

Edinburgh Napier University
University Court

Academic Board

Minutes of the meeting held Friday 18 October 2024 at 9.00 am at the
Rivers Suite, Craiglockhart Campus

PRESENT:

Professor A Nolan (Principal & Vice Chancellor); Professor N Antonopoulos (Vice Principal Research & Innovation and Deputy Vice Chancellor; Professor A Al-Dubai; Professor P Andras (Dean, School of Computing, Engineering & the Built Environment); Dr M Bonnett (School Officer responsible for Quality Enhancement); Dr S Campbell Casey (School of Applied Sciences); Professor S Dawkes (Dean, School of Health & Social Care); Dr C Garden (Associate Dean of Learning & Teaching); Dr R Haddrill (School of Health & Social Care); Professor G Hutchison (Dean, School of Applied Sciences); Dr S Logie (Director, Student Services & Academic Registrar); Dr D Maclean (Dean, Schools of Arts and Creative Industries); C Marvis (ENSA Sabbatical); Dr R Osowska (Business School); Professor P Robertson; B Stillie (Associate Dean of Learning & Teaching); Professor K Stutterheim (Associate Dean, Research & Innovation); Dr E Urquhart (Business School).

IN ATTENDANCE:

D Cloy (Head of Governance and Risk); M Greenhalgh (Director of Strategy & Planning and Secretary to Court); A McGoff (Director of Finance & Operations (until item 6)); Professor C Cunningham (Head of DLTE); A McLachlan (Head of International Operations & Admissions) (until item 7); M Wilkinson (Head of Wellbeing & Inclusion) (item 10); C Taylor (Director of Information Services).

APOLOGIES:

Professor P Barron (Dean, Business School); Dr H Earnshaw (School Officer responsible for Quality Enhancement); S Gerrard (SACI); N Graham (Vice-Principal, International); Professor G Jayalakshmi (School of Arts and Creative Industries); Professor N Karodia (Vice Principal Learning & Teaching and Deputy Vice Chancellor); M Leavitt (School of Health & Social Care); Dr K Leitch (School of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment); Dr F McQueen (School of Applied Sciences); Dr N Pitropakis (School of Computing); Dr G Wright (Associate Dean, Research & Innovation).

OBSERVER:

G Gordon (Career Development Consultant).

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 7 JUNE 2024

AB(23/24)060

2.1 The minutes were **approved**.

3. MATTERS ARISING

i) Academic Promotions Framework Review (minute 14)

3.1 Academic Board received an update on the Academic Promotions Framework Review. It was noted that work continued to progress on this matter and that it was expected to conclude towards the end of the academic year.

ii) Academic Calendar for Taught Postgraduates (minute 16)

3.2 Academic Board received an update on the academic calendar for taught postgraduates. It was noted that feedback received to date did not suggest a strong impetus for change from academic staff at this point, however it was noted that universities with later start dates had seen a surge in late applications and deposit payments in September. Further market intelligence and data are being collated by the international recruitment team, and a discussion would be had with Academic Board should a later start date be considered to confer significant advantages for recruiting international students.

4. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

AB(24/25)002

4.1 The Convenor introduced her written report and highlighted the challenging funding landscape and ongoing policy developments concerning the sector. Updates were also received from members on a range of regional development initiatives and consultations that the University was engaged with.

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

5. UPDATE ON ANNUAL PLAN

AB(24/25)003

5.1 Academic Board received the end of year annual plan priorities update for 2023/24 and noted the achievements and progress across a number of areas as detailed in the report.

5.2 In discussion the mechanisms in place to review and evaluate the performance of the Pathway College, and to identify and respond to any challenges it faced were outlined.

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

6. UPDATE ON FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2023/24 AND BUDGET 2024/25*

AB(24/25)004

6.1 Academic Board received a paper which presented the provisional financial outturn for the year ended July 2024 and budget for 2024/25. The impact of the challenging financial environment on the outturn and budget was recognised, however it was noted that there were a range of external factors and mitigating

actions taken by the University which gave confidence in recovery and future income growth in the medium term.

6.2 Thereafter, Academic Board **noted** the financial outturn 2023/24 and Budget for 2024/25.

7. ADMISSIONS CYCLE REPORT AB(24/25)005

7.1 Academic Board received the paper which provided an overview of the 2024 admissions cycle and current student population estimates.

7.2 In discussion, the basis of the calculations for student population forecasts was explained. In response to a question, it was noted that data were available on the number of students who applied to the University after having attended an open day and this would be shared with members. **Action: AMcL**

7.3 Academic Board **noted** the report.

8. QUALITY ENHANCEMENT FRAMEWORK: REVISED ANNUAL MONITORING PROCESS / SELF-EVALUATION ACTION PLAN (SEAP) AB(24/25)006

8.1 Academic Board received the paper which presented information on the main elements of Scotland's new Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF). It was noted that the University's first Self Evaluation Action Plan (SEAP) would be presented for approval to Academic Board in November prior to being submitted to the SFC on 2 December 2024. It was noted that the intention was that there would be a greater level of partnership working between Colleges and Higher Education Institutions as a result of the new framework to ensure coherence across the tertiary sector. It was also noted that the data requirements of the new framework would be incorporated into the University's Data Strategy project work.

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

9. STUDENT SURVEYS: OUTCOMES AND ACTIONS* AB(24/25)007

9.1 Academic Board received the paper which summarised the latest (2024) results of the sector-wide student experience surveys: the National Student Survey (NSS) and the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES). In addition, the paper provided a summary of the results from Module Evaluation surveys undertaken internally at Edinburgh Napier during the academic year 2023/24, and summarised the actions that would be taken, including ongoing work to enhance student belonging and retention. The ENSA Sabbatical member highlighted key points from recent student feedback and members recognised the value of ongoing detailed feedback from students and welcomed the support of ENSA in facilitating this. The role of staff student liaison committees and USAF (the meetings between the VP L&T, SLT members and ENSA sabbaticals) were highlighted as valuable forums for feedback and hearing student voices.

9.2 Academic Board **noted** the report.

10 STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING UPDATE AB(24/25)008

10.1 Academic Board received the paper which provided an update on the work undertaken to support student mental health and wellbeing in 2023/24 and which commented on current issues.

10.2 Members welcomed the comprehensive report provided. The work of the Wellbeing and Inclusion team, facilitated by the new case management system, in reaching out directly to groups of students impacted by external events and circumstances was noted and welcomed. Members welcomed the reassurance of the effective support mechanisms in place, and it was noted that the Head of Wellbeing and Inclusion would seek to attend School leadership team meetings to further raise awareness of the work outlined in the paper. The need to plan for the support needs of international students in advance of their arrival was also recognised. The ambition to build wellbeing into the curriculum was noted and the importance of seeking to identify and address at an early stage the root causes of issues before they escalated was recognised as an area for further work. The improved integration with NHS mental health services and improved data sharing (which had taken time) were noted. The challenge to academic staff of large numbers of students with learning profiles was acknowledged and the importance of advancing Universal Design for Learning, a key area of work across the university, was recognised as key to improving this position.

10.3 Thereafter Academic Board **noted** the report.

PART B RECEIPT OF MINUTES

Academic Board received the minutes of the following meetings if its sub-committees.

11. Minute from the meeting of Research and Innovation Committee held on 4 June 2024. AB(24/25)009

11.1 Academic Board **noted** the minutes.

12. Minute from the meeting of Research and Innovation Committee held on 18 September 2024. AB(24/25)010

12.1 Academic Board **noted** the minutes. The Convenor highlighted the launch of the Doctoral College, a revised approach to forecasting for research/CPD/consultancy, a review of Research Centres which would include consideration of alignment to our Environmental Sustainability Strategy goals and the work with Schools to identify the academic staff population with significant responsibility for research in advance of the REF 28 census date.

13. Minute from the meeting of Education and Student Experience Committee held on 25 September 2024. AB(24/25)011

13.1 Academic Board **noted** the minutes. It was noted that ESEC had approved the establishment of a task and finish group on compassionate communications.

PART C ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

14. EDUCATION & STUDENT EXPERIENCE, COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24 **AB(24/25)12**

14.1 Academic Board **noted** the report.

15. QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24 **AB(24/25)13**

15.1 Academic Board **noted** the report.

16. TERMS OF REFERENCE, CONSTITUTION AND MEMBERSHIP OF ACADEMIC BOARD 2024/25 **AB(24/25)14**

16.1 Academic Board **noted** its Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership for 2024/25. In response to a query about the absence of Associate Dean, International roles within the constitution, the rationale for the Board's decision not to include international senior officer roles when the constitution was last reviewed was noted. It was noted that this matter would be raised and considered again in the context of the ongoing cycle of Academic Board/Academic Governance review activity.

17. FORWARD SCHEDULE OF BUSINESS 2024/25 **AB(24/25)15**

17.1 Academic Board **noted** its forward schedule of business for 2024/25.

18. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2023/24

Noted as:

22 November 2024 (Horizon Suite (LRC5), Sighthill Campus)

07 March 2025 (Rivers Suite, Craiglockhart Campus)

06 June 2025 (Rivers Suite, Craiglockhart Campus)

All Fridays at 9.00am

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