ACADEMIC COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting held on 12 June 2013

Present: Professor G McCormac (Chair), Professor A Adams, Professor B Austin, Ms M Blain, Professor S Bolton, Professor E Burke, Professor S Burt, Mr J Butscher, Dr P Coffee, Professor B Daniel, Professor R Edwards, Dr J Farkas, Professor T Fenwick, Professor J Gardner, Ms L Grayburn, Professor W Lauder, Professor D Lavallee, Professor R Oram, Mr R Raymond, Professor L Robinson, Professor L Smith, Professor L Sparks

In Attendance: Ms J Morrow, Ms J Prudence, Ms E Schofield, Ms D Waddington

Apologies: Professor A Bowes, Mr J Bradley, Professor D Brodie, Professor R O’Connor, Professor I Simpson, Professor C Squires, Mr M Toole, Dr T Whalley

Before proceeding to formal business, Council extended a warm welcome to new members Professor S Bolton (Head of Stirling Management School), Mr J Butscher (President, Students Union), Ms L Grayburn (Deputy Secretary’s Office), and Mr R Raymond (Vice-president, Students Union).

44. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2013 were approved.

45. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Council noted that there were no matters arising that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

46. STATEMENTS BY THE PRINCIPAL

46.1 Global Excellence Initiative

Council noted that in March 2013, the Scottish Government had announced the introduction of a new global excellence in research initiative, through which they would allocate funding of £14m for each year 2013/14 and 2014/15. In 2013/14, this equated to an additional £393k funding for Stirling. The funding would largely be used to support an extension of the University’s scheme for early career impact fellows in 2013/14. Council also noted that distribution of the grant was based on relative proportions of 4* research.

46.2 UK Border Agency

Council noted that the Home Secretary announced on 26 March 2013 that the UK Border Agency was to be split into two bodies. The implications for universities were
still to be clarified but it was unlikely that requirements in relation to immigration would be diluted.

47. TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Council received a paper setting out the proposals for the transition to 20-credit undergraduate modules; condonement and compensation; grading scheme; and honours classification. The proposals had been through a process of consultation and had been revised accordingly in response to feedback.

During discussion the following points were noted:
- Views had been expressed from the School of Arts and Humanities that the proposed change in criteria for admission to honours (removal of the additional performance barrier) could widen the number of students entering honours level and result in an increase in students achieving third class. However, it was also noted that the new proposals were fairer to students; would result in fewer appeal cases; and would increase the number of students graduating with their intended award of a degree with honours.
- Professional development activities would take place to encourage examiners to review their own practice in terms of use of the full range of marks in the grading scheme.
- Key challenges in the implementation of the proposals had been considered and were detailed within the paper.

Thereafter, Council approved the proposals for implementation in 2014/15.

48. STRATEGY FOR SPORT

Council received the Strategy for Sport for 2013 – 2016. The Strategy had been developed to support the achievement of the University’s ambitions set out in the Strategic Plan 2011 – 2016 and was also aligned to government agendas. Successful delivery of the strategy was dependent upon institutional buy-in and shared ownership of the five goals.

Council welcomed the strategy and suggested some amendments to address the development of sports leadership, and to emphasise the themes of accessibility and inclusivity. It was noted that upon endorsement of the strategy, the Sport Strategy Implementation Group would develop an annual implementation plan.

Thereafter Council endorsed the strategy for onward transmission to the University Court.

49. NATIONAL PERFORMANCE CENTRE FOR SPORT

Council received an oral update on the bidding process to establish a National Performance Centre for Sport (NPCS) at Stirling. It was noted that a total of six bids had been submitted at Stage 1, and that three (Stirling, Dundee, and Edinburgh/Heriot-Watt) had been invited to submit Stage 2 bid documents by 5 July 2013. Council noted that bid presentations would take place at Hampden Park on 8 August 2013 and that a preferred bidder would be identified in September 2013.
50. **INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PATHWAYS**

Council received a paper providing an update on international pre-sessional pathway options. Council noted that the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with INTO University Partnerships Limited to provide pathways at Stirling and at a London campus had been signed; the MoU was not legally binding. Documents were being developed for the Memorandum of Agreement, which would be legally binding, with a view to completing the process in October 2013 and introducing programmes in 2014.

Council noted that the University Secretary and Deputy Principal (Education and Students) were engaging with schools to discuss the developments.

51. **MODEL COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE**

Council received a paper setting out the University's proposed new complaints handling procedure for implementation by 30 August 2013.

Following publication of the Crerar Review (2007) which reported that complaints processes in public services were not fit for purpose, the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman was tasked with developing a model complaints handling procedure for implementation across the public sector. The Scottish higher education model complaints handling procedure was published by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman in December 2012.

The model provided a single process for dealing with complaints made by students, applicants and members of the public, and whilst it was heavily prescribed it provided the University with an opportunity to streamline its processes.

In discussion Council noted that the procedure did not relate to academic judgement but that Stirling’s academic appeals processes would be reviewed to take account of the new procedures. Council also noted that a user group had been established to ensure consistency of practice across the institution.

Thereafter Council endorsed the complaints handling procedure for onward transmission to the University Court.

52. **RESEARCH COMMITTEE**

Council received a report from the meeting of the Research Committee held 16 May 2013.

Council noted the following points:
- The Research Committee had been examining school research plans; the committee was continuing to develop model questions and templates to ensure consistency amongst research plans whilst acknowledging discipline specifics in order to achieve strong strategic research plans to position Stirling positively for REF2020.
- A number of positive REF briefings had taken place during which the main issue raised had been about REF inclusion and career progression; this was addressed
within the REF Code of Practice.
- The second external review in preparation for REF2014 was ongoing and a positive outcome was expected from this.
- The Research and Enterprise Office was monitoring developments in the sector in respect of Open Access. A University Open Access fund was available and colleagues should continue to publish in the most appropriate outputs regardless of the cost.
- Stirling’s citation profile was improving.
- Over £1m of research income had been awarded within the last month.

53. EDUCATION AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE AC (12/13) 38

Council received a report from the meeting of the Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC) held 22 May 2013.

Council noted that proposals for developing a personal tutor system would be taken forward in consultation with the Chair of the students at risk working group, the Head of the Stirling Graduate School and the Students’ Union.

Thereafter, Council noted the business discussed at ESEC.

54. JOINT POLICY, PLANNING AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE AC (12/13) 39

Council noted a report from the meeting of the Joint Policy, Planning and Resources Committee (JPPRC) held 28 May 2013.

55. UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE AC (12/13) 40

Council approved an amendment to the membership of the University Research Ethics Committee.

56. HONORARY APPOINTMENTS AC (12/13) 41

Council endorsed proposals by the Senior Deputy Principal for the approval of Honorary Appointments under the terms of Ordinance 22.

57. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AC (12/13) 42

Council noted a report on appointments to Committees.

58. THANKS

Council thanked outgoing members for their contribution to Council, Professor A Adams, Professor R Edwards, Mr I Murray, and Professor R O’Connor.

DW
June 2013