

University of Glasgow**Academic Standards Committee – Friday 30 September 2016****Report from the Meeting of the Joint Board of the University of Glasgow and Edinburgh Theological Seminary held on 18 April 2016****Robbie Mulholland, Clerk to the Joint Board****1. Interim Report from ETS for Session 2015-16***1.1 The Distance-Learning Project*

The Board was provided with an update regarding the ETS Distance-Learning Project. It was noted that a key aspect of the project involved the proposed introduction of a distance-learning version of the BTh full-time programme. The BTh (by distance-learning) would offer the same curriculum, learning materials and assessment methods as that utilised by the full-time programme. The programme was expected to commence in September 2016 and a validation event would take place in mid-May. In the meantime, the programme was being advertised by ETS as 'subject to validation' by the University.

The supporting accommodation and IT facilities had been installed and a new member of staff, part of whose brief included technical and operational support for student and staff users, had been appointed. In addition, a successful pilot exercise to test the system's software had been undertaken by several full-time BTh students.

The first intake to the programme would be limited to between 5 and 10 students with the cap on numbers due, in part, to limitations imposed by technical considerations such as system bandwidth and memory capacity. However, ETS also considered this number would enable good interaction between on and off-campus students while maintaining the collegiality of the full-time group.

The Board was advised that the distance-learning option would address a gap in theological education provision in Scotland, in that it would enable students who lived some distance from ETS or were unable to relocate for family or financial reasons to undertake niche theological study not available elsewhere.

ETS was also exploring the potential benefits which distance-learning could bring to other areas of its provision and welcomed possible future collaboration with the University in this area. The Convener welcomed the progress ETS had made with the distance-learning model of learning but observed that any future initiatives involving the University would be subject to individual negotiation.

1.2 ETS Impact Goals

The Board was advised that a four-part television series involving ETS had been screened on BBC Alba in the autumn of 2015. Entitled 'Balaich a' Bhiobail' (Bible Boys), the series followed the learning experience of four BTh students at ETS and examined the institution's role in preparing students for Gaelic-speaking ministries. It highlighted the lack of Gaelic speaking pastors and the need for greater language support for theology students hoping to serve in Gaelic speaking communities. The series had generated considerable public interest in the work of ETS, its students and its relationship with the University of Glasgow.

It was noted that Gaelic educational initiatives such as Gaelic medium schooling continued to grow and that Scottish Government funding was available for Gaelic language development at all levels of education. ETS aimed to build on increased public awareness in this area by introducing a Gaelic module and would welcome the support of staff from Celtic/Gaelic at the University in developing the course. The Board welcomed this development and acknowledged that there were currently no Gaelic experts amongst the staff in Theology and Religious Studies. The module would be particularly attractive to students with an existing theological background who wished to learn Gaelic. The Committee **agreed** that this should be taken forward with the Head of the College of Arts in the first instance. It was **agreed** that the details of the Head of the College of Arts (and the University's Gaelic Language Officer) should be passed to ETS.

The Board was informed that BBC Alba had asked if they could film the University's graduation ceremonies in the Bute Hall. It was noted that filming in the Bute Hall was not possible as this would require the consent of all graduands in a particular ceremony. Filming of individual students in the University quadrangles would, however, be permissible.

1.3 Joint Projects with the University of Glasgow

The Board heard that a Mission Centre had been developed on the newly refurbished 6th and 7th floors of the ETS building. The Centre was intended to fill the gap created by the closure of the International Christian College in Glasgow and would be instrumental in taking forward ETS's strategic objectives. It would provide an environment within which recent BTh graduates and other learners could develop ministry and personal skills essential to their future employability, while working alongside experienced missionaries returning from furlough or sabbatical. The Centre would provide part-time learning opportunities for a variety of community groups including lay-preachers, elders and deacons - and would also welcome representatives from denominations outwith the Free Church of Scotland.

ETS planned to develop a proposal for a postgraduate programme in Missiology - which would be delivered from the Mission Centre. Validation for the programme would be sought from the University and a formal proposal developed in due course. It was hoped that the resources of the Mission Centre combined with ETS's expertise in Gaelic, Scottish Church History and distance-learning would provide a good basis for future collaboration with the University. This might include the delivery of lectures, conferences, workshops and research projects.

The Committee **agreed** that ETS should explore these opportunities further with the relevant members of University staff. It was further **agreed** that ETS forward a timeline for the introduction of the proposal (including a Statement of Intent (SOI)) to the Academic Collaborations Office at the earliest opportunity. As the proposed programme would commence in session 2017/18, it was necessary that ETS submit the SOI in time to be considered by the University's Academic Standards Committee (ASC) at its first meeting of the new session (30 September 2016). A validation event for the new programme would be required in session 2016-17.

1.4 Extension of the Taught Masters

It was noted that ETS planned to introduce a taught MTh in Biblical Studies and Pastoral Theology - for commencement in session 2017-18. This would supplement the existing taught MTh in Scottish Church History and Theology. The Committee **agreed** that the same validation timeline and arrangements required for the introduction of the

postgraduate programme in Missiology (above), would also apply to the MTh in Biblical Studies and Pastoral Theology proposal.

2. Changes to the Administration of External Examiners

The Clerk noted that in order to comply with UKVI requirements regarding the verification of employees 'right to work' documentation, the University had changed some of its processes relating to external examiners. The changes would impact on the administration of external examiners at ETS (and the University's other validated partners). The main changes would be as follows:

- ETS would assume the full role of employer of external examiners including assuming responsibility for issuing letters of appointment to externals. (ETS would be expected to develop appropriate templates for letters of appointment in consultation with the Senate Office);
- ETS would assume responsibility for verifying externals' 'right to work' documentation. This would require to be done in the presence of the external examiner; and
- ETS would pay its external examiners directly. Up until now, the University had paid ETS externals and the Senate Office had invoiced ETS for reimbursement.

There would be no change to the present arrangement whereby the University received and scrutinised ETS's external examiners' reports and the University would continue to approve all external examiner nominations, as was currently the case.

The Committee raised several queries regarding the new arrangements including:-

- would the new arrangements apply to just undergraduate programmes or postgraduate taught and research programmes also;
- if the University continued to receive and scrutinise external examiners' reports, what would be the mechanism to prompt ETS to pay their externals; and
- would externals be required to undergo a 'right to work' document verification check annually or just at the beginning of their appointment.

It was **agreed** that the Clerk clarify these issues with the Senate Office.

Action: Clerk

[Clerk's post-meeting note]:

- *the new arrangements would apply to undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research programmes;*
- *external examiners would send their report to ETS (with a copy to the University). Receipt of the report would prompt ETS to make payment to externals; and*
- *external examiners would be required to undergo a 'right to work' document check once only (at the commencement of appointment).*

3. Publications/Publicity Material (standing item)

The Convener thanked ETS members for continuing to send the University copies of their publicity materials which referenced the University. The University was obliged under the QAA Quality Code for Higher Education to review such materials by its validated institutions prior to publication.

4. Convener's Business

4.1 Transfer of Western Infirmary Site to the University

The Convener informed the Committee that the University had taken possession of the former Western Infirmary site at the beginning of April 2016. Demolition was underway to prepare the site, adjacent to the Gilmorehill campus, for a proposed £1 billion re-development. It would be one of the biggest educational infrastructure projects in Scotland and would include the development of:

- a Research and Innovation Hub housing large-scale, inter-disciplinary projects and incubator space for spin-out collaborations with industry;
- a Learning and Teaching Hub (on University Avenue);
- new buildings for the Colleges of Social Sciences and Engineering and the Institute of Health and Wellbeing;
- public access routes linking Byres Road to the emerging West End cultural quarter surrounding Kelvingrove Art Gallery/Museum and the newly refurbished Kelvin Hall; and
- several commercial outlets including a hotel, restaurant and bars.

Extensive consultation had taken place regarding proposals for the site and both Glasgow City Council and local business/community groups had been very supportive of the University's plans. The Convener noted that the area adjacent to the bottom of Byres Road was already home to a sizable student population following the construction of several large private student residences. It was hoped that the development of the Western Infirmary site would help attract the best students and staff to the University and also contribute to economic prosperity locally.

4.2 Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Bill (2016)

The Convener informed members that the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Bill had been passed by the Scottish Parliament in March 2016 and received Royal Assent. He noted that there had been some concern within the University and the sector as a whole regarding aspects of the original Bill. However, he was pleased to note that several contentious aspects of the Bill had been withdrawn or modified in the course of its passage through Parliament. The main proposals in the original Bill had focused on:

- the process to be used to appoint the Chair of the governing body of an HEI;
- the composition of the governing body of an HEI;
- the election and nomination of members of the governing body of an HEI;
- remuneration of the Chair of the governing body of an HEI;
- the size, composition and election of members of the academic board of an HEI; and
- the revision to the definition of academic freedom.

The Convener informed the Committee that amendments made to the Bill included the removal of the proposal to give Scottish Ministers power to intervene in matters relating to:

- the process to be used in appointing the Chair of the governing body;
- the approach to remuneration and amounts to be paid to the Chair of the governing body;
- the number of members of the governing body and category of statutory member; and
- the size and composition of the academic board.

The amended Bill also included provision to protect the position of Rector as complementary to the senior lay member (where an elected Rector was in place). The removal of the section of the Bill allowing Ministers to determine governing body membership meant that HEIs would not be reclassified as public bodies by the Office of National Statistics (ONS). This would ensure HEIs retained their status as charitable organisations.