



UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE

12 February 2018

Minute

Present: Peter Mathieson (Convener)
David Argyle, Leigh Chalmers, Chris Cox, Gavin Douglas, Hugh Edmiston, David Gray, Gary Jebb, Richard Kenway, Dorothy Miell, Gavin McLachlan, Phil McNaull, Andrew Morris, Jane Norman, Jeremy Robbins, David Robertson, James Saville, Jonathan Seckl, Tracey Slaven, James Smith, Sarah Smith, Rob Tomlinson and Moira Whyte.

In attendance: Fiona Boyd and Kirstie Graham.

Apologies: Ewen Cameron and Charlie Jeffery.

1 University Executive Remit

Paper A

The Principal welcomed members to the first meeting of the University Executive and outlined the intention that there was a strategic purpose to every meeting alongside dealing with operational matters. The current membership and remit was approved, whilst noting that this may change over time. There was clarification that the Executive did not have a budget to allocate funding but could prioritise activity to inform the planning round.

2 Principal's Communications

The Principal reported on his positive first impressions of the University, noting it was in a strong place with an excellent international reputation. He reported on the expected industrial action by the University & College Union (UCU) in response to proposed changes to the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) noting that this was a national negotiation. The University was sensitive to the concerns of staff and recognised the strength of feeling on this issue. At its meeting on 5 February, Court had provided a steer that during the strike period the University should prioritise support for student teaching and support over other activities, to mitigate the impact on students as far as possible.

The Vice-Principal Planning, Resources & Research Policy reported a continuing increase in research awards, including a significant Marie Curie COFUND award for international early career researchers, the award of two prestigious Royal Academy of Engineering Research Chairs and a high rating in the recent MRC Confidence in Concept applications. The Deputy Secretary, Strategic Planning reported undergraduate student application statistics for 2018-19 entry noting these were stable, except for a fall in Scots domiciled applicants including SIMD20.

STRATEGIC ITEM

3 Widening Participation Strategy

Paper B

The Executive considered the guiding principles for the University's Widening Participation strategy, which had been developed following extensive consultation across the University. This had informed the development of a whole life approach to access, supporting students to thrive and succeed at the University, while taking a bolder, clearer and simplified approach to aspiration, early engagement and support for admission. Members were supportive of the 'bigger, bolder, clearer and simpler' approach and there was wide ranging discussion, which included the following points:

- The terminology could be further clarified and simplified, with the potential for confusion around 'academic thresholds' and 'academically necessary levels'.
- There should not be too narrow a focus on aspiration and admission at the expense of retention and attainment.
- The importance of academic leadership to drive change, with shared responsibility for embedding at all levels.
- The balance to be struck between local engagement versus working with partners in other geographic areas.
- Subject offer and choices at school level providing a barrier to application and more broadly a lack of alignment of the pre-Honours curriculum with the Scottish schools curriculum. A refreshed approach to the pre-Honours curriculum in some Schools was noted, with a greater focus on skills and the potential for more interdisciplinary work in this area.
- The role of the Centre for Open Learning in providing support, both face to face and on line, to address gaps in areas such as maths, chemistry, data and digital skills.
- Partnering in other geographic areas, particularly in the west, recognising the relative lack of geographic mobility of the SIMD20 intake that could potentially be supported by 2+2 models that required relocation at a later stage.

OPERATIONAL ITEMS

4 City Deal Update

Paper C

The Executive considered the paper that had been presented to the City Deal Sub-Group and Court, noting the positive potential of the City Deal in better engagement with the City, the Scottish and UK governments.

There was discussion on communication across the University, clarifying that this did not provide additional resource to Schools and Colleges but aligned with planned activity to articulate the vision of a 'porous' University working with stakeholders from industry and the public sector.

5 Finance Director's Report

Paper D

The Executive noted the December Management Accounts and Quarter 1 Full Year Forecast. There was discussion on the capital programme and the need to develop a formal, transparent capital prioritisation process to allow capital investments to be assessed and ranked. The Finance and Estates Departments were developing options, with recommendations to follow in due course.

The Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) Return for 2016/17 and Full Economic Cost (FEC) rates to be used this year, including the simplified approach to costing research applications, were approved.

6 General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Online Training

Paper E

The Executive noted the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) would come into force in May 2018, that there had been a notifiable breach in April 2017 and although the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) did not apply a sanction it was noted that was no mandatory staff training, which could provide mitigation in the event of a future breach.

The Executive approved a mandatory Data Protection training module, requesting a joined up approach with current information security mandatory training and noting the importance of clarity on training recommendations and requirements for new and existing staff, with further thought to be given on the enforcement of any mandatory training.

7 Lobbying Scotland Act 2016 – Briefing

Paper F

The Executive noted the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016 and endorsed the decision that the University did not voluntarily register under the Act.

8 Pentland House

Paper I

The Executive noted that the University was considering entering into 20 year lease agreement for student accommodation and associated outdoor amenities at Pentland House (formally Chesser House). This would progress for consideration and approval through the formal governance routes, but members were invited to give a strategic steer to the approval process.

It was noted that up to 1700 additional bed spaces will be required by 2025/26 to support University student growth projections and widen the Post Graduate Taught (PGT) accommodation guarantee. The impact of

this on the City needed to be recognised, but there was concern about the location and whether this was the appropriate response to the issue.

It was noted that EUSA was supportive of the proposal as it would provide additional lower cost accommodation. Members noted it was important to provide a diverse offer in terms of affordability, but there should also be diversity within accommodation blocks to encourage mixing. There was a concern that the area and distance from the University could lead to a sense of segregation at odds with the University's commitment to building a community and it was felt this would not be an appropriate approach for first year undergraduates. The need for more bed space in the short term was recognised, but such opportunities required to be appropriately weighed to be sure they aligned with longer term aspirations.

These considerations were noted and would be taken into account in taking the proposal forward. It was agreed there would be consideration of the University's accommodation and transport strategies and the links between these at an Executive meeting this session.

ITEMS FOR NOTING OR FORMAL APPROVAL

9 Lecture Recording – Summary of Use (Sept – Dec 2017) Paper G

The Executive noted an update on take-up and usage of the new lecture recording service (Media Hopper Replay) on campus for semester 1 2017.

10 Creation of new Chair Paper H

The Executive approved the establishment of a Chair of Agricultural and Resource Economics in the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine.

11 Dates of Future Meetings

The University Executive will next meet on 19 March 2018 at 10 am in the Raeburn Room, Old College.

Meeting dates for the remainder of 2107/18, Monday at 10.00am:

9 April 2018
14 May 2018
11 June 2018

Meeting dates for 2018/19, Tuesday at 10.00am:

28 August 2018
25 September 2018
23 October 2018
20 November 2018
15 January 2019
19 February 2019

19 March 2019
23 April 2019
14 May 2019
25 June 2019