



UNIVERSITY COURT

15 September 2014

Minute

- Present:** Rector (in chair)
The Principal
Sheriff Principal E Bowen
Ms D Davidson
Mr A Johnston
Professor A M Smyth
Dr M Aliotta
Professor J Ansell
Professor S Cooper
Dr C Phillips
Dr A Richards, Vice-Convenor
Mr D Bentley
Dr R Black
Ms M Exley
Lady S Rice
Ms A Lamb
Ms B Pegado, President, Students' Representative Council
Ms T Boardman, Vice-President Students' Representative Council
- In attendance:** Senior Vice-Principal Professor M Bownes
Vice-Principal Professor C Jeffery
Vice-Principal Professor R Kenway
Vice-Principal Professor J Seckl
Vice-Principal Professor S Rigby
University Secretary, Ms S Smith
Mr H Edmiston, Director of Corporate Services
Assistant Principal Dr T Harrison
Ms L Chalmers, Director of Legal Services
Mr G Douglas, Deputy Secretary, Student Experience
Ms S Gupta, Director of Human Resources
Mr G Jebb, Director of Estates and Buildings
Mr P McNaul, Director of Finance
Mrs T Slaven, Deputy Secretary, Strategic Planning
Dr K J Novosel, Head of Court Services
- Apologies:** The Rt Hon D Wilson, Lord Provost of the City of Edinburgh
Mr P Budd
Dr C Masters
Mr L Matheson
Ms S Beattie-Smith, Rector's Assessor

approved subject to insertion of a reference to discussion on the implications of the referendum under University Risk Register: a revised Minute would be circulated.

Court welcomed Dr Anne Richards in her capacity of Vice-Convener of Court and new members Professor Sarah Cooper and Dr Claire Phillips (Senate Assessors) and Ms Mandy Exley and Lady Susan Rice (Co-opted lay members). Court noted that this was the first meeting that Mr Hugh Edmiston was attending in his new capacity as Director of Corporate Services. It was further noted that this would be last meeting attended by Professor Mary Bownes in her capacity as Senior Vice-Principal and Ms Sheila Gupta, Director of Human Resources and Court thanked them for all their work on Court and across the University.

2 Principal's Communications

Paper B

Court noted the content of the Principal's Report and the additional information on: the success of the University's engagement with the Edinburgh Festivals particularly the Book Festival in respect of the James Tait Black awards and Court congratulated all colleagues involved; the current encouraging data on undergraduate, masters and PhD student applications for entry 2014/2015 including the increase in applications from students in SIMD20/40 areas; and the University's approach to communication with students and staff after the outcome of the referendum.

3 Designation of Vice-Principals

Paper C

On the recommendation of the Principal, Court approved the following:

Professor Richard Kenway's term of office as a Vice-Principal to be extended for three years until 31 July 2017 with the title to revert to High Performance Computing with effect from 1 October 2014.

Vice-Principal Professor Jeff Haywood to remain in the full-time role of Chief Information Officer providing leadership of Information Services (IS) until such time as his successor is in post.

Dr Liz Grant to be appointed Assistant Principal Global Health from 1 November 2014 until 31 July 2017.

A revised list of authorised deputies in the Principal's absence.

Court further noted the appointment of Professor Welburn to Vice-Principal Global Access from 1 November 2014 until 31 October 2016 which had been approved via correspondence on 10 July 2014.

SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

4 Student experience

Paper D

Court noted the outcome of the recent National Student Survey (NSS) and that the University's position in respect of overall satisfaction levels had remained the same as in the previous year although there had been some improvement in areas linked to employability and student support. The University's own internal survey for pre-final year undergraduate students generally mirrored the NSS results except in respect of assessment and feedback where the internal survey score was higher.

While recognising a possible lag time between the introduction of various initiatives and the impact on the NSS and internal student survey scores there was disappointment expressed on the slow pace of evidenced improvement. Court welcomed the engagement with Schools to ensure that relevant information on performance in their area was available and to ascertain their specific plans to tackle the issues highlighted.

There was agreement to continue to pursue the current extensive plan of action during this academic year and to take forward a further strand around culture change as set out in the paper. There were a number of suggestions including further work around student focus groups and increased action to ensure a higher response rate to the internal survey. There was also discussion around the need for a consistent approach to learning and teaching activity across the University looking both at School level but also below this at subject area. The initiatives within the The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies as highlighted at the recent Court induction seminar were commended and it was suggested that there should be further sharing of good practice and improving student communications.

5 SRUC Strategic Alignment - update

Paper E

Court welcomed the continuing work to progress the strategic alliance with SRUC noting the current challenges around taking forward the due diligence exercise and the potential impact on the timetable to the delay in commencement. There was agreement on the importance of undertaking a robust exercise given the complexity of SRUC and that this outweighed any issues around consideration of the current timetable while noting the external constraints particularly in relation to Scottish Government and SFC involvement.

There was also discussion around governance arrangements and how SRUC might operate within the University. It was noted that an Advisory Board approach was a helpful model and that there would be further discussions with SRUC on an appropriate way forward.

The Court Sub-Group would next be meeting on 12 November 2014 and would continue to monitor progress.

6 Turing Institute – update

Paper F

Dr Black declared a potential conflict of interest as a Board Member of an organisation which could be involved in the location of the Alan Turing Institute

There was discussion and agreement on the current approach. Court approved, in principle, that the University should submit an expression of interest in joining a Joint Venture to operate the Alan Turing Institute and delegated authority to the Court Sub-Group to approve the final submission by the deadline of 30 October 2014. Court had previously appointed the members of the Court Sub-Group and approved the extension of the membership to include Vice-Principal Professor Andrew Morris with immediate effect.

7 Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) - update

Court noted the current position in respect of a consultation process being initiated on proposed reforms to the Universities Superannuation Scheme. A Court Sub-Group had been established to advise the Principal and consider the way forward as all senior officers of the University were conflicted being members of USS. The Principal had now responded on behalf of the University based on the deliberations of the Court Sub-Group to the initial USS/UUK consultation document and had asked for additional information.

The outcome of this initial consultation and the 2014 valuation would be considered by USS Trustees and thereafter as appropriate further consultation would be taken forward. Court noted the outline consultation process and stressed the importance of ensuring a meaningful consultation with affected staff.

8 Enhanced Employment

Paper G

It was welcomed that all zero hours contracts/hours to be notified contracts would cease by 31 December 2014 with different contractual arrangements being put in place. Court noted the challenges involved in going forward and it was agreed that there should be a further report to Court on the approach being taken.

9 Staff Annual Review Response Rates - update

Paper H

Court strongly welcomed the improved position achieved of 92.55% for the staff annual review completion rate for 2013/2014 and noted that work would continue to progress further improvements in 2014/2015, including ensuring high quality discussions were taking place.

10 Rectorial Election

Paper I

Rector declared a conflict of interest and did not preside at the meeting for this item; the Vice-Convener of Court was elected to preside.

The arrangements to take forward the 2015 Rectorial Election including the Regulations and timetable were approved subject to further consideration of the introduction at the next Rectorial Election of the ability to seek to re-open nominations (RON) should there be only one valid candidate.

It was noted that EUSA currently undertook this process and members of the electorate were able to vote for either the valid candidate or for RON. Court agreed that the emphasis should be on raising awareness and attracting a strong field of candidates so that this situation did not arise noting that the current Ordinance governing the Rectorial Election was very prescriptive on the period during which the election could be held. If there was a desire to re-open nominations in the event of only one valid candidate then under the current Ordinance there would be no Rector for a year as it would not be possible to organise another election within the required timeframe: this was not considered to be good governance. Actions would be taken to look to amending the current Ordinance.

ROUTINE ITEMS

11 EUSA President's report

Paper J

Court noted the items within the EUSA President's Report and the additional information on: progressing the development of a Strategic Plan towards completion by the end of the calendar year; the improving financial position; the continuing success of EUSA's volunteering service; and the earlier start of the 2014/2015 EUSA Teaching Awards to enable participation of one-year/departing postgraduate students.

12 Policy and Resources Committee Report

Paper K

Court noted the report.

13 Vacation Court and Exception Committee Report

Paper L

Court noted the decisions taken on its authority by the Vacation Court and the new Exception Committee.

14 Any Other Business

Members wished to record the success of the new format and approach to Court and its Committees papers.

ITEMS FOR FORMAL APPROVAL/NOTING (Please note these items are not normally discussed.)

15 Donations and Legacies **Paper M**

Court noted the donations and legacies received by the Development Trust from 5 June to 27 August 2014.

16 University of Edinburgh Statement on Quality Arrangements **Paper N**

Court approved the revised Statement on Quality Arrangements.

17 Annual Report to the Scottish Funding Council on Institution-led Review and Enhancement Activity 2013/14 **Paper O**

Court approved the Annual Report and authorised the Vice-Convenor to sign the Statement on its behalf confirming its satisfaction of quality arrangements.

18 Spectator Stand at East Peffermill **Paper P**

The proposal to name the new football spectator stand at East Peffermill the Alan Chainey Stand was approved.

19 Uses of the Seal

A record was made available of all the documents executed on behalf of the Court since its last meeting and sealed with its common seal.

20 Date of next meeting

The next meeting of Court will be held on Monday, 3 November 2014 at 2.00pm in the Seminar Room, Wellcome Trust, Clinical Research Facility, Western General.