MINUTES OF UNIVERSITY COURT
26 February 2013

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

Attending: Hugh Hall, David Coyle, Professor Susan Hart, Professor Tony McGrew, Professor Iain Hunter, Professor Scott MacGregor, Sandra Heidinger, Simon Jennings, Dr Stuart Brough, Chrissie Finnigan, Jim McConnell, Tom Collins.

Apologies: Malcolm Wishart, Dr Rose Mary Harley, Professor Jim Fraser.

Welcome and apologies

The Convener welcomed members to the meeting and shared the apologies of those unable to attend.

1. Minutes / Matters arising

- The minutes of the meeting on 22 / 23 November 2012 were approved.
- There were no matters arising.

2. Principal’s Report

The Principal provided Court with the following updates on key activity since the November meeting, including:

- The draft Post-16 Education (Scotland) Bill.
- The University’s 2013-14 Outcome Agreement and engagement with the Scottish Funding Council.
- The SFC Indicative Letter of Grant for 2013-14. Court noted that Strathclyde’s funding has risen by 2.4% compared to a sector level increase of 1.2%.
- Additional strategic undergraduate funded places have been secured for the Engineering Academy, Biomedical Science and Widening Access.
- A University bid for funding to support the construction of a new combined heat & power and district energy network was one of 6 out of 32 proposals to advance to stage 2 of the SFC process.
- An increase in the Research Postgraduate Grant is higher than the sector average.
- The Principal continues to engage with UK, Scottish Government and political representatives. Court noted that the Rt. Hon David Willetts MP, UK Minister of State for Universities & Science visited Glasgow to announce the launch of the TSB Future Cities ‘Catapult’ Demonstrator which Strathclyde will play a key role in and that Ed Vaizey MP, UK Minister for Culture, Communications & Creative Industries launched the White Space Communications Centre. Court was also informed that that the Scottish Government Permanent Secretary, Sir Peter Housden, had visited the Centre for Excellence for Looked after Children in Scotland (CELCIS). Members expressed an interest in visiting the HaSS based CELCIS and National Centre for Autism Studies.
- The January 2013 Senate Strategy Session that majored on Widening Access.
- The recently established Business Engagement Group. Members noted the possibility of a future presentation to Court on the activities of the Group.
3. Business Report

Court received the Q2 Business Report 2012/13 including an executive summary outlining high level information on finance; infrastructure & staffing, research & knowledge exchange and students & education. The Director of Strategy and Policy confirmed the intention to introduce guidance around defining when, red, green and amber flags would be used for Q3, based on Court Business Group's feedback on this. The Chief Financial Officer informed Court that while the Q2 report showed a marginal operating deficit, it was expected that a small operating surplus would be achieved by the end of the financial year. Members noted an update on the insurance proceeds from the fire in the James Weir Building and were informed that its reinstatement offered an opportunity to accelerate the ambitious plans for the building. Court recognised that a range of activity was taking place to increase tuition fee income and that investment had been made to promote the Times Higher Education UK University of the Year Award.

Court queried the staff turnover percentage and was advised that this reflected the backdrop of REF 2014 and related retention and recruitment matters, that there were no perceived issues with this percentage and that HR would continue to monitor staff turnover. Members agreed that the business reports had been developed in a positive and constructive manner and noted that they will continue to evolve over time.

4. Report from the Strategic Session of Court 23 November 2012 and Strategic Session of Senate 23 January 2013

Court received and considered an overview of the focal points that emerged from the Court and Senate Strategy Sessions that took place in November 2012 and January 2013 respectively. Court noted that the Senate Strategy Session was exclusively focused on Widening Access including FE College Partnerships, the University’s Widening Access Initiatives and contextual admissions. Members were invited to share their views on the content of the Strategic Session in May and commented that in addition to having a ‘health check’ on high level strategic priorities it may be helpful to discuss the following: Internationalisation and its impact on the university over the next few years and Widening Access including contextual admissions.

Members noted the positive role of the Faculty College Relationship Managers in developing strategic partnerships with Colleges. Court was informed of the University's focus on partnership working with colleges as opposed to the narrower focus of articulation and noted that this relationship represented parity of esteem. In this regard, Court recognised the potential that the Engineering Academy model could be replicated in other subject areas in future. Finally, Court suggested that at a future meeting, it would be helpful to discuss the longer term (20 – 25 years) needs of the University for teaching, infrastructure & technology and the big risks over the 5 – 10 year period.

5. Draft Post-16 Education (Scotland) Bill

Court noted that the Principal had appeared before the Scottish Parliament’s Education and Culture Committee in January to present evidence on the bill at Stage 1 and that the University had submitted written evidence in support of this appearance. Members recognised that the approach of the Sector was to present a coherent message reinforcing the fact that appropriate mechanisms for governance and transparency already exist and that the success of universities in Scotland is related to their standing as autonomous institutions that are not subject to political control. Court noted that a range of evidence, including submissions from CBI Scotland and SCDI, supporting the Sector’s position had been submitted to the Scottish Parliament.

Court also received an update on the University’s input to the Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance and on-going work with Universities Scotland. Members commented on the timing of the Bill, the imminence of the Independence referendum and agreed that it was important for the University to
maintain momentum with its strategic goals in this context. Court noted that Universities Scotland had undertaken work in this area looking at strategic risks and opportunities which may arise.

6. 2013-14 Outcome Agreement

Court received an update on progress with the University’s Outcome Agreement (OA) for 2013-14 and noted that the University continues to engage constructively with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). Members were informed that the 2013-14 OA draws heavily on the University’s previous OA and that SFC officers had indicated they were content that the structure, length, outcomes and the overall section headings were appropriate. Court noted the limited additional commitments in this year’s OA in recognition of the fact that many of the outcomes committed to in the 2012-13 OA were of a multi-year nature and agreed that the outcomes were consistent and aligned with the University’s Strategy.

Members agreed that there was scope to consider how the number of outcomes could be further refined and were informed of work in hand to produce a more limited number of metrics in a Performance Measurement Framework. The meeting noted that this would help inform future Outcome Agreement drafting and communication of the University’s top-level strategic aims and would be provided to Court at a future meeting.

In the course of discussion, Members commented on the challenges in capturing KE activity, discussed progress against the previous year’s OA and noted that the SFC, in dialogue with Universities Scotland, is considering what actions it might take should an institution fail to deliver on agreed outcomes. Court commented that the OA process is still in the early stages for both the SFC and University Sector and was of the view that the agreements will evolve over time. Court endorsed the direction of travel outlined in the OA and formally approved the 2013-14 OA subject to Senior Officers' finalisation of the details and metrics.

7. Information Systems Development Framework

Court received a presentation on an Information Systems (IS) Development Framework outlining the University’s development and investment plan for IS for the next five years. Members were informed of the necessity to look at overall investment in both physical and technological infrastructure. It was emphasised that the purpose of the presentations on the IS Framework and Estates Development Framework 2013 was to provide Court with an overview and opportunity to comment on emerging issues.

In the course of the presentation, Court were informed of the IS Development Framework’s strategic context; key priorities; enabling initiatives; pipeline of business and infrastructure projects and business benefits. Court noted the robust IS Governance arrangements, progress to date on the development of a University Enterprise Resource Planning System, that the University is undertaking a pilot of a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) and that the Framework as presented, represented a broad direction of travel that the Executive Team are playing a leading role in developing. Members recognised that the Framework represents a significant change to business processes and that additional investment is required in order to deliver the desired step change.

Members discussed the work that was taking place at sector level on the development of an FE / HE information and communications technology strategy (ICT) and noted that it was important for the Framework to develop in this context. It was commented that it would be helpful to consider the Audit Scotland report on ‘Managing ICT contracts’ and noted that the experience of Lay Members in this area could be helpfully shared with the University.

8. Estates Development Framework 2013

Court received a presentation on the Estates Development Framework 2013 and noted a number of issues emerging from the on-going review of the Estates Development Framework 2013. In the course of the presentation and subsequent discussion, Court noted a range of proposals regarding the potential disposal, retention, development and vacation of property within the University Estate and opportunities for the development of student accommodation.
Members were informed that the University had received verbal approval for residential re-development of the Jordanhill Campus, that marketing of the site could commence in 2013 and that by vacating the Campus, the University has achieved a reduction in its carbon footprint. Court noted a number of city campus aspirations including the importance of having identifiable ‘Front Door(s)’; innovative technology & business space; KE and Enterprise and Learning and Teaching hubs and satellites. A decision-making schedule for proposed reductions in the gross internal area (GIA) of the University Estate was also outlined to Members. Court noted its satisfaction with the investment in learning and teaching space and was also advised that investment was being made in the University’s catering services and student accommodation. Members commented that it would be helpful to illustrate what the University Estate is envisaged to look like once the Estates Strategy has been realised, noted that the Executive Team and Estates Committee are in the process of developing potential options and future plans and that Court is involved in this process through the membership of Lay Members on the Estates Committee. A discussion on the Student Union building took place and the Principal offered to meet with the outgoing and incoming USSA Executive Team after the USSA elections to discuss this further.

9. Internationalisation and Foundation Programme Provider

An update on developments regarding the appointment of a preferred supplier to provide foundation programmes for the University was outlined to Court. Court was informed that following a tendering process and extensive due diligence, Study Group had been confirmed as the preferred supplier at the end of January. The meeting noted that over the course the first phase, the cohort is expected to grow to 300 entrants per annum. Court noted that the roles of both Study Group and University have been clearly defined and that the foundation programmes provided by Study Group will open up further multicultural opportunities for students at the University.

10. Review of Alumni Engagement

The findings and recommendations from the Court commissioned Review of Alumni Relations and the Role of the Graduates Association was outlined to the meeting. Members were informed that the Review Group, chaired by Jeff Fergus, was asked to identify national and international best practice from across the Sector, consider the opportunities for Strathclyde to adopt existing best practice and make recommendations as to how the University could strengthen its engagement with its alumni community. Court noted that alumni group engagement can be facilitated geographically, thematically and by discipline and that there were good examples of internal best practice in this area.

The Convener, on behalf of Court, thanked the Review Group for their work and in particular, was grateful to Jeff Fergus for chairing the Review. Court endorsed and approved the review recommendations and noted its appreciation of the work that the GA has undertaken over the years.

11. Committee Reports

The Convener drew Court’s attention to the following reports provided for information:

- Senate: Meeting of 23 January 2013.
- Court Business Group Report including TIC Update (annex A)
- Staff Committee: Meeting of 6 December 2012.
- Audit Committee: Workshop of 1 February 2013.

12. Membership of the Audit Committee

Court approved the appointment of Dr Jane Morgan to serve on the Audit Committee.

13. Convener’s Action Report

Court homologated the action outlined in the report.

14. AOB
Court received an update on the morning’s Scottish Parliament Education and Culture Committee’s evidence session, 26 February 2013, on the draft Post-16 Bill with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, Mike Russell MSP.

15. Date of Next Meeting

- Members noted that there will be a strategic session of Court on Friday 3 May 2013, 9:30 – 5pm.
- The next business meeting of Court will take place on Tuesday 25 June, 10:00 – 2pm.