

UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING

UNIVERSITY COURT

Summary of Outcomes from the Quinquennial Governance Effectiveness Review Report 2017

Introduction

- 1 The University engaged the Good Governance Institute to undertake a Quinquennial Governance Effectiveness Review. At its meeting in June 2017, Court considered the full report, including the 12 recommendations made in the report. A summary of the report and details of the recommendations are provided below.

Terms of Reference

- 2 The terms of reference for the review were as follows:
 - whether Court is appropriately structured, resourced and has the capacity to deliver the University's ambitious forward strategy and vision;
 - the balance of diversity, skills and experience on Court and to determine whether the University is fully utilising the knowledge, skills and experience of members, and is equipping members appropriately for their roles, including as chairs of sub-committees;
 - the extent to which Court is adequately managing risk, particularly in respect to the current external environment (Brexit; TEF; the Higher Education and Research Bill);
 - the ways in which the Executive and the University more generally engage with Court to improve communication and also enhance understanding of the University and the wider Sector;
 - providing an independent assessment on the ability of Court to deliver the University's Strategic Plan, in compliance with the overall principles of good and effective Higher Education Governance;
 - explore the distinction between governance and management in the operation of the Court and the need for constructive challenge by the Court to be understood and accepted by both members and the Executive;
 - assess the level of Court visibility and engagement with the wider University community of staff and students and other stakeholders;
 - evaluate if the current governance framework embraces and matches the international focus of the academic and institutional strategy.

Summary

- 3 This report highlighted the changing environment in which the University was operating and stated:

"Our overall analysis concludes that the University is well-placed to meet these challenges. It is clear that the University in recent years has developed strong, transparent and cohesive governance arrangements which meet the core requirements of the relevant governance codes and also provide a sound platform for the further development of governance at Stirling. These arrangements have also sustained the organisation effectively through periods of change in leadership.

Our analysis, based on interviews, document reviews, observations and benchmarking makes a number of recommendations which are intended to support further maturity in governance, which will help future-proof the University.

This assessment is a careful, independent reflection of an experienced team. The review is ultimately a professional governance assessment, informed by experience and benchmarking. This is reflected in the style of the report, which sets out our collective view and recommendations. We are confident that the University is fully compliant with the Scottish Code for Good Higher Education Governance and The Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016.”

Recommendations

- 4 The report went on to make a number of recommendations which were split into primary and supporting recommendations. There is a list of recommendations below with a brief statement on how the University has responded.

Primary recommendations

- **R1 adoption of a clear and unambiguous definition of the way governance of the University operates in a Code of Conduct and governance map**
The content of the Governance Handbook has been reviewed to ensure the University governance structures, and the expected conduct and responsibilities of Court members, is clear.
- **R4 an additional formal meeting of Court be added to the annual cycle**
The Court Strategy Day, which had previously been held at the same time as the first meeting of Court during the annual cycle, has been separated to become an enhanced, independent meeting in its own right. The Strategy Day allows for Court members to interact more closely with the members of the University and University business. Having time between the first Court meeting and the Strategy Day allows for Court members to shape the business of the Strategy Day and more time to reflect on Court business between meetings.
- **R6 creation of a Governance and Nominations Committee to absorb the work of the Court Appointments Committee and a lead member for Court development**
A Governance and Nominations Committee has been created with an expanded remit. In addition the Vice-Chair of Court has taken on the role of lead member for Court development.
- **R7 Court business is developed more directly with members, is framed more explicitly around strategic themes and is planned collectively by chairs of committees on a quarterly basis**
Chair of committees have an opportunity to feed into the agenda setting process. Court members are invited to comment on the draft agenda for the Court strategy day by the Chair of Court, and have an opportunity to shape the agenda. The Court agenda has been categorised into themes to reflect strategic priorities and governance responsibilities.
- **R10 an integrated governance development programme for Court, including a ‘buddying’ approach**
There will be a peer-to-peer mentoring arrangement for new members of Court, overseen by the Governance and Nominations Committee.
- **R12 performance impact assessment of Court in the form of an annual self-assessment**
Court members reflect annually on their own skills and contribution to Court, the effectiveness of Court as a whole and the performance of the Chair.

Supporting recommendations

- **R2 a clear succession and skills planning approach to improve the depth and expertise engaged in the governance of the University**
Governance and Nominations Committee have implemented a new skills register which is used to inform succession and skills planning. Individual members are asked to update the skills register annually.
- **R3 the balance of business between Court and the JPPRC is kept under annual review**
The template for committee papers will be revised to include the requirement to specify the journey of the paper i.e. where it has previously been considered. The balance of business between Court and JPPRC is considered as part of the agenda setting process.
- **R5 an annual statement of risk appetite is formally adopted to guide the work of Court and the Executive**
Risk appetite is discussed annually at the Court Strategy Day.
- **R8 Court papers are framed with executive summaries which help increase discussion and support clear decision-making**
The committee paper template has been revised to ensure that papers are effectively summarised.
- **R9 development of a digital governance approach**
New ways of using digital technology to enhance the effectiveness of meetings, decision making and connectivity are being explored.
- **R11 members of Court are supported in engaging actively in the life of the University, and as ambassadors beyond the University**
The responsibilities of Court members has been articulated more clearly in both the agreement new Court members sign and the Governance Handbook.

Data Classification

5 This document is classified as *public*.

Policy & Planning