

Edinburgh Napier University
University Court

Academic Board

Minutes of the meeting held Friday 24 November 2023 at 9.00 am at the
Rivers Suite, Craiglockhart Campus

PRESENT:

Professor A Nolan (Principal & Vice Chancellor) (Convenor); Professor N Antonopoulos (Vice Principal Research & Innovation and Deputy Vice Chancellor); O Akindehin (ENSA Sabbatical); Professor P Andras (Dean, School of Computing, Engineering & the Built Environment); Dr S Campbell Casey (School of Applied Sciences); Dr C Garden (School Head of Learning & Teaching); Professor G Hutchison (Dean, School of Applied Sciences); N Graham (Vice-Principal, International); Professor N Karodia (Vice Principal Learning & Teaching and Deputy Vice Chancellor); 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); Professor P Robertson (School of Arts and Creative Industries).

IN ATTENDANCE:

M Greenhalgh (Director of Strategy & Planning and Secretary to Court); M Masson (Clerk).

APOLOGIES:

Professor A Al-Dubai (School of Computing and Engineering and Built Environment); Professor C Cross (Dean, Business School); S Crozier (School Officer responsible for Quality Enhancement); Dr R Haddrill (School of Health & Social Care); J Irving (Student Representative); M Leavitt (School of Health & Social Care); Dr F McQueen (School of Applied Sciences); A Machay (Student Representative); Dr D Maclean (Dean, Schools of Arts and Creative Industries); Dr K Macleod (School of Arts and Creative Industries); Dr F McQueen (School of Applied Sciences); M Noetzel (Student Representative); Professor A Machin (Dean, School of Health & Social Care); Dr X Pierron (Business School); Dr N Pitropakis (School of Computing); Professor K Stutterheim (School Head of Research); B Stillie (School of Arts and Creative Industries); Dr G Wright (School Head of Research).

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 13 OCTOBER 2023

AB(23/24)016

- 2.1 The minutes were **approved**.

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 There were no matters arising.

4. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

AB(23/24)018

4.1 The Convenor introduced the Principal's written report and highlighted the challenges that lay ahead for the Scottish higher education sector particularly in regard to the level of funding available.

4.2 In discussion it was noted that colleagues had seen a rise in the number of approaches students were receiving from academic writers and the Academic Integrity Panel had recently considered the final gradings of two awards. Academic Board noted this concerning development and that it was difficult to monitor approaches via individual student social media accounts. Concern was expressed that some students may not fully understand the consequences and it was agreed that DLTE would send a communication to all students to set out the potential consequences of engaging with academic writers.

4.3. Academic Board noted that the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTC) had signalled its intent to withdraw from the management of the Student Placement System from June 2024 with the University of Strathclyde agreeing to take ownership of the process from the GTC.

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

5. STUDENT ENROLMENTS AND FORECASTS 2023/24*

AB(23/24)019

5.1 Academic Board received a paper which summarised student enrolments against student targets for the academic year 2023/24. Performance on delivery against Scottish Funding Council (SFC) funded activity was provided alongside overseas on-campus student recruitment, compared with internal targets. Data on Research Postgraduate students was also provided.

5.2 Academic Board noted that the forecast for research students may rise above the current level and whilst positive, it would increase the workload of those involved in supporting write up. The processes and support required would be managed through the doctoral college so there would be an opportunity to address the pipeline needed for support.

5.3 Academic Board noted that some FE Colleges were looking at new delivery models with HE partners and that this was an interesting development that would be kept under review.

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

6. STUDENT RETENTION

AB(23/24)020

6.1 Academic Board received the paper and presentation which provided an update on our University approach to enhancing retention and progression to date,

including a summary of the outcomes from a recent internal audit report on retention.

6.2 In discussion Academic Board acknowledged the considerable effort that had been directed to improving retention rates however some challenges remained such as timetabling constraints which may negatively impact the student experience. Concern was expressed about the level of ongoing support available from professional services which complemented the academic aspects of support. This included support for mental health, cost of living and student futures which were important pillars of student support. Academic Board agreed that colleagues should not lose sight of the challenges being faced by second year students which was an area that had been picked up by programme leaders and, beyond that, transition points across all programmes.

6.3 Thereafter, Academic Board **noted** the update.

7. PLANNING & BUDGETING PROCESS

7.1 Academic Board received an update on the planning and budgeting process and noted that work with Schools and Professional Service areas would start in January with a planning summit where the assumptions, priorities and financial parameters would be set.

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

8. STRATEGY DELIVERY UPDATE: LEARNING & TEACHING **AB(23/24)021**

8.1 Academic Board received the paper and presentation which provided an update on progress on the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy.

8.2 In discussion it was agreed that further insight would be helpful to understand the experiences of students starting in September set against those with a January start date, particularly around induction, teaching and learning and timing of compulsory assessments. Student cohorts starting in January tended to have a lower pass rate compared to those starting in September and would probably benefit from a further teaching semester before taking assessments. This would be added as a consideration to an existing project researching early year assessment.

Action: Vice Principal Learning & Teaching and Deputy Vice Chancellor and Dr S Logie (Director, Student Services & Academic Registrar)

8.3 Academic Board noted the numbers of new and changed or updated modules through the curriculum management system as an indicator of dynamic curriculum change.

8.4 Thereafter, Academic Board **noted** the update.

9. LEAGUE TABLE PERFORMANCE

AB(23/24)022

- 9.1 Academic Board received the paper which summarised Edinburgh Napier's current rankings in the four main UK league tables, as well as the Times World University rankings, and the Entrepreneurial Impact Report 2023. The paper also highlighted the changes in our position this year, the reasons behind those changes and considered the likely future position. An overview of the Guardian League Table methodology was also provided.
- 9.2 Academic Board noted that the individual subject level results in the Guardian league table were helpful despite the shortcomings in the wider ranking methodology. Schools may wish to use the data to implement individual target action plans for the longer term.
- 9.3 Academic Board discussed the importance of the THES rankings to international governments and students. Students were becoming more discerning around sustainability measures, and it was important to ensure common understanding and consistent use of language in reporting on ESG measures and policy and procedure development aligned to metrics. A query was raised in relation to the staffing/student metrics and whether data was reported to best effect. It was noted that there may be differences in how institutions classified some roles e.g. technicians who may be reported in one of several categories and that may skew outcomes. It was agreed that a mapping exercise would be undertaken to review reporting of different categories of staff.

Action: Planning and Budgeting Team

- 9.4 Academic Board **noted** the report.

10. PATHWAY COLLEGE UPDATE

- 10.1 Academic Board received an update on progress with the Pathway College and the Director of Strategy & Planning and Secretary to Court thanked everyone who had contributed to establishing the College.
- 10.2 Academic Board noted that Business was currently the strongest area in terms of January recruitment and that there were some students in Computing and Engineering disciplines. Work was ongoing to build pathways in other Schools and events were planned in different countries to widen the reach for the September 2024 intake.
- 10.3 Academic Board **noted** the update.

11. PROJECT VISION

AB(23/24)023

- 11.1 Academic Board received the paper which provided an update on progress of Project VISION. A presentation would be made to Court in December on the outline proposals and ahead of that, a series of campus conversations had been planned for the Principal to discuss the project with colleagues.

11.2 Discussion followed and it was noted that the ENSA had provided feedback on the social space at Sighthill and that this would be considered by the Campus Board.

11.3 It was acknowledged that the current timetable reflected built in compromises in the scheduling of space, particularly specialist space, which did not always provide for the optimal use of space from a School or student perspective. The strategy should address this and the wider challenges around growth in student recruitment.

11.4 Academic Board **noted** the report.

12 HONORARY AWARDS*

AB(23/24)024

12.1 Academic Board **approved** the Honorary Award nominations recommended by the Honorary Awards and Visiting Tiles Committee for onward transmission to Court for approval.

PART B RECEIPT OF MINUTES

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

13. Minute from the meeting of Research & Innovation Committee held on 20 September 2023.

AB(23/24)025

13.1 Academic Board **noted** the minutes.

14. Minute from the meeting of Education and Student Experience Committee held on 9 November 2023.

AB(23/24)026

14.1 Academic Board **noted** the minutes.

PART C ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

15. UNIVERSITY TOP RISKS MONITORING REPORT (1 OF 3)* 2022/23

AB(23/24)27

15.1 Academic Board **noted** the report.

16. RESEARCH & INNOVATION COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

AB(23/24)28

16.1 Academic Board **noted** the report.

17. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2023/24

Noted as:

08 March 2024

07 June 2024

All Fridays at 9.00am, Rivers Suite, Craiglockhart Campus

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