



UNIVERSITY COURT

30 September 2019

Web Version

Minute

- Members Present:** Ann Henderson, Rector (in chair)
Anne Richards, Vice-Convener
Peter Mathieson, Principal & Vice-Chancellor
Alastair Dunlop, Chancellor's Assessor
Doreen Davidson, General Council Assessor
Jock Millican, General Council Assessor
Sarah Wolffe, General Council Assessor
Elizabeth Bomberg, Senate Assessor
Sarah Cooper, Senate Assessor
Claire Phillips, Senate Assessor
Alexander Tudhope, Senate Assessor
Jo Craiglee, Non-Teaching Staff Assessor
Frank Ross, Lord Provost of the City of Edinburgh
Frank Armstrong, Co-opted Member
Perdita Fraser, Co-opted Member
Caroline Gardner, Co-opted Member
Alan Johnston, Co-opted Member
David Law, Co-opted Member
Clare Reid, Co-opted Member
Susan Rice, Co-opted Member
Andrew Wilson, President, Students' Association
Oona Miller, Vice-President, Students' Association
- Apologies:** Angi Lamb, Rector's Assessor
- In attendance:** Sarah Smith, University Secretary
- Presenters & Observers:** Jonathan Seckl, Vice-Principal Planning, Resources & Research Policy
Colm Harmon, Vice-Principal, Students
Moirá Whyte, Vice-Principal & Head of College
Dave Robertson, Vice-Principal & Head of College
Gavin McLachlan, Vice-Principal, 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
Leigh Chalmers, Director of Legal Services
Theresa Merrick, Director of Communications & Marketing
Lewis Allan, Head of Court Services

1 Minute

Paper A1

The Minute of the meeting held on 17 June 2019 was approved.

On behalf of Court, the Rector welcomed new Court members Alastair Dunlop, Jock Millican, Sarah Wolffe, David Law and Caroline Gardner. The Rector also welcomed Colm Harmon, Vice-Principal Students, to his first meeting.

2 Matters Arising & Review of Action Log

Paper A2

There were no matters arising. The action log was reviewed and noted.

3 Principal's Report

Paper B

Court noted the contents of the report and additional information on:

- A record £15.3 million donation from author J K Rowling to help create new facilities and support research at the University's Anne Rowling Regenerative Neurology Clinic;
- The publication of the University's 'Strategy 2030';
- Ongoing work on the University's future size and shape with anticipated changes to student number projections in the Ten Year Forecast – further information will be submitted in due course;
- Ballots for industrial action on pay and pensions – mid-November 2019 to April 2020 is the potential period for industrial action depending on the results; and,
- A recently published Audit Scotland report on Scottish university finances, with the Auditor General summarising the report's findings and next steps.

Members discussed uncertainty over the implementation of the Augar Post-18 Review of Education and Funding in England; potential for use of risk appetite and concentration risk measures when assessing future collaborations; and, the effect of any change in the University's size and shape on Scottish domiciled student numbers, including those in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation's least advantaged 20% of postcodes (SIMD20). It was noted that the number of Scottish and EU undergraduate student places are currently capped by the Scottish Funding Council, with the University above the SIMD20 10% intake recruitment target.

SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

4 Findings of Student Surveys 2018/19

Paper C

A summary of performance in the 2018/19 National Student Survey (NSS), Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) was reviewed. There had been no significant change in the NSS overall satisfaction score (78.5%), with the results remaining below the Russell Group average, with PTES satisfaction scores (overall 83.2%) generally in line with or above the Russell Group average and PRES scores (overall 79%) slightly below the Russell Group average. Actions underway to improve the student experience include a review of the Personal Tutor system, the planned opening of a

new Health and Wellbeing Centre in February 2020 and accompanying additional investment in delivering the Student Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy.

Court discussed lessons learned from previous initiatives to improve the student experience; academic staff perspectives on the Personal Tutor system; and, using the launch of new projects such as the Health and Wellbeing Centre to communicate improvements already made.

The Vice-Principal Students added some initial reflections, highlighting the opportunity to develop an over-arching student experience narrative, the University's commitment to breadth of subject and course choice and desire for curriculum review.

5 EUSA President's Report

Paper D

The Students' Association President reported on recent developments including a successful Welcome Week with a record 450 events, the planned launch of a 'Money Matters' campaign and survey, the establishment of a Zero Waste Corner in the David Hume Tower's Students' Association shop and presented an introductory video on the Students' Association used within the Principal's Welcome Ceremony for new students.

Members discussed findings for the student voice category in the National Student Survey, with clearer demonstration of action taken on student suggestions proposed; welcomed the favourable financial performance to budget for the year to date; discussed follow-up work between the University and Students' Association on commercial activity during the Festivals and summer graduations; and invited the presentation of the Money Matters survey findings to the City Council when complete.

6 Director of Finance's Report

Paper E

The draft (unaudited) University Group 2018/19 financial results, updates on the latest iteration of the Ten Year Forecast and the 2018 Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) valuation and a revised Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy were reviewed. It was noted that dates for briefing sessions on the draft Annual Report and Accounts 2018/19 prior to formal consideration at the December Court meeting will be circulated shortly. Forecast research income within the Ten Year Forecast was discussed, with a slowing of research income anticipated with a mitigating reduction in research overhead costs. The expected underlying operating surplus in 2018/19 was noted as being at the lower end of the target range, with further discussion planned at Audit & Risk Committee.

The Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy was approved subject to minor amendment to cross-refer to the Whistleblowing Code of Practice.

7 Edinburgh BioQuarter Update

Paper F

An update on the University, Scottish Enterprise, City of Edinburgh Council and NHS Lothian partnership at the BioQuarter site was reviewed.

8 Estates: School of Engineering Module 1

Paper G

A funding request to enable the first stage of the relocation of the School of Engineering within the King's Buildings campus was considered. It was noted that the new building will enable a growth in teaching as well as research activity, with an improved staff:student ratio planned. The environmental impact of the new building was discussed, with solar panels and sustainable materials to be used.

Court approved funding from University Resources to progress the Engineering Module 1 project to completion.

9 Overview of the Main University Rankings

Paper H

A briefing note on the main UK and international university rankings and their differences was reviewed. It was reaffirmed that University decisions are not led by league table rankings but strategies and policies instead support the pursuit of excellence, with the expectation that this should/will be recognised by rankings. The briefing note was welcomed and the following points raised in discussion:

- Improvements in UK rankings in recent years have been influenced by positive changes in the staff:student ratio and graduate employment outcomes;
- The strong influence of the National Student Survey results on the UK rankings and commensurate effect on the University's position in the UK rankings; and,
- The University's position of 13th in Scotland in a Sunday Times inclusion table – acknowledging recent significant improvements in the proportion of students recruited from the least advantaged 20% of Scottish postcodes (SIMD20 measure).

ITEMS FOR NOTING OR FORMAL APPROVAL

10 Annual Scottish Funding Council Quality Assurance Report

Paper I

The report was approved and the Vice-Convener authorised to sign the accompanying statement.

11 Microsoft Agreement

Paper J

Court approved delegation of authority to:

- i) the Principal to approve the contract for a new three year agreement for the University-wide provision of Microsoft software; and,
- ii) the Chief Information Officer & Librarian to the University to sign the contract.

12 Cross & Salmon Trust – Trustee changes

Paper K

Court approved the resignation of Professor Charlie Jeffery as a Trustee of the Cross & Salmon Trust, and the appointment of Vice-Principal Chris Cox as a Trustee of the Trust, with effect from 31 August 2019.

13 Development Trust – Trustee changes

Paper L

Court noted:

i) the resignation of Professor Charlie Jeffery as a Trustee of the Development Trust;
ii) due to conclusion of his term of office as Chancellor’s Assessor, the removal of Sheriff Principal Edward Bowen as a Trustee of the Development Trust; and, delegated to the University Secretary the signing of a Minute of Amendment to the existing Trust Deed of the Development Trust to effect these changes to the trusteeship of the Development Trust, including the additions of Ms Perdita Fraser and Professor Colm Harmon as Trustees, as agreed by Court on 17 June 2019.

14 Committee Reports

• Policy and Resources Committee

Paper M1

The report was noted and minor amendments to the Terms of Reference for Policy & Resources Committee relating to the establishment of Staff Experience Committee and the dissolution of People Committee were approved.

• Audit and Risk Committee

Paper M2

The report was noted.

• Senate

Paper M3

The report was noted.

15 Donations and Legacies; Global Alumni Events

Paper N

Donations and legacies received by the Development Trust from 1 June to 6 September 2019 were noted along with information on upcoming global alumni events.

16 Any Other Business

A regular update from the Edinburgh University Sports Union was requested for future meetings.

17 Date of Next Meeting

Monday, 2 December 2019.