

**UNIVERSITY COURT**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2019**

**Present:** Mr H Adam (Chair), Dr Robert Black, Prof J Donaldson, Mr K Fraser, Prof A Green, Mr H Grossart, Mr S Haldane, Mr G Hastie, Mr D Kearney, Prof M MacLeod, Prof G McCormac, Ms B McKissack, Ms C Morrison, Mr J Muirhead, Rev M Roderick, Councillor C Simpson

**In Attendance:** Ms C Gallagher, Prof P Hancock, Ms J Harrison, Mr G MacLeod, Mr L McCabe, Mr M McCrindle, Mr C McNally, Ms J Morrow, Prof J Phillips, Ms E Schofield, Prof L Sparks, Dr David Telford, Ms F Wheater (Clerk), Prof N Wylie

**Apologies:** Prof H Nehring

Members welcomed the following new members to Court:

* Robert Black - Lay member
* Kenny Fraser - Lay member
* Graham Hastie - Lay member
* Douglas Kearney - Lay member

It was also **noted** that Nelson Acquah had resigned from his position as Union President at the beginning of August. A by-election would be held in October to elect a new President.

**1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**2. MINUTES UC(18/19) Minutes 4**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2019 were **approved** as an accurate record.

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

**\*(i) Charter and Statutes (Min 9, Jun 2019) Oral Report**

Court **received** an update on the amendments to the Charter and Statutes which had been submitted to the Privy Council for approval. The Privy Council were due to meet in the second week of October.

**4. REMIT, COMPOSITION AND MEMBERSHIP UC(19/20)1**

Court **noted** the current remit, composition and membership of Court and also noted the proposed remit and composition which would come into place once the Privy Council approved the proposed amendments to the Statutes.

**\*5. KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT UC(19/20)2**

Court received a report on recent developments in the external environment and their potential impact upon the higher education sector. In addition to the items in the report the following matters were also noted:

* The University had been awarded the accolade of UK Sports University of the Year by the Times/Sunday Times Good University Guide.
* Audit Scotland had published their report on ‘Finances of Scottish universities’. The report highlighted the 7% real terms cut in Scottish Funding Council funding between 2014-15 and 2017-18.
* Chris Skidmore had been appointed as the UK government’s universities and science minister following the resignation of Jo Johnson.
* The Education Secretary, Gavin Williamson, had indicated his support to the Office for Students (OfS) plans to carry out a review of university admissions. The review would look in particular at the benefits and challenges of a post qualifications applications system where students would apply to university after receiving their exam results.

Court **noted** the update on the external environment.

**\*6. INFRASTRUCTURE PRESENTATION Oral**

Court **received** a presentationon infrastructure developments on campus. This included a visual illustration of the damage that had been caused to a number of areas of campus during the flash floods in June 2019. Large areas of the campus had been affected including a third of teaching space. The University had been working closely with its insurance company, loss adjustors and contractors to ensure that key areas of the University were reinstated in time for the start of semester.

It was noted that future insurance premiums would be likely to increase as a result of the claims that had been made.

Members expressed their appreciation to all staff who had been involved in the emergency response and repair process.

An update was also given on the sports facilities project that was on time and on budget. The campus central project was also making good progress although there had been some delays caused by legacy issues and flood impact.

Members were also updated on some of the improvements that had been made to study spaces, particularly in the library, and the introduction of a laptop loan service.

Court **noted** the update on infrastructure developments.

***DELIVERY OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN***

**7. PERFORMANCE REPORT UC(17/18)3**

Court considered the annual Performance Report which built on the quarterly reports on key performance indicators and provided a reflective analysis of the year, comparisons with benchmark institutions and a forward look. Key success indicators included:

* An increase in total income.
* Remaining in the top quartile for tariff on entry.
* The number of graduates in a positive destination 6 months after graduation remained at 97.1%.
* Numbers of home PGT students had surpassed the Making it Happen target.
* An increase in PGT overseas numbers.

Court **noted** the report on the University’s performance in 2018/19.

**8. BUDGET FORECAST UC(19/20)4**

Court considered the revenue budget forecast which summarised the notable changes in the budget since the update received by Court in June. Budget savings of circa £4m had been achieved (out of a recurrent budget saving of £5.3m). Identified savings related mainly to staff costs and other operating expenses. Other forecast variances related to tuition fees and the release of an accounting provision.

The tuition fee position was still fluctuating as students were continuing to enrol and it was anticipated that there would be further enrolments in January. The staff costs budget which, as well as the staff savings, also incorporated a ‘gap’ assumption of £4.0M. Court was informed that gap ‘saving’ was not guaranteed and would in fact be more difficult to achieve due to the staff savings. Other opportunities for improving the financial position included implementing revised tuition fees, pursuing overseas initiatives through Stirling Management School, securing graduate apprenticeships, enhancing the relationship with INTO and securing additional research grants and contracts.

Court **noted** the budget forecast.

**9. MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS UC(19/20)5**

Court considered a report on the fourth-quarter Management Accounts to 31 July 2019. It was noted that there would be some year-end adjustments to the accounts before final out-turn for 2018/19 was presented to Court in the audited financial statements. The key headlines were:

* the actual full year preliminary out-turn was a £3.2m deficit, which represented a favourable variance of £0.2m in Q4 (against the Q3 management accounts) and an adverse variance of £0.8m against the Court approved budget;
* total University income and expenditure had both increased since the previous year but the increase in expenditure had been higher;
* the actual preliminary out-turn was expected to generate a positive cash inflow.

It was noted that the University would be covenant compliant for 2018-19.

Court **noted** the Management Accounts, including the preliminary financial out-turn and the measurement and assessment of the financial performance against budget, for the year ending 31 July 2019.

**10. CAPITAL EXPENDITURE UPDATE UC(19/20)6**

Court considered the Capital Expenditure Update which provided the full year out-turn position of capital expenditure for 2018/19 and the updated indicative plan for 2019 -23.

It was reported that some of the planned expenditure for 2018/19 would be carried forward into 2019/20 due to some of the reinstatement work that had taken place over the summer causing delays to some work. However, it was noted that the overall expenditure plan of £68.6m for the five year period 2018-23 that had been approved by Court would not be affected.

Court **noted** the Capital Expenditure Update.

**11. TUITION FEE SETTING UC(19/20)7**

Court considered the tuition fees setting paper which presented the proposed fees for entrants in 2020/21. The proposed fees took into account a review of postgraduate taught programmes undertaken by Knowledge Partnership and an extensive benchmarking exercise that had been carried out internally. It was proposed that all fees in bands for Home/EU PGT students be increased by £500. For overseas PGT students an additional band was recommended and fees in the existing three bands be increased by between 4.5% and 6.6%. It was proposed that fees for undergraduate overseas and PGR overseas students were uplifted by 5%.

It was noted that an increase in fees could have an impact on recruitment but that it was anticipated this would be minimal as the fees were set in line with fees across the sector.

Court **approved** the proposed fee schedule for 2020/21 entrants.

***POLICIES***

**12. COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE UC(19/20)8**

Court considered the revised Complaints Handling Procedure that closely followed the model procedure published by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

Court **approved** the Complaints Handling Procedure subject to minor amendments.

***ACTIVITY UPDATES***

**13. STUDENTS’ UNION UPDATE UC(19/20)9**

Court considered a report from the Students’ Union on recent and forthcoming activity. A by-election would be held in the Autumn semester to fill a number of vacant posts including the Union President. The Union were proud to announce that it was the UK’s first carbon neutral Students’ Union. The University had achieved its highest ever position in the BUCS ranking reaching 11th in the UK and 2nd in Scotland.

Court **noted** the Students’ Union update.

**14. STAFF AND EMPLOYMENT UPDATE UC(19/20)10**

Court considered an update on staff and employment matters including the following issues:

* The JNCHES pay award negotiations had been agreed between 3.65% (lower points) and 1.8%.
* In relation to the USS pension contributions the member institutions had broadly supported option 3 (21.1% employer and 9.6% employee) to be put in place from October 2019 until Oct 2021.
* All three campus unions had issued ballot notices with a threat of industrial action. The ballots related to both pay and USS contributions.

Court **noted** the update on staff and employment matters.

***COMMITTEE REPORTS***

**15. ACADEMIC COUNCIL UC(19/20)11**

Court considered an update from Academic Council from the meeting of 11 September 2019. The report included items on infrastructure developments, student surveys and committee updates. It was noted that a considerable amount of work would be taking place in the coming year on both preparations for REF 2021 and the Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) which would be happening in 2020.

Court **endorsed** the annual report on Institutional-led Review (see item 18 below) and **noted** the other items in the report from Academic Council.

**16. ANNUAL COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**(i) University Court UC(19/20)12(i)**

Court consideredthe annual reflective report from Court for 2018/19 which summarised the main items of business considered during the year within the context of the remit of Court and the guidelines in the Scottish Code for Good HE Governance.

Court **noted** the annual report from Court.

**(ii) Joint Policy, Planning & Resources Committee UC(19/20)12(ii)**

Court considered the annual reflective report from JPPRC for 2018/19. The report summarised some of the main items of business considered during the year and concluded that the committee has fulfilled its remit for the year and actively engaged with the business. Thanks were expressed to the outgoing Chair.

Court **noted** the annual report from JPPRC.

**(iii) Remunerations Committee UC(19/20)12(iii)**

Court considered the annual report from the Remunerations Committee for 2018/19 including a summary of the matters the Committee had considered during the main meeting of the year in June 2019.

Court **noted** the annual report from the Remunerations Committee.

**(iv) Research Ethics Committee UC(19/20)12(iv)**

Court considered the annual report from the University Research Ethics Committee. The report detailed the key activities of the Committee during the year 2018/19 and matters that the Committee had considered. Thanks were expressed to the outgoing Chair.

Court **noted** the annual report from the University Research Ethics Committee.

**(v) Governance and Nominations Committee UC(19/20)12(v)**

Court considered the annual report from the Governance and Nominations Committee. The report detailed the key activities of the Committee during the year 2018/19.

Court **noted** the annual report from the Governance and Nominations Committee.

**17. GOVERNANCE AND NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE UC(19/20)13**

Court considered the report from the Governance and Nominations Committee for August 2019.

Court **approved** the new appointment to GNC and **noted** the appointments to other Court committees.

***OTHER ITEMS***

**18. INSTITUTION-LED REVIEW OF QUALITY 2018/19 UC(19/20)14**

Court **approved** the annual statement on quality for the Scottish Funding Council.

**19. DOCUMENTS SEALED UC(19/20)15**

Court **noted** the list of sealed documents.

***RISKS***

**20. RISKS ARISING Oral**

It was **agreed** that a risk would be added to the risk register relating to the possible reoccurrence of a major flooding event.

**21. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

There were no other items of business.

**22. NEXT MEETING**

Court **noted** that there would be a Court Strategy day on Friday 25 October 2019 (preceded by dinner on 24 October) and the next full meeting of Court was scheduled for 16 December 2019.

Policy & Planning

September 2019