



UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE

19 March 2018

Minute

- Present:** Peter Mathieson (Convener)  
Leigh Chalmers, Chris Cox, Gavin Douglas, Hugh Edmiston, Lee Hamill, Gary Jebb, Richard Kenway, Dorothy Miell, Gavin McLachlan, Andrew Morris, Jane Norman, Jeremy Robbins, David Robertson, James Saville, Jonathan Seckl, Tracey Slaven, Sarah Smith, Rob Tomlinson and Moira Whyte.
- In attendance:** Fiona Boyd, Kirstie Graham, Lesley McAra (for item 3) and Barry Neilson (for item 5).
- Apologies:** David Argyle, Ewen Cameron, David Gray, Charlie Jeffery, Phil McNaul and James Smith.

**1 Minute**

**Paper A**

The Minute of the meeting held on 12 February 2018 was approved.

**2 Principal's Communications**

The Principal reported on the recent senior management strategy session, which had provided an opportunity for constructive discussion on key issues and raised a number of areas that may progress through to the Executive in due course. He provided an overview of a recent Russell Group meeting where the following topics were aired: an update from the Office for Students, which was only applicable to English institutions but it was important to keep a watching brief; Institute for Fiscal Studies analysis of economic conditions; update on Brexit negotiations; UK Research Institute information on the focus of research funding through the industrial strategy challenge fund; and a useful overview and discussion on how the sector could articulate its values to society. The current industrial action over proposed changes to the USS pension was discussed and there was consideration on how to mitigate the impact on students, as far as possible, whilst being sensitive to the strength of feeling on the issue. The University's support for the continuation of negotiations and the establishment of an independent expert group was reiterated.

**STRATEGIC ITEM**

**3 Strategy for Engaging the Public with Research**

**Paper B**

The Assistant Principal Community Relations, spoke to her paper setting out a strategy for engaging the wider public with research. In discussion it

was noted that the re-shaping of the funding landscape was creating new drivers for universities to engage with their wider publics and contribute to economic, social and environmental prosperity in their locality and beyond, with the Research Excellence Framework (REF) emphasis on the impact of research broadened to include public engagement and understanding. The strategy recognised the work the University was already undertaking and proposed an infrastructure to support this, leading to better co-ordination and evaluation. Members were supportive of the proposed approach and commented on the need to digitally engage with the public and also to support staff in managing public responses. The strategy aligned with earlier discussion about communicating the University's values and the Executive was content to approve the strategy for implementation.

## **OPERATIONAL ITEMS**

### **4 Athena SWAN Action Plan**

**Paper C**

The Vice-Principal People and Culture presented the draft Action Plan for the University's Athena SWAN Institutional Silver application for submission to the Equality Challenge Unit. It was noted that the University already had a silver award (the only University in Scotland to achieve this) and needed to demonstrate continuous improvement in order to retain this. The costings associated with the Action Plan were tabled and there was discussion of the extent to which these were additional spend or were already committed in the University's budget. It was agreed that this required clarification, however members were supportive of the proposal and approved the Action Plan.

### **5 Service Excellence Programme Core Systems (Phase 1) Procurement Governance**

**Paper D  
Paper E**

The Service Excellence Programme Director spoke to these papers, which provided an update on Service Excellence Programme (SEP) and the Core Systems (Phase 1) Procurement Project to provide the underpinning technology for the HR and Finance Transformation parts of the SEP. The key recommendations and implementation for Finance and HR were noted and there was some discussion around the Student Administration & Support section of the SEP, where it was felt communication was essential to ensure buy-in across academic as well as professional services staff. It was reiterated that SEP was based on both cost efficiency and quality of service, with both weighted as equally important.

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

**Paper F**

The paper reported on Period 6, the half way point for the University's financial year and showed an operating surplus to date favourable to the full year budgeted operating surplus. It was noted that with the potential

cost of pensions, the capital programme and other priorities there would be pressure on surpluses going forward and there needed to be a shared understanding of the priorities for the University and communication on the importance of generating a surplus to meet these. There was an update on the financial controls project and the roll out of the new Expenses Policy, with a report on Key Travel's performance over 6 months to come to the May meeting of the Executive.

**7      General Data Protection Regulation: Implementation Overview      Paper G**

This progress update on compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) was noted and the actions to address Internal Audit recommendations were agreed. These were the establishment of a Steering Committee for the project, including the identification of a senior management lead, and the acceleration of the appointment process for the GDPR Champions. The Executive noted the need to align the GDPR Champion role with the recently created Data Steward role.

**8      Research Policy Group      Paper H**

The Executive noted the report, including the increase in research grant applications and awards and the preparations for a mock REF exercise.

**ITEMS FOR NOTING OR FORMAL APPROVAL**

**9      Fee Strategy Group      Paper I**

The Executive approved the tuition fee proposals set out in the paper and noted routine fee approvals for 2018/19 taken by the Chair of the Fee Strategy Group.

**10    Dates of Next Meeting**

The University Executive will next meet on Monday 9 April 2018 at 10 am in the Conference Room, ECCI, High School Yards.