

**AC (23/24) Minute 2**

**ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

**Minute of the meeting held on Wednesday 29 November 2023**

**Present:** Professor Sir G McCormac (Chair), Ms K Batbayar, Professor K Blair, Ms J Dike, Professor J Donaldson, Professor E Duncan, Dr A Gilburn, Ms K Gethings, Professor K Grant, Professor A Green, Dr M Lovatt, Dr G MacIntosh, Dr E Macleod, Dr J Morgan, Professor D Oliver, Professor N Parish, Professor J Phillips, Professor J Tinson, Dr C Wilson, Professor N Wylie.

**In attendance:** Ms I Beveridge, Ms A Higgins, Ms J Morrow, Dr D Telford.

**Apologies:** Professor A Jump, Professor M MacLeod, Professor L Sparks, Ms J Stevenson, Dr I Tabner, Professor R Norman, Ms E Schofield, Professor I Docherty, Professor L McCabe,Professor D McGhee, Dr D Griffiths, Professor G Ochoa, Ms N Foley, Professor A Hadland

**WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

The Committee were welcomed to the meeting and apologies were noted, as above.

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| **1.** | **MINUTES** | **AC (23/24)** |
|  | The minute from the previous meeting held on 13 September 2023 was approved. | **Minute 1** |
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| **2.** | **MATTERS ARISING NOT OTHERWISE ON THE AGENDA** |  |
|  | Further to Council’s endorsement of the University’s annual report on institution-led review for the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) at its September meeting, the report was also approved by Court at its meeting on 23 October 2023 and then submitted to the SFC. |  |
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| **3.** | **STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIR AND**  **AN UPDATE ON THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT** | **Oral Report**  **AC (23/24) 14** |
|  | Council received a briefing from the Chair and an update on the external environment, which covered developments relating to matters including:   * The University’s Strategic Plan had been approved by Court on 23 October 2023. Developments on the launch and connected campaign are underway. * A delegation from our partner institution Chengdu University, China was welcomed to the University for a visit in November 2023. The visit formed part of a continuing partnership with Chengdu, which was officially formed in 2019, and saw senior staff from all faculties discussing potential areas of research collaboration. Students were currently enrolled on degrees across three disciplines, Data Science, Digital Media, and Sports Studies as part of the partnership. * The University was exploring a new partnership with the British University Vietnam (BUV), and the potential for delivery of a new undergraduate Data Science and Artificial Intelligence programme via the partnership. * The 2023 winter graduation ceremonies took place on 23 and 24 November 2023, with the University’s first Paramedic Science graduates having received their degrees.   Council noted the updates. |  |
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| **4.** | **STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT** | **AC (23 24) 15**  **AC (23 24) 16** |
|  | Council received the Digital Strategy and the Research and Innovation Strategy, both produced as enabling strategies of the new University Strategic Plan.  Six key principles of the Digital Strategy were: Learning and Teaching, Student Experience, Staff Experience, Research, Smart Campus, and Data Analytics. These principles and Digital Strategy overall sought to ensure that the University would be prepared for continuing change in an evolving education landscape in the coming years, and to deliver an exceptional digitally enabled student experience. Vital work was ongoing to continue reinforcing the message of the importance of online and information security, and a focus on the development of digital skills for staff would be important going forward.  The Research and Innovation Strategy was using a mission-orientated approach through three main missions of Spaces, Places and Lives. Council noted that bringing on board early to mid-career colleagues (Stirling Fellows) was encouraging.  Thanks were expressed to those who had already given feedback on the strategies.  Council endorsed both of the strategies for onward submission to University Court for approval. |  |
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| **5.** | **ANNUAL REPORT ON ACADEMIC COUNCIL EFFECTIVENESS TO COURT** | **AC (23/24) 17** |
|  | Council received a report on its effectiveness in the preceding academic year, 2022/23.  It was noted that the report outlined the Council’s remit, membership, and operation in 2022/23, and summarised key items of business that had been considered.  Council considered and approved the report for onward submission to University Court. |  |
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| **6.** | **QUALITY ENHANCEMENT AND STANDARDS REVIEW** | **AC (23/24) 18** |
|  | Council received an update on the Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) that had taken place on 22 November 2023.  The previous cycle of Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) ended in 2022, and QESR was part of the statutory external quality review approach in place while the new Tertiary Quality Framework continued to be developed. It was anticipated that enhancement-led principles would be retained within the new framework.  A range of colleagues from faculties and professional services, as well as a number of students, had participated in QESR and met with the panel. No feedback had been given by the QESR panel on the review so far, however, it was expected that a draft report would be received for checking of factual accuracy in December 2023. Once finalised, the report would be published to the QAA website and the University would be required to prepare an action plan in response. The review formed part of Phase 1 of the new national quality assurance and enhancement framework that was being developed for full implementation from 2024/25.  Council noted the update and that further details on the outcome of the QESR would be received at a future meeting. |  |
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| **7.** | **FACULTY NSS ACTION PLANS** | **AC (23/24) 19** |
|  | Council discussed the paper on Faculty National Student Survey (NSS) Action Plans which provided a thematic overview of actions from each faculty after consideration of the 2023 NSS survey results.  A range of work had taken place in response to the results, with meetings having been held with each of the faculties, resulting in constructive discussion. Themes that emerged from those discussions had been referenced in the action plans, including assessment and feedback, belonging, closing the feedback loop and, curriculum.  It was highlighted that faculties had engaged positively with the call to enhance engagement with mental health staff development (first responder training) with 460 members participating. Further enhancement of the module evaluation process with briefing and training being rolled out. Student Learning Services had supported faculties with feedback on assessment to support learning.  Council noted that the 2024 NSS survey would open nationally on 8 January 2024, however, it was intended that the University would launch the survey slightly later than this date, to optimise student engagement and response. |  |
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| **8.** | **REPORTS FROM COUNCIL COMMITTEES** |  |
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| **8.1** | Council received the report from the Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC) meeting held on 25 October 2023.  Council noted the report and particularly that:   * The Curriculum Management Sub-Committee had transitioned to fully using the curriculum management system (Akari) for its work to consider and make decisions upon curriculum proposals. * Amendments to the policies relevant to Board of Examiners, Academic Integrity and Proofreading had been approved by ESEC. The revised versions had been published to the website and had also been circulated to colleagues. | **AC (23/24) 20** |
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| **8.2** | Council received the report from the University Research Committee meeting held on 2 November 2023.  Council noted the report and particularly that:   * The Research Excellence Framework (REF) preparation process had begun within the University and a series of leadership meetings had taken place. * The quality of research ethics and integrity proposals was flagged. Ethics training was available, and colleagues were encouraged to take part. | **AC (23/24) 21** |
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| **8.3** | Council received the report from the Joint Policy Planning and Resources Committee held on 21 November 2023.  Council noted the report and particularly that:   * A draft Digital Strategy and Research and Innovation Strategy had been produced and would be submitted to Court for approval. | **AC (23/24) 22** |
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|  | Council received the annual report from the Joint Policy Planning and Resources Committee for 2022/23.  Council noted the report. | **AC (23/24) 23** |
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| **9.** | **SEMESTER DATES** | **AC (23/24) 24** |
|  | Council noted the semester dates that had been approved for 2024/25 and that further discussion would take place to consider the semester dates for future years. |  |
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| **10.** | **COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS** | **AC (23 24) 25** |
|  | Council approved the appointments to the Academic Panel (Taught) and to University Court. |  |
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| **11.** | **ANY OTHER BUSINESS** |  |
|  | There were no other items of business. |  |
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| **12.** | **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** |  |
|  | Wednesday 6 March 2024 at 2pm. |  |
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