



POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

18 November 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
Peter Mathieson, Principal & Vice-Chancellor
Susan Rice, Co-opted Member
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
Colm Harmon, Vice-Principal Students
Gary Jebb, Director of Estates
James Saville, Director of Human Resources
Tracey Slaven, Deputy Secretary, Strategic Planning
Lewis Allan, Head of Court Services
- Apologies:** David Law, Co-opted Member
Jock Millican, General Council Assessor

1 Minute

Paper A1

Colm Harmon, Vice-Principal Students, was welcomed to his first meeting of the Committee.

The Minute of the meeting held on 16 September was approved subject to minor amendment.

2 Matters Arising & Review of Action Log

Paper A2

The Action Log was reviewed, with an action to be added for consideration of concentration risk within the risk appetite statement, to be overseen by Audit & Risk Committee.

3 Principal's Communications

Verbal

The Principal reported on:

- Industrial action relating to pay and conditions and the Universities Superannuation Scheme scheduled to take place at 60 universities including

Edinburgh from Monday 25 November to Wednesday 4 December inclusive. Contingency planning is focused on mitigating impact upon students;

- The UK general election campaign, with higher education featuring as one of the campaign topics;
- Positive feedback from the launch of Strategy 2030, with work ongoing to develop measurable actions leading from the Strategy;
- A recent development and alumni-focused visit to North America, with the intention to further deepen alumni engagement with North American graduates and raise philanthropic giving levels;
- The decision taken to recall all 21 exchange students at the University of Hong Kong when tuition was suspended in mid-November;
- A recent meeting with the President of the African Academy of Sciences to further links with African scholars;
- The appointment of Shannon Vallor to the Baillie Gifford Chair of the Ethics of Data and Artificial Intelligence and a planned appointment to the Higgs Chair of Theoretical Physics; and,
- Admissions for 2020 entry.

SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

4 Strategic Plan 2016 Performance Measurement Framework Annual Report Paper B

The third and final annual report for the Strategic Plan 2016 Performance Measurement Framework was reviewed. A verbal update was given on industry partnerships measures, with discussion of: increasing commercialisation activity beyond an established core of c. 250 academic staff; expanding the entrepreneurs-in-residence scheme begun in the School of Medicine; the ‘porous University’ concept shown by the co-location with industry in the Bayes Centre; and, developing experiential learning in the curriculum with industry partners. It was suggested that the report could summarise key deliverables over the Strategy 2016 period, for example, the significant expansion in the proportion of students from widening participation backgrounds and the Science & Innovation Audit leading to the City Deal and, in the development of the Strategy 2030 measures, reflect on lessons learned from the Strategy 2016 period.

5 Director of Finance’s Report Paper C

The draft audited Annual Report and Accounts 2018/19, an update on the Ten Year Forecast and Special Focus Updates on the relationship between surplus and cash and a summary of the recent Audit Scotland report on the “Finances of Scottish universities” were reviewed. It was noted that the Ten Year Forecast will include new student number projections from the January 2020 iteration onwards.

As expected, and in line with other similar UK universities, the statutory accounts within the Annual Report and Accounts show an overall deficit owing to non-cash pension scheme movements, with the accompanying reporting taking a consciously positive tone given the on-target underlying operational surplus achieved. Members discussed communication of the financial results, including revenue, operating surplus and the total comprehensive expenditure figures and likely internal and

external stakeholder interpretation, to be considered as part of finalising the document. When finalised, the document will be published on the University website and associated communications agreed.

6 Student Residential Accommodation Strategy Annual Update

Paper D

The first annual update to the Student Residential Accommodation Strategy 2018-2028 was considered. The Committee discussed the range of accommodation offered by price band and the extent to which planned developments would offer lower priced provision, noting survey evidence from current accommodation users and likely future student intakes and wider economic conditions. Further work will be undertaken on likely student demand by price bracket. The paper was agreed for recommendation to Court for approval with minor amendment to refer to the further work on likely student demand by price bracket.

7 People Report

Paper E

Planned industrial action and any local issues within the dispute were discussed, noting that the University uses a 35 hour rather than 37 hour standard working week and does not use zero hour contracts, two issues that are aspects of the dispute nationally. The Student Council has voted to support the industrial action. Student representatives are working with the University's academic planning group to mitigate effects on students. Flexibility exists for University-specific decision-making on the use of pay foregone as a result of industrial action and, as previously, the intention is to use strike pay on student experience measures. The types and range of measures will be developed when the extent of foregone pay is clearer.

The Technician Career Development Programme was discussed, noting that it is an opt-in programme with stand-alone development options allowing individuals to choose appropriate elements at their discretion.

8 Social Investment Strategy

Paper F

Building on previous agreement for the principle of engaging in social investments and an approval for an initial tranche of investments, a draft social enterprise and social investment strategy was reviewed. Advice from Investment Committee that the total number of investments be limited to up to 15 was welcomed, with the intention that around 10 investments are made in total. It is intended that investments will often be made in partnership with other organisations, reducing overheads and building scale. It was requested that future reporting of investment performance be made in a regular, standardised format. The strategy was recommended to Court for approval.

ITEMS FOR NOTING OR FORMAL APPROVAL

9 Estates Committee Report

Paper G

The report was noted.

10 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

11 Date of Next Meeting

Monday, 27 January 2019, 2.30pm.