MINUTES OF UNIVERSITY COURT
25 June 2013

Present: Richard Hunter (Convener)
Principal Professor Sir Jim McDonald, Vice-Principal Professor Kenneth Miller, Ronnie Cleland, Dr Jack Perry, Malcolm Wishart, Jeremy Beeton, Robin Crawford, Gillian Hastings, Margaret McGarry, Dr Jane Morgan, Marion Venman, Councillor Stephen Curran, Dr Rose Mary Harley, Niall Sturrock, Malcolm Moir, Rebecca Maxwell Stuart, Professor Niamh Nic Daeid, Dr Veena O’Halloran, Professor Lisa Woolfson, Professor James Thomson, Professor Jim Fraser

Attending: Hugh Hall, David Coyle, Professor Tony McGrew, Professor Iain Hunter, Professor Scott MacGregor, Sandra Heidinger, Simon Jennings, Dr Stuart Brough, Jim McConnell, Tom Collins, Kwaku Adjei, Roza Salih, Lewis Allan

Apologies: David Gray, Dr Archie Bethel, Professor Susan Hart

Welcome and apologies
The Convener welcomed members to the meeting.

1. Minutes
The minutes of the meeting on 3 May 2013 were approved.

2. Matters arising
Marion Venman and the Convener have volunteered to assist with the Quality Assurance Agency's Enhancement-Led Institutional Review of the University.

3. Principal's Report
The Principal provided updates on the following key activities since the May meeting:
- Post-16 Education (Scotland) Bill
- The University’s 2013/14 Outcome Agreement and engagement with the Scottish Funding Council
- Innovation Centre bids (Industrial Biotechnology, Construction, Oil & Gas, Big Data)
- Engagement with UK, Scottish and other political representatives, including: the Rt Hon. David Willetts MP – UK National Physical Laboratory; the Rt Hon. Vince Cable MP – Fraunhofer UK launch; House of Commons Business Innovation and Skills Committee visit to Strathclyde; the Rt Hon. Michael Moore MP – EU research spending; Lord Gus O’Donnell – Strathclyde International Public Policy Institute; Michael Russell MSP – Fraunhofer Centre; Nicola Sturgeon MSP – Future Cities Institute launch and other events; the Rt Hon. Alex Salmond MSP – Power Network Demonstration Centre, Energy Advisory Board; Graeme Pearson MSP – economic development in South Scotland; and, Sir Peter Housden – Workforce Innovation Centre
- Leadership Group sessions on institutional values – the Convener suggested that the strategic session of Court in November could include a discussion on embedding value-led behaviours in the University, with an update on progress to date
- Principal’s Department Engagement Meetings – 5 meetings remaining. In addition, 6 lunchtime sessions have been held with research leaders from across the University
- International engagements – China, Singapore, Dubai, New York, Toronto, South Korea
- An update on major research projects and major research funding awards.
4. Business Report

Court received the Q3 Business Report for the 2012/13 academic year. The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) informed Court that the marginal operating deficit forecast in the Q2 report had improved to a £2.9 million operating surplus forecast for the Q3 report. The CFO reported that the improvement could be attributed to a rephasing of maintenance expenditure, changes to pension liabilities following an actuarial valuation and the cessation of accelerated depreciation to the Royal College building. The CFO noted that Senate representatives had requested information on the ‘stickiness’ of research funding in terms of contribution to overheads – this has improved from a 25% to a 31% recovery rate from overheads. Senate representatives also requested trend data on staffing for comparative purposes.

The Director of Strategy & Policy added that the format used for the Business Report will be revised further, with Court members invited to submit suggestions for improvements over the summer period.

A Court member queried progress on the Technology and Innovation Centre. The Director of Estates Services replied that the project remains at ‘green flag’ status in the Business Report and that delays are covered within the contract with Lend Lease. The Principal added that he and the CFO met recently with senior Lend Lease staff to discuss the project’s progress and Lend Lease were strongly encouraged to prioritise the project further.

A Court member queried whether project expenditure is recorded on a financial year basis or on a total cost basis in the Business Report. The CFO replied that project expenditure is recorded on a total cost basis.

The Convener provided a summary of the discussion and welcomed the positive financial outcome forecast.

5. Budget and Financial Forecast

The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) presented the draft budget for academic year 2013/14 alongside draft financial projections intended for submission to the Scottish Funding Council and European Investment Bank. The CFO noted that the document incorporated improvements suggested by Court Business Group and projected a surplus of £1.7 million for 2013/14. Court noted that planned growth in overseas tuition fee income is supported by the new International Study Centre (in association with Study Group), the recruitment of Brazilian students through the Science Without Borders scheme and planned improvements to student recruitment processes. Court noted that the ratio of staff costs to income, which is high relative to peer universities, is expected to reduce over time. The Treasurer commented on the ambition shown in planned income growth and signalled support for the draft Budget.

Court discussed the possibilities of income generation through commercialisation activities and the role of the Commercialisation Advisory Board. Court agreed that the November strategic session could include a presentation on commercialisation, including detail on the ‘pipeline’ and targets for commercialisation projects.

Court considered the University’s pension liabilities, which were felt to be manageable and noted that the UK-wide Universities Superannuation Scheme has a four year plan to balance the scheme.

The Convener thanked the CFO for his comprehensive commentary on the draft budget. Court approved the draft budget and financial forecasts.

6. Education Strategy

The Vice-Principal presented an update on the Education Strategy. The presentation covered delivery of the Education Strategy Action Plan, linkages between research and teaching, internationalisation of the curriculum, student internships (8 week summer projects in Faculties and Professional Services), Vertically Integrated Projects (with the water and sanitation VIP featuring as a case study) and Massive Open Online Courses (Strathclyde’s first MOOC, in forensic science, launches in November 2013).
Student representatives commented favourably, noting that the strategy has led to more consistent implementation of best practices across the University but that the successes of VIPs in Malawi and Gambia could be publicised more by the University.

Court members requested that Education Strategy updates be included in future Business Reports.

A Court member queried whether benchmarking data is available to measure the University’s teaching performance. The Principal responded that, while there is a lack of directly comparable data, the Enhancement-Led Institutional Review will give some indication, as will National Student Survey results. Furthermore, many of the University’s courses are recognised by professional bodies and are benchmarked against similar courses in Scotland or the UK in this respect.

A Court member welcomed the internships scheme, which could attract prospective students and enhance student employability.

7. Estates Development Framework 2013

The Director of Estates Services presented the 2013 update on the Estates Development Framework (2010-2024). Court noted progress in refurbishing the James Weir building and the gaining of planning permission, in principle, to change the use of the Jordanhill campus.

Court considered the recommendation to retain the Royal College building beyond 2016, noting that while this did not rule out disposal of the building after 2016, work would commence on options to refurbish and re-establish the building as a ‘front door’ for the University. Members recognised the symbolic importance of the Royal College building and were supportive of retaining the building at this stage to allow for a detailed options appraisal to be undertaken.

Court discussed possible improvements to the campus environment, including signage, cladding buildings and more prominent University of Strathclyde branding.

A Court member noted that estates projects could be prioritised through the use of modelling and Court agreed to return to this topic in the November strategic session. The Convener noted that Court could meet in the refurbished James Weir building in 2014.

Court approved the recommendations in the Estates Development Framework 2013 paper.

8. IS Development Framework

The Director of Information Services provided an update on the Information Services Development Framework. Court was informed that the proposed strategic technology partnership has been established with Capita and that a major project to improve corporate management information using a new system is underway. Subject to review by Capita and approval by the Information Strategy Committee and Executive Team, a final draft version of the Development Framework will be submitted to November’s Court meeting.

Court discussed the governance and IT testing processes for IT projects and was informed that the University uses a system of checkpoints with reviews at each stage of a project. A sign-off that requirements are being met is necessary before the next stage can be undertaken. Court considered the budgetary requirements for the Development Framework and noted that the University’s budget does not cover all projects referenced in the Development Framework, with prioritisation work to be undertaken on projects not currently included in the budget.
9. Annual Health and Safety Report

Court reviewed the annual health and safety report, submitted by the Statutory Advisory Committee on Safety & Occupational Health. The Chief Operating Officer noted that the University’s new insurance provider had commented positively on the health and safety procedures in place following an initial review.

Court approved the report.

10. Corporate Risk Register

Court noted that risks for Estates and Finance have been adjusted upwards to reflect anticipated and managed changes in the scale and complexity of building work and from a strong cash position to higher loans respectively. A Court member commented that the risk register could include a risk related to good governance, with the Convener listed as the lead risk owner.

Court approved the risk register.

11. USSA Financial Statements 2011-12 and Budget 2013-14

The Student President introduced the Financial Statements (2011-12) and draft Budget (2013-14) for the Students’ Association.

A Court member noted a possible concern over tax liability raised in the Auditor’s Report accompanying the Financial Statements. The Student President replied that the concern had been resolved with HMRC and displayed a letter from HMRC to this effect.

Court approved the draft USSA budget for 2013-14.

12. Court/Committee Membership

Court approved the recommendations outlined in the paper, to:

- renew the Court memberships of Dr Jane Morgan, Marion Venman, Dr Archie Bethel and Jeremy Beeton for a three year term, from 1 August 2013 to 31 July 2016 inclusive
- appoint Dr Archie Bethel to Audit Committee for a three year term, from 1 August 2013 to 31 July 2016
- reappoint Ian Dickson (co-opted member) to Audit Committee for a three year term, from 1 August 2013 to 31 July 2016 (not renewable given the existing 3.25 years of service)
- reappoint Virginia Beckett (co-opted member) to Estates Committee for a three year term, from 1 August 2013 to 31 July 2016 (renewable once, given the existing 1.25 years of service)
- change the term of office of the Vice-Convener to replicate that of the Convener – a two year term, renewable for a further three years
- provide delegated authority to the Convener to appoint a new co-opted member of Audit Committee by Convener’s Action over the summer period – for retrospective approval at the September meeting of Court
- specify that co-opted members of Court committees should serve for fixed terms in the same manner as lay members of Court

13. Streamlining the University’s Regulatory Framework and changes to Ordinances and Regulations

Court approved the recommendations outlined in the paper, to:

- revise Regulations 5 and 6.10, as a result of revised Student Discipline and Academic Appeals procedures approved by Senate
- revise Ordinance 4 and repeal Ordinances 7 and 8, as a result of revised Human Resources policies and procedures approved by Staff Committee under delegated authority
- revise Regulation 6.12, as a result of the statutory duty to implement a complaints handling procedure based on a model provided by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.
14. Convener’s Actions

Court homologated the actions outlined in the report. The approvals appointed Ronnie Cleland as Vice-Convener of Court for the 2013/14 academic year and authorised a request to change the name of the Department of Management within Strathclyde Business School to the Department of Strategy and Organisation.

15. Estates Committee Report

Court approved the recommendations in the report – these relate to Carbon Reduction Investment.


Court approved Senate’s recommendation to confer the status of ‘special relationship’ on the Fraunhofer Research Centre.

The following reports were all noted by Court:

17. Senate Report – 12 June 2013
18. Executive Team Report
19. Court Business Group Report
20. Staff Committee Report
21. Audit Committee Report

22. Valedictions

The Convener thanked the following Court members leaving at the end of the academic year for their commitment and service:

- Student President Malcolm Moir
- Student Vice-President Rebecca Maxwell Stuart
- Malcolm Wishart, lay member of Court since 2004, including eight years as Convener of Audit Committee

Court congratulated the University Chancellor, as Lord Hope of Craighead reached the end of his term of office as the first Deputy President of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom.

23. Date of Next Meeting

- The next meeting of Court will take place on Thursday 26 September, 09.30-12.00.

LA, 4 July 2013