Minutes of a meeting of the School Executive Committee
held on February 18th 2004

Present
David Sugden (Chair)
John Grace
Graham Russell
William Mackaness
Simon Harley
Colin Graham
Sue Maclachlan (secretary)

1. Apologies were received from Stuart Haszeldine and Susan Smith.

2. Minutes of the meeting of December 17th were approved.

3. Matters arising:
   (a) Visit of the Head of College: Prof Bulfield was very impressed by the enthusiasm of staff and students, and optimistic about the future for the School.
   (b) NERC issues: DES had written to NERC about the PhD studentship algorithm and the decline in studentships to the University, and the funding gap for the support of skilled technicians.

4. Remarks from the Chair
   (a) JR/ERP (Edinburgh Research Partnership) bid has been submitted. If successful, this could bring 2 senior posts, one technical officer plus equipment to the School.
   (b) Scottish Alliance for GeoSciences, Environment and Society (S.A.G.E.S) bid has been submitted to SHEFC. St Andrews and SAMS, Dunstaffnage (both of which currently collaborate with groups in GeoSciences) have been added to the Edinburgh/ Glasgow/SUERC core alliance in Phase I of the bid. Phase II will extend collaboration via research grants and access to SUERC facilities. A meeting of representatives from all the Scottish departments/schools, plus SUERC and SAMS has been arranged for April 16th in Edinburgh.
   (c) Lectureship in Environment and Development. Interviews for this lectureship, funded following submission to College of a Business Plan for a new MSc in Environment and Development, will take place on February 25th.
   (d) Academic Plan for GeoSciences has been discussed with College, savings figures have been agreed and recruitment of posts can begin.
   (e) RAE 2008 information:- The census date will be 31st Oct 2007; publications (4 outputs for each researcher published from 1st January 2001 to 31st July 2007) and results will be published, in November 2008, as a quality profile at the sub-panel level (i.e. in the case of GeoSciences, at Institute level). The Research Strategy Group will start planning RAE strategy immediately.
   (f) As part of a review of fixed-term positions in the School, three GeoSciences posts have been transferred from fixed-term to open-ended.: Kerry Watt and Catherine Lees (0.2 FTE), Drummond Library staff, and Donna Easterlow, Lecturer in the Institute of Geography.
   (g) AUT action 25/26 February. Staff await guidance, but in the interim it was agreed that the Board of Studies meeting will be postponed. Interviews for the Lectureship in Environment and Development will proceed, as arranged, on the 26th.

5. Teaching Posts
The School has the go-ahead to recruit posts from internal salary savings. Two papers were discussed:
   (a) Teaching Policy Committee paper on teaching post priorities of the different degree programme groups in the School, and (b) Strategic Posts paper, with priorities from the Research Groups. There was a close match between the two. SEG agreed to immediate recruitment of:
   • Lecturer in Exploration Geophysics (3 year-post, initially);
   • Chair and Lectureship in Earth Surface Dynamics;
   • Lecturer in Quantitative Human Geography;
   • Lecturer in Environmental Informatics;
   • 2 teaching studentships in Geography
There is also the possibility that the School will be able recruit further down the list of priorities, because:-
The Head of College is attempting to tap University reserves for recruitment of Chairs, and
The JRI and SAGES initiatives, if they are successful, will bring posts.

Comments from SEG members:
- Concern expressed that immediate staffing problems in Geology/Geophysics would not be
  addressed with the proposed initial recruitment and there would be problems for continuation of
  the current teaching and research programme;
- There is a School-wide need for a spatial statistician; request that the quantitative human
  geography post could also contribute to MSc teaching;
- Support staff issues should be considered when deciding how to use savings;
- The Lectureship in Reactive Fluid Flow should be Lecturer/Reader (DES agreed to amend)
  DES will ask Heads of Research Group to write job specifications for these positions. They will then
  be circulated to S.E.G. members for comment before being advertised.

6. Scientific and Technical Services
John Farmer, Convenor of the STC Committee, introduced the review of all Scientific and Technical
Services within GeoSciences, and its 47 recommendations. It was agreed that some of the
recommendations could be easily implemented immediately, e.g. those relating to cost centres,
charging and websites. Other recommendations are more contentious, e.g. staffing and equipment, and
these would be discussed by the RSG and Heads of Research Groups. DES/JF/CG will have a
preparatory meeting to discuss Recommendation 16 (contracts). CG agreed that this would be a major
agenda item at a forthcoming meeting of the RSG, which JF would be invited to attend. The
committee will report to the March 17th meeting of S.E.G. (ACTION CG)
DES thanked JF and the committee for all the hard work they’d done to produce this thorough review.

7. Research Strategy Group
S.E.G. agreed to the RSG suggestion of:
(a) primary and secondary membership of research groups, with apportionment for resource
distribution purposes. There would be ‘open’ membership lists for external purposes, and lists, for
internal use only, with apportionment for resource allocation. The HoS, HoRSG, and HoRG will meet
urgently to discuss details of membership and apportionment and report their guidelines to S.E.G.
(b) There was brief discussion about the need for extra administrative support for group leaders in the
form of a research administrator, and the possibility of a research development/commercialisation
position funded by Knowledge Transfer funds.

8. A.O.B.
(a) JG noted the difficulty in getting young lecturers to become course organisers; the perception is
that maximum time must be spent on research to merit promotion to Senior Lecturer;
(b) JG will implement procurement of teaching equipment as recommended by the Teaching
Organisation;
(c) A meeting of the web editorial committee will take place on Friday, 20th February. Problems with
the School’s website will be discussed.

The meeting finished at 16.30. Next meeting, 3pm, March 17th 2004.