

**UNIVERSITY COURT**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2019**

**Present:** Mr H Adam (Chair), Ms M Allison, Dr Robert Black, Prof J Donaldson, Mr K Fraser, Ms S Gordon, Prof A Green, Mr H Grossart, Mr S Haldane, Prof P Hancock, Mr G Hastie, Mr D Kearney, Mr G MacLeod, Prof M MacLeod, Prof G McCormac, Ms B McKissack, Ms C Morrison, Mr J Muirhead, Rev M Roderick, Councillor C Simpson, Ms C Whyte

**In Attendance:** Ms J Harrison, Mr L McCabe, Mr M McCrindle, Mr C McNally, Ms J Morrow, Prof J Phillips, Ms E Schofield, Prof L Sparks, Mr L Spillane, Dr David Telford, Ms F Wheater (Clerk), Prof N Wylie

**Apologies:** Prof H Nehring

The following new members were welcomed to their first full meeting of Court:

* Chloe Whyte - Students’ Union President
* Mary Allison - Lay Member
* Susan Gordon - Lay Member
* Professor Peter Hancock - Academic staff member nominated by a trade union
* George MacLeod - Professional Services staff member nominated by a trade union

**1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**2. MINUTES UC(19/20) Minutes 1, 2 & 3**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2019 and minutes of the matters considered by circulation in October 2019 and November 2019 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(19/20)17**

Court **received** a report on recent developments in the external environment and their potential impact upon the higher education sector. In addition to the items in the written report members noted the following:

* The recent general election had resulted in a Conservative majority. Some of the Conservative manifesto items that could, if implemented, impact universities included: post study work visas, the reinstatement of nursing bursaries in England, nursing degree apprenticeships in England and an increase in spend on research and development.
* The new local MPs for Stirling (Alyn Smith) and Clackmannanshire (John Nicolson) were both SNP. Both had previously visited the campus and the University would continue to build relationships with them.
* There were plans to establish an Advanced Research Projects Agency in the UK. The agency would be based on the same idea as the US Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency and would provide funding for hard sciences.
* There was likely to be a renewed interest in the Augar report following the elections.
* The second report from the Joint Expert Panel (JEP) on the review of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) had recently been published. It focused on improving transparency and governance.
* A report by Professor Anton Muscatelli, Vice Chancellor of the University of Glasgow, had recently been published. The report was commissioned by the Scottish Government and looked at links between the higher education and industry. The report was a positive outcome in terms of the economic benefits of research.
* The University was pleased to receive the Queen’s Anniversary Prize for work in the Institute of Aquaculture. This was the highest national honour awarded in UK further and higher education.

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

***PLANNING & BUDGETING***

**5. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

**(i) The Financial Statements for 2018/19 as recommended UC(19/20)18(i)**

**by the Joint Policy, Planning & Resources Committee and**

**Audit Committee and TRAC return**

**(ii) Audit Highlights Memorandum from the External Auditors UC(19/20)18(ii)**

**(iii) The Letter of Representation from the University UC(19/20)18(iii)**

Court **considered** the University’s consolidated Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2019, having first been made aware that they had also been scrutinised in detail by the Joint Policy, Planning & Resources Committee and by the Audit Committee. It was noted that both committees had endorsed the statements and recommended their approval to Court. The Audit Highlights Memorandum from KPMG, the University’s External Auditors, provided an independent view of the accounts as well as, more broadly, their assessment of the University’s financial health and sustainability.

The Financial Statements had been prepared in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP): Accounting for Further and Higher Education 2015 and in accordance with Financial Reporting Standards FRS102.

The University had incurred a deficit for the year of £32.3m, however this had been exceptionally impacted by a number of pension movements. The increase in the pension provision was not a cash call on the University but was a liability shown in the accounts in line with the accounting standards. Removing these pension movements, the underlying operating position was a £3.3m deficit (against a prior year comparable deficit of £2.7m.). The underlying position was broadly in line with the period 12 Management Accounts previously reported to Court.

The flood damage earlier in the year had had no net material impact on the accounts as the expenditure incurred and expected would be largely recovered from insurance claims. There would be some impact from the flooding event in the following year’s financial statements.

University income increased by £4.6m year-on-year to £126m. Expenditure increased by £5.8m. The balance sheet remained strong, despite reserves decreasing by £33.6m to £130.8m, the latter mainly as a result of the pension movements (£29m).

The University remained covenant compliant for 2018/19.

The University had been investing in areas to increase income such as overseas student recruitment, scholarships and research development. It was anticipated that the returns on these investments would be realised in future years.

The 2018/19 TRAC return had been prepared in line with the TRAC guidance and reconciled with the financial statements.

Following discussion, Court **approved** the Financial Statements for 2018/19 and the TRAC return; and Court **noted** the Audit Highlights Memorandum and the Letter of Representations from the University to be signed by the Principal on behalf of Court.

**6. OUTCOME AGREEMENT 2020/21 UC(19/20)19**

Court **considered** the draft Outcome Agreement which had been prepared for submission by the SFC in December 2019. The Outcome Agreement followed the prescribed format and was an early draft of what would form the basis of the final Outcome Agreement to be submitted in April 2020. The final Outcome Agreement would be determined by the result of the SFC funding letter expected in early 2020. The priorities within the Outcome Agreement were articulated as ‘the learner’, ‘the system’ and ‘research & innovation’. It was **agreed** that reference should be made to the Learning & Teaching Strategy in relation to enhancing student experience.

Court **approved** the draft outline Outcome Agreement for submission to the Scottish Funding Council subject to the agreed amendment and **noted** that the final version of the submission would come back to Court for approval in March 2020.

**7. CAPITAL EXPENDITURE UPDATE UC(19/20)20**

Court **considered** the capital expenditure update which provided an update on the indicative capital expenditure position for the period 2019-23. The overall plan of £68.6m which had previously been agreed by Court was still in place, although there had been some movements within budgets. Legacy issues had caused some delays to Campus Central delaying the reopening of the atrium to the end of February 2020. The new build element of the Campus Central project was due to be completed in summer 2021. The Sports Facilities redevelopment project was reported to be on budget and on time for completion in May 2020.

Court **approved** the indicative capital plan for 2019-23.

**8. KPI REPORT UC(19/20)21**

Court **considered** the key performance report for quarter 1 which presented progress against the University’s targets set out in ‘Making it Happen’ in a new format. The performance reflected a very challenging environment where other institutions were also competing for student numbers and research income. The report summarised at a high level some of the work being done and investments being made to improve performance.

 Court **noted** the report on the quarter 1 performance.

**9. ACCOMMODATION ALLOCATION AND PROPOSED RENTS UC(19/20)22**

Court **considered** the paper on accommodation allocations and proposed rents for University residences. The proposed rents had been recommended by the Rent Review Group and the proposed allocations endorsed by the Prioritisation Group. The rents were being set earlier than in previous years to ensure that prices could be publicised early in a competitive accommodation market. The pricing structure ensured there were a range of price points.

 An Accommodation Enhancement Fund was available for students who needed help with covering accommodation costs. The University was working with the Students’ Union to ensure that those that needed assistance were aware of the support available.

 Court **approved** the proposed prioritised allocations and rents.

***GOVERNANCE***

**10. COURT EFFECTIVENESS QUESTIONNAIRE UC(19/20)23**

Court **noted** the analysis of the responses from the annual Court Effectiveness questionnaire. The overall response was very positive with 95.4% of respondents agreeing with the way Court operated and that good governance procedures were in place. Members **noted** the positive points and areas for improvement.

**11. CITY DEAL UC(19/20)24**

 Court **received** an update on the City Region Deal. Since the Heads of Terms were agreed earlier in the year work had been ongoing to prepare the documentation for the Full Deal. It had been anticipated that the Full Deal would be signed in November 2019 however, this was delayed due to the general election. The signing was now scheduled for the second half of January 2020. Commencement of the delivery of the projects would happen once the Deal was signed.

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

***POLICIES***

**12. FIXED TERM CONTRACTS POLICY UC(19/20)25**

Court **considered** the revised Fixed Term Contracts Policy. The Policy had been reviewed by both JPPRC and the Combined Joint Negotiating Consultation Committee (CJNCC). It was confirmed that fixed term contracts were only used in limited circumstances with appropriate justification.

Court **approved** the Fixed Term Contracts Policy.

**13. BUSINESS CONTINUITY POLICY UC(19/20)26**

Court **considered** the revised Business Continuity Policy. The Business Continuity arrangements had been well tested during the flooding and other events requiring contingency arrangements to be invoked and lessons had been learnt as a result. The revised policy ensured that business continuity was a shared responsibility across the University but that there were also individuals who were accountable. Communication was a key aspect of the policy. It was noted that the Business Continuity Policy was not a static document and would be kept under regular review.

Court **approved** the Business Continuity Policy.

**14. IT SECURITY POLICIES UC(19/20)27**

Court **considered** the Information Security Policy Suite. The Policy Suite had been developed in response to increasing security threats, recommendations made following a cyber-security internal audit and in order to align with the requirements of the ISO27001 information security standards framework. The policies covered the 11 domains identified within ISO27001. The objectives were also to reduce the likelihood of security breaches and consequential disruption, reputational damage and financial penalties. An Information Security Board had been established to have an oversight over information security.

The suite of policies represented the first step of establishing a set of policies; putting in place procedures, standards and controls, and having tools and testing in place to ensure the policies and procedures were working.

It was acknowledged that securing university systems was particularly challenging as academic work required a certain degree of flexibility. The policies had been drafted to take this into account but would be kept under review to ensure that academic work was not restricted.

Court **approved** the suite of IT Security policies.

***COMMITTEE REPORTS***

**15. ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

 **(i) Annual Report Academic Council Effectiveness 2018/19 UC(19/20)28(i)**

Court **noted** the annual report on Academic Council effectiveness for 2018/19.

**(ii) Report from meeting of 4 December 2019 UC(19/20)28(ii)**

Court considered the update from the Academic Council meeting of 4 December 2019. The report included updates on the Enhancement-Led Institutional Review, student population and indicative recruitment targets, and committee reports.

Court **approved** the introduction of the award of Doctor of Management and the consequential amendments to Ordinance 58, **approved** the proposed semester and graduation dates and **noted** the other items in the report.

**16. JOINT POLICY, PLANNING & RESOURCES COMMITTEE (JPPRC) UC(19/20)29**

Court **considered** the report from the JPPRC meeting held on 26 November 2019. The Committee had received reports on the management accounts, capital expenditure update, student population and indicative recruitment targets, accommodation allocations and rents and outcome agreement.

Having already **approved** the Financial Statements and Fixed Term Contracts Policy, Court **noted** the other items in the report.

**17. AUDIT COMMITTEE UC(19/20)30**

Court **considered** the report from the Audit Committee meeting of 18 November 2019 and the annual report from the Committee. Items for noting included the internal audit progress report, the annual procurement report and the register of strategic risks.

Having already **approved** the Financial Statements, Court **noted** the other items in the report from Audit Committee.

**18. GOVERNANCE & NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE UC(19/20)31**

Court **noted** the report from the Governance & Nominations Committee meeting that was conducted by circulation in October 2019. Court had previously approved three new appointments to Court.

Court **approved** the changes to the name and remit for the Academic Advancement and Promotions Committee to become the Academic Promotions Committee.

***ACTIVITY UPDATES***

**19. STUDENTS’ UNION UPDATE UC(19/20)32**

Court **considered** a report from the Students’ Union on recent activity which included updates on the by-election, BUCS, Challenge Yersell, student representation, student engagement and housing.

Court **noted** the Students’ Union update.

**20. UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING STUDENTS’ UNION ACCOUNTS UC(19/20)33**

Court **noted** the annual report and financial statements for the University of Stirling Students’ Union for 2018/19. The statements reflected improvement from the previous year: a surplus of £12.5k was achieved against a deficit of £14k the previous year. The Union also had a small net current assets balance of £0.3k against net current liabilities of £31k in the previous year.

**21. STAFF AND EMPLOYMENT UPDATE UC(19/20)34**

Court **received** an update on staff and employment matters. The University was one of 57 institutions in the UK that had been subject to industrial action. There had been 8 days of strike action during November and December and there was a possibility of further action in February/March 2020. The disruption to students had been minimal due to the timing of the November/December action but was likely to be more significant if strike action went ahead in 2020.

It was noted that the negotiations on pensions and pay took place on a national basis and hence the University had minimal influence on the outcomes.

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

**22. EQUALITY UPDATE UC(19/20)35**

Court **considered** the Equality update and congratulated the University and the Students’ Union on winning the first UK Limelight Sexual Violence and Misconduct Liaison Officer (SVMLO) Team Innovation Award.

The University had been awarded an additional £94k in 2019/20 by the Scottish Government to support mental health. It was noted the funding would be put towards additional counselling support.

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

***RISKS***

**23. RISKS ARISING Oral**

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

**24. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of other business.

**25. NEXT MEETING**

Court **noted** that the next meeting was scheduled for 23 March 2020.

Policy & Planning

December 2019