



**POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**16 September 2019**

**Web Version**

**Minute**

**Present:** Anne Richards, Vice-Convener of Court (Convener)  
Frank Armstrong, Co-opted Member  
Sarah Cooper, Senate Assessor  
Doreen Davidson, General Council Assessor  
David Law, Co-opted Member  
Peter Mathieson, Principal & Vice-Chancellor  
Jock Millican, General Council Assessor  
Sarah Smith, Vice-Principal Strategic Change & Governance; and  
University Secretary  
Jonathan Seckl, Vice-Principal Planning, Resources & Research Policy  
Andrew Wilson, President, Students' Association

**In attendance:** Hugh Edmiston, Vice-Principal Business Development & Director of  
Corporate Services  
Lee Hamill, Director of Finance  
James Saville, Director of Human Resources  
Gary Jebb, Director of Estates  
Tracey Slaven, Deputy Secretary, Strategic Planning  
Lewis Allan, Head of Court Services

**Apologies:** Susan Rice, Co-opted Member

**1 Minute** **Paper A1**

The Minute of the meeting held on 3 June was approved.

**2 Matters Arising & Review of Action Log** **Paper A2**

The Action Log was reviewed and there were no matters arising.

**3 Principal's Communications** **Verbal**

The Principal reported on:

- a £15.3 million donation from J K Rowling to help create new facilities and support research at the University's Anne Rowling Regenerative Neurology Clinic;
- the Principal's Welcome Ceremonies held on 9 September for new students, with Court members attending thanked for their contribution;
- a lecture by Philip Rycroft, former Permanent Secretary at the Department for Exiting the European Union on 'Brexit and the Union: what next for Scotland in the UK', organised by the David Hume Institute and held at the University;
- the annual Universities UK conference, including presentations on Generation Z (late-1990s to early 2000s birth cohorts), who are typically more motivated by

work with wider benefit to society and value work-life balance to a larger degree than earlier generations and are more likely to report mental health conditions;

- a bid for funding from UK Research & Innovation to establish a Global Open Finance Centre of Excellence. If successful, approval will be sought from the Committee to establish a company limited by guarantee; and,
- success in winning funding from the Wellcome Trust for five doctoral training centres, the highest number awarded to one university.

Members discussed student mental health, including interaction between NHS and University provision of services, the growing proportion of students matriculating with declared mental health conditions and the proportion who develop mental health conditions while studying, noting that late teenage years are a peak period for the emergence of mental health conditions in the population as a whole. The Students' Association President commented on pressures on students and pre-emptive actions that could be considered, such as whether the number of examinations is excessive.

## **SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS**

### **4 Student Recruitment Update**

**Paper B**

An overview of student recruitment for 2019/20 entry was reviewed. It was noted that despite volatility recruitment is on target to deliver the business plan.

Members discussed the increased volatility in different application categories, plans to refresh online courses and improve targeted marketing of courses more generally along with wider work on the future size and shape of the student population. The widening access figures were welcomed, with discussion of outreach work in schools and University publicity to counteract any negative perceptions of costs. Media stories on a sector-wide growth in unconditional offers were discussed, noting that Edinburgh does not make unconditional offers to applicants who do not already hold the requisite qualifications. Summary information on entry figures in tabular form was requested within future reports and an update on student recruitment and admissions management at an appropriate point.

### **5 Brexit Update**

**Paper C**

An update on the potential impacts associated with transitional arrangements for Brexit given continuing uncertainty before the revised extension date of 31 October 2019 was reviewed. The following comments were made in discussion:

- the UK government's recent announcement of the planned re-introduction of a two year post-study work visa was welcomed;
- widening access for EU students will be considered within wider work on scholarships; and,
- possible effects on future block grant funding levels if the fee treatment of EU students changes.

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

**Paper D**

The Director of Finance reported on the draft (unaudited) University Group 2018/19 financial results, the latest iteration of the Ten Year Forecast and the 2018

Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) valuation. Members discussed presentation and communication of the non-cash movements in the USS and Staff Benefits Scheme pensions within the Annual Report and Accounts. It was noted that the statutory presentation of the accounts sits within a fixed format but the earlier part of the documents provides scope for explanatory text. Sector-wide work on communication of the USS non cash movement was welcomed, with a guide expected from the British Universities Finance Directors' Group shortly.

**7 Edinburgh BioQuarter Update** **Paper E**

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

**8 China Merchants Group** **Paper F**

An update on the proposed development of a strategic partnership between the University and the China Merchants Group was considered.

**9 Estates: School of Engineering Module 1** **Paper G**

A funding request for the School of Engineering Module 1 project, a first step in a long term plan to re-locate the School of Engineering within the King's Buildings Campus, was reviewed. The Committee agreed to recommend to Court approval for funding from University Resources to progress the Engineering Module 1 project to completion.

**10 Staff Experience Committee/Dissolution of People Committee** **Paper H**

The Committee:

- noted the establishment of the Staff Experience Committee and the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee as Standing Committees of the University Executive;
- approved the dissolution of People Committee as a thematic committee reporting to Policy & Resources Committee; and,
- recommended approval to Court of consequential amendments to the Terms of Reference for Policy & Resources Committee, retaining the Committee's governance oversight of people matters.

It was noted that the Staff Experience Committee will oversee follow-up work on the Staff Survey, with regular reporting on strategic people matters to continue to be submitted to Policy & Resources Committee.

**11 People Report** **Paper I**

The report was noted, with discussion of ongoing ballots for industrial action relating to pay and the USS pension scheme.

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

### **12 ARCHER2 Update**

**Paper J**

An update on proposed contract bids to manage and support the next-generation UK High Performance Computing service ARCHER2, based at the University's Advanced Computing Facility at Easter Bush, was reviewed. It was agreed to delegate authority to the Vice-Principal Business Development & Director of Corporate Services to approve the bids for the Service Provision and Computational Science and Engineering components of the ARCHER2 service.

### **13 Investment Committee Report**

**Paper K**

The report was noted and strong investment gains in the latter half of the 2018/19 year welcomed.

### **14 Research and Commercialisation Statistics Annual Report**

**Paper L**

Research and commercialisation statistics for the 2018/19 academic year were reviewed. Key figures of a value of £1,052 million in research bids submitted (a decrease from £1,211 million last year but above the three year average of £1,017 million) and an award total of £307.2 million (below the £402.7 million figure last year and the three year average of £335.4 million) were discussed, noting that the previous year was a record for the University and included a number of large multi-year grants that distort comparisons. The Vice-Principal Planning, Resources & Research Policy is working with colleagues to encourage an increase in research grant applications, particularly in the College of Science & Engineering.

### **15 Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

### **16 Date of Next Meeting**

Monday, 18 November 2019, 2.30pm.