



UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE

23 February 2021

Minute

Present: Peter Mathieson (Convener)
David Argyle, Leigh Chalmers, Chris Cox, Sarah Cunningham-Burley,
Gavin Douglas, David Gray, Lee Hamill, Gary Jebb, Colm Harmon,
Wendy Loretto, Pauline Manchester, Catherine Martin, Gavin McLachlan,
Ellen MacRae, Dorothy Miell, Theresa Merrick, Barry Neilson,
Dave Robertson, James Saville, Jonathan Seckl, Aziz Sheikh, Sarah Smith,
Sandy Tudhope and Moira Whyte.

Apologies: Andrew Morris and James Smith.

In attendance: Rebecca Gaukroger for item 9, Dave Gorman for item 12, Alan Mackay, Fiona Boyd and Kirstie Graham.

1 Minute Papers A1, A2

The Minutes of the meetings held on 19 January 2021 and 28 January 2021 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 recent coverage of the significant research by Professor Aziz Sheikh and colleagues on the effect of the Pfizer and Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines, with congratulations to Professor Sheikh and team;
- The Scottish Funding Council announcement of additional funding for research with discussions ongoing on how this may be allocated across the sector;
- The recent Westminster Government announcement of the road map out of lockdown with the Scottish Government announcement anticipated shortly.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4 Curriculum Transformation Paper B2

The Executive noted the paper covered one of the two main strands that would continue after the Adaptation and Renewal work had wound down, alongside Reshaping. The main focus of the paper was the composition of the Curriculum Transformation Board to oversee the programme, reporting to the University Executive. There was discussion on the size of the Board, the competing workload pressures on staff and the importance of inclusivity, in particular including earlier

career staff, perhaps through working or sub groups. Taking these comments into account, the Executive approved the terms of reference and membership of the Curriculum Transformation Board.

5 People Report

Paper D

The Executive noted the update on people related matters and were informed that the Staff Experience Committee had considered the focus for the next pulse survey, which would be around hybrid working.

6 Director of Finance's Report

Paper E

The Executive noted the latest University management accounts up to the end of December (period five) and the results of the 2019-20 Russell Group financial benchmarking exercise. In discussion, members agreed on the need to ensure a sustainable financial platform to support planned major change programmes such as curriculum transformation. This would be assisted by the savings achieved to date, however more transformative work would be required to achieve the required savings. It was noted that the Senior Management Team had been looking at areas where it was possible to make savings at scale and a paper on this would shortly be coming to the Executive.

There was discussion of the ongoing challenge of relying on year to date progress against budget to make effective financial decisions and it was noted that the work on finance transformation and the People and Money system should assist with this. There was consideration of a more detailed look at financial matters as part of a future Executive away day.

Planning Round Update

Verbal

It was noted that due to the current uncertainty, the planning round timetable was being pushed back, with the plans now scheduled for the May Executive meeting, to progress through Policy and Resources Committee to Court on 14 June 2021.

7 Areas for Further Development from Annual & Periodic Review

Paper F

The Executive noted the areas for further development as identified through annual and periodic review, noting the key themes of staff welfare, communication, equality, diversity, and inclusion, extensions and special circumstances, online learning platforms, on-campus space and resources and assessment and progression tools. Members welcome the paper, noting Senate Quality Assurance Committee was following up with individuals and areas with relevant responsibilities and would consider a progress report on actions later in the academic year.

8 Undergraduate admissions update: 2021/22 entry

Paper G

The Executive considered a summary of the status of the 2021/22 undergraduate admissions cycle, noting this was a period of uncertainty and the University needed to remain agile in response to changes. Members noted the concerns regarding staffing of critical activity and approved the recommendations regarding resource

planning and flexibility of staffing in the latter part of the admissions cycle, to ensure processes are resilient.

9 Adaptation and Renewal

Paper B1

The Executive considered the update on the work of the Adaptation and Renewal Team and noted the planned transition back to pre-pandemic decision making processes by standing down Adaptation and Renewal and reverting back to the University Executive. The two strategic priorities of Curriculum Transformation and Reshaping would report via the Senior Leadership Team to the Executive and a Planning Group to respond to Scottish Government Guidelines would report to the Executive on a regular basis.

10 People and Money System and Financial/Transformation Update

Paper C

The Executive had considered a revised plan for implementation of the People and Money system at meetings on 19 and 28 January. Following initial review by Policy & Resources Committee and subsequent review and recommendation for approval by a specially convened Sub-Group of Policy & Resources Committee, Court Exception Committee approved the revised plan and additional financial contingency on 12 February 2021. The Executive noted that as part of this approval, programme controls would be further strengthened by a fortnightly report to Senior Leadership and regular reports to Policy & Resources Committee. The Head of Internal Audit will provide independent oversight and provide assurance to Audit & Risk Committee.

There was discussion of the schedule for benefits realisation and it was noted that a revised benefit forecast was being developed based on the revised plan. Members were reminded that the maximum benefits would be realised by full staff engagement with the new system and the Executive could provide leadership on this.

11 Update on Implementation of the University Brand

Paper H

The Executive considered an update on work to embed a collaborative and integrated approach to the University brand. The work of the Brand Governance Group and was noted and the importance of ensuring broad representation on this. Members were assured that marketing representatives from the Colleges and Schools were included in the membership of this Group.

12 Concentration Risk

Paper I

The Executive considered a paper exploring where the University may be vulnerable to concentration risk, that is, the potential for a particular area of exposure to threaten the overall reputational and financial health of the institution. Work in this area had arisen from Audit & Risk Committee's request for some initial data on concentration risk in March 2020 and desire to see additional work in this area, including further consideration of international partnerships, how these relate to strategy and our risk tolerance in deciding to pursue international relationships.

A version of this paper had been discussed at Risk Management Committee and there had been a recent joint workshop between Risk Management and Audit and Risk Committee considering high level strategic risks. Based on consideration by the Executive, this paper would progress to Audit and Risk Committee.

In discussion, members considered the possible approach to managing and mitigating concentration risk; the need to consider both ethical values based risk alongside financial imperatives; that consideration of the magnitude of the risk if it crystallised needed to be captured; and whether there should be consideration of some measurement in this area in the performance framework for Strategy 2030.

ITEMS FOR FORMAL APPROVAL/NOTING

13 Revising the Remit, Membership and Ways of Working of the Social Responsibility and Sustainability (SRS) Committee Paper J

The Executive approved an updated remit, membership and ways of working for the SRS Committee including a change of the committee name to the Sustainability, Civic and Social Responsibility (SCSR) Committee.

14 Health and Safety Quarterly Report: Quarter 1: 1 September – 30 November 2020 Paper K

The Executive noted the summary of health and safety related incidents that took place during the period 1 September to 30 November 2020, as well as relevant health and safety issues and developments.

15 Contract for the Web Paper L

The Executive noted the University's endorsement of the Contract for the Web: "a global plan of action, created by experts and citizens from across the world to make sure our online world is safe, empowering and genuinely for everyone".

16 University Executive Communications Verbal

The Executive agreed there would be communication on Professor Aziz Sheikh's research; transitioning out of Adaptation and Renewal; the University brand; the updated SRS Committee and the Contract for the Web.

17 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 23 March 2021 at 10.00am.