

MINUTES OF UNIVERSITY COURT

1 March 2022

Auditorium B, Technology & Innovation Centre

Present: Dame Sue Bruce (Convener), Paula Galloway (Vice-Convener), Professor Sir Jim McDonald (Principal), Professor Scott MacGregor, Neelam Bakshi, Virginia Beckett, Elaine Blaxter, Ronnie Cleland, Alison Culpan, Professor Jonathan Delafield-Butt, Andrew Eccles, Stephen Ingledew, Mary Jo Jacobi, Councillor Ruairi Kelly, Susan Kelly, William McLachlan, Malcolm Roughead, Professor Jan Sefcik, Peter Young

Present by remote video link: Kirsty Bannatyne, Gillian Hastings, Benn Rapson, Linda Brownlow (from item 4), Melfort Campbell (from item 4).

Attending: Professor Tim Bedford, Professor Douglas Brodie, Gillian Docherty, Professor David Hillier, Professor Atilla Incecik, Dr Veena O'Halloran, Beth Lawton, Gordon Scott, Professor Eleanor Shaw, Professor Iain Stewart, Steven Wallace, Dr Daniel Wedgwood, Professor Stephen McArthur, Professor Duncan Graham.

Apologies: Brenda Wyllie

Welcome and apologies

The Convener welcomed Court members and attendees to the meeting. The Convener extended a particular welcome to Gillian Docherty, who was attending her first meeting of Court since taking up her role of Chief Commercial Officer, and congratulated her on her recent election as President of the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce.

No interests were declared.

1. Minutes

Court **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2021, and noted the record of the strategy sessions held on 25 & 26 November 2021.

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:

- The University had contacted all staff and students of nationalities relevant to the current conflict in Ukraine, and any others known to be affected, and had offered appropriate support. The University had small numbers of students from the affected countries. Strathclyde was engaging with sector-wide efforts in Scotland and the UK to create a coordinated response across higher education to the unfolding situation. The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) noted that Strathclyde had no direct investments in Russian enterprises and was investigating whether it held any indirect investments.
- Sir William Lithgow had passed away in February. The Principal paid tribute to this important figure in Scottish industry and in Strathclyde's history, noting that Sir William had been the first President of the Students' Association at Strathclyde, later recognised with lifetime honorary presidency of that

organisation, and had subsequently made many contributions to the University. Court's sadness at this news was formally noted.

- The Diamond Jubilee of the granting of the University's Royal Charter would be celebrated in 2024. Court would be kept informed of the development of events to mark this anniversary.
- This year's Chancellor's Fellows programme had been launched. 24 new exceptional early career Fellows were to be hired through the scheme.
- The University had experienced seven days of strike action by the UCU union between 14 and 22 February, in relation to the national dispute over reforms to the USS pension scheme. The University had worked to minimise impact on students. The CFO provided a summary of recent developments regarding the USS. Members discussed the University's position. The Principal noted that this was unchanged: the University was prepared to pay more to protect pension benefits, within affordable limits, and sought to encourage constructive dialogue on all sides at the national level.
- The University Secretary & Compliance Officer and the Vice Principal provided updates on the University's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. In the context of the announced removal of legal restrictions relating to the pandemic on 21 March, a number of measures in place around the University had changed or were due to change from being mandatory to being advisory. Guidance for the higher education sector on 'living with Covid' was expected to be published soon. Faculties were working with hybrid models of learning and teaching, with scope to increase face-to-face activity, but also the ability to revert to online teaching should this be required. The Principal noted the valuable and constructive engagement of the Student President and his team in addressing the impacts of the pandemic.

Court **noted** the report.

4. Presentation: Trends in the International Recruitment Market

The Vice Principal and the Head of Recruitment & International Office gave a presentation setting out recent trends in international recruitment and the context for future activity. Topics covered included:

- the scientific, educational, socio-cultural and economic benefits of a diverse international student body;
- the University's systems and infrastructure for managing international recruitment;
- trends in international recruitment and student fee income;
- challenges and opportunities in the external environment;
- the role of the Recruitment & International Office;
- support for applicants during the Covid-19 pandemic;
- key markets;
- the impact of January intakes; and
- the outlook for the next academic year.

It was noted that the University monitored data in order to capture lessons from growing markets and regularly benchmarked against its main competitors. Work was in hand to raise the University's profile in certain markets. It was noted that the University's EU Transition Scholarships had helped to establish the University in certain European markets following the UK's withdrawal from the EU and the consequent change in the fee status of EU students. The University's work with agents was also discussed and noted to make an important contribution to recruitment. The University undertook significant work to ensure agents were well informed and carefully monitored agents' performance and contracted accordingly.

Court **noted** the presentation.

5. Q2 Business Report

The CFO summarised the core financial elements of the Q2 Business Report and financial forecast.

There had been an improvement to the surplus due to a combination of increased income, driven by January student intakes and reduced costs from targeted mitigating actions across all budget holders. All debt covenants were met with headroom strengthened. Further improvement would be required to achieve budget and to ensure sustained covenant headroom. Over the coming weeks and months, the focus would remain

on the delivery of a balanced budget for the coming academic year, in a period of ongoing uncertainty in the external environment.

Court members welcomed the financial results and noted the University's strong record in delivering budgets. The Principal commended the collaborative efforts of colleagues to achieve this, under the leadership of the Executive Team.

A number of other points were highlighted alongside the core financial elements of the Business Report. These included

- PGR population and intake: These were running below targeted levels for Vision 2025. This was a key area of focus for the Executive Team and Performance Development Group. It was noted that performance in this area was good but that significant further progress was required to meet the University's ambitions.
- Retention: This had improved overall and within the SIMD0-20 and SIMD20-40 populations.
- PGT recruitment: This was an area of significant growth. The significant January intake was expected to become part of business as usual.

Court **noted** the Business Report.

6. Strategic Plan 2020-25: mid-year progress report

The USCO presented a summary of progress in relation to the 16 KPIs in the University's Strategic Plan, Vision 2025. For two of the KPIs, data were not currently available. Eight of the KPIs were reported to be on track or ahead of milestone targets. Two KPIs were reported as being behind milestone targets: KPI 18 (PGR population) and KPI 11 (Industrial Research Income). Four were reported as being behind milestone targets despite progress.

Members discussed the impacts of the pandemic on industrial research income and noted that Strathclyde's industrial engagement was nevertheless a significant driver of good performance on overall competitively-won research income (KPI 6).

The University's excellent record in relation to Widening Access, as indicated in KPI 1, was noted in subsequent discussion. It was noted that Strathclyde had engaged with other universities and with the Scottish Funding Council in order to disseminate good practice in this area.

Court **noted** the report.

Items for formal approval

7. Appointment of Acting University Secretary

Court **approved** the appointment of the Director of Human Resources as Acting University Secretary for the period between the retirement of the University Secretary & Compliance Officer and the engagement of a new University Secretary.

8. Extension of Treasurer's term of office

Court **approved** the extension of the current Treasurer's term of office for one year, on the recommendation of Court Membership Group.

9. Convener's Actions:

- **Amendments to the Ordinances: Senior Officer positions**

Court **homologated** the Convener's approval of changes to the Ordinances to establish the Senior Officer roles of University Secretary and University Compliance Officer.

- **Membership of Remuneration Committee**

Court **homologated** the Convener's approval of the appointment of Melfort Campbell to Remuneration Committee.

- **University Hospital Status for NHS Golden Jubilee**

Court **homologated** the Convener's approval for establishment of 'University Hospital' status for NHS Golden Jubilee, on the basis of the existing strategic partnership.

Items for information

10. Counter Terrorism and Security Act (2015): Annual Update

Court **noted** the Annual Prevent Report, which set out action taken to address the duties placed upon the University by the Counter Terrorism and Security Act (2015).

11. Key Court dates 2022/23

Committee Reports

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

12. Executive Team

13. Senate

14. Court Business Group

15. Audit & Risk Committee

16. Staff Committee

17. Enterprise and Investment Committee

18. AOB

It was noted that Fraser Livingston, a former Convener of Court, had passed away. Court's sadness at this and gratitude for his service to the University were formally noted. It had been observed at a recent memorial service that the University had been an important and valued part of Mr Livingston's life.

The Convener noted that the University Secretary & Compliance Officer, Dr Veena O'Halloran, would be retiring following this meeting and thanked her for her exceptional contribution to Court, to the University and, over the course of her career, to the Scottish higher education sector.

Date of next meeting

- 3 May 2022

DW, 7 March 2022