

**UNIVERSITY COURT**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2020**

**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, Prof H Nehring, Rev M Roderick, Councillor C Simpson, Ms Mary Allison, Ms P Crawford, Ms S Gordon, Prof P Hancock, Ms A Smith and Mr G MacLeod.

**In Attendance:** Ms C Gallagher, Ms J Harrison, Mr L McCabe, Mr M McCrindle, Mr C McNally, Ms J Morrow, Prof J Phillips, Dr J Rogers, Ms E Schofield, Prof L Sparks, Mr L Spillane, Dr David Telford, Mr M Nichol (Clerk), Prof N Wylie, Dr L Zhuang, and Mr G Duff.

**Apologies:** Apologies for absence were received from Dr P Cowell.

**1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**2. MINUTES UC(19/20) Minutes 7**

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 June were **approved** as an accurate record.

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

There were no matters arising.

**4. REMIT, COMPOSITION AND MEMBERSHIP UC(20/21) 1**

Members discussed the remit, composition and membership of Court and proposed amendments to Statute 9, the remit of Court, to meet the current needs of the University. In particular, members proposed to strengthen the remit on matters relating to equality, diversity and inclusion and update the term ‘true and fair’ in the context of financial reporting.

Court **noted** the remit, composition and membership of Court for 2020/21

 **[Action: University Secretary]**

**5. KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ENVIRONMENT UC(20/21) 2**

Court received the report on latest external factors that presented potential challenges to the University, and recent policy developments in the external environment relevant to the Higher Education (HE) sector.

Members discussed in particular the National Student Survey (NSS) results that placed the University of Stirling at 18th in the UK, the Government’s review of the NSS, and institutional research awards successfully secured during the last financial year.

Court **noted** the recent developments in the external environment.

***DELIVERY OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN***

**6. PERFORMANCE REPORT UC(20/21) 3**

Court received a report on institutional performance relative to Strategic Plan Key Performance Indicator targets in the previous year and an overview of specific institutional achievements and future priorities. Members discussed in particular performance relating to non-continuation at undergraduate level and the postgraduate student experience.

Court **noted** the report on the University’s performance in 2019/20.

**7. UPDATE ON FINANCIAL PLANNING AND INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES UC(20/21) 4**

Court received an indicative financial forecast for the academic year 2020-21, along with an overview of actions undertaken to support delivery of an acceptable budget position.

Members discussed the indicative financial position presented in comparison to the Court- endorsed budget ‘Scenario 1’ (UC (19/20) 53), and the income and expenditure assumptions underlying the scenario.

Court **considered** and commented in particular on the indicative 2020-21 financial forecast, the University’s cash position, the restructuring and reconfiguration of staffing resource and the valuation of the Universities Superannuation Scheme.

Court **approved** the financing arrangements detailed in Appendix 2 and agreed to commence preparatory work and negotiations on terms and conditions.

**8. MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS UC(20/21) 5**

Court received an analysis of the actual preliminaryfinancial performance for full year 2019-20 against budget and the post Covid-19 forecast prepared for the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) in April 2020 and previously reported to Court.

Members discussed the key headlines from the 2019-20 full year management accounts including achievement of the savings target and the actual *preliminary* out-turn outturn deficit of £2.8m, which represents a £2.3m favourable variance to April 2020 SFC forecast outturn and a favourable variance of £0.7m against the Court approved budget.

Court **noted** the University’s *preliminary* management accounts for the 2019- 20 financial year.

**9. TUITION FEE SETTING UC(20/21) 6**

Court received a paper that presented a range of tuition fee recommendations for 2021/22 for entrants at all levels of study. It was confirmed that the fee setting process is undertaken annually and the exercise considers the current and future market conditions, inflation costs, government policy and competitor pricing, and aimed to deliver a clear and consistent fee structure across the portfolio.

Members noted the recommendations had been endorsed by the Fees and Scholarships Working Group and the University Strategy and Policy Group (USPG), and discussed the considerations taken into account this year due to the impact of Covid-19 and the detailed benchmarking exercise that informed the recommended fee levels.

Court **approved** the 2021/22 fee recommendations.

It was confirmed that EU-domiciled entrants attending Scottish universities would no longer qualify for a ‘Home’ fee status and the associated tuition fee support beyond academic year 2020/21. Members noted as a consequence, proposals for EU fees remained to be finalised and that analysis would be undertaken to inform cohesive proposals for institutional fee levels and potential scholarships options for the 2021/22 EU market.

Court **awarded delegated authority** to USPG to approve fee levels for EU entrants for 2021/22.

**10. CITY REGION DEAL UPDATE UC(20/21) 7**

Court received recommendations on moving forward the University-led projects within the innovation workstream of the City Deal project, namely Scotland’s International Environment centre (SIEC) and the National Aquaculture Technology and Innovation Hub (NATIH).

Members discussed the strategic importance in delivering the innovation workstream and the benefits of the City Deal project, and the revised programme for the delivery.

Court **noted** the report and **approved** the revised Financial Profile for the University-led projects.

***ACTIVITY UPDATES***

**11. STUDENTS’ UNION UPDATE UC(20/21) 8**

Members received an update on activity from the Students’ Union including preparations for the new semester to support students learning and overall experience, and training for sports union clubs on responsibilities for upholding health and safety rules and government guidance.

Court **noted** the update on activity from the Students’ Union.

**12. STAFF AND EMPLOYMENT UPDATE UC(20/21) 9**

Members received an update on staff and employment matters and noted in particular the financial assistance available via the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the 2020/21 pay negotiations with trade unions, and the University’s Employee Assist Programme in place to ensure provision of counselling and wellbeing support to staff and their immediate families.

Court discussed the safety measures in place for staff returning to work on campus and **noted** the update on staff and employment matters.

***OTHER ITEMS***

**13. COURT STRATEGY DAY Oral**

Members **discussed** proposals on the development of the Strategic Plan as the University approached the final year of the Strategic Plan 2016 – 2021. Members agreed to postpone the Court Strategy Day and requested the Executive Team outline an approach to develop an ‘interim’ Strategic Plan to cover a period of 24 months from 2021 – 2023.

 **[Action: University Secretary]**

**14. INSTITUTION-LED REVIEW OF QUALITY 2019/20 UC(20/21) 10**

 Court **approved** the Annual Statement on quality for the Scottish Funding Council.

***COMMITEE REPORTS***

**15. ACADEMIC COUNCIL UC(20/21) 11**

Court **noted** the report from the meeting of 9 September 2020.

***RISKS***

**16. RISKS ARISING Oral**

Court **considered** risks associated with items discussed in the context of the agreed risk appetite statement.

**17. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

The Chair paid tribute to former Chancellor Dame Diana Rigg who held the position from 1998 to 2008. Members of Court were deeply saddened to learn of her passing and recognised the great contribution she made to the University over the years.

**18. NEXT MEETING**

Court **noted** the next full meeting of Court was scheduled for 14 December 2020.

**Policy & Planning**

**September 2020**