

**From:** owner-dept-staff@abdn.ac.uk on behalf of Communications  
**Sent:** 14 February 2014 09:05  
**To:** dept-staff@abdn.ac.uk  
**Subject:** Principal's Update February 2014

Dear Colleagues

#### **VICE-PRINCIPAL FOR INTERNATIONALISATION**

Following announcement of his appointment last year, Seth Kunin has now joined us and is quickly getting to grips with the exciting opportunities and challenges that exist in the area of Internationalisation. Since taking up his post last month, Seth has already met with many colleagues and I am sure will be keen to continue to meet with those of you who are directly engaged in the various aspects of the Internationalisation agenda. If you would like to offer Seth any thoughts to input into his emerging plans then please email him [seth.kunin@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:seth.kunin@abdn.ac.uk) or arrange to meet.

#### **ELIR**

We received the formal report of the Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR) in January and as I suggested in my last update, the results are very good with the University receiving the most positive judgement an ELIR Panel can bestow. This means the University has robust arrangements for securing academic standards and for enhancing the quality of the student experience.

The Panel also highlighted a significant number of positive practices including:

- Curriculum Reform and its transformational effect on all areas of learning and teaching;
- MyAberdeen and its development in response to student views;
- Our provision of systematic student support and in particular the new Personal Tutoring scheme;
- Our arrangements for promoting employability and delivering the Aberdeen Graduate Attributes;
- the University's positive and constructive relationship with the Aberdeen University Students' Association;
- the Centre for Academic Development's emerging role in providing coordinated staff development and support across the University; and
- The institution's culture of self-reflection and critical self-evaluation and in particular the methodical and detailed critical analysis provided by our Internal Teaching Review process.

This outcome sends a really positive message about the student experience at Aberdeen to potential students and others. I pass on my considerable thanks to you all, not only for the help you have given to our Enhancement-led Institutional Review, but also for all your efforts to improve continually the experience our students have when they come to Aberdeen.

#### **NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY**

The 2014 National Student Survey will shortly commence and I would like to highlight to colleagues how important it is to the reputation of the University with potential applicants. The survey of final year undergraduate students at all UK universities is compiled externally and takes place between February and April. A key issue can often be the number of students who respond to the survey and we want to encourage as many final year students as possible to participate, first so that these data can help to identify and address areas where the student experience at Aberdeen could be improved for continuing students, and second to help us raise the profile with potential applicants of the University as home to a great student experience. Research shows that around 40% of respondents identify that they complete the survey because they are encouraged to do so by lecturers or other members of staff. I would therefore encourage you to promote the NSS with final year students at every opportunity, and to ask colleagues to do the same.

#### **BUREAUCRACY REVIEW WORKING GROUP**

Dr Chris Brittain, Senior Lecturer, Divinity, has kindly agreed to lead this short-life working group to identify where there are administrative tasks or processes in the University that impact negatively on our effectiveness, particularly with regard to teaching and research. He is being joined by Professors Gordon Brown from CLSM, Bernadette Hayes from CASS and Tom O'Donoghue from COPS. I know that in addition to taking up valuable time, 'bureaucracy', can be hugely frustrating and demoralising for academic colleagues. We do though need an effective streamlined set of

processes and sometimes, of course, the bureaucracy is at the behest of funding bodies or other external agencies rather than the University. However, we hope this Review can help to identify where there are processes that we can improve and thereby help colleagues focus on their core roles of teaching and research. I would encourage colleagues with comments or suggestions for the Review to contact Chris Brittain (Convener - [c.brittain@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:c.brittain@abdn.ac.uk)), Caroline Inglis (University Secretary - [c.inglis@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:c.inglis@abdn.ac.uk)) or Heather Crabb (Clerk to the Review - [h.crabb@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:h.crabb@abdn.ac.uk)).

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Following on from discussions at recent meetings of the University Court, the University is taking forward a review of health and safety culture in the University over the coming months. The health and safety of our staff, our students and those who visit our campuses is paramount and there is already a positive attitude and awareness of the importance of this across the University. However, it is good practice for all of us as staff to be looking for issues or ways in which we can enhance our health and safety culture and this review offers us an opportunity to do that.

## **NEW ROWETT INSTITUTE OF NUTRITION AND HEALTH BUILDING**

As colleagues at Foresterhill will know, construction of the new building for the Rowett Institute is progressing with the structure now having reached its highest point. We recently marked this milestone in the project with a short 'topping out' ceremony which was also an opportunity to promote to the wider community how the £37M building will place Aberdeen at the forefront of international nutrition and health research. The Rowett celebrated its centenary last year and so it is starting its second century in a truly exciting way with the construction of this state-of-the-art facility which is expected to open in 2015.

## **INAUGURAL LECTURES IN MEDICINE, NUTRITION AND HEALTH**

A short reminder about this lecture series which will feature a selection of new academic appointments in the College of Life Sciences and Medicine giving Inaugural public lectures around the theme of Medicine, Nutrition and Health. I was privileged to Chair the first, an excellent tour de force by Vicki Entwistle, and I know the forthcoming lectures will be equally outstanding. It is great to be welcoming these new colleagues who joined the University following our recent academic recruitment campaign. <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/clsm/inaugural/>.

## **SFC FUNDING LETTER**

The University has now received confirmation of its core grant funding from the Scottish Funding Council for 2014/15 and as expected given the continuing restraints on public funding, the University's main research and teaching grants will essentially remain flat (+0.23%), with the overall position in Scotland being an increase of 1.92%. The reason for our being lower than the mean is that we continue to lose funds as a result of the SFC withdrawing funding for RUK students. This illustrates the restricted financial environment that the University is operating in and reinforces the importance of the University continuing with the diversification of its funding base both in teaching and research to help us continue the investment we have been able to make in staff and facilities.

## **DATA 2 TEXT 'SPIN-OUT'**

I was delighted to see one of the University's spin-out companies progressing to commercial success recently with the flotation of Arria NLG on the London Stock Exchange. Arria last year acquired Data2Text, a company formed by academics in Computing Science to develop Natural Language Generation (NLG) research. NLG is a form of artificial intelligence which can communicate information extracted from complex data sources into natural language. As an example of its applications, the Met Office is using the tool to translate weather data into text for weather forecasts. ARRIA NLG now employs 17 staff based in Old Aberdeen and it is important to remember that its success in getting to this point is based upon over 20 years of research at the University by its academic founders. It is a great example of the University's continuing success at bringing its excellence in research to commercial application.

## **FOUNDERS' DAY**

Our annual service to celebrate the University's establishment and to give thanks to Bishop Elphinstone and our other Founders was held on 9 February. A packed congregation in the Chapel heard a wonderful sermon around the theme of hope by the *Right Reverend Lorna Hood*, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (and mother of one of our graduates!) as well as hearing some magnificent singing by the Choir.

## **LONG SERVICE AWARDS**

Our annual Long Service Awards ceremony for colleagues who have given 25 or 40 years' service to the University took place recently. It was striking to hear in the ceremony the testimonials to the eight individuals who were marking 40 years at the University and the varied ways in which each of them had contributed to the success and

transformation of Aberdeen. It was a pleasure to be able to thank these colleagues on behalf of the whole institution for their outstanding dedication to the University.

#### **WOMEN IN SCIENCE: MRC SCIENCE HEIRLOOM AWARD**

Many congratulations are due to Professor Lynda Erskine in Medical Sciences who has been awarded the 2014 MRC Clinical Sciences Centre 'Science Heirloom' Award. This is a scheme launched in 2011 to mark 100 years of women in life sciences. It recognises the achievements of leading women in life sciences with each awardee then nominating a female peer to whom the science heirloom is passed on. It is a very welcome award for one of our female professors to be receiving and encouraging in terms of our own efforts to achieve Athena Swan status.

#### **STUDENT SPORTING SUCCESS**

A short note to highlight the achievements of two students, Zoey Clark and Stephen Dunlop, who were part of the National Scottish Athletics Team competing at the recent International Athletics Meet in Glasgow. To see our student athletes competing at this national level is great and adds to the University's growing reputation as a place where student athletes can thrive. Congratulations to both students on their success.

Ian Diamond

Principal and Vice-Chancellor

***This Update is also available on StaffNet [here](#).***

**From:** owner-dept-staff@abdn.ac.uk on behalf of Communications  
**Sent:** 05 June 2014 17:14  
**To:** dept-staff@abdn.ac.uk  
**Subject:** Principal's Update: June 2014

## Principal's Update June 2014

Dear Colleagues

### RECTOR

As I am sure colleagues will have read in my separate communication to staff, we are all deeply saddened by the loss of our Rector, Maitland Mackie, who died at the weekend. Not only have the students lost an excellent Rector, we as a University have lost one of our most successful graduates, a governor of 15 years and one of our most committed supporters. Maitland was passionate about the University he loved and he will be remembered with great fondness by our community. Our thoughts are very much with his family at this sad time.

### WORLD RANKINGS

Since my last update, colleagues may have read about our performance in the Quacquarelli Symonds, *World University Rankings® by Subject*. These subject-specific rankings look at three indicators: Academic Reputation, Employer Reputation and Citations per Paper.

The results were encouraging with twelve subjects on offer at Aberdeen ranked among the top 200 universities in the world. English Language & Literature and Philosophy were both included in the Top 150 for the first time alongside Medicine, Law, History, Environmental Sciences, and Geography. Economics is now in the top 200, alongside Pharmacology, Sociology, and Politics & International Studies. Agriculture and Forestry, which is a major part of the School of Biological Sciences, again featured in the top 100.

More recently still, the 2014 *U-Multirankings* were announced. These are not league tables but an assessment of a University's performance from (1 Very Good to 5 weak). It was pleasing to see the University being ranked as "Very Good" in the great majority of the sub-components of the research, knowledge transfer and International orientation categories.

### TOP MEDICAL SCHOOL IN SCOTLAND

I also want to congratulate all staff concerned and NHS colleagues who have confirmed our medical school as the best in Scotland, and 5th in the UK in the *2015 Complete University Guide*. This is a considerable achievement and a brilliant story of how an early and pioneering commitment to the teaching of medicine over five centuries ago has kept us at the forefront today in a state-of-the-art building and a very different world of medical knowledge and practice.

### STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Colleagues will know of my view that we must constantly be looking at how we can make the student experience ever better. A key part of that is, of course, listening to what our students have to say about the student experience and their ideas on how we can enhance their time at Aberdeen. This goes beyond how good our teaching is - fundamental though that is - as the recent *Times Higher Education* Student Experience survey shows. In this, the two categories that held us back were not at all related to teaching but were- "Good Students Union" and "Cheap shop/bar". These are issues that students have raised with us and which we are addressing in the new Students' Association building that is a key project in our £290M capital plan.

A few years ago it would have been our sports facilities where our ranking fell short and which, thanks to the investment we have made, we are now firmly ranked in the Top 10 for by students. The point I want to stress is that it is crucial to our reputation and future success in recruiting students that we are always asking ourselves what are the next set of initiatives that will make the student experience we offer even better. To this end I have been holding a number of round tables looking at different aspects of the student experience, for example the transition to university, minimising drop out, and careers advice, and I will be holding a number of others. It is my view that we need to build on our already strong base by identifying best practice globally in all areas of the student experience and then innovating boldly so as to achieve our goals of a brilliant student experience.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

I'm grateful to colleagues who took the time to participate in the recent Health and Safety survey and was delighted by the high response rate, the results of which are now being analysed to enable us to identify how we can enhance our safety culture.

At this time, however, I'd like to remind colleagues that we can all help to reduce the risk of accidents in the University simply by reporting anything which we see in the course of our daily work that might pose a risk to health and safety, however minimal an issue it might seem. It is only through the vigilance of staff and the reporting of, for example, a maintenance issue that we can minimise such risks and help prevent accidents occurring.

## **MAY FESTIVAL**

Last month we enjoyed welcoming many visitors onto campus for our second May Festival. While the weather was not particularly kind, we still saw large numbers of people attending thanks to the impressive range of events on offer over the course of the weekend from music through to science and the feedback has been very positive. The Festival is a wonderful platform to showcase the University, to engage with the wider community, to raise our profile nationally as well as locally, and to highlight the work of our some of our students. To organise and deliver an event of this scale takes considerable time and effort, and my thanks go to all staff who were involved in making the Festival, once again, such a success.

## **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CONFERENCE**

Although it took place in March, I did not want to let an important conference that the University organised and hosted to mark International Women's Day pass without comment. The conference was hugely successful and brought together a strong programme of inspirational keynote speakers focusing on the issues that face women in career development at the local, national and international level. An exhibition to tie in with the conference entitled, *Inspiring Women: Women's Exhibition*, was also held to showcase the achievements of female graduates and staff.

In parallel, during the same week, the University also organised an event called *Women in Science: The Next Generation* where around 80 female secondary pupils were invited to learn more about careers in science and engineering from a range of female academics.

The feedback from these events has been very positive and I was delighted to see the University taking a lead in marking International Women's Day in these different ways. However, as I indicated in my address to the conference, such meetings are, ultimately, not terribly useful unless they are accompanied by real action to ensure that we, as a University, are a beacon of good practice in this area.

## **PROJECT SEARCH**

Many colleagues will be aware of Project Search, and I want to draw your attention to the external recognition this is receiving for its valuable contribution to helping young people with disabilities to prepare for employment. The project is a collaboration between the University, Inspire (Partnership Through Life) and North East Scotland College. A cohort of 12 Interns entered the programme in September, which involves a mix of education and work experience. I am pleased that the interns are making excellent progress and will graduate this month.

The project has won an award from SURF, Scotland's Independent Regeneration Network, and the University welcomed a number of high profile visitors in April to learn more about how it is working here. We will run Project Search again in 2014/15 and you can read more about it [here](#).

## **UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN AND DIRECTOR OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS**

As colleagues will know we have recently welcomed to the University community Diane Bruxvoort, our new University Librarian, and Theresa Merrick, our new Director of External Relations. Diane joins us from the University of Florida and Theresa from Heriot-Watt University. I know that both will make valuable contributions in their respective roles to the future success of the University and that staff will join me in making them feel very much at home.

## **TIMES HIGHER LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT AWARDS**

I want to add my congratulations to all involved in the University's short-listing in two categories in this year's Times Higher Leadership and Management Awards. The team behind the University's research and commercialisation of Natural Language Generation software have been listed in the Knowledge Transfer category, and our Shared Data Centre Project is listed in the ICT category. The winners are announced this month and I know we will all be hoping that those involved return home with well-earned Awards for their achievements.

## **ELPHINSTONE PHD SCHOLARSHIPS**

I want to remind colleagues of the £5M Elphinstone Scholarship scheme we launched last month. The one hundred Scholarships - named in honour of our founder Bishop Elphinstone who died 500 years ago this year - are available to high-achieving students from anywhere in the world looking to begin a PhD programme here this coming autumn. As a research-driven university, it is vital that we continue to increase our numbers of postgraduate research students and we hope this investment will make a significant difference.

## **PG FOCUS FORTNIGHT**

Last month saw our first Postgraduate Focus Fortnight, run jointly by SRAS and the Graduate Schools. This was aimed at final year students, with third year students and alumni also encouraged to attend a variety of events, raising awareness of postgraduate opportunities and highlighting the employability benefits to be gained from achieving a masters qualification. As I referred to above, promoting our PG offerings across the University is a very important priority, and I commend colleagues for the enthusiasm and effort that went into this programme of activity.

## **AQUATICS CENTRE**

I hope that many of you have now had the chance to try out the magnificent new Aquatics Centre. My sense is that people are hugely proud and impressed that we have this outstanding facility now sitting alongside the rest of the Sports Village, and making the University and Aberdeen home to sporting facilities to rival the best in the country. All ASV and University staff involved in the project are to be congratulated on what they have achieved.

## **COMMONWEALTH 'GAME CHANGER' AWARDS**

Closely connected to the Aquatics Centre, I was delighted that the University won gold and bronze awards at the recent Game Changer awards. The awards were launched by Universities Scotland to recognise those in the education sector who were making a contribution to supporting the Commonwealth Games. The Sports Union's Commonwealth Sports Tour won Gold for the work it has done in promoting sport to young schoolchildren and their knowledge of the Commonwealth, while the University's Sport and Exercise Team's free swimming lessons for staff and students initiative won Bronze.

## **GRANITE CITY CHALLENGE**

Also on a sporting theme, it was good to see the University make up for the disappointment of losing the Boat Race by triumphing over RGU in the Granite City Challenge which is Britain's biggest inter-varsity sporting event with teams competing in a variety of sports.

## **REFERENDUM ON SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE**

The Referendum edges closer and academic colleagues continue to make some important contributions to the national debate on Scotland's future. It is important that, as a university, we support, inform and facilitate public debate on this fundamental choice that Scotland's people are faced with. To that end we have enjoyed hosting a number of relevant and extremely interesting debates at the May Festival and a further event held with the ESRC and Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce. In addition the Development Trust organised a very successful event in New York, at which Michael Keating spoke. We also recently welcomed the Scottish Parliament's Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee to campus, in recognition of our important role in Scotland's energy future whatever the outcome is in September. I was also interested to note that our students recently hosted a mock referendum.

I am also keen that we host meetings led by the proponents of both sides of the debate and that colleagues participate fully in them. Universities are safe places for difficult discussions and I believe we should do all we can to ensure that there can be an informed decision at the ballot box. It is, of course, a debate that can become impassioned from views which are strongly held. It is important therefore that where we do have debates within the University on this or indeed on other issues, we do so in a way that is respectful and accepting of the views of others.

## **GRADUATIONS**

I know that colleagues will be in the midst of a very busy period of marking and I am sure looking forward to the conclusion of the academic year and the happy occasions of the graduation ceremonies. I look to the ceremonies also as an opportunity to acknowledge not only the hard work of the students but the wonderful commitment of their lecturers and professors.

Ian Diamond  
Principal and Vice-Chancellor

***This Update is also available on StaffNet [here](#).***

**From:** owner-dept-staff@abdn.ac.uk on behalf of Communications  
**Sent:** 09 July 2014 14:13  
**To:** dept-staff@abdn.ac.uk  
**Subject:** Principal's Update: July 2014

## **Principal's Update July 2014**

Dear Colleagues

As we enjoy this wonderful week of Graduations it is timely to acknowledge the commitment and hard work of colleagues across the University. The Graduation ceremonies are, if we needed one, a very personal and moving reminder of the transformational impact that we as a university have on students and wider society. That is testament not only to the purpose of a great university but to the collective dedication and professionalism of you as staff. I would like to thank all staff for all that you have done to achieve the mission of the University in this past academic year.

### **Meetings of Court and Senate**

Over the course of the last month we have had the usual final meetings of the year of the University Court and Senate. One of the highlights of the Court meeting last week was the endorsement of a new strategy for Internationalisation addressing student recruitment, the enhancement of the international student experience at Aberdeen, transnational education, research networks, staff recruitment and mobility, and alumni and donors. These are key priorities for us and I hope colleagues will continue to support Seth Kunin, the Vice-Principal for Internationalisation, to pursue the significant opportunities that are out there for a University with the profile and reputation of Aberdeen. We regularly have a presentation at Court from an academic or academic area to help inform our governors on the academic content of the University - and at this meeting we had an excellent presentation from Professor Mandy Ryan on the work of Health Economics Research Unit.

At Senate last month we had a productive consideration of the outcome of the Bureaucracy Review. In addition to a number of recommendations which should help enable us to allow academic colleagues to focus more of their time on academic work, the proposal for School based Innovation Forums will I hope help us to encourage new initiatives at a local level but which ultimately may have benefits for us across the University.

### **Opening of the Aberdeen Aquatics Centre and Commonwealth Queen's Baton**

It is difficult to escape sport at present given the World Cup, Wimbledon and, of course, the Commonwealth Games coming to Scotland this summer – and so it proves here on campus after we had the official opening of the Aquatics Centre by the Chancellor, HRH The Duchess of Rothesay and the arrival of the Queen's Commonwealth Baton.

I'm sure colleagues will be interested to note that in addition to one of our students, Zoey Clark's fantastic achievement in being selected for the Scottish Commonwealth Games Athletics team a number of Aberdeen graduates will also be participating in the games. Also representing Team Scotland will be Olympic Gold medalist Neil Fachie MBE in para-cycling, Niall Cameron in table tennis, Dr Ross Houston in athletics, and Neil Stirton in the shooting. We wish them all every success.

### **European Student Energy Summit**

I was impressed to see the first European Student Energy Summit being hosted here at the University a few weeks ago. The Summit which is student led and organised by *Student Energy*, came to Aberdeen as a result of a successful bid by Aberdeen students last year. The event, which took place simultaneously with events in Africa, North America and Latin America, and linked 300 European students with 1200 other students around the world, aims to inspire students to make a difference in the Energy sector. It was good to see a number of Aberdeen academics participating in the conference.

At the same time the University also hosted a series of events for secondary school pupils from across Scotland who were interested in a career in Energy. The Careers in Energy conference featured speakers from Industry and, of



course, colleagues from the University who were able to highlight the range of degree courses available here that could help open up a career in the Energy Industry.

## **Recent Fundraising Success**

I think it would be helpful to share with colleagues periodically news regard the University's Development Trust and our fundraising activities. The University was built on philanthropy and fundraising has made a significant contribution to our modern development. More important, it is a key part of our plans for the achievement of the University's ambition for the future. The Development Trust's sole purpose is to raise funds for the University, benefiting students, staff and the wider community in a number of ways.

The Trust is entering an ambitious new phase. It has recently launched a new look and a brochure which outlines its ambitious plans for the future, which asks everyone involved to look forward and give back. This rebranding re-emphasises the Trust's commitment to continue enhancing Aberdeen's reputation as one of the leading universities in the world.

The Trust's priorities - 'patronage of our students', 'progress of our innovation' and 'preservation of our heritage' - are based around the ambitions of the University with the aim of generating support through donations and gifts in kind from our world-wide family of alumni, friends and supporters. Those working on or visiting the King's College campus can now see the results of this rebranding with various marketing materials in place around the area.

In recent weeks the University has benefitted from the Trust transferring £200,000 for the Aquatics Centre, £45,000 for spinal injury research, £30,000 for Library Outreach & Education, and funding for numerous scholarships, fellowships and pieces of vital equipment across all Colleges. Earlier in the project, the Aquatics Centre, as a further example, received significant support from Saltire Energy and FirstGroup which has helped us to create a facility that can rival any other aquatics venue in the world.

I look forward to keeping colleagues informed on the further achievements and activities of the Trust and the University's fundraising as they progress.

## **Visits to Schools and Professional Services**

My regular visits to academic areas continued recently at the School of Language and Literature where there was a very helpful discussion with colleagues on a range of issues. In addition, I had an inspiring meeting with some junior colleagues in Engineering. I was hugely impressed by their passion for their subject and their respective aspirations for the future.

I look forward to extending these visits to areas of the Professional Services over the course of the summer with the University Secretary, Caroline Inglis, and to discussing the vital part that non-academic colleagues play in the University.

## **Project Search**

Colleagues will recall that I highlighted in my last message Project SEARCH, a collaborative project based at the University which aims to increase the number of people with learning disabilities in employment. Last week we held a graduation ceremony for the first cohort of Project SEARCH Interns which was a wonderful occasion.

The Project SEARCH Aberdeen team is also celebrating following recognition at a national level of the achievements which they have made. The team received an award at the recent Project SEARCH European Conference, at which it was named the foremost up and coming new site of 2013/14, which is a great achievement.

In addition, the team have also been announced as finalists in the Green Gown Awards 2014. Established in 2004. The Green Gown Awards recognise exceptional sustainability initiatives being undertaken by universities and colleges across the UK. This nomination is a tremendous accolade and we wish the team every success in this endeavour.

## **Scotland's Census Conference**

I recently helped to open Scotland's Census conference in Edinburgh which was organised by the National Records of Scotland and the British Society for Population Studies. It was an opportunity for me to highlight not only the important resource for academic research that the Census is, but some of the ways that colleagues in a range of

disciplines here at Aberdeen use the Census to produce research that informs policy making across Scottish public life.

Ian Diamond  
Principal and Vice-Chancellor

***This Update is also available on StaffNet news [here](#)***

**From:** owner-dept-staff@abdn.ac.uk on behalf of Communications  
**Sent:** 31 July 2014 19:11  
**To:** dept-staff@abdn.ac.uk  
**Subject:** PRINCIPAL'S UPDATE: AUGUST 2014

Dear colleagues

I hope that many of you have been able to make the most of the good weather this month to recharge batteries and enjoy time with family and friends. The sun that shone on our Graduations has certainly encouraged a celebratory feel for summer here on campus and across Scotland.

### **Celebrating our sporting family**

This week's Commonwealth Games have been an excellent reminder of the power of sport in promoting dialogue and partnership, well evidenced by the international outlook of our region and country and the warmth of the welcome for the Commonwealth community at Glasgow 2014.

Our alumnus, honorary graduate, and brilliant ambassador for the University and for sport, Neil Fachie, led the gold rush with two top spots on the podium in the para-cycling, while alumni Neil Stirton (shooting), Ross Houston (marathon) and Niall Cameron (table tennis) also turned in great performances. We wish student Zoey Clark all the best when she competes in the ladies 4x400m relay on Friday and Saturday. These and other local elite athletes – including gold medal winner Hannah Miley – use our University's ASV and Aquatics facilities as part of their training schedule, and their success is a great endorsement of our strategic investment in world-class sports facilities for our students, staff and local community.

### **Showcasing HE for the Commonwealth**

Learning, research, and the outstanding contribution of Scotland's universities were very much on show for the international community gathered in Glasgow. I had the privilege of chairing an event to showcase the quality and achievements of Scotland's higher education sector to the countries of the Commonwealth. *Connecting with the Commonwealth* was hosted by Universities Scotland and Scottish Enterprise as part of the Scotland House business-to-business programme of Glasgow 2014.

Diplomats and dignitaries from over 16 Commonwealth countries included the President of Mauritius and Scotland's Cabinet Secretary for Education, Michael Russell MSP. This proved a great opportunity to reinforce the reputation of Scotland's universities, and especially for research which reaches every corner of the globe. It is worth noting that every one of the country's higher education institutions undertakes some research of world-leading quality, and with only 0.1 per cent of the world's population Scotland produces 1.8 per cent of the world's citations.

### **Encouraging sharing and learning in Energy and Equity**

A second event, on the eve of the opening ceremony, also took advantage of the high-level delegations in Glasgow for the Games to focus on a particular area of challenge - that of Energy, Equity and Development. The one-day conference was organised by our Centre for Sustainable International Development led by Dr Hilary Homans, in partnership with the Glasgow-based African Forum Scotland.

Government officials from African Commonwealth nations and Scotland, senior representatives of international energy companies active in sub-Saharan Africa, academic experts, and development partners exchanged ideas and good practice in achieving equal access to energy for all communities. Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs in the Scottish Government, gave the opening address, and the keynote speaker was Dr Kandeh Yumkella, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General who travelled from Vienna to brief delegates prior to the formal European launch of the United Nations Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All) initiative.

### **Archaeologists enthralled by beauty and history of King's**

Professor Jane Geddes led the hosting on campus of the six-day annual conference of the British Archaeological Association. For the last 40 years the society has descended annually on a cathedral city to explore its medieval heritage, in terms of art, architecture and archaeology.

This year 90 delegates enjoyed basking in stunning weather while exploring King's Chapel, St Machar's, St Nicholas' and the medieval revival churches of Ninian Comper. In addition to colourful papers recreating the lost medieval wealth of this area, delegates experienced bell ringing, bagpipes and Benedictine monastic vespers, together with a baronial feast at Fyvie Castle. Feedback confirms that participants were delighted by the beauty, convenience and antiquity of the University. This is a fine testimonial to the very extensive and professional team who helped to co-ordinate all aspects of the event.

### **Society for French Studies Conference**

We were also delighted to host this year's Society for French Studies Conference in July. The Society for French Studies is the leading learned association for French Studies in the UK and Ireland, and hosts an annual conference at different institutions around the country. This year's event was attended by over 100 delegates from across the globe and we were delighted to welcome delegates including the French Consul from Edinburgh, Pierre-Alain Coffinier, and Dr Catherine Robert, HE attaché at the French Embassy in London who was also able to take the opportunity to meet with our Vice-Principals and senior researchers engaged in projects and collaborations with French academics and universities.

French studies has a history at Aberdeen almost as long as the University itself. French is specifically mentioned in the second foundation charter of 1514 as the language in which students are permitted to speak with each other, as an alternative to Latin – an importance probably linked to the fact that Bishop Elphinstone had studied at the University of Paris. French has officially been part of our curriculum since 1893, with the chair of French established in 1926.

### **Sharing good practice in medical statistics**

During July, Dr Shona Fielding and our Medical Statistics team had the privilege of hosting Burwalls: Annual Meeting for Teachers of Medical Statistics. The aim of this event is to encourage sharing of ideas among those responsible for teaching statistics (and evidence-based medicine) to medical students and other health professionals. The programme was designed to share knowledge, ideas and suggestions for future practice, with a keynote presentation from Professor Mike Campbell of the University of Sheffield who spoke on how to survive as a statistician in medicine and health research. Feedback from participants was extremely positive.

All these events are tremendously important in showcasing our strength, profile and organisational skills to important strategic academic communities, and I congratulate all involved.

### **Hosting international talent on campus**

The international theme has been well reflected here on campus and across our region with our partnership in the Aberdeen International Youth Festival. This year's packed programme of diverse and astonishing talent got off to a brilliant launch in Elphinstone Hall last week, wowing an influential audience with performances from Jordan, the US, and from across Scotland with the the Robbie Burns group of extraordinary young musicians and actors exploring the life and work of Scotland's famous Bard. As one visitor put it to me: *"The campus is really buzzing!"*

### **Attracting the Gifted and Talented**

On the subject of talent, in July we welcomed 17 students from across the UK to participate in the University's first ever Gifted and Talented Residential Programme. This is a 'first' in Scotland, and aims to help increase the number of RUK students applying and studying at Aberdeen, as well as increasing the quality of applicants. The programme targets the most able RUK students (AAB+) using existing relationships with teachers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Students who successfully complete the programme become eligible for an unconditional offer from the University of Aberdeen (excluding medicine, law, engineering and education) and will also be offered direct entry to second year pending satisfactory results.

This first cohort undertook bespoke programmes in all three colleges within the University, challenging their ability and giving a flavour of what it is like to be a student at Aberdeen. The programmes consisted of three days of presentations, workshops, student discussion and social experience, plus a formal dinner. Our programme is unique in that it offers a residential programme to final stage students at a university which is outwith their immediate geographical area.

### **Raising our global profile**

Our internationalisation activity is developing over the summer, under the leadership of Vice-Principal Professor Seth Kunin. We are committed to embedding a culture of internationalisation across all our activities and in so doing enhance our reputation as a global university.

This clearly involves exploring and evaluating options for strategic partnerships with regions and organisations, especially in subjects where we have particular strength and leadership. Two options for which we have commissioned specialist market research over the summer are an opportunity to provide graduate education as part of a centre for offshore and energy-related research and education in South Korea, and to provide medical education through a partnership in Sri Lanka. More work will be done over the coming months to evaluate these opportunities and I will be able to update colleagues in due course.

### **Professor George McNicol**

We were saddened to learn this week of the death of former Principal, Professor George McNicol. Professor McNicol was an eminent professor of medicine who served as Principal from 1981-1991, following a successful career at the University of Leeds. As Principal, Professor McNicol was at the helm of the University during challenging times for the higher education sector, and the UK as a whole. His work in steering the organisation through those challenging times undoubtedly helped lay the foundation for the success and reputation of the University today. Our thoughts are with his family at this sad time.

### **Visits to Professional Services**

As signalled in my last Update I am taking the opportunity over the summer to spend time meeting and talking with our Professional Services teams about the opportunities and challenges we face in driving forward our agenda for enhancing all aspects of our student experience. These discussions are progressing very well and I have valued and enjoyed opportunities to engage in dialogue on everything from the Scottish Referendum to HE league tables and the development of online courses.

### **Keeping our data secure**

I want to close with a reminder of the responsibility we all share to protect University data, and to urge all colleagues to take advantage of new guidance from our IT Services.

We now have a series of short, tailored slideshows to help raise awareness of information security threats at the University and the part we all play in helping to keep our data and systems safe. Each self-paced slideshow tackles a different theme and offers guidance on best practice for email, mobile devices, passwords, anti-virus software, and more.

Log in to myAberdeen at [www.abdn.ac.uk/myaberdeen](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/myaberdeen) and follow the link to **IT Security Awareness** in the **My Organisations** box. In addition to the slideshows, you will find a quick guide on **How to spot Phishing Scams**. I all encourage all staff to download a copy now and keep it handy to help identify email scams as soon as they arrive in your inbox.

And finally I hope you all enjoy the remainder of the summer.

Ian Diamond  
Principal and Vice-Chancellor

*This Update is also available on StaffNet news [here](#)*

**From:** owner-dept-staff@abdn.ac.uk on behalf of Communications  
**Sent:** 05 September 2014 13:12  
**To:** dept-staff@abdn.ac.uk  
**Subject:** Principal's Update: September 2014

## **PRINCIPAL'S UPDATE: SEPTEMBER 2014**

Dear Colleagues

As we come together for the start of the new academic year I hope we have all managed to get a break over the last couple of months and have made the most of a particularly kind Scottish summer.

By the time of my next Update the people of Scotland will have cast their vote in the referendum for its constitutional future. While it may be some time before we know the consequences for higher education of either decision, our mission to provide the very best experience and career preparation for our students will always be paramount, within a context of internationalisation and commitment to thinking global.

### **Strategic Plan**

This leads me on nicely to what will be an important priority over the next few months – the renewing of our strategic direction and goals in the form of our Strategic Plan for the next five years.

Our Court will meet on 30 September for its annual strategic review, and this exercise will provide an outline structure which we will develop as a community through consultation during autumn and winter. By next spring we aim to have a new Strategic Plan that speaks to our internal and external audiences, effectively articulating our ambition and objectives in a way that enables every member of our community to see clearly their own role and contribution.

I look forward to a vigorous and challenging period of debate and discussion with colleagues, students, and our wide range of external stakeholders, on the future direction of the University, what our priorities should be, the values that underpin all our activity, and the goals we are working to.

### **AUSA's Strategic Plan**

Steve Logan and I recently were privileged to listen to an excellent presentation by our Student Association sabbatical officers. The AUSA sabbatical team and trustees are currently finalising a Strategic Plan that maps out their focus over the next three years, and last week the team discussed progress with senior management of the University. The Student Association Plan responds to an independent consultation commissioned by AUSA earlier this year, and is engaging widely across the student community.

The three key pillars focus on AUSA leading a student community with influence, providing high quality representation and student led services; AUSA as the social hub at the heart of the student experience at Aberdeen, with development of the new union underway; and providing innovative and ethical societies, clubs, initiatives and volunteering experiences for the whole student community. As such, this Plan will support a diverse, vibrant student community, attract international students, support retention, and contribute significantly to our student experience and international rankings.

### **OneSource**

The summer months have been far from relaxing for the many colleagues involved in getting the new OneSource finance system live for the start of our financial year. This is a tremendous achievement and a brilliant team effort, and I want to thank everyone involved. Next week will see OneSource impacting even more directly on student experience as the *MyCurriculum* online course selection tool is launched to new and returning students, in a supportive environment which will give us important feedback.

OneSource is enabling an exciting and cutting edge transformation of our business processes which will radically improve efficiency and transparency and make the University an ever more attractive place to study and work.

### **Admissions**

We have had an excellent student recruitment round for 2014, and are forecasting to meet all undergraduate and taught postgraduate targets for home, UK, and international students. I look forward to welcoming all new arrivals to our community at Freshers' next week.

The popularity of our degrees, and of our student accommodation – coupled with a difficult rental market in Aberdeen – has challenged our bed capacity, and I know that our accommodation team is working flat out to ensure all new students have accommodation when they arrive over the coming weekend. A full programme of activity is planned, in partnership with the Student Association, to help all students make the most of Freshers' Week, and I know that colleagues will do their utmost to help all new students to settle into University life over the weeks ahead.

I am especially delighted that our international numbers are up, contributing very positively to the campus experience for the whole student and staff body. While we concentrate on raising our international profile abroad we should remember the international experience we give students from closer to home. Next week we host a conference on campus for guidance and careers teachers in the north of Scotland, and the Aberdeen UCAS Convention will be here later in September.

Raising aspiration is important for all young people, and this is what the Speakers for Schools scheme seeks to promote. I very much enjoy taking part in this national scheme, and enjoyed visiting Ellon Academy earlier today to speak to pupils about enterprise, entrepreneurship and career challenges, and what a university experience could offer them.

### **Open Day**

Campus is livening up daily as we approach the start of term. Last week we welcomed over 7,000 visitors onto campus for the University Open Day, to experience the University first-hand through exhibitions, demonstrations, presentations and campus tours. This is a huge operation and all involved deserve credit for the fantastic atmosphere, on a wonderful sunny day which really showed our campus at its very best. As always feedback was very positive, with would-be students commenting on the friendly welcome of University staff and students.

### **Artwork honours Sir Duncan Rice**

This Monday I had the pleasure of welcoming dear friends and supporters of the University to a small ceremony to unveil a bronze bust of former principal Sir Duncan Rice, in the ground floor atrium of our magnificent library which bears his name.

The bronze bust is the gift of a group of benefactors, and has been created by leading Scottish portrait sculptor Alexander Stoddart, Sculptor in Ordinary to The Queen in Scotland.

We have a long tradition held by the University of honouring former Chancellors and Principals in the artistic style of the day. Sir Duncan transformed the University, raising intellectual fire-power with some brilliant appointments and strategic mergers – notably with the Northern College and the Rowett Research Institute. He also elevated the global aspirations of the University community – a manifestation of which is our wonderful library. This bust is a fitting tribute which I hope you will look at next time you are in the library.

### **Staff news**

Claire Wallace is standing down as Vice-Principal for research, and I want to acknowledge the success Claire has had; in particular in encouraging greater engagement with Europe and positioning ourselves for Horizon 2020. Claire had oversight of the strategy for increasing research income through the Principal's Interdisciplinary Fund and the Principal's Excellence Fund and, with Peter McGeorge, set up the Centre for Academic Development to develop researcher training in a co-ordinated way across the University. Claire has a significant research opportunity, and as one of the University's leading scholars, I have agreed to support her career by offering her a period of sabbatical leave to pursue her research ideas. Phil Hannaford will take on the role of VP Research and Commercialisation on a full-time basis.

### **Awards for excellence in teaching**

I recently had the pleasure of hosting an event for academic colleagues who have been nominated by their students for the quality of their teaching. I want to congratulate them all! Inspirational, enthusiastic and innovative teaching is the bedrock on which this University was founded, and it was tremendous to see students praising the commitment, inspiration and support of teachers across our colleges. While we had over twenty colleagues nominated, unfortunately, we can only award one winner per college. In these Eighth Annual University Awards for Excellence in Teaching, the winners were:

- College of Life Sciences and Medicine: Dr Claire Trinder, School of Biological Sciences
- College of Arts and Social Sciences: Mrs Jacqueline Stewart, School of Education

- College of Physical Sciences: Dr Laurent Trembleau, School of Natural and Computing Sciences  
Congratulations to all who were nominated and to our three winners for this year.

## **EXPLORATHON '14**

On the theme of research I want to draw colleagues' attention to EXPLORATHON '14 - Scotland's first European Commission Horizon 2020 project, led by our Public Engagement with Research unit. The idea is to bring as many researchers and public together in a single night across Aberdeen, Glasgow and Edinburgh on 26 September as part of the European Researchers' Night initiative.

I encourage as many staff as possible to get involved with this event, which will take place simultaneously with 300 cities across Europe and is all about highlighting the relevance and importance of research and innovation in our global society. Already over 50 colleagues are contributing to talks, workshops, shows and performances across Aberdeen including Satrosphere, Union Square, Aberdeen Museums and the Belmont cinema. We'll also be welcoming our own Anne Glover, Chief Scientific Adviser to the European Commission, to host a special event here at King's College celebrating some of our world-class European funded research.

## **Development success**

Over the course of a year our Development Trust distributes millions of pounds across our University schools and research units in each of our three colleges thanks to their fundraising efforts.

The Trust raises funds from individuals, companies and trusts and foundations, and we have recently been very fortunate to receive the support of a dedicated volunteer fundraiser who, over the course of the past few years has raised over £100,000. Company director Charlie Bain organised two spectacular fundraising nights in support of dementia research and brain imaging and this has bought a mass spectrometer and a FASTLAB, both of which enable advanced research in this area. Colleagues will know that imaging is an area in which Aberdeen has led the way since John Mallard first developed the MRI scanner for patients and this fantastic fundraising effort is enabling our Brain Imaging Team to continue at the forefront of the fight against dementia.

Thanks to many other extremely generous benefactors around the world, the Trust has also recently been able to send a Law and European Legal Studies student to Japan, fund a number of research assistant posts, hand out £30,000 worth of vital engineering and geology text books and support the Glucksman Conservation Centre adjacent to the library to the tune of £25,000.

## **Forthcoming events**

As term gets underway our events calendar will fill up and I know that colleagues will engage with enthusiasm. I would like to mention just three events taking place in October:

Firstly, our Health Economics Research Unit (HERU) will be hosting an event on the 21 October remembering the contribution of one of our leading academic colleagues who tragically lost his life in December 2012. *'Celebrating 40 years of Health Economics at Aberdeen University: a tribute to Professor Gavin Mooney'* is certain to be a popular tribute to a great leader in bringing together medicine with economics.

Also in October we will be honoured with a week-long visit by Nobel prizewinner Douglas Osheroff. Professor Osheroff won the prize for physics in 1996. We are delighted that he is travelling from Stanford to spend a week inspiring staff and students in our College of Physical Sciences, including an RV Jones Lecture for a public audience on 1 October.

The third event I want to draw special attention to is the commemoration of the life and legacy of our founder, Bishop William Elphinstone, on the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death, and of how his mission to found a university devoted to *"the pursuit of truth in the service of others"* has underpinned our achievements over 500 years, our strong local partnerships, and our global ambition today. The focus of our programme of commemoration will be a Chapel service of Vespers on Saturday 25 October followed by a reception in Elphinstone Hall. Other activity will include Chapel tours with historian Jane Geddes, a talk from Peter Davidson, and a special Elphinstone exhibition in the Gallery of the Sir Duncan Rice Library. We look forward to welcoming our many alumni, friends, supporters, and the local communities of north-east Scotland to join our University community in marking this important anniversary.

In the meantime, welcome to a new academic year and an especially warm welcome to new colleagues joining us this autumn in various roles across the University. I also want to congratulate a further graduate of Project SEARCH who has just been appointed to a vacancy within HR. This brings the total number of interns who have secured employment to 11 out of 12, with three appointed to full-time permanent positions within the University.



Ian Diamond  
Principal and Vice-Chancellor

*This Update is also available on StaffNet news [here](#)*

**From:** owner-dept-staff@abdn.ac.uk on behalf of Communications  
**Sent:** 16 October 2014 12:27  
**To:** dept-staff@abdn.ac.uk  
**Subject:** Principal's Update: October 2014

## **Principal's Update: October 2014**

Colleagues

### **Rankings rises**

We have had excellent news in the last few weeks of significant rises in the three major international university rankings, and I want at the outset to thank all colleagues for the commitment and teamwork which has given us this gratifying result.

The news that we have risen ten places to 178 in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings – against a backdrop of UK universities slipping against big investment in higher education in Asia – confirms our progress in the performance indicators used by THE and its partner Thomson Reuters: teaching, research, knowledge transfer and international outlook.

This completes a hat-trick of rises, following last month's success in the QS World University Rankings which rated the University as 137th in the world, and the Leiden ranking of research strength which placed us 79<sup>th</sup> in the world – a rise of 12 places from last year and to position 14 in the UK. This Leiden score is fantastic news as it is based on entirely quantitative measures.

It is interesting that – with exceptions including our medical school which is ranked top in Scotland – we have not made the same overall progress in some of the internal UK ratings, and we will be considering any actions around this in the next few months as we discuss aspects of our Strategic Plan.

### **Court and Strategic Plan**

Our recent Court meeting was particularly productive, encouraging and positive. I was able, along with Peter McGeorge, Phil Hannaford, Steve Logan and Theresa Merrick, to present a first draft of our priorities for the next few years. It was evident that the vision of the executive team for where we want to take this University is shared by our governors and our student representatives, and this commitment to a common goal provides the very best foundation to begin consulting on our next Strategic Plan. I stress that this is a wonderful opportunity for every member of the University family to help shape our priorities and objectives over the next five years and be part of our success.

### **Growing Value: Scotland Task Force**

The Scottish research and development landscape exists in an incredibly competitive world, and only by identifying its strengths and weaknesses – as well as opportunities to expand – will we be able to ensure the success of Scottish research and the wider Scottish economy.

I was delighted to be asked to co-chair, with STV CEO Rob Woodward, a new task force to examine the challenges, opportunities and competitiveness for the future of the Scottish research base as a driver of Scottish industry at this crucial time following the independence referendum. The task force brings together experts from across industry and academia to identify and prioritise actions specific to Scotland to enhance the value of publicly-funded research and business-university collaboration. The task force is the initiative of the National Centre for Universities and Business (NCUB) and we will publish our final findings and recommendations in January 2016.

### **Professor Peter Morgan**

As we draw nearer to the completion of the new building for the Rowett Institute of Nutrition and Health and the move of staff from the Bucksburn site, Professor Peter Morgan is stepping down from his role as Vice-Principal to focus on

his research and to oversee the transition into the new building. Peter was appointed a Vice-Principal as part of the merger agreement, and has been responsible for the smooth integration of Rowett staff and facilities into the University. He has recently played a major role in our Health and Safety agenda, chairing the University Health and Safety Committee, and I am personally grateful to him for the immense amount of work he has done in this area. As one of our most eminent scientists I am confident that his return to his research will have major benefits for the University going forward.

## **Start of term**

Who can fail to notice that the campus looks busier than ever in the autumn sunshine? We met our recruitment targets this September, and I want to mention just one school which has done particularly well. Our Law School has achieved a 30% increase in postgraduate taught students this year, which takes our cohort of PGT students in Law to almost 200, among which 40 different nationalities are represented. Law scored an impressive 95% student satisfaction rating in the latest 2014 National Student Survey.

Move-in weekend, Freshers' Week, and the start of term provided excellent opportunities for myself and colleagues to engage with students, their parents and families, alumni, staff and supporters through a number of great events on campus. Almost 200 parents and relatives of new students (many of whom were visiting campus for the first time) took the opportunity to tour both Cruickshank Botanic Garden during move-in weekend and then Aberdeen Sports Village and Aquatics Centre the following week. This had the added bonus of giving visitors the opportunity to cheer on their side during the first ever Student v Alumni Sports Day, which brought former students aged from 20 to 79 back on campus. It is an important mission of the Development Trust's Parent & Family Programme and the work of the Alumni Team to welcome into the Aberdeen family new students and their families right at the start of what we want to be a lifelong relationship with the University.

I also want to thank everyone who helped to ensure that the process of registering our students ran smoothly this September. While this time we were not able to provide all the online support that we had hoped would be possible, students were clearly very engaged in thinking about and selecting courses. The knowledge that has been gained from the first year of this more student-led approach will be very valuable in ensuring that we are able to provide them with the information they need to be able to make their course selections in the coming years.

## **Student accommodation**

For a number of reasons we found ourselves this September facing the challenge of managing a shortfall in bed capacity for students wanting to come into university accommodation. We normally plan for 65% of the new intake asking to come into halls, however this year the number shot up to over 75%, influenced we believe by an expensive rental market in Aberdeen. This is not a position we would have wished to be in, but the efforts of our accommodation team mean that students temporarily in a hotel have been found permanent University accommodation, and those who arrived on campus having made no accommodation arrangements are also being helped to find somewhere to live. I also want to thank the Student Association for its work in supporting students in temporary arrangements and helping them to fully engage with Freshers' activities and settle into University life.

## **Students 4 Students (S4S)**

We are growing our initiatives to help all new students quickly feel at home in the University community, and this month I would like to mention one in particular. The Students 4 Students peer mentoring initiative begun as a small CLSM pilot four years ago is now available to every first year student. I congratulate the small team whose commitment has made this possible.

In a nutshell, the purpose of the scheme is to offer an extra level of support, but from a student viewpoint. For the first time this year organisers have enough student mentors to provide peer support for every first year who wants it, and so far this appears to be working well in parallel with the Personal Tutoring system. S4S mentors are recruited, trained, and then assigned incoming students for the duration of their first year studies. The mentors come from all subject areas, so the aim is to provide each first year with a mentor from their own or related subject area. All mentors are trained in active listening skills and confidentiality, and in our student support mechanisms. They can also apply for a Silver STAR Award, so this is a great help for their own development, in line with the principles of our curriculum reform and graduate attributes.

## **Sports partnerships**

Colleagues may have seen the recent media coverage of the launch of the first Scottish BT Sport Academy, based at Hillhead sports facility. This partnership with Scottish Rugby and BT is great for us on several counts. It offers potential access to national training for the most talented young players in the University and local community, and – combined with the Aberdeen Sports Village and Aquatics Centre – it strengthens still further the fantastic opportunities we have at Aberdeen for developing the skills [and](#) dedication to excellence which are equally applicable to sports and to study.

We are also continuing to discuss options for partnership with Aberdeen Football Club, and working with the AFC Community Trust as part of our knowledge transfer and community engagement activities particularly with regard to nutrition and healthy lifestyle for people of all ages in our local communities. I was also pleased to meet last week with Mike Whittingham, Director of High Performance at SportScotland and we discussed future partnerships for sport.

### **Head teachers' dinners**

Every year the University hosts a series of Head Teachers' Dinners which take place throughout Scotland. They offer a chance to update schools on our current developments and for our staff to hear issues facing secondary schools. The latest events took place in Glasgow and Aberdeen and were both extremely well attended, with head teachers representing both public and private sector. Further dinners are planned for March 2015. We value the engagement we have with schools in our community, and events like this are very valuable in developing partnership working.

### **Articulation with FE**

Colleagues will be aware of changes in the Further Education sector over the last year or so, and we are currently working to update our existing articulation agreements to reflect this. The North East Scotland College was formed in November 2013 as a result of the merger between Aberdeen College and Banff & Buchan College. The new updated agreement with NESCol is near to completion and due to be signed in November. This is wide-ranging and covers subject areas from Accountancy through to Zoology.

### **Autumn events**

As we get into autumn our event programme is getting into full swing. One rather special event which I want to mention is the inaugural Andrew Carnegie Lecture, fully booked tonight in our King's Conference Centre, when we welcome His Excellency, Matthew Barzun, United States Ambassador to the United Kingdom. We are very grateful to the Carnegie Corporation of New York for the generous donation which will enable the University to stage this prestigious annual event for the next ten years, and we are keen for suggestions from colleagues across the University for high-profile speakers in future years. I will chair a committee each year to consider suggested speakers, and details of the process for submitting ideas will be circulated shortly after this year's event.

We also welcomed Nobel prize-winner physicist Douglas Osheroff from Stanford to deliver the latest RV Jones to a packed King's Conference Centre, and our honorary graduate Richard Thompson delivered a very popular masterclass at MacRobert. We also marked the retirement of Professor James Grieve with public events looking at our fascination with forensic science and the 'medical policeman'.

And finally... I'm delighted to hear that Project SEARCH which I spoke of in some detail in my last Update has now been named winner of the 'Raising Achievement' award at the annual Aberdeen City Council's Children and Young People's Services Award ceremony. Well done to everyone concerned!

Ian Diamond  
Principal and Vice-Chancellor

***This Update is also available on StaffNet news [here](#)***

**From:** owner-dept-staff@abdn.ac.uk on behalf of Communications  
**Sent:** 11 November 2014 10:05  
**To:** dept-staff@abdn.ac.uk  
**Subject:** Principal's Update: November 2014

Colleagues

### Opportunities to remember

I would like to begin on a rather sombre note. Today, Tuesday 11 November is of course Armistice Day. As a mark of respect, I would like to extend an invitation to all members of our University community to participate in this act of remembrance for the many Aberdeen students, staff and alumni who lost their lives fighting for their country, by observing the two minute silence at 11am.

Our annual Remembrance commemorations have certainly had a special significance this year, with 2014 marking the centenary of the start of the First World War. Throughout the year colleagues have organised a variety of events and opportunities to find out more about the involvement of Aberdeen staff and students in the Great War and details are available [here](#). Particularly poignant was *The Death of Innocence* last Friday at Suttie Centre, with Professor Steve Heys and Mr Tom Scotland hosting a moving evening of poetry and storytelling of innocent young men from across Great Britain who went to serve, and very often met with terrible fates. Our annual Remembrance service this Sunday past was a powerful reminder of the qualities of our student cadets today, and of the many before them who fell in armed conflict throughout the last century. I'm sure I was not alone in finding this a very moving Remembrance.

### Strategy, investment and engagement

I want to thank all colleagues who have contributed so far to development of our next Strategic Plan. We have had some excellent discussion in workshops and open meetings, and it is good to see colleagues engaging with enthusiasm and great ideas. There are further opportunities to input, and I stress that this is a wonderful chance for every member of the University family to help shape our priorities and objectives over the next five years. You can find the background documents [here](#) and you can email your comments and suggestions to [strategicplan@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:strategicplan@abdn.ac.uk).

One important group in terms of engagement is that of our MSP, MP and MEP representatives (including several alumni), and I am looking forward to our regular biannual meeting later this month to share our thoughts with them, and discuss issues of mutual interest.

Underpinning our ambition must be the world-class facilities to deliver teaching, research and student experience of a quality which will mark us out as a top 200 university. Next month we will begin a wider consultation with our local communities and relevant stakeholders on our ambitious long-term programme of development of campus infrastructure.

### Postgraduate Open Day 2014

Postgraduate Open Day on 1 November attracted around 150 potential postgraduate taught and research students to campus, from all over the UK and as far afield as Germany. Professor Margaret Ross welcomed everyone and chaired an informative student panel. In addition to the academic fair, visitors attended information sessions on student funding, geosciences and the PGDE route. SRAS would be unable to deliver such high quality days without the help and support of colleagues throughout the University, and our external partners, and I want to thank everyone involved.

This comes on the back of our PGT numbers being up this year: Home PGT numbers have increased in all Colleges by an average of 18%, RUK PGT numbers are up 26%, and International PGT students have grown overall by 11%. Growing our postgraduate community is crucial to the success of the University, both academically and financially. It is, however, an increasingly competitive market and it is absolutely crucial that across the University we are doing all that we can to raise Aberdeen's profile and to make our offering as attractive to potential students as it possibly can be.

### Time with the family

Among industry events one of the most important for us is undoubtedly the Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE) Annual Technical Conference & Exhibition which showcases new technologies, products, and best practices, whilst addressing all conventional and unconventional oil and gas resources from around the world. This year's event in Amsterdam was only the second time in 90 years that this has been held in Europe, and we made the most of the opportunity to strengthen industry links at the event, with discussions ranging from degree enquiries to research collaborations, consultancy and teaching. I had the pleasure of hosting an excellent alumni event on the opening night, attended by around 40 alumni and guests from a range of disciplines and generations. It was particularly pleasing to see how grateful the alumni were to have been invited to an event on their doorstep. This gave me a wonderful opportunity to bring them up-to-date with the global impact the University has made and continues to make, thanks both to our research pedigree and to our alumni family spread far and wide around the globe – and making a difference.

As part of strengthening relationships with our alumni diaspora in key areas of our internationalisation strategy, New York alumni will be joining us at an exclusive event at the University Club in New York on 15 November to hear Professor Michael Keating, our Chair in Scottish Politics and Director of the Scottish Centre for Constitutional Change, present on the issues that Scotland faces in the wake of the historic referendum, focusing on the argument for more powers and how this fits into constitutional reform for the UK as a whole. Michael will also discuss the intensity of the public debate and citizen engagement that the referendum evoked. In addition I will talk about the impact of Scotland's students globally. This will be a great opportunity to meet alumni and other members of the University's US family - including the founding members of our New York Alumni Chapter, which will be formally launched during the evening.

Closer to home local alumni and their families gathered for another great Bonfire night on 5 November. The lucky 140 people who managed to get tickets enjoyed spectacular views of the Aberdeen fireworks from the warmth of the top floor of the Sir Duncan Rice Library. Tasty and traditional treats were much enjoyed – including sticky toffee apples and pumpkin soup – plus arts and crafts activities for the smaller (and the bigger) guests.

### **A memorable October**

October proved a month for big questions – and a big celebration. We hosted a vibrant international conference, *The Freedom of a Christian Ethicist, organised by colleagues in our School of Divinity, History & Philosophy*, which brought together major theologians and intellectuals – many from leading US universities - to consider the significance of the Reformation and its legacy for contemporary ethics and politics. We also welcomed a new colleague to Aberdeen. Professor in Theological Ethics, Stanley Hauerwas, is respected worldwide for his influential and wide-ranging scholarship and acknowledged as a leading public intellectual both within and outwith the churches.

The same weekend we were proud to host senior representatives of the Scottish Churches for a day of commemoration for our Founder, Bishop Elphinstone, culminating in a traditional service of Vespers in our Chapel – with as always a wonderful contribution from our magnificent choir. I have received many warm messages and positive feedback from our alumni, friends and supporters who were able to join us for this memorable day.

The Inaugural Andrew Carnegie Lecture was extremely well attended and US Ambassador Matthew Barzun gave a wonderful lecture and took a wide range of questions. Ambassador Barzun returned to campus the following day to hear about the achievements of Aberdeen computing scientists in developing commercial applications of Natural Language Generation through our data2text spinout (now part of Arria NLG). Meanwhile the University's Irish links were re-energised by a visit from Pat Bourne, Irish Consul General to Scotland. We were delighted to welcome Mr Bourne who also met with colleagues at the Research Institute of Irish & Scottish Studies and the Sir Duncan Rice Library.

### **Students triumph on world stage**

The last fortnight has seen some fantastic triumphs for Aberdeen students on the international stage. The details are available in the news stories on our website, and I want to add my own congratulations to all involved.

Our student team who used synthetic biology to develop a new diagnostic test to diagnosis African Sleeping Sickness secured two trophies and a gold medal at the iGEM (International Genetically Engineered Machine) competition in Boston - one of the world's leading science competitions. The six undergraduates won best team in the 'Health and Medicine' track, and were awarded the 'Best synthetic biology measurement approach'. This is a major coup for Aberdeen - the iGEM competition brings almost all the best universities in the world together to compete, including Yale, Harvard, Oxford, Cambridge, MIT, Heidelberg, ETH Zurich to name but a few. To have brought home two trophies from the competition is an outstanding achievement.

Our team of undergraduate Real Estate students also came home from the US with prizes in a prestigious international competition in New York. The Aberdeen students took on rivals from four continents in the prestigious international Real Estate competition hosted by Ivy League university, Cornell, New York. The competition featured a

record field, with student teams from 17 universities competing for a share of over \$22,000 in prize money. Our team did brilliantly – finishing in 4<sup>th</sup> position.

Meanwhile Enitome Buluku, an MSc Oil and Gas Engineering student, beat off tough competition from students from around Scotland to be named as SPE 2014 Energy Apprentice, selected by a panel of expert judges from Halliburton, the Oil & Gas Innovation Centre, Baker Hughes and Thor Holt Limited, an oil and gas presentation training company.

### **Fabrics for the future**

I want to mention the achievements of a number of colleagues this month: Brian Paterson of our Department of Chemistry and Business Improvement Team has been named 'Technician of the Year' by the Royal Society of Chemistry. This is a terrific acknowledgement of the quality and importance of our technical colleagues and I am delighted for Brian.

Also in Chemistry, Professor Fred Glasser has been selected to receive the inaugural 'Instituto de Ciencias de la Construcción Eduardo Torroja for *"your superb record of internationally recognised achievements as a scientist, teacher and a driving force for innovation in the field of construction"*.

In connection with Professor Glasser's research I want to mention our involvement in the 1<sup>st</sup> Arab Forum on Sustainable Communities and Green Building (AFSCGB '14), which will be held early December in Cairo, and that Fred's colleague Dr Mohammed Imbabi will be speaking about the truly world-leading work being done by our multidisciplinary team here at Aberdeen in developing sustainable building methods and materials for the future.

In a related vein, geosciences has a long and strong history in the University and we are always delighted when this is recognised at national level. The Geological Society of London marked the start of Earth Science Week by naming its top 100 geological sites in the UK and Ireland – a list compiled with the help of our colleague Rob Butler who chairs the society's Geoconservation Committee. Two local landmarks made it onto the top 100 – the Buchan type metamorphism near Portsoy, and Clashach cove on the Moray coast. Both of these areas are studied by our geoscientists and their students. Such remarkable geology on our doorstep is yet another reason to study and research geology at Aberdeen.

### **Aberdeen Institute of Energy**

I am keen to keep colleagues updated with the development of the Aberdeen Institute of Energy. The Institute has successfully applied for EU funding under a European Aid call "to support Capacity Building in Higher Education Institutions in Tanzania in Development of the Oil & Gas Sector". Working with colleagues from across the University, including Education, Economics, Law, Engineering and Geology, the three-year programme will support Tanzania to develop the skilled workforce it needs to support new discoveries, including HR capacity building through long and short term training and staff exchange, and research and knowledge exchange. There is also support to develop facilities, and to establish and maintain links, collaborations and business partnerships with the oil and gas industry in Tanzania. The project will include a course in Sustainable International Development and a situational analysis to enable recommendations for curricula and pedagogical reform to promote engagement with STEM subjects. The value of the application is €1.89m and we expect formal confirmation of the grant and contractual matters to be put in train at the end of November.

The University welcomed the Mexican Ambassador, Diego Gomez Pickering, at the end of October. The Ambassador was interested to learn about our suite of postgraduate energy degrees and review our current research collaborations with the Mexican state, its universities and private companies. In turn he was keen to share information on developments in reforming Mexico's energy legislative infrastructure, thereby opening the country for greater collaboration and enabling private companies to participate in oil and gas exploration and production. We have agreed to work together to host a seminar in the New Year to publicise the reforms to industry prior to the first open licensing round, which will help Mexico to maximise the benefits from the reforms.

### **Getting a feel for university**

Articulation from further to higher education is a growing route for many ambitious students. Later this month I will sign an updated Articulation Agreement with the Principal of the newly-formed North East Scotland College. Students at the College who are interested in going on to university are invited to visit campus for a day, meet with academics and students in their area of interest, have campus tours and register as Associate students. Last week 30 students who are currently studying for an HND in Applied Science enjoyed a programme of activities in the IMS building. Other days are being planned through November and into December for Computing, Social Science, Engineering and Music students.

### **Development Trust: recent successes**

Colleagues will be aware that the University of Aberdeen Development Trust raises funds from individuals, companies and trusts and foundations for the benefit of all Colleges and our growing student body. Extremely generous donations are received from around the world and thanks to this support, the Trust has recently been able to provide a wide range of scholarships for each College. They have also funded the University's Alzheimer's research, the School of Divinity, History & Philosophy's 'Buildings of Scotland' project and our involvement, through the Library, with the Capturing the Energy Programme. Student who excel in a variety of sports have also benefitted with £12,500 being given towards the Sports Bursary Scheme which enables talented students to reach their full potential nationally and internationally.

Events also play an important role in the Development Trust's donor engagement activities. In addition to those mentioned earlier, a Private Client CPD evening in partnership with the School of Law was held at the Sir Duncan Rice Library. Chief Executive of the Law Society, Lorna Jack, gave an engaging talk at an event well attended by local law professionals and staff and was aimed at encouraging gifts in wills to the University. Over the centuries, gifts in wills have greatly helped the University to become the hugely successful, internationally-recognised institution that it is today and we have a dedicated programme in place to ensure that this continues for the benefit of generations to come.

### **Events in November**

Last week saw the University participating in a Scottish Parliament policy event around the theme of Wellbeing in Scotland. Coordinated by the Scottish Universities Insight Institute, the Aberdeen-led 'Pathways to Wellbeing' project was led by Professor Claire Wallace and our Public Engagement with Research Unit, alongside Public Affairs, Researcher Development and a multi-disciplinary team of academic colleagues. I am delighted to be personally taking Aberdeen's input further by chairing a meeting at the University next February examining the development of Scotland's National Performance Framework.

I am also delighted that the University is now a regional UK hub for the annual *Festival of Social Science* supported by the Economic and Social Research Council, and with a wide range of events running early November. We are also hosting a diverse programme for the inaugural *Being Human Festival* supported in part by the British Academy and Arts and Humanities Research Council and running from 15-23 November. These festivals highlight the important work led by our colleagues based in arts, humanities and social science disciplines and I encourage everyone to take a look at the events taking place, and others in our wide-ranging [event programme](#) over the coming weeks.

Ian Diamond  
Principal and Vice-Chancellor

*This Update is also available on StaffNet news [here](#)*



**From:** owner-dept-staff@abdn.ac.uk on behalf of Communications  
**Sent:** 19 December 2014 15:49  
**To:** dept-staff@abdn.ac.uk  
**Subject:** Principal's Update: December 2014

## **Principal's Update: December 2014**

Firstly I want to reiterate my delight at the appointment of Professor Stephen Logan as the new Chair of NHS Grampian. I believe this is an excellent appointment, and want to wish Steve every success in his new challenge, and to say how much I look forward to working together on our continuing and vital partnership with our regional NHS.

### **December meeting of Court**

A number of significant items for the future of the University were considered by Court when it held its final meeting of 2014 last week. In addition to receiving an update on the progress of the consultation sessions we have been running for the development of our Strategic Plan, Court approved a revised capital plan and strategy for student accommodation. The strategy has been revised to take into account the increasing demand for student accommodation over the short and longer term, driven both by our own targets for growth in international student numbers and changing local rental market conditions. The approval by Court allows us to now develop proposals to build a new hall of residence at Hillhead and to progress another development on the Dunbar site which is focussed on accommodation for postgraduates or students with families. The relatively high cost of property is an issue for staff as well as students and our capital plan also includes new proposals to increase the amount of affordable housing available to early career staff.

I was also delighted to receive Court approval for the development of a University of Aberdeen campus in Hadong, South Korea. This is a hugely exciting initiative which will be the University's first campus overseas and will deliver postgraduate programmes and CPD courses in offshore-related disciplines. The establishment of the campus is being supported by the Korean Ship and Offshore Research Institute, the Gwangyang Bay Area Free Economic Zone, Hadong District and Gyeongsangnam Prefecture. It will provide the University with access to major new research facilities in engineering, opening up exciting new opportunities in research as well as in teaching. This represents a major step forward in the internationalisation of our activities and in raising the University's profile in a key region of the world. The project will now progress through the necessary formal approval process required by the South Korean Government and our funding partners, with the aim of opening in September 2016. We will share more details of this exciting project with colleagues as it progresses.

### **Strategic Plan**

Our discussions continue and I have enjoyed exchanging views with colleagues in both academic and professional services, and in the New Year we will be engaging with our many stakeholders on our thoughts to date. We have earmarked our next meeting of UMG in January to take stock and plan out the next phase of this process. The publication this week of our REF14 assessment will also help inform our Plan as we move forward in an increasingly competitive environment.

### **RCUK awards**

RCUK have recently published success rates at institutional level for the financial year 2013/14 and there are two elements of special good news for us. While the overall value of RCUK awards across the sector has decreased by 20.7%, our overall value of RCUK awards has risen by 6.9% - so we are bucking the trend. Also, while the average value of RCUK award has fallen by £50k, our average value of RCUK award has risen by £62k, again significantly against the trend. This is very encouraging, though we cannot ever be complacent, given the competitive landscape highlighted above.

### **New energy building**

Our announcement that we are to go ahead with a new energy building is creating a lot of interest from our various stakeholders, and this will help in shaping the project in these early days. We have now embarked on the formal consultation process prior to seeking planning consent and our team have met over recent weeks with the local community councils and groups, and hosted a public meeting at The Hub with another to follow in January.

### **Enterprise Campus**

Colleagues will recall that the University was ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in the UK in last year's Praxis Unico survey for its success in commercialising research through forming spin-out companies. This month we have had welcome news of significant investment in spin-outs which will bring our research closer to benefiting those in need. SIRAKOSS has secured £3.1m from a syndicate of investors to take forward work on synthetic bone grafts which can be used in trauma, spinal and dental surgery, and a new drug discovered by our Kosterlitz team to treat the common and painful condition of rheumatoid arthritis will be tested on patients next year thanks to a new R&D alliance and global option and licence agreement between Modern Biosciences plc (to whom our spin-out OsteoRx is licensed) and Janssen Biotech, Inc. We were also awarded £0.6m of the Wellcome ISSF Award Institutional Strategic Support Fund (ISSF) This is very encouraging and will support a range of activities to build our Wellcome and translational portfolio.

We have a great tradition in drug discovery, and Marischal College has been highlighted by the British Pharmacological Society in *Putting UK Pharmacology on the Map 2014* for the work of Hans Kosterlitz and John Hughes in isolating the first brain endorphins, and more recently for work led by Roger Pertwee in discovering the first naturally-occurring cannabinoid, which paved the way for pioneering work in cannabinoid-based medicines. Professor Pertwee has also just been recognised by Thomson Reuters as being one of the few scientists in the world to be in the top 1% in terms of being cited by other researchers in the published literature. This is a tremendous accolade.

In addition to building on this great heritage through our research this coming year we will also be introducing new support for staff and students to develop their own clever ideas within a culture which supports enterprise and innovation. News about our Enterprise Campus will follow in the New Year.

### **People news**

I have been delighted to receive many messages over the last few weeks of awards and accolades for colleagues across the University. It would be impossible to mention them all, but I would like to highlight just a few. Tim Ingold our Chair in Social Anthropology was made Knight, First Class, of the Order of the White Rose of Finland for his service to UK-Finnish relations, and the same day, at the British Museum, received the Huxley Memorial Medal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, the highest honour that the Institute presents.

Paul Thompson, of our School of Biological Sciences at the Lighthouse Field Station in Cromarty won the RSPB Nature of Scotland Award for Outstanding Contribution to Nature Conservation, and Professor Chris Secombes marked his elevation to Regius Professor of Natural History with a talk on the key research questions and interests that have driven his studies of the immune system of fish.

Gary Macfarlane was invited to present at the House of Lords as part of the national coalition which brings together parliamentarians, healthcare professionals, commissioners and patient groups to discuss issues affecting chronic pain. As part of this Professor Macfarlane was tasked with establishing a pain epidemiology task force, and through his work the University is now a member of a new £1.4million Arthritis Research UK/MRC research centre to tackle the impact of musculoskeletal disorders on people's ability to work.

Keeping fit, I'm assured, is a great preventative – and where better to do that than Aberdeen Sports Village which successfully defending its Scottish Gym of the Year title at the National Fitness Awards held in Leicester last weekend. Congratulations to the ASV team on also achieving a Gold award in the Investors in People scheme, the highest possible IIP standard, and as an added bonus the Investors in Young People award.

### **Professional development in teaching**

I had the pleasure last week of congratulating a number of our teaching staff, who have recently completed one of the Professional Taught Programmes delivered by the Centre for Academic Development. These Master's level programmes adopt a blended learning approach with supported workshops and structured online learning which gives opportunities to reflect on their own educational practice. Successful completion also entitles staff to receive UK-wide recognition as Fellows of the Higher Education Academy (HEA).

The Centre now offers four part-time Postgraduate Certificate programmes in Higher Education-related topics, and all are aligned explicitly with the UK Professional Standards Framework for Learning & Teaching in Higher Education and fully accredited by the Higher Education Academy (HEA). I know that our Centre for Academic Development is now keen for interest in the Postgraduate Certificate Programmes for the academic year 2015-16, and I encourage staff to find out more.

### **Development Trust**

During the last financial year the Development Trust disbursed £5.2m in charitable grants to the University for a huge variety of projects in all three Colleges, thanks to the generous support of our worldwide family of alumni, friends and

benefactors. This was up from £3.4m in the previous year and the impact of this has benefitted not only our student body but staff, visitors and the wider local community.

In recent months the Development Trust has funded a wide range of scholarships including a 1<sup>st</sup> year Neuroscience with Psychology student, a 1<sup>st</sup> year Medicine student, a 3<sup>rd</sup> year Pharmacology student and a 4<sup>th</sup> year Economics student through the Jim Duncan Scholarship. This scholarship is being funded in perpetuity by the generosity of Dr Mary Duncan, an alumna of the University who left a gift in her will to ensure that students could benefit for generations to come.

Further funding has been received from the Development Trust for a spring visit to the US by the Chamber Choir, specialist energy scholarships, international conference attendance by academics and the research being undertaken by Dr Toyo Fujii through the BP Fellowship in Applied Fisheries which has the potential to inform local and international fishery policies in the future.

Finally I want to wish all colleagues a very well-earned festive break and thank you again for all that we have achieved together this year.

Ian Diamond  
Principal and Vice-Chancellor

*This Update is also available in StaffNet news [here](#)*

**From:** owner-dept-staff@abdn.ac.uk on behalf of Communications  
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**To:** dept-staff@abdn.ac.uk; sa-sabbs@abdn.ac.uk; connected-users@abdn.ac.uk  
**Subject:** Principal's Update: May 2015

## **Principal's Update: May 2015**

Colleagues

As we approach the end of the academic and financial year, we are using the opportunity of our Strategic Plan discussions – and the reality of a challenging financial climate – to take stock of where we are as an organisation, where we want to be, and how we can get there.

For the Scottish, UK, and international higher education sector we know that competition is increasing, and that we need to be more focused in our strategic choices if we are to maintain and grow our position. In our new Strategic Plan we have identified People, Teaching and Learning, and Research as our three big headings. We are now in the process of defining what we need to do to strengthen Teaching and Learning, and Research, and enhance our position as a dynamic, stimulating and caring community for staff and students. This includes determining measures of success and targets. We will complete this exercise in the next few months and will continue to involve staff and students in these discussions.

Our objectives will remain as aspirations however unless we secure the financial sustainability to pay our rising costs as an employer, react to future pressures and developments outwith our control, and have the ability to invest. This will be challenging against a background of constraints on the public purse, and the need to compete with universities across the world who are making large investments in attracting a discerning and mobile student community.

Colleagues will know that we are currently looking across the whole spectrum of our operation to identify how we can achieve this financial sustainability. We need to review current activity and plans to ensure that they dovetail with the direction and ambition in our Strategic Plan. We also need to search for further efficiencies in the way that we run our university. And, thirdly, we must reduce staff costs which are already above the sector average and set to grow with increases to employer contributions to USS pension and national insurance.

Reducing the number of our staff is never easy, and we recognise that this is a source of concern in the staff and student community. Our efforts in managing this situation are directed at ensuring that we maintain the quality of our student experience at Aberdeen. Achieving the goals we have agreed in our Strategic Plan will ultimately contribute further to the 'Aberdeen experience' for staff and students, and the value of an Aberdeen degree.

## **Internationalisation**

We have now signed the agreement to formalise our partnership in Korea to create our first overseas campus. I want to thank our team who built an impressive business case and solid relationships that augur well for the success of this venture. This is a great opportunity for us to gain a foothold in a region of significant potential, through a campus in the Gwangyang Free Economic Zone (GFEZ) in Hadong District in South Korea. Our new campus is a collaborative venture with KOSORI (Korea Shipbuilding & Offshore Research Institute) at Pusan National University, the Korean government and local authorities. The campus, due to open in September 2016, will be a wholly-owned subsidiary of the University of Aberdeen in Korea, delivering University of Aberdeen postgraduate programmes and CPD courses in offshore-related disciplines, and carrying out academic research.

Meanwhile we continue to explore opportunities in transnational education based on work here in our School of Education to develop an International Postgraduate Diploma in Education. Following a concentrated due diligence exercise we have decided not to pursue the opportunity we had been evaluating around medicine in Sri Lanka.

Our international agents across the globe are important partners in our recruitment activity, and we recently hosted on campus 21 representatives from around the world. Delegates to the two-day conference came from China, Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, India, Mexico, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Malaysia. In addition to a whistle-stop tour of the University and its facilities, delegates met with colleagues from all three Colleges and professional services and enjoyed visits to Dunnottar Castle and Glengarioch Distillery. It was a pleasure to welcome such enthusiastic partners and credit goes to all the team here who made the visit such a success.

## **Applicant Days**

The recent Applicant Days proved the most popular yet, inviting applicants holding an unconditional or conditional offer to experience life as a student here, through exploring the campus, meeting academics on their chosen course, visiting their chosen department/school and talking to current students.

519 applicants and 926 parents/guardians attended the Science and Engineering Applicant Day, and attendance at the Arts & Social Sciences Applicant Day was up 7% this year, with 421 applicants and their guests making a total of 835 people keen to find out about studying at the University, including the structure and flexibility of the MA degree.

## **Infrastructure**

Two important new buildings are now nearing completion. The new nursery for the children of staff and students will welcome its first occupants at the start of the autumn term. Some of you will be aware that this is a 'first' for us in several ways, as one of very few buildings in Scotland designed using the Passivhaus style, and is a wonderful opportunity to showcase our commitment to sustainable, low carbon buildings. We expect this to attract attention from many sectors in this region and beyond in the coming months.

We continue to explore with the Crown Estate and RGU the feasibility of a joint renewable energy project to produce enough energy to significantly offset the electricity use of the two universities – delivering long-term economic and environmental benefits and substantial carbon saving. This is a long-term project that remains at an early stage, and I will update colleagues with developments.

On the theme of environmental performance, the Rowett building at Foresterhill has secured a BREEAM rating of 'outstanding' for its sustainable engineering features. This new building is important in confirming our leadership in nutrition research, and the Human Nutrition Unit will be the best in the UK. Rowett scientists continue to grow the profile of their work and expertise at international summits, on prime time TV, at the forthcoming May Festival, and at huge public events such as the recent Edinburgh International Science Festival where their colourful 'discobreads' proved a great hit in demonstrating the potential of reformulating foods for health.

## **University of Aberdeen Development Trust**

The Development Trust plays a huge role in securing the means to make the student experience at Aberdeen all the more special. The Trust's Annual Report is now available, and recognises and thanks our generous supporters who have enabled the Trust to distribute £5.2m to the University during the last financial year. The document features articles about a number of our benefactors including our late rector Dr Maitland Mackie and his wife Dr Haldis Mackie, and I commend it to you, on this link [www.abdn.ac.uk/giving/about](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/giving/about).

Recent disbursements from the Trust have included the 'Come and Try Commonwealth Games Sports Sessions' at Aberdeen Sports Village, the 'Northern Picts: Archaeology of Fortriu' project, a number of Hotstarts laboratory placements for Medicine and Biomedical undergraduates and a PhD Divinity student who has the wonderful opportunity to undertake a placement at Yale in the autumn.

## **People**

As always our students and staff have been distinguishing themselves in many fields, and I can mention here only a few:

Third-year student Allan Mcleod won the Engineering Leadership Advanced Award of the Royal Academy of Engineering. This is a prestigious national award, and comes with £5,000 for personal development over three years and mentoring by industry professionals. This is a tremendous achievement and I want to add my personal congratulations to Allan.

Another engineering student, Michael Ferguson, won the 800 metres at the Scottish Universities Track event this spring, having won the Scottish Universities' Cross Country back in December. Subsea engineering postgraduate Anthimos Pavlidis meanwhile represented Scotland in the Celtic Nations swimming tournament in Glasgow. This is a championship between England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland in a variety of sports, and only two swimmers were selected (from Aberdeen and RGU) to represent Scotland.

As we reached the deadline for applications to this year's Elphinstone PhD Scholarship programme, the achievement of an existing Elphinstone scholar reinforced the value of attracting outstanding PhD candidates through this scheme. Namibian-born Johanna Amunjela featured in Scottish and African media for her research, supervised by Dr Steve Tucker in Pharmacology, on identifying specific proteins which appear to directly affect the development and spread of cancer.

I am delighted that Professor Neil Gow who heads up the Aberdeen Fungal Group has been recognised for his exceptional contribution to the medical sciences by being elected as a Fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences and that Professor Marcel Jaspars has been made Fellow of The Royal Society of Edinburgh, in recognition of his work in the discovery of new pharmaceuticals and enzymes from marine biodiversity.

And I also congratulate Professor Russell Howe in Chemistry on securing a highly sought-after British Council Newton Award to host a conference in conjunction with Universitas Indonesia in Jakarta next year, the aim of which will be to grow long-term collaborations.

It's always rewarding to read about the influence our academic colleagues have had on thinking in so many fields of knowledge. We had an excellent example recently with Professor Celso Grebogi quoted in *Quanta*, the major US science magazine in a feature on Strange Nonchaotic Stars for his work with colleagues at the University of Maryland back in 1984 which identified strange nonchaotic attractors for the very first time. The story names the University of Aberdeen as the location in which this important work on chaos theory, and its many applications in our everyday lives, is being taken forward.

### **And finally...**

We will be showcasing more University talent than ever before at this year's May Festival this coming weekend. There are still tickets left for several events so I encourage colleagues who have not yet booked to do so now, taking advantage of the staff discount, on [www.abdn.ac.uk/mayfest](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/mayfest)

Ian Diamond  
Principal and Vice-Chancellor

*This Update is also available in StaffNet news [here](#)*

**From:** owner-dept-staff@abdn.ac.uk on behalf of Communications  
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**To:** dept-staff@abdn.ac.uk; sa-sabbs@abdn.ac.uk; connected-users@abdn.ac.uk  
**Subject:** Principal's Update: July 2015

## Principal's Update: July 2015

### Colleagues

At no time is our *raison d'être* clearer than at Graduation Week. We came together two weeks ago in a reunion of the 'Aberdeen family' to celebrate with pride our new members, and welcome back alumni returning as inspiring speakers, donors, supporters and friends, and of course as proud parents.

We applauded individual perseverance and achievement, heard fond memories of the Aberdeen experience from former graduates who have achieved so much in so many fields, and recognised that none of this would be possible without the quality of teaching by colleagues at the peak of their profession, more of which below.

I was struck not only by the quality of the speeches - including from our new honorary graduates - but also by the heartfelt personal messages for students graduating into a challenging labour market, armed with the advantage of an Aberdeen degree. The pace of change was a recurring theme, with the need to keep an eye on the horizon and be prepared and ready for the opportunities. I believe this is as applicable to our University as it is to our graduating students.

We are very well placed, with the strength of great teaching and a strong research base with demonstrated impact - all acknowledged this year through the ELIR, the REF, and in international league tables. We have also demonstrated progress in our underpinning values, including equality and diversity (Athena Swan and Project Search), in our journey towards environmental sustainability (our new nursery and carbon management plan), and in the pastoral and learning support and opportunities we encourage across our student and staff community. And our commitment to internationalisation has taken a major step forward with the campus in Korea.

Last October we commemorated our founder Bishop Elphinstone on the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death, with a service in Latin that he would have recognised, made all the more special by the brilliance of our Chapel Choir. Excellence and innovation are not words the Bishop would be familiar with, though I suspect that he would have recognised them in action, as core to taking forward his mission to create a university dedicated to *the pursuit of truth in the service of others*.

A world enriched through greater knowledge is still our mission, and the biggest consultation we have ever undertaken for our new Strategic Plan has yielded a lot of feedback which confirms a shared vision of where we want to take this university, the strengths we will build on, and the opportunities we have to pursue. I am pleased to say this vision was approved at the most recent meeting of Court, and I look forward to implementing this plan as we seek to articulate our mission and become ever better known globally.

Growth requires investment, and we have many challenges to our ability to invest which are outwith our control. These include our obligations and rising costs as an employer in terms of pension and national insurance contributions. Additionally we face a challenging landscape as a UK university in an increasingly competitive international market. . What is certain is continuing fiscal constraint and possibly a reduction of public funding at UK level. We will also be constrained by the continuing impact of immigration policy on recruitment of international students.

We have updated our governors on our programme to achieve the financial sustainability which will enable us to address these pressures and uncertainties, with a separate paper outlining the benefits of a limited restructuring within our Colleges and greater devolution of budgetary responsibility to our Schools. In his most recent update to staff Jeremy Kilburn has provided further detail on these proposals, as well as on the joint agreement reached between the university and UCU which led to the University Court agreeing to extend the university's voluntary severance and early retirement scheme. I look forward to further discussions taking place around our restructuring proposals in the weeks ahead, and would encourage staff to involve themselves as fully as possible in this process.

### People

As always, we have too many individual achievements to name, but it would be remiss to not begin by congratulating Professor Anne Glover on being made a Dame in the Queen's Birthday Honours, Mr John Duncan, director of undergraduate teaching for our medical students in Inverness, who received an OBE, and of course Mrs Iris Paterson (Mrs P) who is now the proud recipient of a British Empire Medal.

I mentioned at the start colleagues in each of our Colleges who were voted by their students to receive the annual Awards for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching at Graduations. Passion for their subject, enthusiasm and energy, and innovative teaching styles – and also care, support, and positive student experience - came through strongly in the nominations. So many congratulations to Dr Tania Fahey Palma, Dr Emily Nordmann, and Professor Corrie Imrie, and also to colleagues who were just pipped at the post.

I saw many colleagues at Graduations congratulating Liza Young on being voted Scottish PA of the Year 2015 by ACES & Brook Street, having survived all the drama of a live vote. Liza provides a brilliant service to Professors Mike Greaves and Neva Haite and the team at the CLSM, and this recognition is truly well deserved.

It was a joy to see Professor Alex Kemp recognised by the oil industry for a lifetime of achievement in the first ever Press & Journal Gold Awards. Our world-leading petroleum economist was honoured for his key role in policy-making, including as specialist adviser to the UK House of Commons select committee, and is the first person to be inducted into the North Sea Hall of Fame.

Professor Tom Greggs has been appointed a member of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, the think tank constituted by official representatives of churches belonging to the main historical streams of Christianity and a unique multilateral, global forum of ecumenical theology. Tom is one of 40 commissioners from 33 countries on the Commission which is the main forum for theology for this huge global NGO.

On a similar theme I want to mention recent achievements of colleagues in our Centre for Ministry Studies. We have a community of many faiths and none, and it is important that no-one is disadvantaged in their quest for spirituality. Professor John Swinton's work with the Kairos Forum and support for spirituality in people with various types of disability is truly path breaking, along with his successful nomination of Jean Vanier for the Templeton Prize. John is now hoping to bring to Aberdeen the Lochman Lectures, which are a partnership between the Universities of Zurich and Basel and a coalition of their local churches. These lectures bring together church and academy in interdisciplinary scholarly conversations around a variety of key issues, as a biannual event running in different countries across Europe. I hope that we can bring them to Aberdeen in the not too distant future.

An Aberdeen dental student who is leading a group of her classmates to Africa this summer to teach oral health to locals is among four students to receive our 2015 Quincentenary Prize. Clare Lowe received the award alongside fellow winners, dental student Paul Roden, Buba Bojang from the School of Law and Magdalena Blanz from the Chemistry department. The annual Quincentenary Prize was established to mark the University's 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary and recognises the exceptional efforts and talents of students.

I was delighted to present this year's Principal's Prize for Public Engagement in front of a capacity audience at this year's brilliantly successful May Festival. Senior staff recognised were Professor of Politics, Michael Keating, who took the overall prize, and Professor of Ecology, Xavier Lambin who was recognised for his outstanding achievement. Early career staff were also recognised with history of art researcher Fern Insh winning top prize followed by Heather Morgan of the Health Services Research Unit taking the runner up award. This year, a new category inspired by the University's recently secured Wellcome Trust Institution Strategic Support Fund was introduced, with the prize going to Dr Jennie Macdiarmid of the Rowett Institute of Nutrition and Health. I congratulate them all, and also the huge and enthusiastic contribution of our community to making this flagship public festival go from strength to strength

I want to thank all our alumni and friends whose generosity has increased the total for the past year's Regular Giving campaign by almost 50%. £170,000 was received for a range of projects and areas including research into Alzheimer's disease and support for the Robertson Trust Bursary Scheme with 'the area of greatest need' continuing to attract donations. I also want to mention local cancer research charity CRANES, whose recent grants of over £200K bring their total support of medical research underway at the University to over £2 million.

And finally, Graduation week is getting longer! On Saturday of graduation week, it was the turn of our undergraduates of the future, with the first graduations from the Aberdeen Children's University. This was a delightful event and an opportunity to inspire ambitious young pupils from P5 to S1 to aim for a University experience. I was very pleased that we were asked to host this first event in the hall where throughout the week thousands of our students had celebrated their achievement programme. My brief is to get across the spirit of ambition and to increase aspiration – with a reminder that hard work gains rewards.

But we all need occasional therapeutic downtime, and I hope you all enjoy a break over the summer whenever it comes.



Ian Diamond  
Principal and Vice-Chancellor

**From:** Communications  
**Sent:** 31 August 2015 12:48  
**To:** List - Staff; List - Honorary; sa-sabbs@abdn.ac.uk  
**Subject:** Principal's Update: August 2015

## Principal's Update: August 2015

Colleagues

As the media spotlight falls on higher education following the release of Higher and A-level results, the debate this year included, understandably, the value of a university degree in today's changing labour market.

It's a question we addressed a few years ago when our curriculum reform project brought institutional focus to the entire learning and development role of a university, and integrated the development of graduate attributes and other advantages for employability into our teaching and co-curricular programmes. It's gratifying that we were named recently as one of the top 10 universities in the UK for graduate employability by *The Daily Telegraph*. This league table was based on the proportion of 2013/14 graduates entering employment or further study within six months, and our position is testament to the quality of our students and their learning, our teaching staff, careers team, and our close relationships with employers across a wide range of business and industry.

Yet, it is equally important to recognise that a degree is not simply a 'passport' to employment. An Aberdeen education is much more than that, offering a real base from which our graduates can proceed on to the next stage of their lives. We are reminded frequently by our alumni and others how special the Aberdeen experience was for them and the impact it has had, and continues to have, on their lives.

Recent developments, including our investment in cutting edge IT systems to improve our student experience and to run our business affairs more efficiently, bring further potential to create something unique on our campuses. I want to thank the team who have worked tirelessly over recent months to make MyCurriculum and MyTimetable breakthroughs for new and returning students in managing their own course choices and timetables. The demonstration I attended was really exciting, and I'm delighted to hear that by this morning almost 4,000 students had selected their courses online, and 2,000 have already used MyTimetable.

We have just concluded another busy admissions cycle, including a successful RUK campaign. I look forward to confirming our student numbers in a few weeks when we welcome our new students onto campus. Before that we have our Open Day tomorrow, and I will be joining colleagues in welcoming huge numbers of prospective students and their families onto campus, and conveying to them the enthusiasm I know we all feel for our University and why an ambitious student should make us their number-one choice.

Important as our programmes, facilities and support are, we know that it is the quality and commitment of all our people, whatever role they have at Aberdeen, that makes the difference. We all have a role to play in creating the community of excellence and opportunity to which thousands of ambitious new students are now preparing to journey, from all corners of the globe, entrusting us with their dreams.

Our current initiatives to generate savings, adjust our structures and achieve efficiencies are all geared to getting ourselves in the best possible shape and position to take our university and its student experience to a new level. There is no room for complacency or inaction, facing, as we do, intense competition from traditional rivals and newcomers. But we have a very strong base to build on. As you know, the Strategic Plan will shape our priorities, and we are now at the stage of developing School Plans that will have real local ownership of academic and strategic developments. I look forward, with my senior management team, to discussing these with colleagues, and considering how best we build on our areas of strength and how we seek out and exploit new strategic opportunities. There is a series of opportunities for these discussions next month at open meetings to which I am delighted to invite all staff. Dates, times and venues are given at the end of this Update.

## National Student Survey (NSS)

Detailed analysis of the complex datasets delivered through the recently-published NSS is still ongoing, but we can see already that our performance has improved over last year. Colleagues are now working on data at School level and this will be disseminated to colleagues when available. We can see that new initiatives around assessment and feedback have had a positive impact on levels of student satisfaction in terms of quality and speed, and that our

investment in new buildings and learning and IT resources has been well received by students. I want to thank all colleagues who encouraged our students to take part and improve our response rate on previous years.

### **Living Wage Employer**

I am delighted to share with colleagues the exciting news that the University is now an accredited Living Wage Employer. This recognises the commitment we have demonstrated since 2013 in paying all directly employed staff at least the level of the Living Wage, and, importantly, our stipulation that all contractors engaged by the University are also committed to honouring the living wage for their own staff working on University premises. The Living Wage is currently £7.85 per hour and is reviewed annually with a new rate taking effect from November of each year. I want to thank colleagues who have worked with our student representatives and campus trade unions to achieve this recognition of our commitment to our staff community and to paying a living wage. This is completely in line with the underpinning commitment in our Strategic Plan that our people are at the heart of our shared vision for this University.

### **News of recent research**

I am always delighted to hear of the efforts and considerable achievements of colleagues, and want to mention two examples of prodigious activity which is growing already acknowledged areas of strength. First I was privileged to talk with a number of colleagues in English recently. This has been another great year for the WORD Centre for Creative Writing, where the four core members have all published books in 2015 and all with excellent reviews; Alan Spence's new play has been, rightly, praised highly and four staff in English have published monographs. I am very conscious of the considerable effort that goes into producing monographs such as these and we should all be proud of these achievements.

I was also pleased to receive the Geosciences newsletter. This gives a long list of publications emanating from our colleagues in Geosciences, covering a wide range of topics. Colleagues have also secured a healthy tally of successful funding applications, frequent contributions to international conferences and invitations to speak to prestigious professional groups and leading multinational companies. All in all, evidence of thriving academic enterprise.

### **International developments**

Our international links and partnerships continue to grow, bringing opportunities for staff and students as we continue to internationalise the University in every sense. It was a pleasure to welcome, in July, Charles Hay, the UK's ambassador to Korea, and to update him on our exciting plans for our first overseas campus. We will be showcasing this important development for the University, and the industry, at this year's Offshore Europe exhibition.

Jeremy Kilburn led a delegation to Curtin University in Perth, Western Australia, to follow up the Memorandum of Understanding we signed in July. We want to explore the development of joint degrees and research partnerships across a broad range of disciplines including energy, medicine and literature, and to facilitate student and staff exchanges and joint professional training opportunities for staff.

The agreement Seth Kunin signed this summer to explore collaboration with Harbin Engineering University (HEU) in China – witnessed by Scotland's First Minister - could result in HEU students entering higher level teaching programmes at Aberdeen, co-operation in civil engineering programmes, and collaborative applications for contracts in research and consultancy.

We also hosted a delegation from Indonesia's oil and gas regulator, SKK MIGAS, to discuss plans for our colleagues to deliver training to SKK MIGAS staff across our oil and gas related disciplines, as a precursor to the signing of an MoU in Jakarta later this year. Emre Usenmez in our Law School must take credit for this visit, and I look forward to hearing more about this exciting project later this year.

Similarly Adam Price in Biological Sciences deserves mention for bringing a delegation from Assam Agricultural University to Aberdeen to explore five areas of common interest and potential academic and research links. I look forward to our colleagues making a return visit to this area of north-east India in February 2016, extending a collaboration begun in 2008 and an excellent example of Aberdeen research impacting on a critical world issue to feed a growing global population.

I also find it hugely energising to see our research students sharing their ideas and work and making new friends with their counterparts from across the world. This summer we were delighted to welcome the annual International Student Research Forum, now in its tenth year, and I was privileged to make the opening address. Research students from China, Australia, USA and Denmark joined PhD students from our College of Life Sciences and Medicine to share their research and make new professional links.

### **People**

Staff will be aware of changes in the leadership of the College of Life Sciences and Medicine, and I want to add my personal thanks to Mike Greaves for all that he has done for the University and to wish him best wishes for his retirement. I welcome Phil Hannaford and Steve Heys to their new roles as, respectively, Head of College and Head of the new combined School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition, which has huge potential as a centre of excellence in teaching and research. I also want to thank David Reid for his contribution in a number of roles as he retires from his post as Head of the School of Medicine and Dentistry. Fred Stevenson-Robb, Director of Research and Innovation, is also retiring having given over 30 years' service and been instrumental in supporting academic staff and successfully commercialising research.

I want particularly to commend colleagues at the Dental School for the work they have done over the past year, and look forward to the forthcoming report from the General Dental Council. I thank Sarah Duffy for leading the team through a challenging period, and welcome our new director Richard Ibbetson who will take the Dental School forward as a hub of professional excellence for the dental profession in north Scotland.

I am delighted also to welcome Naveed Qamar who has joined us in the new role of Director of Health, Safety and Wellbeing and will report to me. Naveed was formerly Group Safety Director at First Group Plc, and brings a wealth of experience gained across the public sector and industry.

It was great to hear of the triumph of colleagues, students and partner organisations in scooping the national CUBO Awards in the Campaign of the Year category for the *CluedUp* student safety campaign led by the Directorate of Student Life, and the Excellence in Student Sport Experience category, in which our Sport and Exercise Team - working in partnership with the student Sports Union and Aberdeen Sports Village – beat off some of the best sporting universities in the UK with their 'non-competitive' exercise opportunities to help students tackle the pressures of student life by boosting wellbeing. This was a brilliant partnership with our students, and I'm looking forward to working with the new team of sabbatical officers. I'm pleased that Megan Burgoyne was able to attend BUCS annual conference this summer, at which I was privileged to speak.

It was a joy to see not only Aberdeen Sports Village hosting the Scottish National Athletics Championships this summer, but also our own University athletes enjoying such success. Zoey Clark, chemical engineering student who holds the John Robertson Sports Scholarship, won Gold in the woman's 400m, and Kelsey Stewart, who starts at the University this term, picked up Bronze in the same event. Fellow UoA athlete Stephen Dunlop won Bronze in the Men's 100m, with Michael Ferguson finishing fourth in the Men's 800m. Both are University of Aberdeen Development Trust Sport Bursars. Earlier this summer Zoey won gold with Great Britain & Northern Ireland at the Euro Under-23 athletics championship in the 4 x 400m relays - a fantastic achievement.

We enjoy a warm and productive partnership with the MacRobert Trust, and welcome Rear Admiral Chris Hockley as the new head of the Trust. We are keen that newcomers in our community are aware of how our MacRobert Building received its name. A brand new plaque will be arriving soon, recognising the Trust's generosity towards the University, and including a QR code linking to a webpage on the history of our links to the Trust, including the delightful memorial garden near Wrights and Coopers Place and the Trust's generous gifts to the Sir Duncan Rice Library.

Speaking of the Library, I want to thank Diane Bruxvoort and her library team – and Estates and IT colleagues - who pulled together so magnificently following last week's power outage to find other ways to provide library services for staff and students. It's good news that we are back up and running in time for Open Day and our students returning to campus.

I've been struck by how impressive the Cruickshank Gardens have looked over a rather challenging summer. The passion and commitment of Mark Paterson and his team, including the student and local resident volunteers, is very evident. Enjoyment and use of the Gardens continues to grow. This summer we have had research plots showcasing experimental work of UG, PG, and academic colleagues, and visitors through the gates have come not only from Scotland but England, America, Canada, Sweden, Germany, Turkey and Romania.

On the theme of outdoors I want to pass my very best wishes for a speedy recovery to our groundsman Michael Crombie, who suffered a fall at Foresterhill, and now, I am pleased to hear, is back at home.

I also want to mention colleagues in Music. Our composers Phillip Cooke and Paul Meador are both featured on 'The Eternal Ecstasy', a new CD recorded by the Chapel Choir of Selwyn College, Cambridge, including a newly-commissioned work from Dr Cooke, as well as works by Morten Lauridsen, James MacMillan and David Bednall. Gemma McGregor, who is studying for a PhD in composition with Paul and Phillip will have her composition 'Egilsay Kirk' performed by the BBC Singers as part of Choir & Organ Magazine's choral composition workshop in London in September. My wife, Jane, was privileged to attend a wonderful talk by Paul Meador on Music and Faith, at the three Choirs Festival in Hereford Cathedral this summer. Paul will be speaking on Music and Remembrance in Cardiff as part of the BBC Radio 4 coverage of this November's Day of Remembrance. Another highlight this autumn

will be our Chamber Choir performing at the London Scottish lunch in November at The Savoy with the Princess Royal in attendance. The London Scottish rugby club has committed to raising at least £15,000 for our Spinal Cord Injury research team at Foresterhill plus 50% of additional money raised at the event if it tops £75,000. The Choir will sing in London twice that week as they will also sing at our annual London Carol Service.

And finally, it had to happen! BBC Songs of Praise comes to St Machar Cathedral for its Christmas Eve edition and we hope many in our community will want lend their voices to what is sure to be a loud, proud, and happy event, and a wonderful showcase for the University and our lovely campus. Details of how to apply will be circulated in the next couple of weeks. And, it seems, Christmas jumpers are welcomed.

Ian Diamond  
Principal and Vice-Chancellor

*This Update is also available on Staffnet [here](#)*

### **Invitation to open meetings for all staff**

All staff are invited to open meetings to hear from Principal and senior management colleagues about the challenges and opportunities ahead for the University, and ask questions. There is no need to book.

#### **King's College:**

- **Friday 11 September, 12.00 to 1.00pm – Regent Lecture Theatre (professional services)**
- **Tuesday 15 September, 1.00 to 2.00pm – Fraser Noble Lecture Theatre 3 (academic)**

#### **Foresterhill:**

- **Friday 18 September, 1.00 to 2.00pm – Med-Chi Hall (professional services)**
- **Tuesday 22 September, 1.30 to 2.30pm – Med-Chi Hall (academic)**

**From:** Communications  
**Sent:** 08 October 2015 13:20  
**To:** List - Staff; List - Honorary; sa-sabbs@abdn.ac.uk  
**Subject:** Principal's Update: October 2015

## Principal's Update: October 2015

Colleagues

I firstly want to thank all colleagues for their contribution to the news last week that we have risen six places to 172 in the latest Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings, increasing our score across all criteria. This is further evidence of our progress in an increasingly competitive global education environment. In the UK we were assessed as 29<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> in Scotland. A particularly welcome placing is 9<sup>th</sup> position in the UK for income from industry. This is very exciting, especially for the employability of our graduates, and it's important that our School Strategic Plans build on this. It's also very encouraging to be judged 14<sup>th</sup> in the UK for International Outlook, and suggests that our internationalisation strategy is really starting to pay dividends.

These results come just weeks after another positive showing for the University in the QS World University Rankings, at position 137, and with a rise one place to 23<sup>rd</sup> in the UK. Aberdeen's ranking for Academic Reputation went up two places from 26<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> in the UK and on a worldwide basis we increased our scores for Employer Reputation, Staff: Student Ratio, International Students and International Staff.

All this is giving us a strong foundation to drive forward our new Strategic Plan. Printed copies of the full plan and pocket summaries will be distributed shortly across the organisation. I will be sending copies to our key influencers and stakeholders with a covering letter stressing the scale of our ambition and the important role played by their continued support and engagement.

Operational planning continues meanwhile, and I want to thank again all staff who attended the recent open meetings. These have been a brilliant opportunity for discussion on our opportunities and challenges and I look forward to more of these sessions in the coming months.

### Court strategy day

We were able last week to invest a whole day with our Court, reviewing in detail the strategic context within which the University operates. I presented the political context that we face, Jeremy Kilburn took Court members through our planning systems and processes, and Steve Heys presented on the ambitions of our new School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition.

We updated Court members on the OneSource programme, and a demonstration of *My Curriculum* and *MyTimetable* was very well received, as was the news that over 12,000 students have now used these online tools to take ownership of their course programmes. Much effort went into introducing these systems and helping students to use them, and I want to thank again all those involved. I know that the team wishes in turn to thank all colleagues who have given feedback to date, and to remind others of the email to do this – which is [studentlifecycle@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:studentlifecycle@abdn.ac.uk) (Subject Header FEEDBACK).

Our student officers gave an excellent presentation entitled '*Not your average student*', encouraging all of us to acknowledge and celebrate the increasing diversity of our student community and to think about how we can meet the very differing needs of ambitious young people coming to our University from all circumstances and regions of the world. An important partnership with our students is the new programme of fee waivers, accommodation and support for living costs for students with refugee status who have come to the UK. The University will fund an initial four scholarships, two at UG and two at PG level, and our hope is that philanthropic support from our alumni and other donors will enable this programme to grow. Peter McGeorge will be the initial contact on this.

### City Deal ambitions

Our own strategy, while international in its ambition, will thrive best within a strong and sustainable region. We have been working for some months with our partners at Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils on detailed proposals for our £2.9 billion bid to the UK Treasury for investment into the North-east through the City Deal scheme. A key pillar of our joint ambition is the development of a high-value innovation agenda for the North-east, spanning both universities and industry, and focused on a multi-disciplinary innovation hub undertaking near-market, industry-led

research across some of Scotland's key sectors, namely oil and gas, renewable energy, food and drink, life sciences, and big data. This is an enormously exciting prospect and I look forward to sharing developments with our University community.

Meanwhile I'm delighted to see a new partnership bringing life to the former medical school accommodation in Marischal College, space which has been surplus to requirements since the Suttie Centre opened in 2009. 'The Anatomy Rooms' will now nurture creative arts through a new organisation, supported by a grant from the City and addressing a recognised local need for such a space, with support and mentoring.

Our local 'town and gown' links are close and supportive, and I was pleased to represent the University at the Rededication Service last Sunday for the memorial headstone in St Nicholas Churchyard to Dr William Guild, former Principal and first patron in 1633 of the Seven Incorporated Trades of Aberdeen. This followed a visit to Fraserburgh on Saturday to attend graduations at North East Scotland College, and share in the pride and achievement of young people and their families in north Aberdeenshire, many of whom will hopefully set their sights on university.

### **Converge Challenge success**

I'm absolutely delighted that our outstanding track record in commercialising clever ideas has again brought distinction in the prestigious national Converge Challenge competition. Elasmogen, led by Andrew Porter and Caroline Barelle, claimed second spot in the main competition, and EuroBiotix UK, the business idea of fourth year medical students James McIlroy and Matthew Bracchi, triumphed in the Social Enterprise Award category. Managing Information in Medical Services (MIME), developed by Alasdair Mort and Phillip Wilson also made it through to the final six of the competition. These successes follow the achievement in 2014 of students Chukwudi Onyia and Jonas Marcius of Next Stage Health and Wellbeing Education who jointly won the KickStart Social Enterprise Award. And in 2013 Madhu Nair, founder of Saccade Diagnostics, our spin-out which uses eye movement as a psychiatric diagnostic tool, won the coveted top prize in that year's Converge Challenge.

### **THE awards shortlisting**

Bringing sparkle to the short days of November are the annual THE awards, widely viewed as the Oscars of the UK's HE sector. Being shortlisted in any category is a great achievement and we are in with a very good chance this year of bringing three awards to Aberdeen. The greenhouse gas calculator developed by Jon Hillier and colleagues in Biological Sciences is shortlisted for the Research Project of the Year, and also in the Outstanding Contribution to Innovation and Technology category. The Cool Farm tool is a great success story for the University, a major international industrial collaboration and a brilliant example of impact.

We are also shortlisted in the Outstanding Support for Early Career Researchers category for EXPLORATHON, the European Researchers' Night Scotland which took place on Friday 25 September. Supported by the European Commission and led by the University's Public Engagement with Research Unit in partnership with the Universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow and Strathclyde, evaluation indicates that 2,500 people in Aberdeen attended events (likely to be over 7,000 across Scotland), 100 staff and students were involved from our University alone, and the twittersphere was buzzing with 1,400 tweets generating 2.6 million twitter impressions in the pan-Scotland social media campaign.

### **RSE awards reception**

Last month an impressive number of our academic colleagues were honoured in the annual awards of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Eight of our awardees are pictured on the front cover of the autumn newsletter: Hazel Hutchison, Alexandra Lewis, Elizabeth Elliott, Helen Dooley, Amy Bryzgel, Aideen O'Leary, Heather Morgan and Wei Pang. Awards also went this year to Alasdair Mort for MIME, Caroline Barelle for Elasmogen, and Peter Duff in Law. You can see photos from the awards reception and read the full list of winners in the latest *resource* newsletter on this link

<https://www.royalsoced.org.uk/news/news.php?id=340>

### **Iona Abbey education project**

I was hugely privileged this week to see a presentation by David Smith, Katrina Foy and Aloyise Mulligan of a wonderful project they have undertaken to develop a game-based learning technology initiative 'Tales of Iona' to improve the understanding among school children of Iona's place in our heritage. It was an outstanding presentation of some exciting educational research and demonstrated once more the strengths we have both in research and in pedagogy across the university.

### **Head teachers' dinner**

I was able to enthuse about the Iona project, and the University as a whole, when I met many of our local head teachers over dinner. These are some of our most important stakeholders and it is always good to share the challenges we both face and discuss how best to smooth the transitions of our students between our two sectors.

### **Sixth Century Forum**

I have been very pleased over the last few months to support the activities of the Sixth Century Forum. I welcome this initiative and look forward to the fruits of its labour. One initial suggestion, from Martin Barker in the School of Biological Sciences, was that we need to coordinate conversations leading to, potentially, interdisciplinary research. In the medium term I see this being an activity of a proposed Institute of Advanced Studies, but in the short term I would welcome suggestions of areas of research to which we would potentially contribute and which would benefit from some round tables or sandpits. I look forward to suggestions.

### **Energy Law**

I had a great meeting this week with the Energy Law team, led by John Paterson. We are privileged to have such a strong group of scholars with research and teaching activities across the globe, and covering the full range of energy issues from hydrocarbons through to wind. It was excellent to share in the enthusiasm of the team to continue to build Aberdeen's reputation in this area.

### **Peace campaigner for Carnegie Lecture**

One event I particularly want to draw to colleagues' attention is the second Andrew Carnegie Lecture on 20 October. We are honoured to welcome Jerry White, Nobel Peace Laureate and anti-landmine campaigner. At the age of 20 Mr White lost his leg to a landmine explosion while hiking in northern Israel, and has dedicated his life to non-proliferation and building resilience in individuals and communities affected by violent conflict. The 1997 Nobel Prize for Peace was awarded to his organisation the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, and his trip that year to Bosnia-Herzegovina with the late Princess Diana turned the spotlight on victims of landmines worldwide. I am very much looking forward to welcoming Mr White to Aberdeen and hearing him speak on the theme of *Religion, Violence and Strategy: How to Stop Killing in God's Name*, and I encourage colleagues to secure their place by booking [here](#).

### **Winter is coming...**

We've been reminded this week that autumn is on the advance, bringing ideal conditions for the unpleasant cold and other viruses which spread so easily in the workplace. I would like to stress to colleagues that should you feel unwell and have symptoms of an infection please do stay at home until you are well again. The wellbeing of all members of our community is an integral part of our developing strategy for Health, Safety and Wellbeing, and I look forward to sharing our new strategy in the coming weeks.

And finally, for an example of wonderful inspiration, dedication and sheer grit, we need look no further than the fantastic achievement of our student Emma Lister, who swam the English Channel, in support of a health issue very dear to her family. Emma is featured on the home page of our website and this short video shows the challenge she was up against and overcame in a day I'm sure she'll remember all her life. Well done Emma – the University is very proud of you!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lt8g1X4pbvk>

Ian Diamond  
Principal and Vice-Chancellor

*This Update is also available on Staffnet news [here](#).*



**From:** Communications  
**Sent:** 23 November 2015 12:44  
**To:** List - Staff; List - Honorary; sa-sabbs@abdn.ac.uk  
**Subject:** Principal's update - November 2015

## Principal's Update

November 2015



### Colleagues

The autumn term is flying by faster than the leaves falling from the trees outside my office. This week we celebrate our winter graduations and as always I am looking forward to seeing our graduates and their families enjoying this very special day which they will remember all their lives. In so doing they will certainly remember the encouragement and hard work by so many of our colleagues that has enabled them to get to this happy day.

Meanwhile very different conversations are taking place north and south of the border with respect to the future of higher education in the UK. In Westminster, the UK government released its Green Paper on Higher Education. This proposes some changes to the architecture of English Higher Education with the HEFCE and the Office of Fair Access amalgamating into a new Office for Students; a largely metrics based Teaching Excellence Framework linked to the ability to raise the level of fees by RPI; a proposed move of the REF to the Research Councils and a new metrics based mid-REF review to identify emerging areas of research; and the removal of English institutions from Fol.

We await the results of the consultation of the Green Paper, and will be working through - with other Scottish universities - the implications for us. A key input on research to the Green Paper will be the report of the Review of Research Councils by Sir Paul Nurse, expected before the Chancellor makes his autumn statement on Wednesday.

All these will lead into the discussions about the Scottish Government's budget for Higher Education which will continue alongside the discussions on the Higher Education Governance Bill. All of this makes it a fluid time for higher education policy but, for us, the key thing will be to continue to deliver the very high quality education and research for which we are rightly praised.

One conversation which is certainly not getting enough attention is the contribution Scotland's universities can make to growing the economy. Last year Rob Woodward, CEO of the STV Group and I agreed to co-chair a new Growing Value Scotland (GVS) Task Force, with the aim of exploring ways to connect the natural inventiveness of universities with the innovation needs of companies and the Scottish economy. Our work built on a UK-wide inquiry undertaken by the National Centre for Universities and Business (NCUB) into fostering greater business/industry and university collaboration in future.

Our interim report *Growing Value: Business – University Collaboration for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* has just been published. One of our key findings is that whilst university-based research spend in Scotland is above the UK average as a percentage of GDP, spending by business in this area lags considerably behind the majority of the UK. In fact only 3% of the total investment in research and development across the UK is derived from businesses in Scotland and we clearly need to understand why this is the case, and how Scotland's industrial base can undertake more R&D. The full report is available on the [GVS webpage](#).

This University is acknowledged for the high impact of its research and our success in commercialising clever ideas; building on this strength is fundamental in our new Strategic Plan. Printed copies are now being distributed across our campuses, and a digital version with videos is now on our [website here](#). In addition to the year of internal conversations in our community, we also benefited from contributions made by our partners and stakeholders, and I shall be writing to them this week to stress the value and importance of their continuing engagement in taking our ambitions forward.

Internally many of our most important discussions take place at meetings of Senate, as our main academic body. As part of our recent Senate Effectiveness Review, we engaged with staff and students from across the University to find out how we could enhance the operation of Senate, and one of the outcomes was the [Senate Digest](#), a concise overview for staff following each Senate meeting, the first of which headlined the weekly StaffNet ezine. I enjoy the breadth of discussion at these meetings, and I hope that the *Digest* will be helpful to all the community in following these discussions.

[Click here to read the Principal's update in full](#), with updates on:

- Vice-Principal portfolios
- Visitors on campus
- Chinese conversations
- Ideas put forward for Sixth Century Forum
- Leadership Academy
- International recognition for colleagues
- And more

**From:** Communications  
**Sent:** 23 November 2015 13:41  
**To:** List - Staff; List - Honorary; sa-sabbs@abdn.ac.uk  
**Subject:** Principal's update November 2015: reissued

It's come to our attention that there may have been an error with the links in the update previously sent, so now re-sending corrected.

## Principal's Update

November 2015



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This University is acknowledged for the high impact of its research and our success in commercialising clever ideas; building on this strength is fundamental in our new Strategic Plan. Printed copies are now being distributed across our campuses, and a digital version with videos is now on our [website here](#). In addition to the year of internal conversations in our community, we also benefited from contributions made by our partners and stakeholders, and I

shall be writing to them this week to stress the value and importance of their continuing engagement in taking our ambitions forward.

Internally many of our most important discussions take place at meetings of Senate, as our main academic body. As part of our recent Senate Effectiveness Review, we engaged with staff and students from across the University to find out how we could enhance the operation of Senate, and one of the outcomes was the [Senate Digest](#), a concise overview for staff following each Senate meeting, the first of which headlined the weekly StaffNet ezine. I enjoy the breadth of discussion at these meetings, and I hope that the *Digest* will be helpful to all the community in following these discussions.

[Click here to read the Principal's update in full](#), with updates on:

- Vice-Principal portfolios
- Visitors on campus
- Chinese conversations
- Ideas put forward for Sixth Century Forum
- Leadership Academy
- International recognition for colleagues
- And more

**From:** Communications  
**Sent:** 18 December 2015 16:10  
**To:** List - Staff; sa-sabbs@abdn.ac.uk; researchpostgrads1@abdn.ac.uk; List - Honorary  
**Subject:** Principal's update - December 2015

## Principal's Update

December 2015



Colleagues

### Spending Review

Following the UK Spending Review on 25 November we gained greater knowledge of the future structure of research funding in the UK. The Research Councils will remain but will work together under the banner of Research UK, which will be governed by a Board including senior scientists. This was one of the key recommendations of the Review chaired by Sir Paul Nurse, a review accepted in full by the Chancellor who also protected research funding in real terms as well as providing extra funds for some global challenges. This funding boost is very welcome.

We have also recently received news of the resulting Scottish Budget. Protection of health, education and the police means that other areas, including higher education, will receive in 2016/17 significant cuts. Unlike Westminster the impending Scottish elections mean that we only have a one year budget settlement. The implications for the University will not be properly known until the New Year, but it is clear that we will need to manage our budgets carefully over the next year as we will receive significantly less money from the Scottish Government. However, I want to make it clear that the University remains in a very healthy position and that with the outstanding teaching that I know has been taking place across the University this term - accompanied by wonderful research exemplified by some of the successes highlighted below - we will continue to flourish in all areas of our activity.

As we move into Christmas and the New Year, I would like to thank everyone across the University for their commitment and drive to take the University forward. I also recognise that the first semester is a long one and would urge everyone to switch off their emails and have a really good break so as to return refreshed in the New Year.

[Click here](#) to read the Principal's update in full, with updates on:

- Winter grads
- Research funding and impacts
- Project 500
- Scottish Affairs Committee
- Health and Wellbeing
- University of Aberdeen Development Trust
- And more.

**November 2018**

Dear colleagues,

I'm grateful to everyone who attended my presentations to Schools and Professional Services in September and October. I also gave this presentation to other groups including Court and the Business Committee of the General Council. I'm very pleased by the enthusiasm for re-energising our 1495 foundational purpose of being open to all, and dedicated to the pursuit of truth in the service of others.

My presentation and a summary of the main themes that were covered in the Q&A sessions following the presentation are [available here](#). The next stage in the development of ideas about the future of our University is an event that brings various groups across the University together. The participants include members of Court and Senate, students, early career academics, Heads of School, Directors of professional services and members of the senior management team. The programme for the event is [available here](#).

The other issues I'd like to update you on are:

**USS** - together with UCU we have issued a joint statement welcoming the report of the Joint Expert Panel as a positive basis for resolving this very difficult issue. A copy of the statement is [available here](#).

**UASLAS** – we have recently undertaken a consultative process, working in partnership with our colleagues in Unison and Unite, to address financial challenges in relation to our support staff pension scheme. We made very good progress through the consultation - thanks to all of those involved.

**Gender Pay Gap** – Substantial progress on this will be possible only by addressing the imbalance of males and females at different grades in the University, which will require a sustained focus on equality in recruitment, development opportunities, promotions and rewards. An initial step is to rectify the gender imbalance in the pay of experienced professors; this is the only grade within which there is gender pay inequality in the institution. Remuneration Committee has approved a proposal to address

this in the current academic year. The paper that it considered on this issue is [available here](#).

**School budgetary autonomy** – the budgetary arrangements have been reformed to achieve two main objectives. First, to give Schools greater autonomy over the budgets that are allocated to them (e.g. in-year appointments, virement of funds between staff and non-staff, and carry-over of budget from one year to the next). Secondly, after rising costs have been covered, to share extra revenue between School budgets and the University as a whole (with a minimum 30% return to Schools) The paper approved by UMG is [available here](#).

**Brexit** – I am continuing to lobby, directly and through Universities Scotland and Universities UK, for an outcome that will avert or mitigate the likely negative consequences for Higher Education and for us in particular. We are busy with contingency planning that takes account not only of the total potential impact on teaching and research revenue but also the differential effects across our disciplines.

**Head of School Appointment Process** - I've taken initial steps to make this more participative and consultative. The current processes in the Business School and in LLMVC are beginning with meetings convened by Professor Phil Hannaford - interim SVP - with individuals and groups in each School. These are open to anyone who wishes to attend; the purpose is to establish whether the School wishes to pursue an external or internal appointment, and in either case to identify potential candidates. Following a call for and receipt of formal applications, the final stage will include a presentation to the School by each of the shortlisted candidates. Feedback from School staff on these presentations will contribute directly to the final decision on the appointment.

Other projects that I'm working on include reviews of our strategies for community engagement, sports and environmental sustainability. Further information on how to get involved in these will be available in December.

As always, please get in touch if you'd like to let me know about ideas to improve our institutional procedures and performance.

With best wishes

George

Professor George Boyne  
Principal and Vice-Chancellor



**December 2018**

Dear colleagues,

As I approach the completion of the first five months in my role as Principal I'm pleased to have the chance to convey my thanks for all of the advice and support I've received from you. This has helped to deepen my understanding of the many opportunities we have to continue to fulfil the promise of our 1495 foundational purpose through new research and educational programmes.

I'd also like to update you on progress with the following activities:

**University-wide (and beyond) consultation on our future**

**strategy** – Following the strategy 'away event' in October, I made a presentation to Court last week which sought to draw together the main proposals that emerged to enhance the quality of our teaching, research and societal impact. A copy of the presentation, with some amendments requested by Court, is available [here](#). The consultation process will be designed to encourage and support extensive participation through seeking volunteers to join the various working groups for meetings and through apps (or similar) which will allow all of us to contribute ideas and suggestions as the strategic actions take shape. Court quite rightly emphasised that each of the proposed workstreams needs to be framed by horizon-scanning and scenarios for global developments in higher education over the next twenty years. If you have ideas about how to ensure a comprehensively consultative and participative process, please send these to: [ross.anderson@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:ross.anderson@abdn.ac.uk). Further information about next steps will be provided in January.

**Q&A open sessions with members of the senior management team –**

The members of the University's senior management team are keen to be more visible to the University community of staff and students. To help to achieve this a series of regular monthly Q&A sessions will begin in January 2019. Further information is available [here](#).

**Plans for revenue growth, expenditure, and investment in physical**

**and digital infrastructure** – The University Court considered proposals to move our revenue and expenditure back to a break-even position by

academic year 2020/21 (which will allow us to maintain our current staff numbers while investing in 50 extra T&R posts) and to borrow funds to enhance substantially the quality of our infrastructure. A copy of the presentation that David Beattie (Director of Finance) and I made is available [here](#). Court agreed the break-even strategy, and is supportive of the infrastructure investment subject to reviewing additional information at a follow-up meeting in January.

In addition, Court gave final approval to move ahead with the construction of the Science Teaching Hub which is an important enhancement of our teaching estate. Our ability to continue to fund such investments in staff and buildings of course depends on raising extra revenue; as the figures on the presentation slides show, this is a challenging task and will require a University-wide collective effort, but the ambition and ability that we have here, and the plans we have in place, give strong grounds for optimism that this will be achieved.

And finally for this year, I'm pleased to let you know that I'll be taking a complete break from work so that I can enjoy time with friends and family (well, and watching football) throughout the Christmas and New Year holiday period. I hope very much that you'll also be able to be fully 'out of the office' when the University is closed for the holiday, and come back in January refreshed and ready for the year ahead.

With best wishes,

George

Professor George Boyne  
Principal and Vice-Chancellor

**May 2019**

Dear colleagues,

This is an exciting time to be working at the University of Aberdeen, with major developments that will enhance our academic quality and financial sustainability. In addition to our current big recruitment campaign for academic posts, we recently announced a very substantial regeneration programme for the King's College campus to enhance teaching and learning spaces, and work is underway on our new Science Teaching Hub. Alongside this, our international student numbers are heading towards significant growth again in academic year 19/20, and continuing growth in the years ahead will be supported by our new International Foundation Programme.

I'd like to update you on progress with the following institutional activities:

**Recruitment for 60 teaching and research posts** – Our [global recruitment campaign](#) is live and these posts form part of our ambitious strategy to enhance the University's status as a world leader in research. This is one of the largest single investments the University has made in recruiting academic staff. We have received almost 1,000 applications so far across the range of posts, and I'm looking forward to the first of our new colleagues arriving in the autumn.

**Strategy Development** – Work is well underway on our new 20-year institutional strategy development process. Each of the workstream steering groups has met a number of times and will have regular meetings throughout the year, as will the Strategy Development Steering Group which is overseeing the process.

Our online app Yammer has recently been launched for all staff to contribute ideas and suggestions to each of the four workstreams: Inclusive, Interdisciplinary, International and Sustainable. The Yammer pages can be [accessed here](#). Please take the chance to join in and contribute to this process. Almost 200 people have signed up to attend five workshops this month which will address a broad range of topics which fall within the remit of each workstream.

There will also be a strategy away day session in early July to bring Court, members of Senate, University Management Group and staff and student representatives together to discuss progress and next steps. [More information about the strategy development process is available online.](#)

**Honorary Degrees** – In light of the recent decision by Senate to revoke the Sultan of Brunei's honorary degree, I have asked that we pause all new nominations to review the criteria for awarding an honorary degree to ensure that they remain appropriate. The Terms of Reference for the Review Group on Honorary Degrees Criteria, which will be convened by Professor Igor Guz, is [available here](#).

**Brexit** – I very much welcome and strongly endorse the recent announcement from the Scottish Government that new students from EU countries will still be entitled to free university tuition on UG courses which start in 2020. These arrangements will cover EU students for the duration of their courses. We will continue to update our [Brexit pages](#) with the latest information as developments unfold, and remain committed to arrangements that allow the University to maintain its very strong European connections and partnerships in teaching and research.

**Recruiting for a new Vice-Principal (Education)** – Professor Peter McGeorge will soon complete nine years in post as Vice-Principal and has decided to focus on other academic activities at the University. I am therefore seeking applications for this Vice-Principal role, and very much hope that it will attract applicants from within as well as outwith the University. Details about the role and how to apply are available in the [further particulars](#). I'd be happy to have an informal discussion with anyone who is considering applying – please contact [Lois Brown](#) if you'd like to arrange a meeting with me.

I'd like to thank Peter for all his work and many achievements for the institution to date and look forward to a continued working relationship with him in the future. Peter will remain in post as Vice-Principal (Education) until a replacement is recruited for the role. Given the interdependency of the MacRobert Project Board with the wider development of the Old Aberdeen estate, and to ensure continuity and consistency in the

development of these Estates projects, Peter is handing over the leadership of the King's Project Board to Professor Alan Speight, Vice-Principal Student Recruitment, who will now oversee both Boards.

**Looking ahead** – Later this week, we will host the popular [May Festival](#) which will be held from the 24th to the 26th of the month with more than 150 events taking place on campus and around the city. A huge amount of work is being done to make this important cultural event a success.

The University is also sponsoring the [Grampian Pride](#) event which takes place in Aberdeen on Saturday, 25 May. There will be a University stall at the Pride Village at Queen's Links to promote the institution as well as May Festival to attendees. We will also be flying the Rainbow flag from the Cromwell Tower over the weekend as a symbol of our support of the event and to highlight our inclusive ethos.

Preparations are underway for our 'Live on the Lawn' staff celebration event on 7 June at Elphinstone Hall and King's Lawn to mark the many achievements of our University community over the last year. The student event in March was very successful and well attended. An email has already been circulated for registrations to attend the staff event and I look forward to seeing you there.

As always, please get in touch if you'd like to let me know about ideas to improve our institutional procedures and performance.

With best wishes,

George

Professor George Boyne  
Principal and Vice-Chancellor

**July 2019**

Dear colleagues,

As we reach the end of the academic year, I'm very pleased to express my deep gratitude for all your hard work for the University since I took up the role of Principal last August. Much remains to be done, but I hope you are beginning to see signs that we are heading in a very positive direction.

I recently completed a series of School visits to meet with as many colleagues as possible to review the University's [progress and achievements](#) in the last year, and look at [our priorities](#) for the year ahead (which were refined as a result of these discussions). The priorities were endorsed by Court at its meeting on 2 July 2019 and will be the basis for the University's Operational Plan for the 19/20 academic year.

Thank you to everyone who asked a question during these School visits, I tried to address as many of them as possible on the day; when that wasn't possible a note was taken of queries to follow up on. Here's a round-up of the [questions and responses](#).

If I've missed anything from the sessions that you were expecting a response about, please email me and I will reply when I return from my summer break. In the meantime, I hope you all either already have taken or will be taking a proper break from work over the summer, and come back refreshed for the next academic year as we continue to build on the substantial progress that we've made together.

With best wishes,

George