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**ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

**Minutes of meeting held on 3 June 2020**

**Present:** Professor G McCormac (Chair), Professor A Bowes, Professor M Cusack, Dr A Desbois, Professor I Doherty, Professor J Donaldson, Dr P Dudchenko, Ms L Ehresmann, Dr L Forbat, Professor K Grant, Dr A Gilburn, Professor A Green, Professor M MacLeod, Dr D McArdle, Mr J McDairmid, Professor H Nehring, Professor R Oram, Professor J Phillips, Professor M Priestley, Ms A Smith, Professor L Sparks, Ms J Stevenson, Dr I Tabner, Professor J Tinson, Professor T Whalley, Dr C Wilson, Professor N Wylie.

**In Attendance:** Ms I Beveridge, Dr A Griffiths (Secretary), Ms J Morrow, Ms E Schofield,

Dr D Telford.

**Apologies:** Dr E Macleod, Professor R Norman.

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| **1.** | **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING** | **AC (19/20) Minutes 3** | | | | | | |
|  | The minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2020 were approved**.** | | | | | | | |
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| **2.** | **MATTERS ARISING NOT OTHERWISE ON THE AGENDA** |  | | | | | | |
|  | Council noted the following matters arising that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda:  Item 4 of the previous minutes: following feedback from Academic Council, amendments to Ordinance 1: Constitution of the Students’ Association were noted as in progress and would be presented by the Students’ Union at a future meeting of Academic Council.  Item 5 of the previous minutes: Ordinance 2, The Code of Student Discipline, and Ordinance 30, Exclusion from University Campus, were approved by University Court and were in operation.  Item 6 of the previous minutes: the revision to Ordinance 58, Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates of the University to reclassify the MSci as a first degree was approved by University Court and the change was reflected on the Ordinance. | | | | | | | |
| **3.** | **STATEMENTS FROM THE CHAIR** | | **Oral Report** | | | | | |
|  | Council ­received and discussed a briefing from the Chair, which focused primarily on the continuing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Updates were provided on the financial considerations surrounding the impact of COVID-19, both across the UK and Scottish university sectors and the local context of the University of Stirling, the ongoing discussions between the UK and Scottish university sectors with both the UK and Scottish government and the broader political landscape surrounding COVID-19 and its impact on universities, and the developing road map to re-opening the university campus in line with the progressive lifting of national lockdown restrictions.  Council noted the statements from the Chair. | | | | | | | |
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| **4.** | **PLANNING FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING IN 2020/21 & REPORT FROM COUNCIL’S EDUCATION AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE** | | **Oral Report & AC (19/20) 23** | | | | | |
|  | Council received an update on planning for learning and teaching arrangements for the academic year 2020/21 and received the Education and Student Experience Committee Report from the meeting of 6 May 2020.  The ESEC report was introduced and it was noted that it presented an overview of normal business of the Committee whilst also discussing the then immediate effects surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. The Education and Student Experience Committee Report from the meeting of 6 May 2020 was noted by Council.  The following updates on planning for learning and teaching in 2020/21 were provided and noted:    It was noted that the University was moving significant levels of teaching provision to an online teaching model for Autumn semester in anticipation of significant social distancing measures remaining in place.  It was noted that a review of the teaching portfolio was being undertaken with reconfiguration of programmes to accommodate scenarios of a combination of online only and blended learning models of delivery. Postgraduate provision was being reviewed also, and it was noted that Faculties were in the process of taking decisions about which programmes would run and at what point in the academic year they would start (e.g., October start, February start, or both October and February start for some programmes).  It was noted that the University was attempting to move to a position where autumn would be blended learning with the primary element online, and in spring, if external COVID-19 guidelines permitted, this blended element would continue but with face to face teaching as the primary element. It was noted that the University would need to continue to take a flexible approach: it may be required and must be prepared to change back to predominantly online teaching should circumstances swiftly change.  Council were invited to discuss the updates on planning for learning and teaching in 2020/21. Discussion centred on encouragement around the blended approach to learning and appreciation of the enhanced communications and dialogue in this area, and the delayed start dates of PGT programmes and the potential for students to enrol at other institutions who were providing these programmes in October. It was noted that detailed considerations were taking place around this, and that the University was balancing several demands in the area of provision, ensuring that provision was sustainable and resilient to the demands of the pandemic. | | | | | | | |
| **5.** | **PLANNING FOR RESEARCH IN 2020/21 & REPORT FROM COUNCIL’S UNIVERSITY RESEARCH COMMITTEE** | | | | **Oral Report & AC (19/20) 24** | | | |
|  | Council receivedan update on planning for research arrangements for the academic year 2020/21 and received the University Research Committee Report from the meeting of 7 May 2020.  The University Research Committee report was introduced, and it was noted that it detailed reports of research success around the COVID-19 research agenda and funding connected to this, and updates on research awards. Council noted the University Research Committee Report from the meeting of 7 May 2020  An update was provided and noted on the research arrangements moving forwards for 2020/21 with research and innovation seen as an important way forward to recover post pandemic and kick start the economy. Other research matters at UK level in light of COVID-19 were noted such as the research sustainability task force chaired by Paul Boyle which was examining research efficiency, debate on the sustainability of financial model for research, and the reliance of international students to subsidise the nation’s research endeavours. Matters discussed at a number of UK wide and Universities Scotland meetings were noted. An update on the REF was also noted. It was outlined that the REF had been paused and a consultation exercise across the sector about when it should be restarted was taking place, with Research England providing a statement on this at the end of June.  It was noted that planning was taking place on the internal arrangements for research going forward and how they were impacted by external arrangements. It was also noted that about 50% of research projects had been paused as a result of COVID-19 with some research staff on furlough. An update was provided and noted on the City Deal and it was reported that the regional programme office was in discussion with the government to bring forward decisions so funding from the City Deal could be released.  Further information was provided on the international portfolio for research, and it was noted that there were many opportunities for COVID-19 related research. It was also noted that there had been some preferential insights into some international research funding opportunities, and that the University was reaching out to research partners to reaffirm our commitment to current projects, with positive responses from our partners.  An update was provided and noted on PGR, and that the IAS had reviewed progress on moving short term activities online which was highly successful, and it was moving the summer school programme online. It was also noted that IAS had been in contact with students directly to support them and understand how the issues surrounding COVID-19 were impacting them. In the area of recruitment, it was noted that the IAS was 4 months into the new online application and would be reviewing the success of that in due course. Recent success in studentship competitions was also noted, specifically with regard to DTPs, and anticipation of further funding from future competitions was expected.  The update on research planning arrangements for 2020/21 was noted by Council. | | | | | | | |
| **6.** | **ACADEMIC QUALITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2020/21 AND UPDATE ON ENHANCEMENT-LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW** | | | | | | **Oral Report** | |
|  | Council received an update on academic quality arrangements for 2020/21 and on the alterations to arrangements for the QAA Scotland-led Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR).  It was noted that COVID-19 had impacted both internal and external processes surrounding academic quality, and that the QAA had remained clear that the University maintained continued responsibility for its approach to quality and standards for degrees in response the rapidly changing circumstances. Consequently, it was noted that adaptations to quality arrangements had been made by Academic Registry in response to this.  The matter surrounding the importance of maintaining the schedule of learning and teaching reviews within the 6 year cycle as stipulated by the SFC was raised and noted, and that whilst COVID-19 had presented disruption to the University, reviews had taken place through alternative online approaches this semester, mitigating risk in this area.  With regards to the University’s scheduled ELIR in autumn 2020, it was noted that ELIR had been postponed and rescheduled to spring 2021 in light of COVID-19. The planning visit for the review was noted as scheduled for Wednesday 3 March 2021, with the review visit taking place between Monday 19 April – Friday 23 April 2021, and in order to accommodate these revised dates, a timeline and plan for preparation would proceed in due course.  With regards to learning and teaching arrangements for 2020/21, it was noted that considerations would be taken forwards in terms of changes to policy, regulation, and procedure to accommodate the rapidly changing landscape presented by COVID.  Council noted the update on academic quality arrangements for 2020/21 and the alterations to arrangements for ELIR. | | | | | | | |
| **7.** | **UPDATE ON BE CONNECTED PROGRAMME AND ACTIVITIES RELATING TO HEALTH AND WELLBEING** | | | **AC (19/20) 25** | | | | |
|  | Council received an update on the Be Connected programme and activities as well as discussion surrounding the management of equality matters in light of the challenging circumstances COVID-19 was presenting to the sector in this area (e.g., the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on the BAME populations, and females with childcare responsibilities).  The importance of equality impact assessments was discussed and noted with an emphasis on these assessments assisting those completing them to consider carefully the impact of their proposals on the various groups of individuals impacted.  An overview of the Be Connected programme was provided and noted and emphasis was given to the highly tailored content to the University community which had been a great area of success. It was further noted that the University had also introduced the Big White Wall mental health programme online that both staff and students could access for support and wellbeing.  Matters surrounding hardship funding in response to COVID-19 were also raised and noted. There had been further engagement with the Scottish Government on the provision of further funding, especially as this funding did not extend to international students.  Council noted the update on the Be Connected programme and activities relating to health and wellbeing. | | | | | | |
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| **8.** | **ANY OTHER BUSINESS** | | | | |  | | |
|  | There was no other business presented for Academic Council to consider. | | | | | | | |
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| **9.** | **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** | | | | | | | |
|  | Council noted that the next meeting of Academic Council was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 9 September 2020 at 2pm, location to be determined. | | | | | | | |
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**Dr Alexander Griffiths**

**Academic Registry**

**June 2020**