

**UNIVERSITY COURT**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2019**

**Present:** Ms F Sandford (Chair), Mr H Adam, Mr J Dick, Mr J Grant, Prof A Green, Mr H Grossart, Mr S Haldane, Prof M MacLeod, Ms L Marr, Prof G McCormac, Ms B McKissack, Ms C Morrison, Councillor C Simpson, Ms A Smallenbroek, Mr A Sturgess (from item 6 onwards)

**In Attendance:** Ms C Gallagher, Prof P Hancock, Ms J Harrison, Mr G MacLeod, 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 D Telford, Ms F Wheater (Clerk), Prof N Wylie, Dr L Zhuang

**Apologies:** Mr S Anderson, Prof J Donaldson, Prof H Nehring, Rev M Roderick

Members noted that this would be the last meeting attended by Astrid Smallenbroek and Jamie Grant. Court thanked them for their contributions to Court over the previous 2 years.

**1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**2. MINUTES UC(18/19) Minutes 2**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2018 were **approved** as an accurate record.

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

There were no matters arising.

**4. KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT UC(17/18) 34**

Court **received** a report on recent developments in the external environment and their potential impact upon the higher education sector. In particular, it was noted that there were a number of external factors that presented potential strategic and financial challenges to the University, most notably: Brexit, student recruitment, UK and Scottish Government policy, public spending and funding allocations, staff pay awards and pensions.

It was also noted that the European Universities Association (EUA) had recently published a Public Funding Observatory Report comparing levels of public resource invested in universities across Europe. The report found that funding for Scottish Universities was in ‘sustained decline’.

The publication of the ‘Augar Review’ of tuition fees and funding for post-18 education in England was still pending. This could have a significant impact on fees for RUK students. It was noted that officers were in regular contact with sectoral and government representatives emphasising the difficult financial position of the sector and for the institution.

Court **noted** the update on the external environment.

***DELIVERY OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN***

**5. PERFORMANCE MONITORING UC(17/18) 35**

Court **considered** the Making it Happen Performance report which covered research performance, commercial and philanthropic income, and unregulated student numbers. The research grant and contract awards were higher than at the same point the previous year although below the ambitious, stretch targets. There were positive signs that the strategy for supporting larger bids was paying off and there were a number of strong bids in the pipeline.

At the end of the second quarter the University had delivered 50% of the target 2018/19 income for commercial services. An update on Sports Development Service income against budget (50% achieved) was noted, in addition to the original Making it Happen target noted in the report. It was recognised that this was a good performance given the on-going re-development of the Sport Centre.

In a very competitive environment, some targets for increasing unregulated student numbers had been exceeded, such as postgraduate taught home/EU students, whereas others had not been achieved such as postgraduate research students. The University had recently established the Institute for Advanced Studies which would be leading on enhancing the recruitment and experience of postgraduate research students.

Court **noted** the Making it Happen performance report.

**6. CITY DEAL UC(18/19)36**

Court received an update on the Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal. The Heads of Terms had been agreed in principle and it was anticipated that a contract would be signed in the late spring or summer. A programme team had been established internally and a Joint Committee had been established, by Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils, as the principal regional decision-making body. The University programme team was in the process of developing draft business cases for the National Aquaculture Technology and Innovation Hub and Scotland’s International Environment Centre. A decision was awaited on the University’s submission of an application to the Clackmannanshire Fund for the development of the Intergenerational Living Innovation Hub project.

Court **noted** the update on the City Deal.

***PLANNING & BUDGETING***

**7. SFC INDICATIVE FUNDING ALLOCATIONS 2019/2020 UC (18/19)37**

Court **considered** the report on the indicative funding allocations for 2019/20 that had recently been released by the Scottish Funding Council. Some key points included:

* The budget represented an overall sector decrease of 0.6% compared to 2018/19.
* The total sector budgets for Teaching and Research funding had been maintained at the same level, in cash terms, as the previous year.
* The total sector funding for capital investment had increased and was provided in three elements: capital maintenance grant, research capital funding and financial transactions fund. It was noted that any funds provided from the financial transactions fund would be repayable loans not grant funding.
* The funding for postgraduate taught skills places had been repurposed to support courses aimed at upskilling people already in the workforce or addressing skills shortages.
* The indicative settlement did not include the reduction of funded places associated with the transfer of nursing places to UHI or the anticipated increase in the SFC funded nursing population that had been announced by the Chief Nursing Officer in November 2018.
* The University’s funding for research and innovation had decreased by 1.6% compared to 2018/19.
* The University would receive an 8% decrease in capital funding.
* Overall, based on the indicative announcements and the impact of an estimated nursing funded population uplift, the University would receive an increase of £28k in grant funding (0.1%) compared to the final SFC grant 2018/19.

The University’s 2019/10 indicative budget would be amended to take account of the settlement and it was **noted** that the indicative funding allocations would inform ongoing discussions to conclude the University’s Outcome Agreement for 2019/20, and associated intake targets.

Court **noted** the report on the indicative funding allocation for 2019/20.

**8. OUTCOME AGREEMENT UPDATE 2019/2020 UC (18/19)38**

Court considered the updated Outcome Agreement for 2019/20 that had previously been considered at the December 2018 meeting of Court. The Outcome Agreement had been developed in a number of ways from the early draft which included adding additional information on widening access, making reference to Advance HE’s Race Equality Charter and the addition of two case studies. The final version was due to be submitted at the end of April and would be dependent on the final funding allocation from the Scottish Funding Council.

Court **endorsed** the Outcome Agreement Update 2019/2020 and **approved delegated authority** to the Chair of Court to approve the Outcome Agreement once final settlement had been issued.

***GOVERNANCE***

**9. GOVERNANCE UPDATE UC(18/19)39**

Court received and update on governance matters covering the implementation of the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016 (‘the Act’) and the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance (‘the Code’). All of the requirements relating to the Act and the Code were being met with the exception of the outstanding actions related to the approval of the revised Charter and Statutes by the Scottish Government and Privy Council.

Court **noted** the Governance Update.

**10. POLICY REVIEW SCHEDULE UC(18/19)40**

Court considered the proposed schedule for Court to review policies relating to compliance and statutory duties as required by the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance. It was noted that the schedule would be kept under review to ensure that relevant policies were included and review cycles were appropriate.

It was **agreed** that Audit Committee, with its responsibilities relating to risk, should have a role in assessing which policies should be included in the schedule taking account of the risks involved.

Court **approved** in principlethe proposed schedule of policy reviews.

***ACTIVITY UPDATES***

**11. STUDENTS’ UNION UPDATE UC(18/19)41**

Court received a report on Students’ Union activities. Elections had recently taken place for sabbatical officers and other part time positions with the highest turnout for elections in 8 years.

It was **noted** that a rent deal had been agreed with the University. During the course of the discussion it was clarified that the University was committed to continuing investment in student accommodation and addressing the condition of the legacy estate. However, no firm commitment could be made regarding the level of the investment as this had to be considered by JPPRC and Court as part of the University’s capital plan, particularly given many other competing capital investment demands over the coming years. The capital plan would be considered at the next meeting of JPPRC.

The Student’s Union had raised concerns with First Bus regarding price increases on paper tickets. This was an equality, diversity and inclusion issue as it disadvantaged students who were unable for any reason to use a mobile phone. It was agreed that the Union should continue to work with the University to raise concerns with the bus company.

Court **noted** the report from the Students’ Union.

**12. STAFF AND EMPLOYMENT UPDATE UC(18/19)42**

Court received an update on staff and employment issues. The Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) trustees were progressing with their obligation to finalise the 2017 valuation based on increasing employer and employee pension contributions from the current position 26% (18% employer, 8% employee) to 35.6% (24.2% employer, 11.4% employee) in April 2020. In the meantime the Joint Expert Panel (JEP) had assessed the 2017 valuation and, based on the implementation of recommended adjustments, they had predicted total contributions of 29.2% were required (20.1% employers and 9.1% employees).

Discussions were ongoing and a new USS valuation as at March 2018 was underway, however, in the meantime the proposed increased contribution planned for April 2019, 28.3% (19.5% employer, 8.8% employee) would be going ahead.

Court noted that arrangements were in place to support EU staff with the EU Settlement Scheme process in preparation for Brexit.

In relation to the JNCHES negotiations, it was noted that the 2018/19 pay round had closed. The joint unions had submitted a list of ‘heads of claim’ for 2019/20 which included a request for a pay rise of RPI plus 3% or a minimum increase of £3,349.

Court **noted** the staff and employment update.

**13. EQUALITY UPDATE UC(18/19)43**

Court received an update on equality and diversity. The update provided coverage on a number of activities including the British Sign Language (BSL) action plan, actions relating to the preventing and tacking sexual violence and misconduct strategy (PTSVM), development of a mental health and wellbeing strategy for staff and students, and an overview of Public Sector Equality Duty reporting requirements.

It was noted that 16 University and Students’ Union staff had been fully trained as sexual violence and misconduct officers and also that Jill Stevenson had recently been appointed as Dean of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Athena SWAN applications had been submitted for the Division of Biological and Environmental Sciences for a silver award and Health and Sport Sciences for a bronze award.

Court **noted** the update on Equality & Diversity issues.

***COMMITTEE REPORTS***

**14. ACADEMIC COUNCIL UC(18/19)44**

Court received an update from Academic Council from its meeting of 13 March 2019. The report covered appointments to committees and the outcomes from meetings of Research Committee, Education and Student Experience Committee and Joint Policy Planning and Resources Committee.

Court **approved** the Annual Report of Academic Council and **noted** the other items in the report.

**15. JOINT POLICY, PLANNING & RESOURCES COMMITTEE (JPPRC) UC(18/19)45**

Court **considered** the report from the JPPRC meeting held on 5 March 2019. The report included updates on the external environment, management accounts, performance reporting, capital expenditure, accommodation allocation policy and rents, and Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC).

Court **noted** the report from JPPRC.

**16. AUDIT COMMITTEE UC(18/19)46**

Court **considered** the report from the Audit Committee meeting of 18 February 2019 which included an update on implementing cyber security measures following the Cyber Security audit in 2018, internal audit progress report and the register of strategic risks.

Court **noted** the items in the report.

**17. GOVERNANCE AND NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE (GNC) UC(18/19)47**

Court received a report from the meetings of GNC that took place on 15 January and 14 March 2019. Court noted a number of committee appointments and re-appointments, and the amended composition for the Remunerations Committee, all of which had been approved by GNC. An update was given on the recruitment process for the lay members of Court and the Chair of Court elections.

Court **approved** the re-appointments of three members to Court and **approved** the principles regarding the Chair of Court recruitment and election.

Court **noted** the other items in the report.

***RISKS***

**18. RISKS ARISING Oral**

No additional items were identified to add to the institutional Register of Strategic Risks.

***OTHER ITEMS***

**19. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of other business.

**20. NEXT MEETING**

Court **noted** that the next meeting was scheduled for 17 June 2019.

Policy & Planning

March 2019