

**AC (21/22) Minute 4**

**ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

**Minute of the meeting held on Wednesday 1 June 2022**

**Present:** Professor G McCormac, Professor I Docherty, Professor J Donaldson, Professor L Forbat, Professor K Grant, Professor A Green, Dr M Lovatt, Professor M MacLeod, Professor D McGhee, Ms N Miller, Professor H Nehring, Professor R Norman, Professor J Phillips, Mr M Sammels, Professor L Sparks, Ms J Stevenson, Dr I Tabner, Ms L Wilson**,** Professor N Wylie.

**In Attendance:** Ms I Beveridge, Ms J Morrow, Ms E Schofield, Mr D Soutar (secretary), Dr D Telford.

**Apologies:** Mr Calum Brown, Dr Andrew Desbois, Dr Andre Gilburn, Professor Adrian Hadland, Professor Alastair Jump, Dr Emma Macleod, Professor Nina Parish, Professor Mark Priestley, Professor Julie Tinson.

**WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

Following the recent election process, the newly elected Students’ Union Officers had taken up post on 1 June 2021 and the new student members of Academic Council were confirmed:

* Union President – Tash Miller
* Vice President Education – Calum Brown
* Engagement Officer - Lucy Wilson
* Mature Students Officer - Michael Sammels

Thanks were once again extended to the student representatives who had contributed to Academic Council over the previous year.

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| **1.** | **MINUTES** | **AC (21/22)**  **Minute 3** |
|  | The minutes of the meeting held of 9 March 2022 were approved. | |
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| **2.** | **MATTERS ARISING NOT OTHERWISE ON THE AGENDA** |  |
|  | Council noted the following matters arising:  **Institutional Sustainability Plan**  Further to Council’s approval of the report, it was considered and approved by University Court.  **Amendment to Ordinances**  Further to Council’s endorsement of the amendment to Ordinance 30, it was considered and approved by University Court. | |
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| **\*3.** | **STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIR AND**  **AN UPDATE ON THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT** | **Oral Report**  **AC (21/22) 28** |
|  | Council received a briefing from the Chair and an update on the external environment, which covered developments relating to matters including:   * All COVID-19 rules and restrictions had been lifted in Scotland, but as government and University messaging had noted, it remained important that staff and student followed guidelines and stayed vigilant. * The results of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021, were announced on 12 May 2022. There had been a very positive outcome for the University and the results had shown that the University's research was making a tangible difference across the globe with 87% being of the highest standard, having an outstanding or very considerable impact on society. The Research Excellence Grant (REG), received from the Scottish Funding Council, had seen a small reduction (1.6%) in the final funding allocation as a result of the REF 2021 outcome, driven by a reduction across the sector in the unit of income. * The Scottish Government published the findings of the Resource Spending Review in May 2022, the first multi-year spending review in a decade. The review covered the government’s spending plans for the remainder of the term of the current parliament and saw the University sector remain flat in cash terms throughout the period. This would mean a reduction in funding for both teaching and research at the University. * The Institute of Aquaculture (IoA) had recently won the ‘Aquaculture Supplier of the Year’ award, and jointly won ‘Animal Welfare’ Award, at the Aquaculture Awards 2022. The Aquaculture Awards was the only UK awards event dedicated to the global aquaculture community. * The new Campus Central building had been recognised by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) as a UK Regional Winner in the Commercial Development category. Campus Central was seen as an example of a pro-actively delivered project in challenging circumstances influenced heavily by the existing condition of the building and by budget constraints. In addition, the building had positive sustainability credentials, and the end users had been delighted with the space. Campus Central had also been nominated for an award at the Scottish Design awards that would be held in June 2022.   Council noted the updates. | |
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| **\*4.** | **LEARNING AND TEACHING UPDATE** | **Oral Report** |
|  | Council received an overview of planned arrangements for learning and teaching in the Autumn 2022 semester.  It was outlined that the approach to teaching for in the 2022/23 academic year was being finalised, and consideration of the approach had been closely linked to the continuing work on the institutional strategic plan. The current plan had been developed on the understanding that levels of Covid19 would be low, which was a shared understanding across the sector.  It was discussed that all teaching approaches needed to be sustainable and inclusive, whilst also ensuring that they appropriately supported the development of our students.  Academic Development had continued to provide significant support to staff development, and this had resulted in positive progress in continuously building skills and knowledge which in turn would support teaching and learning delivery.  Council noted the update. | |
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| **\*5.** | **REF OUTCOMES** | **Oral Report** |
|  | Council received an update on the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 outcomes.  The REF demonstrated that more than 80% of the University’s research was world leading (4\*) or internationally excellent (3\*) and noted the improved institutional GPA relative to the REF 2014 position.  It was outlined that the Research Excellent Grant (REG) was 1.6% down on the previous REG due to a large increase in submission volumes and lack of overall funding uplift. This, however, was a relatively small drop when compared against others across the sector.  The output from the Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel (EDAP) reports outlined that further work was required to consider all protected characteristics and ensure the University produced good case studies.  It was discussed that REF was only one element of the overall research eco-system of the University, and work was continuing to review the strategy at a holistic level.  Council noted the update. | |
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| **\*6.** | **HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT UPDATE** | **AC (21/22) 29** |
|  | Council received an update on Higher Education Quality Assurance and Enhancement.  The significance of the development of a single quality framework for colleges and universities in Scotland was discussed. Work on developing the new framework was underway, with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) working in partnership with QAA, Education Scotland, the College Development Network and sparqs. It was intended that the framework would be fully implemented in academic year 2024/25. Development of proposed quality arrangements for the sector in the 2022/23 and 2023/24 academic years was also ongoing.  The University had already contributed to the work on the new framework through a range of forums and activities, and opportunities to influence development would continue to be taken.  Academic Council would receive further updates in due course.  Council noted the report. | |

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| **\*7.** | **REPORTS FROM COUNCIL COMMITTEES** |  |
|  | Reports were received from Council’s Committees as follows: |  |
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| **\*7.1** | **Education and Student Experience Committee Report: 12 May 2022.** | **AC (21/22) 30** |
|  | Council received and noted the report from the Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC). | |
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| **\*7.2** | **University Research Committee Report: 5 May 2022**. | **AC (21/22) 31** |
|  | Council received the report from the University Research Committee (URC). | |
|  | It was discussed that there remained uncertainty on the Horizon Europe programme, and the associated impacts of whether the UK would become an associated country of the programme.  Faculties had been exploring ideas for mission-orientated research themes and developing faculty-level plans as part of the new institutional Research Strategy.  Thanks were recorded for the Dean of the Institiute of Advanced Studies and the Dean for Research Engagement and Performance for their efforts in leading the successful Festival of Research.  Research award capture in current financial year was £10.66m, with a linear projection to £14.22m by year end.  It was noted however that with three months of current year remaining, potential existed for an uplift in grant capture towards the end of the financial year.  It was noted that the University had successfully retained the HR Excellence Award following the recent 10-year review.  Council noted the report. | |
| **\*7.3** | **Joint Policy Planning and Resources Committee Report: 24 May 2022.** | **AC (21/22) 32** |
|  | Council received the report from the Joint Policy Planning and Resources Committee.  Council noted the key outcomes of the University College Health Partnership paper which set out a proposed initiative between the University, Forth Valley College and NHS Forth Valley for launch in September 2022. Key workstreams were being developed under the headings of Joint Strategic Working, Research and Innovation, Education and Skills, Workforce Development and Career Pathways, as well as acknowledging the opportunities for the University and students in terms of upskilling, benefits for the local community as well as the benefit of attracting, and maintain, high quality staff.  A new policy would be communicated during summer 2022 to support use of personal devices by University staff and students whilst ensuring institutional and personal information was secure.  Council noted the report. | |
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| **\*8.** | **ANY OTHER BUSINESS** |  |
|  | Council noted that there were no other items of business. | |
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| **9.** | **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** |  |
|  | Council noted that the date of the next meeting would be 15 September 2022. | |

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