

## UNIVERSITY COURT – AGENDA

Thursday 25 November 2021, 12.00 – 14.00  
Technology & Innovation Centre, 99 George Street Glasgow

**Apologies:** *Malcolm Roughead*

**Declarations of interest:** *None*

Introduction		
1.	<b>Minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2021</b>	<b>Paper A</b> 5 mins
2.	<b>Matters arising</b>	<b>Oral</b>
3.	<b>Principal's Report</b> <i>Principal</i>	<b>Oral</b> 20 mins
Substantive items		
4.	<b>2020/21 Financial Statements</b> (additional commentary available on <a href="#">SharePoint</a> ) and <b>Going Concern assessment</b> <i>Chief Financial Officer</i>	<b>Paper B1</b>  <b>Paper B2</b> 20 mins
5.	<b>Q1 2021-22 - Quarterly Business Report</b> <i>Chief Financial Officer, Acting Director of Strategic Planning</i>	<b>Paper C</b> 20 mins
6.	<b>Strategic Plan Progress Report</b> <i>Acting Director of Strategic Planning</i>	<b>Paper D</b> 10 mins
7.	<b>Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council</b> <i>Acting Director of Strategic Planning</i>	<b>Paper E</b> 10 mins



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Items for formal approval		20 mins
8.	UK Research Concordats: Annual Reporting	Paper F
9.	Senior Officer appointments and re-appointments	Paper G
10.	SBS UAE branch campus: Country Manager & Authority to operate banking facilities	Paper H
Committee reports <i>(for noting, unless otherwise stated)</i>		5 mins
11.	Executive Team	Paper I
12.	Senate	Paper J <i>To follow</i>
13.	Court Business Group	Paper K
14.	Court Membership Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval: appointment to Court Business Group</li> </ul>	Paper L
15.	Audit & Risk Committee (including Annual Report to Court)	Paper M
16.	Estates Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approvals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Heart of the Campus business case</li> <li>○ Curran Building renovations</li> <li>○ Biological Procedures Unit: heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Paper N
Closing remarks		5 mins
17.	Any other business  Date of next meeting 3 March 2021	

## **MINUTES OF UNIVERSITY COURT**

**05 October 2021**

Meeting held by videoconference

**Present:** Dame Sue Bruce (Convener), Paula Galloway (Vice-Convener), Professor Sir Jim McDonald (Principal), Neelam Bakshi, Kirsty Bannatyne, Virginia Beckett, Elaine Blaxter, Melfort Campbell, Ronnie Cleland, Alison Culpan, Professor Jonathan Delafield-Butt, Andrew Eccles, Gillian Hastings, Stephen Ingledew, Mary-Jo Jacobi, Councillor Ruairi Kelly, Susan Kelly, Professor Scott MacGregor, William McLachlan, Benn Rapson, Professor Jan Sefcik, Peter Young

**Attending:** Professor Tim Bedford, Professor Douglas Brodie, Professor David Hillier, Professor Atilla Incecik, Dr Veena O'Halloran, Beth Lawton, Gordon Scott, Professor Eleanor Shaw, Professor Iain Stewart, Steven Wallace, Dr Daniel Wedgwood.

**Apologies:** Linda Brownlow, Malcolm Roughead

### **Welcome and apologies**

The Convener noted apologies as above and welcomed Court members and attendees to the meeting, extending a particular welcome to the new members of Court for 2021/22. In this context, Court was invited to note the recent election of Professor Jonathan Delafield-Butt to the position of Court member elected by and from among Academic Professional staff, as this election had been completed after the production of the Court Membership Group Report to Court.

No interests were declared.

### **1. Minutes**

Court **approved** the minutes of the meetings held on 17 June 2021 and 30 August 2021.

### **2. Matters arising**

There were no matters arising, other than those covered in the main agenda.

### **3. Principal's Report**

The Principal updated Court on recent developments. Key points included the following:

- The agreement with the Charles Huang Foundation over a major donation, as approved by Court in August, had been completed. Dr Huang had visited the University to mark the official presentation of the donation, in which members of Court had participated. This had generated positive media coverage and wider interest, including in the alumni community.
- The academic session had started successfully, following extensive preparatory work by the e-FIRST programme and staff across the University to ensure appropriate arrangements in recognition of continuing concerns over Covid-19. Case numbers in the University community were low and policies impacting on learning and teaching were to be reviewed in week 4 of the semester, as previously planned. In this context, members were provided with information on the University's wellbeing resources and policies, including provision for clinically vulnerable staff, and on the University's preparedness for any potential future major public health events, such as influenza or meningitis outbreaks

- The Learning & Teaching Building was open and work was progressing towards full functionality of all its facilities. It was noted that the poet Jackie Kay was due to visit to mark the naming of part of the building complex in her honour.
- A highly successful TEDx event, co-hosted by the Students' Union, had been held in the TIC. The talks from the event were available online.
- As Court had been informed by email, Professor Stephen McArthur had been appointed Associate Principal & Executive Dean of Engineering and Professor Duncan Graham had been appointed Associate Principal & Executive Dean of Science. Both would take up their new positions at the start of 2022. The Principal commended the contributions of the outgoing Deans. The process for appointing a new Chief Commercial Officer was underway and high-quality candidates had been attracted. An Interim Director of Strategic Planning was to be appointed imminently.
- As previously communicated to Court, the University had achieved significant success in a number of ranking exercises, including placing 4<sup>th</sup> in the UK in the Times Higher Education analysis of the National Student Survey. The University had also been shortlisted for three Times Higher Education awards.
- Strathclyde Medals had been awarded at a recent ceremony to recognise outstanding contributions, with 14 individual medals, 16 team awards and three Principal's Special Awards presented.
- Preparations were continuing towards the Glasgow's hosting of the COP26 international climate change conference in November. Ahead of the main summit, the University, in partnership with the Students' Union, was to host the UN Climate Change Conference of Youth (COY16), the world's largest annual youth gathering on climate change. The University would also have 'Observer' status during the critical UN Climate Negotiations.
- The Minister for Higher and Further Education, Jamie Hepburn MSP, had visited NMIS on 28 September.
- The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) had published a report on its Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability. A response from Ministers was awaited. Strathclyde was well positioned to contribute in areas identified as priorities for major strategic investment.
- Ahead of the UK government's Comprehensive Spending Review, the University was well connected to government and key agencies and was making the case, along with partners, for the critical nature of maximising support for UK science and innovation. The University's distinctive approach meant it was well positioned to take advantage of any opportunities arising and also to manage any resulting change in the system.

Court **noted** the report.

#### **4. Student Recruitment 2020/21**

The University Secretary & Compliance Officer (USCO) gave a summary of student recruitment to date. Recruitment of home and RUK students had been strong, including in Widening Access populations. Registration of international students had been affected by caution in relation to Covid-19, even though application rates had been high. Recruitment from China, in particular, had been significantly affected, including loss of articulating students from partner institutions. Pronounced growth from India and an increase in registrations from a number of other key overseas markets was having a positive impact on overall international recruitment. Overall, there was year-on-year growth but intake targets for international recruitment had not yet been achieved.

The University would intensify efforts to convert applicants to registered students until the registration deadline of 25 October, providing support wherever possible to overcome barriers such as travel restrictions, with an offer of initial online learning as one available solution in such cases.

Demand for the University's courses with January commencement was very strong and was, at an early stage in the cycle, well beyond the previous year's total applications. The University would seek to maximise the value of this.

The CFO noted that the final picture for autumn recruitment and its financial implications would be set out in the Q1 Business Report.

Members commented on the importance of the Indian market and noted that the University had significant experience in this area and was well-placed to build on the growing level of applications.

Members also discussed future accommodation needs in the University and the city, which might be affected by future expectations of graduate work in the post-pandemic world. It was noted that Estates Committee was formulating a strategic view on such questions.

Court **noted** the update.

## **5. SFC Outcome Agreement Update**

The USCO outlined the Outcome Agreement (OA) process and SFC guidance. The process was curtailed relative to other years, in recognition of the need to reduce administrative burden in the context of recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. An early, outline draft of the University's OA had been circulated. A full draft would be provided for the November Court meeting, allowing approval before the SFC's submission deadline.

Members were invited to send any detailed comments on the draft OA in writing to the USCO.

Court **noted** the intended process and the proposed form of the Outcome Agreement.

## **6. Corporate Risk Register**

The USCO introduced the Corporate Risk Register (CRR), noting that some adjustments had been made to risk levels in the light of wider developments in relation to tackling Covid-19 and improved understanding of how to mitigate its impact.

The Convener of Audit & Risk Committee provided feedback from that committee regarding the balance of strategic overview and operational detail in the register. It had been recognised that more detail than normal had been introduced through the merger of the main CRR with a dedicated Covid-19 Risk Register earlier in the year and this was to be addressed in the next iteration of the CRR.

Members discussed the significance of cyber security and data privacy as areas of risk throughout the economy and endorsed the University's continued focus on these risks. The CDIO and USCO outlined the University's protections, processes and active work in these areas. While these were considered to be robust and to encapsulate best practice, the University would continuously review and seek to make enhancements in these areas.

Court **approved** the University's top risks and mitigating actions and **approved** the Corporate Risk Register.

## **7. Court Strategy Session, November 2021 – initial planning**

The Principal outlined initial plans for the November meeting and strategy session. In order to maximise the involvement of members of Court, a suitable balance would be sought between the provision of information in advance and presentations on the day. It was noted that the location of the meeting remained to be finalised, as the anticipated need for some degree of social distancing impacted on the available options.

Court **noted** the initial plans.

### **Items for formal approval**

## **8. Amendments to the Ordinances: Associate Principal positions**

Court **approved** the proposed amendment to the Ordinances, whereby a cap on the number of Associate Principals was removed. It was noted that Court-approved protocols ensured that all Senior Officer appointments were carefully assessed according to strategic need, limited by terms of office and subject to review, and that Court's overall control of the process was maintained in line with the governing instruments.

## **9. Convener's Action: Establishment of an International Centre in Belgrade, Serbia.**

Court **homologated** the approval previously granted by Convener's Action to establish the Centre.

## **10. Annual review of key Court documentation**

Court **approved** updated versions of Court's Standing Orders, the Handbook for Members of the University Court, incorporating Court's Statement of Primary Responsibilities, and the Schedule of Delegated Authority.

## **11. Annual Statement on Institution-led Review of Quality for Scottish Funding Council, Academic Year 2020/21**

Court **approved** the Annual Statement on Institution-led Review of Quality, noting that, in line with standard practice, this had been submitted to the SFC by its deadline of 30 September 2021, marked as being subject to Court's approval. **[Minute note:** Also in line with standard practice, a Statement of Assurance signed by the Convener was sent to the SFC following the meeting.]

## **Items for Information**

### **12. Court Members' Annual Survey 2021**

Court **noted** the report. The Convener thanked the Senior Deputy Convener for his key role in Court's self-evaluation process.

### **13. Complaints Handling Annual Report 2020/21**

Court **noted** the report.

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

Court **approved** the amendment to the Regulations with regard to the Terms of Reference of the Statutory Advisory Committee on Safety and Occupational Health (SACSOH), allowing SACSOH to co-opt external members, in line with most other committees of Court.

## **Committee Reports**

Court received and **noted** the following committee reports and gave approvals as follows:

### **15. Executive Team**

### **16. Senate**

Court **approved** the following on Senate's recommendation:

- Annual Statement on Institution-led Review of Quality for Scottish Funding Council (see item 11, above)
  - Establishment of a new Safety & Wellbeing Directorate
- In relation to latter, it was suggested and **agreed** that health inequalities should be mentioned in the final Equalities Impact Assessment.

### **17. Court Business Group**

### **18. Court Membership Group**

Court **approved** the following on the recommendation of Court Membership Group:

- the appointment of Virginia Beckett to Court Business Group;
- the appointment of Melfort Campbell to Audit & Risk Committee; and
- the appointment of Neelam Bakshi to Estates Committee.

### **19. Audit & Risk Committee**

### **20. Staff Committee**

### **21. Enterprise & Investment Committee**

### **22. AOB**

There was no further business raised.

## **Date of next meeting**

- Thursday 25 & Friday 26 November 2021

**2020/21 Financial Statements  
[RESERVED ITEM]**

The University's published Financial Statements are available at:

<https://www.strath.ac.uk/professionalservices/finance/generalinformation/financialstatements/>

**Going Concern Assessment**  
**[RESERVED ITEM]**



**Q1 2021-22 - Quarterly Business Report**  
**[RESERVED ITEM]**

## Strategic Plan 2020-2025 – Year 2 Progress Report

### Introduction

1. Immediately prior to publication of the University's [Strategic Plan 2020-2025](#) (Vision 2025) in February 2020, relevant targets were disaggregated to Faculty and, in some cases, Department/School. The approach of setting disaggregated targets and continuing to keep the number of University-level KPIs tight at 16 ensures a continuing focused framework for determining progress against the University's Strategy. This approach has provided a robust basis for Faculty and Departmental/School annual planning and performance assessment since 2015.
2. To raise awareness of, and enhance Court's ability to respond to, any issues with performance in-year, we provide Executive Team and Court with twice annual reports on progress against University KPIs, as follows:
  - a) Actual performance for the preceding year in November;
  - b) Mid-year forecast performance for the current year in February / March.
3. The KPIs in Vision 2025 mainly used 2018-19 data as their baseline and this Year 2 Progress Report is intended to:
  - a) Provide Court with an update on progress, achieved in 2020-21, against the University's agreed 16 KPIs as outlined in the 2025 Strategic Plan;
  - b) Inform the University's annual planning round discussions with Faculties and Professional Services.
4. It should be noted that:
  - a) Within Vision 2025, our 16 key performance indicators (KPIs) build on the positive progress made over the period of the previous strategy. The majority of KPIs have been continued on and extended where significant progress has already been made with some improvements introduced for Vision 2025.
  - b) HESA's work on Performance Indicators ceased in May 2021. The milestones and final target for **KPI4** (graduate outcomes) – above benchmark - was part of the suite of Performance Indicators. Following analysis and a recommendation from the University's Survey and Metrics Working Group, Education Strategy Committee supported a change to the milestone and final target on 7 October 2021. The milestones and final target are now Graduate Outcomes figures with the percentage of UK full time, first degree leavers in highly skilled employment or further study to remain in the upper quartile of UK HE institutions.
  - c) The Strategic Relationships KPI (KPI 10) has previously been reported qualitatively. Work is ongoing to define this KPI: an approach to definitions and categories of partners has been established and work is underway to develop the baseline. Quantitative reporting will commence for the 2021-22 Strategic Plan mid-year progress report onwards.
  - d) Following further work by the Sustainability team and Strategy and Policy, in addition to a review by the Sustainability Advisory Group, KPI16 has been updated. The definition is now inclusive of all elements of Scope 3 emissions which we are able to reliably quantify and mitigate. The baseline has been restated accordingly, and we continue to work to the same target of a 70% reduction in emissions by 2025, as part of the long-term strategy to achieve net zero by 2040. The intention is to further review the coverage of the definition over time as our measurement approaches improve.
  - e) Milestones from 2020-21 onwards were agreed by Faculties and were used to inform the preparation of plans as part of the annual planning round for 2020-21. (With the exception of KPI 15 (net cashflow from operating activities), given the timing of the launch of Vision 2025 and this early reporting on the 2025 KPIs, which

mainly reference 2018-19 baselines, the majority of quantitative milestones for 2019-20 were indicative, and were calculated as the mid-point between the baseline and the agreed 2020-21 milestone)).

5. A mid-year report on progress achieved in 2021-22 will be provided to Executive Team and Court in Spring 2022.
6. For KPIs that are flagged red/amber, further detail and context in relation to the 2020-21 actual has been provided in the commentary box. In line with the KPIs reporting approach to date, context has been kept to a minimum for KPIs that are flagged green.
7. Regular reporting of progress towards Strategic Plan targets uses a simple traffic light flagging system to summarise performance for each measure against the relevant annual milestone.
8. For background, Court may wish to note that:
  - **12 KPIs 'on track'** or ahead of milestone – green flag;
  - **3 KPIs as 'further work required'** or behind milestone – red flag (KPI8 PGR population; KPI11 Industry Research Income and KPI12 International Student FTE); and
  - **1 KPI as 'further work required'** or behind milestone, despite progress – amber flag (KPI7 Citations).

In February 2021, using early 2020-21 data and projections, we reported:

- **8 KPIs 'on track'** or ahead of milestone – green flag;
- **5 KPIs as 'further work required'** or behind milestone – red flag (KPI5 PGT population; KPI9 income from conferences, training, consultancy, KE grants; KPI11 Industry Research Income; KPI12 International Student FTE; KPI15 Net cashflow from operating activities);
- **1 KPI as 'further work required'** or behind milestone, despite progress – amber flag (KPI7 Citations); and
- **2 KPIs as unable to report – data available Summer 2021** (KPI3 NSS; and KPI4 Graduate outcomes).

In November 2020, using 2019-20 actuals, we reported:

- **11 KPIs 'on track'** or ahead of milestone – green flag;
- **3 KPIs as 'further work required'** or behind milestone – red flag (KPI8 PGR population; KPI9 income from conferences, training, consultancy, KE grants; KPI11 Industry Research Income); and
- **2 KPIs as 'further work required'** or behind milestone, despite progress – amber flag (KPI 2 Student retention; KPI7 Citations).

### **Action Requested**

9. Court is invited to **discuss** the 2020-21 Year 2 progress update on the 16 KPIs in Vision 2025.



## Outcome Agreement Process - 2021-22

### Background

1. On 31 August 2021, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) published updated [guidance](#) on the Outcome Agreement (OA) process and timetable for negotiating 2021-22 interim University OAs, and monitoring of 2020-21 OAs.
2. Prior to the publication of the OA Guidance, on 30 August 2021 the Scottish Government (SG) produced a corresponding [Ministerial Letter of Guidance](#) from the Minister for Higher Education and Further Education, Youth Employment and Training, Jamie Hepburn MSP.
3. Within the latest guidance, the SFC note that they recognise that universities are working towards recovery following last year's Covid-19 pandemic related OA emergency period and that institutions are continuing to deliver a responsive learning approach. 2021-22 is likely to be the final year of the current OA process as it is understood that a new overarching National Impact Framework (NIF) is in development, to ensure greater alignment with Scotland's National Performance Framework and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, one of the recommendations arising from the [Coherent Provision and Sustainability Report](#).
4. The SFC guidance also outlined the requirements for institutions to prepare a self-evaluation report (SER) for the 2020-21 OA. The University's SER for 2020-21 includes a reflection on performance data for 2020-21 and reports on qualitative and quantitative progress towards our commitments outlined in our Interim Outcome Agreement 2020-21. This will be appended to the main Outcome Agreement for AY 2021-22 in our final submission to SFC.
5. As in previous years, institutions are required to submit a completed National Measures data table that the SFC provide; this requires us to state targets for SFC national measures for 2021-22.
6. The OA draft is presented in 3 sections, aligning with the Outcome and Impact Framework outlined within the [SFC Guidance](#).
7. The OA 2021-2022 and OA SER 2020-21 must be signed off by the Principal or head of institution on behalf of the governing body. The final documents must be submitted to the SFC by no later than 30 November 2021.

### Recommendation

8. Court is invited to **approve**:
  - the OA Self-evaluation report covering the period 2020-21; and
  - the Outcome Agreement for AY 2021-22 incorporating the National Measures data table and UIF allocation plan.

**University of Strathclyde Self-evaluation report 2020-21**  
**2020-21 Interim Outcome Agreement**  
**[RESERVED ITEM]**

**2021-22 Outcome Agreement**

**University of Strathclyde**  
**[RESERVED ITEM]**

## UK Research Concordats: Annual Reporting

### Introduction

1. This paper presents Strathclyde's Annual Research Integrity Statement 2020-21 and the First Annual Researcher Development Concordat Report to Court for approval and publication.

### Annual Research Integrity Statement 2020-21

2. The Annual Research Integrity Statement 2020-21 fulfils Strathclyde's commitment to produce an annual statement for approval by the University's governing body and publication on the institutional website, in accordance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.
3. This statement:
  - outlines the University's approach to research integrity;
  - details actions and activities undertaken during 2020-21 and those planned for 2021-22;
  - reports on formal investigations of research misconduct and lessons learned.

### First Annual Researcher Development Concordat Report

4. The First Annual Researcher Development Concordat Report fulfils Strathclyde's obligation to report annually as a signatory institution to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. This report, which is to be approved by the governing body and made publicly available, describes our strategic objectives and measures of success along with an implementation plan and progress update. As initial reporting was required within one year of becoming a signatory, an interim report was presented to Court in June 2021 with the intention that the reporting cycle move to November, and annually thereafter, to align with that of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. Therefore, this report serves as the First Annual Report on progress of the implementation of the revised Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers at Strathclyde.

### Approvals

5. Court is asked to:
  - **approve** the Annual Research Integrity Statement 2020-21 and the First Annual Researcher Development Concordat Report for publication.



# Researcher Development Concordat

## First Annual Report

### 2020-21

<b>Period covered</b>	June 2020 – 31 August 2021
<b>Author</b>	Academic Development Lead (Research)/ Institutional Concordat Champion, Organisational and Staff Development Unit (OSDU)
<b>Date considered by the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) and recommended for approval and publication</b>	21 September 2021
<b>Date reviewed and recommended to Senate by Executive Team</b>	19 October 2021
<b>Date reviewed and recommended to Court by Senate</b>	17 November 2021
<b>Date approved by Court</b>	[To be considered on 25 November 2021]
<b>Date of publication</b>	

# Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers: First Annual Report

## A Introduction

1. The University of Strathclyde became a signatory to the revised [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers](#) ("the Researcher Development Concordat") in June 2020. This agreement builds on the original Researcher Development Concordat published in 2008, to now provide strengthened expectations and distinct obligations on Institutional support for *Researchers*<sup>1</sup> and their *Managers*. Strathclyde is committed to supporting the professional and career development of our researchers and has retained the EU HR Excellence in Research Award since 2011 which recognises this commitment.
2. The aims of this Researcher Development Concordat strongly align with Strathclyde's strategic ambitions addressed within Vision 2025 and our People Strategy as well as our institutional commitments to the *Research Integrity* and *Knowledge Exchange* Concordats.
3. As a signatory institution to this revised Concordat we are obliged to report annually to Court describing our Strategic Objectives and Measures of Success along with an Implementation Plan and Progress Update, subsequently making this report publicly available. An interim report was presented to Court in June 2021 to meet this obligation within one of year of becoming a signatory; reporting at the time was made with the intention that the reporting cycle move to November, and annually thereafter, to align with that of the *Research Integrity Concordat*. Therefore, this report serves as the First Annual Report on progress of the implementation of the revised Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers at Strathclyde.

## B National Context

4. The Researcher Development Concordat recognises the critical role of research and innovation in delivering the UK's ambitious economic and industrial strategies aiming to set the gold standard in researcher development and, in turn, allowing this to be used as an internationally competitive advantage. The Principles of this Concordat - *Environment and Culture*; *Employment*; and *Professional and Career Development* – reflect the current sector-wide priorities of People and Culture addressed in the recently published *BEIS Research & Development People & Culture Strategy* and *Innovation Strategy* as well as the SFC's *Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability*.
5. There is substantial sector support for the Researcher Development Concordat with more than 80 Universities so far becoming signatories in addition to major funding organisations, including UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), the Scottish Funding Council, Wellcome, Cancer Research UK and the Royal Academy for Engineering. UKRI and the Royal Academy for Engineering have notably also published their own Funder Action Plans committing to embedding the Concordat Principles within their funding award and review processes.

## C Leadership

6. In line with our signatory responsibilities, Professor Tim Bedford (Associate Principal Research and Innovation) has been named as Strathclyde's Senior Academic Concordat Champion with Dr Emma Compton-Daw as the Institutional Concordat Champion. Dr Maria Weikum has been appointed as the Researcher Development Concordat Officer.
7. The Researcher Development Concordat Steering Group (RDCSG), chaired by Professor Billy Kerr (Deputy Associate Principal Research and Knowledge Exchange), was convened in October 2020 to oversee and advise on Gap Analysis and Action Plan development with representation from all Faculties,

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<sup>1</sup> Researchers are defined as individuals whose primary responsibility is to conduct research and who are employed specifically for this purpose; appreciable numbers of research colleagues within this category are often referred to as 'postdoctoral researchers' or 'postdocs'.

all Professional Services units currently supporting Researchers, and Researchers themselves. Regular progress reports are made to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) and the Researcher Development Sub-Committee (RDSC).

## **D Researcher Representation**

8. The Researcher's voice is at the heart of both the Researcher Development Concordat and Strathclyde's commitment to embedding the Principles of this Concordat. Researcher representatives are members of RDSC, RKEC, Faculty Research Committees, RDCSG and its Working Groups.

## **E Implementation Plan and Progress**

9. Within the first year of signing, organisations are required to undertake a Gap Analysis and develop an Action Plan. During 2020/2021, a broad-ranging and comprehensive consultation process took place, overseen by RDCSG, to address this obligation. The views of Researchers, their Managers and those who support them across the University were sought through focus groups, analysis of the results of the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) 2020 and direct engagement with Faculty academic representatives. The remit of this Concordat is wide-ranging and aligns with many functions of the University; therefore, connectivity and collaboration with ongoing strategic institutional initiatives was embedded at all stages and continues.
10. The Gap Analysis demonstrated that Researcher Development is well-embedded at Strathclyde in relation to the original Researcher Development Concordat, with activities in place such as comprehensive programmes of development opportunities, a [Policy for the Use of Fixed-Term Contracts](#), the [Strathclyde Pledge](#) and the [Researchers' Group](#), a Researcher-led group that organises activities and represents the interests of Researchers across the university. Opportunities for additional activity were identified in particular in areas where the Concordat's expectations have been strengthened as well as around emerging sector-wide challenges.
11. As a result of the Gap Analysis, five key Action Themes, each with a Strategic Objective, were identified to address the considerably enhanced and additional obligations of this revised Concordat. This plan has been approved by RKEC, Senate, Staff Committee and the Executive Team. The Action Plan is summarised below under its five Key Themes and the full action plan with detailed success measures and aligned Institutional initiatives is available upon request.

## **Key Action Plan Themes**

### **12. Implementation and Governance**

*Strategic Objective: Embed the Concordat implementation and progress across the Institution through effective governance, communication, monitoring and reporting mechanisms*

Robust implementation and governance measures will be critical to successfully addressing the obligations of this revised Concordat. Effective monitoring and review mechanisms are in place relating to the original Concordat which can be built upon to deliver this expanded revised Concordat.

Actions have been developed relating to review of governance processes and, where necessary, enhancements made in order to monitor, review and communicate implementation and progress. A Communications Strategy will be developed supported by a single online destination for all aspects of Researcher Development and Research Culture. Approaches to recognising the roles of staff across the Institution in delivering the Concordat actions will be considered to ensure effective implementation.

### **13. Research Culture**

*Strategic Objective: Champion and embed a positive Research Culture across the Institution through bold, innovative, ambitious and collaborative approaches*

Research Culture is a sector-wide priority encompassing the behaviours, values, expectations, incentives, attitudes and norms of the research community. In this context, Research Culture includes equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), bullying and harassment, research integrity, and health and wellbeing. Actions have been developed to embed collaboration with related Institutional initiatives and groups to identify bold, innovative and ambitious approaches to encourage a positive Research Culture,

as an essential aspect to achieving our Concordat obligations and addressing wider national strategies. Meaningful engagement with Research Culture training will be embedded across the university while enhancing awareness of support mechanisms for staff and our institutional understanding of the challenges through reporting and monitoring. Health and Wellbeing has been a significant, and nationally recognised, area of focus for Strathclyde and it is intended that this will continue.

#### **14. *Researcher Career Development and Progression***

*Strategic Objective: Embed time and recognition for Professional and Career Development activities as integral to the Strathclyde Researcher experience to support Researcher progression into successful, fulfilling careers across a range of employment sectors*

Professional and Career Development are integral to enabling Researchers to achieve their full potential in an increasingly diverse global research environment and employment market. There is a wide range of available professional and career development opportunities at Strathclyde including dedicated induction support.

This revised Concordat strengthens expectations on Institutions in terms of the level of support provided, which Strathclyde will meet through actions which will embed an expectation of at least 10 days development time for Researchers per year, in addition to time for developing research identity and leadership skills, within Institutional Policy. Researchers will also be provided with access to Career Development Reviews, Professional Careers advice and enhanced training and development opportunities.

Job security for researchers is recognised as a sector-wide challenge which Strathclyde seeks to address through our [Strathclyde Pledge](#) commitment to stable contracts with fair and equal pay, while continuing to review and support job security and progression mechanisms for Researchers. Guidance for Researchers and their Managers in this domain will also be enhanced.

#### **15. *Managers of Researchers Training and Development***

*Strategic Objective: Support Managers of Researchers to be excellent, effective Leaders and Managers*

The revised Researcher Development Concordat includes Managers of Researchers as a key stakeholder group for the first time, recognising their distinct development needs relating to line management, project management, supporting Researcher career development and creating an effective and positive research culture.

Actions have been developed to identify and implement mechanisms to establish and deliver enhanced training for Managers of Researchers alongside dedicated induction support and extended peer-learning and networking activities.

#### **16. *Engagement in Policy and Decision-Making***

*Strategic Objective: Effectively engage Researchers and their Managers with Policy and Decision-Making to develop a thriving and inclusive research environment*

Engaging Researchers and their Managers in Institutional Policy and Decision-Making is key to ensuring effective outcomes are embraced by all stakeholders.

Actions have been developed to identify mechanisms for working collaboratively with Faculties, Departments and Schools to provide enhanced opportunities for Researchers and their Managers to engage with Institutional Policy and Decision-Making.

### **Measures of Success**

17. Our success will be measured and monitored in terms of timely achievement of the proposed actions. For each strategic objective, this will be captured through:

- Formation of appropriate working groups and confirmation of Concordat and Researcher representation within aligned committees and initiatives, as well as, where appropriate, identification of follow-up actions; and

- Evidence of progress/improvement regarding views and perceptions of staff, collected through the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS), when compared with previous years; and implementation of new provision and supporting resources, including structures to maintain and update new online resources, as well as mechanisms to regularly monitor and report on continuing activities through the RDCSG, RDSC and RKEC.

## **Implementation Plan Progress**

18. Where possible, the planning and implementation of actions under each of the Action Packages is underway as summarised below (Paragraphs 19 to 23). A Business Case is currently in development to address resourcing of the Action Plan. Further actions will be addressed in the coming year and beyond.

### ***Researcher Development Concordat Steering Group***

19. The remit of the Researcher Development Concordat Steering Group (RDCSG) has been revised to reflect progression from the consultation to the implementation phase in order to oversee and advise on the implementation of the Concordat Principles and Action Plan. Two Working Groups have been formed under the remit of RDCSG to address actions relating to:

- A) Research Culture (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Bullying and Harassment; Research Integrity; and Mental Health and Wellbeing); and
- B) Development and Recognition (Professional and Career Development for Researchers; Training and Development for Managers of Researchers; Recognition of the full range of activities within Researcher and Manager roles).

20. The Working Groups are comprised of relevant Steering Group members plus additional staff with responsibility in the areas addressed and Faculty Representatives. Mechanisms have also been established to ensure ongoing, close working relationships with Faculties in addressing the obligations of Researchers and Managers of Researchers.

### ***Collaboration with Ongoing Institutional Initiatives***

21. The Researcher Development Concordat has a wide-ranging remit and therefore interacts with a number of ongoing institutional initiatives. Consideration has been given, and will be ongoing, to work collaboratively, either through inclusion of relevant colleagues on RDCSG and its working groups or through reporting directly to those initiatives. Since the approval of the Action Plan, relevant aspects have been presented at the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee and to the Strathclyde Safe360 Group (formerly the Inquiry Recommendations Implementation Group (IRIG)).

### ***CEDARS 2021***

22. The second CEDARS survey ran at Strathclyde from 22nd April to 30th June 2021 and the results will be reported to relevant committees from September 2021. The findings and outcomes will continue to be used to inform the Researcher Development Concordat actions and will be shared with appropriate groups.

### ***Enhanced Development Opportunities***

23. Three peer-learning networks will be launched in September 2021 focusing on the following topics:

- Career Management (for Researchers);
- Managing and Supervising Researchers (for Academic Staff); and
- Research Funding (for Research, Academic and KE staff)

While the networks are targeted at specific staff groups, they will be open to all interested members of staff. During the year further opportunities will be developed.

## **Summary and Activities for the Coming Year**

A comprehensive strategy to embed the Principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers has been developed through a deep and broad-ranging Gap Analysis consultation during 2020 and early 2021. A detailed Action Plan has been approved through the University's committee structures and progress is being made according to this plan. Over the next year, we will continue to embed the Principles of this Researcher Development Concordat within Strathclyde through continued implementation of the Action Plan and connectivity with aligned Institutional Initiatives

# Research Integrity Statement

## 2020-2021

<b>Period covered</b>	1 September 2020 – 31 August 2021
<b>Author</b>	Research Policy Team, Research and Knowledge Exchange Services
<b>Date considered by the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) and recommended for approval and publication</b>	21 September 2021
<b>Date reviewed and recommended to Senate by Executive Team</b>	19 October 2021
<b>Date reviewed and recommended to Court by Senate</b>	17 November 2021
<b>Date approved by Court</b>	[To be considered on 25 November 2021]
<b>Date of publication</b>	

# Research Integrity Statement 2020-2021

## 1. Introduction

Seeking to ensure the highest standards of good practice and ethical conduct in its research, the University of Strathclyde (hereafter Strathclyde) is committed to safeguarding and enhancing research integrity in accordance with The Concordat to Support Research Integrity (2019). This translates into policy, systems and practice aimed at delivering effective measures and continual improvement in a visible and joined-up manner to support a healthy research culture. Underpinning this is the University's Research Code of Practice which defines both the standards that researchers are expected to attain and desired good practice.

In fulfilment of the commitment to produce a short annual statement for approval by the University's governing body and publication on the institutional website, this statement:

- outlines the University's approach to research integrity;
- details actions and activities undertaken during 2020-21 and those planned for 2021-22;
- reports on formal investigations of research misconduct and lessons learned.

Strathclyde's research integrity statements for 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2019-20 are available to view and download at <https://www.strath.ac.uk/research/integrity/>.

## 2. Approach to research integrity

### 2.1 Named Person

In recognition of the seriousness of Strathclyde's commitment to research integrity, the Associate Principal with responsibility for Research has designated responsibility for ensuring that the University responds to and upholds the Concordat. This responsibility extends to research and knowledge exchange policies, ethics, postgraduate researcher development and research governance. To ensure confidentiality and encourage disclosure of concerns around misconduct, any queries related to research integrity are directed to a dedicated email address ([research-integrity@strath.ac.uk](mailto:research-integrity@strath.ac.uk)) which is only accessible to the Associate Principal and select members of the Research Policy Team based in Research and Knowledge Exchange Services (RKES).

### 2.2 Research integrity leadership

The Associate Principal is supported in this work by the Deputy Associate Principals with Research and Knowledge Exchange portfolios in addition to the University Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC). A strategic committee within Strathclyde's governance structure with reporting responsibilities to University Senate, RKEC is responsible for oversight of research and knowledge exchange strategy and policy, and the monitoring of their implementation. Key to this is ensuring that the University's commitments as signatory to The Concordat to Support Research Integrity are met. Accordingly, the principles of research integrity are supported across all domains by the following bodies with oversight from RKEC:

- University Ethics Committee (UEC);
- Animal Welfare Ethical Review Board (AWERB);
- Researcher Development Sub-Committee (RDSC);
- Open Research Group (ORG);
- Knowledge Exchange Group (KEG).
- Strathclyde Doctoral School.

Strathclyde's committee structure enables cohesion and consistency of communication at a senior level across the academic faculties and professional services directorates.



Within the faculties, information is communicated via staff and student structures as follows:

- Responsibility for Research Integrity is distributed through the faculties via the Vice Deans with responsibility for Research who represent their faculties on RKEC. Agreement made at committee level is disseminated via faculty, departmental and school management structures.
- Student representatives participate in the Researcher Development Sub-Committee and Strathclyde Doctoral School Board to ensure involvement in decision-making and communication of information into the wider student community. Expectations, information and guidance are also delivered to research students via their supervisors and postgraduate administrators in order to ensure that they are fully informed of best practice in research.

Formally established in 2019, the Research Policy Team located in RKES and led by the Research Policy Manager is responsible for: maintaining and advising on the Research Code of Practice (which includes the research misconduct process); providing secretariat support for RKEC, UEC and ORG; supporting the Associate Principal to implement the research misconduct process; and preparing the annual Research Integrity Statement in accordance with the Concordat.

### **2.3 Policies**

Strathclyde maintains a range of policies and procedures to promote and monitor good practice and ethical conduct in its research. Central to these is an overarching Research Code of Practice which provides a definition of research and covers: the nature and scope of research integrity; independence of judgement and academic freedom; data protection; protecting authenticity; publication; authorship; intellectual property; sources of research funding; research misconduct; the process for dealing with allegation of research misconduct. It also signposts researchers to a comprehensive list of academic policies and procedures, including the following research policies and guidelines:

- Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Students;
- Code of Practice on Investigations Involving Human Beings;
- Research Data Policy;
- Research Data Deposit Policy;
- Policy on Animal Research (in accordance with the Concordat on Openness).

## **3. Overview of actions and activities to support and strengthen research integrity**

### **3.1 Researcher Training**

Professional and personal development is a core component of research degrees at Strathclyde ensuring that our doctoral graduates have the skills and experience to be successful both in their studies and their future careers. Our PGR Researcher Development Programme (RDP), delivered by Faculties, Professional Services and external partners, is mapped to the UK's Researcher Development Framework and Statement (RDF/S), which articulates the knowledge, behaviours and attributes of successful researchers. The tailored RDP provides the postgraduate research community a range of opportunities to continue their personal, professional and career management skills development and enhance their generic skills, attributes and competencies for future employability both inside and outside of academia. Specific Research Integrity training is delivered through PGR induction (delivered twice annually and supplemented by our online PG Essentials module), via face-to-face workshops and as a 20-hour online resource available to all students. A wholesale review of the PGR lifecycle from regulations to administrative processes and systems was conducted in 2019-2020 and an extensive set of documented recommendations designed to enhance the overarching approach to supporting the PGR lifecycle are being implemented. Planned developments include an increased focus on research cultures and activities aligned to the themes highlighted through the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.

Training for Early Career (including postdoctoral researchers, research fellows and research assistants), Mid-Career & Established Academics is delivered by our Organisational and Staff Development Unit (OSDU). In particular, the Unit's Strathclyde Programme in Academic practice, Researcher development and Knowledge exchange (SPARK), Strathclyde Programme in Research and Leadership (SPIRAL) and Strathclyde Supervisor Development Programme aim to deliver relevant content to our researchers. SPARK's specific Researcher Development provision aims to empower staff by providing them with the skills, experiences and understanding to reach their full potential, whilst at the same time providing the University with a means of assuring and enhancing quality in its research at all levels. Meanwhile SPIRAL focuses on developing and strengthening leadership across research and knowledge exchange while the Supervisor Programme provides comprehensive development opportunities for new and experienced doctoral Supervisors. All three programmes contribute significantly to the culture of Research Integrity at Strathclyde.

Specific training on Research Integrity issues including research data management is available to groups of researchers on request. In addition to the 20-hour online resource on Research Integrity, also available to students, there is a full research data management course available online via the Development & Training Gateway. Research Integrity events are now included as standard within OSDU's Researcher Development provision:

- 'Research Integrity in Practice' (SPIRAL Programme) – a twice-yearly, half-day workshop to support staff to understand and apply the principles of Research Integrity in their everyday work, and to explore how misconduct may arise and ways to alleviate such pressures, as well as drawing attention to Strathclyde's policies and procedures in these areas.
- Research Integrity and Ethics (Strathclyde Supervisor Development Programme) – previously a half-day workshop to support PGR supervisors to consider their own understanding of good research practice, make informed choices based on the principles of Research Integrity and consider how they can embed a culture of integrity within and beyond their supervisory relationships. During the transition to online training in 2020, this training was split into two separate workshops (see 4.1).
- Staff researchers are able to access the online suite of 'Research Integrity' workshops also available to PGRs.

### **3.2 Researcher Support Services**

Strathclyde provides dedicated support in a number of areas in addition to structured training programmes to assist researchers in the fulfilment of their research responsibilities. Colleagues from across Professional Services provide specialist advice on topics with research integrity implications such as:

- Information Governance including GDPR;
- Ethics in Human and Animal Research;
- Records Management;
- Data Management;
- Open Access and Open Data;
- Cyber security.
- Dignity and Respect.

This provision is often delivered via cross-disciplinary/departmental groups involving specialists from Strategy & Policy, Information Services, Human Resources and RKES working with academics wherever appropriate. This extends to the handling of allegations of misconduct. If an allegation is made that appears to touch on more than one area of compliance, the relevant senior officers (namely the Associate Principal with responsibility for Research, University Secretary and Compliance Officer, and Director of Human Resources) will meet to discuss the appropriate channel(s) for the allegation to be considered.

## **4. Summary of actions and activities undertaken in 2020-21**

### **4.1 Researcher training**

To adapt the Strathclyde Supervisor Development Programme's Research Integrity and Ethics training to an online format, this course was split into two separate events – Research Integrity and Research Ethics. Initially the purpose of this was to avoid a half-day zoom call. However, the new format has been found to be more accessible as researchers can more readily find an available two hour window. It also allows for a more tailored discussion of research integrity and research ethics, as not all research at the University requires ethical approval, but must nonetheless be conducted with research integrity. As a result of these changes, these training sessions now have better attendance than the previous format.

### **4.2 Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers**

Research integrity is a core component of Strathclyde's work to ensure a healthy and supportive research environment in line with the aims of the revised Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (2019). Demonstrating an ongoing commitment to supporting the career and professional development of our researchers, Strathclyde became a signatory in June 2020 and named the Associate Principal with responsibility for Research as Senior Academic Concordat Champion and the Academic Development Lead (Research) within the Organisational and Staff Development Unit (OSDU) as Institutional Concordat Champion. With oversight from these champions and the Researcher Development Concordat Steering Group (RDCSG), the required gap analysis was undertaken by a dedicated Concordat Officer between October 2020 and April 2021, leading to the development of an institutional action plan. A broad spectrum of key stakeholders was consulted in this process through focus groups, engagement with the Researchers' Group, and analysis of Strathclyde's 2020 Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) responses. With regular reporting to RKEC and RDSC throughout, the action plan was approved by University Court in spring 2021. Although researcher development was found to be well embedded across the University, actions were identified to enhance current initiatives to address gaps and challenges arising from new and strengthened obligations.

These actions are organised under five key themes: implementation and governance; research culture (including research integrity); researcher career development and progression; managers of researchers training and development; and engagement in policy and decision-making. To ensure focused and sustained progress, the following RDCSG working groups were formed in July 2021:

- Research Culture Working Group (addressing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Bullying and Harassment; Research Integrity; and Mental Health and Wellbeing); and
- Development and Recognition Working Group (addressing Professional and Career Development for Researchers; Training and Development for Managers of Researchers; Recognition of the full range of activities within Researcher and Manager roles).

### **4.3 Revision of Research Code of Practice**

Following consultation with a broad range of researchers in 2019-20 to ascertain how research integrity is understood and practiced within the University, the need for a comprehensive review of the Research Code of Practice was identified to ensure full coverage reflecting recent sector developments and optimise its use. Recognising the time and resources required to do this effectively, this review will be undertaken during the course of 2021-22 in alignment with other institutional initiatives including the work of the RDCSG and its Research Culture Working Group. To ensure that the information contained in the current version is up to date (including hyperlinks), a minor update was prepared in summer 2021 for approval by University Senate.

#### **4.4 Review of Ethical Procedures and Committees**

Over the course of academic year 2019/2020, the Convener of the University Ethics Committee conducted a wide-ranging review of the operation of ethics services at Strathclyde. The results of this review were reported to RKEC in September 2020 and a number of actions were identified. The interruption of University activity as a result of the pandemic, and the increased workload on the University Ethics Committee as a result of all face-to-face research being reviewed at a University level due to the additional risk of COVID-19 transmission, have delayed progress with further developments. Plans for refining the application process (including the move to an online form), enhancing record-keeping and revising the University Ethics Committee Code of Practice will be taken forward in 2021-22 (as outlined in 5.3).

#### **4.5 Nagoya Protocol compliance check**

In response to a letter issued to the University by the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) on 13 May 2021, RKES collated and returned the required information pursuant to the Nagoya Protocol (Compliance) Regulations 2015. This legislation is relevant to those conducting research and development on the genetic or biochemical composition (including through the application of biotechnology) of genetic resources (plants, animals, microbes, fungi, other – but not human) accessed from overseas.

Following a review of the information submitted, OPSS concluded its engagement with Strathclyde on 6 September 2021 with a recommendation that consideration be given to implementing procedures to seek, keep and transfer all relevant documentation to prove that projects are either compliant or out of scope. Work is ongoing to incorporate lessons learned from the audit process into internal process and procedures to ensure appropriate due diligence and recordkeeping.

### **5. Action and activities planned for 2021-22**

#### **5.1 Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers**

As noted in 4.2, actions identified in the approved Researcher Development Concordat Action Plan will be taken forward by two RDCSG working groups. The Research Culture Working Group has specific responsibility for progressing and ensuring alignment of actions around research integrity. Work over the next year will focus on: enhancing training on research integrity and related issues such as Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) and bullying and harassment; encouraging a positive research culture through case studies and improved guidance; increasing engagement with research integrity and research culture policies and decision making; raising awareness of support mechanisms for staff with research integrity and research culture concerns; collaborating with aligned initiatives to identify further approaches.

To ensure a visible and joined-up approach, the Research Culture Working Group is aligned with the following institutional projects and initiatives: Equality Outcomes, Athena SWAN, People Strategy, Research Excellence Framework (REF), Thrive@Strathclyde, Inquiry Recommendations Implementation Group (IRIG), STEM Equals, Research Integrity Concordat, Equally Safe, Culture & Values Accelerator Team, Research and Innovation Accelerator Team, Healthy Working Lives Gold Award Action Plan, and Enhancing the PGR Experience.

#### **5.2 Comprehensive review of Research Code of Practice**

With oversight from RKEC and in consultation with key stakeholders, during 2021-22 the Research Policy Team will undertake a comprehensive review of the Research Code of Practice and revise the document to ensure full coverage reflecting recent sector developments and changes within the University. Associated materials and processes will also be developed to optimise its use in alignment with related institutional initiatives, specifically the work of the RDCSG and its Research Culture Working Group which is taking forward actions around research integrity.

### **5.3 Review of ethical procedures and committees**

Taking forward actions from the UEC Convenor's review, the Research Policy Team will revise the Code of Practice on Investigations Involving Human Beings to ensure that the guidance is clear and up to date. A revised application form will also be produced, with potential for this form to be completed online. A review of management of NHS studies is also planned, as well as the management of data, in particular the ethical use of open data. This includes both data to which Strathclyde researchers have access to and our own data which others might want to use. Ensuring that data imported and exported are ethically sourced and used requires attention.

### **5.4 Continuous Improvement**

In order to support and promote continuous improvement in safeguarding and enhancing research integrity, the Research Policy Team will:

- Utilise the UKRIO Self-Assessment Tool for The Concordat to Support Research Integrity (Version 2.0, 2021) to identify areas of Strathclyde's research practices, systems and policies, researcher development and monitoring that may need to be revised in order to adhere to the requirements and recommendations of The Concordat to Support Research Integrity (2019). Suggestions for the content of annual research integrity statements will also be applied when writing Strathclyde's 2021-22 statement.
- Monitor sector & government guidance for recommendations or guidance that provide an opportunity for improvement.
- Ensure action on lessons learned from the handling of misconduct allegations, the Nagoya Protocol audit process, and reports prepared by UEC & AWERB.
- Seek out examples of best practice from other HEIs and research organisations. We expect our membership of UKRIO to greatly assist in this aspect of our learning.

## **6. Research Misconduct**

### **6.1 Process for investigating allegations of research misconduct**

In 2017/18, Strathclyde formalised and made public its process for investigating research misconduct by including it as an Appendix to the Research Code of Practice. Updated in line with best practice at this time, clear responsibilities were outlined for senior members of staff and internal processes and guidance were created to ensure that allegations of misconduct are dealt with in a transparent, timely, robust and fair manner. As this process has been in place since January 2018, a detailed review will be undertaken during 2021-22 to capture lessons learned and update the process to reflect current best practice within the sector. This will include the development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) which are more closely aligned with other University investigation processes to ensure a coordinated and streamlined approach in dealing with allegations of misconduct and associated issues. Linked to the work being progressed to enhance Strathclyde's research culture, particular attention will be paid to creating and embedding an environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable reporting instances of misconduct.

### **6.2 Formal investigations of research misconduct**

During the reporting period (2020-21), two formal investigations were undertaken in response to allegations of research misconduct. The allegations relate to authorship and IP (investigation complete – allegations not upheld) and plagiarism, including self-plagiarism (investigation complete – allegation upheld). As reported in the 2019-20 statement, two formal investigations had been conducted prior to this. These related to failure to follow ethical guidelines (2016-17 investigation complete - allegation upheld) and failure to recognise/report student falsification (2019-20 investigation complete – allegation not upheld).

### **6.3 Lessons learned**

As well as learning lessons from the formal investigations undertaken, consideration has been given to issues highlighted in dealing with allegations that progressed no further than an informal investigation or simply required clarification to address concerns. Key learnings include:

- Researcher guidance and training should ensure a good understanding of background and foreground IP, including the implications of bringing in co-authors from outside a project.
- The potential for new technologies to facilitate academic dishonesty, particularly plagiarism, on a unprecedented scale should be highlighted so that suspect activity can be picked up and addressed early (e.g. excessive rate of publication).
- Guidance on authorship should be expanded to promote best practice in line with discipline-specific norms and enable a robust and fair approach to allegations around author inclusion or exclusion.
- Greater alignment of the University's various ethics bodies would increase transparency and enhance record-keeping to enable early identification of potential issues as well as a timely and robust response to allegations of misconduct.
- Guidance on data storage and sharing should be updated regularly in light of issues arising (e.g. safeguards to prevent anonymised data becoming identifiable when combined with other sources).

## Senior Officer Appointments and Reappointments

1. This paper provides an update to Court on recent Senior Officer appointments. This includes the appointment of Gillian Doherty OBE as Chief Commercial Officer and two Associate Principal appointments that have been approved under Convener's Action since the last Court meeting. Court is requested to homologate the two Associate Principal appointments outlined below.

### **Appointment of Mrs Gillian Doherty OBE as Chief Commercial Officer**

2. We are delighted to confirm that Gillian Doherty OBE has recently been appointed as the University's new Chief Commercial Officer. Currently Chief Executive of The Data Lab, Gillian will join the University in February, taking responsibility for Innovation & Industry Engagement, Research & Knowledge Exchange Services, Campus Support and Marketing & Development. As a member of the Executive Team, she will work across the institution to drive forward the University's sector-leading activities with industry and support Scotland's and the UK's economic recovery from the global pandemic.
3. Gillian has been Chief Executive of The Data Lab for the past six years, an Innovation Centre with a mission to help Scotland maximise value from data and AI through collaboration, building skills and growing talent, and strengthening the thriving data science community. Gillian is also Deputy President of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, a trustee of BeYonder Involve charity and an industry advisor to several start-ups.

### **Reappointment of Professor Tim Bedford, Associate Principal (Research and Innovation)**

4. Professor Tim Bedford was appointed as Associate Principal (Research and Innovation) for a standard five-year term on 1 November 2016. Following a successful term in office the Principal has recommended the reappointment of Professor Bedford for a further five-year term with effect from 1 November 2021. Professor Bedford will continue to play a key role in the development and delivery of our Research and Innovation Strategy, further developing our International relationships and delivering our sustainability agenda.
5. The University's [Staff Appointment Protocols](#) state that Associate Principals shall be eligible for re-appointment, subject to the approval of Court on the recommendation of the Principal (the full initial appointment procedure need not apply). Re-appointments would normally be for periods of up to five years.
6. Following full consideration of the case for reappointment by the Deputy Convener of Court (Staff) and the Convener of Court, this reappointment was approved under Convener's Action for a further five-year term until 31 October 2026.

### **Appointment of Professor Atilla Incecik as Associate Principal (International Partnerships)**

7. As Court will be aware, it has been proposed that Professor Atilla Incecik, currently Executive Dean of Engineering, should take up a new position as Associate Principal (International Partnerships), with a brief centred on Internationalisation.
8. This role will support the successful delivery of our Vision 2025 strategy, focusing on internationalisation to help further develop our partnerships in China. The University will benefit from Professor Incecik's extensive experience and networks in this priority area and he will work closely with other senior officers on Executive Team to accelerate our internationalisation agenda.
9. Following recommendation of this appointment by the Principal and full consideration of the case in line with the [Staff Appointment Protocols](#), the Deputy Convener of Court (Staff) has approved

this for a one-year period and the Convener of Court has endorsed this appointment under Convener's Action.

### **Recommendations**

10. Court is invited to **homologate** the two Associate Principal appointments outlined above.



**SBS UAE branch campus: Country Manager & Authority to operate banking facilities**  
**[RESERVED ITEM]**

## **Executive Team Report to Court**

The Executive Team (ET) met on 4 & 19 October 2021 and 4 November 2021. The following key items were discussed and are provided here for Court to note:

### **1. Health and Safety moment and Covid-19 Updates**

Under the 'Safety Moment' led by the University Secretary & Compliance Officer, the Team took the opportunity at each meeting to discuss health, wellbeing and safety matters and Covid-19 related updates.

### **2. Pay and pensions**

ET received regular updates on national pay negotiations and the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS).

### **3. Investment stage-gating**

In line with enhanced cost control measures, ET received regular updates on investment stage-gating.

### **4. Student Recruitment**

ET received regular updates on student recruitment.

### **5. Graduation ceremonies**

ET received regular updates on planning for the November 2021 graduation ceremonies.

### **6. Values Survey**

ET received updates on the University Staff Values Survey 2021

### **7. Investment Opportunity: [RESERVED]**

ET considered an Investment Opportunity for **[RESERVED]** recognising significant strategic alignment with the University's strategic ambitions. ET approved the proposed investment.

### **8. Learning & Teaching Post-building Handover (Phase 2): Staffing Resources Requirements**

ET endorsed the proposed two-stage Phase 2 recruitment plan for the Learning & Teaching Building and endorsed progression with Phase 2a and related recruitment.

### **9. Strathclyde Innovation Forum – Grand Challenge update**

ET received an overview of ideas received from staff in response to the three Grand Challenge Themes: 'Key Covid Lessons Learned', 'Climate Change' and 'A Caring and Compassionate Employer'. For each Theme, priority actions for implementation were proposed. ET agreed the actions for implementation.

### **10. Strathclyde Return to Campus – APS survey results**

ET received a summary of the results of the Strathclyde Return to Campus APS pulse survey.

### **11. UK Research Concordats: Annual Reporting**

ET considered and recommended to Senate the Annual Research Integrity Statement 2020-21 and the First Annual Researcher Development Concordat Report.

## **12. Global Partner Locations**

ET considered an output of the “Globally Distinctive” Strathclyde Acceleration Team. The Team examined the use of Global Partner Locations as an innovative approach to enhancing the University’s international reach and capitalising on opportunities overseas. Following extensive discussion, the Team approved the implementation of a pilot project in South East Asia.

## **13. Sustainability Governance Review**

ET considered a proposed governance structure to ensure delivery of the University’s Net Zero target, KPI 16, from Vision 2025. The Team agreed the proposed sustainability governance structure and management process and that a Strategic Sustainability Steering Group be established. The Strategic Sustainability Steering Group would have oversight of all strategic aspects involved in the delivery of the University’s Net Zero targets, would provide guidance and oversight of the University’s Climate Change and Social Responsibility Policy and Plan and take senior-level action as needed.

## **14. Information Strategy Committee (ISC) Business Cases**

ET considered three ISC Business Cases. It was noted that the three projects were due to commence in January 2022 and that further work would be undertaken on risk analysis and interdependencies of the projects. In line with the investment stage gating process, the Vice-Principal and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) would further discuss the funding related to these business cases.

- 14.1.      The Digital Accessibility Legislation Compliance Project Business Case  
ET endorsed the approval of this project by the ISC and recommended the project to Court Business Group for final approval (in line with the Schedule of Delegated Authority for projects of this scale), for commencement in January 2022.
- 14.2.      The Oracle Applications GDPR Compliance Project Business Case  
ET approved the project for commencement in January 2022.
- 14.3.      The Mobile App Developments Enhancement & Upgrade Project Business Case  
ET approved the project for commencement in January 2022.

## **15. Conferencing and Events (C&E) – Phase Three Return Proposal**

ET approved proposals to the effect that:

- from October 4 to December 31, C&E should retain 1m social distancing for events, but lift the cap on numbers from 70 to 200;
- an exemption to this position be applied for events which take place in the lead up to and during COP26, temporarily removing the requirement to observe social distancing at 1m and/or limit delegate numbers to 200.

## **16. Going Concern assessment**

ET considered and approved the adoption of the Going Concern basis for the current Financial Statements 2020-21, noting that it is the responsibility of Audit & Risk Committee to recommend to Court that the Financial Statements be approved.

## **17. KPI 10 Update**

ET received an update on KPI 10, Key Strategic Relationships. The paper presented an updated definition, a proposed set of five relationship categories, steps to establishing a baseline and outcome measures for KPI 10. Executive Team approved the overall direction of travel set out in the paper, including the definitions and categories of partners, in order to facilitate the next stage of development.

## **18. Draft Financial Statements 2020-21**

The CFO presented the 2020-21 Draft Financial Statements to ET. ET considered the Financial Statements noting that it is the responsibility of Audit & Risk Committee to recommend to Court that the Financial Statements be approved. Members commended the Finance Team on their production of the Financial Statements for 2020-21.

## **19. Strategic Plan Progress Update**

ET considered the 2020-21 Year 2 Strategic Plan Progress Update for the University's 16 KPIs in Vision 2025, ahead of transmission to Court Business Group and Court.

## **20. SFC Outcome Agreement 2021-22 and Self-evaluation report 2020-21**

ET received an update on matters relating to the University's Outcome Agreement reporting to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). ET approved the draft Outcome Agreement Self-evaluation Report for 2020-21. The team also approved the draft Outcome Agreement for 2021-22. Members noted that Court approval for both reports would be sought at the November Court meeting, ahead of the SFC's deadline for submission.

## **21. Reports**

ET noted the following reports:

- Update report – Strathclyde Centre for Sustainable Development;
- Performance Development Group meeting reports;
- Strathclyde Safe 360 reports;
- Update report – Strathclyde Centre for Sustainable Development.

Senate met on 17 November 2021. The second meeting of Academic Year 2021-22 was again conducted as a hybrid meeting with approximately 34 members of Senate attending on campus in room 325 of the new Learning and Teaching Building, and 44 members attending via Zoom.

This report provides Court with key points from the Senate meeting.

Senate invites Court to **note** the following items considered by Senate on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

## 1. Report from Senate Business Committee

Senate Business Committee (SBC) noted at its meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> October that since the last meeting of Senate on 15 September 2021 the CPA subgroup had processed one agreement which is a renewal to an existing agreement between the Business School and the universities of Aberdeen and Glasgow, to deliver the MSc in Precision Medicine and Pharmacological Innovation. The report from the first annual joint meeting between a subgroup of the Quality Assurance Committee and the Collaborative Provision Subgroup, which took place in July 2021, was also noted.

Senate was invited to consider and approve the reports for the November Senate meeting. Senate approval was given where requested in the reports, and will be documented in the formal minute of the Senate meeting.

Senate homologated the following Convener's Action approved by the Principal on behalf of Senate since the last Senate meeting:

- A Memorandum of Understanding with Ulsan National Institute of Science and Technology (UNIST).

Senate endorsed a proposal to create a New Awards Recommendation Group, the key aims of which are to ensure consistency within the application of the academic governance requirements to support the recommendation of new Awards of the University, in line with the Statutes and Ordinances of the University and to recognise the academic governance processes supporting the conferring of subsidiary awards of Senate. The new group will report to Senate through the Senate Business Committee.

## 2. Principal's Report

The Principal provided a comprehensive report on news and items of interest since the last meeting, noting that this is the first week of **on-campus graduations at the Barony** in two years, with a total of 29 ceremonies being conducted by 26<sup>th</sup> November. In addition, the following key topics were covered:

- COP26, in particular the University's involvement in the various events that took place during 31<sup>st</sup> October and 12<sup>th</sup> November, with more than 50 events taking place on campus. Of particular note was former President Barack Obama's visit on 8<sup>th</sup> November. The Principal expressed his thanks to all colleagues involved in COP26 preparations and activity.
- COVID-19 latest, noting that to date the number of infections on campus has remained low but noting that in his statement to parliament, Deputy First Minister John Swinney said that the loading on the NHS is 'precarious and unpredictable'. The Student Executive's role in encouraging students to get vaccinated was acknowledged. The University Secretary and Compliance Officer updated Senate on her discussions with the Cabinet Secretary for

Education and Skills, Shirley-Anne Somerville, on the measures in place on campus, noting that the University's cautious and measured approach will continue, particularly through the winter months.

- Student and staff Wellbeing, highlighting the recent communication from the Director of Student Experience to all students pointing to the support services available. Professor Tim Sharpe was thanked for chairing a Scottish Government advisory group to improve ventilation and for his wider contribution to society on the subject of ventilation.
- Transformational gift from Dr Charles Huang, with £30m of the gift supporting the construction of the new TIC East building in the Technology and Innovation Zone and £20m being used to enable the creation of The Stephen Young Institute for International Business, The Stephen Young Global Leaders Scholarship Programme, and The Stephen Young Entrepreneurship Awards.
- Strathclyde Innovation Forum.
- The University will shortly be launching a new programme – the Strathclyde Leadership Talent Development Programme – as part of its investment in talent and efforts to increase the diversity of the leadership group.
- The appointment of Gillian Docherty OBE as the new Chief Commercial Officer.
- Update on the forthcoming strategic session of Court.
- The launch of a new careers module specifically for student carers, of which the University has over 1,000.
- Industry and external engagement news, specifically that Strathclyde has become a partner in the new Newton Flight Academy at Glasgow Science Centre. This will be a permanent classroom used to teach students aviation STEM concepts and will be launched in Spring 2022.
- Campus update, noting that Estates Committee recently approved the business case for the first phase of the Heart of the Campus project. Also of note was the extensive work that had taken place in the Halls of Residence earlier this year. In addition, the University is working with Strath Union to create a new mural on the Graham Hills Building to celebrate Black History month.
- Recent research wins.

### **3. Substantive Items of Business**

Senate welcomed presentations on the following items:

- i. The Deputy Associate Principal, Learning and Teaching and the Director of Education Enhancement presented Senate with an overview of the E-First (education-Future Innovation and Reflection on Strathclyde Teaching) Framework. The Deputy Associate Principal focused specifically on the feedback received from students regarding on campus and blended learning and progress to date on planning for the Semester 1 Formal Assessment Period. A campus occupancy update was also provided, noting that within the Student Experience Directorate teams operating on flexible / shift rotas to increase on-campus support and that by January, all services will have staff on campus. The Director of Education Enhancement highlighted the increase in informal study space now available on campus noting that there are 1500 drop in study spaces throughout campus as of now, which will increase again before the end of the formal assessment period. Preparations for the formal assessment period and for the start of Semester 2 were also outlined together with an overview of next steps.
- ii. The Strath Union President provided reflections on COP26, noting Strath Union's involvement in many of the activities held in the Union, specifically highlighting the visit by

President Obama, who was given lifetime membership of Strath Union. The Union was the first university in the UK to sign the [Plant Based Treaty](#) and also hosted [After the Pandemic](#). The Student Parliament recently passed the Climate Policy which has 4 key points:

1. For the University to remain authentic and avoid greenwashing,
2. To explore the creation of campus-wide climate assembly,
3. To commit to be a good leader in the sector, and
4. For a comprehensive climate education to be embedded within the curriculum.

It was noted that the Vice President Community is currently working with Dr Scott Strachan, Co-Director of the VIP for Sustainable Development Programme on this last point.

In addition, an update was provided on the number of Faculty representative vacancies currently being filled. A recent Return to Campus Survey showed that 71% of student respondents want on-campus teaching. Winter graduations are currently taking place and the feedback from students has been positive. The President thanked the University for its proactive and supportive response to students' personal circumstances.

Furthermore, Professor Tim Bedford thanked Strath Union for its role in COP26 and in turn, the Principal thanked Professor Bedford for coordinating the many University activities in relation to COP26.

- iii. The Acting Director of Strategic Planning presented Senate with an overview of recruitment for AY2021-22 so far in the context of the University's Vision 2025 ambitions and the KPIs and targets it relates to, as well as the ongoing impact of COVID-19 and the reclassification of EU status to international status as a result of Brexit. In terms of UG recruitment, the University has exceeded its RUK target, noting also that we continue to increase the number of students from a Widening Access background reaching a total of 1275 students in AY 2021-22 (our Vision 2025 target is 1300). With regards to PGT recruitment, we will continue to recruit PGT students to January. PGR student intake is more challenging however it was noted that the University is looking to generate further demand/applications, and is working to ensure eligible students register. The University Chief Financial Officer presented Senate with an overview of the University's financial position, noting that while uncertainty remains on the timing of the pandemic conclusion, the University has a strong liquidity position underpinning our current financial health. Forecast accuracy and monitoring is key to allow the University to capitalise on opportunities as they arise.
- iv. Dr Scott Strachan, Co-Director of the VIP for Sustainable Development Programme and Dr Louise Logan, VIP for Sustainable Development Programme Coordinator presented on Education for Sustainable Development at Strathclyde highlighting the key activities currently taking place within the University in terms of awareness raising, staff development and academic practice with the aim of embedding sustainable development into the curriculum and culture. Aligned within the University's Vision 2025 and other key strategic objectives, knowledge and understanding of sustainable development is vital for the type of global citizen that Strathclyde is committed to nurturing and producing. As well as attracting growth in the number of projects available, the VIP for Sustainable Development Programme has achieved a number of notable awards in recent years including:
  - Winner of 2019 UK & Ireland Green Gown Award for Student Engagement and subsequently International Green Gown Award in the same category in 2020
  - Winner of Campus Sustainability Research Award in 2020 from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education

#### **4. New and Revised Policies**

Senate approved revisions to the following University policies:

- Policy and Procedure for the Quinquennial Review of Academic Provision;
- Research Code of Practice;
- PGR Leave Support Policy; and
- Code of Practice for PGR Study and Guidance for PGR Students who support Teaching.

#### **5. Reserved business**

Senators noted the Minutes and outcome of a recent Senate Discipline Committee hearing.

End



## **Court Business Group Report to Court**

**The following items were discussed by Court Business Group (CBG) on 12 November 2021 and are provided here for Court to note.**

### **1. 2020/21 Financial Statements**

The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) provided an overview of the annual financial statements, which had been presented in near-final form to CBG. The Covid-19 pandemic had had a significant impact on income through its effect on student numbers and other income, including from residences and conference and catering services. There had been effective mitigations of this loss of income, in particular through the newly established courses with January commencement. On the expenditure side, the University continued to be an investing institution. The completion of the 2020 valuation of the USS pension scheme had resulted in a disclosure requirement for a non-adjusting Post Balance Sheet Event, which will be the case across the sector. The University was in a net cash position at year-end and its debt covenants showed good headroom, giving a strong base upon which to enter the 2021/22 academic year.

### **2. Q1 Business Report**

CBG considered the Q1 Business Report and financial forecast. The continued impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on student recruitment, contrary to expectations earlier in the year, had created a deficit relative to the budget. Tuition fees had recovered significantly relative to the previous year, but short of budget targets. A process to mitigate this shortfall, through both cost control measures and income generation, was in progress. The University's debt covenant position had been maintained, following the in-year benefit of the Foundation Donation. The balance sheet forecast showed the University to be in good financial health throughout the current financial year. Courses with January intakes were attracting high levels of interest, as shown in applications and deposits received. CBG also received a summary of the non-financial elements of the business report.

CBG members noted the forecasts and the plan to address the shortfall relative to budget. Members suggested clarificatory amendments for the presentation to Court and it was agreed that an additional document would be provided to Court to guide members through key aspects of the financial modelling.

### **3. Strategic Plans Progress Report**

CBG received a summary of progress against the University's strategic KPIs. Alongside progress, necessary changes to the definitions of certain KPIs were noted, including the development of KPI10, Key Strategic Relationships, from a qualitative basis towards quantitative reporting.

Members noted that progress against KPI 3, Student Satisfaction, had been driven by the University's excellent performance in the National Student Survey (NSS). It was agreed that a full summary of NSS performance would be supplied to Court and reflected in presentations to the Court strategy session.

### **4. Draft Outcome Agreement Self-evaluation Report for 2020-21 and draft Outcome Agreement for 2021-22**

CBG reviewed drafts of the University's Outcome Agreement Self-evaluation Report for 2020-21 and Outcome Agreement for 2021-22. Members noted that the former strongly reflected the University's distinctiveness and wide-ranging achievements. It was noted that Court would receive a final version of the Outcome Agreement for approval ahead of the SFC's late November deadline for submission, which was earlier than in previous years.

## **5. Digital Accessibility Legislation Compliance**

CBG **approved** a proposed Digital Accessibility Legislation Compliance project for commencement in January 2022, on the recommendation of Information Strategy Committee, with the endorsement of the Executive Team. This required the approval of CBG under the Schedule of Delegated Authority, owing to the level of funding required.

## **6. Draft Court agenda, incorporating strategy session programme**

CBG **approved** the agenda and the strategy session programme, subject to minor adjustments.

## **Court Membership Group Report to Court**

**The following decision was taken by Court Membership Group on 12 November 2021.**

### **1. Committee Appointment**

Court Membership Group (CMG) **recommended to Court** the appointment of Professor Jan Sefcik to Court Business Group, to fill the vacant position in that group for a staff member of Court. The position had remained vacant hitherto as a result of the unusually late elections to two staff member of Court positions in this academic year.

## Report to Court from Audit and Risk Committee

The Audit and Risk Committee met on 4 November 2021.

**Audit and Risk Committee makes a recommendation to Court in regard to the following item:**

### 1. Financial Statements 2020/21

Prior to the meeting, the members of the Audit and Risk Committee met in closed session with the Head of Internal audit and the External Auditor to discuss the audit and draft Financial Statements. This allowed the Internal and External Auditors the opportunity to raise any issues of concern with members of the Audit and Risk Committee. No matters were reported to the Audit and Risk Committee as requiring further consideration.

The draft Financial Statements and accompanying commentary from Finance were presented during the main meeting. Following discussion amongst members, the presentation from Finance, the assurance provided by the report from the External Auditors and the circulation of revised documents, as requested by Members, the Audit and Risk Committee **recommends** to Court that:

- I. The draft Financial Statements for 2020/21 be approved (subject to final minor amendments and presentational details); and
- II. The relevant officers be authorised to sign the printed statements in due course.

### 2. Review of External Auditor's Performance

The Committee noted that the 2020/21 audit process had gone well and that the performance of the External Auditors had been professional and diligent. Audit Committee **recommends** to Court that Ernst & Young LLP be retained as the University's External Auditor for the audit of the 2021/22 Financial Statements.

**The following items were discussed by the Audit and Risk Committee and are provided here for Court to note:**

### 3. COVID-19 Update

The USCO updated members on the current situation and the plans underway for semester 2. The following points were noted:

- Cases of Covid-19 were at low levels both in University residences and in the wider University community;
- There was no evidence of on campus transmission;
- The University was implementing measures beyond the Scottish Government guidance;
- There was concern that an uptick in infection rates may follow COP26, taking place in Glasgow, but this had been anticipated and the University was ready to deal with it if necessary;
- Currently there was relatively low physical attendance at blended learning activities but it was planned to increase capacity in semester 2;
- Other events were restarting on campus with over 90% of potential graduands registering to graduate in person at congregations later in the month;
- The University was also committed to in person graduation ceremonies for those who had graduated during 2020 or in summer 2021.

#### **4. Draft Financial Statements 2020/21**

**[RESERVED ITEM]**

## **5. Commentary from Finance Directorate**

The Committee **noted** the commentary provided by the Finance Directorate.

## **6. Report from External Auditors**

The representative from the External Auditors outlined the results of their audit of the financial statements of the University for 2020/21, reinforcing the earlier summary provided by the Chief Financial Officer and providing details on the specific areas where audit scrutiny had been focused. The following points were highlighted:

- The audit work was substantially complete with only a detailed review of the Financial Statements and review of the Going Concern work to be completed. It was anticipated that this would be finalised within the usual timeframe allowing sign off in late November;

- The External Auditor anticipated issuing an unqualified audit opinion on the University's financial statements;
- There had been no material modifications or significant adjustments to the scope of the audit as outlined in the audit plan;
- There were no unadjusted or adjusted audit differences arising from the audit, no misstatements and no matters to bring to the attention of ARC;
- Although audit procedures were ongoing, regarding the accounting for the defined benefit obligations of the Strathclyde Pension Fund, there were no issues to note around the valuation of pension assets. The fund auditors' report was awaited but there were no material matters to bring to the attention of ARC;
- The Auditor confirmed their contentment with the model used to determine the USS pension deficit provision which was consistent across the sector;
- They were also content that Senior Officer emoluments had been correctly disclosed;
- There were no matters to report with respect to the University's status as a going concern and the Auditor anticipated that their opinion would remain unqualified in this respect once the outstanding audit work had been completed;
- The External Auditor confirmed that the representation letter which would be signed on behalf of the University was a standard letter;
- 2020/21 was the first year audit procedures around estimates were required to comply with the revised auditing standard - ISA (UK) 540. This required additional detail in the representation letter.

## **7. IAS Activity Report**

The Committee noted that the reviews of Senior Management Expenses and of the GCID Financial Model had been completed along with the Management Action Update Report and final Internal Audit Annual Report. Work had commenced on the reviews of Health & Safety Departmental Compliance, Staff Health and Wellbeing and the Modern Slavery Act.

IAS had performed sample testing of the controls in relation to claiming, authorising and processing of senior staff business expenses and the use of University Traveller Cards (UTC). The Review was extended to include Deputy Associate Principals and Professional Services Directors and 100% of expense claims and UTC transactions were tested. The overall assurance evaluation for the review was Reasonable Assurance and IAS highlighted a number of opportunities for enhancements to the existing control framework.

Following approval of the postponement of the planned One Ocean Hub Review, IAS had drafted the scoping document for the review of NMIS Governance Processes to share with the NMIS Executive Team for comments. The Review was expected to take the form of a deep dive review of the Key Controls checklist for NMIS.

## **8. IAS Management Action Update Report**

The Head of IAS noted that, since the last Management Action Update report, 17 recommendations had been implemented and there were 96 outstanding recommendations, 40% of which were not yet due. There were 2 high risk actions overdue with respect to the 2018/19 USSA Review. These actions related to business continuity work being undertaken. Following the recent relocation to the new building it was expected that these would be closed before the next report. It was also anticipated that 10 of 16 medium risks would also be closed during the next reporting period.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had resulted in delays in the implementation of a number of actions, particularly in relation to the reviews of Business Continuity, Risk Management and Student Residences. Peers across the sector had reported similar or more significant delays.

#### **9. Review of the GCID Financial Model**

The Head of IAS introduced the Review of the GCID Financial Model report noting that an overall assurance evaluation had not been assigned and audit recommendations had not been raised. IAS had highlighted several observations for management to consider as they continued to refine the Model prior to seeking Court approval. A number of these were already known to the Finance Directorate and would be reflected in future iterations of the Model

It was noted that the Financial Model had been produced to a high standard of quality with only two calculation errors identified during testing which had been addressed. The Finance Directorate had adopted a prudent approach to developing the Financial Model, taking cognisance of lessons learned from the previous process to produce a standardised template and detailed guidance to assist the Clusters through the process. Cluster leads, who were academic staff members, had led on projections with Finance providing the challenge to these. Previous experience within the University and existing commercial income achievements from Inovo were used to benchmark projections.

#### **10. Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report 2020/21 (Annex A)**

The Audit & Risk Committee noted and **approved** the Annual Report 2020/21 and its submission to Court, subject to the Going Concern section being updated.

#### **11. IAS Annual Report 2020/21 (Final)**

Audit & Risk Committee noted and **approved** the amended version of the IAS Annual Report 2020/21,

#### **12. IAS CHEIA Quality Assurance Assessment Results**

Audit & Risk Committee **noted** the results of the Quality Assurance assessment.



# UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE

## AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT TO COURT

### Year ended 31 July 2021

This is the University of Strathclyde Audit & Risk Committee's Annual Report for 2021 covering the financial year 1 August 2020 to 31 July 2021.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 As a leading international technological university, Strathclyde has a very clear focus on the delivery of world-leading research, knowledge exchange and teaching and learning programmes augmented by partnerships with business, industry and government. Established as the place of useful learning, with a mission to make the world better-educated, prosperous, healthy, fair and secure, the University continues to live by its socially progressive values today.
- 1.2 The University's investment in campus infrastructure and management information systems continues in order to develop a dynamic, technology-enabled and sustainable environment for staff, students and partners. It is also pursuing new opportunities in support of its ambitions and strategic objectives, building upon existing strengths.
- 1.3 The University has had to respond to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and resultant lockdowns to ensure the Safety, Health and Wellbeing of staff and students. The University sought to be agile, innovative and evidence based in its decision making taking the appropriate time to respond to external changes. During the course of the pandemic the University continued to focus on risk management, control and governance to support the operational management of the University.
- 1.4 The Audit & Risk Committee has continued to fulfil its role by providing an objective assessment to the University Court on the adequacy and effectiveness of the University's systems of internal control. Under the Audit & Risk Committee's direction, the continued review of management practices, operations, systems and procedures (including risk management, control and governance) by the Internal Audit Service (IAS) allowed for the timely identification of risks, opportunities, and issues. In addition, Audit & Risk Committee members met with leaders of key initiatives throughout the year.
- 1.5 During 2020/21, under the Audit & Risk Committee's direction, IAS continued to focus resources on the three major aspects of audit work – *key risk based audits, recurrent audit activities, monitoring and advisory work*. Implementation of the University's Accountability & Assurance Framework helped to support a continually developing culture of good governance and sound internal control. Through this framework, the Principal is supported in the requirement for him to certify the Statement of Internal Control in the University's Annual Report and Financial Statements by Assurance Statements provided by the Chief Financial Officer, University Secretary and Compliance Officer, Chief Commercial Officer, Vice Principal and the Executive Deans.
- 1.6 In light of the unprecedented and ongoing nature of the Covid-19 pandemic and its impacts on funding and key income streams, there was a significantly increased focus on Going concern during 2020/21. The University conducted an assessment of going concern and modelled a severe but plausible downside scenario based on extended periods of disruption. In this scenario the University was still forecasting significant liquidity throughout the assessment period. ARC was content to approve the adoption of the going concern basis for the preparation of the 2020/21 Financial Statements.

## **2 MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE**

- 2.1 The membership of the Committee in 2020/21 is detailed below with the Terms of Reference (as approved by the Committee on 20 May 2021) appearing in Appendix 1. A minor amendment was made to the Terms of Reference, at the 20 May 2021 meeting, to increase the number of members the Committee could co-opt.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Term of Office</b>
Paula Galloway (Convener)	Lay Member of Court	01/08/18 – 31/07/21
Jeremy Beeton	Lay Member of Court	01/08/19 – 31/07/21
Alison Culpán	Lay Member of Court	01/08/18 – 31/07/21
Brenda Wyllie	Lay Member of Court	01/08/19 – 31/07/22
Kerry Alexander	Co-opted Member	01/08/19 – 31/07/23
Ian Reid	Co-opted Member	01/08/19 – 31/07/23

## **3 MEETINGS IN 2020/21**

- 3.1 The Committee met on five occasions during the year. Due to the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic all meetings were held by videoconference.

2 September 2020  
6 November 2020  
20 January 2021 (Annual Workshop)  
18 March 2021  
20 May 2021

- 3.2 The Principal, the Head of Internal Audit, the Chief Financial Officer, the University Secretary and Compliance Officer and the Committee Manager were also in attendance. Other members of senior staff were invited to attend when appropriate. Representatives from the University's External Auditors, Ernst & Young LLP also attended all meetings during the year, including the Committee's Annual Workshop.
- 3.3 The Committee members took the opportunity to meet privately, prior to the start of each meeting, without University officers in attendance.
- 3.4 Prior to the November 2021 meeting (where the 2020/21 Financial Statements were discussed) the members of the Committee met in closed session with the Internal Auditor and with the External Auditors.
- 3.5 Due to the restrictions in force during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Committee was unable to visit any areas of the University as part of its 2020/21 programme of meetings. A planned visit to the Continuous Improvement Directorate, which had been postponed in early 2020, was replaced by a presentation from the Director at the Annual Workshop along with an opportunity for questions and discussion.
- 3.6 The Committee also received presentations from members of senior staff on a range of strategically important activities and key areas in the Corporate Risk Register, providing an opportunity to scrutinise the arrangements for governance and internal control:
- Covid-19 Pandemic and the University's response – the University Secretary & Compliance Officer updated Audit & Risk Committee, regularly, on the University's response to the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and resultant lockdowns;

- Information Security - the Director of Information Services described the cyber risks facing the University and the processes and plans in place to mitigate these. (see paragraphs 10.6 – 10.7);
- Research Excellence Framework - the Research Policy Manager took Members through a summary of the preparations underway for REF2021, the revised timetable for submission and the impact of the pandemic and associated delays on preparations;
- Leaving the EU - the Director of Strategy & Policy updated Members on what the University was doing to prepare for and manage the risks associated with the wide-ranging impacts of Brexit;
- Outstanding Education and Student Experience – the Vice Principal, Director, Education Enhancement, Deputy Associate Principals (Learning & Teaching) and Vice Dean Academic (Faculty of Science) took Members through the impact the Covid 19 pandemic had had on the student experience and academic provision, how the University had responded and the preparations underway for the academic year 2021/22 and beyond.

#### **4 INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE 2020/21**

- 4.1 The University is required by the SFC's Financial Memorandum to have an effective internal audit function. This is provided at the University of Strathclyde by an in-house team. The Unit had a staff complement, during the 2020/21 financial year, comprised of the Head of Internal Audit and two Senior Internal Auditors (2.4 staff FTE) which was considered adequate for delivery of the 2020/21 Audit Plan.

##### **Role of the Internal Audit Service**

- 4.2 The primary role of the IAS is to provide independent and objective assurance to the Principal and Court, via the Audit & Risk Committee, on the adequacy and effectiveness of the University's systems of risk management, governance and internal control. This is obtained through conducting audit reviews of management practices, operations, systems and procedures (including risk management, control and governance), and measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of these controls and systems in achieving the University's strategic objectives.

##### **Internal Audit Plan**

- 4.3 In May each year, during the drafting of the Internal Audit Assurance Strategy and Plan for the following year, an early draft is shared with Audit & Risk Committee members for review and comment. At its May meeting the Committee considers and endorses the Internal Audit Assurance Strategy and Plan for the coming year.
- 4.4 The Strategy and Plan is prepared using a risk based approach and aims primarily to ensure assurance can be given about the key risks faced by the University in achieving its objectives. This involves reviewing the University's Strategy and Corporate Risk Register as well as the subsidiary registers held within individual Directorates, Faculties, Schools and Departments. In developing the plan, IAS also takes into account its inherent knowledge and experience of the University's governance and control systems including the results of previous audit activities. For the 2020/21 and 2021/22 plans IAS also considered the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in planning the work to be undertaken.
- 4.5 In addition to the risk-based plan, IAS also performs annual recurring audit work designed to meet the requirements of the Scottish Funding Council's Financial Memorandum and Outcome Agreement.

- 4.6 IAS continued to manage the University's Assurance Statement process by distributing the Key Controls Checklist and collating the results from individual departments and directorates. This process is designed to ensure management remains vigilant about its governance and control responsibilities in key areas. (see 4.12 – 4.17)
- 4.7 IAS also continued to monitor key developments across the University that impacted on governance, control and risk management.
- 4.8 The Strategy and Plan was designed to be fluid and updated to reflect changing priorities or emerging risks. Any proposed changes would be approved by the Audit & Risk Committee.

#### **Annual Report from Internal Audit Service 2020/21 and Audit Assessment**

- 4.9 The Committee received the IAS Annual Report 2020/21 at its meeting on 9 September 2021. The Report served to provide an independent opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the University's arrangements for governance, risk management and internal control. It also provided a summary of the activity and resources of the IAS during 2020/21.
- 4.10 In its Report, the IAS provided assurance that the University had a framework of controls in place that provided reasonable assurance regarding the organisation's governance framework, internal controls, effective and efficient achievement of objectives and the management of key risks. This assessment was based on:
- all reviews undertaken as part of the 2020/21 Internal Audit Plan;
  - any scope limitations imposed by management;
  - matters arising from previous reviews and the extent of follow-up action taken including 2020/21 reviews;
  - expectations of senior management, the Audit & Risk Committee and other stakeholders;
  - the extent to which internal controls address the University's risk management / control framework;
  - the effect of any significant changes in the University's objectives or systems;
  - the internal audit coverage achieved to date; and
  - the signed Statements of Assurance provided by Heads of Department or equivalent, Directors, Executive Deans, the University Secretary & Compliance Officer, Chief Financial Officer, and Chief Commercial Officer.
- 4.11 IAS confirmed that there had been no scope limitations imposed by management on the delivery of the 2020/21 Internal Audit Plan.

#### **Accountability & Assurance Framework (Key Controls Checklist)**

- 4.12 This self-assessment document covers key areas of internal control and governance. Following consultation with colleagues across the University, the Key Control Checklist was reviewed and refreshed to reflect changes in University, regulatory and legislative requirements in 2021. The checklist was issued to every Head of Department/School and Professional Services Director, and a number of other managers identified as being in charge of significant stand-alone functional areas, for completion by end of July 2021.
- 4.13 IAS reviewed the returns to identify areas of risk or potential weakness and followed up on any anomalies and queries raised by staff. IAS also summarised the outputs of the checklists and collated useful feedback to Professional Services teams (such as Cyber Security and Human Resources) for their own information and follow up.

- 4.14 As in 2019/20, IAS review of the completed checklists noted a number of alterations to embedded key control practices due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These included: alternative right to work check arrangements; alternative onboarding activities for new staff members; changes to UKVI student monitoring; and the inability to conduct onsite departmental H&S checks. The altered working practices were considered reasonable given the remote working arrangements over the course of the year.
- 4.15 At the request of the Audit & Risk Committee, IAS performed spot checks of a selected area of the Key Controls Checklist. Budget Monitoring and Reporting was selected in 2020/21, across a sample of twelve departments. IAS reviewed the responses provided on the Checklist with the results of the work undertaken at departmental level during the IAS Review of Budget Monitoring in November 2020. No exceptions were noted during this review.
- 4.16 Statements of Assurance were provided to the Executive Deans, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Commercial Officer and the University Secretary and Compliance Officer. These officers in turn signed Statements of Assurance addressed to the Principal, Audit & Risk Committee and University Treasurer to confirm compliance with key University policies and procedures within their area of control.
- 4.17 This provides the Principal, as signatory of the University's Annual accounts, with an additional degree of confidence that the important internal controls are operating effectively throughout the University. The process also serves as a means by which any areas of concern can be referred upwards for consideration at a higher level. The Audit & Risk Committee was apprised of the details of this process for 2020/21 and provided with the signed Statements of Assurance from Deans, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Commercial Officer, Vice Principal and the University Secretary and Compliance Officer.

#### **Internal Audit Performance**

- 4.18 The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) were updated in April 2017 and state that the Chief Audit Executive must develop and maintain a Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme that covers all aspects of the internal audit activity. The programme must be designed to enable an evaluation of the internal audit activity's conformance with the Standards and an evaluation of whether internal auditors apply the Code of Ethics. The programme should also assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the internal audit activity and identify opportunities for improvement. The programme must include both internal and external assessments, with an external assessment required at least once in every 5 years.
- 4.19 Separately, the Council for Higher Education Internal Auditors (CHEIA) developed a self-assessment tool for Internal Audit Services in the Higher Education sector in January 2014, updated in April 2021. CHEIA notes that the PSIAS requirement for an external assessment can be discharged via completion of this tool with independent, external validation which is evidence based. CHEIA updated the self-assessment tool in April 2021 to ensure full alignment to the Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors Standards and to improve functionality.
- 4.20 The Head of IAS undertook an external assessment in 2018 and, following discussion with the Audit & Risk Committee Chair, agreed to undertake more frequent external assessments than the PSIAS standards required. In order to achieve this, the Head of IAS took part in a peer-reviewed, evidence-based Quality Assurance Assessment in July 2021 with three other HEIs.

- 4.21 This concluded that, for the 60 questions asked, the Strathclyde IAS displayed leading practice in 51 areas, met expectations in 8, had one developing area and no areas considered immature. The one developing area related to specialist skills within the IAS Team. The size of the team meant that it would not be possible to address this area. The risk is mitigated by the option to procure outsourced skills should the need arise.
- 4.22 The Head of Internal Audit utilised the results of the 2018 external assessment to produce an action plan for improvements during 2019/20. This process was repeated during 2020/21 and further improvement work is planned for 2021/22. This has resulted in a pattern of improved results over the past three years.

## **5 EXTERNAL AUDIT**

### **External Auditors**

- 5.1 Following their re-appointment in 2019/20 for a period of five years, Ernst & Young LLP continued to act as External Auditors to the University.
- 5.2 Mr Stephen Reid fulfilled the role of Audit Partner for 2020/21 and Mr Rob Jones was the Engagement Manager.

### **Audit Related Assurance Services and Non-Recurring Audit Services Provided by the External Auditor**

- 5.3 In 2020/21, the audit fee was £ 71,100, with an additional £12,000 agreed fee variation, plus VAT totalling £99,720. Other assurance services were also provided by the External Auditor, in the year, relating to loans (including European Investment Bank), discretionary funds and Trusts of £26,400. The total value of audit and audit related assurance services provided was £126,120.

### **External Audit Plan 2020/21**

- 5.4 At its May 2021 meeting the Committee considered and approved the External Auditors' Audit Plan for 2020/21, including the proposed approach for the audit of the 2020/21 financial statements. This was aligned with the requirements of the auditing standards and other professional requirements and also aligned with the Audit & Risk Committee's service expectations.
- 5.5 The key issues which drove the University's financial statement risks were unchanged from previous years. Key areas of focus included risk of fraud in revenue recognition or management override of controls, going concern, senior officer disclosures and accounting for pension obligations, valuation of capital development programmes and defined benefit obligations.

### **Review of Performance of External Auditors**

- 5.6 At its November 2021 meeting, the Audit & Risk Committee considered and discussed the performance of the External Auditors. Overall, the view was that the External Auditors were performing well and the Committee was satisfied with their work. The Committee recommended to Court that Ernst & Young LLP be appointed as External Auditor for the 2021/22 financial year.

## **6 RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 6.1 In accordance with its Terms of Reference, the Committee kept under review the effectiveness of the University's risk management arrangements, receiving and discussing the Corporate Risk Register at regular intervals throughout 2020/21. The Committee was satisfied that processes were in place to ensure the identification of key risks and that appropriate mitigating actions were planned and undertaken in response.

In addition, a number of risk owners and senior officers were invited to attend meetings to discuss the management and mitigation of selected strategic risks (see 3.6 above).

- 6.2 A risk register which contained additional risks associated with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was presented, along with the Corporate Risk Register, in 2019/20 and early 2020/21 and discussed at Audit & Risk Committee.
- 6.3 Due to the ongoing nature of the pandemic and the resulting shift to a new 'business as usual', the decision had been taken to review both risk registers to extract the current top risks to the University's strategic objectives and establish one Corporate Risk Register based around the identified categories. This combined Risk Register was presented to Audit & Risk Committee at its meeting on 18 March 2021. The Committee was satisfied that processes were in place to ensure the identification of key risks and that appropriate mitigating actions were planned in response.
- 6.4 The risk assurance framework was discussed in the context of risk management and the ongoing work on the review of risk appetite across the University. The Committee also received papers showing where Strathclyde sat in relation to other institutions in key risk areas and the role of Senate and the control measures in place to mitigate the risks to the delivery of an outstanding education and student experience.
- Impact of the UK's departure from the EU**
- 6.5 The UK's departure from the EU was prominent in the University's Risk Register and mitigations were in place. A Strathclyde EU Exit Working and Advisory Group, convened by the Head of the European Policies Research Centre with faculty and student input, had been created along with a Brexit No Deal Business Continuity Group convened by the USCO.
- 6.6 Following the signing on the deal between Britain and the European Union, the Director of Strategy & policy updated ARC on what the University was doing to prepare for and manage the risks associated with the wide-ranging impacts (see 3.6 above). The deal with the EU provided some certainty in key areas. The University would continue mitigating actions and to search for and take advantage of any opportunities.

## **7 VALUE FOR MONEY**

- 7.1 The University's Internal Audit Service (IAS) has, as a key objective in every audit review, the aim of ensuring that the University obtains best value from the use of its resources and includes in every review consideration of VFM and awareness of fraud and corruption risks. Some reviews were also undertaken with a clear focus on value for money issues. Recent reviews in this category include:
- Review of International Travel;
  - Review of Authority to Appoint (ATA) Process;
  - Review of Budget Monitoring;
  - Review of Estates Maintenance; and
  - Review of Procurement Contract Management.
- 7.2 The Audit & Risk Committee monitors VFM in its review of all IAS reports. The Committee also reviews the University's annual submission regarding Transparent Approach to Costing and questions Senior Officers on the underlying information. The Institutional Efficiency return is also reviewed by ARC and the results of the most recent review confirmed that the University exceeded the target set by SFC.

- 7.3 The University is making a significant continuing investment in Information Systems and Infrastructure, with the objectives specifically requiring the delivery of 'efficient and effective services which provide value for money to the institution'. ARC has had an ongoing interest in this area with the Student Information Management System project being a standing item on the agenda and future update on the progress of the 2025 digital strategy expected during 2021/22.
- 7.4 The University's Continuous Improvement Directorate provides leadership and direction to the University's continuous improvement activity and national Higher Education agenda including value for money. The Directorate has undertaken specific improvement reviews as well as supporting and coaching continuous improvement projects in a number of areas. ARC was due to visit the Directorate in March 2020 but was prevented by the Covid 19 pandemic. However, the Director presented to the Committee at its workshop in January 2021.

## **8 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

- 8.1 As part of its review of the Financial Statements, the Audit & Risk Committee reviewed the draft Statement on Corporate Governance and Internal Control at its meeting on 9 September 2021 before it was incorporated into the Financial Statements.
- 8.2 At its meeting on 4 November 2021, the Committee provided scrutiny of the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2021, in the presence of the External Auditors. A pre-meeting with the Internal and External Auditors (see 3.4 above) provided the opportunity to raise any issues of concern with members of the Audit & Risk Committee.

### **Going concern**

- 8.3 In light of the ongoing effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and its potential impacts on funding and key income streams, there was an increased focus in this area. The University conducted an assessment of going concern which included consideration of:
- the current and developing environment in which the University operates;
  - the University's liquidity through the assessment period – demonstrated through a detailed monthly cash flow forecast throughout the assessment period;
  - key assumptions made by management around the future financial performance of the University, in particular:
    - assumptions around future student intake, in particular overseas students, for both 2021/22 and the following academic year;
    - assumptions around other income streams for both 2021/22 and the following academic year;
    - assumptions around increases in pension contributions, including those subsequent to changes from the finalisation of the 2020 USS valuation, and National Insurance; and
    - assumptions around other key cashflows over the review period.
  - Evidence of compliance with loan covenants at 31 July 2021 and forecast compliance with loan covenants through the going concern period.
- 8.4 A risk adjusted budget for 2021/22 and financial forecast for 2022/23 formed the basis of the going concern assessment which was subject to scrutiny and approval by the Audit and Risk Committee and Court.
- 8.5 The risk adjusted budget modelling work shows that the University will maintain significant forecast cash reserves and will be able to adhere to the covenants for the period from approval of these financial statements to 31 July 2023 with minimum liquidity of £151.4 million.



- 8.6 In addition, the University has also modelled a severe but plausible downside scenario based on further increases in pension contributions and the possibility of an economic downturn following COVID-19 with related impacts on tuition fees, other income, utilities, ongoing COVID-19 related costs and other expenditure. In this scenario, the University forecasts sufficient liquidity to settle all contractual liabilities, while maintaining significant liquidity throughout the going concern assessment period to 31 July 2023. Minimum liquidity headroom throughout being £85.6 million at 31 July 2023.
- 8.7 Having taken these factors into account, ARC is content that the University has adequate resources to continue in operation until at least 31 July 2023 and for this reason was content to approve the adoption of the going concern basis for the preparation of the 2020/21 Financial Statements.
- 8.8 The considerable effort required to finalise the financial statements in the current challenging environment was recognised by the ARC.

## **9 EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE CONTROL ENVIRONMENT**

- 9.1 The ARC was briefed by management on the University's response to Covid-19 regularly throughout 2020/21. The University recognised the importance of ensuring that robust controls continued to be in place despite altered working practices due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A supplementary risk register had been developed dedicated to risks relating to the Covid-19 outbreak which sat alongside the existing risk register for the initial part of the pandemic before being merged with the existing risk register.
- 9.2 Key compliance requirements continued to be addressed during the pandemic, through robust processes and oversight including:
- Court, Senate, Executive Team and committees of Senate and Court continuing to function and operate to reporting cycles;
  - implementation of the requirements of the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016 and of the revised Scottish Code of Good HE Governance (2017));
  - compliance with the latest UK and Scottish Government Acts and guidelines and guidance from Health Protection Scotland and the University's Insurers in relation to Covid-19;
  - compliance with data protection legislation (GDPR) was assured through guidelines and online training;
  - maintenance of robust, centrally co-ordinated visa procedures, in line with UKVI guidance, protecting the University's ability to recruit international students and staff;
  - Executive Team and Senate oversight to ensure assessment, examinations and Boards of Examiners could progress within University Ordinances & Regulations, assuring governance and equity for all learners, aligned to external quality assurance expectations (QAA guidance);
  - fit-for-purpose physical and digital infrastructure: home working, facilitated by online conferencing and collaboration tools, integration with MyPlace virtual learning environment; online learning resources for staff, standard monitoring process and helpdesk procedures;
  - detailed guidance, FAQs and communications to students and staff delivered via website and email throughout the pandemic;
  - close working with industry partners, including Microsoft alerts on cyber-crime across HE.

## **10 OTHER BUSINESS**

- 10.1 The Committee considered a range of other relevant business during 2020/21, including the following:

### **University of Strathclyde Students' Association (USSA) Review**

- 10.2 The University provides a block grant to the University of Strathclyde Students Association (USSA). To ensure compliance with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Financial Memorandum requirements, the Internal Audit Service (IAS) includes reviews of financial and other management control systems along with key risk areas affecting the USSA in its annual plan. As part of the 2020/21 Internal Audit Plan, IAS agreed with the USSA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to undertake a review of the USSA's budget monitoring and reporting arrangements. The objective of this review was to provide management with assurance over USSA's budget monitoring activities and to review and assess the operational effectiveness of controls and processes in place.

- 10.3 The scope of this review included:

- Review and assessment of the policies and procedures in place for managing budgetary monitoring activities;
- Review and assessment of the processes and controls in place within the Finance Team in respect of the production of budgetary monitoring management information;
- Review and assessment of the processes and controls in place to disseminate the budgetary monitoring management information to Heads of Department;
- Interviews with Heads of Department to review and assess the processes and controls in place in respect of budgetary monitoring activities;
- Review and assessment of the processes and controls in place to identify variances to expected financial performance;
- Review of the governance arrangements in place to monitor USSA's financial performance.

- 10.4 The overall evaluation for this review was Substantial Assurance (Controls are robust and well managed. Risk governance and control procedures are effective in supporting the delivery of any related objectives. Any exposure to potential weakness is low and the materiality of any consequent risk is negligible).

### **Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC)**

- 10.5 The Committee considered and approved a report on the University's TRAC return, at its meeting on 18 March 2021, prior to its submission to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). The final figures in the TRAC return had been audited and approved by the IAS.

### **Information Security and Risk Analysis**

- 10.6 The Committee continued to offer robust scrutiny of this area during 2020/21. Members sought assurances that the University was appropriately managing information security risks and was suitably equipped to respond to incidents, should they occur (see 3.6 above).
- 10.7 Audit & Risk Committee noted that people were key to protecting systems. Multi Factor Authentication for University accounts had been piloted and roll out was beginning across Professional Services areas. This was anticipated to reduce attacks by 99.9%. The roll out of training continued with 86-87% of staff having completed training, which was high within the sector, and refresher training was ready to be rolled out. The University was also currently pursuing Cyber Essentials Plus re-certification. Student uptake of training was still low although it had doubled in the last year. The University

was making use of social media to encourage students to participate and was confident that the roll out of multi factor authentication would help with security in this area.

### **Other Reviews**

- 10.8 In addition to the activity described above, a number of other key audit reviews were undertaken across the University in 2020/21. Subsequent findings were reported to the Committee by the IAS in each case. The Committee also received updates at its November and May meetings on the implementation status of agreed Management Actions in completed audit reports.
- 10.9 Additional areas where management practices, operations, systems and procedures were reviewed in 2020/21 included:
- Review of COVID-19 Lessons Learned Phase 1
  - Review of COVID-19 Lessons Learned Phase 2
  - Review of International Travel
  - Review of Authority to Appoint (ATA) Process
  - Review of Budget Monitoring
  - Review of Maintenance
  - Review of CMA Compliance
  - Review of Procurement Contract Management
  - Review of PGR Admissions and Lifecycle
  - A desktop review of the UKVI staff visa requirements
- 10.10 The outcome of these reviews is addressed in the IAS Annual Report.

### **Annual Workshop**

- 10.11 The Committee held its Annual Workshop on 20 January 2021 where it received presentations and held strategic discussions on Continuous Improvement, the UK's departure from the EU and Information Security.
- 10.12 The Audit & Risk Committee had been included in the externally facilitated review of the effectiveness of Court and its committees which took place in the summer of 2017. The final report of this review concluded that the Committee worked well, carried out its responsibilities with care and diligence and had an appropriate membership including provision for two external co-opted members with highly relevant experience.
- 10.13 During 2020/21, the Committee used questions drawn from the Self-Review tool in the Committee of University Chairs'(CUC) "Higher Education Audit Committees Code of Practice", published in May 2020 to complement its Higher Education Code of Governance, to assist with the effectiveness review of the Committee. All members and one stakeholder had completed the questionnaire with an overall positive response.
- 10.14 The Committee also undertook its annual review of its Terms of Reference and considered that the current Terms of Reference remained fit for purpose. A minor amendment was subsequently made to the Terms of Reference, at the 20 May 2021 meeting, to increase the number of members the Committee could co-opt.

### **Fraud Prevention**

- 10.15 In the 2020/21 no instances of fraud were reported to Audit and Risk Committee under the Fraud Prevention policy. In all work undertaken by IAS fraud and the potential for fraud is

considered. In addition fraud risk is discussed with the External Auditor in the context of the external audit planning process and the completion process.

## **11 OPINION**

11.1 On the basis of the information presented to the Committee by the University management, IAS, Ernst & Young and other sources, and the discussion and review of that information, it is the Audit & Risk Committee's view that the University's arrangements for:

- Risk management;
- Internal control;
- Corporate governance;
- Economy, efficiency and effectiveness (VfM)

during the year 2020/21 were adequate and effective and can be relied upon by the Court.

11.2 The Committee is satisfied that, during 2020/21, the University has complied with and applied the principles set out in the Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance 2017. Areas which vary from full compliance with the 2017 Code are detailed in the Statement of Corporate Governance and Internal Control within the Financial Statements.

11.3 The Committee is also satisfied that the Governing Body's responsibilities, as defined in the Statement of Primary Responsibilities of the University Court in the Financial Statements and to the extent covered by the Audit and Risk Committee's remit, have been satisfactorily discharged.

Ms Paula Galloway  
Convener of the Audit & Risk Committee  
November 2021

## **Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report to Court 2020/21**

### **Appendix 1: Audit and Risk Committee**

#### *Terms of Reference*

#### **Purpose**

- 1.2.9 The Audit and Risk Committee reports to the University Court and oversees the arrangements for risk, internal control and governance, including the associated assurances related to these systems.
- 1.2.10 The committee is authorised by Court to obtain outside legal or other independent professional advice and to secure the attendance of non-members with relevant experience and expertise if it considers this necessary, normally in consultation with the Principal and/or convener of Court.
- 1.2.11 It is also authorised to investigate any activity within its terms of reference and to seek any information it requires from any employee, and all employees are directed to co-operate with any request made by the committee.

#### **Main Duties**

- 1.2.12 The specific duties of the Audit & Risk Committee shall be to:

#### **Internal Controls**

- (a) keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of the University's corporate governance arrangements, and its financial and other internal controls systems,
- (b) consider the effectiveness of the University's policy on whistleblowing and its arrangements for the prevention, detection or investigation of questions of fraud or other financial irregularities and be notified of any actions taken in line with such arrangements
- (c) to monitor and be satisfied that suitable arrangements are in place to promote economy, efficiency and effectiveness (value for money) in the management of the University's resources
- (d) ensure the appropriate investigation of significant losses and that the relevant parties have been informed

#### **Internal Audit**

- (e) consider and advise the Court on the criteria for the selection and appointment of the Head of the Internal Audit Service or the appointment and terms of engagement of the internal audit service
- (f) review and endorse the Internal Audit Service's draft assurance strategy and annual plans; consider major findings of internal audit reviews and management's response and be satisfied that appropriate action is taken
- (g) monitor the implementation of agreed audit-based recommendations
- (h) consider if the resources made available to the Internal Audit Service are sufficient to meet the University's needs and make recommendations to the Court, if appropriate
- (i) promote co-ordination between the internal and external auditors

#### **External Audit**

- (j) advise the Court on the appointment of the external auditors, the audit fee, and any questions of resignation or dismissal of the external auditors

## **Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report to Court 2020/21**

- (k) discuss with the external auditors, before the annual audit begins, the nature and scope of the audit
- (l) review the annual financial statements, prior to submission to the Court, in the presence of the external auditors and alongside the auditors' formal opinion, the Management Letter and the Statement of Corporate Governance and Internal Control, in accordance with the Scottish Funding Council's accounts direction, financial memorandum and other relevant direction and guidance
- (m) discuss with the external auditors any issues and reservations arising from the annual audit, including a review of the management letter, incorporating management responses and any other matters the external auditors may wish to discuss (in the absence of management where necessary)
- (n) to review and approve policy on the engagement of the external auditors to supply non-audit services
- (o) monitor annually the performance and effectiveness of the external auditors, including any matters affecting their independence or objectivity, and make recommendations to the Court concerning their reappointment, where appropriate

### **Risk Management**

- (p) to monitor and ensure the effectiveness of the University's approach to risk assessment and management through regular review of the Corporate Risk Register and reports from relevant University officers or committees.
- (q) to review the prioritisation of risk management focus via the Corporate Risk Register, taking into account financial, reputational and commercial risks.
- (r) to ensure that audit work is informed by risk management

### **Reports**

- (s) consider the impacts of reports or guidance issued by relevant external bodies, including the Scottish Funding Council, and make recommendations to the Court, where appropriate
- (t) to receive, as appropriate, reports on the implementation of major projects within the University covering progress, risks and mitigations.
- (u) to receive reports, as appropriate, where there is a potential reputational, commercial and/or financial risk to the University.
- (v) Prepare and present to Court, and subsequently to the Scottish Funding Council, an annual report covering the University's financial year and any significant events up to the date of preparation. The report should express opinions in relation to the committee's review of the effectiveness of institutional arrangements for:
  - i. Risk management, control and governance (including the adequacy of the governance statement)
  - ii. Economy, efficiency and effectiveness (value for money)

### **Other**

- (w) consider such other topics as may be remitted by the Court from time to time
- (x) review, on an annual basis and in consultation with Court, the committee's own performance against accepted good practice

## **Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report to Court 2020/21**

### **Composition**

- 1.2.13 The Committee shall consist of no fewer than four lay members of the Court, of whom one shall be Convener. At least one member shall have recent relevant experience in finance, accounting or auditing. The Committee may co-opt up to three further individuals external to the University, who should not have significant interests in the University, for a period of time to be determined by the Committee. The convener of Court should not be a member of the committee.

### **Meetings**

- 1.2.14 Meetings shall normally be held at least four times each financial year. The external auditors or head of internal audit may request a meeting if they consider it necessary.
- 1.2.15 The committee should meet with the external and internal auditors, without any officers present, at least once a year.
- 1.2.16 There shall be a quorum at any meeting of the Committee when not less than 3 members, at least 2 of whom are members of Court, are present. In the absence of a quorum no business shall be transacted other than the adjournment of the meeting.

*Approved by Court: 17/06/21*

## Report to Court from Estates Committee

The Estates Committee met on 10 November 2021 and the following items were among those discussed:

### For Approval by Court:

In line with the Schedule of Delegated Authority Court is invited to **approve** the following items:

#### 1. Heart of the Campus – Full Business Case

The Assistant Director (Executive Lead Sustainability) reported on recent work finalising the design and financial details for this project to seek approval for the Full Business Case and the procurement route for Phase 1 of the project. Committee was referred to the breakdown of the priority elements that constitute Phase 1, as follows: the pedestrianisation of the three surrounding streets and accessibility improvements, namely Richmond Street, North Portland Street and Rottenrow through formal 'stopping up' orders; closure of North Portland Street to any traffic apart from emergency access; relandscaping of the central elements of the gardens linking west to east, with a focus on the relationship with the new Learning and Teaching Building; building of a new green-roofed, covered walkway to link Montrose Street with North Portland Street and the Learning and Teaching Building; rain garden elements; installation of the graduation wall, creation of an expanded community garden with universal access; relocation of the Monument to maternity, reprofiling of the south east corner to enable better sightlines and views and improvements to Richmond Street East outside the Union to enable student usage for events.

In terms of timescale, his aim is to go to tender to the open market in the new year. Work on the site is programmed to commence in August 2022, or sooner, on an eighteen-month construction programme.

Committee was alerted to some outstanding concerns including rising prices and inflation in the market which may affect costs. Currently, a temporary traffic regulation order which is in place, and which it is hoped to extend beyond the temporary period to coincide with the programme for the works. These issues would be reviewed going forward.

The Chief Financial Officer confirmed the affordability of the project, with earmarked sufficient funding contained within the Capital Investment Plan (CIP.) Additionally, the Committee expressed their support for the project. One concern raised was the balance between the planned pedestrianisation of the surrounding roads and the need to retain universal access, specifically for those with mobility issues but who are not wheelchair users. In response it was stated that efforts had been taken to accommodate the needs of those with visual impairments or other non-mobility related impairments, albeit the options were constrained given the topography of the site location. Suggestions of providing seating and handrails at frequent intervals around the proposals would be taken on board.

The Committee was assured that contingencies would be put in place to limit noise disruption where possible, including the avoidance of exam and pre-exam periods.

**See Annex A for the full Business Case Paper as presented to Estates Committee.**



In line with the Schedule of Delegated Authority, the Committee:

**Recommends** to the Executive Team and the University Court that the procurement of the Phase 1 works is approved, **[RESERVED]**

## **2. Curran Fabric Improvements (SFC Financial Transactions)**

The Assistant Director (Estates Development and Operations) presented a paper to seek approval for the 3rd phase of the Curran Building Fabric Improvements. Phases 1 and 2, which were tendered in early 2021, are complete and details of these works were included within the papers. Committee was advised that in November 2020, a successful bid had been made to the SFC University Financial Transactions Loan Programme, **[RESERVED]**. This funded all three phases of this work and had allowed Estates to accelerate the timeline for the Phase 3 works. Phase 3 would include a number of fabric issues including the following essential works: roof works, replacement of approximately 380 existing single glazed windows with new high-performance low emissivity triple glazed units, remodelling of the elevations to include larger windows, thus increasing the amount of natural light into the library and improving both the student experience and the streetscape, improving the thermal efficiency of the façade through increased thermal insulation, and continuation of the phased replacement of life expired ventilation air-handling units with higher efficiency, lower temperature coils, complete with upgraded controls linked to CO2 occupancy monitoring sensors.

It was indicated that the aim was to go out to tender pre-Christmas, with a tender being awarded in February and works completing on site by October 2022.

The Chief Financial Officer advised that, for financial purposes, this project had been assessed as 95% Capital 5% Revenue and was included within the Capital Investment Plan. The SFC Financial Transactional Loan Programme is an annual funding opportunity, and the University had been successful in obtaining funding via this source over a number of years, and successfully delivering projects to SFC's satisfaction. It was highlighted that the interest rate on the Loan was low at just 0.25% interest per annum. Receipt of the SFC Financial Transaction had allowed effective acceleration of this work.

**See Annex B for the full Business Case Paper as presented to Estates Committee .**

In line with the Schedule of Delegated Authority, the Committee:

**Recommends** to the Executive Team and the University Court that the Phase 3 investment in the Curran Building's fabric and services is approved, **[RESERVED]**

## **3. BPU Infrastructure (Ventilation and Controls) Upgrading**

The University Secretary and Compliance Officer presented a paper seeking approval of a Business Case for the replacement of the life expired Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning systems (HVAC) serving the Biological Procedures Unit (BPU) within the Robertson Wing.

The Committee was advised that the existing plant is no longer fit for purpose and required to be replaced as soon as practicably possible to ensure that the University did not risk being in breach of the Standard Conditions related to the Establishment Licence that it holds for the

BPU. Failure to do so would severely compromise key research activity carried out in that area.

The existing HVAC plant had been in operation since 1996 and was now at end of life. It required replacement to prevent failure and the associated negative impact on the operation of the BPU research activity. Much of the hardware and software was obsolete and some components have had to be upgraded with used parts to ensure the continued operation of the HVAC equipment. An original intention to replace the key plant components in 2019 had been delayed by the Covid pandemic.

The Chief Financial Officer confirmed that the **[RESERVED]** funding for replacement of this unit was contained within the CIP.

**See Annex C for the full Business Case Paper as presented to Estates Committee.**

In line with the Schedule of Delegated Authority, the Committee:

**Recommends** to the Executive Team and the University Court that funding in the sum of **[RESERVED]** be approved for the replacement of life expired Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning systems serving the Biological Procedures Unit, and that this project be progressed.

**For Noting by Court:**

#### **4. Residence Services Upgrade**

Lucy Skinner (Head Accommodation Services) provided a summary of works that had been undertaken in the residences over summers 2020 and 2021. The ongoing upgrade programme entails investment in both cosmetic upgrade and building maintenance in order to deliver a standard of accommodation that meets the expectations of our students, as well as legal and legislative obligations as a landlord.

Considerable redecoration had been carried out, with a consistent grey and white palette chosen, which would be continued going forward. Work had also been carried out to replace lifts, vents, bedframes and mattresses, and a 5-year replacement programme has been implemented for these. Carpets and shower pods had also been replaced, and before and after photos of some of these enhancements were shown. The feedback from students had been very positive, with some indicating that the standard compared favourably to that of some of the new builds in the local area.

The Committee acknowledged the hard work done by Residences and Estates and highlighted the fact that these improvements had been achieved while still retaining cost effective accommodation.

#### **5. NMIS Update**

The Assistant Director (Capital Projects) provided an update on the NMIS development which was now in month twelve of a nineteen-month programme and was 60% completed, excluding fit-out. Previous budgetary concerns had been addressed and costs had now been reduced by the required savings target through the significant joint efforts of the internal team and the contractor.

A series of slides was shown to the Committee illustrating, among other things, the distinctive heather coloured cladding on the roof, the new road which had been installed to service the facility, the 'window to the world', and the internal of the building, with its Glulam Diagrid structure.

Planned upcoming activities include completion of the North and West elevations, the handover of Netherton Square from Renfrewshire Council, as well as cladding and roof works. Several of the ongoing risks to the project were also detailed, with one of the main ones being the availability of material within the construction industry, which remains challenging.

A flyover video was shown to the Committee. Although it dated from August and did not reflect the most recent progress, it served to effectively illustrate the location and scope of the building.

The Committee expressed its appreciation for the visual updates and reflected on how well the project was developing. It was also noted that the Medicines Manufacturing Innovation Centre and the Lightweight Manufacturing Centre are both close by and that the University was now seeing the reality of the larger innovation district coming to fruition, with its associated economic impact.

**Estates Committee  
Annexes A-C  
[RESERVED ITEMS]**