Chair: Dr Jim McGeorge, University Secretary

Present: 29

In Attendance: Mrs Barbara Boyle, Alumni & Development Officer

Apologies: Professor Peter Downes, University Principal & Vice Chancellor, Mr Chris Browne (DUSA Deputy President), Mr David Gauld, Mr Chris McDonald and Mr Martin Nimmo.

Dr Jim McGeorge, University Secretary, welcomed all attending members of Graduates’ Council to the University of Dundee and conveyed University Principal & Vice Chancellor, Professor Pete Downes’, apologies for his absence.

1. Minutes of Annual Meeting 2010 – Saturday 17 April

Approved – with no matters arising.

2. Report by University Principal

Dr Jim McGeorge highlighted some of the points contained in the Principal’s written report which had been previously circulated to attending Council members. Professor Pete Downes’ full report follows:

“Let me begin by welcoming you all to the University and this year’s Graduates’ Council Meeting. It has been a truly remarkable year set against the background of the recession, cuts in public spending and the momentous change in the funding of higher education in England. Even in this context, there is much for graduates of this University to be proud of in our performance and in the widespread recognition of our achievements. We returned our strongest financial result in many years with sustained growth in key areas of income combined with effective control of expenditure. The University climbed more than 60 places to 140 in the Times Higher Education world rankings, putting us within a whisker of Glasgow and ahead of Aberdeen, Birmingham, Nottingham, Newcastle and many more highly regarded institutions. The news was even better when the results of the survey of student experience were announced recently with Dundee ranked 5th in the UK, bracketed between Cambridge and Oxford in 4th and 6th places, respectively – and top in Scotland. And once again our own staff voted us one of the top ten places to work internationally in the poll published annually by ‘The Scientist’ magazine.

Our work to bring the V&A to Dundee remains the most high profile project in our regional development strategy receiving national prominence as a result of the highly successful architectural competition to design the building, a major tranche of Scottish Government funding as well as cross party support ahead of the Holyrood elections.

As I hope you will appreciate we are not resting on our laurels; and my report documents some of the threats we and the rest of the sector are facing as well as our plans and ambitions for the future development of the University.

Finance

The University continued to improve its financial position and for 2009/10 the result was a significant improvement on previous years. We expect that the financial result for the current year will be lower, but that we will still deliver a surplus.

The outlook for future years is much more uncertain and we now know that we will face Scottish Funding Council (SFC) cuts of 10% in 2011/12 and are likely to face real terms cuts in future years. To address this the University is currently implementing the findings of the strategic review, which has focused on improving excellence in teaching and research across the University, whilst at the same time aiming to deliver savings of between 10% and 12% (see below).

Financial Year 2009/10: The University has continued to improve its financial position. In the last financial year (2009/10) we posted a significant increase for both operating and overall surplus as compared to the previous year. This has been achieved through a combination of improved income
generation and cost management. The summarised results are shown in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>09/10 £m</th>
<th>08/09 £m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>219.1</td>
<td>207.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff costs</td>
<td>(129.2)</td>
<td>(122.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other operating expenses and depreciation</td>
<td>(84.9)</td>
<td>(83.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endowments</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating result (before interest and finance costs)</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest and finance costs</td>
<td>(1.1)</td>
<td>(1.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating result</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restructuring costs / exceptional costs</td>
<td>(0.2)</td>
<td>(1.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain on disposal</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>(0.6)</td>
<td>(0.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surplus for the year</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Income increased by 5% in the year up to £219m. Income received from the SFC was flat and now represents 38% of total income. In order to achieve its strategic goals, the University has set itself demanding income growth targets for research and tuition fees, the latter particularly in relation to postgraduate and overseas income.

Research income continued to grow and was up by 9% in 2009/10, which was above the target set for the year. UK Charities remain the largest group of funders but with a reduced share down from 37% to 35%. The University has benefited from a significant growth in tuition fees income during the year, in particular for postgraduate courses. Non–EU tuition fees increased by 22% in the year which follows on from a 27% increase in the previous year.

The cash expenditure on fixed assets was £19m which was in line with the previous year. Regarding future building investment, the focus now, as identified in the Estates Strategy, is to maintain the campus to the highest possible standard and align capital expenditure with our strategic priorities.

The net cash inflow from operating activities in 2009/10 was £7.6m, compared to the previous year of £9.5m. The operating cash inflow strengthened the University cash position to increase net funds from £8.3m to £16.6m.

The financial performance for 2009/10 was a strong result and represents a considerable improvement on the position of the University compared to recent years. This reflected the hard work of staff across the University in increasing income and managing costs and has been supported by enhanced financial controls and reporting arrangements.

**Current & Future Years:** There are clearly significant uncertainties around the economy and public funding as well as significant cost pressures which will make for a challenging future for the University and the Higher Education sector as a whole. The forecast for the current year is an operating surplus of £3.3m, which is £1.3m higher than the budget. The income from research and overseas students continues to increase, however income from the SFC is flat and has not kept pace with cost inflation. As a result we are forecasting a lower operating surplus as compared to last year.

Looking ahead we now know that we are facing SFC reductions of £7m in recurrent funding compared to the financial projections for 2011/12. There has also been a 50% reduction in capital funding for the year. At this stage it is not clear what the future of Higher Education funding in Scotland will be, although it is likely that we will be facing real terms cuts at least in the medium term. Clearly this represents a significant challenge to the University, in anticipation of which we embarked upon a strategic review, focusing as I have said on improving teaching and research excellence whilst at the same time enhancing financial sustainability. The University has set itself the target of achieving £10m in recurrent savings. This will help to offset at least the initial funding reduction but will not deliver the sustainable surplus (at least 3%) which the University requires to enable it to continue to invest. Therefore there is also the need to continue to focus on improving income.

**Strategic Review and Academic Footprint**

Around the time of last year’s Annual Meeting of the Graduates’ Council, the April meeting of Court endorsed in principle the Senior Management Team’s Strategic Review proposals for extensive consultation across Schools, Colleges and Directorates. Court also agreed that each Strategic Review project, once consulted upon and finalized would be brought forward through the appropriate University decision-making process in accordance with the University’s Schedule of Delegation and Decision-making and general governance framework. Progress was reviewed and noted at each subsequent
meeting of the Court and there have been opportunities for both the Senate and DUSA to debate and provide feedback. In particular, at its meeting in June 2010, the Court reviewed a range of projects that would deliver the new vision for the future development of the University, as well as projected savings of the order of 10-12% in a targeted and strategically focused manner over a period of 2-3 years.

As noted above under ‘Finance’, Scottish Government-imposed cuts in core funding to be implemented in the 2011/12 budget have necessitated the acceleration of this timescale so that the current aim is to achieve the majority of the savings within a single year. Accordingly a voluntary severance scheme was introduced as a key component of our strategy to do all that we could to avoid the possibility of compulsory redundancies as we look to lose around 190 posts through retirement, turnover and voluntary severance. The scheme closed at the end of February 2011 and its full impact is currently being evaluated. Current activities are listed below:

- Evaluations of individual research performance have been completed across most Schools indentifying 3*, 4* and ‘rising 2*’ activity, with academic workload models being adjusted to reflect the time allocated to individuals for research.
- Reviews of teaching activity have taken place at programme, module and curriculum levels. Many Schools are already planning to rationalise delivery in order to generate efficiencies while protecting and where possible enhancing the student experience. This activity is ongoing and is supported by a Programme and Module Review Project that will provide hard data to support the portfolio review process.
- A range of human resources procedures have been enhanced and developed to support the aims of the Strategic Review in terms of promoting excellence in teaching and research. These include the introduction of objective-setting and review for all staff, as well as ongoing reviews of the appointment procedure for academic staff and the procedure for reviewing probationary lecturers. These procedures will ensure that a culture of enhancing performance and encouraging excellence is embedded across the University.
- A number of initiatives are being taken forward as part of the Strategic Review implementation with the aim of improving the effectiveness and cost efficiency of support services across the University. A significant number of these are based on the greater use of common information systems, improved reporting software, more streamlined business processes and greater standardisation of processes and procedures across the University. However, in addition, there has been further restructuring of Support Services, including the establishment of a new Directorate of Student Operations, internal restructuring of Information & Communication Services and the forthcoming merger of the Principal’s Office with Academic Affairs to form a Directorate of Policy, Governance & Legal Affairs.

The Senior Management Team is now looking beyond the Strategic Review in order to develop a new and ambitious vision and strategic plan for the University for 2012 onwards. An academic and financial analysis of the University’s current footprint indicates that all of the University’s Schools have significant academic strengths and make positive net financial contributions to the University’s central and corporate costs. That is not to say, however, that the University would wish to see all current subject areas necessarily remain at their current size and shape, or that some further restructuring of Schools might not be envisaged as the University’s future academic vision takes shape.

Court discussed at its meeting in December a paper from the Senior Management Team on the review of the current academic footprint and strategic options for the University’s future academic development. That paper was also debated by the Senate at its meeting on 9 February 2011. A strong sense has emerged through this process that the University should focus on four key cross-cutting themes:

- Biomedical and Clinical Sciences;
- Business and Professional Education;
- Creative Arts and Cultural Understanding;
- Sustainability and the Environment.

The four themes will be shaped, through internal consultation and external market testing over the next year, into a meaningful, positive and exciting vision for the future strategic development of the University.

Future Funding of Scottish Universities

Higher education has undergone a year of change and uncertainty. It has seen the constant threat of cuts in public funding to help close the UK’s financial deficit; the Browne report and the subsequent government response to raise tuition fees south of the border to a maximum of £9,000; and the Scottish Government’s head-in-the-sand approach to funding in Scotland. The Scottish political parties are already gearing up for the May elections, and it is clear that the issue of higher education and in particular its funding is going to play a central role. Towards the end of 2010 the Scottish Cabinet...
Secretary for Education and Lifelong learning, Mike Russell, had published the Green paper ‘Building a Smarter Future’. A short-life Technical Working Group, commissioned as a result and comprising members of the Scottish Government, the Funding Council and Universities Scotland, has recently reported that the gap in funding between Scottish and English universities, as a result of the raising of fees in England, is likely to exceed £200m per annum by 2014-15. I am calling for all parties to agree on the scale of the problem, as well as to make a commitment to ensuring the funding of Scottish universities remains competitive with England at the very least. Of course, the political parties are putting their own spin on the size of the funding gap, revising it as appropriate to suit their own plans for higher education. As far as I am concerned, this is unhelpful, and fails to understand the seriousness of the issue. More importantly the public needs to understand precisely how the politicians intend to fund higher education, particularly as the three major Scottish parties claim to be able to do this from the public purse. We also need the politicians to be clear about how they will address the issue of improving access for students from poorer backgrounds and from underrepresented groups. In short, we need to know how Scottish Universities’ pre-eminence is to be maintained in the face of a changing landscape in England and with reductions in available public funding both north and south of the border. I would be particularly interested to hear graduates’ views on these issues.

Learning and Teaching

All the indicators are that the University continues to offer one of the best quality student experiences in the UK. In the recent Times Higher Education Student Experience Survey, Dundee was ranked top in Scotland and fifth in the UK out of a total of 113 universities. The survey highlighted a particularly strong level of satisfaction with the student union and its encompassing social life but also with the IT and library services and the high quality of teaching delivered in our programmes. Similarly, the National Student Survey, which annually assesses the views of graduating students and achieves over a 60% response rate, affirms the very high level of satisfaction attributed to the quality of teaching, to the learning infrastructure (libraries, IT facilities) and to the overall student experience. And the same trends are revealed amongst postgraduate students in the annual Postgraduate Student Experience Surveys for taught and research postgraduates - and with international students whose views are regularly surveyed through the International Student Barometer.

Although the University quite rightly takes pride in the results of these surveys, it is not complacent. There are some areas of the University where the survey results are not so good, and whatever the outcomes there is always room for further improvement. The results of these surveys are regularly discussed between staff and students and actions are taken forward and evaluated with the aim of constantly striving to ensure improvements in the experience and outcomes for the students. One of the keys to the University’s success in this area, which was recognised in the recent review of our teaching and learning by the Quality Assurance Agency, is an effective system of student representation, coupled with good staff student relationships and a committed teaching and support staff.

The effectiveness of the University in promoting the student experience is central to its success in recruiting and retaining students and to ensuring that our students graduate with the knowledge and skills that prepare them for future accomplishment in life and employment. As the quality of student experience at the University of Dundee becomes more widely recognised, the numbers of students applying to come here is steadily increasing – even at times when many Scottish universities are experiencing a decline.

We must also be concerned about the experience of our graduates when they enter the world of work. Professor Chris Whately, Head of the College of Arts and Social Sciences, currently leads the University’s graduate employability agenda which aims to develop and recognize the skills, beyond disciplinary knowledge, which employers increasingly demand. I am a keen supporter of the Enterprise Gym which offers extra-curricular programmes and activities for students with an interest in enterprise and entrepreneurship. This year, for the first time, many of the Gym’s activities have been oversubscribed thanks to the enthusiasm and reputation of many of its contributors and to the strong leadership given by Ken Edwards.

An important part of the high quality of student experience is of course the effective contribution staff make in teaching and supporting students’ learning. The University has for a long time encouraged and celebrated innovative and creative teaching through its distinctive awards – initially through the annual Honorary Graduates’ Award for Innovative Teaching. More recently, this has been supplemented with the introduction of the Senate Award for Excellence in Teaching and the Chancellor’s Award for a Lifetime Contribution to Teaching. This year, DUSA is introducing a series of new student-nominated awards to recognise a range of areas of good practice of particular importance to students, including inspirational teaching, innovation, student advice, and assessment and feedback.

Recognising and encouraging excellence in teaching also extends to the way we reward and promote
university staff. The University's promotion system has for a long time enabled staff to be promoted for a range of competences spanning research, teaching and administration, but, in common with many pre-92 universities, we are still largely promoting staff, particularly at the higher levels, on the grounds of research performance. The academic success of the university, however, depends upon staff with a range of skills, including teaching, curriculum development, knowledge transfer, liaison with professional and disciplinary bodies, and academic leadership and management. As a result, we are looking at the way our promotion system works and how we can establish a rigorous and transparent set of processes and criteria that enables our best staff to develop and be rewarded for the important and distinctive expertise they contribute to the University’s success.

Research
The gap that is opening up between England and Scotland in the handling of tuition costs is not mirrored in the funding of research. The Scottish Funding Council has matched the commitment of HEFCE to maintain the value of research funding in cash terms although this amounts to a cut of around 10% in real terms over the period of the spending review. SFC has decided to protect funding for 3* and 4* research in real terms by reducing funds available for 2* and 1* research this being very much in line with this University’s excellence agenda. This change has had little impact on us with projected earnings of £20.02M for 2011/12 maintaining our ranking as 3rd in Scotland behind Edinburgh and Glasgow.

The economic conditions are creating an increasingly competitive environment for winning external research funding from all sources, both commercial and non-commercial. The UK science budget, which supports the activities of the Research Councils, will also be protected in cash terms with the exception of the Medical Research Council (MRC) which is being protected in real terms. This is helpful to us because of our relatively large scale of MRC funding compared with the other research councils. The Wellcome Trust, another major source of funding for biomedical research, is also reputed to have fared relatively well during the recession. Dundee is therefore reasonably well positioned to maintain its current funding levels from these sources.

Despite the current challenging environment in which higher education is operating, the University continues to achieve very notable successes especially in relation to the strategic priority areas of translational medicine and interdisciplinary research. Key developments include:

- Collaborations with major pharmaceutical partners through the European Innovative Medicines Initiative.
- Renewed funding from the Wellcome Trust supporting the Drug Discovery Unit in the College of Life Sciences to combat tropical diseases.
- Creation of the Scottish Diabetes Research Network Type I Diabetes Bioresource (Diabetes UK and the CSO)
- Establishment of the Centre for Environmental Change and Human Resilience (College of Arts and Social Sciences) in collaboration with the Scottish Crop Research Institute.

Despite some notable successes our overall performance in the last Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) was disappointing. RAE is being replaced by the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and will report in 2014. We have established the internal infrastructure required to enhance management of the REF with the objective of maximizing institutional performance. This includes ongoing externally assisted research reviews and a planned mid-term REF review scheduled for November. A new challenge of REF 2014, compared to previous RAES, is the requirement to evidence the impact of our research. Having taken part in the HEFCE led pilot impact exercise the University is well informed to help guide staff on how to engage with this new aspect of the assessment process. As part of its campaign to promote the impact of research the Biological and Biophysical Sciences Research Council held a national competition and recently named the College of Life Sciences in Dundee as the winner of its first ever ‘Greatest Impact’ Award. At the same ceremony, the College’s Jason Swedlow was named ‘Innovator of the Year’. At this stage in the process, therefore, we are well placed to perform well in this new output measure of research excellence.

Governance
The last year has continued to see the implementation of the recommendations arising from the recent Review of Court Effectiveness, with a key development being the introduction of new arrangements for the appointment of lay Court members, involving a full advertising and interview process.

These changes have prompted the Graduates’ Council Business Committee to commence a review of the work of the Graduates’ Council, which will no doubt be covered in greater detail in the reports from the Convener and the Graduates’ Council Assessors. However, for my part, I greatly welcome both the initiative of the Business Committee in taking forward such a review and its willingness to regard, as the two central elements of the review, the needs of its members and the University’s view of the role of the
Graduates’ Council. I also welcome the willingness of the Business Committee to review the process of electing Graduates’ Council Assessors to Court to ensure that it aligns with the way Court now appoints lay members and is consistent with best practice in corporate governance.

Senate has also reviewed its own effectiveness over the last year, bringing forward a range of recommendations for improving its operations and enhancing its role as the forum for strategic debate on the academic direction of the University. These include:

- Changes in membership to include all Deans and enhance representation across Schools;
- A review of the committee structure and associated memberships and remits;
- The establishment of a Business Committee of Senate to help set and prioritise Senate’s agendas;
- Enhanced reporting to Senate from the Senior Management Team;
- The introduction of critically-evaluative annual reports on their activities from Colleges, the University Secretary (in terms of SASS), the Vice-Principals for Educational Development, Research and Employability and the Student’s Association.”

In conclusion, Jim McGeorge affirmed that University management very much believe in Graduates’ Council declaring it to be a great asset to the University. Further, he would welcome ideas on how to ensure it remains a lively and vibrant body, making as much impact on graduates’ lives as possible and providing a positive experience for both graduates and the University.

Having invited questions or comments on the Principal’s report, general discussion followed covering various topics including the cost of providing higher education in Scotland, the impact English University fees might have on Scottish Universities and the possibility of considering mergers and acquisitions within the Scottish higher education sector. Jim McGeorge concluded by saying that Dundee University is in as strong a position, both academically and financially, as it can be.

3. Annual Financial Statement
Copies of the audited accounts for 2009-10 were available.

4. Business Committee

Report by Convener of Graduates’ Council Business Committee

Printed copies of the Convener’s Report were circulated in advance – as follows. Before briefly mentioning various points from this report, Willie Wilson expressed his thanks to Director of ISE, Brian Ewing, for earlier leading a tour of the excellent facilities available at the sports centre. In his opinion, the provision of these amenities demonstrates the value that the University places on the physical health and mental wellbeing of students and staff.

1. Introduction
The work of the Council has continued over the year and inevitably the last 12 months have passed very quickly. I outline below some of our main activities:

In the first instance I would like to thank our Vice Convener, Charles Lovatt, for his continued help and support throughout the year. In addition, members of the Business Committee have provided a great deal of time and support in the last 12 months. I would also like to express my continued thanks to Barbara Boyle for all her excellent work and support to the Committee and the Council.

2. Meetings
The Business Committee has met on two occasions in the last year and the Convener’s Sub Committee on one occasion. The visits planned for the year have not taken place for a variety of reasons, some of which are outlined below, but we did visit the V & A Exhibition after our meeting on Saturday, 2 October 2010. During the year we have welcomed Martin Nimmo and Keith Winter to the Committee, as co-opted members.

3. Discovery Lecture
Following last year’s very successful lecture we have again been extremely fortunate to secure the services of Nick Barratt, Genealogical Consultant for the BBC series “Who Do You Think You Are?” This is a very topical subject and we are very grateful for the help of the university in arranging the lecture. The Civic Reception and Alumni Supper which follow promise once again to make for an interesting evening. I would like to place on record my thanks to the Lord Provost, John Letford for his continued support in these events.

4. Alumni Supper
The Alumni Supper will again be held this year following the Discovery Lecture and Reception at the
Apex City Quay Hotel, Dundee at 8.30 pm.

5. **University Court**
We have continued to be well served by Professor Ann Burchell and Mr Iain Wright as Court Assessors and I want to thank them for their work and diligence in this regard. Iain's term of office expires on 31 July 2011 – the results of an election to fill the vacant post will be announced at a later point in this meeting. In addition Eric Sanderson, a member of the Council and former GC Court Assessor, has been appointed as Chair of the University Court and congratulations are in order for this.

9. **Events**
During the year I have attended a variety of events including the DUSA Awards, the University Carol Service, several graduations and other social events. It has always been a delight to represent the Graduates’ Council on such occasions.

10. **The Future**
At our January Meeting we had an extensive discussion regarding the future of the Graduates’ Council and proposals have been made to reform ourselves as a Graduates’ Association. Two small working groups, one dealing with the governance and technical issues in this regard and one dealing with the communications and IT issues, have been set up and will report back to our next meeting of the Business Committee on 1 October 2011.”

Willie concluded his verbal report by welcoming both Martin Nimmo and Keith Winter to the Business Committee as co-opted members and commended Steven Blane and Chris McDonald’s contribution to Business Committee discussion, in particular their deep involvement in the “change” process.

5. **Graduates’ Council Assessors on Court**

(a) **Presentation of Report for 2010-11**
Iain Wright presented the following report which had been circulated to attendees.

“**Current Assessors**
The Graduates’ Council (GC) has the privilege of electing two Assessors to the University Court - its governing body. Following changes to the Charter which came effective from August 2010, the Court consists of 23 members, 12 of whom are ‘lay’ members, i.e. not employed by, or students of, the University

Iain started his current term of office in August 2007 and it concludes at the end of July this year. The other Assessor, Ann Burchell, commenced her term of office in August 2009, concluding in July 2013. She will then be eligible for re-election.

**Court Assessors’ participation on the University Court**
During the Academic session 2009/10, both Assessors fully participated in the affairs of Court as follows:

Iain Wright attended all six meetings of Court;
was a member of the Finance committee and attended all meetings of it;
was a member of the Governance & Nominations committee and attended all six meetings of it.

Ann Burchell attended five of six meetings of Court, having missed one as a result of the ‘Ash’ cloud;
was a member of the Audit committee and attended three of four meetings.

Iain also attended Graduation ceremonies in July and November.

Iain was also a member of the Pensions Working Group, set up to review the future strategy of the University of Dundee Superannuation Scheme which covers support staff.

For the session 2010/11 Ann joined Iain on the Governance & Nominations committee. Iain also participated in the Charter and Statutes working group.

**Focus of Iain’s Activities**
During his time as a member of Court, Iain had taken a particular interest in:

- the need to improve the student experience, particularly non completion rates, and employability of
students;

- encouraging the efficient use of University resources, especially the use of building ‘space’;
- the financing arrangements for the provision of student accommodation;
- resolving long term issues associated with funding the University’s superannuation scheme for support staff;
- modernising the governance of the University, and in particular the recruitment of ‘lay’ members through open advertising and panel interviews.

**Proposed changes to GC Assessor nomination procedures**

The process used to elect the Graduates’ Council assessors has changed little since the foundation of the University. Candidates are required to be graduates of the University (or predecessor institutions), to be nominated and seconded by graduates, and to provide a two hundred word personal statement which is circulated to the 40,000 strong electorate of the University’s graduates. The electorate is provided with no guidance on the personal qualities required of the assessors, nor of the role expected of them on the University Court. Other than their brief personal statement, candidates have to evince no evidence of their independence, good judgement, skills or experience.

The present process sits ill at ease with current good governance practice. The number of candidates standing for election has varied between one and four in the past decade, and has generally been drawn from a narrow group associated with the Business Committee of the Graduates’ Council. Typically fewer than 800 graduates have voted – less than 2% of those eligible. The low level of participation, small number of candidates, and limited information provided to the electorate lends little credibility to the electoral process.

At its last meeting, the Business Committee of the Graduates’ Council agreed to proposals to bring the nomination process into line with best practice. It is proposing to Court that, in future, nominations for the post of Assessor should be sifted by the Governance & Nominations (G&N) committee of the University against the established criteria used for any other lay member and only those meeting the criteria should be eligible to stand for election. It would not be the role of the G&N committee to appoint the Assessor, but rather to ensure that candidates for election should have sufficient experience and skills to discharge their role. The Graduates would then vote for their choice of candidate from the approved list. The criteria for appointment would be published on the University web site and potential candidates would be able to self nominate.

Iain commented that he had enjoyed serving as Court Assessor for the last four years and had endeavoured to ensure that the views and interests of the University’s alumnae are known to Court. He intimated that he would like to thank the Principal, University Secretary and the University officers who have freely given of their time to diligently listen to the concerns and issues he had raised with them over the last four years.”

(b) **Election of Court Assessor**

The term of office of Iain Wright expires on 31 July 2011. Three nominations to succeed him had been received. Jim McGeorge addressed the members present and informed them that 530 votes had been cast in total for the three candidates – Brian Cairns (177 votes), Reza Kouhy (153 votes) and Iain Wright (200 votes). Mr Iain Wright was duly elected as Assessor to serve for the period 1 August 2011 to 31 July 2015.

6. **Graduates’ Council Fund**

(a) Willie Wilson reported that the current balance available for disbursement was £3584.33. One significant award of £1000 had been made to the Eritrean Ministry of Health Continuing Education Unit for the purchase of 2 laptops. This award had been particularly well received. An award was agreed (£300) to a 2nd Yr Politics Student towards costs for her attendance at 49th Commission on Social Development in New York in February 2011, however the application was subsequently withdrawn due to illness and the student’s inability to attend the event.

(b) Charles Lovatt and Jim Smith were nominated to GC Fund Board of Directors.

7. **Members of the Business Committee**

(a) **Business Committee Convener**

The Business Committee has re-elected Willie Wilson to serve as Convener until the Annual Meeting of 2012.

Dudley Kay (attending Council member) congratulated Willie and thanked him for being a dedicated member of the Committee but commented on the need for “new blood”. Willie responded by agreeing that this had been a recognised ambition of the Business Committee for quite some time, pointing out
that, over recent years, quite a few Business Committee members had been drawn from “recent” graduates. The Business Committee would welcome any Council member’s ideas or thoughts on this subject.

(b) **Election of New Business Committee Members**

It was noted that Steven Blane and Chris McDonald’s term of office had come to an end – both were commended for their contribution to Graduates’ Council Business Committee.

Two nominations for the 2 vacant positions were received in advance – Mr David Gauld, BSc Engineering 1974 and Ms Vivienne White, MA 1991. In the absence of further nominations being received, both candidates were duly elected to serve for a period of three years until the Annual Meeting 2014.

8. **AOB**

   (a) Willie Wilson proposed (seconded by Ann Burchell) that Charles Lovatt should continue as Graduates’ Council Representative on the Honorary Degrees Committee - Charles agreed to comply.

   (b) Jim McGeorge thanked members of Graduates’ Council Business Committee in general for their commitment and support of the University while particularly highlighting the tremendous contribution made by Willie Wilson as Convener and both Ann Burchell and Iain Wright as Court Assessors. He also mentioned Barbara Boyle’s clerical support to the Committee and finally thanked all those attending the meeting.

18 May 2011