



**UNIVERSITY COURT**

**18 February 2019**

**Minute**

- Present:** Anne Richards, Vice-Convener (in chair)  
The Principal, Peter Mathieson  
Doreen Davidson, General Council Assessor  
Ritchie Walker, General Council Assessor  
Sarah Cooper, Senate Assessor  
Claire Phillips, Senate Assessor  
Jo Craiglee, Non-Teaching Staff Assessor  
David Bentley, Co-opted Member  
Robert Black, Co-opted Member  
Alan Johnston, Co-opted Member  
Clare Reid, Co-opted Member  
Susan Rice, Co-opted Member  
Eleri Connick, President, Students' Association  
Kai O'Doherty, Vice-President, Students' Association
- In attendance:** Angi Lamb, Rector's Assessor  
University Secretary, Sarah Smith  
Senior Vice-Principal Charlie Jeffery  
Vice-Principal David Robertson  
Vice-Principal Moira Whyte  
Gavin McLachlan, Chief Information Officer & Librarian to the University  
Lee Hamill, Director of Finance  
Tracey Slaven, Deputy Secretary Strategic Planning  
Gavin Douglas, Deputy Secretary Student Experience  
Gary Jebb, Director of Estates  
Theresa Merrick, Director of Communications and Marketing  
Lewis Allan, Head of Court Services  
Vice-Principal Chris Cox (for Item 10)
- Apologies:** Ann Henderson, Rector  
Edward Bowen, Chancellor's Assessor  
Frank Ross, Lord Provost of the City of Edinburgh  
Alan Brown, General Council Assessor  
Elizabeth Bomberg, Senate Assessor  
Alexander Tudhope, Senate Assessor  
Frank Armstrong, Co-opted Member  
Perdita Fraser, Co-opted Member

**1 Minute**

**Paper A1**

The Minute of the meeting held on 3 December was approved subject to two minor amendments.

Lee Hamill was welcomed as Director of Finance from 1 January 2019. Court recorded its congratulations to four staff members recognised in the 2019 New Year Honours: Jonathan Seckl OBE, for services to endocrinology; Anna Meredith OBE, for services to animal welfare; Ian Deary OBE, for services to the social sciences; and, Fiona Alderson BEM, for services to engineering and education.

## **2 Matters Arising & Review of Action Log**

**Paper A2**

There were no matters arising. The action log was reviewed, noting that the City Region Deal's University Grant Agreement document is under development. Further detail on next steps for actions was requested for future iterations.

## **3 Principal's Report**

**Paper B**

Court noted the contents of the report and considered the Principal's reflections on his first year in office, with a focus on the local and Scottish context of the University over the past twelve months. Additional focus on the UK and international context is planned for the following year, particularly in relation to Brexit, the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) and the ongoing review of post-18 education in England and any cross-border implications.

USS consultations on the 2017 and 2018 valuations and the role of the Court USS Sub-Group in providing advice on consultation responses from lay Court members who are not USS members was discussed. Topics raised in the 2018 valuation consultation including contingent contributions and negative pledges were discussed.

## **4 University Leadership Structure**

**Paper C**

*Individuals named in the paper absented themselves from the meeting for the duration of the item.*

The Principal presented a paper clarifying the senior leadership structure and presented proposals for the future role of Vice-Principals and Assistant Principals. Court welcomed the paper and the proposal to extend Vice-Principal titles to the three heads of the Professional Services Groups and discussed the distinction between the Senior Leadership Team (a smaller body which discusses matters of strategic importance at an early stage and operationally focused items when a shared agreement among the senior leadership is beneficial, often in 'pre-decision' mode) and the University Executive (a larger body with operational decision-making authority, including all members of the Senior Leadership Team), with the membership and remits of both and an updated organisational structure diagram to be circulated. Senior leadership for the equality and diversity portfolio was discussed, with the Vice-Principal People & Culture taking up a new role at the University of Bristol, with this to be finalised and communicated in due course.

Court approved the appointment of three new Vice-Principal positions for terms of office until 31 July 2022:

- Vice-Principal Strategic Change & Governance and University Secretary Sarah Smith;

- Vice-Principal Business Development and Director of Corporate Services Hugh Edmiston; and,
- Vice-Principal and Chief Information Officer Gavin McLachlan.

Court approved the extension of the terms of office until 31 July 2022 for the following Vice-Principals:

- Senior Vice-Principal Charlie Jeffery;
- Vice-Principal Planning, Resources & Research Policy Jonathan Seckl;
- Vice-Principal High Performance Computing Richard Kenway;
- Vice-Principal Data Science Andrew Morris;
- Vice-Principal Philanthropy & Advancement Chris Cox;
- Vice-Principal International James Smith; and,
- Deputy Vice-Principal International Alan Mackay.

Court noted the extension of the terms of office for the remaining Assistant Principals until 31 July 2021 and the terms of this extension.

## **SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS**

### **5 Student Experience Plan**

**Paper D**

An update on the Student Experience Plan was reviewed, with work underway to establish costings for individual projects to enable calibration against other priorities within planning round discussions and a standing sub-committee of the University Executive set up to oversee the Plan.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- The potential for ‘quick wins’ alongside longer term improvements should be explored;
- The plan for the review of the Personal Tutor system is complete and the review will begin shortly;
- Consolidating the 70+ projects into a smaller set of workstreams;
- The importance of maintaining a clear link with staff experience activities and a joined-up approach given interdependencies;
- Measuring success in a more sophisticated means than existing surveys; and,
- Using communication of the student experience projects for community building.

### **6 EUSA President’s Report**

**Paper E**

The Students’ Association President reported on recent developments. Members discussed the proportion of EUSA employees paid the real living wage, with the Association committed to increasing the proportion in future years and balancing commercial activity on University sites during the Edinburgh Festivals with commercial opportunities for EUSA – to be considered further within the Planning Round.

The report was noted and an amendment to the EUSA Democracy Regulations to introduce a Trans & Non-Binary Liberation Officer approved.

## **7 Director of Finance's Report**

**Paper F**

The most recent monthly management accounts excluding subsidiaries (December 2018, Period 5), the latest iteration of the Ten Year Forecast including initial scenario analysis and pensions updates were reviewed. Work to improve the accuracy of quarterly forecasting ahead of the Quarter 2 forecast is underway, with overly conservative projections of income growth made in Quarter 1. Levers available, should Key Performance Indicators show weak performance, were discussed; including capital prioritisation and planning to achieve greater income growth and cost control, to be presented to the next Court meeting.

## **8 Brexit Update**

**Paper G**

An update on potential impacts from the UK's planned departure from the European Union on 29 March 2019 was reviewed. The continuing uncertainty over the terms of departure and possible extensions to the departure date was noted. Court discussed: possible changes to government funding for EU students; the recruitment of non-EU international students, with figures to date for 2019/20 entry highly encouraging; existing foreign currency holdings; supply chain implications; and, reputational impacts to the UK university sector as a whole, including attractiveness to EU and non-EU staff and access to EU research funding. The importance of staff and student communications at time of uncertainty, including regularly updating the frequently asked questions section on the University website was agreed, with a meeting date for the Court EU Sub-Group to be identified before the end of March if required.

## **9 External Effectiveness Review**

**Paper H**

The report of the external effectiveness review and covering note from the Convener of Nominations Committee, which had acted as the working group during the course of the review, was considered. On behalf of Court, the Vice-Convener thanked David Newall, external facilitator of the effectiveness review and Alan Johnston, lead Court member for the review. Nominations Committee had agreed that the report be presented to Court without seeking amendments and proposed that two of the report's five themes: People; and Structure and Process, be prioritised for follow-up action. Court welcomed the report, agreed with the prioritisation of the People and Structure and Process themes and agreed that the report be published in full on the University's website.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- For the People theme, succession planning and continuing the recruitment of high calibre new Court members will be the top priority in responding to the report and taken forward by Nominations Committee;
- For the Structure and Process theme, more opportunity for detailed discussion of key strategic items should be created on Court agendas, including opportunity to comment on significant early stage proposals – to enable this, the Delegated Authority Schedule should be reviewed to enable more routine items to be approved at committee level;

- How Court provides constructive challenge to the senior management, noting that this occurs at committee level and also outside of formal meetings – committee reports could illustrate challenge at this level more;
- The size of Court, substantially larger than most boards outside of the higher education sector, can be a disadvantage in effective and efficient operation. Court members typically report that that it takes a year of membership to develop a detailed understanding of the University, given its size and complexity – further improving induction arrangements and introducing shadowing opportunities would assist.

## **ITEMS FOR NOTING OR FORMAL APPROVAL**

### **10 Development & Alumni Annual Report**

**Paper I**

The annual report on the University's philanthropic and alumni relations activities for 2017/18 and interim update on progress in 2018/19 was reviewed. Court welcomed the strong performance in philanthropic giving for the year and discussed:

- The proportion of alumni donors, currently the third highest in the UK, while noting that non-alumni donors are also often significant benefactors to universities, including Edinburgh;
- Improving Court visibility of alumni events; and,
- Engaging current students and recent alumni, including using the new Platform One online community to offer career advice and mentoring.

### **11 Draft Ordinances: Senate, General Council & Court**

**Paper J**

The following draft Ordinances were considered and approved for transmission for statutory consultation:

- Composition of the Senatus Academicus;
- General Council Membership and Registration; and,
- Election of Chancellor and Chairing of General Council Meetings.

A minor amendment to the draft Composition of Court Ordinance was approved and authority delegated to the University Secretary to agree any further non-material changes to the Ordinance if requested by the Scottish Government or Privy Council.

### **12 Committee Reports**

- **Exception Committee**

**Paper K1**

The following matter approved by Exception Committee on behalf of Court was noted: Core Systems (Phase 1) Procurement – overall estimated project and service costs, delegation of authority to the Principal to approve the external contracts awarded through the procurement process; authority for the University Secretary and the Chief Information Officer and Librarian to the University to sign the contracts; and, delegation of the budget to the Service Excellence Programme Board governance structure to administer during the implementation project and to Information Services Group to manage the recurrent budget, service and contracts following completion of the implementation project.

• **Court Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) Sub-Group** **Verbal**

The Sub-Group Convener reported on this morning's meeting to consider a response to the Universities UK consultation on the 2018 valuation. A final draft response will be circulated to the Sub-Group before the consultation closes on 13 March.

• **Policy & Resources Committee** **Paper K2**

The report was noted.

• **Nominations Committee** **Paper K3**

The report was noted and an amendment to Court's Standing Orders was approved to allow for newly appointed co-opted Court members to be appointed for a term of office for up to four years subject to satisfactory appraisal and any probationary periods that may be applied.

• **Knowledge Strategy Committee** **Paper K4**

The report was noted.

• **Senate** **Paper K5**

The report was noted.

**13 Resolutions** **Paper L**

The following draft resolution was referred to the General Council and Senate for observations: Draft Resolution No. 7/2019: Code of Student Conduct.

The following resolutions were approved:

Resolution No. 64/2018: Foundation of a David Hume University Chair of Economics

Resolution No. 1/2019: Foundation of a Chair of Inorganic Chemistry

Resolution No. 2/2019: Alteration of the title of the Chair of Mathematics (third)

Resolution No. 3/2019: Foundation of a Chair of General Practice

Resolution No. 4/2019: Foundation of a Chair of Primary Care and Multimorbidity

Resolution No. 5/2019: Boards of Studies

**14 Donations and Legacies** **Paper M**

Donations and legacies received by the Development Trust from 13 November 2018 to 25 January 2019 were noted.

**15 Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

**16 Date of Next Meeting**

Monday, 29 April 2019