



POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

3 April 2020 (Videoconference)

Web Version

Minute

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

In attendance: Alan Johnston, Co-opted Member
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
Terry Fox, Director of Specialist Services, Finance, for Item 5
David Gray, Head of School of Biological Sciences for Item 9

1 Minute Paper A1

The Minute of the meeting held on 27 January 2020 was approved.

2 Matters Arising & Review of Action Log Paper A2

Hugh Edmiston was thanked for his service to the University and wished well prior to his move to Singapore Management University. The action log was reviewed.

3 Principal's Communications Verbal

The Principal reported on the Covid-19 pandemic, paying tribute to staff and students who have quickly adapted to online teaching and learning and to all staff who have worked to facilitate the new arrangements, in particular Tracey Slaven, Gavin Douglas and Gavin McLachlan. University staff, students and alumni are contributing the national and global response to the pandemic, including work to examine suitability of existing drugs for treating Covid-19, assisting the power supply to the first NHS Nightingale hospital, the accelerated graduation of final year medical

students and increased clinical placements for nursing students. The pandemic is expected to have a highly significant negative financial effect on the UK higher education sector and the University is actively engaged in sector-level discussions, including seeking full funding for research to improve on current research funding levels that require cross-subsidy from other activities.

Members welcomed the cross-University effort in response to the pandemic and discussed communicating the wide range of activity internally and externally. Protection for intellectual property generated will be sought where appropriate.

SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

4 Covid-19 Update

Paper B

An update on the University's response and planning in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic was reviewed. The following points were raised in discussion:

- the Students' Association President thanked University colleagues for their engagement with the Students' Association as the pandemic developed and welcomed decisions taken on assessment and accommodation;
- whether the University may furlough some staff under the UK Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme – this is under careful consideration at present, noting that the University has committed to paying staff on guaranteed minimum hours contracts as normal during the outbreak;
- whether student recruitment could be regulated by sector-wide number controls and potential for increased domestic recruitment to offset any international student reductions – student number controls have been the subject of speculation with regard to English institutions, with Scottish institutions already subject to controls on Scottish and EU undergraduate student numbers. While scope exists for some increased domestic recruitment it would be unlikely to offset any significant reduction in international recruitment; and,
- recognising the significant efforts that staff will be likely be expected to make over the summer period to prepare should online teaching be required in the first semester of the next academic year.

5 Finance

• Director of Finance's Report

Paper C1

Updates to the Ten Year Forecast and on the University's disinvestment strategy to return cash to Treasury funds were noted, along with reports on the results of the 2018-19 financial benchmarking exercises for the Russell Group and the Scottish sector.

• Additional Finance Update on Potential Impact of Covid-19

Paper C2

Key financial matters in light of the current Covid-19 crisis were reviewed.

6 Planning Round Update

Paper D

An update on the current business planning cycle was considered. It was agreed to delay the final PRC and Court decisions until the June cycle of meetings to allow

additional time to assess the impact of Covid-19 on the proposed plans. Scope for Court to make a contingent approval for the Planning Round to allow for rapid adjustments if required was discussed. It was noted that the regular Planning Round approval covers a one year period only, with funding for years two and three indicative.

Given the earlier financial year end of April for the Edinburgh University Students' Association (EUSA) and Edinburgh University Sports Union (EUSU), it was agreed to recommend their proposed University allocations for approval by Court on 27 April. The proposed allocation for EUSA is the current core grant of £3,044,000 for each of years 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23. This is to allow EUSA to continue to provide services and plan accordingly with the EUSA plan for moving to the Real Living Wage to be considered once the external environment becomes more certain. The proposed allocation for EUSU is £678,000 for each of years 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23.

7 Edinburgh University Students' Association Budget 2020/21

Paper E

The proposed budget for financial year 2020/21 for the Edinburgh University Students' Association (EUSA) was reviewed, noting that it been approved by the EUSA Trustee Board but also required approval by PRC under a delegation of authority from Court. Given the timescales for budget planning, it was recognised that adjusting for Covid-19 impacts had not been possible and that the budget will give a business-as-usual benchmark against which actual performance can be measured.

The Students' Association President outlined initial financial impacts from the Covid-19 pandemic, with a £1.2m reduction in income (of which £850,000 is from the cancellation of the Edinburgh Festivals) expected over the period from March to the end of the summer. Mitigating cost reduction measures are underway, including furloughing staff under the UK Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme but the scale of the impact will likely lead to an additional request to the University for financial support next year. The importance of close collaboration between the University and EUSA on mitigating measures was agreed, with a consistent approach to be taken where appropriate.

The EUSA budget 2020/21 was approved as set out in the paper.

8 Delegated Authority Schedule – Review & Update

Paper F

Proposed updates to the Delegated Authority Schedule were reviewed, with the updated document recommended for approval by Court subject to minor amendment.

9 Gujarat Biotechnology University

Paper G

Finalisation of plans for a strategic partnership between the University and the Government of Gujarat in the development of the Gujarat Biotechnology University were considered. Noting the two stage approach planned, it was agreed to

recommend to Court that approval for the signing of the Stage 1 Memorandum of Agreement be granted.

10 People Report

Paper H

A regular update on people related matters being taken forward by Human Resources and other University departments was received. It was noted that salary deductions for those participating in industrial action would be spread over a three month period and any deductions used for the benefit of students who have suffered disruption from the action.

ITEMS FOR NOTING OR FORMAL APPROVAL

11 Outcome Agreement 2020-21

Paper I

The draft single year Outcome Agreement for 2020-21 was recommended for approval by Court.

12 Estates Committee Report

Paper J

The key points discussed at Estates Committee were noted and it was agreed to recommend for approval by Court the extension of the lease at Argyle House for an additional 7 years to May 2033.

13 Estates Committee Terms of Reference

Paper K

Minor updates to the Estates Committee's Terms of Reference were approved.

14 UoE Estates Services Company (UoEESCo) – Board Membership and Chair

Paper L

The Committee:

- noted that, as a result of advice from Legal Services, the Director of Finance has resigned as a Director of UoEESCo, which creates a vacancy for a Director and a vacancy for the Chair of the Board of the UoEESCo;
- approved the appointment of Terry Fox, Director of Specialist Services, Finance Department as the Chair of the Board; and,
- noted that this leaves a vacancy on the Board for a Director and that consideration is being given to suitable alternatives.

15 Investment Committee Report

Paper M

The report was noted.

16 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

17 Date of Next Meeting

Monday, 1 June 2020, 2.30pm-5pm.