



MINUTES OF UNIVERSITY COURT

5 October 2022

Court-Senate Room, Collins Building

Present: Dame Sue Bruce (Convener), Paula Galloway (Vice-Convener), Professor Sir Jim McDonald (Principal), Professor Scott MacGregor, Neelam Bakshi, Virginia Beckett, Councillor Richard Bell, Elaine Blaxter, Linda Brownlow (from item 4), Melfort Campbell, Andrew Eccles, Gillian Hastings, Mary Jo Jacobi (by videolink), Susan Kelly, Lewis McDermott, Adam Morrow, Malcolm Roughead (by videolink), Fiona Salzen, Professor Jan Sefcik, Peter Young

Attending: Professor Douglas Brodie, Gillian Docherty, Dr Stuart Fancey, Professor Duncan Graham, Professor Atilla Incecik, Beth Lawton, Professor Stephen McArthur, Louise McKean, Professor Eleanor Shaw, Steven Wallace, Dr Daniel Wedgwood.

Apologies: Alison Culpan, Professor Jonathan Delafield-Butt, Stephen Ingledew

Welcome and apologies

The Convener noted apologies as above and welcomed Court members and attendees to the meeting, extending a particular welcome to the new members of Court for 2022/23: Councillor Richard Bell, Lewis McDermott, Adam Morrow and Fiona Salzen,

The Convener also offered her congratulations to the Principal on his formal induction, on 2 October 2022, as an International Member of the US National Academy of Engineering.

No interests were declared.

1. Minutes

Court **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2022.

2. Matters arising

There were no matters arising, other than those covered in the main agenda.

3. Principal's Report

The Principal updated Court on recent developments, including the following:

- This was Court's first meeting since the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II. The Principal noted the University's sorrow and observed that Her Majesty had played a crucial part in the history of the University, having signed its Charter in 1964, and had visited the University twice more recently. The Convener, the Chancellor and the Principal had taken part in official events during the period of national mourning.
- The new Prime Minister and UK Cabinet had brought forward significant new economic policies and potential changes in other areas of government policy had also been noted, some with direct relevance to the higher education sector. The University would continue to monitor developments closely.
- The UK Government and the EU had not yet reached agreement over the UK's possible association with Horizon Europe research funding structures. Alternative plans were being formulated by the UK Government, but outcomes remained uncertain at this stage.
- The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) gave a brief overview of the University's position in relation to relevant economic context. It was noted that a weak pound sterling could make UK higher education more attractive to international students, but any rise in inflation could counterbalance this. Any rise in interest rates would inevitably have an impact on the University's costs. The University had good

cash reserves, at a higher level than before the Covid-19 pandemic. Detailed analysis would be provided in the annual accounts, which were to be presented to the next meeting of Court.

- Members enquired as to the impact on the University's pension schemes of recent economic events. The CFO noted that the USS scheme had issued an early reassurance that it was not significantly exposed to the liability-driven investments that had affected a number of other pension schemes.
- The University had taken measures to help staff cope with the recent and on-going significant rise in the cost of living. A non-consolidated payment had been made to every member of staff (except members of the Executive Team), with weighting towards the lower end of the pay scale. The University had also brought forward a scheduled rise in the Voluntary Living Wage for relevant staff. Measures to help students manage the increased cost of living were also being developed by the University and the Students' Association.
- The Principal noted that a number of significant new research and innovation partnerships were at advanced stages of negotiation.
- The National Manufacturing Institute Scotland (NMIS) had recently appointed Chris Courtney as its new Chief Executive. He had previously held the position of Director of the UKRI Made Smarter Innovation Challenge.
- Links with CESAER, the European network of science and technology universities, remained strong. New agreements were being formed with a number of European institutions.
- The University had been shortlisted for two Times Higher Education Awards: Outstanding Entrepreneurial University and Outstanding Library Team. The Principal congratulated Elaine Blaxter, member of Court and University Librarian & Head Of Library Services, on her leading role in earning the latter nomination. Winners would be announced on 17 November.
- The University had been shortlisted for the 'Best Large Employer' and 'Judges' Award' categories at The Herald Top Employer Awards 2022.
- Four senior members of Strathclyde's staff had been nominated for The Scottish Women's Awards. These included two members of the Executive Team, Gillian Docherty and Professor Eleanor Shaw, alongside Dr Olga Kozlova and Professor Mairi Spowage.
- The Principal noted a number of other members of the Strathclyde community who had in recent months received recognition for their work from prestigious bodies.
- Open Days and Inauguration events had taken place on campus for the first time since the Covid-19 pandemic and had attracted high levels of interest and high attendances.
- The Principal and the University Secretary outlined the University's response to the current shortage of student accommodation in Glasgow. It was noted that accommodation shortages had occurred in a number of UK cities, due in large part to a significantly reduced private rental market in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. The University had taken a number of special measures to provide accommodation for students, including procurement of over 150 hotel rooms, with the prospect of transferring students to the refurbished Thomas Campbell Court in the second semester. The University was also in advanced negotiations with another institution regarding accommodation. Large numbers of students had already been helped and the University was working hard, in close collaboration with the students' association, to assist new students who remained in need of accommodation. Planning was underway for the second semester, bearing in mind both the arrival and departure of different groups of students in the new calendar year.
- The University Compliance Officer (UCO) and the Vice Principal summarised arrangements for on-campus activity in the new semester, with particular regard to the monitoring and control of Covid-19. Processes for the return to campus had been developed in line with Scottish Government guidance and the University continued to liaise closely with government, including through the sector Covid Leads group. Among other measures, the University was participating in the 'distance aware' scheme. The eFIRST group was meeting regularly and continuing to coordinate policies and practices in relation to learning and teaching in the context of the general return to campus. There were regular meetings with trade unions and the students' association on relevant matters.
- The Leadership Group had undertaken Active Bystander training, which was being made available across the University, as part of the broader Safe360° approach to helping every member of the University community feel safe, supported and secure. The course had been very well received. It was agreed that the UCO would circulate relevant materials to Court members, subject to permission from the training providers.

4. Continuation of the Convener's Term of Office

The Convener recused herself and the Vice Convener assumed the Chair for this item.

The University Secretary outlined the recommendation of Court Membership Group that Dame Sue Bruce be re-appointed as Convener of Court for a further two years from the end of her current term of office, thus continuing her tenure as Convener up to the maximum allowed under the current Statutes and under the Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance. Independent legal advice had confirmed that this was the appropriate measure of the Convener's maximum term of office, notwithstanding her appointment under a previous version of the Statutes.

Members welcomed Dame Sue's willingness to continue in the role and commended her service to date.

Court unanimously **approved** the re-appointment of Dame Sue Bruce as Convener of Court for two years from the end of her current term, thus continuing her appointment as Convener to 31 July 2025.

The Convener returned to the meeting and resumed as Chair.

5. NMIS and the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District

The Chief Commercial Officer (CCO), the Executive Dean of Engineering and Stephen Burgess (Visiting Professor) delivered a presentation on the development of NMIS and the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District (AMID).

NMIS was reaching a significant milestone, with the imminent opening of its new, purpose-built headquarters. In addition, the second phase of funding from the High Value Manufacturing Catapult (HVMC) and associated 5-year plan were drawing to a close in spring 2023. This had been a period of significant growth in activity and income for NMIS. It was also noted that NMIS had recovered strongly from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. The next Catapult planning period promised further acceleration of this growth, in part because of the opportunities created by the new premises and the attractiveness of the new facilities to partner organisations. The next plan had been submitted to the HVMC and early indications were of a very positive reception.

The CCO also updated Court on the progress of the MERLIN project, which would make another significant contribution to AMID. A thorough review of the project had brought about some changes, including some financial adjustments in the changing economic context, but the overall funding envelope previously approved by Court had not changed. New opportunities were being identified as the project developed and discussions with partners continued.

The Executive Dean of Engineering summarised the extensive alignment of NMIS/AMID activity and work in Strathclyde's academic community and the mutual benefits, alongside benefits for the economy and wider society, that followed from this. As part of this, it was noted that the University was able to leverage its role in NMIS to create significant numbers of PhD places.

Members enquired as to the monitoring and recording of the substantial economic impact of NMIS and AMID. The CCO noted that this was on-going and that relevant staff were skilled in both capturing and presenting impact. Members also discussed the highest risks associated with the next phase of NMIS. It was noted in this context that the commitment of resources during the period of transition to the new headquarters was being carefully managed.

It was proposed that a future Court meeting might take place at the new NMIS headquarters and it was agreed that opportunities to do this in 2023 would be investigated.

Court **noted** the presentation.

6. Student Recruitment 2022/23

The University Secretary gave a summary of student recruitment to date. It was noted that:

- Scottish undergraduate (UG) recruitment had been largely on track, with key widening access cohorts close to target and others exceeding targeted numbers (while being closer to target than the previous year).
- RUK UG recruitment had been strong, exceeding targeted levels.
- The University, in common with many other UK universities, had experienced a fall in home/RUK taught postgraduate (PGT) applications and recruitment was correspondingly below targetted levels. January intakes would provide some opportunity to move closer to this target.
- Overseas recruitment would continue throughout October. At current levels:
 - overseas UG was below target, at similar levels to the previous year;
 - overseas PGT was below target but high levels of recruitment were expected in the January cohort, following high levels of applications.
- There would be an update on research postgraduate recruitment (which was subject to year-round activity) at the next Court meeting.

The University Secretary also summarised trends in the geographical spread of our international students' home countries.

Court **noted** the update.

7. Report of the Court Effectiveness Review 2022

The University Secretary introduced this item, summarising the work carried out over the summer of 2022 to review Court's effectiveness, with external facilitation (in the terms of the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance) provided by Professor Sir Pete Downes. The major elements of the review had been a written survey of Court members and a series of meetings with Court members, members of Court's committees and relevant University staff. Sir Pete had provided a report with recommendations, which had been circulated to members ahead of the meeting. It was noted that the report was generally very positive and that the recommendations all related to opportunities for further enhancement.

Court recorded thanks to Sir Pete and to the Review Secretariat.

Court **agreed** that a group should be established to consider Court's response to each recommendation and, reporting back to Court in due course, propose any further action as appropriate. It was **agreed** that the core membership of this group should be the same as that of the Review Steering Group that had met earlier in the year, although other members of Court were invited to express an interest if they wished to be involved.

Members were reminded of the numerous channels of communication through which any concerns or observations relating to Court or its effectiveness could be conveyed at any time.

8. Court Strategy Session, December 2022 – initial planning

The Principal outlined initial plans for the December meeting of Court and strategy session. The latter would include both a mid-cycle review of progress against the Vision 2025 strategic plan and sessions on the development of the University's next strategic plan, for 2025-2030.

Court **noted** the initial plans.

Items for formal approval

9. Convener's Action: Data Storage

Court **homologated** the prior approval, by Convener's Action, of an ongoing strategy for the provision of data storage, together with a funding for the first two years' provision.

Members enquired as to relevant requirements and constraints on data storage. The Chief Digital & Information Officer and the Associate Principal (Research & Innovation) briefly outlined the various ways in which relevant kinds of data storage could be obligatory and/or advantageous in the context of a research-intensive university, noting that the new strategy would help to ensure that the most appropriate locations and kinds of storage were identified in all cases.

10. Corporate Risk Register

Court **approved** the University's top risks and mitigating actions.

11. Annual review of key Court documentation 2022/23

Court **approved** updated versions of Court's Standing Orders, the Handbook for Members of the University Court, incorporating Court's Statement of Primary Responsibilities, and the Schedule of Delegated Authority.

12. Annual Statement on Institution-led Review of Quality for Scottish Funding Council, Academic Year 2021/22

Court **approved** the Annual Statement on Institution-led Review of Quality, noting that, in line with standard practice, this had been submitted to the SFC by its deadline of 30 September 2022, marked as being subject to Court's approval. **[Minute note:** Also in line with standard practice, a Statement of Assurance recording this approval was signed by the Convener and sent to the SFC following the meeting.]

Items for Information

Court received and **noted** the following reports:

- 13. National Student Survey: Summary of results**
- 14. Complaints Handling Annual Report 2021/22**
- 15. Health & Safety Annual Report and Strategy update**

Committee Reports

Court received and **noted** the following committee reports:

- 16. Executive Team**
- 17. Senate**
- 18. Court Business Group**
- 19. Court Membership Group**
- 20. Audit & Risk Committee**
- 21. Enterprise & Investment Committee**

22. AOB

No further business was raised.

Date of next meeting

- 1 & 2 December 2022

DW, 12 October 2022