MINUTES OF UNIVERSITY COURT
2 October 2014

Present: Richard Hunter (Convener)
Principal Professor Sir Jim McDonald, Vice-Principal Professor Scott MacGregor, Ronnie Cleland, Dr Jack Perry, Marion Venman, Gillian Hastings, Jeremy Beeton, Dr Jane Morgan, Margaret McGarry, Alison Culpan, Malcolm Roughhead, Susan Kelly, Dr Alistair Goldsmith, Councillor Stephen Curran, Dr Veena O’Halloran, Professor Lisa Woolfson, Professor James Thomson, Dr Debra Willison, Dr Jonathan Delafield-Butt, Niall Sturrock, Gary Paterson, Mairi MacVicar

Attending: Hugh Hall, David Coyle, Professor David Littlejohn, Professor Susan Hart, Dr Anja Lowit, Sandra Heidinger, Simon Jennings, Ray McHugh, Stella Matko, Dr Lewis Allan

Apologies: Dr Archie Bethel

Welcome and apologies

The Convener noted apologies and welcomed new members of Court. There were no declarations of interest. [Secretary’s note: the Vice-Convener indicated that, following the survey of Court members over the summer period, which included seeking feedback on the Convener’s performance, Court members had not requested a meeting without the Convener present to appraise the Convener’s performance.]

Professor Colin Grant: Members expressed their sincere condolences. A University commemoration service to celebrate Professor Grant’s distinguished service will be held shortly.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 16 April (special meeting) and 25 June 2014 were approved.

2. Matters arising

Court noted the following matters arising:

- **Referendum:** The Prime Minister announced on 19 September that Lord Smith of Kelvin will oversee the process to take forward devolution commitments made during the campaign.
- **Times Higher Education 2014 awards:** Strathclyde has been shortlisted in the Outstanding Support for Early Career Researchers category.
- **QS World University Rankings 2014-15:** The University has entered the top 250 for the first time (position 246)
- **Glasgow Inspiring City Awards 2014:** Strathclyde received the Industry and Business Award.

3. Principal’s Report

The Principal informed members of the following key activities since the June meeting:

- Independence referendum and expected further devolution of powers to the Scottish Parliament
- University spin-out Savitur Metrics has been awarded the 2014 Converge Challenge prize
- Performance in international and UK league tables
- Major research awards and developments
- International engagements, including visits to South Korea, Malawi, Sweden, New York and Hong Kong
• Involving the Leadership Group in ‘task and finish’ strategic projects with associated mentoring over the course of the current academic year – mentoring assistance will be sought from lay members of Court as appropriate

4. Student recruitment update

An update on undergraduate and taught postgraduate recruitment for the new academic year was presented. It was noted that a fuller indication of student recruitment and related financial performance will be provided in the Q1 Business Report at the November meeting. Members welcomed the process improvements in applicant tracking highlighted in the paper and discussed how the University could improve its communications to prospective undergraduate and postgraduate students. The Director of Student Experience and Enhancement Services noted that the new University website will improve communications to prospective students.

5. National Student Survey 2014

A summary of the University’s National Student Survey 2014 results was considered. Court noted the three point rise in overall satisfaction to 89% and actions to improve assessment and feedback scores. Members discussed the following points:

• Whether the survey reflects the views of all Strathclyde students given that respondents are exclusively final year undergraduate students – it was noted that internal surveys are undertaken for students in earlier years with broadly similar themes emerging
• Improvements to assessment and feedback may take a number of years to be reflected fully in survey results as the survey is an overview of a final year student’s experience in all academic years
• Whether the new Strathclyde iTunes/Android ‘app’ could incorporate useful pointers to the National Student Survey
• Subject areas with relatively strong and relatively weak performance – noting that Senate had considered individual subject areas at its September meeting and that, with eight topics surveyed, subject areas may perform well in some topics and less well in others.


The draft 2013-14 self-evaluation report and key points from Scottish Funding Council guidance for Outcome Agreements covering 2015-16 were presented. Members suggested the following revisions to the 2013-14 self-evaluation report:

• Including project costs to the list of Estates successes
• Referencing work on business process improvements and the ‘Strathclyde Way’
• Re-ordering of bullet points to raise profile of key successes (e.g. NPL, ELIR)
• Consider grouping bullets in headed subsections to improve readability

Investment from private equity companies in University spin-out companies was discussed, with a future Court meeting to explore the topic further as part of an update on the Commercialisation and Investment Advisory Board.

7. Operating Plan 2014-15

The Convener announced that the item would be postponed to the subsequent meeting (November 2014), to allow Court Business Group and Court members sufficient time to consider the paper in advance of the meeting.

8. National Physical Laboratory update

The Chief Operating Officer provided an update on developments with the National Physical Laboratory (NPL). [Reserved section: Ref: section 33, FOI(S)A]
Items for formal approval

9. Convener’s Actions

Court homologated the action to approve the appointment of Professor Atilla Incecik as Acting Executive Dean of the Faculty of Engineering.

10. University Fellowship nomination

Court approved the Convener’s nomination of [Reserved section: Ref: section 38, FOI(S)A] for the award of Fellowship of the University.

11. SFC Annual Statement on Institution-led Review of Quality

Court approved the Annual Statement on Institution-led Review of Quality for Academic Year 2013-14 for the Scottish Funding Council.

12. Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance

Court approved minor revisions to the standing orders and approved a submission to the Committee of Scottish Chairs and Universities Scotland confirming that the University is compliant with the Governance Code.

13. Corporate Risk Register

Court considered and endorsed the selection of top risks and mitigating actions in the Corporate Risk Register, subject to consideration of minor proposed amendments (Risk 1 – REF results: consider NPL as a mitigating action; Risk 2 – Financial Sustainability: consider including work on business process improvements as a mitigating action).

Items for information


The Complaints Handling Procedure Annual Report 2013-14 was reviewed.

15. Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) consultation

The Chief Financial Officer and Director of Human Resources provided an update on the Universities UK consultation and the University and College Union ballot initiated on 1 October. Members noted that the Corporate Risk Register includes the USS deficit within the financial sustainability risk and a more detailed set of proposals have now been provided by Universities UK, to be discussed with the Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee

16. 2014 Celebrations update

An update on celebrations marking 50 years since the granting of the Royal Charter was noted.

17. Court Members’ Appraisal & Survey

The Convener reported on individual appraisal meetings held with Court members and results of the online survey, both conducted over the summer period. High levels of trust between the Executive Team and Court were recorded. Additionally, members expressed a desire to refresh the format of the strategy sessions and to have a closer understanding of the work of the Commercialisation and Investment Advisory Board.

Committee Reports

The following committee reports were received by Court:
18. Senate
Court approved amendments to the constitutional regulations for Boards of Study.

19. Executive Team
20. Court Business Group
21. Audit Committee
22. Estates Committee
23. Staff Committee
24. Remuneration Committee
Court approved the Contribution Pay Policy.

25. Any other business
The Convener encouraged members to attend the upcoming November graduation ceremonies.

Date of next meeting
- Strategic session: Thursday and Friday 20-21 November 2014, Ross Priory

LA, 3 October 2014