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**ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

**Minutes of meeting held on 12 September 2018**

**Present:** Professor G McCormac (Chair), Professor A Bowes, Prof C Caldwell, , Professor J Donaldson, Professor A Green, Professor M MacLeod, Professor H Migaud, Professor R Oram, Ms A Smallenbroek, Professor L Sparks, Professor T Whalley, Mr D Wright

**In Attendance:** Ms E Hensens (Secretary), Ms J Morrow, Ms E Schofield

**Apologies:** Ms I Beveridge, Prof M Cusack, Professor L Bauld, Dr A Desbois, Professor H Nehring, Professor J Phillips, Professor M Priestley

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| **1.** | **REMIT AND MEMBERSHIP** | **AC (18/19) 1** |
|  | The current remit and membership of Council was noted.The membership of Council had been updated in light of the HE Governance (Scotland) Act and the membership changes approved by Academic Council last year. The appointment of new members would follow the approval of the appointments process by Court at a future meeting. |
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| **2.** | **STANDING ORDERS** | **AC (18/19) 2** |
|  | Academic Council’s Standing Orders was noted. |  |
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| **3.** | **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING** | **AC (17/18) Minutes 4** |
|  | The minutes of the meeting held on 6th June 2018 were approved**.** |
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| **4.** | **MATTERS ARISING NOT OTHERWISE ON THE AGENDA** |  |
|  | Council noted that there were no matters arising that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda. |
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| **5.** | **STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIR** | **AC (17/18) 24** |
|  | **Senior Management Appointments**The Chair confirmed that a number of appointments had been made to complete the senior management team, including the Deputy Principal (Internationalisation), Professor Neville Wylie, the Director of Information Services, Mr David Telford and the Director of Internationalisation and Partnerships, Dr Lee Zhuang.**Sport Centre Transformation**Following the update to Council at the last meeting, the Chair confirmed that preliminary work had begun on the demolition of the Gannochy building.**Campus Central** A contractor had been appointed and planning work begun to ensure that the phasing of this significant project mitigated disruption to activities throughout the period of work. The new University bus hub would open on the 24th September with the vehicular access through Queens Court closing a week later.**City Deal**Following agreement of the heads of terms work had continued to develop the business cases for all three projects funded through the City Deal scheme. Both the external and internal governance arrangements were being developed ensuring appropriate oversight and reporting within the University, and to the involved Councils, Scottish and UK Governments.A further potential opportunity had been identified through the Argyll and Bute Regional Deal.The Chair reiterated his thanks to all those involved in the process so far and noted the significant progress towards the achievement of the research related strategic goals as a result. |
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| **6.** | **student surveys** | **AC (18/19) 4** |
|  | Council received an update on the outcomes of the 2018 National Student Survey (NSS), Postgraduate Taught Survey (PTES) and Postgraduate Research Survey (PRES) along with the internal Stirling Experience Survey (SES).Council noted that the 2018 survey activity was conducted during a period of strike action, which may have impacted both response rates and the outcomes of the surveys. Ongoing analysis of the survey outcomes would continue within service areas and the faculties. It was reported that the overall satisfaction levels masked more nuanced messages from within and across each survey.

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|  | **2017** | **2018** | **Change** |
| **NSS** | 86% | 84% | -2% |
| **PTES** | 87% | 84% | -3% |
| **PRES** | 85% | 85% | 0% |
| **SES** | 83% | 76% | -7% |

Table 1. Overall satisfaction scores for 2017 and 2018Whilst the Stirling NSS overall satisfaction decreased by 2% this was mirrored by reductions in the Scottish average of -2% and the UK average dropped by -1%. Across PTES the overall satisfaction score was 84%, a reduction of 3% on the previous year. In the previous year, Stirling was ranked in the top quartile for seven of the question sections. The PRES overall satisfaction score was 85%, which was the same score as last year which ranks in the top quartile nationally. The SES overall satisfaction score was 76%, which was lower than the 2017 score (83%) and the 2018 NSS score (84%). Stirling was above the sector average for overall satisfaction by 4% and higher than the sector average for every question section except resources and services, where we were equal.*National Student Survey*Council noted that the 68% response rate was a 4% decline on the previous year and that careful consideration should be given when drawing comparisons with Scottish and other benchmark institutions due to the varied engagement in strike action and the NSS boycott in previous years. Positive results came in teaching with excellent performances at subject level. Open text responses highlighted areas such as study space and group assessment as sources of dissatisfaction. Alongside these two factors assessment feedback, the provision of advice, organisation and management of programmes, and the student voice, and in particular how actions are taken following feedback from students were identified as areas for potential improvement.It was agreed that further consideration must be given to how students’ feedback on modules acted upon at an earlier point in the module cycle, and outcomes reported back to students in a more effective and timely manner. It was noted that social media could provide opportunities to open up a more informal exchange of feedback and actions and consideration was given to alternative mechanisms for engagement of External Examiners with students.Council discussed the importance of using feedback mechanisms to identify positive outcomes and good practice, seeking to balance this with the management of complaints and concerns. A rigorous approach to curriculum design, the student voice, and empowering students to engage with the university community to identify solutions would benefit students and support improvement in study survey outcomes.Consideration was given to the development of a Learning and Teaching campaign, to generate positive messages about activities in this area. It was noted that evaluation and response at all levels of the University were important. *Postgraduate Taught Survey*It was noted that the PTES response rate was down 20% on 2017. Overall satisfaction fell, and was mainly derived from feedback regarding the management of the programmes. Performance in four out of the nine PTES question sections placed the University of Stirling in the top quartile in the sector, having been in the top quartile for seven question sections in the previous year.*Postgraduate Research Survey*The PRES also saw the response rate fall by 18% on the previous year and below the sector average. The University of Stirling was ranked within the top quartile in PRES, with performance in five out of eight PRES question sections ranking within the top quartile. In the previous year, Stirling was ranked top quartile for only one question section (research culture) and the results indicated a range of outcomes across different subject areas and faculties.*Stirling Experience Survey*Council noted that further consideration would be given to the use and management of the SES internal survey for the early year UG students in future, particularly in light of the very low response rates. It was noted that the overall satisfaction was 80% prior to the strike and 72% following the strike action. Results indicated that there may be a need to consider the transitions between 2nd and 3rd year in particular. |
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| **6.1** | **DESTINATION OF LEAVERS FROM HIGHER EDUCATION**  | **AC (18/19) 5** |
|  | Council noted that undergraduate students were surveyed 6 months following graduation and the outcomes of the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey fed into a number of league table outcomes. Within the 2016/17 survey the positive destination outcome saw the University achieve the Strategic Plan target. It was reported that the results from the 2016/17 survey would last longer as a result of the transition from the DLHE to the Graduate Outcomes Survey which would see undergraduate students surveyed 15 months after graduation. Council noted that the longer survey period would see students transitioning from UG to PGT study surveyed following their PGT programme. Council noted that further consideration would be given to ongoing engagement with graduates and alumni in future. |
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| **7.** | **ANNUAL REPORTS FROM COUNCIL’S COMMITTEES** | **AC (18/19) 6** |
|  | Council received the annual report from the Education and Student Experience Committee for 2017/18 which provided a summary of the progress of the committee over the period and an evaluation of the achievement of the committee remit.  |
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| **8.** | **REPORT FROM COUNCIL COMMITTEES** | **AC (18/19) 7** |
|  | Council received a report from the Research Committee of the meeting of the 29th August 2018. It was noted that mock REF panels had been planned over the Autumn semester and feedback had been provided to those preparing impact cases. Deans of Faculty and Associate Deans for Research were encouraged to engage with these key activities supporting preparation for the REF 2021. |
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| **9.** | **APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES** | **AC (18/19) 8** |
|  | Academic Council noted the changes made to the membership of the Discipline Committee and Appeal Board under Chairs Action. |

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| **10.** | **ANNUAL REPORT ON INSTITUTION-LED REVIEW** |
|  | Academic Council endorsed the annual report to the Scottish Funding Council on institution-led review in 2017/18. |
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**Erica Hensens**

**Head of Academic Quality and Governance**

**Academic Registry**

**September 2018**