



**UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE**

**21 January 2020**

**Minute**

**Present:** Peter Mathieson (Convener)  
Leigh Chalmers, Chris Cox, Sarah Cunningham-Burley, Gavin Douglas, David Gray, Lee Hamill, Colm Harmon, Gary Jebb, Richard Kenway, Wendy Loretto, Gavin McLachlan, Dorothy Miell, Theresa Merrick, Dave Robertson, James Saville, Jonathan Seckl, Tracey Slaven, James Smith, Sarah Smith, Sandy Tudhope, Andrew Wilson and Moira Whyte.

**In attendance:** Ashley Shannon (for Hugh Edmiston), Antony Maciocia (for paper D), Rachael Roberston, Fiona Boyd and Kirstie Graham.

**Apologies:** David Argyle, Hugh Edmiston and Andrew Morris.

**1 Minute**

**Paper A1**

The Minute of the meeting held on 17 December 2019 was approved as a correct record.

**2 Matters Arising & Review of Action Log**

**Paper A2**

The Principal noted that it had been reported at the last meeting that not all members had completed the online mandatory information security training and they were reminded to do so and to encourage colleagues to lead by example. There were no other matters arising and the action log was noted.

**3 Principal's Communications**

**Verbal**

The Principal reported:

- Hugh Edmiston would be leaving the University for a senior post at Singapore Management University and the Executive noted its congratulations and appreciation for all his work during his time at the University;
- Recent work by the Industrial Strategy Council to quantify the extent to which universities and colleges contribute to economic and social prosperity;
- His planned trip to Brussels as a member of UNA Europa, an alliance of eight leading research universities;
- The recent visit by Douglas Ross, Under Secretary of State for Scotland;
- That the UCAS deadline had passed and while overall applications were up, there was a reduction in Scots domiciled and rUK numbers while EU numbers were flat. Admissions teams will be encouraged to support diversity and quality of intake using gathered fields/gateways where appropriate to deliver business targets;

- There would be a series of Town Hall meetings throughout January to provide the opportunity for staff and students to engage on Strategy 2030, Brexit, the recent industrial action or any other issues they wish to raise.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### **4 Supporting Black and Minority Ethnic Students and Staff**

**Paper B**

The Executive considered the findings from two internal and two external reviews carried out in 2019 that raised questions about the experience of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) students and staff at the University and in the sector. Common recommendations emerging from these include:

- The importance of strong institutional leadership;
- Having (possibly difficult) conversations about race;
- Increasing awareness and racial literacy among staff;
- Making better use of data;
- Supporting students and staff better if they experience racial harassment; and
- Considering how BME student and staff sense of belonging can be enhanced and supported.

There was a wide ranging discussion which agreed the importance of this work being taken forward and noted the crossover into the ongoing work on staff and student experience. It was agreed the University would commit to a programme of work to improve the experience of BME staff and students, with a taskforce established by Professor Sarah Cunningham-Burley under the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee to drive forward the recommendations.

### **5 Confronting Slavery and Colonisation**

**Paper C**

The Executive considered an approach to proactive and meaningful engagement with the University's historical relationship to slavery and colonisation. The paper recommended an exercise of engagement and reflection, with an external black public figure be invited to lead the process and a process of research, noting some research had already been undertaken through UncoverEd and support could be extended for this.

The Executive welcomed and supported the proposed approach and noted the synergy with the work to be undertaken under the aegis of the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee and it was agreed there should be discussion on how to take these forward together.

### **6 The Case for Creation of a Doctoral College**

**Paper D**

At its June meeting, the Executive approved the establishment of a short life working group to progress plans to develop a University level Doctoral College to enhance the co-ordination of doctoral education. The Executive considered the outcome of the working group, which recommended a largely virtual horizontal structure with an immediate soft launch followed by a hard launch in Autumn 2020.

There was extensive discussion on the opportunities but also the medium to long term resource requirements. It was agreed that the soft launch could proceed immediately and there should be further discussion to identify how this would be resourced longer term prior to the hard launch.

## **7 China Merchants Group Update**

**Paper E**

The Executive considered an update on discussions with the China Merchant Group and noted there were a number of unresolved issues including ethics, governance and resource considerations that required further discussion. It was agreed to consider this further at the Executive away day on 31 January 2020.

## **8 Edinburgh BioQuarter**

**Paper F**

The Executive noted the proposed first steps to formalise the partnership arrangement between the University, Scottish Enterprise, the City of Edinburgh Council and NHS Lothian (“the BioQuarter partners”). The Executive approved in principle the formation of a new limited company, with delegation of authority to the Vice Principal of Business Development/Director of Corporate Services to complete the detailed work and finalise the arrangements and the delegation of signing authority to the Vice-Principal Strategic Change and Governance/University Secretary for all associated legal documentation. This would now progress to Policy and Resources Committee for formal approval.

## **9 Director of Finance’s Update**

**Paper G**

The Executive noted the University management accounts (excluding Subsidiaries) position up to the end of November (period four) and an update on the University Group Quarter One forecast position. It was noted that the Quarter One forecast operating surplus was down on the Court approved plan for 2019-20. There were Quarter Two review meetings scheduled with each of the budget areas in March and any adjustments will be consolidated following these meetings with the final results to be shared with the University Executive.

The Executive noted the Special Focus Updates on the early results of the 2018-19 Russell Group financial benchmarking exercise and a summary of the second report from the Joint Expert Panel looking at USS pensions.

## **10 People**

- **People Report**

**Paper H1**

The update on people related matters was noted.

- **Updated Reward Policies**

**Paper H2**

The Executive considered the proposed updates to the University’s reward policies and approved three new policies: Job Grading, Regrading of Professional Services Jobs and Academic Promotions, noting the key changes and that these would be subject to regular review.

• **Updated Discipline and Grievance Policies** **Paper H3**

The Executive considered and approved changes to the following policies and procedures: Disciplinary policy; Grievance policy and employment related appeals procedure, noting the key changes and that these would be subject to regular review.

• **Support for non-EEA staff – Indefinite Leave to Remain Fees** **Paper H4**

The Executive noted the continuing lack of clarity regarding the future immigration regime post Brexit and agreed the University's visa reimbursement policy should be fully reviewed during 2020, with a view to having a new package of support in place for January 2021, the end of the Brexit implementation period.

**ITEMS FOR FORMAL APPROVAL/NOTING**

**11 Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers** **Paper I**

The Executive approved the University becoming a signatory to the revised Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.

**12 Service Excellence Programme Update** **Paper J**

The Executive noted the periodic update on the Service Excellence Programme.

**13 Planning Round Update** **Paper K**

The Executive noted the update on the delivery of the medium-term improvements in the cost base during the 2019-22 planning round.

**14 Closure of Agreed Management Actions from Internal Audit Reviews** **Paper L**

The Executive noted the update on the closure of agreed management actions arising from Internal Audit reviews.

**15 Health and Safety Quarterly Report** **Paper M**

The Executive noted the summary of health and safety related incidents that took place during the period 1 September 2019 to 30 November 2019.

**16 Staff Experience Committee Update** **Paper N**

The Executive noted the summary of the Staff Experience Committee meetings that took place on 22 October 2019 and 17 December 2019.

**17 Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 25 February 2020 at 10am in the Raeburn Room.

There will be a Strategic Away Day on Friday 31 January in St Trinneans Room, St Leonards Hall.

The following meeting dates for 2020/21 were approved:

- 18 August 2020
- 8 September 2020
- 6 October 2020
- 10 November 2020
- 15 December 2020
- 19 January 2021
- 23 February 2021
- 23 March 2021
- 20 April 2021
- 18 May 2021
- 22 June 2021
- 20 July 2021