

**AC (22/23) Minute 3**

**ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

**Minute of the meeting held on Wednesday 8 March 2023**

**Present:** Professor Sir G McCormac (Chair), Professor K Blair, Dr A Desbois, Professor I Docherty, Professor J Donaldson, Professor P Dudchenko, Dr A Gilburn, Professor A Green, Professor A Jump, Dr M Lovatt, Professor M MacLeod**,** Professor D McGhee, Professor R Norman, Professor N Parish, Professor J Philips, Professor L Sparks, Ms J Stevenson, Professor J Tinson.

**In attendance:** Ms I Beveridge, Ms J Morrow, Ms E Schofield, Mr D Soutar (Secretary), Dr D Telford.

**Apologies:** Professor L Forbat, Professor K Grant, Professor A Hadland, Professor H Nehring, Dr E Macleod, Ms T Miller, Professor M Priestley, Mr M Sammels, Dr I Tabner, Dr C Wilson, Ms L Wilson, Professor N Wylie.

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| **1.** | **MINUTES** | **AC (22/23)** | |
|  | The minutes from the previous meeting held on 1 December 2022 were approved. | **Minute 2** | |
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| **2.** | **MATTERS ARISING NOT OTHERWISE ON THE AGENDA**  Council noted the following matters arising: |  | |
|  | Following Council’s endorsement of the Annual Report on Academic Council Effectiveness, the report was approved by University Court at its meeting on 12 December 2022. |  | |
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| **3.** | **STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIR AND**  **AN UPDATE ON THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT** | **Oral Report**  **AC (22/23) 21** | |
|  | Council received a briefing from the Chair and an update on the external environment, which covered developments relating to matters including:   * Scotland’s First Minister Nicola Sturgeon had announced that she would step down from her role as SNP leader and First Minister following the conclusion of the leadership contest. This resulted in movement in civil servants who support Education and Higher Education. It was unknown what impact, if any, these changes would have on the University sector. * Forth Valley College had announced a voluntary severance Scheme in response to financial challenges related to the reduction in the College sector’s core funding allocation from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). * The [Strategic Plan Addendum](https://uoscomms.newsweaver.com/universityofstirling.1rid8s2hqn/8setcly9kbt3m1k19cs69h/external?email=true&a=5&p=2104347&t=380534) covered the period 2021-2023, and work was underway to develop the new institutional strategy for 2023/24 and beyond. Staff input and engagement was critical in forming a strategy reflective of the University community. Engagement with staff had already begun and there would be several further opportunities for staff, students, and external stakeholder involvement in the plan’s development. * The University’s study programmes at Ras al Khaimah (RAK) in the United Arab Emirates, run in partnership with Planet One, had been featured as an international case study by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education. The partnership was chosen by the QAA’s Quality Evaluation and Enhancement of UK Transnational Higher Education (QE-TNE) as an example of integrated learning, enriched student experiences and, ultimately, enhanced employability for students during uncertain times. * Council noted the updates. |  | |
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| **4.** | **TEACHING AND LEARNING** | **Oral Report** | |
|  | Council received an update on future Teaching and Learning and the Strategic Plan development.    It was noted that the approach for developing the new Strategic Plan, including the learning and teaching element, would include a faculty led approach.    The changing landscape for the sector was discussed and it was noted that the unit of teaching resource had reduced by 27% in real terms over the last decade. This had been a result of a policy decision taken by the Scottish Government and was not forecast to reverse over the coming years. The Scottish Government also encouraged Scottish universities to access unregulated markets to ‘balance the books’ as a consequence to the policy. However, this was a very competitive market, with a potential threat from the UK Government’s policies regarding international students.    Council discussed several strategically important areas for consideration in respect of Teaching and Learning including portfolio design, the balance of focus on both programmes and modules, structures of UG programmes, and the impact of 10 credit modules. |  | |
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| **5.** | **TERTIARY QUALITY FRAMEWORK** | **AC (22/23) 22** | |
|  | Council received an update on the continuing development of the tertiary sector quality framework in line with the recommendations of the Coherence and Sustainability review undertaken by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), which reported in June 2021.  The update provided a summary of activity undertaken in developing the new framework and approach, ahead of the full implementation which was expected from 2024/25.  The approach for academic years 2021/22 and 2022/23 was discussed, which represented Phase 1 of the new framework, including Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) and Institutional Liaison Meetings (ILM).  Council noted the report. |  | |
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| **6.** | **REPORTS FROM COUNCIL COMMITTEES** |  | |
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| **6.1** | Council received the report from the Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC) meeting held on 15 February 2023.  It was noted that the student welcome event, held at the start of the Spring 2023 semester, had been implemented to create efficiencies in the enrolment process for both students and staff and enhance the student experience. The event had been a success with collaborative working between students and staff.  The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems such as Chat GPT had generated good discussion amongst members. A small working group had been created to drive forward how AI can be used effectively in the academic setting, particularly in assessments. It was noted that the provisions of the current Academic Integrity Policy, and associated procedures, were already in a position to take account of associated issues regarding Artificial Intelligence.  Council noted the report. | **AC (22/23) 23** | |
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| **6.2** | Council received the report from the University Research Committee meeting held on 8 February 2023.  Members noted the increase in funding opportunities being issued by UKRI and the continued planning in the event of Horizon Europe non-association.  The work in establishing missions and challenges, as part of the development of the new Research Strategy, created discussion amongst members. Overarching missions would be aligned to the strategy, with scope for (sub) missions to be created. Continued engagement with the development process was encouraged to maintain the collaborative approach in establishing our missions.  Council noted the report. | **AC (22/23) 24** | |
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| **6.3** | Council received the report from the Joint Policy, Planning and Research Committee meeting held on 28 February 2023.  Council noted the report. | **AC (22/23) 25** | |
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| **7.** | **ANY OTHER BUSINESS** |  |
|  | There were no other items of business. |  |
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| **8.** | **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** |  |
|  | Tuesday 30 May 2023 at 2pm. |  |
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