

MINUTES OF UNIVERSITY COURT
6 October 2016

Present: Richard Hunter (Convener), Ronnie Cleland, Dr Jane Morgan, Malcolm Roughead, Gillian Hastings, Dr Archie Bethel, Alison Culpan, Kerry Alexander, Susan Kelly, Principal Professor Sir Jim McDonald, Vice-Principal Professor Scott MacGregor, Dr Veena O'Halloran, Dr Jonathan Delafield-Butt, Professor Erling Riis, Dr Dimitris Andriosopoulos, Louise McKean, Raj Jeyaraj, Gerry McDonnell, Dr Alistair Goldsmith, Dr Jeremy Beeton, Dr Andrew McLaren

Attending: Hugh Hall, David Coyle, Professor David Littlejohn, Professor David Hillier, Professor Dimitris Drikakis, Professor Douglas Brodie, Rona Smith, Ray McHugh, Stella Matko, Dr Stuart Brough, Darren Thompson, Professor Terry Gourlay (item 4), Dr Roddy Yarr (item 5)

Apologies: Dr Jack Perry, Marion Venman, Councillor Stephen Curran, Sandra Heidinger

Welcome and apologies

The Convener noted apologies and welcomed members of Court and attendees. He particularly welcomed the new President of the Students' Association to his first meeting as a member of Court.

Court members expressed their best wishes and hopes for a speedy recovery to Marion Venman who was recovering following a recent accident.

There were no declarations of interest.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2016 were approved.

2. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

3. Principal's Report

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

Executive Team composition: following Court's approval in June for a revised composition of the Executive Team, interviews had been held and two new Associate Principals appointed. Commencement dates were yet to be finalised but it was anticipated that these appointments would enhance the capacity and diversity of the Executive Team.

External engagement: Court received an update on a number of recent and forthcoming engagements with senior industry figures and strategic international partners. Specific opportunities had been taken to promote the University's strategic approaches to innovation and industry engagement.

Ministerial engagements: the University had recently hosted a visit from the Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science and from the Scottish Government's Chief Scientific Advisor at which discussions had been wide-ranging and valuable. The University had also hosted two separate visits in the last month from the Minister for Childcare and Early Years.

Programme for Government: the First Minister had announced in September the Scottish Government's plans to create a National Manufacturing Institute which was being developed in partnership with the University of Strathclyde and the Scottish Research Partnership in Engineering.

Student Inaugurations: the Principal and a number of Court members had been directly involved in this year's student welcome events, continuing the success of last year's events. The opportunity had been taken to highlight the University's welcoming and inclusive ethos. Particular thanks were offered to Jeremy Beeton for attending all four events this year.

Strathclyde Business School opening: the official opening of the refurbished Business School had taken place on 3 October. The recent relaunch of the Fraser of Allander Institute and the establishment of a strong team were also highlighted.

EU exit issues: there was a high degree of continuing uncertainty in this area, particularly on issues of staff/student mobility and research funding, despite recent UK Government announcements. Sector-level activity continued to focus on seeking confirmation of student support arrangements for 2017/18 and beyond. An update paper had been provided to Court elsewhere on the agenda, for information.

League tables: the Principal provided a summary of the issues influencing the University's recent performance in a range of UK and international league table rankings. He highlighted that, although league tables do not drive the University's strategy, their influence on reputation and external perceptions was fully recognised. As such, performance was monitored and analysed regularly with improvement actions for individual measures of performance implemented, as necessary. The University continued to demonstrate significant improvements in a range of measures while performance improvements in some key areas (which often had a disproportionate effect on rankings) were less significant relative to other institutions. Efforts were underway to drive greater improvements in these areas and a summary briefing would be circulated to Court following the meeting.

4. Biomedical Engineering redevelopment proposal

The Head of the Department of Biomedical Engineering presented a business case for investment in the proposed redevelopment of the Wolfson Centre Building. He explained that redevelopment of the building was required to deliver increased capacity in support of an ambitious growth strategy, provide facilities which were fit for future purpose, contribute to an excellent student experience, and allow the Department to continue to excel in a strongly competitive local and national landscape. The Associate Principal & Executive Dean of the Faculty of Engineering indicated that the Faculty was fully supportive of the investment proposal. The Director of Estates confirmed that the funding required was fully accounted for in the University Capital Investment Plan.

Court noted that the business case had been the subject of prior discussion and endorsement by the Estates Committee, Executive Team and Court Business Group.

Court discussed the proposal and considered the following key points:

- The ability to adequately support the Department's potential future requirements within the level of investment proposed. Taking account of space and cost restrictions and the increasing level of cross-disciplinary activity in this area, it was felt that the level of redevelopment proposed would be appropriate at this time. However, the potential for significant future growth in this area was noted and the situation would be kept under review. The Director of Estates was also asked to provide a cost comparison with recent refurbishment work undertaken elsewhere in the University;
- The ability to achieve the target contribution from external sources through fundraising activities. The Director of Estates confirmed that potential sponsors had been approached significantly in advance and there was high level of confidence that this target would be achieved. Additionally, any contributions would be confirmed in advance of building activity commencing;
- The importance of engaging student representatives in the design process. The Head of Department confirmed that students from the Department had been involved in the development of the business case and would continue to be consulted at relevant points; and

- The potential impact of redevelopment and the associated decant requirements on the student experience. The potential impact was recognised and would be managed through on-going and proactive consultation and communication with student representatives.

Court **approved** the delivery of *Option 3: Comprehensive Refurbishment – Full Decant*, as recommended within the paper, and the required capital investment of **[Reserved section: Ref: section 33, FOI(S)A]**

5. Combined Heat and Power District Energy Project – tender return

The Director of Estates Services and the Assistant Director (Sustainability) presented a proposal for an increased budget allocation to allow the University to proceed with this project on the timescales originally approved by Court in November 2013. There were a number of key factors contributing to a revised budget including:

- The highly bespoke nature of the project and the small number of companies able to carry out the work required;
- A number of technical specification design changes required to allow the scheme to be effectively tendered, including confirming the capacity and configuration of boiler plant and the inclusion of a demonstration space to satisfy the conditions of SFC funding.

Court discussed the proposal and noted that, although the increased cost and reduced investment returns were disappointing, the project remained an important element of the University's carbon reduction strategy and continued to present an opportunity for substantial financial savings, despite the remaining technical risks.

Accordingly, Court **approved** an additional project budget allocation of **[Reserved section: Ref: section 33, FOI(S)A]**, to be realised through project deferrals or savings identified in the existing Capital Investment Plan.

6. Student Recruitment – update

An update on undergraduate and taught postgraduate student recruitment for the new academic year was presented. Court welcomed an improved recruitment position, compared to the same stage in the previous year's recruitment cycle, due to increased demand and a more strategic and cohesive approach to offer-making and conversion. The positive impact of stretch targets on a significant increase in projected overseas fee income and the achievement of a higher market share of international students in an increasingly competitive environment were noted.

Court **noted** the Vice-Principal's significant contribution in overseeing the close coordination of cross-institution activity which had been a significant factor in delivering improvements.

7. National Student Survey 2016

A summary analysis of the University's National Student Survey 2016 results was considered. Court was disappointed that the previous year's overall satisfaction score had not increased but noted significant progress in a range of individual areas. Members considered the actions being taken directly at Department/School level to support sustained high performance in areas of strength/improvement and to drive a step change in areas where targeted action is required. Members also discussed the following key points:

- The importance of establishing and sharing best practice and of ensuring compliance;
- The potential to identify correlations with the results of other student surveys and with areas where student engagement activity is high;
- The need to recognise and manage effectively the potential impacts of planned estates redevelopments on student satisfaction levels; and
- The importance of an increasingly closer dialogue with students in key areas to develop a shared understanding e.g. ensuring that students are able to recognise feedback when it is provided.

8. Outcome Agreement 2015/16 self-evaluation report & guidance

A working draft of the University's Outcome Agreement 2015/16 self-evaluation report, developed in line with SFC requirements, was presented. Noting that the report would be subject to further refinement in the coming weeks, Court **approved it in principle** and **agreed** to delegate authority to the Court Business Group to finalise the report by circulation, ahead of submission to SFC by 31 October.

Court asked that information be provided which presented the University's progress over time against quantitative Outcome Agreement commitments in a summary tabular format.

The SFC's Outcome Agreement Guidance covering the period 2017-2020 had been published following the circulation of Court papers. This set out the timeline for the development of the University's new three-year Outcome Agreement and a number of key areas where SFC wished institutions to develop a new or enhanced focus. Court noted the alignment between the three-year Outcome Agreement period and the University's existing Strategic Plan, which would inform the development of an initial draft agreement. A well-developed draft would be presented to Court for discussion in November.

9. EU exit – update

Court received an update on the key activities undertaken by the University in response to the result of the Referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union. Whilst clarity was still required in a range of key areas, the University had established an internal working group to consider critical issues, monitor external developments, and oversee communications with staff and students. The University was also focusing on strengthening its existing relationships with EU partner institutions and organisations. The risks and opportunities associated with an EU exit had been reflected within the University's Corporate Risk Register and would also inform and shape discussions at Court's Strategy Session in November.

Members **noted** the update and **agreed** that the issue of a UK exit from the EU should remain as a standing item on Court's agenda in order to ensure regular updates.

10. Court Strategy Session, 24-25 November – initial planning

Court considered proposals for the broad format and structure of its November Strategy Session. It was **agreed** that the six areas of project activity recently identified by the Executive Team to deliver performance improvements in key areas should form the basis of discussions at the Court Strategy Session. Individual lay members of Court would be identified to provide critical views and advice in each of the six project areas.

Items for formal approval

11. Convener's Actions

Court **agreed to homologate** the actions undertaken by the Convener since June, specifically:

- The appointment of Dame Sue Bruce as a co-opted member of the University Audit Committee for an initial one-year term, until 31 July 2017; and
- Non-material amendments to the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the University of Strathclyde Students' Association.

12. Corporate Risk Register

Court considered and **endorsed** the selection of top risks and mitigating actions in the Corporate Risk Register.

13. Treasury Management Policy

Court considered and **approved** the proposed revisions to the University's Treasury Management Policy, as set out in the paper.

14. Report for Scottish Funding Council: internal review of quality

Court **approved** the Annual Statement on Institution-led Review of Quality for Academic Year 2015/16 for submission to the Scottish Funding Council.

Items for information

15. Convener Recruitment – update

The Vice-Convener of Court provided a brief update on the process being undertaken to identify and appoint a successor to the current Convener.

16. Court Members' Annual Survey 2016

The Convener reported on the main themes arising as a result of the Court members' online survey and the individual appraisal meetings held with Court members over the summer. It was noted that there was generally a high level of satisfaction amongst members and that the Court was felt to be fulfilling its role appropriately. Due consideration would be given to a range of useful suggestions made, including the shared desire for a renewed focus on medium-term challenges and opportunities and for the swift execution and implementation of key actions. The Convener also encouraged all members to make full use of the networking and informal discussion opportunities provided by pre or post-meeting refreshments and lunches. It was noted that, in accordance with good practice, the members' online survey also provided an opportunity for members to submit feedback on the performance of the Convener to the Vice-Convener as the appointed "intermediary".

17. Governance Act 2016 – update

Court **noted** a paper detailing the key provisions of the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016 and the proposed next steps.

18. Complaints Handling Annual Report

Court reviewed and **noted** the Complaints Handling Annual Report for 2015/16.

Committee Reports

The following committee reports were received and **noted** by Court:

19. Senate (with the Internal Review of Quality report **approved** under Item 14 above)

20. Executive Team

It was **noted** that summary results of the 2016 University Values Survey had been considered by the Executive Team and would be provided to Court in November.

21. Court Business Group

22. Audit Committee

23. Estates Committee (with the redevelopment of the Wolfson Building **approved** under Item 4 above)

24. Enterprise & Investment Committee

25. Remuneration Committee

26. Any other business

There was no other business.

Date of next meeting

- Thursday 24 and Friday 25 November 2016, Ross Priory

DT, October 2016