



POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

25 March 2024, Edinburgh Climate Change Institute

Minutes

Present: Janet Legrand, Senior Lay Member (Convener)
Douglas Alexander, General Council Assessor
Frank Armstrong, Co-opted Member
Sharan Atwal, President, Students' Association
Leigh Chalmers, Vice-Principal & University Secretary
Ruth Girardet, Co-opted Member
Kim Graham, Provost
Peter Mathieson, Principal & Vice-Chancellor
Jock Millican, General Council Assessor
Hugh Mitchell, Co-opted Member
Kathryn Nash, Trade Union Academic Staff Member

In attendance: Lewis Allan, Senior Governance Advisor to the Vice-Principal & University Secretary
Lee Hamill, Director of Finance
Gary Jebb, Director of Place
Veena O'Halloran, External Facilitator for the Court Effectiveness Review
James Saville, Director of Human Resources
Rona Smith, Deputy Secretary Governance & Strategic Planning
Daniel Wedgwood, Head of Court Services
Damien Toner, Director of Estates (items 1-5)
Sarah Cunningham-Burley, University Lead on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (item 4)
David Argyle, Vice-Principal & Head of College of Medicine & Veterinary Medicine (item 5)
Ashley Shannon, Director of Operations, Corporate Services (item 5)

Apologies: None received

1 Minute

Paper A

Janet Legrand, Convener, welcomed members and attendees to the meeting, noting that Veena O'Halloran was observing the meeting as part of her work on Court's quinquennial effectiveness review.

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2024 were approved.

2 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

3 Principal's Communications

Verbal

Peter Mathieson, Principal & Vice-Chancellor, reported on the following matters:

- Financial planning was a current area of focus for the Senior Leadership Team, in the context of annual planning round, taking into account the implications of the University's salary grade scale review and the Q1 and Q2 financial forecasts.
- On a national scale, there was concern over the size of current and future international student intakes. These could be affected by multiple factors, including UK government policy relating to immigration. Many universities would be more immediately affected by any downturn in international student numbers but Edinburgh would also experience impacts from any significant change.
- A series of 'town hall' meetings, open to all staff, had been held. Questions had been raised and answered, with a focus of interest on a number of HR-related topics.
- An independent review of the sustainable travel policy was close to being concluded: a draft report had been received.
- Future funding models for the Smart Data Foundry, a wholly owned subsidiary of the University, were under consideration. PRC would be consulted as appropriate in the future, when plans had been developed.
- Senior staff had received additional training in relation to cybersecurity, in response to guidance on current threats.
- Jasmin Paris, Senior Lecturer in Veterinary Medicine, had become the first woman to complete the Barkley Marathons ultramarathon trail race.

SUBSTANTIVE ITEMS

4 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Data Report 2024

Paper B

Sarah Cunningham-Burley, University Lead on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), presented this annual report on the University's staff and student population with respect to protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. The report had been approved by the University Executive. It was noted that this reporting was central to compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty and with relevant parts of the Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance. While the presentation to this meeting focused on EDI data, there had been a separate broader session ahead of the meeting, open to all Court members, covering recent achievements and policy developments in this area.

Overall, the data showed significant progress in relevant areas and a high and growing level of diversity in many parts of the University, alongside ongoing challenges, some areas of low rates of disclosure, and shifting patterns of student attainment. It was recognised that further progress was required and that some elements of progress were within the University's control, although wider societal change would also be needed to achieve equity in all areas. The data, as presented in this report, indicated key areas for attention. It was noted that significant improvements had been made recently in the presentation and dissemination of the data, which would help to facilitate further understanding. In addition, expert

contributions to statistical analysis had been provided from within the University's academic staff.

Key points in EDI currently included the following:

- There were factors beyond the legislatively protected characteristics that were relevant in principle to EDI, intersected in important ways with other characteristics and would likely be subject to obligatory reporting in future. These factors included economic disadvantage and care experience.
- Within the set of protected characteristics, there was scope for age to be investigated in more detail, in particular with regard to the diversity of the student population.
- Gender balance among staff in promoted roles remained a priority area: while progress had been made, there were persistent imbalances and work was underway to establish what further actions the University could take to tackle these.
- Ethnic diversity was another area of continued focus. It was recognised that external factors, including government immigration policy, influenced this.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- Care should be taken to distinguish between the Equality Act protected characteristics and any other parameters used in the University's EDI reporting.
- The scope and quality of the data were helpful but could only guide actions in conjunction with a clear understanding of the University's core values. Care was taken to respond to any issues that were revealed through the data in a suitable, constructive way, with an awareness of the risk of establishing perverse incentives through target setting.
- Modelling the future could be an important complement to the reporting of past and current outcomes. For example, the future balance of the staff body would be affected by retention and progression, as well as recruitment, each of which could be modelled to provide a better understanding of the impacts on EDI of different scenarios and potential actions.
- The EDI data might usefully be associated with initiatives relating to contractual conditions, to provide further dimensions to the overview to be given to Court. It was noted that the current report was restricted to essentially demographic data, but that wider connections could be drawn, the Staff Experience Committee being a key nexus for these different matters.
- It was important to recognise the need for further progress but also to celebrate successes in EDI, in order to continue to recognise the contributions of the many people in the University who were effecting positive change and to provide sustained motivation.

The Convener noted that Sarah Cunningham-Burley would shortly be stepping down from the role of University Lead on EDI and, on behalf of the Committee, thanked her for all of her contributions in this role, over a period that had seen significant progress. It was noted that Edinburgh's work in many areas of EDI had been taken as a model by many others in the higher education sector and beyond.

5 Edinburgh BioQuarter

Paper C

The committee received a presentation on the further development of the Edinburgh BioQuarter. The extensive site offered the potential to create, in conjunction with partner organisations, a unique concentration of research, teaching and innovation facilities embedded in a new vibrant community. It was noted that the University had successfully achieved something similar in the development of Easter Bush. The BioQuarter was envisioned as a truly interdisciplinary development. Its focus on healthcare would encompass facilities and new avenues of research and innovation for staff and students in all of the Colleges of the University, in addition to opening new possibilities for collaboration with external organisations.

It was noted that an update would be provided to Court on the day of the next Court meeting.

6 Finance

**Papers
D1 & D2**

Director of Finance's Report

The Director of Finance's Report was reviewed.

Planning Round 2024-29: Update

PRC received an interim update on progress in the planning and budget-setting process for 2024-29.

7 People

**Papers
E1 & E2**

People Report

The People Report was noted.

Annual People Report

PRC received the Annual People Report, noting that this was the first document of its kind, reflecting on the range and volume of work undertaken by the University over the previous year in support of the People Strategy. It was noted that the report focused on work led by HR and much additional relevant work could be found within the operating plans of individual areas of the University.

It was noted that, as in the case of EDI (see item 4, above), the staff experience was an area with many positive outcomes to celebrate, even as it was recognised that there was more to be done. The University was widely seen as an attractive employer, was at the forefront of many progressive initiatives, and was often seen as a model for other organisations in this respect. The recent series of 'town hall' meetings, open to all staff, had generated constructive discussion and helpful feedback on HR issues.

In discussion, reference was made to the value of benchmarking, as discussed under item 6. It was noted that benchmarking could be challenging in HR, especially if comparators were to be used outside of the higher education sector, but opportunities to benchmark were sought and used where possible. It was also suggested that, for future iterations of the report, work from across the University might be drawn in to the report, alongside that led by central HR, to create a more comprehensive whole-institution overview.

8 People & Money Roadmap

Paper F

The Committee received a summary of the roadmap for on-going and future work to implement improvements and enhancements to the People & Money (P&M) system and associated processes.

It was noted that the Enactment Group had completed its work and that work on P&M now reported into the University Initiatives Portfolio Board (UIPB). The Principal recorded his gratitude to Catherine Martin and Dave Robertson for their work in leading the Enactment Group and the significant progress that this group had brought about.

In discussion, it was noted that an analysis of the benefits of the P&M system and associated transformation work would be of value. This had been discussed by the UIPB and it was the intention to produce such an analysis, although this would be complex, given the scope and variety of the work that P&M encompassed. Work was in hand to clarify the timing of key pieces of work within the roadmap and to establish costings.

9 Performance Measures to Support Strategy 2030: 2023-24 Mid-Year Report

Paper G

PRC received a report on performance in relation to the Strategy 2030 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

10 Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) Update

Paper H

The Committee received an overview of progress in tackling the presence of RAAC in University buildings, as a result of concerns raised at a national level over the resilience of this material. The University had reacted quickly and proportionately and had ensured that the work was subject to appropriate governance.

ITEMS FOR NOTING OR FORMAL APPROVAL

11 Edinburgh University Students' Association Annual Budget

Paper I

PRC reviewed a narrative summary of the Students' Association budget for the financial year 2024/25 (1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 for the Association). It was noted that the budget had been reviewed and approved by the Association's Board of Trustees, the body responsible for the finances of the Association. It was being presented to PRC to fulfil a legislative responsibility on behalf of, and under delegated authority from, Court.

In line with standard practice, the budget had been approved by the Board of Trustees prior to confirmation of the University's grant to the Association and therefore contained assumptions regarding the level of this grant.

PRC approved the budget.

12 Transition of the University's operating model in India **Paper J**

PRC noted the decision of the University Executive to change the University's present operational structure in India, subject to a second phase of work to clarify the implications

13 Research and Commercialisation Statistics: Mid-Year Report **Paper K**

PRC noted the report. The positive year-on-year results were noted and the committee recommended that these be highlighted to Court.

14 Estates Committee Report **Paper L**

PRC noted the report.

15 Investment Committee Report **Paper M**

PRC noted the report.

16 PRC Commercialisation Sub-Group Report **Paper N**

PRC noted the report.

17 PRC meeting dates 2024/25 and 2025/26

PRC approved the proposed meeting dates.

18 Any Other Business

The Convener noted that Gary Jebb, Director of Place, was attending his final PRC meeting before retiring from the role and recorded thanks, on behalf of the committee, for all of his achievements and contributions to the University, including delivery of major projects, such as the Edinburgh Futures Institute, that would have long-term positive impact far beyond the benefits to the University.

19 Date of Next Meeting

Monday, 3 June 2024, 14.30-17.00