

**UNIVERSITY COURT**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2021**

**Present:** Mr H Adam (Chair), Ms M Allison, Dr Robert Black, Ms N Cadinanos Gonzalez, Dr P Cowell, Ms P Crawford, Prof J Donaldson, Mr K Fraser, Ms S Gordon, Prof A Green, Mr S Haldane, Mr H Grossart, Prof P Hancock, Mr G Hastie, Mr D Kearney, Prof M MacLeod, Ms A MacKay, Prof G McCormac, Ms B McKissack, Ms C Morrison, Rev M Roderick and Councillor C Simpson.

**In Attendance:** Mr G Duff, Ms C Gallagher, Ms J Harrison, Mr L McCabe, Mr M McCrindle, Mr C McNally, Ms J Morrow, Prof J Phillips, Dr J Rogers, Ms E Schofield, Prof L Sparks, Mr L Spillane, Dr David Telford, Mr M Nichol (Clerk), Prof N Wylie, Dr L Zhuang and Ms J Stevenson (item 9 and 10)

**Apologies:** Apologies for absence were received fromMr G MacLeod and Prof H Nehring

**Welcome:**

The Chair welcomed Ms N Cadinanos Gonzalez (Students’ Union President) and Ms A MacKay (Students’ Union Vice President Communities) to the meeting following their appointment to University Court.

The Chair thanked Prof A Green, Mr S Haldane and Mr M McCrindle for their contribution to University Court and welcomed Ms K Lawson the newly appointed Executive Director of HR&OD.

**1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**2. MINUTES UC(20/21) Minutes 3**

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 March 2021 were approved as an accurate record.

**3. MATTERS ARISING NOT OTHERWISE ON THE AGENDA**

There were no matters arising.

**4. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT UC(20/21) 56**

Court received an overview of developments in the external environment that included the Scottish Government’s approach towards international travel and quarantine measures, Scottish Parliament election, Enhancement-led Institutional Review and Times Higher Education Impact Rankings

Court noted the recent developments in the external environment.

**5. ENHANCEMENT-LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW (ELIR) UC(20/21) 57**

Court received an update on the outcome of ELIR, following the main review visit that took place from 19 to 23 April 2021.

Members noted that the University had received the highest possible judgement of ‘effective’ and discussed the recommendations and the high number of commendations made following the review. The commendations included the University’s response to COVID 19, the learning environment, the range of student support available, the effectiveness of internal review arrangements, and the University’s commitment to and work on equality, diversity and inclusion. It was confirmed the recommendations were limited and a full report following the review would be available from August 2021. Members of Court acknowledged the achievement of staff and students and thanked in particular Iona Beveridge (Academic Registrar), Alex Griffiths (Academic Quality and Governance Manager), Alison Green (Dean of Teaching Quality Enhancement), Lexi Ehresmann (Students’ Union Vice President of Education) and Amy Smith (Students’ Union President) for their efforts in preparation for and during the review.

Court noted the update on the outcome of ELIR.

***INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING AND BUDGETING***

**6. DEVELOPING THE STRATEGIC PLAN UC(20/21) 58** Courtreceived an overview of the Strategic Plan Addendum. It was confirmed that the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) termed the period 2020-22 as being ‘emergency years’ within their Coherence and Sustainability Review Phase 1 Report and at its meeting in December 2020, Court agreed the proposed development of an extension to the Strategic Plan to cover the period 2021-23.

Members considered the Strategic Plan addendum that set out the strategic direction and objectives for 2021-23. Members discussed in particular the focus on recovery, on the assumption that a 5-year Plan for the period 2023-28 would follow. Members discussed the external environment and policy drivers, including the funding environment and broader economic conditions. It was confirmed that concurrent operational planning was underway to implement the objectives as articulated in the Strategic Plan addendum.

Court approved the Strategic Plan Addendum.

**7. INTEGRATED PLANNING AND BUDGETING 2021/22 UC(20/21) 59**

Court received an overview of the institutional priorities which guided and informed decisions that affected the University’s future shape and delivery objectives. It was confirmed that the University Budget 2021-22, as the financial expression of the plan, was developed within the context of financial performance over the last three financial years, with 2018-19 being the last set of financial results prior to the pandemic.

Members discussed in particular institutional priorities, revised key performance indicators and critical planning assumptions that included financial sustainability; campus life; community health and wellbeing; student recruitment and market development; learning and teaching, the student experience and research reputation and performance. Court discussed the contribution of philanthropic income and the staff survey as a mechanism to provide insight into staff satisfaction levels and monitor perceptions of culture change over the period of the strategic plan.

Members discussed the 2020-21 Quarter 3 Management Accounts, the University Budget 2021-22, the forecast outturn surplus of £1.2m, and risks associated with the draft budget and financial modelling undertaken. Members discussed the forecast cash position and it was confirmed the University was covenant compliant based on the 2020-21 forecast surplus of £1.2m and access to an anticipated free cash balance of £23m in 2021-22. In addition, the University had access to £30m of working capital facilities (via the Lloyds Revolving Credit Facility and HSBC CLBILS).

Court received an overview of the indicative five-year 2021-26 Capital and Major Infrastructure Plan. It was confirmed the University had proposed a consistent level of investment in the fixed asset base utilising the annual deprecation charge as a proxy (£7.7m) for that investment.

Court considered and approved the integrated planning and budgeting item.

Additionally, Court:

* noted that the financial forecasts for the period 2020-21 to 2022-23 would be submitted to the SFC at the end of June 2021.
* considered and approved the variation to the covenant compliance provisions under the Note Purchase Agreements as laid out in Appendix 4, paragraph 20 and delegated authority to execute the said amendment to the University Secretary and the Executive Director of Finance.

***CITY DEAL***

**8. CITY DEAL UC(20/21) 60**

Members received an update from the University’s City Region and Growth Deal Programme Board and discussed in particular progress on the phase one full business case for Scotland’s International Environment Centre (SIEC). It was confirmed that all necessary approvals were likely to be secured by September 2021, enabling draw down of funds to commence. It was confirmed that development work of the outline business case for the National Aquaculture Technology and Innovation Hub (NATIH) had commenced, and the timeline for completion of the outline business case was 12 months.

Court noted the report from the University’s City Region and Growth Deal Programme Board, in particular actions taken to progress the University-led projects and progress to date with the Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal.

***POLICY DEVELOPMENTS***

**9. SAFEGUARDING FRAMEWORK UC(20/21) 61**

Members received an overview of theinstitutional Safeguarding Framework.

It was confirmed that the Safeguarding Framework provided the University’s community with guidance on responsibilities in relation to safeguarding. It also described the procedure that a member of staff should follow if they suspect a child, young person or vulnerable adult was experiencing, or was at risk of experiencing, harm.

Members discussed the policy and support framework through which the commitment of the University in its obligation to protect children and vulnerable adults who are at risk of harm, abuse, neglect, exploitation, or discrimination was set out. It was confirmed that the framework applied to all members of the University community who may come into contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults in the course of their duties or University-related activities. For these purposes, the University community was defined as employees, volunteers, agency staff, contractors and students.

Court approved the institutional Safeguarding Framework.

**10. EQUALITY STRATEGIES UC(20/21) 62**

Court received an overview of the Mental Health Strategy, the Gender Based Violence Strategy and the Corporate Parenting Plan and discussed in particular the link between the strategies and the University’s Equality Outcomes, the priorities for mental health and wellbeing, the development and support available for staff and work undertaken to foster a culture where people experiencing discrimination or harassment are respected, supported and empowered.

Court approved the:

* Mental Health Strategy 2021-24
* Gender Based Violence Strategy 2021-24
* Corporate Parenting Plan 2021-24

**11. RISK APPETITE STATEMENT, RISK POLICY AND GUIDANCE UC(20/21) 63**

Court received the revised Risk Appetite Statement, Risk Policy and Guidance.

Members discussed in particular the risk guidance, which incorporated a focus on the process and approach toward the management of operational risk and ensured ongoing risk management effectiveness. It was confirmed that the Risk Appetite Statement was viewed as remaining fit for purpose and remained unchanged.

Courtapproved the revised Risk Appetite Statement, Risk Policy and Guidance.

***ACTIVITY UPDATES***

**12. STUDENTS’ UNION UPDATE UC(20/21) 64**

Court received an update on recent Students’ Union activities which included work to secure funding to support recovery and financial sustainability from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Court noted the activity update from the Students’ Union.

**13. STAFFING AND EMPLOYMENT UPDATE UC(20/21) 65**

Court received a Staffing and Employment update, which included the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the 2021/22 pay round and the USS pension scheme.

Court noted the update on matters relating to staffing and employment.

***COMMITTEE REPORTS***

**14. ACADEMIC COUNCIL UC(20/21) 66**

Court received the report from the Academic Council meeting of 2 June 2021.

Court noted the report from the meeting of 2 June 2021.

**15. JOINT POLICY, PLANNING & RESOURCES COMMITTEE (JPPRC) UC(20/21) 67**

Court received the report from the meeting of JPPRC meeting of 24 May 2021.

Court noted the report from the meeting of 24 May 2021.

**16. AUDIT COMMITTEE UC(20/21) 68**

Court received the report of the Audit Committee meeting which took place on 18 May 2021.

Court noted the report from the Audit Committee meeting of 18 May 2021, approved a tender process commence to make a three year appointment with the option to extend for the delivery of external audit services from 1 January 2022 and approvedthe extension of the contract with Ernst and Young to deliver internal audit services for one further year to 31 July 2023.

**17. GOVERNANCE AND NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE (GNC) UC(20/21) 69** Court received the report from the Governance and Nominations Committee which took place on 26 May 2021.

Court notedthe report from the Governance and Nominations Committee of 26 May 2021 and approved the appointments nominated by GNC.

**18. COMBINED JOINT NEGOTIATING & CONSULTATION COMMITTEE (CJNCC) UC(20/21) 70**

Court received the report from CJNCC for 2020/21 and the reviewed recognition and procedure agreement.

Court noted the report from CJNCC for 2021/21 and approved the reviewed recognition and procedure agreement.

**19. ACADEMIC PROMOTIONS COMMITTEE (APC) UC(20/21) 71**

Court received an overview of the annual report from APC.

Court noted the annual report from APC.

***RISKS***

**20. RISKS ARISING Oral**

Court consideredrisks associated with any items discussed in the context of the agreed risk appetite statement.

***OTHER ITEMS***

**21. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

There was no other competent business.

**22. NEXT MEETING**

Court noted the meeting dates for 2021/22 would be communicated as soon as possible.

**Policy & Planning**

**June 2021**