



UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE

19 May 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, Richard Kenway, Wendy Loretto, Gavin McLachlan, Dorothy Miell, Theresa Merrick, Andrew Morris, Dave Robertson, James Saville, Jonathan Seckl, Tracey Slaven, James Smith, Sarah Smith, Sandy Tudhope, Andrew Wilson and Moira Whyte.

**Apologies:** Aziz Sheikh.

**In attendance:** Barry Neilson, Fiona Boyd and Kirstie Graham.

**1 Minute Paper A1**

The Minute of the meeting held on 23 April 2020 and the electronic meeting concluded on 11 May 2020 were 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 reported on the next stage of the University's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, with the creation of an Adaptation and Renewal Team to report regularly to the University Executive. He reported that the University had been ranked fourth in the recently published Higher Education - Business and Community Interaction (HE-BCI) Survey, from the previous position of fifteenth, making the University the strongest in Scotland by a wide margin in its engagement with industry and the community.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**4 Update on Partnership with Shanghai Jiao Tong University in Hainan Paper F**

The Principal reminded members he had previously circulated an email providing an update on signing Memoranda of Understanding with Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU). Following discussion at the University Executive Away Day on 31 January 2020, the direction had been to proceed 'cautiously' and this paper provided an update on a recalibrated and de-risked proposal to develop a single consultancy agreement between SJTU and the University which will be funded by Hainan Government and the China Merchant Group. This will scope the delivery of Medical Education, a Data Research Institute, an International Diabetes Centre and a One

Health International Centre, the strand of work on Deep Ocean Technology would not be progressed. This consultancy contract would include a number of 'early deliverables', including a pilot of online postgraduate medical education professional development courses. There was discussion on the importance of ethics and governance and using cross University expertise to inform this and alignment with the University's values and Strategy 2030.

The Executive agreed to recommend to Policy & Resources Committee that the University engage in a 9-12 month consultancy framework agreement with the Hainan Government with authority delegated to the Principal to sign off on individual projects within that framework, in consultation with the Senior Vice-Principal, Vice-Principal Data Science, the Director of Finance and the Director of Legal Services.

## **5 Finance**

### **• Director of Finance's Report**

**Paper B1**

The Executive noted the management accounts (excluding subsidiaries) position up to the end of March (period eight) and a Special Focus Update on the half-year performance of the University's subsidiary companies for 2019-20.

### **• Planning Round 2020/21**

**Paper B2**

The Executive noted the uncertainty created by the Covid-19 pandemic and the need to substantially replan the delivery of core business of teaching and research. To allow the University to move forward, it was proposed to set the initial one year expenditure budget equivalent to that of Year 2 of the 2019-20 year Court approved plan for each budget area, post attribution of agreed adjustments.

The Executive agreed the proposed approach to the planning round and noted that the initial budgets proposed will be actively managed, with the expectation that net costs will require to be reduced by around £50m in 2020-21.

## **6 Adaptation and Renewal Team Update**

**Paper C**

The Principal convened the Adaptation and Renewal Team to co-ordinate the next phase of activity to ensure the University emerged from the Covid-19 pandemic as a strong, renewed organisation. The Team has University-wide representation, meeting weekly and reporting regularly into the Executive.

The four work-streams are Research and Innovation, Students (including Transition to the University of Edinburgh; Delivering Curriculum Resilience; Rethinking Student Administration and Support), Estates and Digital Infrastructure and Re-shaping and the Executive received an update from the Programme Co-ordinator on work across these areas. There was discussion on the challenges of re-opening the campus when permitted, maintaining social distancing, generating sustainable savings and a building a collective view of what the future state should look like, with a future away day potentially to be used to allow space to discuss these issues.

## **7 People and Money Systems and HR/Finance Transformation**

**Paper D**

At its last meeting, the Executive noted the Service Excellence Programme Board would be meeting that afternoon to consider the programme priorities in the light of Covid-19 and alignment with the Covid-19 adaptation and renewal work. That meeting agreed that implementation of the People and Money system is a key foundational investment by the University and, along with the HR/Finance process and service changes, underpins our renewal plans and activities. These programmes will now report directly to the University Executive on a monthly basis. The priorities from the Student Recruitment and Admissions and the Student Administration and Support programmes now feed directly into, and integrate with, the student strand of the Adaptation and Renewal programme of work.

The Executive considered an update on the People and Money system, noting the programme status remains red. The impact of Covid-19 had reduced capacity across the team and the implementation of Phase 1 'HR and finance structures' had been moved from June 2020 to September 2020. The most recent assessment on progress against plan highlighted that it is likely there will be a delay with the payroll/phase 2 part of the programme, which in turn may impact phase 3.

There was discussion of the challenge of implementing phase 1 at the start of semester 1 and the tension this would create for staff in managing competing priorities. The financial implications of delay were noted with any further delay beyond September having cost implications. On that basis, it was important it was communicated clearly to staff that this remained a top University priority to support continued engagement with the programme.

## **8 Edinburgh Earth Initiative**

**Paper E**

The Executive considered a proposed framework for the University to advance its work on finding solutions to the challenges of climate change through global partnerships. A recent review of the University's Global Academies (excluding the Agriculture and Food Security Academy as it is functionally different from the rest) concluded that consolidation and reimagining were warranted. The proposal provides this consolidation and brings into focus and delivers on some of the discussions that have been ongoing about a possible 'planetary resilience' or 'post carbon' initiative. It builds around four 'challenge-led' themes: the future of energy; sustainable lands and seas; health in a changing climate; and inequality and socially just transitions. There were modest resource implications that could be met through redeploying existing resources through the planning round.

There was discussion on ensuring alignment with the Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation and Edinburgh Futures Institute and clarifying what success would look like with a set of key performance indicators. Subject to this, the Executive approved the next steps towards a formal launch in September 2020.

## **9 People Report**

**Paper G**

The Executive noted the update on people related matters and discussed the importance of effective communication in implementing and managing the furlough scheme.

- **2020 Contribution Award – Proposed Revised Approach**

**Paper G1**

The Executive considered a simplified approach to contribution awards for 2020 and approved a standard lump sum across all grades.

### **ITEMS FOR FORMAL APPROVAL/NOTING**

## **10 Strategy 2030 Strategic Performance Framework update**

**Paper H**

The Strategy 2030 Strategic Performance Framework update was noted.

## **11 Research Relating to Covid-19**

**Paper I**

The Executive welcomed a summary of some Covid-19 research across our three Colleges, noting it was illustrative rather than exhaustive.

## **12 Internal Audit Follow Up Actions**

**Paper J**

The Executive noted the status of ongoing management actions and it was noted that some open actions may longer be relevant and members were encouraged to engage with internal audit to address these.

## **13 Zoom Video Communications**

**Paper K**

The Executive noted the purchase of an institutional Zoom licence as a third alternative for video conferencing and collaboration for non-teaching use (after Microsoft Teams and Skype for Business) but that that Microsoft Teams should be continue to be used as the preferred platform for all non-teaching video meetings and collaborations.

## **14 University Executive Communications**

**Verbal**

The Executive agreed there would be communication on adaptation and renewal; research relating to Covid-19 and the Edinburgh Earth Initiative.

## **15 Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 16 June 2020 at 2.30 pm.