

**MINUTES OF UNIVERSITY COURT**  
**1 October 2019**

**Present:** Ronnie Cleland (Senior Deputy Convener), Professor Sir Jim McDonald (Principal), Dr Jeremy Beeton, Dr Archie Bethel, Kayla-Megan Burns, Amanda Corrigan, Matt Crilly, Dr Kathy Hamilton, Gillian Hastings (Treasurer), Stephen Ingledew, Professor Scott MacGregor (Vice-Principal), Dr Neil McGarvey, Dr Katharine Mitchell, Gillian Pallis, Malcolm Roughead, Heather Stenhouse, Brenda Wyllie, Peter Young

**Attending:** Professor Tim Bedford, Professor Douglas Brodie, Adrian Gillespie, Sandra Heidinger, Professor Atilla Incecik, Dr Veena O'Halloran, Professor Iain Stewart, Rona Smith, Steven Wallace, Dr Daniel Wedgwood, Neil Brown (item 4), Cathy Milligan (item 7), Maddy Watson (item 4)

**Apologies:** Dame Sue Bruce (Convener), Paula Galloway (Vice-Convener), Alison Culpan, Councillor Ruairi Kelly, Susan Kelly, Marion Venman

**Election of meeting convener**

In the absence of the Convener of Court and the Vice-Convener, Court elected the Senior Deputy Convener to convene the meeting.

**Welcome and apologies**

The Senior Deputy Convener noted the apologies received and welcomed Court members and attendees to the meeting.

**[Reserved]**

**1. Minutes**

Court **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2019.

**2. Matters arising**

Court noted that the action point under item 5 of the minutes of 18 June 2019 had been fulfilled through the provision of information to the member who had raised the relevant question. Any other members interested in this information were invited to contact the Director of Strategy & Policy.

The Senior Deputy Convener enquired as to any developments in the UK and Scottish governments' reactions to the Augar review of post-18 education in England. The Principal noted that the review's recommendations had not yet been formally addressed by government and that they were not expected to be an immediate priority in the current political context.

### 3. Principal's Report

Before inviting the Principal to deliver his report, the Senior Deputy Convener gave his congratulations, on behalf of Court, on the Principal's recent election to the Presidency of the Royal Academy of Engineering, noting that he was the first President from a Scottish institution. Court members offered further congratulations, noting the highly prestigious nature of the appointment. The Principal thanked Court for its earlier approval of and support for his candidacy for the role.

The Principal informed members of key activities and developments since the June 2019 meeting:

#### Independent Inquiry

Court had previously been informed of the conviction of a former member of staff for inappropriate and exploitative sexual behaviour towards students, which had occurred at Strathclyde and subsequently at another university. The Principal reiterated his shock and that of the whole University community at the details of the case that had emerged during the trial and noted that the University had taken steps to support all those affected, in addition to a number of relevant measures and initiatives that had been introduced since the time of these crimes to support students and improve the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour. An independent inquiry, led by Craig Sandison QC, had been launched by the University into what was known at the time, what should have been known and what should have been in place. The USCO was the sole point of contact with the inquiry for the University; others would be involved only as and when called upon by the inquiry. The University intended to publish the findings of the inquiry and implement any recommendations. Court would be kept informed of developments regarding the inquiry and continuing work to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students and staff.

#### Recent Awards and Nominations

Strathclyde had been named Scottish University of the Year by the Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2020. In awarding the title, the Good University Guide had praised Strathclyde's strong student satisfaction ratings, high subject rankings, campus investment programme and focus on entrepreneurship skills for students.

The University had also been nominated for the Times Higher Education UK University of the Year award. A member of the judging panel had visited the University and met a wide range of stakeholders. The Principal expressed gratitude to the students, staff and industry partners who had devoted time to this. The winner would be announced at an awards ceremony on Thursday 28 November in London. In addition to University of the Year, Strathclyde had received nominations for three other THE awards:

- Outstanding Contribution to Leadership Development, for the STEP programme;
- Widening Participation or Outreach Initiative, for Breaking Barriers; and
- Outstanding Library Team.

#### Student inauguration ceremonies

A ceremony for each Faculty had taken place in Freshers' Week to welcome new undergraduates. The Principal, the President of the Students' Union and the Dean of the relevant Faculty had spoken to the students at these well-attended events. The Principal thanked members of Court who had also taken part, in particular the Vice-Convener, who had attended all the ceremonies.

#### Medals ceremonies

The Strathclyde Medal had been awarded to 14 individuals and 11 teams from within the University at a ceremony held on Friday 6 September. The recipients had all been nominated by their peers in recognition of important contributions that demonstrated adherence to the University values.

The Strathclyde Medal was to be awarded to external co-opted members of Court and University committees at another ceremony, immediately following the Court meeting.

### Government engagement

The Scottish Finance Secretary, Derek Mackay MSP, had visited the University in September to inaugurate two important facilities, taking part in the ground-breaking ceremony for the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District and on the same day visiting the Inovo building to open the new offices of the photonics and quantum technology company M Squared.

The First Minister had recently visited the Power Networks Demonstration Centre in Cumbernauld, where she announced a £7.5m project between the public and private sectors to deliver electric charging points in Scotland. The visit reflected the PNDC's standing as a leading enabler in smart technologies development.

In addition, the Leader of the Opposition, Jeremy Corbyn MP, had recently spoken at the Students' Union. The President of the Union noted that the event had been well attended and had stimulated debate. The Union would now look to stage similar events with representatives of other political parties. The Leader of the Liberal Democratic Party, Jo Swinson MP, had also been on campus recently, speaking at a conference held in the TIC.

Through the Presidency of the Royal Academy of Engineering, the Principal had become a member of the Prime Minister's Council for Science and Technology (CST) and in addition had joined an Advisory Group of the CST on decarbonisation of the energy supply.

Audit Scotland had recently released a report on the finances of Scottish higher education, which also touched on accountability mechanisms. Strathclyde was shown within the report to be performing well financially, despite significant reductions in Scottish Funding Council grant funding across the sector in recent years.

### The UK's exit from the EU

The UK political environment remained highly uncertain. The University was continuing to plan for multiple scenarios. The working and advisory group SEEWAG was meeting regularly. The 'no deal' Business Continuity Group had also stepped up its work in response to the political situation, with two additional meetings planned for October and preparations being progressed through several sub-groups. The University had continued to engage with the sector through Universities UK and Universities Scotland to ensure that all appropriate measures were taken. Communications with staff and students were in preparation, advising on a range of issues including travel, supply chains, research funding and student exchanges.

### Other UK Policy issues

The resignation of Jo Johnson MP had brought about a change of UK Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation. Chris Skidmore MP had returned to the role. He was familiar with Strathclyde, having visited during his previous spell as Minister, and the Principal was due to meet him again shortly.

The government had announced the introduction of a post-study work visa scheme across the UK, to be available to students from the 2020/21 intake. This had been a focus of campaigning for the higher education sector for a number of years and now had cross-party support.

### CESAER activity

CESAER activities were progressing towards the annual conference in Paris in October. There was an on-going process to select the Principal's successor in the role of President, from January 2020. Work was underway to ensure a smooth handover. Strathclyde would continue to be an active CESAER member with representation on a range of taskforces.

### Updates on University staffing and operations

Cathy Milligan had been appointed to the post of Director of Education Enhancement and Gill Watt to Director of Student Experience.

The Business School had been re-accredited by both AMBA and AACSB for the maximum five-year period, after a rigorous review process. This reaffirmed the School's 'triple-accredited' status.

The newly refurbished Ramshorn Theatre had opened and an event held to launch the Confucius Institute for Scotland's Schools, which was hosted there. China's Vice-Ambassador to the UK had been in attendance, along with representatives of the Scottish Government and the Confucius Institute.

#### Development of major strategic initiatives

Policy@Strathclyde had been formally launched at an event in the Business School on 9 September, with speakers from Strathclyde and the Scottish Government. This cross-faculty initiative was expected to make major contributions to Scottish policy development and policy education.

The Health & Care Institute was due to be launched in January 2020. Professor Roma Maguire had been appointed as the Director of the Institute. Also marking an important milestone in the University's expanding contribution in the fields of health and care, a Memorandum of Understanding had been signed with NHS Lanarkshire, paving the way for further significant collaborations.

#### Industrial relations

The Chief People Officer briefly updated Court on ongoing trade union ballots regarding possible industrial action in relation to both the nationally negotiated annual pay offer and changes to the USS pension scheme. Ballots were due to close at the end of October.

#### Research news

The UK National Quantum Technologies Programme had received government funding worth £94 million for its next phase of work. Strathclyde remained the only University involved in all four hubs of the Programme.

The Principal noted the success of Dr Panagiotis Papadopoulos (Electronic & Electrical Engineering) in winning a prestigious Future Leaders Fellowship from UK Research & Innovation, through a highly competitive process

#### Health, Safety and Wellbeing

The USCO provided a summary of recent Health and Safety matters:

- A joint message had been issued by the Principal and the President of the Students' Union, to update students regarding capital projects on campus and remind them to take care when moving about campus, in particular in the vicinity of construction sites. A similar message was to be issued to staff and a letter was to be sent to senior representatives of major contractors on campus, reminding them of their health and safety responsibilities.
- In the context of the ongoing construction works, the University had held discussions with Glasgow City Council, resulting in improved signage indicating the 20mph speed limit at the corner of North Portland and Montrose Streets.
- An HSE Asbestos Management audit had taken place on 20 August. The Inspector had commended the exceptional quality of the University's Asbestos Management Plan. No enforcement actions or recommendations were necessary.
- The University had been awarded the Meningitis Awareness Mark in light of its newly developed incident response plan. Information on meningitis awareness had been displayed on screens across campus to enhance awareness at the start of the academic year.
- As Court had previously been advised, earlier in the year a member of the public attending an event in the TIC building had been successfully treated with a defibrillator by a member of staff while awaiting arrival of emergency services. This member of staff had been awarded the Strathclyde Medal at the recent medal ceremony.

#### **4. Presentation: Strathclyde Sport**

The Head of Sport & Recreation delivered a presentation reviewing progress one year on from the opening of the Strathclyde Sport building. Usage of University sport and recreation facilities had increased markedly, beyond the ambitions set out in the business plan for the new building, including increased usage by targeted groups, such as students living in University residences. Users reported increased activity and fitness levels. Positive effects on the wider campus were noted, including increased footfall in the library, with a noticeable shift in the focus of University life to this part of the campus for many students.

The Students' Union Vice President, Sport & Wellbeing confirmed that the new facilities had brought substantial benefits to the Sports Union and affiliated clubs. Sports clubs now had more training time than ever before and were able to train at more convenient times. However, full capacity was now being reached in this regard. She also noted that the jointly-funded FOCUSport programme had been effective in promoting high performance in selected sports.

Subsequent discussion focused on the following points:

- The University's high-quality sports facilities were recognised to be an attraction to many prospective students. Materials were in development to make Strathclyde Sport a more prominent part of the University's international marketing.
- Enhancements to the University's sports scholarship offer were planned.
- Glasgow had been successful in attracting a number of large-scale sporting events to the city. The University would explore ways to become integrated into these without compromising students' access to sports facilities.
- The University's partnership with the Sirens netball team had led to significant positive coverage for the University through broadcasts from the netball World Cup.

The Chief People Officer commended the Sport & Recreation team for their success in effecting major changes over the past year.

Court **noted** the presentation.

## **5. Student Recruitment and fee income 2019/20**

The Director of Strategy & Policy provided an update on the current position regarding undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research postgraduate student recruitment for the new academic year. She noted that data were still being processed and recruitment was ongoing in some areas. This was therefore an early indicative overview and subject to change.

The following key points were highlighted:

- The data showed continuing success in widening access. Targets had been exceeded and early indications suggested that Strathclyde was outperforming the rest of the Scottish sector. Graduate Apprenticeships were making a significant additional contribution to the already strong results in this area.
- Targets for non-EU and 'rest of UK' undergraduate students had been exceeded.
- Research postgraduate (PGR) recruitment was increasing year-on-year but remained below target. It was recognised that growth in this area was challenging for UK institutions in general. Recruitment in this area was a year-round activity and so this picture could be subject to change.

Discussion centred on the factors that led to positive results. A combination of factors had been involved; these included investment in Professional Services staff, improvements to the campus and student experience, an enhanced academic offering targeted at particular markets and investment in tools that facilitated more targeted recruitment and conversion. The time taken to convert applications to offers had been improved in many areas and the University had a much improved understanding of where this was critical within its admissions processes.

The Chief Financial Officer presented current data and projections regarding tuition fee income. Based on receipts to date and patterns in previous years' income, it was expected that fee income targets would be met.

The Treasurer welcomed the recruitment and fee income data, noting a number of encouraging trends.

Court **noted** the data and projections.

## **6. Outcome Agreement 2019/20 self-evaluation and guidance for 2020/21**

The Director of Strategy and Policy noted that the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) had not yet released Outcome Agreement (OA) guidance for 2020/21. Major changes of focus were not expected, but certain areas

were expected to receive more emphasis, in particular skills and climate change. The timetable for completion and submission of the OA was expected to be similar to previous years, meaning that a 'well developed draft' should be submitted to SFC in December. Ahead of this, a draft OA would be presented to Court at its November meeting.

A draft self-evaluation report on fulfilment of the 2018-19 OA had been circulated. This report was to be submitted to SFC by the end of October; Court was requested to grant delegated authority to the Principal to sign off the final version of this prior to submission.

Members noted that access measures in the report showed strong performance, with the exception of the overall figure for recruitment from low progression schools, which had fallen slightly. It was noted that this aggregate figure masked significant variation across relevant schools and was subject to some fluctuation year-on-year; work was underway to elucidate this further.

Members also discussed the high levels of student satisfaction noted in the report. It was observed that multiple factors contributed to this, including experiences of academic provision, estates improvements and policy decisions. The President of the Students' Union highlighted the importance of the Student Experience Committee as a channel for identifying and implementing key actions.

Court **approved** the draft as a basis for completing the self-evaluation report and **delegated** authority for final sign-off to the Principal.

## **7. National Student Survey 2019**

The Vice-Principal and the Director of Education Enhancement provided Court with an update on the University's performance in the National Student Survey (NSS) 2019. Strathclyde had shown a notable recovery from a sector-wide dip in the previous year, producing this improvement while other UK institutions had generally remained relatively static. Strathclyde was now in the top quartile of universities in the UK for overall satisfaction. The University's position had also improved relative to selected benchmark institutions.

The focus would now be on improving consistency across the University and maintaining overall performance. Comparative analysis at the level of academic disciplines was enabling better identification of successful measures to drive improvement.

Improvement in NSS scores had been shown to follow from an enhancement-led approach, with effective sharing of good practice and strong accountability. The learning and teaching improvement framework was important in this context: each academic department had a learning and teaching action plan.

In further discussion, members noted the possible sensitivity of student satisfaction ratings to external events or change within the University, recognising that this may involve short-term negative impacts as a cost of making longer-term improvements, for example in the case of disruption caused by building works or refurbishment.

Court **noted** the presentation.

## **8. Strategic Plan Preparation**

The Director of Strategy & Policy provided Court with an overview of the preparations for the 2020-25 Strategic Plan. The presentation focused on the development of public-facing activity, Court having previously had significant input into the substance of the strategy, through discussions of the vision for 2025. A launch event was to be held early in 2020.

The circulated working draft was subject to change in a number of ways. In particular, up-to-date figures would be added at the appropriate time and additional substance was to be added to 'feature boxes', providing compelling illustrations of the University's values, vision and ongoing delivery. Efforts would also be made to reflect the changing external environment appropriately.

Members were invited to send feedback on this draft directly to the Director of Strategy & Policy. It was agreed that near-final draft would be provided at the November Court meeting and the final Plan produced in the light of comments at that meeting.

Court **noted** the update.

## **9. Court Strategy Session 2019 – initial planning**

The Principal updated Court on proposals for the format and structure of Court's November Strategy Session.

In addition to discussion of the strategic plan, there were a number of important new developments to present to Court, in particular strategic initiatives in the area of human resources and significant new programmes to advance teaching, research and knowledge exchange in key areas.

The proposals would be further refined and agreed through discussion with the Convener, Vice-Convener and Senior Deputy Convener.

Members noted the importance of receiving a clear overview of the University's financial sustainability, in the context of uncertainty in the wider economic environment, and were assured that this would be included in the November meeting.

Court **noted** the proposals.

### **Items for formal approval**

## **10. Convener's Actions**

Court **homologated** the approval by Convener's Action of the appointments of Jeremy Beeton and Brenda Wyllie to Audit & Risk Committee; and Peter Young to SACSOH.

Court **homologated** the approval by Convener's Action of revised Terms of Reference for Enterprise & Investment Committee.

## **11. Corporate Risk Register**

The USCO outlined key points in the Corporate Risk Register.

Court **approved** the Corporate Risk Register, including top risks and mitigating actions.

## **12. Annual Review of key Court documentation 2019/20**

The USCO invited Court to approve the following documents, as newly revised:

- Court Standing Orders 2019/20
- Handbook for Members of the University Court 2019/10, incorporating
- Court's Statement of Primary Responsibilities

In addition, the USCO noted a further proposed revision to the Handbook for Members of the University Court. This was to move the role of 'Court intermediary' from the Vice-Convener's responsibilities to those of the Senior Deputy Convener, as had been agreed between these office-holders and the Convener.

Subject to this additional amendment, Court **approved** the documents.

## **13. Annual Statement on Institution-led Review of Quality for Scottish Funding Council, Academic Year 2018/19**

The Vice-Principal briefly outlined the nature and purpose of the Annual Statement.

Court **endorsed** the Statement.

## **Items for information**

### **14. Court Members' Survey 2019**

The USCO outlined the results of the Court member's survey, noting the overwhelmingly positive nature of the responses. Detailed comments would be considered for the purposes of enhancing Court's operations.

It was noted that further feedback had been gained through the one-to-one conversations that the Convener had held with some members and that other members would meet with the Senior Deputy Convener for similar conversations.

Court **noted** the summary feedback from the annual survey of members.

### **15. Complaints Handling Annual Report 2018/19**

The USCO introduced the report, noting that the number of complaints received had been impacted by three clusters of related complaints. Complaints handling was close to target for response times to both frontline complaints and investigations.

Court **noted** the report.

### **16. Health & Safety Annual Report and Strategy Update**

The USCO introduced the report, noting that reporting was now on an academic year basis. This area was moving towards more data-driven reporting.

Members noted that wellbeing and safety infrastructure would need to adapt to changes in the University's physical infrastructure, with current changes leading to a more clearly campus-based institution. The availability and potential benefits of mental health first aid training were also emphasised; the USCO noted that this was already provided in the University and was an important part of the Mental Health Action Plan.

Court **noted** the report and **approved** the amended terms of reference contained therein for the Statutory Advisory Committee on Safety and Occupational Health.

## **Committee Reports**

Court received and **noted** the following committee reports:

### **17. Executive Team**

### **18. Senate**

### **19. Court Business Group**

### **20. Court Membership Group**

Court **approved**

- the appointment of Alison Culpan to Court Membership Group; and
- the appointment of Tracy Black to Enterprise & Investment Committee.

### **21. Audit & Risk Committee**

### **22. Enterprise & Investment Committee**

### **23. Staff Committee**



## **24. AOB**

No further business was noted.

### **Date of next meeting**

Court Residential: Thursday 28 & Friday 29 November 2019, Ross Priory

**Daniel Wedgwood, 8 October 2019**