



**UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE**

**25 September 2018**

**Minute**

- Present:** Charlie Jeffery (Convener)  
David Argyle, Eleri Connick Leigh Chalmers, Chris Cox, Gavin Douglas,  
Hugh Edmiston, Gary Jebb, Gavin McLachlan, Phil McNaull,  
Theresa Merrick, Dorothy Miell, Jane Norman, James Saville,  
Jonathan Seckl, Tracey Slaven (from item 5), Sarah Smith and Moira Whyte.
- In attendance:** Jennifer McGregor (for item 6), Lee Hamill, Fiona Boyd and Kirstie Graham.
- Apologies:** Peter Mathieson, David Gray, Richard Kenway, Wendy Loretto,  
Andrew Morris, Dave Robertson and James Smith.

**1 Minute**

**Paper A**

The Minute of the meeting held on 28 August 2018 was approved, subject to a rewording at point 7.

**2 Principal's Communications**

The Senior Vice-Principal reported on the following: Baillie Gifford has pledged to fund a Chair in Data and AI Ethics and associated programme of postdoctoral and postgraduate research for ten years through a gift of £5m; the University has a partnership with the Scottish Government to work with UNICEF on data analytics relating to childhood; the City Deal Data-Driven innovation initiative has been launched; a recent successful visit to Singapore; the series of roadshows on pensions delivered by Mercer, which had been well received by staff; the Joint Expert Panel on the Universities Superannuation Scheme had published its recommendations and University UK was currently consulting to provide the employer response.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**3 Student Experience Approach and Action Plan**

**Paper B**

The Executive considered the proposed approach to tackling deep-seated cultural challenges impacting on student experience and an associated action plan, with headline actions including:

- The establishment of a Teaching and Academic Careers Working Group to ensure we have the right incentives and procedures in place to recognise teaching excellence in academic careers
- A Review of the Delivery of Advice and Support to Students which will explore changes to the Personal Tutor system alongside the

changes to professional services for student support under development in the Service Excellence Programme

- A focus on enhancing Staff Experience in recognition of the interdependencies of quality of staff experience and quality of student experience
- A focus on ensuring an effective Student Voice through an enhanced and responsive representative system.
- The appointment of a new Vice-Principal for Students to work alongside Heads of College and Support Group in delivering a high quality student experience and to take forward work on curriculum reform.

There was broad discussion of the issues raised in the paper, with endorsement of the need for collective responsibility and accountability, balanced by concerns that the actions alone may not be sufficient to deliver the change we need to see. The new Vice-Principal role was noted and it was considered important that this role was seen to be working alongside Colleges, Schools and Professional Service groups to co-ordinate and embed action, with each level responsible for delivery. It was noted that the job description was currently being developed and would be shared with the Heads of Colleges.

The action plan was being taken forward to Court on 1 October and Senate on 3 October for noting and the Executive was content that it was a work in progress, to be further developed subsequent to discussion into a project plan with associated milestones and deliverables, which would return to the Executive.

#### **4 Knowledge Exchange Framework**

**Paper C**

The Executive noted the planned introduction of the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) and its emerging principles and metrics. There was agreement that the University was in a strong position in this area, particularly with the City Deal, however whilst this was part of our core business there were concerns about the additional administrative burden. With that caveat, there was broad support for entering KEF, once the final proposals were clear, recognising that it was important this was communicated effectively.

#### **5 Reshaping the Planning Round**

**Paper D**

The Executive considered a paper articulating the intended approach to the planning round this cycle and the intent to streamline the process for future cycles. The proposed option of a shorter planning round required a single round of business plans based on clear information from the quarterly financial reviews, with sign off at all levels in April. The idea of a shorter process was welcomed but relied on clear information at an earlier stage. There was also discussion of the cross cutting themes and allowing sufficient time to develop shared articulation and connection. The Executive agreed the shape of the 2019-22 cycle and members

would provide further comments to the Deputy Secretary, Strategic Planning on the shape of future planning rounds

**6 Strategic Plan Refresh**

**Paper E**

The Executive considered the process for the planned refresh of the current Strategic Plan noting this would be a short document with strong points of continuity to the current plan, to be values-led and identify a small number of “big things” to provide increased focus. There was a view that the current plan was too generic and this was an opportunity to make a bolder and more unique statement of our aspirations. Although metrics were important to measure success, these should be used with caution with an appropriate balance of internal and public facing measures.

**ITEMS FOR FORMAL APPROVAL OR NOTING:**

**7 Proposed Change to Grade Structure to Accommodate Voluntary Living Wage**

**Paper F**

The proposed changes to Grades 1 and 2 as set out in the paper were approved, subject to further discussion on resourcing.

**8 British Sign Language Plan**

**Paper G**

The proposed British Sign Language Plan was approved, subject to further discussion on some of the specific deliverables between the Head of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and the Deputy Secretary, Student Experience.

**9 Global Challenge Chancellor Fellowships**

**Paper H**

The proposed Global Chancellors Fellowships were approved in principle, subject to the funding being available.

**10 Finance Director’s Update**

**Paper I**

The Finance Director spoke to his update, noting the Group turnover for the year was £985 million, generating an operating surplus of £27 million, 2.7% of income. This was a welcome favourable result compared to the very low 2017/18 budget of only £11m operational surplus. However, the result is £30m unfavourable compared to our 2016/17 operating surplus of £57m, as University Group expenditure is growing at a faster rate than income (expenditure growth was 10% compared to income growth of 6%). This highlighted the importance of shared fiscal responsibility and a common understanding of how to generate surplus through increased activity or cost saving.

**11 REF 2021 Update** **Paper J**

The update on developments over the summer regarding the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 exercise and ongoing preparations for REF 2021 more generally were noted.

**12 University Study Spaces** **Paper K**

The Executive noted that teaching space and the learning estate impacted on the student experience and while the Space Strategy Group considered teaching space, there needed to be a collective responsibility for the learning estate more broadly. There was discussion of the balance between central library study space and other study spaces that could be made accessible to students to relieve pressure on the main library. There was also discussion of study spaces at other campuses and the impact of transport on pressure in the central area. It was noted that the accommodation and transport strategies were both under review, the Space Strategy Group could also consider this issue and the new Vice-Principal Students could play a co-ordinating role in looking at the teaching and learning estate in the round.

**13 Space Strategy Group Report** **Paper L**

The key points from the Space Strategy Group meeting on 22 August were noted.

**14 Distance Learning at Scale Update** **Paper M**

The Distance Learning at Scale update was noted.

**15 Any Other Business**

The University Secretary reported that at the last Audit and Risk Committee meeting, a high number of incomplete internal audit recommendations were reported. To assist with the year end assurance process, each budget holder will be provided with information on any outstanding internal audit recommendations in their area and asked to account for these.

**16 Date of next meeting**

The University Executive will next meet on Monday 22 October 2018 at 10.00am in the Raeburn Room, Old College.