

## **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