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**ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

**Minute of meeting held on 10 March 2021**

**Present:** Professor G McCormac (Chair), Professor A Bowes, Dr A Desbois, Professor I Docherty, Professor J Donaldson, Dr P Dudchenko, Dr L Forbat, Dr A Gilburn, Professor K Grant, Professor A Hadland, Professor A Jump, Dr M Lovatt, Dr E Macleod, Professor M MacLeod, Professor H Nehring, Professor R Norman, Professor R Oram, Professor N Parish, Professor J Phillips, Prof M Priestley, Ms A Smith, Professor L Sparks, Mr A Seel, Dr I Tabner, Professor J Tinson, Professor T Whalley, Professor N Wylie.

**In Attendance:** Ms I Beveridge, Ms E Schofield.

**Apologies:** Ms L Ehresmann, Professor A Green, Ms Joanna Morrow, Ms J Stevenson, Dr D Telford Dr C Wilson.

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| **1.** | **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING** | **AC (20/21) Minutes 2** |
|  | The minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2020 were approved. |
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| **2.** | **MATTERS ARISING NOT OTHERWISE ON THE AGENDA** |  |
|  | It was noted that the proposed amendments to Statute 9 and Ordinance 72 that Council endorsed at its last meeting, were considered and approved by University Court on 14 December 2020. The revised version of Ordinance 72 had been published on the University website and approval of the amendment to Statute 9 was being discussed with the Scottish Government. In addition, University Court had noted the Annual Report on Academic Council Effectiveness for 2019/20. |
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| **3.** | **STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIR AND** **AN UPDATE ON THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT** | **Oral Report & AC (20/21) 18** |
|  | Council received a briefing from the Chair and an update on the external environment. The External Environment paper discussed the University’s continuing response to Coronavirus and the alignment of its approach to changes in risk and government policy, and provided the link to the webpages on Covid19 updates.The University had communicated its decision to postpone in-person graduation ceremonies in 2021, in light of the ongoing uncertainty and challenges in respect of Covid19. This was a difficult decision and one that was carefully considered. Students would continue to graduate in absentia to ensure there would be no delay in their receiving degree certificates and transcripts, and virtual celebrations would take place. Graduating students would also be invited back to the University for an in-person celebration once it was safe to do so.It was noted that plans for virtual celebrations were being developed, and further detail would be shared and discussed in due course.  |
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| **4.** | **ENHANCEMENT-LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW (ELIR)** | **Oral Report** |
|  | Council received an update on the progress of the ELIR process which remained ongoing. Following the submission of the University’s Reflective Analysis and the Advance Information Set in January 2021, the one-day Planning Visit had taken place on 3 March 2021, via MS Teams. The Visit had comprised three meetings with the ELIR Panel – one with the Deputy Principal (Education and Students) and the Academic Registrar, one with a group of staff representatives, and one with a group of student representatives. Discussion at each of the meetings was constructive, covering a range of topics. Based on brief feedback from the ELIR Panel, the discussions had been productive in assisting panel members in preparing the draft programme for the Main Review Visit which would take place from 19 to 23 April 2021. It was anticipated that the draft programme would be provided to the University in mid-March 2021, along with an indication of the staff and student representatives with whom the Panel would wish to meet, and requests for additional information in advance of the Main Review Visit. Thanks were extended to those students and staff members who had contributed to the Planning Visit, and in advance to those colleagues who would contribute to the upcoming Main Review Visit. |
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| **5.** | **RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (REF)** | **AC (20/21) 19** |
|  | Council noted the paper on the University’s REF submission which set out the context to this, the process followed in preparing the submission and modelling that had been undertaken.It was highlighted that the 2021 REF submission was better in comparison to that of 2014 in terms of the GPA, representing a notable achievement. The REF submission would be sent to Research England on March 31 2021, and it was anticipated that outcomes would be published in spring 2022. Thanks were extended to members of the Advisory Group and the many other colleagues who had contributed to the REF submission.  |
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| **6.** | **REPORTS FROM COUNCIL’S COMMITTEES** |  |
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| **6.1** | **Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC) Report –** **9 December 2020 and 10 February 2021:** | **AC (20/21) 20** |
|  | Council received thereport from the two most recent meetings of the Education and Student Experience Committee.The update provided on the Committee’s business was noted, including that a new International Partnerships Handbook had been approved. This Handbook would provide further structure to the University’s arrangements for the approval and management of international partnerships and was therefore a positive and welcome development. ESEC had also discussed the University’s Equality Outcomes and these discussions would subsequently feed into the wider discussions that were ongoing. |
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| **6.2** | **University Research Committee Report – 24 November 2020** | **AC (20/21) 21** |
|  | Council received the report from the meeting of the University Research Committee held on 24 November 2020.The update provided on the Committee’s business was noted, with some particular aspects highlighted:* 2020/21 had so far been a successful year in respect of research awards, with almost £20 million in grants achieved to date.
* The context of grant funding would become more challenging in the year ahead with a range of cuts expected and the overall landscape for growth changing. It would be important for the University to be consistent in its strategic approach to responding to the challenges, and tap into funds available through various emerging strands of government planning and strategy, such as the Levelling Up Fund. The Horizon Europe Programme also represented an opportunity for the University.
* Existing research strengths would stand the University in good stead to meet the challenges ahead.
* The Research Strategy would be developed to take account of the ways in which the University would need to respond to challenge and change going forward. It was anticipated that as a result, the Strategy would become more concentrated and targeted, with a sharper focus.
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| **6.3** | **Joint Policy, Planning and Resources Committee Report – 1 March 2021**  | **AC (20/21) 22** |
|  | Council received the report from the meeting of the Joint Policy, Planning and Resources Committee held on 1 March 2021. The update provided on the Committee’s business was noted, including that a small uplift in the unit of resource for universities had been confirmed by the Scottish Government, and this additional funding would be allocated to institutions by the Scottish Funding Council. Discussions on allocations were continuing and would be made using a formulaic approach.JPPRC had also considered: the Research and Innovation Safeguarding Code of Practice; the Time Off for Dependents Policy; an Outcome Agreement update; and the Safety, Environment and Continuity Report for 2019/20. In respect of the latter, the extraordinary effort from staff members in maintaining the University campus environment as a safe place, and keeping students and staff on campus safe throughout the pandemic, was acknowledged and recognised. This had been a significant undertaking, and one in which the University community had lived our institutional values. |
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| **10.** | **ANY OTHER BUSINESS** |
|  | Council noted that there were no other items of business. |
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| **11.** | **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** |
|  | Council noted that the date of the next meeting would be Wednesday 2 June 2021, on Microsoft Teams. |

**Academic Registry**

**March 2021**