AB(22/23)017

EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY COURT

ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held Friday 14 October 2022 at 9.00 am at the Rivers Suite, Craiglockhart Campus and by Teams Video Conference

PRESENT:
Professor A Nolan (Principal & Vice Chancellor) (Convenor); Professor N Antonopoulos (Vice Principal Research & Innovation and Deputy Vice Chancellor) (Convenor); Professor P Andras (Dean, School of Engineering & the Built Environment and School of Computing); Dr J Brodie (School Head of Learning & Teaching); Professor C Cross (Dean, Business School); Dr J Hails (School of Arts & Creative Industries); Professor G Hutchison (Dean, School of Applied Sciences); Professor N Karodia (Vice Principal Learning & Teaching and Deputy Vice Chancellor); V Khattar (ENSA): Dr M Leggate (School Officer responsible for Quality Enhancement); Dr K Leitch (School of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment); Dr S Logie (Director, Student Services & Academic Registrar); Dr D Maclean (Dean, Schools of Arts and Creative Industries); Dr K Macleod (School of Arts and Creative Industries); Dr C Mahoney (School of Health & Social Care); Dr F McQueen (School of Applied Sciences); Dr N Pitropakis (School of Computing); Professor A Snowden (Professoriate); B Stillie (School of Arts and Creative Industries); Dr S Wells (School of Computing).

IN ATTENDANCE:
M Greenhalgh (Director of Strategy and Planning and Secretary to Court); A McGoff (Director of Finance & Operations) (for item 6) ; A McKendrick (Information Services) (for item 6); A Quickfall (Head of Planning and Business Intelligence) (for item 11); C Taylor (Director of Information Services); A Wating (Head of Student Futures) (for item 15); M Masson (Clerk).

APOLOGIES: Dr C Backhaus (Business School); Dr S Campbell Casey (School of Applied Sciences); Dr Peter Chapman (School of Computing); D Cloy (Head of Governance and Risk); Dr A Fonzone (School of Engineering & the Built Environment); Professor A Machin (Dean, School of Health & Social Care); Professor A McCleery (Professoriate)Professor L Mora (Business School); Dr X Pierron (Business School); Dr G Wright (School of Applied Sciences).

1. **WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS**

1.1   The Convenor welcomed members to the meeting.

1.2   The apologies were **noted.**

PART A: ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION & DECISION

2.   **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 3 JUNE 2022**   AB(21/22)058

2.1   The minutes were **approved**.

3.   MATTERS ARISING

3.1   3.1 Academic Board Membership

The Board noted that Court at its meeting on 20 June 2022 had approved the proposal from Academic Board that Achille Fonzone and Simon Wells be permitted to complete their terms of office as Academic Board members, noting that would conclude in September 2023, as a transitional provision further to the SEBE/SOC School Merger.

4.   ANNUAL COMMITTEE EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW FEEDBACK

4.1   The Board noted that very few responses had been received but that the view was that the Board had been effectively fulfilling its remit over the past year and that the balance of business was considered appropriate.

4.2   The Board noted areas for consideration including efforts to send outlook invitations earlier and to post Board papers as they became available onto the Board SharePoint site. Although online meetings had worked well during lockdown conditions, it was observed that engagement in discussions tended to be better at in-person meetings. This would be considered in deciding the balance of in-person and online meetings.

4.2   The Academic Board **noted** the feedback.

5.   PRINCIPAL'S REPORT   AB(22/23)002

5.1   The Principal introduced her written report and members noted particular ongoing challenges including the funding outlook and the wider higher education landscape. The position with the UK's association with Horizon Europe funding remained unchanged although there was a more promising outlook for a resolution of the challenges associated with the Northern Ireland protocol which may impact the Horizon funding scheme. Recent experience of a collaborative research submission suggested there was scope for Edinburgh Napier University to submit as an 'associate country'.

5.2   Thereafter, Academic Board **noted** the report.

**6.   UPDATE ON FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2021/22 AND   AB(22/23)003
        BUDGET 2022/23***

6.1   Academic Board received a paper which presented the provisional financial outturn for the year ended July 2022 and budget for 2022/23. The Board noted the key highlights and the overall positive outturn for the year and that the University had grown its reputation with a positive REF outcome and good positions in student surveys. Recruitment to academic roles would continue apace although it was acknowledged there were recruitment market challenges.

6.2   Thereafter, Academic Board **noted** the financial outturn 2021/22 and Budget for 2022/23.

7.   UPDATE ON ANNUAL PLAN   AB(22/23)004

7.1   Academic Board received the end of year annual plan priorities update for 2021/22. Academic Board noted significant achievements across a number of business areas which were testament to the commitment and hard work of staff. The recent announcement of the University's rise in position in the THES World Rankings (to 401 – 500 ranking category) was noted.

7.2   Thereafter, Academic Board **noted** the report.

8.   EARLY STUDENT ADMISSIONS DATA   AB(22/23)005

8.1   Academic Board received the paper which provided an overview of the 2022 admissions cycle and current student population estimates. There had been a decline in applications to certain student populations in certain Schools attributable to various factors including a significant drop in direct entry applications from colleges and a decline in applications from the Republic of Ireland attributable to the post-Brexit fee regime affecting undergraduate numbers. A decline in home postgraduate taught and PDGE numbers was also noted.

8.2   Discussion followed and Academic Board noted the importance of ensuring the University recruited within the thresholds set by the SFC to avoid financial penalties and the impact of fewer funded places in the future. A portfolio review of taught postgraduate provision was planned which would include a review of current provision. Any changes to the intakes of students to Teacher Education (ITE) programme at a national level would also be considered.

8.3   Academic Board **noted** the Early Student Admissions Data

9.   PROJECT VISION UPDATE

9.1   Academic Board received an update on the ongoing work to develop an estate and property plan for the University now renamed project VISION.   Academic Board noted that work was well underway on the five different workstreams and colleagues were invited to get involved. The University's consultants were facilitating workshops which provided an opportunity to think more strategically about the use of space in the longer term.

9.2   Some observations were made following one recent workshop where room utilisation data was discussed. Academic Board noted that there may be valid reasons for low utilisation in particular rooms such as the availability of specialist kit. Further, it was noted that rooms were booked on the basis of planned numbers which were frequently different from actual numbers of students in classes once into term time.

9.3   Academic Board noted the update**.**

10. STUDENT SURVEY: OUTCOMES AND ACTIONS* AB(22/23)006

10.1 Academic Board received the paper which summarised the latest results of the sector-wide student experience surveys (National Student Survey and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey) and noted the key headlines. The University had broadly retained the same ratings as last year and had held its position in being above the UK sector and Scottish Sector averages and its place as number one in Edinburgh.

10.2 Academic Board noted that Biomedical Sciences and Biosciences had performed exceptionally well ranking first in the UK against the backdrop of the pandemic. It was further noted that a comparison of the outcomes against the ENhance Framework had shown that all elements of the Framework had been met which was a validation of the Framework itself.

10.3 From a student perspective the return to on-campus teaching was welcomed and ENSA had established a community pantry to support students encountering hardship during the cost-of-living crisis. In addition, further work would be undertaken to in discuss/review academic integrity issues working with DLTE.

10.3 Thereafter Academic Board noted the paper.

11 STUDENT SUCCESS: REPORT ON PROGRESSION FOR 21/22

11.1 The Head of Planning and Business Intelligence introduced the slides which had been circulated prior to the meeting and highlighted the main challenges. Academic Board noted trends in student progression including the pattern of decline in the pass rates and non-engagement with assessments particularly for Level 7 students. A number of analytical tools were available to help Schools review the data but there were other more fundamental questions to review and consider such as our approach to student engagement, support for students who may be considered to be at higher risk, the assessment strategy and student communications.

11.2 Discussion followed and a query was raised as to whether Personal Development Tutors (PDTs) were aware of students' backgrounds if they were considered to be high risk and it was confirmed that the replacement for the existing tracker system would make that clear. The Board noted existing practices in Schools to address engagement and participation and further noted that a student in the School of Health and Social Care was developing a 'participation model' which would potentially have wider applicability, and this would be shared at the appropriate time.

11.3 The Board also discussed University regulations and the exceptional circumstances in which students may (or may not) be allowed to progress and whether there may be differences in interpretation of the regulations. Academic Board also wished to see exit interviews undertaken consistently with questions to tease out the extent to which academic or pastoral issues were causal factors in decision making.

11.4 Academic Board noted that DLTE had recruited to a new student engagement role which would be helpful in bringing coherence to the various strands of student engagement.

11. 4 There was wide support for a short life working group to look at all the matters raised in discussion of this item with a report back to the December meeting.

ACTION: Discussion feedback to be considered by Short Life Working Group on student progression, with an update to be provided at the December Academic Board meeting (VP L&T & Academic Registrar)

12.   CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

12.1 Academic Board received an update on latest developments and the work ongoing to deliver the January implementation date. The Curriculum Management environment was in place and data migration of existing curriculum records was ongoing and Academic Board noted that there was alignment with the Enhance and Quality Frameworks and Institution Led Review.

12.2 A number of roadshows were planned in the coming weeks to engage School staff in the new processes, and it would be critical to get staff involved in User Acceptance Testing. Members of Academic Board were asked to promote the system at this vital stage and to ask questions/feedback comments to the Project Team.

12.3 In discussion it was clarified that the system should, in time, hold all provision (credit and non-credit bearing) offered by the University although it was acknowledged that there would be a period of transition between existing systems and the new system.

12.4 Academic Board noted the latest developments.

13.   CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PROJECT: REMIT AND SCOPE

13.1   Academic Board noted the composition and aims of a working group that had been established to review the taught postgraduate curriculum. An external company had been procured to lead the work starting in November. The outcomes and recommendations from the review would be available in the spring and it was expected that a report would come back to Academic Board at the last meeting of the academic year.

14   PATHWAY CENTRE*   AB(22/23)007

14.1   Academic Board received a paper which outlined a proposal for a new Embedded Pathway Centre to support international undergraduate student recruitment. The paper set out the background and strategic aims of the project and Academic Board noted that a provisional preferred partner had been identified with a strong reputation and international reach. An initial session had already been held with key University staff and wider discussions with Schools were now planned.

14.2   Discussion followed and it was noted that the preferred partner should be made aware of the timeline for delivery of Project VISION and associated projects to manage expectations regarding campus locations and pace of delivery of projects.   The ongoing difficulties regarding student accommodation availability was also relevant to the project although Academic Board noted that this would be mitigated by a change in the City Council planning regulations.

14.3   Thereafter the Committee noted the report.

15. EMPLOYABILITY STRATEGY   AB(22/23)008

15.1 Academic Board received the University's Employability Strategy which had been developed by a short life working group. The four broad pillars of the strategy were noted and that the next phase was to operationalise the strategy.

15.2 Academic Board welcomed the Strategy and noted the plans for further work at the operational level. This further work would include a review of existing data on placements against demand and the options for increasing those particularly for undergraduates.

15.3 Thereafter Academic Board noted the Strategy.

16. UPDATE ON WELCOME WEEK

16.1 A Welcome Week Co-ordination Group had overseen a successful Welcome Week. It was the first time since the pandemic that students were back on campus with no restrictions and Professional Services staff had supported students in a proactive way across the full range of University business.   A point of reflection and action was a stronger presence from Professional Services staff beyond Welcome Week at each campus to promote early engagement and signposting to help students settle and feel welcome. It was noted this aligned with the discussion on student engagement more generally and was another factor to be considered in the mix of topics for that wider discussion.

16.2   Academic Board noted the update.

Action: Report on changes to welcome week to be provided in due course.

PART B   RECEIPT OF MINUTES

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

17.   Minute from the Research & Innovation Committee held on 21 September 2022

17.1 The minutes were noted and it was further noted the next meeting would consider the Graduate School.

18. Minute from the meeting of Education and Student Experience Committee held on 5 October 2022

18.1 Academic Board noted the change in name of the Committee and that the Learning and Teaching Strategy had been updated with the inclusion of additional enablers.

PART C   **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

19. ANNUAL REPORT OF RESEARCH & INNOVATION   **AB(22/23)011 COMMITTEE 2020/21**

19.1 Academic Board **noted** the report.

20. LEARNING, TEACHING, ASSESSMENT & STUDENT EXPERIENCE, COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22   **AB(22/23)12**

20.1 Academic Board **noted** the report.

21. QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT   **AB(22/23)13 2020/21**

21.1 Academic Board **noted** the report.

22. ELIR ACTIONS UPDATE/QUALITY ENHANCEMENT……….AB(22/23)014 AND STANDARDS REVIEW

22.1 Academic Board **noted** the review and that the Institution Led Review Action Plan would be on the agenda for the December meeting.

23. TERMS OF REFERENCE, CONSTITUTION AND   **AB(22/23)15 MEMBERSHIP OF ACADEMIC BOARD 2021/22**

23.1 Academic Board **noted** its Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership for 2021/22

24. FORWARD SCHEDULE OF BUSINESS 2022/223   **AB(22/23)16**

24.1 Academic Board **noted** its forward schedule of business for 2022/23.

25. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2022/23

Noted as:
02 December 2022
10 March 2023
02 June 2023

All Fridays at 9.00am, Rivers Suite, Craiglockhart Campus

Consideration would be given to the format of the meeting as hybrid was not thought to be the most effective approach.

*denotes a paper to which an exemption under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 applies.