



UNIVERSITY COURT

21 September 2015

Minute

Present:

Mr Steve Morrison, Rector (in chair)
The Principal, Professor Sir Timothy O'Shea
Sheriff Principal Edward Bowen
Dr Anne Richards, Vice-Convener
Ms Doreen Davidson
Dr Alan Brown
Mr Ritchie Walker
Dr Marialuisa Aliotta
Professor Sarah Cooper
Professor Jake Ansell
Dr Claire Phillips
Mr David Bentley
Dr Robert Black
Lady Susan Rice
Ms Alison Grant
Mr Jonny Ross-Tatam, President, Students' Association
Ms Urte Macikene, Vice-President, Students' Association

In attendance:

Mr Sandy Ross, Rector's Assessor
University Secretary, Ms Sarah Smith
Mr Hugh Edmiston, Director of Corporate Services
Ms Leigh Chalmers, Director of Legal Services
Mr Gavin Douglas, Deputy Secretary, Student Experience
Mr Gavin McLachlan, Chief Information Officer & Librarian to the University
Dr Ian Conn, Director of Communications & Marketing
Mr Gary Jebb, Director of Estates & Buildings
Ms Leigh Chalmers, Director of Legal Services
Ms Zoe Lewandowski, Director of Human Resources
Ms Kirstie Graham, Deputy Head of Court Services
Dr Lewis Allan, Head of Court Services
Vice-Principal Professor Dorothy Miell, Head of the College of Humanities and Social Science (for Item 5)
Professor David Argyle, Head of The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies (for Item 5)
Professor Graeme Reid, Dean of Learning & Teaching, College of Science & Engineering (for Item 5)
Mr Luke Reeve, Partner, Ernst & Young (for Item 7)
Mr Dave Gorman, Director of Social Responsibility (for Item 10)

Apologies:

The Rt Hon Donald Wilson, Lord Provost of the City of Edinburgh
Mr Peter Budd
Dr Chris Masters
Ms Angi Lamb
Mr Alan Johnston

1 Minute

Paper A

The Minute of the previous meeting held on 22 June 2015 was approved.

Court noted apologies and welcomed new General Council members Dr Alan Brown and Mr Ritchie Walker and the new Head of Court Services, Dr Lewis Allan, in attendance.

2 Matters Arising

Verbal

There were no matters arising.

3 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 Harmonium Project; the largest ever intake of new students to the University, with the Holyrood North postgraduate accommodation operational for the new academic year; recent and planned engagement relating to the Higher Education (Scotland) Governance Bill; and speeches given at the University by the Secretary of State for Scotland and the First Minister of Scotland relating to the one year anniversary of the independence referendum.

The Principal informed Court of the approval of three scholarships to Syrian refugees and described the operation of the Confucius Institutes in relation to the British Council, Goethe Institut and other cultural associations.

4 Assistant Principals – Renewal

Paper C2

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

- Mr Kevin Collins' term of office as Assistant Principal Industry Engagement, Industry Funding and Big Data be renewed for a further three years until 31 December 2018, with the post renamed Assistant Principal Industry Engagement and increased from 0.4 FTE to 0.6 FTE from 1 January 2016.
- Professor John Smyth's term of office as Honorary Assistant Principal Cancer Research Development be extended for a final two year term until 31 July 2017.

Court agreed to consider the appointment of new Assistant Principals following Item 5 (National Student Survey and the Student Experience Update).

SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

5 National Student Survey and the Student Experience Update

Paper D

Court considered a discussion paper setting out initial findings from the 2015 National Student Survey results and an analysis of wider challenges around the student experience, teaching and learning at the University. The improvement in all National Student Survey measures including the headline overall satisfaction rate (increased by two percentage points to 84%) on the previous year was welcomed but disappointment was expressed regarding relative performance against peer institutions in the overall satisfaction and assessment and feedback measures in particular.

The Principal indicated that supporting the Senior Vice-Principal in improving the student experience will be of the highest priority over the coming year. Representatives from the three Colleges were invited to report on College performance and planned activities in response. Common themes that emerged in discussion were:

- Uneven results between Schools and between disciplinary groupings within Schools – with further sharing of good practice and consistency in approach sought, while recognising that year-to-year fluctuations will occur
- Continuing to develop the personal tutor system, including mentoring of tutors, ensuring full inclusion of personal tutor and teaching performance within annual reviews, appropriate incentives for personal tutors and for those delivering excellent teaching
- Co-designing with students spaces intended for staff-student interaction to assist a sense of community and belonging.

Court endorsed the analysis and suggested direction of travel for learning and teaching set out in the paper. Members welcomed the intention to convey the importance of the student experience by the University's leadership, recognise and reward outstanding teaching, hold poor standards to account, celebrate the best learning and teaching practice and simplify the regulation and organisation of teaching and the assessment of learning.

It was requested that the Senior Vice-Principal provide a progress update at the December Court meeting.

6 Assistant Principals – New

Paper C1

Following the National Student Survey and Student Experience update, Court approved the following appointments on the recommendation of the Principal to support the Senior Vice-Principal in improving the Student Experience:

- Professor Alan Murray as Assistant Principal Academic Support 0.5 FTE for an initial period of 3 years from 1 October

2015 until 31 July 2018

- Professor Susan Rhind as Assistant Principal Assessment and Feedback 0.4 FTE for an initial period of 3 years from 1 October 2015 until 31 July 2018
- Professor Lesley McAra as Assistant Principal Community Relations 0.4 FTE for an initial period of 3 years from 1 October 2015 until 31 July 2018.

7 Finance Director's Update / External Borrowing

Paper E

Updates on the project to secure external funding in support of the University's Strategic Plan objectives, a revised Ten-Year Forecast and progress to date in the recovery of tax-relief in relation to Research and Development expenditure were received.

The Director of Finance introduced the update on the external funding project, noting the ambition of the Estates Funding Strategy approved by Court on 22 June and the record period of low interest rates, which provides a favourable environment for accessing external funding. The attendee from the University's external advisors, Ernst & Young, commented on financial market conditions and the recent experience of other similar UK universities that have accessed external funding using a variety of financial instruments. Members discussed expected future reporting requirements to the Policy & Resources Committee, loan amortisation and interest cover and noted the positive experience of members who had worked with the European Investment Bank.

The conclusions of the External Finance Review Group as set out in the paper were approved, with the Policy & Resources Committee to receive on-going reporting on performance with respect to loan covenants.

The Rector inquired as to whether a proportion of the expected tax relief from the Research and Development Expenditure Credit (RDEC) could be deployed to accelerate projects to improve the student experience, with student input as appropriate. The University Secretary confirmed that initial advice received was favourable in this regard although additional work would be required. Court noted progress to date in the recovery of RDEC-related tax relief and approved proposals for the deployment of the associated income subject to the request that further thought is given to the appropriate spend of the balance of £5.8M to examine whether the Quartermile project can be funded from additional reserves from RDEC receipts accounted for in 2014/15 – releasing the resource for student experience related works in the current year.

8 Counter Terrorism and Security Act / Prevent Duty

Paper F

Draft plans for the implementation of the duty to 'have due regard to the need to prevent people being drawn into terrorism' within the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (2015) – known as 'the Prevent

Duty' – were reviewed. It was noted that, for Scottish universities, University Courts are expected to be responsible for ensuring compliance with the Prevent duty. The EUSA representatives provided advice on the position taken by the National Union of Students and by EUSA, commenting that EUSA believed the legislation to be inappropriate while acknowledging that Court must endeavour to comply with the Prevent duty. Members welcomed the intention to implement the duty in a sensitive and non-discriminatory manner.

The draft plans for implementation were endorsed, with final proposals to be submitted for approval at a subsequent meeting.

9 Revision to Computing Regulations

Paper G

Revisions to computing regulations to include reference to the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (2015) and a number of minor textual changes were approved.

10 Responsible Investment

Paper H

A responsible investment policy for armaments following the Principles for Responsible Investment and the completed review of investment in fossil fuels was considered. Members discussed the definition of 'controversial weapons', noting the intention to use the Sustainalytics definition of: anti-personnel mines, biological weapons, chemical weapons, cluster weapons, depleted uranium ammunition, nuclear weapons and white phosphorus weapons.

Court endorsed the approach taken in identifying controversial armaments as a divestment priority and approved the policy based on the exclusion of controversial weapons. The subsequent intention to proactively review and finalise the University's overall policy on Responsible Investment was noted.

11 City Deal

Paper I

Discussions taking place with the City of Edinburgh Council on a proposed City Deal for the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region, including input to a proposal document submitted in early September, were noted. Court welcomed the emphasis in the City Deal proposal on building on existing strengths in knowledge, culture and technology and the alignment with aspects of the University's major Estates projects under development. Governance arrangements were discussed, with a paper to follow at the December meeting. Members expressed an interest in meeting Council representatives, with the Principal to consider appropriate opportunities and formats.

Approval was granted for proceeding with discussions on the basis outlined in the paper.

- 12 Outcome Agreement – Cycle and Draft Self-Evaluation of 2014/15 Agreement** **Paper J**
- The draft Outcome Agreement Self-Evaluation 2014/15 report was considered. Members discussed the process of offer-making to candidates from SIMD40 groups including those attending widening access summer schools and discussed the broader variety of indicators that can be used to complement the SIMD classification.
- Court endorsed the development of the draft Outcome Agreement Self-Evaluation report for 2014/15 and delegated authority to the Deputy Secretary, Strategic Planning for the finalisation and submission of the report to the Scottish Funding Council. The publication of note-worthy extracts from Self-Evaluation reports was approved.
- 13 Audit and Risk Committee Report** **Paper O**
- Court noted the report and approved the recommended minor revision to the Committee’s terms of reference.
- 14 Effectiveness Review** **Paper K**
- The draft 2014/15 review of effectiveness of Court was considered and approved, with the intention to undertake an externally facilitated review noted.
- ROUTINE ITEMS**
- 15 EUSA President’s report** **Paper L**
- Court noted the items within the EUSA President’s Report and the additional information on: the planned introduction of a careers mentoring system with pilot projects underway for business, history and widening participation students; success in welcoming new students to the University with over 700 different EUSA events held; improvement in EUSA’s National Student Survey results with plans to focus on the experience of CSE and ECA students over the coming year; a continued improvement in finances and a successful Edinburgh Festival period.
- The Principal commended EUSA for its Welcome Week and Edinburgh Festival activities while the Bristo Square refurbishment work continued.
- 16 Exception Committee Report** **Paper M**
- The matters approved by the Exception Committee on behalf of Court were noted:

- *Designation of Vice-Principals*
Approval of the extension of the Senior Vice-Principal's remit to include student experience, teaching and learning with effect from 1 September 2015. Court offered its congratulations to Professor Sue Rigby on her appointment as Deputy Vice Chancellor at the University of Lincoln and noted its thanks to Professor Rigby for all her work on learning and teaching at the University.
- *Fossil Fuel Review Outcomes*
Following the recommendation of the Investment Committee, the University's direct holdings in the three companies that did not meet the threshold tests will be sold as soon as possible and divestment in these companies should occur within 6 months or earlier where there is no financial impediment. An appropriate communications strategy was agreed.
Post-meeting note: this has since been completed.
- *UoE Deaconess Ltd.: Capitalising the Subsidiary*
Approval to progress with capitalising the subsidiary company and the issuing of new shares to the University.
- *Request for Delegation of Authority for an equipment purchase*
Vice-Principal Professor Sir John Savill was granted delegated authority to take forward the purchase of grant funded equipment in excess of £200,000.
- *Resolutions*
41 Resolutions founding Personal Chairs were approved.
- *Court Sub-Group for external loan funding*
The establishment, membership and remit of a Court Sub-Group to consult and assist with the process to secure external loan funding was approved.

17 Policy and Resources Committee Report

Paper N

Court noted the report.

18 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

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

19 University of Edinburgh Statement on Quality Arrangements

Paper P

Court approved the Statement on Quality Arrangements.

20 Annual Report to the Scottish Funding Council on Institution-led Review and Enhancement Activity 2014/15 **Paper Q**

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

21 Joint Meeting of Senate and Court Committee Conveners Report **Paper R**

Court noted the report. The Principal noted that Court members are welcome to attend meetings of Senate.

22 Annual Review Completion Rates 2014/15 **Paper S**

Court noted the annual review completion rates 2014/15 and congratulated staff who have been instrumental in improving completion rates.

23 Donations and Legacies **Paper T**

Court noted the donations and legacies received by the Development Trust from 5 June to 3 September 2015.

24 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.

25 Date of next meeting

The next meeting of Court will be held on Monday, 7 December 2015 at Moray House School of Education.