

# Minutes (unrestricted)

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**Meeting title:** Senate

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**Date:** Wednesday, 16 November 2011

**Time:** 2.15 pm

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**Location:** Senate Room, George Thomas Building, Highfield campus

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**Present:** The Vice-Chancellor (*in the Chair*), Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Wheeler, Pro Vice-Chancellor Humphris, Pro Vice-Chancellor Nelson, Dr J Adams, Dr M C Azaola, Mr R Bailey\*, Professor P Bartlett, Dr V Benson, Dr J Beswick, Dr J Blaydes, Dr S Bleeck, Professor S Brailsford, Dr M L Brown, Dr F Cagampang, Ms J Calvert, Dr M Carravetta, Dr A Channon, Dr Z Cole, Ms C Court, Professor A Curry, Mrs J Davis, Professor D Eccles, Professor M E Everist, Mr P Fraser-Mackenzie, Mr P Gibbs, Mr D Gilani\*, Dr M Gobbi, Dr A M Gravell, Dr L Green, Professor P de Groot, Professor Dame Wendy Hall, Ms T Harrison (*Registrar*), Professor G Hearn, Dr C Holmes, Professor J Howells, Dr T Irvine, Dr C W Jackson, Dr D Keir, Dr L Kraaijeveld, Professor N Lee, Dr R Lewis, Mr S Ling\*, Dr M Luke, Dr B MacArthur, Dr J Maclean, Professor N J Madise, Professor R A Mills, Ms R Moore, Dr A D Neill, Dr T Newman, Dr D Nicole, Professor M Niranjana, Mr L O'Brien\*, Dr K Oliver, Ms K Owens, Dr J Parker, Professor J Petts, Dr C Pickard, Dr E Roe, Professor A Richardson, Dr S Sharkh, Dr W B Sloan, Dr A Smith, Dr C Smith, Dr P Smith, Professor P G R Smith, Ms L Stobseth-Brown, Professor G Taylor, Professor P Townsend, Dr J Tumblety, Mr S Watson\*, Mr S Watt, Professor N White, Professor P Wilson and Mr E Zaluska

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**In attendance** The Director of Communications and Marketing, the Director of Human Resources and Ms C J Gamble

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(\* Member of Senate not present for the restricted items.)

## Welcome

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly the new members of Senate who were attending their first meeting. He also welcomed the Registrar, Ms Tessa Harrison, who had taken up her post on 1 August 2011.

## Obituary

The Vice-Chancellor announced with regret the death on 5 November 2011 of Emeritus Professor Sir Gordon Higginson, Vice-Chancellor of the University from 1985 to 1994, and asked members of Senate to stand as a mark of respect.

## 1 Standing Orders

**Received** A copy of the Standing Orders of Senate for 2011-12, revised to amend the title 'Registrar and Chief Operating Officer'.

**Resolved** That the Standing Orders for the current academic session be approved.

## 2 **Senate membership**

**Received** A copy of the current list of Senate members.

The Vice-Chancellor stated that since the membership paper had been circulated the Faculty of Engineering and the Environment had elected four more members. An amended version of the paper would be posted on the SUSSED group site as soon as possible.

The Vice-Chancellor drew attention to the vacancies that existed in two categories: Representatives of the academic staff from each Faculty (category (e)) and Representatives of the research staff of the University (category (f)). He encouraged the Faculties which were holding vacancies to fill them before the next meeting of Senate.

**Noted** The Senate membership for 2011-12.

## 3 **Minutes**

The members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2011 for signing by the Vice-Chancellor.

## 4 **Matters arising**

### 4.1 **Senate question time** (Minute 50) (*Update on principles to guide international partnerships*)

The Vice-Chancellor reported that, following a proposal from a member of Senate, a reference to gender has been included in the set of principles which had been drawn up to guide international partnerships and collaborations. It was now stated that staff appointments and student admissions would be made on merit, with no restrictions based on *gender*, race or religion, but that national laws would need to be observed and cultural sensitivities understood and respected. Council had endorsed the document at its meeting in September 2011.

### 4.2 **Revisions to Ordinances to reflect new academic structures** (Minute 53)

**Received** A report from the Registrar which explained several further changes to Part 2 of the Ordinances (Organisation and government) to amend the title of one of the academic units in the Faculty of Medicine, and to include the new Southampton Marine and Maritime Institute in the list of academic units.

The Vice-Chancellor drew attention to the report which explained the timetable that had been established for approving the changes: Council had agreed them on 26 September 2011, subject to endorsement by Senate at its first meeting of the 2011-12 academic session. He invited the members of Senate to endorse the revisions under Ordinance 2.3 (the addition of the Southampton Marine and Maritime Institute in the Faculty of Engineering and the Environment), and under Ordinance 2.6 (the addition of Clinical and Experimental Sciences in the Faculty of Medicine and the deletion in the list of the name 'Infection Inflammation and Immunity').

**Resolved** That the amendments to Ordinances 2.3 and 2.6, set out in the report, be endorsed, and come into effect immediately.

### 4.3 **University Programme Committee** (Minute 54 (iii) and (iv)) (*Amendments to parts of Sections IV and V of the Calendar*)

The Vice-Chancellor reported that he had approved the Regulations and Procedures Governing Student Complaints in August 2011. Further revisions to the Admissions Regulations had been signed off by the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor after a meeting of the University Programme Committee in July 2011.

## 5 **Vice-Chancellor's report and University Executive Group (UEG) decision log**

**Received** The Vice-Chancellor's report, together with a list of actions and decisions taken by UEG since the meeting of Senate in June 2011.

The Vice-Chancellor presented his report, highlighting the following items:

### *White Paper on higher education*

Since the publication of the White Paper *Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System* the Government had confirmed the introduction of a core and margin system for student numbers, and announced the steps that would be taken to protect subjects which were defined by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) as strategically important and vulnerable (SIVS). It was not clear at this stage how the new arrangements would affect the overall numbers of students applying to universities.

The Vice-Chancellor stated that he was pleased that the University had been able to submit a joint response with the Students' Union to the Government's consultation on its White Paper. He commented that some of the Government's responses to the treatment of SIVS accorded with the views highlighted by the University and the Union.

### *University league rankings*

The most recent rankings illustrated the effects of changes that had been made to the criteria used to compile the higher education listings. By any objective measure, the University's performance had remained stable. However, in the areas that called for a subjective assessment by peer groups, the institution had performed less well. It was worth noting that although the University had dropped to 127 th position in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings for 2011-12, its placing among UK institutions – joint 17 th – appeared to reflect a decline in position experienced by other UK universities.

The Vice-Chancellor said that he believed that the University could do better in the national rankings and to achieve this there was work to be done in respect of the National Student Survey (NSS) which was highlighted in his report.

### *UEG and Council awaydays*

The UEG and Council awaydays had focused on five critical themes, identified from the feedback received from the NSS and from developments in the sector. Two further areas had been discussed at the Council awayday: raising the profile of the University and strengthening further the institution's commitment to enterprise.

### *The Times Higher Awards 2011*

The University had been short-listed in three categories in the Times Higher Education (THE) Awards: University of the Year; Outstanding ICT Initiative of the Year; and Outstanding Contribution to Sustainable Development. The awards ceremony would take place in London on 24 November 2011.

[Post-meeting note: THE announced that the University was the winner of the Outstanding ICT Initiative of the Year.]

### **International visits**

The Vice-Chancellor had visited Dalian Polytechnic University (DPU) in China in October for the formal launch of two undergraduate programmes – a BA (Hons) Graphic Art and a BA (Hons) Fashion Design – offered by the University in collaboration with DPU.

### **Members of Senate appointed to Council**

One of the responsibilities of Senate at the beginning of an academic session was appointing a standing Nominating Committee to propose appointments to fill vacancies that might arise in the group of Senate members who sat on the governing body. Professor Makhoul had indicated that he wished to stand down from Council because of work commitments, particularly abroad, which had prevented him from fulfilling his role on the governing body. The Vice-Chancellor invited members of Senate to put themselves forward to join the Committee by emailing him by the end of November 2011.

### **Senior appointments**

Ms Sarah Pook had been appointed Director of Finance in September 2011. She had joined the University from the Hampshire County Council where she had been the Deputy County Treasurer.

**Noted** The Vice-Chancellor's report and UEG's decisions.

## 6 Education and the Student Experience

### 6.1 Education Strategy: update

**Received** A report from Pro Vice-Chancellor Humphris entitled 'Education Strategic Plan: Quarter 1 Report 2011/12' which gave the details of the actions and decisions that had been taken during the period August 2011 to October 2011 in relation to the objectives of the Education Strategic Plan.

Pro Vice-Chancellor Humphris highlighted the following items in her report:

#### *Quality Assurance and Enhancement*

Staff had been appointed to join the Quality, Standards and Accreditation Team which would coordinate the preparations for the Institutional Review, planned to take place in October 2012, in addition to working with the Faculties on the routine quality assurance and enhancement activities.

In the new committee structure, the University Programme Committee would support a University-wide forum which would meet biannually to discuss the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Review and Action Plans (LTERAPs). Similarly, Faculties would hold twice yearly forums to consider programme enhancement issues.

#### *Curriculum Innovation*

A pilot programme would run from the second semester of the current academic year for a group of undergraduates. The modules for the pilot had been selected under the guidance of the Themes and Pathways group, one of the groups established to bring the curriculum innovation project to fruition. The aim was to roll out the programme from 2012-13 to allow all students to choose to study modules from a wide range of subjects that would broaden their knowledge and skills beyond the curriculum of their specific degree.

Pro Vice-Chancellor Humphris thanked all the individuals who had led on the development of the curriculum innovation offer for their hard work.

#### *Assessment and feedback*

The approach to evaluating the student experience was set out in an accompanying report (Agendum 7.2). It built on the work undertaken by a number of staff. In particular, Pro Vice-Chancellor Humphris acknowledged the efforts of Dr Anderson and Dr Jackson in the area of module evaluation and the framework for student feedback.

#### *Recruitment and Admissions*

A review of the Admissions Policy would be undertaken in preparation for the 2013-14 recruitment cycle. Recommendations for updating the University's policy statement on the A\* grade at 'A' level in relation to admissions were set out in a report from the University Programme Committee (Agendum 11).

Responding to a question about the accommodation guarantee (section 8), Pro Vice-Chancellor Humphris explained that it had been necessary to reconsider it in respect of continuing international students in order to allow greater flexibility in the provision of rooms in Halls of Residence. She understood the potential effect this might have on recruitment overseas until the number of rooms had been increased. Plans had been drawn up to improve the current position by 2014-15. Pro Vice-Chancellor Humphris stated that the scope of the revised guarantee would not be out of line with what a number of other Russell Group institutions were offering.

**Noted** The report for the first quarter of 2011-12 on the Education Strategic Plan from Pro Vice-Chancellor Humphris.

## 6.2 Knowing Our Students framework

**Received** A report from the Registrar entitled 'Knowing Our Students framework', dated 7 November 2011.

The Registrar summarized the content of the report, underlining that the aim was to develop a more coherent and consistent approach to the evaluation of the student experience. The framework drew on previous work in the area of the evaluation of student satisfaction and engagement. Its five elements were: institutional level evaluation, internally and externally driven, module evaluation, campaigning and communicating, and student data. At whatever level an evaluation was undertaken, the analysis of the results should be used to introduce improvements, where it was concluded that they were required, and were within the power of the institution to make changes. A steering group would be set up to have oversight of the implementation of the framework and to bring forward recommendations to Pro Vice-Chancellor Humphris through her Education and Student Experience Advisory Group. The activities would be coordinated centrally through the Planning Office which would provide benchmarking information and ensure that the survey work was not duplicated across the University. The plans for the work ahead included bringing together data from various sources which staff across the University could interrogate for a variety of purposes.

A pilot survey of all students would be run during the Autumn term, using a customized version of the well-established i-Barometer questionnaire, with the exception of final-year undergraduates because of the timing of the National Student Survey (NSS). A piece of qualitative research had been commissioned as well from the group 'Students in Free Enterprise' who would conduct interviews with a selected number of students from each Faculty.

The President of the Students' Union and the Vice-President (Academic Affairs) commented that one of the most important aspects of the evaluation process was the feedback to students, reporting on how the University had responded to the matters they had raised. The timing of the preparations for the NSS was vital, too.

**Noted** The Knowing Our Students framework and the plans for its implementation.

## 6.3 Degree classification system

**Received** A report, and a presentation, from Pro Vice-Chancellor Humphris which compared the relative merits of the current system of degree classification and an alternative system, Grade Point Average (GPA).

In her presentation, Pro Vice-Chancellor Humphris explained the background to the discussions at a national level on the subject of classification systems and the developments taking place within the Russell Group. The merits and the disadvantages of both systems were discussed in the report and highlighted in the presentation. Pro Vice-Chancellor Humphris invited members of Senate to consider whether the arguments for changing to a GPA system were stronger than those for maintaining the current system of classification.

In discussion, the following points and comments were made:

- What different models of GPA systems were in use across the world? How well-recognized were they in continental Europe? What would such a system add when a student's marks were provided in a Diploma Supplement to prospective employers in addition to a degree classification?
- If the University decided that it wished to adopt a GPA system, it might be necessary to provide an equivalent honours classification rating during a transitional period.
- The views of student groups, home/EU and international, had not been sought at this very early stage. No financial information on the cost of moving to a new system had been prepared. All of this would form part of a subsequent investigation into the possibility of changing systems, subject to Senate's endorsement.
- There were a range of academic considerations, such as the marking criteria - for course work and examinations - and the weightings at different levels of study, which would need to be thought about carefully. How would they be taken into account in a

new system? The consequences for different modes of delivery, including distance learning, and the implications for higher degrees, in particular postgraduate admissions, were all identified as matters for further debate.

- If there was a move towards adopting a GPA system within the sector, it might serve the University well to be in the vanguard of institutions.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked members for their initial views and proposed that a start be made on exploring the issues further, all of which would be brought back to Senate in a detailed report that would be discussed later in the academic year. The work being undertaken by the Russell Group institutions would be followed closely as this would help the University judge how best to proceed. Senate endorsed the Vice-Chancellor's proposal.

**Resolved** That Pro Vice-Chancellor Humphris should arrange for preliminary work to commence on exploring what type of GPA system might be introduced in the future, and the consequences for the University, academically and financially, of doing so.

## 7 Academic reward and recognition

**Received** A presentation, given by the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, on the academic reward and recognition project.

A Steering Group, chaired by the Provost, had been set up during the last academic session to design a system that helped the University to recruit, develop, retain and reward high-performing academic staff and to recognize fully the range of roles staff might perform during the course of their careers.

In presenting the proposals, the Provost drew attention to:

- The principles of a fair and equitable framework which would incentivise individuals and teams to excel in their academic fields.
- The characteristics of an international academic.
- The academic career pathway, and the related descriptions for each stage of an individual's career, and the accompanying titles.
- The development and appraisal framework.
- The timetable for the consultation with members of staff, and the launch of a website in early December 2011 which would hold the details of the project and would be open for staff contributions and comments in specific areas.

The Vice-Chancellor commented that the changes contained in the proposals were significant. The presentation was the start of a year during which consultation would take place leading up to the planned date of introduction at the beginning of 2012-13.

A number of questions were asked about the presentation:

- Regarding capability and performance, the Provost outlined several examples where academic staff could be supported: capturing research grants, directing research activities to a new area where a particular discipline changed focus during the course of an individual's career, and help with language learning if English was not an academic's native tongue.
- The title 'Reader' was not always understood abroad. The alternative 'Associate Professor' was more easily translatable. Should the title 'Senior Lecturer' be revised too? Responding to the query, the Provost explained that, considering the length of time it might take to establish an academic career, there should be two stages below the level of Associate Professor and to distinguish those two stages the titles 'Lecturer' and 'Senior Lecturer' would be retained. There would be a phased introduction of the new title over a period of years which would take into account individual circumstances.
- An individual would be expected to be active in both education and research to progress along either of the education-led or research-led career tracks beyond the level of Senior Lecturer.

The Vice-Chancellor stated that the University Executive Group had thoroughly examined all aspects of the proposals. There would be opportunities for members of Senate to engage in the wider discussions on the framework, including debates at Senate in February and June 2012. He acknowledged the extraordinary amount of work which had been undertaken to formulate the proposals, and thanked all those involved.

**Noted** The detail of the Provost's presentation.

## 8 **Senate question time**

The Vice-Chancellor said that as Senate question time had been introduced only relatively recently – from the end of the last academic year – a protocol for the session had not yet developed. He was working on the basis that he would respond to the queries without stating the names of the members of Senate who had posed the questions. Nevertheless, members should feel free to identify themselves, if they wished to, and to respond to the answers that he gave.

### *Questions and answers*

- 1 The timing of the release of the new criteria for promotion to ERE levels 6 and 7 – two weeks prior to the deadline for the submission of applications – had not given candidates sufficient time to prepare adequately. New criteria appeared to have been adopted which were not included in previous career pathways personal guide.

The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that there had been no change in the criteria. The University Executive Group (UEG) had discussed the matter in early October after which new guidance had been issued. The detail of the question asked was being followed up with Human Resources and the Dean of the Faculty concerned.

- 2 Regarding the new level of student fees from 2012 and the effect it would have on the University's recruitment and finances, would the amounts for Band A and B subjects be enough to cover the cost of providing the programmes which fell in these bands?

The Vice-Chancellor pointed out that the current level of funding did not cover the cost of teaching Band A and B subjects. Universities had had to manage this position. Looking ahead, it was clear that the funding for teaching was capped, yet the market that would be introduced from 2012-13 was unregulated in that the number of students with 'A' level grades of AAB or equivalent that universities could recruit was not fixed. Should the number of students grow, the unit of resource would decline. These points had been raised with the Government. It was unlikely that supplementary funding would be forthcoming from the private sector.

- 3 Did the Vice-Chancellor think that the Transitions project had been a success?

The Vice-Chancellor stated that it was too early in the process to make a judgement, other than to observe that the University had reached the end of the first phase of the changes that had been agreed. The new structure had been put in place only at the end of the last academic year. He acknowledged that the Faculty support services were not fully staffed in all areas yet and that some of the staff were relatively inexperienced in their new roles. This had led to difficulties during the beginning of the 2011-12 session, causing inconvenience to students and creating unwelcome stress for members of staff. He thanked staff for doing their utmost to ensure that the University continued to function properly during a challenging period. It would take some time for the new set-up to be firmly established, namely standardized systems and services delivered through the Faculties. UEG had advised that a fund of £500 k be made available to help overcome problems that had arisen in respect of the delivery of services. This support would be used to alleviate pressures in the system that had become evident after the transition but which in the longer term should be resolved as the processes bedded down during the year.

Professor Lee commented that students in her academic unit had been angered by the problems that they had encountered with the arrangements for their programmes of study. The timing of the transition had affected the admissions process, pulling academics away from teaching and research. She was concerned too about the amount of time that remained to resolve administrative problems before the National Student Survey was held, and the repercussions of all of that for the University.

The Vice-Chancellor said that moving to a new organizational structure had enabled the University to achieve significant savings, all of which had allowed the Faculties to recruit academic staff. He hoped action would be taken quickly to sort out the difficulties that had been experienced; the 'snagging' fund should be used for that purpose. Support staff should be thoroughly prepared to provide the service that was required, leaving academic staff to concentrate on their principal responsibilities. The Registrar and the Chief Operating Officer, working with the Deans, would ensure that the Professional Services were functioning properly. He reiterated that the transition had been completed only ten weeks ago. During the current year the systems and services should be up and running in the way that had been intended. However, he was not in a position to offer guarantees against temporary shortcomings that might occur but wished to reassure Senate that there was a very high level of awareness of what the difficulties were, what was required to resolve them, and what improvements might be made in the way that progress in this area was communicated across the University.

- 4 Was it expected that, as a result of the new arrangements for the funding of student numbers from 2012-13, the number of University applicants would fall?

The Vice-Chancellor said that he thought it was too early to forecast what effect the changes would have. There had been no significant change overall in the number of applications to the University. Looking at specific groups of prospective students, it was clear that fewer EU applications had been received, as was the case across the sector, while demand for particular programmes of study varied across the institution. Head Teachers and College Principals were indicating that the cohort of pupils who were applying this year had already committed to moving on to higher education whereas the years below them might question whether it was the most appropriate choice for them in the future. During the year ahead a better understanding would be gained about the new 'market'. It would be premature to take action to revise the strategic direction of the University. He was confident about its future.

**Noted** The questions and answers during Senate question time.

9 **University Programme Committee: report from the meeting held on 26 October 2011**

**Received** A report from the meeting of the University Programme Committee, held on 26 October 2011, presented by the Chair of the Committee, Professor Curry.

Professor Curry invited Senate to note the website that had been set up for the Quality Handbook: [https://sharepoint.soton.ac.uk/sites/ese/quality\\_handbook/Handbook/home.aspx](https://sharepoint.soton.ac.uk/sites/ese/quality_handbook/Handbook/home.aspx). It was accessible to all members of the University, staff and students. The previous version would be archived.

Professor Curry invited members of Senate to approve the following matters:

- Item 1 The revised text in the Quality Handbook on the role of the external examiner in the examination of taught programmes.
- Item 2 The amendments to the 'Code of Practice for Research Candidature and Supervision: Change of Supervisor', following proposals from the RDGC (Researcher Development and Graduate Centre) Working Group to clarify the processes for making such a change.
- Item 3 The proposals set out in Appendix 1 to the report on the University's admissions policy statement in respect of A\* grades at 'A' level.

**Resolved** That the sidelined text under Item 1, the replacement text under Item 2, and under Item 3 the text set out in the Appendix to the report be approved.

10 **Annual report from the Senate Appeals Committee**

**Received** The annual report from the Senate Appeals Committee which summarized the appeals considered by the Committee in 2010-11, and which included an appeal from the previous year, 2009-10.

Pro Vice-Chancellor Humphris was pleased to report that all the appeals that had come forward during 2010-11 had been considered and completed within the agreed time-scales. There had been no delays and there was no backlog of cases. Compared with the previous year, the position had improved significantly. She wished to acknowledge the role played by Ms Pugh, the Academic Appeals and



Student Complaints Manager, in respect of the appeals and her involvement in bringing forward the new processes which had been introduced from the beginning of the current academic year.

**Noted**            The content of the Annual Report.

11 **Vice-Chancellor's action(s) as Chair of Senate**

The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that there were no items on which he had taken Chair's action on behalf of Senate that he should report.

12 **Annual report from Senate to Council**

**Received** A report, presented by the Registrar, which summarized the work of Senate during the 2010-11 session.

The Vice-Chancellor reminded members of the findings of the Council effectiveness review in December 2010 that had included a recommendation that Senate present an annual report on its work to the governing body to help it gain a better understanding of developments in education and research. The report before Senate was a draft which, if approved by the members, would be presented by the Vice-Chancellor to Council. The overview supplemented the regular reports that had been provided during the year which contained all of the procedural matters that required Council approval, in addition to relaying the debates on the areas of activity that fell within the portfolios of the Pro Vice-Chancellors.

The Registrar, who had taken up her post at the start of the current year, commented that Council's views would be sought on the format of the report.

**Resolved** That the annual report for the academic session 2010-11 be approved and submitted to Council for consideration at its meeting on 24 November 2011.

13 **Code of Practice to Secure Freedom of Speech within the Law**

**Received** A copy of the revisions to the Code of Practice to Secure Freedom of Speech within the Law, and the annual report on the operation of the Code which had been presented to Council earlier in the year.

**Noted** The recent revisions to the Code of Practice to Secure Freedom of Speech within the Law which had been approved by Council in September 2011.

14 **Date of next meeting**

The Vice-Chancellor reminded members of the date of the next scheduled meeting: 29 February 2012. He invited Pro Vice-Humphris to explain the reason for an extraordinary meeting of Senate during the year. Pro Vice-Humphris said that an additional meeting was required to approve the University's Self-Evaluation Document, part of the requirements of the forthcoming Institutional Review. She proposed that the meeting take place on 2 May 2012.

**Noted** The date of the extraordinary meeting of Senate on 2 May 2012.

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