MINUTES OF UNIVERSITY COURT
5 March 2014

Present: Richard Hunter (Convener)
Principal Professor Sir Jim McDonald, Vice-Principal Professor Kenneth Miller, Ronnie Cleland, Dr Jack Perry, David Gray, Dr Archie Bethel, Gillian Hastings, Margaret McGarry, Dr Jane Morgan, Jeremy Beeton, Marion Venman, Niall Sturrock, Kwaku Adjei, Professor Niamh Nic Daeid, Professor Jim Fraser, Dr Veena O’Halloran, Professor Lisa Woolfson, Professor James Thomson, Councillor Stephen Curran, Dr Rose Mary Harley

Attending: Hugh Hall, David Coyle, Professor Tony McGrew, Professor Iain Hunter, Professor Susan Hart, Professor Scott MacGregor, Professor David Littlejohn, Sandra Heidinger, Simon Jennings, Ray McHugh, Stella Matko, Dr Stuart Brough, Dr Steve Graham, Dr David McBeth, Dr Lewis Allan, Professor William Kerr (for Item 6), Professor Martin Hughes (for Item 8)

Apologies: Robin Crawford, Roza Salih

Welcome and apologies
The Convener noted apologies.

1. Minutes
The minutes of the meeting on 21-22 November 2013 were approved.

2. Matters arising
i) Memorial service for former Principal, Professor Sir Graham Hills: a memorial service will be held at the Barony in late April.

ii) Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR): the Vice-Principal provided an update on the successful ELIR Stage 1 visit and preparations for the forthcoming Stage 2 visit.

iii) Times Higher Education UK Entrepreneurial University of the Year 2013: Court congratulated the Executive Team on the award.

iv) 2014-17 Outcome Agreement: the ‘well developed draft’ was submitted following approval of a draft at the 21 November Court meeting.

v) Scottish Government’s Independence White Paper: Court noted the briefing paper circulated on 12 December and re-circulated prior to the meeting.

vi) Commercialisation and Investment Advisory Board: an update is provided at today’s meeting.

vii) Internationalisation: an update will be provided at the strategy session on 1 May.

3. Principal’s Report
The Principal provided updates on the following key activities since the September meeting:
   • Scottish Funding Council’s indicative letter of grant for 2014-15
• Oil & Gas Institute
• Engagement with UK and Scottish government representatives
• International engagements - visits to Hong Kong, China and Singapore, including alumni meetings in Beijing, Shanghai and Singapore
• Major research projects, initiatives and funding awards.

Court congratulated the Chief Operating Officer on his appointment as chair of the governing body for the Central region of Further Education Colleges in Scotland

Court congratulated the five members of University staff recently appointed as Fellows of the Royal Society of Edinburgh: Professors William Kerr, Rebecca Lunn, Laura Piacentini, Rein Ulijn and Dr Carol Trager-Cowan

4. Q2 Business Report

The second quarter Business Report was presented. The Chief Financial Officer commented on the improvement in the overall forecast surplus compared with Q1, variances in the Balance Sheet compared with Q1 and re-negotiation of the drawdown period of the European Investment Bank loan. The Director of Strategy and Policy commented on the likelihood of further growth in postgraduate student numbers, improvements in the student retention rate and the number of students entering with over 400 UCAS points (i.e. well-qualified students).

The following points were discussed:

• The use of the Business Reports by the Executive Team to respond to emerging issues in-year
• A potential technical change to the accounting of one significant research grant that may boost the research income figure
• Significant improvement in the retention figures for students from SIMD20 neighbourhoods
• Improvements in cost management and the importance of growing tuition fee income
• An on-going review of taught postgraduate courses, for potential presentation to Court following its completion and discussion at Executive Team

5. National Physical Laboratory

The Principal and Chief Operating Officer provided a briefing on the University’s bid to partner with the National Physical Laboratory (NPL). It was noted that a special meeting may be called in April to consider the bid documentation prior to submission to the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills.

The following points were discussed:

• The University’s partnership with fellow lead bidder the University of Surrey
• Other institutions bidding and collaboration between bidders
• The high level of synergy between the University and the NPL
• Senior management time available given the demanding strategic targets already set
• International comparators to the NPL and learning points from these institutions
• Key decision makers and the existing management team at the NPL
• European opportunities offered by Horizon 2020 funding
• Different operating models for NPL and the preferences of Government
• The role of HM Treasury

6. Student Information Management System (SIMS) project

The business case for a new Student Information Management System was presented. Court noted the detailed work undertaken to date and support from the Executive Team and Court Business Group for the project.

The following comments were made in discussion:
• The importance of project management, including the suitability of a project board featuring an external member with Enterprise Resource Planning experience – possibly from the University’s strategic technology partner, Capita
• Capturing benefits on a stage by stage basis and reporting progress to Court and the Executive on a regular basis
• The involvement of Audit Committee and Internal Audit
• The support of the Student President for the project
• The importance of the project for the operational excellence pillar of the University’s strategy
• Experience from international and domestic universities drawn upon by the project team

Court approved expenditure on the SIMS project of up to £14.6 million (including contingency) over the four year period of the project – subject to successful negotiations with the preferred supplier.

7. Research Strengths and Opportunities

The presentation was postponed until the next meeting of Court.

8. Commercialisation and Investment Advisory Board (CIAB): update

Court received an update on the activities on the Commercialisation and Investment Advisory Board since its creation following the June 2012 Court meeting. It was noted that CIAB has revised policy for company creation and investment, introduced a commercial investment process and procedures and approved a strategy for investor networks and investor relations work. Investments in three companies recommended by CIAB for approval by the Executive Team: Smarter Grid Solutions Ltd, mLED Ltd and Insignia Ltd, were outlined. CIAB’s pipeline of future work was noted, including an exploration of possible future funding streams via donations and crowdfunding.

Members commented on the intention of establishing CIAB to maximise the potential of University spin-out companies and the early evidence demonstrating this, balancing potential conflicts between donation funding and crowdfunding and the likelihood of future regulation for crowdfunding. Court noted the potential reputational risks that could be associated with certain types of financial return crowdfunding models but noted that the University would not be creating such funds. It was agreed that future investments approved by Executive Team following recommendation by CIAB would be reported to Court for information.

9. Faculty of Engineering update

The Executive Dean of Engineering provided an overview of the strategic priorities for the Faculty of Engineering and performance to date. Court noted the high proportion of international staff (c. 40%) in the Faculty, strong financial performance, including a consistent surplus since 2007/08, control of core staffing costs, 38% growth in postgraduate research student population since 2010-11, significant contribution made by the Faculty’s Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, widening access measures via the Engineering Academy and Engineering Summer School and growth in student scholarships and internships.

Members discussed spreading best practice in internationalisation between departments and the high employment levels of the Faculty’s students.

Court welcomed the Faculty update and asked the Executive Dean to report the positive reception of the presentation to Faculty staff.

10. Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences update

The Executive Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences provided an overview of the strategic priorities for the Faculty and performance to date. Court noted that the Faculty’s fifth anniversary occurs in 2015, with the Faculty having integrated fifteen departments into six schools and moved from Jordanhill to co-locate on the John Anderson campus in recent years. The increase from three national centres of excellence to five, large rises in undergraduate applications, a strategic shift towards a smaller number of larger REF submissions and a 20% growth in research income in the last two years were all noted. Key developments for 2014 were discussed, including a review of taught postgraduate courses.
Court welcomed the Faculty update and asked the Executive Dean to report the positive reception of the presentation to Faculty staff.

11. Convener’s Actions

Court homologated the action outlined in the report to:

- **Approve** the execution of an amendment to the finance contract dated 27 April 2011 between the University and the European Investment Bank, by a letter of amendment dated 10 February 2014. This has the effect of extending the Final Availability Date by one further year to 17 May 2015.

12. Residences Maintenance and Refurbishment

Court **approved** expenditure of £1.95 million on maintenance and refurbishment of student residences, to be funded by the operating surplus from the residence income.

13. 2014 Celebrations: update on programme of events

Court **noted** the updated programme of events for the 2014 Celebrations.

14. Governance Code implementation: update

Court **noted** an update on the implementation of the Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance.

15. Senate Report to Court

Court **approved**:

i) the change of name for the Department of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering to the Department of Naval Architecture, Ocean and Marine Engineering

ii) conferment of the title of Emeritus Professor on four individuals named in the accompanying report, as recommended by the Academic Professional Appointments Panel

The following committee reports were noted by Court:

16. Executive Team
17. Court Business Group
18. Audit Committee
19. Estates Committee
20. Staff Committee

21. Any other business – change to start time for 25 June meeting

Court **noted** the change in start time from 09.30 to 14.00 for the 25 June 2014 meeting.

**Date of next meeting**

- Thursday 1 May, 09.30 – 17.00, strategy session, Confucius Institute, Lord Hope building

LA, 10 March 2014