-led teaching and excellent student experience. The implications for Scotland of the replacement of The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) by an Office for Students (OfS) and a new body for research called UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) are unclear and the subject of further debate between Holyrood and Westminster.

Turning from the changing UK landscape to the changing Scottish landscape, Professor Taylor pointed to the Scottish Government's appointment of a new Cabinet Secretary for Education and, for the first time, a Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science, as encouraging signs of the importance being placed on education. We support the Scottish Government's aspiration for widening access to higher education, but there are challenges to achieve this without further resources. We would not wish to see an increase in Scottish places without further investment in

higher education, nor would we wish to see individuals from less deprived areas being displaced from an opportunity to study in Scotland through a pressure to take people from the most deprived areas. St Andrews performs well in attracting individuals from those regions representing the postcodes of the poorest 20% using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD20) and, if we use access codes as a more nuanced metric for measuring deprivation, some 39% of Scottish students at St Andrews have an access code.

The Scottish budget had resulted in a 3.1% cut in the University's core teaching and research budgets and a cut in capital such that it will receive £2m less than last year from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). For 2016/17, SFC funding will only account for 17% of our £200m income. Increasingly, the University's ability to ride the financial storms is buffered by its very strong overseas cohort of students that account for almost one third of the student body of 8,400 students.

Despite these external pressures, the University is continuing to invest prudently in ambitious developments which support its strategic aims in student experience, research and teaching. The planned developments at Guardbridge, the Gatty Marine Laboratory and the new Music Centre mentioned in Professor Taylor's November address, are all moving ahead. The Guardbridge biomass plant will be operational early next year. The next phase of the Sports Centre redevelopment will involve refurbishing the current building, converting the present facilities into a new 130-station fitness suite and reallocating space to create a new strength and conditioning suite, which will be amongst the best in Scotland. In addition, the University is planning to invest over £70 million in student housing to provide 900 additional bed spaces and refurbish large areas of its existing residences. The capital for replacement of Albany Park and extensions to two existing halls will come from an external development partner in a similar deal that saw the recent redevelopment of Fife Park. There are also plans to develop rented housing for new academic staff, contract research staff and students with families.

In summing up, Professor Taylor shared with members that he was mindful of the fact when preparing his address that the result of the EU referendum would be known when he came to deliver it. Clearly, the University sector benefits considerably from being in the EU: over 170 EU students had graduated from St Andrews this week and, in research terms, St Andrews captures a remarkable number of European Research Council and other EU grants for its size, currently holding 18 grants each with a value in excess of €1m. We are a member of many European networks giving access to international research facilities and many of our researchers come from Europe, often funded on European mobility schemes. In addition, a significant number of staff and their families come from Europe and are all valued members of our community. The continuing uncertainties following the Brexit decision is something that we will need to manage carefully over the years ahead.

Professor Taylor ended by reminding members that our new Principal, Professor Sally Mapstone, will take up post at the beginning of September. As Professor of Old Scots Literature at Oxford she is a perfect academic fit to St Andrews and well known to several of our staff in English and History. As a hugely experienced Pro-Vice-Chancellor in Oxford, she would bring an outstanding record of achievement in University leadership. Members were invited to join the Acting Principal in wishing Professor Mapstone the very best as she leads Scotland's oldest and finest university through its next exciting phase.

Questions from the floor included concern over the impact the new Music Centre may have on St Mary's Quad and the impact of the vote to leave the EU on the University. Members were assured that the Quad would not be adversely affected; the Music Centre would replace the old terrapin buildings at the side of the Bute building and have sound-insulated practice rooms. On the subject of leaving the EU, Professor Taylor acknowledged that, as an international university with many European staff and students and which currently benefits from European research funding, leaving the EU would pose serious challenges. Much would depend on the outcome of negotiations and the shape of our ultimate relationship with the EU. The University would be looking to the Scottish Government for clarity and stability.



## **6. The University's international agenda – presentation by Dr Anne Mullen, Vice-Principal (International)**

Dr Anne Mullen, Vice-Principal (International), introduced herself as a relative newcomer to the University who had had the pleasure in the last 14 months of being part of the audience at two previous General Council meetings and who was now delighted to be addressing members about the particular role she plays in the University. Dr Mullen's extensive background in Modern European languages and ten years' experience in academic policy, strategy and management as Senior Tutor at St Anne's College in the University of Oxford had, she felt, prepared her well for her role at St Andrews. She was very conscious of the importance of the University's international brand and aware that the University will be facing some very challenging times ahead on the international front, especially in view of the results of the EU referendum. The University would be looking to some of the areas she manages to help meet these challenges, including its overseas recruitment and admission programmes and the building of relationships and securing of financial support by its Alumni Relations and Development operations.

Dr Mullen assured members that, led by Acting Principal & Vice-Chancellor Professor Garry Taylor and Quaestor & CEO Mr Derek Watson, the University is being managed by a strong and cohesive group of Vice-Principals who cover between them Governance and Planning, Learning and Teaching (through the role of Proctor), Research, and Enterprise and Engagement, in addition to her own role relating to the University's international agenda. Dr Mullen is confident that the University is in a very good state to be handed over to the new Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sally Mapstone, at the beginning of September.

Moving on to facts and figures, Dr Mullen reported that of a student population of 8,420, 27.26% are from Scotland, 12.76% from the EU, 27.84% from the rest of the UK and 32.14% from overseas, the percentages varying depending on the category of student (i.e. undergraduate, postgraduate taught or postgraduate research). In working to retain this "rich tapestry", Dr Mullen highlighted the importance of continuing to work to widen access to ensure that the University is recruiting the very best students in terms of their academic ability and potential to succeed, and from all backgrounds. This responsibility is not down to universities alone – a holistic approach would be required reaching back to primary school level. Another important aspect was to retain a good international mix of students, including European students, bearing in mind that 44.9% of our current student population comes from outside the UK (overseas and the EU). This, against a backdrop of competition from institutions in England (where numbers are not capped) and the rapid increase in the number of quality higher education institutions in America, Australia and Asia, means that St Andrews cannot afford to be complacent and must work to sustain this mix in order to maintain the academic excellence of a wonderful but comparatively small university.

Work by colleagues in Admissions and International Foundation Programmes is continuing to produce good results in Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong and South Korea, complementing our long-established strengths in attracting students from the USA. In addition, in Modern Languages, but also in other subject areas such as History and Theology, changes to the breadth and depth of academic courses with international reach is also helping to ensure that the curriculum stays relevant without neglecting the need to understand the past.

Dr Mullen went on to give examples of where funding has allowed the University to not only receive students but to propel them out into the world, including Scottish Government funding which allowed a high school pupil from Kirkcaldy and first-year student to spend a month in the US with one of our US partners, and funding through the American Foundation which benefits from very supportive alumni and families keen to provide bursaries and scholarships to enable others to share the St Andrews experience they have had.

The number of students participating in Study Abroad and Exchange programmes has grown and, it is hoped, will continue to do so with 350 students currently involved in the ERASMUS programme –

our top European partner providing opportunities for study in places like Paris, Munich and Madrid. Outside of Europe, St Andrews continues to enjoy very good links with US institutions whereby students can attend St Andrews for one or two semesters on Junior Semester and Junior Year abroad programmes and with exchanges such as the University of California programme. Further study abroad opportunities are hoped to be on offer in the future, for example, in Japan and South Korea, as well as exchange programmes with institutions in Asia.

St Andrews is in the top 1% of the world's universities and has collaborative research arrangements with institutions in 90 different countries. Dr Mullen emphasised that effective co-operation and collaboration between different departments within the University, including Registry and the Recruitment and Admissions teams, is now more important than ever to make sure that the University does not lose its footing in these difficult times.

In terms of Development and Alumni Relations, the 600th Anniversary Campaign has raised £71m of its £100m target in gifts and pledges. At 7%, we have the third best participation rate in the UK after Oxford and Cambridge and we also have a very successful parents' programme, surpassed only by Cambridge and Leeds. Last year, 30 years after the setting up of the University of St Andrews American Foundation, the Hong Kong Foundation was launched, with the first gift totalling HK\$1.2m. The biggest ever US pledge of \$5m was made in support of a Lectureship in American Literature and a Chair in Philosophy. Since 2008, £13.5m has been raised for scholarships, £3.5m of this in the last 18 months. Martyrs Kirk, named last week as the Richardson Research Library, was made possible by very generous donations totalling £2.5m, including \$2m from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. At St Andrews we pride ourselves on our well-rounded students. The Sports Centre project is two-thirds of the way to its fundraising target of £3m for a project totalling £14m and the Music Centre has received £5.1m in pledges towards its estimated £7.5m cost. With 71% of our alumni contactable by mail, email or phone and through social media, the University continues to seek to engage with alumni and friends to maintain a lifelong association with the University, from cradle to grave, by providing opportunities to continue to be involved with the life of the University, for example, social and career networking, internships and mentoring.

Dr Mullen concluded by emphasising the need to offer the type of degree programmes that will be attractive to an international audience and mentioned the work underway to establish a new Graduate School to complement existing efforts in postgraduate recruitment. The University has to be able to respond to the needs of the market and be more agile in terms of working with industry and providing more distance learning opportunities and practical Masters courses.

Questions to Dr Mullen from the floor included a question seeking clarification on the role of the Hong Kong Foundation, which is to encourage philanthropy and participation from alumni and friends in Hong Kong and South East Asia more broadly. Another question related to the countries from which most of our overseas undergraduates come: US, Canada, China, Norway, Malaysia, Hong Kong, India, South Korea, Singapore and Russia, which has been the pattern for the last four years.

## **7. Any Other Competent Business**

Professor Taylor was thanked from the floor for so ably chairing the meeting in the Chancellor's absence and for addressing the General Council at the last two meetings. In the absence of any motions having been received by the Registrar and there being no other competent business, the meeting was drawn to a close.

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