



UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE

10 November 2020

Minute

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

Apologies: David Argyle and David Gray.

In attendance: Pauline Manchester, Barry Neilson, Fiona Boyd and Kirstie Graham.
Alan MacKay for item 7 and Dave Gorman for item 11.

1 Minute

Paper A1 & A2

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2020 and the electronic meeting concluded on 2 November 2020 were approved.

2 Matters Arising & Review of Action Log

Paper A3

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

3 Principal's Communications

Verbal

The Principal updated members on:

- The Covid 19 pandemic, reporting that current staff and student cases are very low and there is no evidence of transmission in the classroom. The University was currently in discussion with the Scottish Government on students going home for Christmas and returning in January as the curriculum would continue to be delivered using a hybrid model of online and face to face teaching.
- The ongoing Scottish Funding Council review of the coherence and sustainability of Scotland's Colleges and Universities.
- The proposed strategic partnership with the Government of Gujarat in the development of the Gujarat Biotechnology University, which continues to progress with an update going to Policy and Resources Committee next week.
- The voluntary severance scheme had now closed, with 217 staff accepted for voluntary severance, most to leave at the end of January. The Executive noted its thanks to these staff for their valued contributions to the University.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4 Adaptation and Renewal Team - Report

Paper B

The Executive received an update on the recent work of the Adaptation and Renewal Team. In the section on Semester 2 planning, it was noted that specific challenges for the upcoming semester included availability of specialist teaching space, not study space as referenced in the report. The report was noted.

5 People Report

Paper C

The Executive noted the update on people related matters.

6 Equality and Diversity

• Application for White Ribbon Status

Paper D1

The Executive approved applying for White Ribbon status through an action plan led by Fearless Edinburgh.

• Everyday Discrimination Survey for our Black and Minority Ethnic Staff

Paper D

The University Executive noted a proposed survey of everyday discrimination for our Black and Minority Ethnic staff using a pilot survey developed by Harvard University. Members welcome the proposal and there were supportive suggestions on ensuring the language was UK appropriate and considering the intersections with other protected characteristics. Taking this into account, the proposed survey was approved.

7 Supporting Working Overseas and International Activity

Paper E

The Executive noted the immediate and longer term risks to the University relating to employees working overseas and agreed it was timely to confirm how many employees are currently located overseas. The Executive approved establishment of a Working Group, reporting back in March 2021, to recommend options for ensuring that we have the required resources, processes, frameworks and policies to support overseas working and wider international activity such as transnational education projects and collaboration.

8 Finance

• Director of Finance's Report

Paper F1

This Executive noted the draft audited University Group Annual Report and Accounts for 2019-20 prior to submission to Audit & Risk Committee for review and recommendation to Court for approval on 30 November 2020. The proposed approach for managing short term investment of donations was noted.

- **Interim Financial Update**

Paper F2

The Executive noted the PowerPoint presentation regarding the University Group's forecasted financial position between 2020/21 and 2024/25. The Director of Finance had convened two dedicated update sessions on this topic for University Court and Policy and Resources Committee members and took Executive members through the key points arising from the scenario modelling. Members agreed this provided helpful context for the current cost cutting measures and need for longer term sustainable savings. It was noted that it was intended to do a further interim financial update in the new year.

9 Planning Round Cycle 2022-22 & Student Number Planning

Paper G

The Executive considered the timetable for the 2021-22 planning round and the proposed approach to managing uncertainty in relation to student number planning to allow flexibility to implement recruitment contingency plans in the event that funded places are significantly different from the assumptions and/or that exam results are again awarded on the basis of teacher-assessed/predicted grades or are significantly delayed forcing decisions on the basis of predicted results.

Following discussion, the Executive approved: the approach to the 2021-22 planning cycle, to be reported to Policy and Resources Committee; the approach to managing uncertainty on in relation to student number planning; and the preparation of a Clearing project for 2021/22.

10 Strategy 2030 Strategic Performance Framework

Paper H

The Executive considered a Strategic Performance Framework to assess performance against Strategy 2030, noting that this was a work in progress and did not include financial measures. Following discussion, the Executive endorsed the general direction of travel, noting this would also go to Policy and Resources Committee and Court for comments before returning the Executive.

11 Responding to the Climate Emergency

Paper I

The Executive considered an update on commitments to address climate change, which included a core commitment in Strategy 2030 to become net zero carbon by 2040. As part of this work, the Executive had agreed an action plan which included investment in carbon sequestration to support this commitment. This was a time sensitive issue if the 2040 target was to be achieved.

There was extensive discussion of the broader context, including the work of Estates Committee in considering the carbon generated by heating the estate; the changing financial landscape due to Covid; the reputational benefits of being sector leading and risks of failing to achieve the target; the benefit to the curriculum and broader student experience; and the challenges of strategic prioritisation to support balanced decision making.

The Executive reiterated its commitment to the net zero carbon target by 2040 and that this remained a strategic priority. This would therefore be considered and

incorporated into the review of capital prioritisation and the planning round, which would clarify the consequences for the overall plan, which would return to the Executive for approval next Spring.

12 Enterprise and Innovation Strategy **Paper J**

The Executive considered and approved the Enterprise and Innovation Strategy, for onward transmission to Policy and Resources Committee, noting the Senior Vice-Principal as sponsor and the formation of a new Innovation Leadership Group, Innovation Working Group and Forum.

ITEMS FOR FORMAL APPROVAL/NOTING

13 Internal Audit Update on Outstanding Actions **Paper K**

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

14 Integrating Sustainable Development Goals in Committee papers **Paper L**

The Executive approved the addition of a new section to the template and guidance for University Executive and Court committee papers with the intention of integrating consideration of the climate emergency, United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Strategy 2030.

15 Modern Slavery Statement **Paper M**

University Executive approved the draft 2019/20 Modern Slavery Statement for onward review through Audit and Risk Committee to Court and noted the proposed next steps, including the development of an Anti-Slavery Policy in 2021.

16 The Introduction of Use of Operational Data Policy **Paper N**

The Executive approved the proposed Operational Data Policy, subject to clarification on the ethical oversight of Type 2 and 3 data access.

17 Information Security Policy Refresh **Paper O**

The Executive approved the updated Information Security Policy.

18 Development and Alumni – Annual Report and update 2019-20 **Paper P**

The Executive welcomed the Development and Alumni Relation Annual Report and progress update for year 2019-20. The Executive noted that last year saw a new record high for the University in terms of funds raised and commended the breadth of work to engage with and contribute to the University community.

19 People and Money System and Financial/Transformation Update **Paper Q**

The Executive noted the update on the HR and Finance Transformation Programmes and that the People and Money system would be going live across the University tomorrow, with members asked to encourage colleagues to log onto and familiarise themselves with the new system.

20 Annual Strategic Risk Report

Paper R

The Executive noted the Strategic Risk Report Update, for onward transmission to Audit and Risk Committee following final approval by Risk Management Committee.

21 Health and Safety Quarterly update: Quarter 4

Paper S

The Executive noted the summary of health and safety related activity during the period 1 June 2020 to 31 August 2020.

22 Global Open Centre Finance Centre of Excellence Update

Paper T

The Executive welcomed the update on the Global Open Centre Finance Centre of Excellence (GOFCoE) including the proposed incorporation timetable.

23 University Executive Communications

Verbal

The Executive agreed there would be communication on: the equality diversity and inclusion papers; supporting working overseas and international activity; the inclusion of Strategy 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals in papers; the Development and Alumni Annual Report and the Operational Data and Information Security Policies.

24 Date of Next Meeting

There will be an 'Away Day' on Wednesday, 2 December 2020 at 10.00 – 12.00 and 14.00- 1630. The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 15 December 2020 at 10.00am.