

Paper A

MINUTES OF UNIVERSITY COURT 28 September 2017

Present: Dame Sue Bruce (Convener), Ronnie Cleland, Malcolm Roughead, Kerry Alexander, Dr Archie Bethel, Susan Kelly, Alison Culpan, Dr Jeremy Beeton, Dr Jane Morgan, Paula Galloway, Principal Professor Sir Jim McDonald (from item 2 onwards), Vice-Principal Professor Scott MacGregor, Professor Erling Riis, Amanda Corrigan, Dr Kathy Hamilton, Gillian Pallis, Louise McKean, Calvin Hepburn, Taylor Wong

Attending: David Coyle, Dr Veena O'Halloran, Darren Thompson, Professor Tim Bedford (for item 5), Rona Smith (for items 6-8), Helyn Gould (for item 8)

Apologies: Marion Venman, Gillian Hastings, Councillor David McDonald, Dr Andrew McLaren

Welcome and apologies

The Convener noted the apologies received and welcomed members of Court and attendees to the first meeting of 2017/18.

The following interests were declared:

- All members of staff who were also members of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) declared an interest in relation to item 16. It was noted that this item was presented for Court's information only with no formal decision being sought; and
- Jane Morgan, as the elected Councillor for the Maryhill Ward, Glasgow, declared a potential interest in regard to the discussions with Glasgow City Council referenced in the paperwork for item 5.

1. Reserved item:

[RESERVED ITEM]

2. Minutes

Court **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2017.

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Principal's Report

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

Health & Safety: The Principal provided a summary of recent Health & Safety activity and incidents, including:

- A recent increase in the number of reported incidents. This was felt to be the result of improved reporting procedures, particularly amongst the University's more industry-focused areas. Further reporting enhancements were planned. The Principal indicated that a short paper would be provided to the next meeting of Court to highlight recent reporting and incident trend;

- A recent instance of deliberate fire-raising within the University's residences compound. No buildings were at risk as a result. The individuals responsible had been identified as former students who were subsequently found to have returned to their home country. The University was considering the possibility of applying appropriate sanctions;
- Recent steps taken to review and improve fire evacuation procedures, particularly in relation to Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) following a minor fire incident in the Curran Building.

In relation to health and safety issues, Court members discussed:

- the importance of recording near misses to support the identification of key risks for the University;
- the increased use of non-University equipment on site (e.g. from industry and academic partners) and the need to undertake appropriate risk assessments;
- the significant construction activity currently taking place on campus and the importance of prominent signage and guidance to ensure the safety of students, staff and visitors. The Principal explained that this issue had been identified and was being pursued with the relevant contractors.

Appointment of Chief Commercial Officer: The Principal informed Court that a new Chief Commercial Officer (CCO) had been appointed. Adrian Gillespie, currently Managing Director of Operations at Scottish Enterprise, would take up post in January 2018 and would play an invaluable role in driving forward major projects and enhancing the University's strong links with business and industry. Court members welcomed this appointment and looked forward to meeting and working with Mr Gillespie in due course.

Model Confucius Institute/Ramshorn Theatre: The University's Confucius Institute for Scotland's Schools (CISS) had recently been appointed a Model Confucius Institute by the Confucius Institute Headquarters (Hanban) and a commemorative plaque marking the new status of CISS had been unveiled at a conference attended by both the Scottish Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science and by the People's Republic of China's Ambassador to the UK. Subject to further development by the Estates Committee and the Executive Team, recommendations would soon be brought forward to Court for the proposed redevelopment of the University's Ramshorn Theatre. This would support the relocation of the Confucius Institute to its new headquarters, with purpose-built space for conferences, exhibitions, and cultural events.

Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance: Following a sector-wide consultation in June 2017, a final revised version of the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance was expected to be provided to the Committee of Scottish Chairs for approval in early October. No timescales for compliance with the revised Code had yet been confirmed but the University was in a strong position and would review its practices as appropriate to ensure future compliance.

Brexit update: The University had hosted a recent visit from Lord Duncan of Springbank, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Scotland. This had been a positive engagement and provided an opportunity to brief UK Government officials on key sector-specific issues. The University had also received multiple positive mentions within a recent UK Government paper on its post-EU intentions for science and innovation activity. Senior officers continued to promote the University and engage with EU partners, through various channels.

UK Research and Innovation: UKRI was starting to take shape ahead of its April 2018 launch, under the leadership of its CEO-designate, Sir Mark Walport, and Chair, Sir John Kingman.

Research Excellence Framework: Initial decisions on the format and criteria of the next Research Excellence Framework (REF) had been published. The University was continuing and accelerating its advance preparations, focusing on the quality of outputs and the development of impact case studies. Clarity was still awaited on key issues, including staff submission and output portability, and the University would respond to a request from the Funding Councils for views on these areas.

Global Talent Attraction: Following a recent and widely advertised strategic recruitment campaign, the University had received 740 applications for up to 60 places for world-leading Professors and Readers. 22% of applications had come from non-UK EU applicants and 53% from overseas applicants outside the EU.

Widening Access: According to recent statistics published by the Scottish Funding Council, the University continued to lead amongst Scottish research-intensive universities for the number of entrants from Scotland's

most deprived areas (SIMD0-20 and SIMD0-40). At the same time as improving access, the University had recently improved its ranking for entry standards, based on The Times and Sunday Times University League Table, rising to 6th in the UK and 2nd in Scotland.

Principal's Engagement Sessions: The Principal had held eight staff engagement sessions, covering a significant proportion of the University's staff. This had provided the opportunity to update staff on strategic issues and for staff to ask questions of the Principal. The tone of these meetings had been overwhelmingly positive.

Strathclyde Medals 2017: The Principal had recently presented 11 Strathclyde Medals to staff, based on nominations from their colleagues. The Strathclyde Medals recognise people who have made an important contribution to the University Values in their work, relationships and achievements.

Student Inauguration Events: The Student Inauguration events provided an opportunity for new undergraduate students to be welcomed into the University community. The Principal had presided over four events (one for each Faculty), welcoming around 1,600 new students. He thanked members of Court who had been able to attend the events. The Student President confirmed that the events had been very well received by the students involved.

5. Reserved item:

[RESERVED ITEM]

6. Student Recruitment 2017/19

The Director of Strategy and Policy introduced an update on the current undergraduate (UG), taught postgraduate (PGT) and research postgraduate (PGR) student recruitment position. She reminded Court of the importance of meeting student recruitment targets and the associated link to the delivery of the University's strategic aims and the impacts upon its sector position and forecast fee income. The 2017/18 recruitment cycle had seen increases in both demand from applicants and competition from other institutions, However, the University continued to demonstrate year-on-year improvements in key student recruitment areas, with associated fee income growth; the recruitment cycle for both PGT and PGR entrants on-going.

Court members welcomed the generally positive position indicated within the paper and particularly noted the strong performance in relation to widening access recruitment which was the result of a strategic approach and focus in this area.

7. Outcome Agreement 2016/17 self-evaluation and guidance for 2017/18 – verbal update

The Director of Strategy & Policy provided a verbal update on the development of the University's Outcome Agreement self-evaluation report, which would constitute a review of progress against 2014-2017 commitments achieved during 2016/17. As the Scottish Funding Council's annual guidance had not yet been issued, it was intended that a draft report would be circulated to Court in mid-October, for review and approval.

Court members noted that, following the previous approval and publication of the University's new three-year Outcome Agreement for 2017-2020, an update on commitments for 2018/19 would be developed and incorporated as an annex to the Outcome Agreement. This would be presented to Court for approval in due course.

8. National Student Survey 2017 results and analysis

The Deputy Associate Principal (Learning & Teaching) presented an overview of the University's performance, relative to the UK and Scottish sectors, in the National Student Survey (NSS) 2017. She explained the background to the NSS, noting particularly the changes to the survey questions for 2017 and a national student campaign to boycott the survey which had impacted upon both the results and response rates, which therefore limited the ability to make comparisons with previous years' performance levels.

During discussions, Court members noted:

- A widespread drop in performance across the sector, amongst which the University had maintained its 2015 and 2016 overall satisfaction score of 87% whilst improving its relative sector position to 4th amongst Scottish HEIs and joint 37th amongst UK HEIs;
- The development of internal 'heat maps', as in previous years, to identify and review areas of strength and challenge below the headline figures and in each part of the University, benchmarked against sector comparators;
- Varying underlying levels of performance, with three faculties seeing fairly comprehensive positive movement, or maintaining previous positions of strength, and one faculty seeing negative movement;
- Lower than anticipated performance in relation to the new questions introduced for 2017 and on-going efforts to understand and address the reasons for this;
- The next steps, including the Education Strategy Committee's role in developing an Improvement Framework, and a renewed focus on cascading results and improvement actions down to Department/School level; and
- The key role for the Students Association and Class Representatives in contributing to the improvement of the student experience on an on-going basis and enhancing levels of student engagement.

It was confirmed that the University regularly operated additional student surveys throughout the year, focussed on similar areas to the NSS, in order to identify and address specific issues impacting upon the student experience.

Court also noted the development of a short-term Executive Team project on addressing future NSS performance, to be led by the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

9. Court Review of Effectiveness – Final Report and Recommendations

The Convener introduced a report and recommendations arising from Court's Review of Effectiveness. She reflected on the process undertaken since March 2017, led by the Effectiveness Review Steering Group, and highlighted the key messages: that the University's governance arrangements and practices were effective and consistent with recognised good practice and also that there were particular areas which represented exemplars of best practice. Recommendations had been reviewed and refined by the Steering Group and were presented for Court's consideration and approval. She highlighted that some recommendations, such as those around the conduct and organisation of meetings, were already being implemented (e.g. the reduced number of officers in regular attendance at Court meetings).

The University Secretary and Compliance Officer explained that, subject to Court's approval, the Steering Group's recommendations would be taken forward throughout the remainder of 2017/18, in consultation with the Convener and with regular progress reports being provided to Court.

During discussion of the report and its recommendations, Court members noted that:

- The general effectiveness of Court and of the University's governance practices had been established and the decision to implement any of the recommended changes should be considered based on their potential to further enhance effectiveness;
- The categorisation and assessment of the recommendations by the Steering Group had been helpful and was appropriate;
- The University's dynamic governance arrangements were key to the delivery of its success and opportunities for continued engagement (both formal and informal) between members of Court and senior staff of the University should be maintained; and
- The external consultant's view on the process for appointing Senate members to Court was not one that was shared by Court and the Steering Group had appropriately rejected this recommendation.

Court **approved** the recommendations of the Effectiveness Review Steering Group, agreeing the need to review certain arrangements and practices during the course of 2017/18 and bring forward any subsequent recommendations for Court's approval in due course.

10. Court Strategy Session 2017 – initial planning

The Principal proposed a draft programme for Court's 2017 Strategy Session including:

- An introductory presentation from the Principal on the University's current position and performance trajectory with appropriate comparative data, set against the backdrop of current challenges and opportunities;
- Individual presentations and discussions on how to develop and articulate an appropriate definition of University 'productivity' and on how to advance the University's external narrative by leveraging its distinctiveness both nationally and internationally;
- Presentations from each of the Executive Deans, the Chief Financial Officer, and the University Secretary and Compliance Officer on the visions for each of their respective areas;
- A summative conclusion from the Principal and the Vice-Principal on the University's overall vision.

Members welcomed the suggested approach and noted the proposal that, as in previous years, presentations would include key input, both in advance and on the day, from individual Court members. University senior officers would be tasked to engage directly with relevant Court members in due course.

Items for formal approval

11. Convener's Actions

There were no actions to report since the last meeting.

12. Revisions to University Ordinance and Regulations

Court **approved** proposed amendments to the University's Ordinances and Regulations which were required, following earlier revisions to the Charter and Statutes, to reflect changes to the titles and roles of senior officers and to update the composition and Terms of Reference for several of the University's committees.

13. Corporate Risk Register

Court reviewed and **approved** the top risks and mitigating actions reflected within the latest version of the University's Corporate Risk Register.

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

Court reviewed and **approved** the University's report to the Scottish Funding Council on institution-led review and enhancement activities for academic year 2016/17.

15. Review of Court's Statement of Primary Responsibilities

Court considered and **approved** its own Statement of Primary Responsibilities, subject to minor amendments required to ensure accuracy in senior officer titles.

Items for information

16. Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) 2017 funding position

The Chief Financial Officer provided an update on the current funding position of USS and informed Court that institutional views were currently being sought by Universities UK on a number of key issues, including:

- the maximum regular contributions each institution is willing to pay;
- the level of USS pensions risk each institution is willing to bear; and
- the institution's preferred approach to future benefits.

He summarised the tone and content of the University's current draft response, confirming that this had been circulated to Court Business Group for final comments, prior to the submission date. Court noted that there were potential financial impacts for the University but that final decisions on future arrangements were a

matter for the USS Joint Negotiating Committee, informed by the collective view of the entire UK higher education sector.

17. Complaints Handling Annual Report 2016/17

Court **noted** key performance information on the volume and types of complaints recorded by the University during 2016/17.

Committee Reports

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

18. Senate

Court noted the key matters discussed by the University Senate at its recent meeting on 6 September 2017. The two matters for formal approval had been approved by Court under items 12 and 14 above.

19. Executive Team

Court **noted** the key matters discussed by the Executive Team at its recent meetings.

20. Court Business Group

Court **noted** and welcomed the Court Business Group's advance consideration and scrutiny of the Court agenda and its substantive items.

21. Remuneration Committee

Court **noted** the matters considered and decisions taken by the Remuneration Committee at its recent meeting on 27 August 2017.

22. Audit Committee

Court **approved** proposed amendments to University Regulations in order to reflect changes to the Audit Committee's Terms of Reference, which had recently been discussed and endorsed by the Committee at its meeting on 7 September 2017. Court **noted** the other items discussed by Audit Committee.

23. Estates Committee

Court **noted** the items discussed by the Estates Committee at its recent meeting on 22 August 2017.

24. Staff Committee

Court **noted** the items discussed by the Staff Committee at its recent meeting on 16 June 2017.

25. AOB

The Convener reminded members of a training session on Health & Safety which had been scheduled for 31 October. There was still one place remaining and members were encouraged to contact the Head of Governance and Public Policy, should they wish to attend.

Date of next meeting

- Court Residential, Thursday 30 November & Friday 1 December 2017