



UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE

24 March 2020

Minute

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

In attendance: Fiona Boyd and Kirstie Graham.

Apologies: Richard Kenway and Andrew Morris.

1 Minute Paper A1

The Minute of the meeting held on 25 February 2020 was approved.

2 Matters Arising & Review of Action Log Paper A2

There were no matters arising and the action log was noted.

3 Principal's Communications Verbal

The Principal welcomed members to the first University Executive conducted through Teams and extended his thanks for all the hard work underpinning the University's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. He reported that Tracey Slaven was leading the contingency planning group, which was focussing its work on 3 timescales: immediate & contingency issues; the short-term operating model (3 – 5 months) and recovery. In relation to immediate issues, the priority remained protecting our community while retaining our education and critical research as far as possible. The senior leadership team had confirmed the University would honour staff short-term contracts until the end of this academic year and had agreed to release students from the remainder of their accommodation fees if they were vacating University accommodation. These decisions had financial implications as did the expected impact on international student recruitment.

There was extensive discussion, with the following points raised:

- The work of the Academic Contingency Group in providing guidance on assessment for honours students and postgraduate taught assessments to ensure no detriment to students and the importance of following the guidance to ensure consistent messaging;
- The impact on research, with the focus on maintaining research that was directed at Covid-19 and the need to communicate effectively the vital work the University was doing in this area;

- The pause on all capital projects that had not already started;
- The importance of maintaining a focus on student recruitment for session 2020/21 and considering ways to provide a full online experience for the delivery of core materials in semester one, if required;
- The importance of maintaining morale and a forward looking focus, so the University could emerge from this crisis in a strong position.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4 Finance

- **Director of Finance's Report**

B1

Lee Hamill informed members that the circulated update had been superseded by current events which had impacted on the forecasted surplus. There would be short term mitigation in savings on capital expenditure and travel costs and the finance team was currently working on modelling outcomes. Looking ahead to 2020/21 and beyond, scenarios were being worked on based on the expected reduction in overseas students to provide a robust basis for future planning.

- **Planning Round Update**

B2

The Executive approved the EUSA and EUSU plans progressing to Policy and Resources Committee on 3 April 2020 and Court on 27 April 2020 due to their earlier financial year end. It was agreed to delay the final plans and proposals for investment until Policy and Resources Committee on 1 June 2020 and Court on 15 June 2020 to allow more time to assess the impact of Covid-19.

5 Gujarat Biotechnology University Update

Paper C

The Executive considered an update on the proposed strategic partnership with the Government of Gujarat for the University to play a key role in the development of the Gujarat Biotechnology University.

There had been a productive visit by the Project Team to Gujarat in early March and it was proposed to enter the first part of a two-stage agreement by signing a Memorandum of Agreement in May 2020 to initiate Stage 1 of the agreement. This would initiate a number of workstreams over 4 months to finalise the operating detail for the partnership before entering the binding Stage 2 Collaboration Agreement.

There was discussion of the potential impact of Covid-19 on the timescales and funding. Whilst recognising this, the opportunity aligned with the University's strategy in creating a strong academic partnership in India with a focus on translational research and teaching and it was important the University continued to be forward looking and outward facing. The Executive approved the proposal progressing to Policy and Resources Committee and Court for approval.

ITEMS FOR FORMAL APPROVAL/NOTING

6 Outcome Agreement

Paper D

The Executive supported the draft single year Outcome Agreement for 2020/21 and delegated authority to Tracey Slaven to refine the detail of the document in advance of Policy and Resources Committee and Court on 27 April 2020 for approval in advance of submission to the Scottish Funding Council by 30 April 2020.

7 Open Management Actions – Internal Audit Reports

Paper E

The Executive noted the number of open management actions had increased as a result of new audit reports coming into scope of the report and members were asked to facilitate closure of actions within their own areas of responsibility, engaging with the internal audit service to resolve these.

8 People Report

Paper F

The Executive noted that UCU had paused the ballot for the next round of industrial action and it was expected that forgone pay from the recent industrial action would be used to support student hardship funds.

There was general appreciation from all members for the work of staff in responding to the crisis and continuing to support students and colleagues through this unsettling time.

9 Any Other Business

Verbal

The Executive received a verbal update on the Service Excellence Programme with members informed that the core IT implementation for HR and Finance systems was progressing as a priority.

10 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 23 April 2020 at 10.30am through Microsoft Teams.