

**APPROVED
CIRCULATED**

**AB(11/12)13
JMCD Mins**

**EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY COURT
ACADEMIC BOARD**

**Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 30 September 2011 at 9.00 am in the
Castle Room, New Craig, Craighouse**

PRESENT:

Professor Dame J K Stringer DBE (Principal & Vice-Chancellor)(Convenor); N Ashton (School of Arts & Creative Industries); Dr S Cairncross (Dean, Faculty of Engineering, Computing & Creative Industries); K Cairney (Director of International, Development & External Affairs); M Chapman (School of Life, Sport & Social Sciences); Professor J Duffield (Vice-Principal, Strategy, Resources & External Affairs); S Falconer (Head of School from the Business School); Professor C Fairfield (School of Engineering & the Built Environment); Professor E Hart (Professoriate); R Holmes (School of Accounting, Financial Services and Law); Dr P Jaworski (School of Management); R Kemmer (School of Computing); C Lambert (Director, Student and Academic Services); Professor A McCleery (Leader of Research Strategy & Practice); I McIntosh (Assistant Dean from Faculty of Health, Life & Social Sciences); Professor R Mackenzie (Vice-Principal, Commercialisation); A Millar (Student Representative from the Business School); A Morrison (Assistant Dean from the Business School); Professor B Paechter (Assistant Dean from Faculty of Engineering, Computing & Creative Industries); R Pelik (Leader of Academic Strategy & Practice); Professor M Prowse (Dean, Faculty of Health, Life & Social Sciences); S Smith (Head of School from Faculty of Engineering, Computing & Creative Industries); Professor S Smith (Director from the Research Institutes); Professor G Stonehouse (Dean, the Business School); L Veitch (School of Nursing, Midwifery & Social Care); Dr G Webber (University Secretary); J Worden (Dean of International Strategy & Operations); T Zanelli (President, Napier Students' Association).

IN ATTENDANCE:

J McDermott (Governance Officer) (Clerk)

APOLOGIES:

Dr J Donaldson (Head of School from Faculty of Health, Life & Social Sciences); Dr L Juleff (Teaching Fellows/Senior Teaching Fellows); Dr S Marr (School of Marketing, Tourism & Languages); C Pinder (Director, Information Services).

1. WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS

1.1 The Convenor welcomed members to the first meeting of the new Session and the first under the new Constitution of the Board. Particular welcome was offered to: the new student President, Mr Zanelli; the 'new' members drawn from the Assistant Deans, Mr McIntosh, Mr Morrison and Professor Paechter; the new member drawn from the Institute Directors, Professor Smith; and the newly co-opted member, Ms Cairney.

1.2 The apologies were **noted**

PART A: ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE, CONSTITUTION & MEMBERSHIP (AB(11/12)02)

- 2.1 As normal at the first meeting of each session, Academic Board **noted** its Terms of Reference and Constitution, as well as its Membership for the coming session. It was noted that NSA was taking steps to fill the two vacant student representative positions.

3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 27 MAY 2011 (AB(10/11)62)

- 3.1 The minutes were **approved** as an accurate record of the previous meeting.

4. MATTERS ARISING

a) Academic Board Review: Follow-up action (Minute 6)

- 4.1 The Convenor reported that in line with the decision at the previous Board meeting, she had approved the final versions of the sub-committee remits and constitutions during the summer. A full set of the documents had been included in the meeting pack for members to **note** and for future reference.
- 4.2 Members noted that a successful introductory event had been held earlier in the month to enable convenors and clerks of the sub-committees to become familiar with the new arrangements.

b) Student Experience Statement (Minute 10)

- 4.3 The Board was informed that subsequent to the previous meeting the Student Experience Statement had been considered by the Student Experience Committee. Work was now underway to develop the Student Charter. The Student Charter would be subject to further consultation, with the intention to submit both the Student Experience Statement and the Charter to a future Academic Board meeting. The position was **noted**.

5. HOMOLOGATION OF CONVENOR'S ACTION:

a) Approval of Honorary Awards, June 2011 (AB(11/12)02)

- 5.1 The papers were circulated as strictly confidential.
- 5.2 The Convenor firstly introduced the Awards that she had of necessity approved after the last Board meeting and which therefore required to be reported to this meeting. It was noted that Court had subsequently endorsed all but one of the nominations. The Board **homologated** the Convenor's decision.
- 5.3 It was noted that a further meeting of the Honorary Awards Committee had recently taken place and that the nominations agreed there had now been submitted for the Board's approval. Members considered the proposals and **approved** the nominations for onward consideration by University Court.

b) Decisions regarding the start and operation of the taught postgraduate year from September 2012 (AB(11/12)03)

- 5.4 The Board was informed of the pressing need to decide on a change of shape and structure of the postgraduate academic year, to take effect from autumn 2012/13. Significant feedback had been received that the current structure, put into effect from 2009, posed difficulties for many international entrants. This

had adversely affected recruitment from overseas to postgraduate programmes in particular. It was reported that at the end of the previous Trimester 2, the then Vice Principal (Academic), in consultation with the Deans and others, had set some planning parameters for the start and operation of the taught postgraduate year from September 2012.

- 5.5 It was noted that there had initially been an intention to submit the detailed parameters for homologation, however a number of further difficulties had subsequently been identified by the group charged with implementation. Therefore the Board was now asked firstly to homologate the decision in principle to change the structure; and secondly to choose between two options, as detailed in the paper, for the future structure of the academic year.
- 5.6 It was noted that significant work had been undertaken by a number of staff to assess the situation and to prepare the options. The advantages and disadvantages of both options were detailed under headings of 'Learning, Teaching and Assessment'; and 'Administrative'. It was agreed that in making its decision, the Board would give precedence to the LTA aspects, whilst still taking cognisance of the issues that would have to be worked through by staff.
- 5.7 Members gave detailed consideration of the options and the respective advantages and disadvantages. Several members reported on soundings they had taken from staff and students in different parts of the University. There were strong statements of support for both options, with the balance in favour of Option 2. This had been the preferred option of the NSA President and was also reported to best fit the preferences of the overseas partners with whom the University works to attract students to several postgraduate programmes.
- 5.8 In agreeing this option, it was accepted that the clearly identified pressures on staff would need to be addressed, including those related to workload allocation. It was further agreed that a clear rationale for the change would be issued to staff and students, emphasising that the intention is to enhance the student experience.
- 5.9 A commitment was given that the Vice Principal (Strategy, Resources and External Affairs), in conjunction with the Deans and others, would make available appropriate resources to ensure that the change can be accommodated. It was noted that the matter would be considered in depth at each of the Faculty Academic Boards and that these – along with the implementation group – would help to identify where resources would be required. An update report on progress towards implementation was agreed to be received at the March meeting. It was noted that the calendar for 2013/14 was scheduled to come to the next Board meeting.

Decisions:

- 5.10 To homologate the principle of the earlier decision to change the postgraduate academic year.**
- 5.11 To agree Option 2, as detailed in the paper, as the shape and structure of the postgraduate academic year from autumn 2012.**
- 5.12 The decision, along with a clear rationale, to be communicated to staff and students at the earliest opportunity.**
(Note: An [intranet announcement](#) was made on Monday 3 October)
- 5.13 To receive an update report at the March 2012 meeting of progress towards implementing the new structure in autumn 2012.**

c) Research Institutes: Schedule of Centres

(AB(11/12)04)

- 5.14 The paper was received which informed members of changes that had been approved earlier in the year relating to the composition of certain of the Research Institutes. The Board **homologated** the changes. It was noted that further changes would be brought to the Board on an annual basis. In discussion it was noted that the centres were subject to scrutiny and non-performing areas would be closed if necessary.
- 5.15 In response to a query it was noted that there was no prohibition to the institutes and centres seeking commercial sponsorship, subject to normal University ethical and other considerations.

6. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

(AB(11/12)05)

- 6.1 The Principal highlighted key elements of her written report, noting in particular the recent important announcements from Government. These had been mostly broad policy, and there were likely to be opportunities and threats contained in the detail that would come later. The implications for Higher Education had yet to be clearly defined in the pre-legislative consultation paper on Post-16 Education. However, should there be moves to 'streamline' the HE sector, the University was in a strong position and consideration would be given as to how to react. The statements on future research funding might not bode well for Edinburgh Napier, although it was felt that the examples of excellent research provision within the University should continue to be funded. It was further noted that the University had in a strategic manner concentrated research activity in areas that coincided with the Government's key objectives.
- 6.2 A very recent development not included in the written report was that of the agreement of the University's fee structure for UK students not domiciled in Scotland. Due to timing factors, the structure had been announced to the University the day prior to the meeting and the Principal hoped that the detail and the rationale had been clearly communicated. It was emphasised that a straightforward approach had been taken and that the fee level had been set at a level that covered tuition costs and also permitted the provision of bursaries to maintain the University's mission to expand access to students for under-represented sections of society. The impact of the fee structure would not be known until autumn 2012, but applications would be monitored closely and a full assessment made in time. The Principal extended thanks to all who had helped to inform and develop the fee structure and related issues.
- 6.3 The Principal further reported on her recent visits to each of the main campuses to speak with staff. There had been significant change recently in the University and she was impressed by the commitment of staff in continuing to offer excellent provision. She emphasised that this was an important component in continuing to attract students to the University's programmes, whether delivered in Edinburgh or overseas. The new MBA being offered in Sri Lanka was cited as an excellent example of seeking to employ new models and strategies to fulfil the University's aims. This was also a prime example of working in partnership with private and public bodies to ensure excellent provision.
- 6.4 Academic Board **noted** the report.
(Note: Subsequent to the meeting the University Secretary wished the record to show that formally, the Principal had taken Convenor's action on behalf of the Board when making the decision regarding the fees. By long-established convention this right

had been delegated to the Principal as Convenor of the Board. The consultation she had engaged in had been over and above the requirements of this delegated authority. In this instance there was also a timing issue because of the need to announce the RUK fee level by 30th September.)

7. EARLY STUDENT MATRICULATION STATISTICS (AB(11/12)06)

7.1 As is normal at the first meeting of each session, the Board received the early enrolment statistics. It was noted that the University was forecast to exceed its Home EU Undergraduate targets, whilst under-recruiting to taught postgraduate programmes. It was noted that the reasons behind this performance would be scrutinised closely and the planning assumptions adjusted accordingly. The impact of government decisions on international recruitment was also being assessed. The importance of working in partnership was again emphasised.

7.2 Academic Board **noted** the report.

8. NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY (NSS) – 2011 OUTCOME (AB(11/12)07)

8.1 The Board received and considered the paper, which gave the outcome of the 2011 NSS for the University. It was recognised that the University had attained an improved position on previous years, both in higher 'scores' and a higher participation rate. This position was commended as reflecting the hard work of staff and student officers; but it was accepted that there was still considerable work to be done to improve further. As the NSS was increasingly referred to in student media and to inform student choices, it was agreed that there should be further concerted and focussed action. It was suggested, however, that the true performance in many parts of the University was not being reflected in the NSS data.

8.2 In analysing the results, it was noted that the structure of the survey was such that particular difficulty in a specific academic area could have the effect of reducing the overall rating. There was also a patchy picture across the University, which meant that a targeted approach might bring greatest result.

8.3 The particular themes where action was particularly required were suggested to be 'Teaching on my Course'; 'Assessment & Feedback'; and Personal Development'. Frustration was expressed that feedback issues in particular had not yet been resolved, given the priority attached to that issue in recent years. It was noted that the 'Feedback for Learning' initiative, which involved collaboration between Faculties, professional services and NSA, had shown some early success and more was expected.

8.4 In considering approaches to address the issue, it was noted that a 'blitz approach' could be used to good effect whereby individual problems would be selected for particular focused attention and thus resolved. It was suggested that scrutiny of the comments made by respondents could help identify those problems in most need of early attention. In general, more engagement with the student body would be useful.

8.5 It was noted that positive feedback had been gained following the engagement of students with staff close to industry. This and other forms of collaborative work were commended. A practical issue was noted that development activity required to be recognised in the workload allocation model and in resource allocation.

8.6 It was noted that the Deans had responsibility for driving the actions within each Faculty and **agreed** that the Faculty Academic Boards (FABs) were appropriate forums to discuss these actions and to monitor the impact of the work. It was noted that as well as receiving the minutes of the FABs, the Board would receive a further report on the NSS at the November meeting.

**9. NOMINATIONS FOR HONORARY ACADEMIC TITLES FROM THE
BUSINESS SCHOOL (AB(11/12)08)**

9.1 The Board **approved** the three nominations presented for Honorary Titles (one of which was an extension of an existing award).

PART B RECEIPT OF MINUTES

These minutes are received to confirm to Academic Board that its sub- committees are continuing to meet their remits and are undertaking business on its behalf to the standard it expects.

10. Open Minutes of Research Degrees Committee meeting held on 20 May 2011 **AB(10/11)57**

In commenting on these minutes, the importance of public engagement was recognised.

11. Open Minutes of Research Degrees Committee meeting held on 31 May 2011 **AB(10/11)63**

12. Minutes of Research & Knowledge Transfer Committee meeting held on 12 May 2011 **AB(10/11)58**
(To come to the next meeting)

13. Minutes of Learning, Teaching & Assessment Committee meeting held on 11 May 2011 **AB(10/11)59**

14. Minutes of Learning, Teaching & Assessment Committee meeting held on 6 June 2011 **AB(11/12)09**

It was noted that Minutes of the Sub-Committee meetings held in September 2011 would be brought to the November meeting of the Board

PART C ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

**15. ACADEMIC BOARD REVIEW: SUB-COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE,
FINAL VERSIONS (AB(11/12)10)**

15.1 As mentioned earlier under matters arising, the full set of terms of reference were presented for members to note and for their future reference. The document included an up-to-date list of convenors and clerks.

**16. REPORT ON UNIVERSITY KEY RISKS APPROPRIATE TO ACADEMIC
BOARD (AB(11/12)11)**

16.1 The Board **noted** the report on the University's key risks appropriate to its remit.

17. ELIR REPORT

17.1 The Board **noted** that the ELIR Report was now available on the intranet:

<http://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/academicdevelopment/ELIR/Pages/report.aspx>

**18. FORWARD SCHEDULE OF BUSINESS OF ACADEMIC BOARD 2011/12
(AB(11/12)12)**

18.1 The Board **noted** the forward schedule of business.

19. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS FOR 2011/12:

18 November 2011;
02 March 2012;
01 June 2012.

All meetings to commence at 9.00am and to take place in the Castle Room, Craighouse, unless otherwise notified.

20. VALEDICTION

20.1 The Convenor noted that Vice Principal Dr Jenny Rees would shortly leave the University. The Convenor extended thanks on behalf of the Board for her contribution over the previous five years to the work of the Board and to the University as a whole – particularly the student body. Dr Rees was wished well in her future endeavours.