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**ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

**Minutes of meeting held on 11 September 2019**

**Present:** Professor M MacLeod (Chair), Professor A Bowes, Professor M Cusack, Professor J Donaldson, Dr P Dudchenko, Professor K Grant, Dr A Gilburn, Professor A Green, Professor R Oram, Professor J Phillips, Ms A Smith, Professor L Sparks, Dr I Tabner, Professor J Tinson, Professor T Whalley, Dr C Wilson, Professor N Wylie.

**In Attendance:** Ms I Beveridge, Dr A Griffiths (Secretary), Dr D Telford, Mr C McNally (for item 5.),

Ms J Morrow, Ms E Schofield.

**Apologies:** Professor G McCormac, Dr A Desbois, Professor I Doherty, Mr J Douglas, Dr L Forbat, Professor H Nehring, Professor R Norman, Dr E Macleod, Dr D McArdle, Professor M Priestley, Ms J Stevenson.

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| **1.** | **TERMS OF REFERENCE** | **AC (19/20) 1** |
|  | The current terms of reference of Council were noted.The Chair welcomed new members to Academic Council who were attending their first meeting.The Chair noted that there were four vacancies for members of professorial staff, and two vacancies for student representatives as elected by the Students’ Union, and that the process to appoint to these positions was in progress.  |
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| **2.** | **STANDING ORDERS** | **AC (19/20) 2** |
|  | Academic Council’s Standing Orders were noted. |  |
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| **3.** | **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING** | **AC (18/19) Minutes 4** |
|  | The minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2019 were approved**.** |
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| **4.** | **MATTERS ARISING NOT OTHERWISE ON THE AGENDA** |  |
|  | Council noted that the following matters were arising that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda:Following approval from Academic Council, the Learning and Teaching Quality and Enhancement Strategy (LTQES; AC (18/19) 23), went for onward transmission to University Court, where it was approved at the meeting of 17 June 2019.Following endorsement from Academic Council, the Amendments to Charters and Statutes (AC (18/19) 25), went for onward transmission to University Court, where they were approved at the meeting of 17 June 2019. The amended Charter and Statutes were sent to the Privy Council for consideration at their next meeting in October 2019.  |
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| **5.** | **PRESENTATION** | **Oral Report** |
|  | Academic Council received a presentation on infrastructure developments across campus. The presentation detailed work completed in connection with the flooding of University buildings and facilities in June 2019, including the remedial and reinstatement work that had taken place over the Summer in order to make spaces affected by flooding operable again for the start of the new academic year. It was outlined that remedial and reinstatement works were still ongoing in response to the flooding, but significant numbers of teaching rooms and lecture theatres (and all those identified as Priority 1 by the responses group) had been reinstated to protect the student experience. Appropriate support was being provided to students and staff, including the provision of additional temporary study and workspaces for members of staff and students displaced by the flood damage. Further to this, information was provided on the progress and development of the major capital projects: the Sports Centre redevelopment, Campus Central, and the Courtyard study space project. Detail was given on the ongoing development of an expanded number of study spaces in the Library, the redevelopment of the study zone as part of Campus Central, and the creation of flexible study spaces where students can access a variety of desk and study space and a self-service laptop scheme, so that they can study flexibly across the campus. It was highlighted that the former bookshop in the Atrium had been converted into a new study space, where students could trial and provide feedback on an array of furniture that is being considered for Campus Central. |
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| **6.** | **STATEMENTS FROM THE CHAIR AND** **UPDATE ON THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT** | **Oral Report****AC (19/20) 3** |
|  | **Welcome Weekend and 2019/20 Recruitment**The Chair noted the successful Welcome Weekend at the start of the academic year, with the positive reception of new student arrivals. **Response to Flooding and Remedial Work**The Chair noted thanks to all staff across the University for their assistance and understanding in response to the flooding, especially with regard to their support of the remedial work that has been undertaken in connection to this. **Graduate Apprenticeships Bid Submission**The ­Chair noted the submission of the bid in August 2019 to Skills Development Scotland for three strands of the Graduate Apprenticeships Scheme and thanked the many staff across the University who had been involved in development of the bid. It was outlined that the bid was made for three strands: Early Learning and Childcare, Business Management (including Financial Services), and Data Science; and that the outcome of this bid was expected in October 2019.Academic Council received an update on the external environment as outlined in AC (19/20) 3. In addition to the updates in this paper it was noted that the UK Government had recently announced the introduction of post-study work visas for international students, which it was hoped would incentivise international students to consider the UK for study now that there was again the potential to remain in the UK to work following a period of study. |
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| **7.** | **ANNUAL REPORT ON INSTITUTION-LED REVIEW** | **AC (19/20) 4** |
|  | Council received the Annual Report to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) on Institution-Led Review in 2018/19.Council noted that the report outlined the University’s institution-led review activity to the SFC as well as providing a signed statement of assurance from the University Court that the University was undertaking institution-led review in line with SFC guidelines on quality assurance and enhancement. The report summarised the institution-led review outcomes of learning and teaching reviews in 2018/19, review of professional services that support institution-led review, learning and teaching strategic activities undertaken by the University, the University’s response to student feedback, and the University’s approach to student engagement. Further to this, Council noted that the University would undergo its quinquennial Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) led by the Quality Assurance Agency in Autumn 2020, with the planning visit being held on 7 October 2020, and the review visit being held week commencing 23 November 2020. Council noted that preparations for this visit were well underway and would continue to progress in line with planned timescales. Council endorsed the annual report to the SFC on Institution-Led Review in 2018/19 for onward transmission to University Court for endorsement and sign-off prior to submission to the SFC.  |
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| **8.** | **STUDENT SURVEYS** | **AC (19/20) 5** |
|  | Council receiveda report on the National Student Survey 2019, and Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research Experience Surveys 2019. Council noted that whilst the University’s overall performance in NSS results showed a decline, there was strong performance in particular areas including assessment and feedback placing the institution above both the Scottish and UK average. Whilst there were areas of strong performance, it was noted that there were areas that required improvement and development, and clear issues had emerged in connection with the student voice. Amongst Scottish institutions there is a strong positive correlation between student voice satisfaction levels and the overall satisfaction level. It was emphasised that student voice would be an enhanced and particular focus in future plans. Council also **noted** that response rates for PTES and PRES were much lower this year. PTES satisfaction scores declined in comparison to last year but were above the UK sector average, whilst PRES satisfaction scores reflected a 7% decline, with scores for research culture dropping by 14%. It was noted that due to low response rates for the PTES and PRES the results cannot necessarily be considered truly reflective of Stirling’s taught and research postgraduate students.Council discussedthe results of the student surveys, and it was noted that the NSS in particular acted as a proxy for how the institution was performing in terms of student experience. It was noted by members that there were certain factors outwith our control with regards to student satisfaction (e.g., dissatisfaction with student accommodation that was not under the University’s management), but that we needed to work on positively developing our approach to factors we could control as an institution. Council noted that a great deal of development work and investment was being focused on various areas of learning, teaching, and the student experience, and that it was anticipated this would be positively reflected in survey results over time. Examples of these developments and investments included managing and supporting student transitions throughout the student journey, capital spend and investment in learning, teaching, and learning spaces, and development of systems, processes, and student feedback processes to enhance the student experience. It was also noted that enhanced reporting was in development to examine data over time to improve trend analysis across various elements of NSS data, and to specifically identify areas that require significant improvement in order to focus efforts in these areas. Council noted that in addition to the above development work and investment, in order to focus on NSS improvement, a wider institutional level consideration of the implication of survey results with associated improvement actions had been developed separately, and initial review meetings with each faculty had been undertaken. A fuller action plan was now being finalised at institutional and faculty level.  |
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| **9.** | **REPORT FROM COUNCIL’S COMMITTEES** |  |
| **9.1** | **Annual Report from the Education and Student Experience Committee AC (19/20) 6**Council received the Annual Report from the Education and Student Experience Committee for 2018/19 and noted the summary of the work of the committee over the period of 2018/19. Council noted prospective development work around the organisation and function of ESEC and its sub-committees. Further to this, members noted the upcoming dates for the University’s ELIR, and that members of Council may be called upon to be involved in preparation and visit activities for ELIR. Council noted the Annual Report from the Education and Student Experience Committee 2018/19. |
| **9.2** | **Annual Report from the University Research Committee AC (19/20) 7**Council received the Annual Report from the University Research Committee for 2018/19 and noted the summary of the progress of the committee over the period of 2018/19. In addition, it was noted that recommendations on the units of assessment going forwards to REF 2021 were being considered, with feedback being concluded in this area. Council noted the Annual Report from the University Research Committee 2018/19.  |
| **10.** | **ANY OTHER BUSINESS** |  |
|  | Council noted that the Deputy Principal (Internationalisation) and the Executive Director for Internationalisation and Partnerships were leading the development of a revised Internationalisation Strategy, and as part of its development would be holding a series of roadshows around faculties and professional services for the purposes of feedback as the strategy evolved.  |
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| **11.** | **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** |
|  | Council noted that the next meeting of Academic Council was scheduled to take place on 4 December 2019 at 2pm in the Court Room. |
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**Dr Alexander Griffiths**

**Academic Registry**

**September 2019**