

**EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY**  
**UNIVERSITY COURT**

**Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2013  
at 3.45 pm in the Rivers Suite, Craiglockhart Campus**

**Present:** Dr G. Forbes (Chairman); Professor Dame J.K. Stringer (Principal & Vice-Chancellor); Mr N. Ballantyne; Ms J. Boyle; Lady Clark of Calton (Chancellor's Assessor); Mr M. Connarty; Dr V. Ellis; Mr R. Hare; Mr R. Kemmer; Mr S. Logie; Mr R. Maclennan; Mr B. Rigby; Professor A. Sambell (Vice Principal, Academic); Dr P. Stollard; Mr R. Sweetman.

**Apologies:** Ms M. Ali; Professor J. Duffield (Vice-Principal, Strategy, Resources & External Relations); Mr W. Gallagher; Dr S. Jiwa; Ms L. Sitali; Mrs P. Woodburn; Mr T. Zanelli.

**In attendance:** Mr D Cloy (Clerk to Court); Mrs M Cook (Director of Human Resources); Mr C MacDonald (Acting Director of Finance); Dr G Webber (University Secretary).

**Observer:** Ms D Watt (Governance Officer, University Secretary's Office).

**1. WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS**

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the final meeting of the 2012/13 Academic year and welcomed Diana Watt (Governance Officer, University Secretary's Office) who was observing the Court meeting as part of her induction to her new role.
- 1.2. The apologies were noted.

**Part A For discussion and decision**

**2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 MARCH 2013 UC(12/13)53**

- 2.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2013 were **approved**.

**3. MATTERS ARISING**

- 3.1. No matters arising were identified.

**4. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT UC(12/13)54**

- 4.1. The Principal introduced her written report and highlighted the Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) confirmation of the main grants for Higher Education for 2013/14, which had taken place at the beginning of April. These were broadly in line with the indicative grants announced in December 2012 and the subsequently announced additional taught postgraduate funded places. It was

further noted that the University's 2013/14 Outcome Agreement with the SFC had been finalised, with the 2014/15 Agreement due in December 2013.

- 4.2. Recent international developments were highlighted, and it was reported that the Queen's Hill site in Hong Kong remained challenging given the continuing controversy regarding the use of the land, and that there was no expectation that a Request for Proposals in relation to this site would be issued before the summer. It was reported that a number of potential future opportunities for the University to establish a physical presence in the territory were being explored, and that philanthropic supporters remained keen to assist the University in this initiative. The Principal's recent visits to New York, Singapore and India were also highlighted.
- 4.3. The University's performance in recent league tables, which had showed a relative decline, was highlighted and it was noted that work was continuing to identify and address the underlying issues which were affecting the University's league table rankings. More positively, it was noted that the University had scored well in the "value added" measure of the Guardian league table.
- 4.4. It was reported that the major project to co-locate all of the Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Creative Industries at Merchiston Campus had reached "practical completion" and thanks were extended to all those involved in the successful delivery of this project.
- 4.5. Thereafter, Court **noted** the report.

## **5. REVIEW OF CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION UC(12/13)55\***

- 5.1. The Acting Finance Director introduced the paper which gave Court an update on the University's financial position for the period to 30 April 2013. It was noted that operational forecasts undertaken throughout the year had been robust and had shown steady gains against the budgeted outturn as events and assumptions had crystallised and enabled more accurate predictions and the release of provisions. In view of this, it was reported that the operational surplus for the year would exceed the budgeted surplus of £2.856m with the total surplus for the year now forecast at £3.808m. It was noted that at this stage of the financial year, based on current knowledge of future events and probabilities, it was unlikely that the forecast outturn would not be achieved.
- 5.2. Discussion followed during which it was noted that achievement of budgeted targets in respect of non-exchequer income remained challenging and that efforts continued to address this. It was further recognised that there were tensions surrounding the growth of income from commercial activities and the position of research.
- 5.3. Thereafter, Court **noted** the report.

## 6. THREE YEAR FINANCIAL FORECAST AND BUDGET FOR 2013/14 UC(12/13)56\*

- 6.1. The Acting Finance Director introduced the paper which provided Court with the financial forecast for the period to 2015/16 and the indicative budget for 2013/14. It was noted that the Finance & Commercialisation Committee (F&CC) had, at its meeting on 6 June 2013, considered the financial strategy including the financial plan, budget for 2013/14 and the key risks and sensitivities. Subject to clarification of a number of points which had been sought and provided to the Convenor of F&CC subsequently, the Committee agreed to recommend to Court that the indicative budgets for 2013/14 and the approach taken to the preparation of the financial forecasts for the period to 2015/16, which would form the basis of submissions to the Scottish Funding Council, be approved. A summary of the key elements of the financial strategy and the assumptions used was provided.
- 6.2. Discussion followed during which it was noted in relation to the slight increase in staff costs as a percentage of total operating income that a figure around 60% was in line with the sector in Scotland and considered appropriate, but that this would be kept under review to ensure it did not increase further. It was further noted that, although the University's staff costs percentage figure was consistent with the sector, its student-staff ratio was relatively high.
- 6.3. Thereafter, Court **approved** the three year financial forecasts for the period to 2015/16, which form the basis of the submission to the Scottish Funding Council, and **approved** the indicative budgets for 2013/14.

## 7. CORPORATE PLAN ANNUAL UPDATE UC(12/13)57

- 7.1. The Principal introduced the update of the University's Corporate Plan which provided a summary of progress against the six key strategic objectives and set out at a high level the actions which had been agreed to deliver the 2009-2015 University Strategy. It was noted that, in response to feedback from members at the June 2012 Court meeting, the format of the document had been somewhat simplified and that the identified actions had been consolidated where possible.
- 7.2. Discussion followed surrounding the University's performance in league tables in which the view was expressed that these gave a misleading picture of the quality of institutions such as Edinburgh Napier and did not reflect the excellent work which went on across the University. It was noted that institutions with very different missions were ranked by the same set of measures which were not always appropriate, and that often very small differences in scores in particular areas were amplified in terms of their effect on relative positioning in league tables. It was also recognised that further work was needed to improve the quality of data presentation. However, it was recognised that league tables did consistently reflect a number of areas relating to student satisfaction which required attention and the range of activities underway to address these issues were outlined by the Vice Principal (Academic). It was agreed that a communication to staff on this matter would be helpful to improve their

understanding of the issues, and that a written update on the activities outlined would be provided to Court members.

- 7.3. In response to a member's question regarding the decline in staff satisfaction, it was noted that a great deal of work had taken place in the two years since the last survey to address the issues raised, with action plans having been developed for each area of the University and work continuing to ensure their implementation. In view of this, it was hoped that an improvement in staff satisfaction would be seen when the next survey took place later in the year.
- 7.4. In response to a member's comment regarding support for research activity, the structure of the Research Institutes was recognised as a major factor. It was noted that this was currently subject to review and would come back to Court in due course.
- 7.5. Thereafter Court **noted** the report.

**8. REPORT FROM NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE ON COURT AND COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP UC(12/13)58**

- 8.1. The Chair of Court introduced the paper which provided Court with a report of the recent meeting of the Nominations Committee and highlighted a number of proposals regarding membership of Court, the convenorship and membership of its sub-committees and the Court appointed trustee position on the Edinburgh Napier University Development Trust.
- 8.2. It was noted that Lady Clark would be stepping down as Chancellor's Assessor following the current meeting. It was noted that the matter was being considered by the Chair of Court, Principal and University Secretary who would confer with the Chancellor to facilitate the appointment of a replacement by the Chancellor in due course.
- 8.3. Thereafter Court:
  - a) **Approved** the proposal to invite Roddy MacLennan and Pamela Woodburn to serve second four year terms of office, and Richard Sweetman to serve a final ninth year, upon the expiry of their current terms in 2014.
  - b) **Approved** the proposal to appoint June Boyle as the Court appointed trustee to serve on the Edinburgh Napier University Development Trust for a period of three years.
  - c) **Approved** the proposed membership and convenorship of Court Committees for 2013/14 as contained in **Annex B**.

**9. ANNUAL REPORT TO THE SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL ON INSTITUTION LED REVIEW UC(12/13)59**

- 9.1. The Vice Principal (Academic) introduced the paper which presented the draft annual report on institution led review for the Scottish Funding Council, which Court was invited to approve in principal ahead of its submission. Court was

also asked to authorise the Chair of Court to sign the annual statement of assurance for submission to the Scottish Funding Council. It was noted that the final submitted version of the report would be circulated to Court members for information.

9.2. Thereafter, Court:

a) **Approved** the report in principal ahead of its submission to the Scottish Funding Council.

b) **Authorised** the Vice Principal (Academic) to sign-off the final report to be sent to the Funding Council by 30 September 2013, subject to the Chair of Court being informed of any significant changes.

c) **Authorised** the Chair of Court to sign the governing body statement of assurance contained within the report.

## 10. RISK MANAGEMENT

### 10a) Key Risks Monitoring Schedule

UC(12/13)60\*

10.1. Court received the report which provided the third assessment of confidence in the management of the University's top risks for the academic year 2012/13.

10.2. Further to a query regarding the performance of the pathway college (Edinburgh International College) in the delivery of international student numbers, it was noted that the performance of the college in this regard remained under review. The future development of the partnership would be considered further over the next couple of years. It was agreed that enrolment and progression figures would be circulated in confidence to Court members following the meeting.

10.3. Thereafter, Court **noted** the report.

### 10b) University Top Risks for 2013/14

UC(12/13)61\*

10.4. Court received the draft Top Risks Matrix for academic year 2013/14, which it was invited to approve on recommendation of the Audit Committee.

10.5. Court **approved** the Top Risks Matrix for 2013/14.

## 11. APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITORS

UC(12/13)62

11.1. Court **approved** the appointment of Scott Moncrieff as the Internal Audit Service Provider to Edinburgh Napier University for an initial period from 1 August 2013 to 31 July 2016, as recommended by the Audit Committee.

**12. UNIVERSITY COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCEDURE UC(12/13)63**

12.1. Following discussion in which some of the challenges of implementation were recognised, Court **approved** the University's Complaint Handling Procedure as recommended by Academic Board.

**13. HONORARY AWARDS UC(12/13)64\***

13.1. Court **approved** the proposal for an Honorary Award, as approved and recommended by Academic Board.

**Part B For information**

**14. ACADEMIC BOARD MEETING 31 MAY 2013 UC(12/13)65**

14.1. Court **noted** the minutes of the meeting of Academic Board, held on 31 May 2013.

14.2. The decision taken at this meeting to re-align the undergraduate and postgraduate academic years with an early September start date was highlighted.

**15. ANNUAL REPORT ON EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY UC(12/13)66**

15.1. Court **noted** the annual report on Equality and Diversity.

**16. HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT UC(12/13)67**

16.1. Court **noted** the University's Annual Report of activity in Health & Safety management for the period April 2012 to April 2013.

16.2. In response to feedback from a member it was noted that the format of the report was being reviewed by the Health and Safety Committee and the issues identified would be addressed in future reports.

**17. HIGHER EDUCATION GOVERNANCE UC(12/13)68**

17.1. Court **noted** the paper which provided an update on progress regarding the Scottish Government's Post-16 Education (Scotland) Bill and the publication of the draft Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance. It was noted that the views of members of Court had been sought and on the basis of comments received, the Chair had conveyed Court's broad support for the draft Code. It was agreed that the full text of the response would be circulated to members following the meeting.

## **Part C Not intended for discussion**

### **18. REPORTS FROM COURT COMMITTEES**

18.1. Court received and **noted** reports from the following standing committees:

- |             |  |                    |
|-------------|--|--------------------|
| <b>18.a</b> | <b>Estates Committee meeting held on 16 April 2013</b>                       | <b>UC(12/13)69</b> |
| <b>18.b</b> | <b>Health &amp; Safety Committee meeting held on 8 May 2013</b>              | <b>UC(12/13)70</b> |
| <b>18.c</b> | <b>Audit Committee meeting held on 22 May 2013</b>                           | <b>UC(12/13)71</b> |
| <b>18.d</b> | <b>Human Resources Committee meeting held on 28 May 2013</b>                 | <b>UC(12/13)72</b> |
|             | Not available at meeting. To be circulated to members when available.        |                    |
| <b>18.e</b> | <b>Students' Association Committee meeting held on 4 June 2013</b>           | <b>UC(12/13)73</b> |
| <b>18.f</b> | <b>Finance &amp; Commercialisation Committee meeting held on 6 June 2013</b> | <b>UC(12/13)74</b> |
| <b>18.g</b> | <b>Estates Committee meeting held on 11 June 2013</b>                        | <b>UC(12/13)75</b> |

### **19. MEETING DATES FOR 2013/14** **UC(12/13)76**

19.1. Court **noted** the calendar of meeting dates for the 2013/14 session.

### **20. VALEDICTIONS**

- 20.1. The Chair paid tribute to demitting members of Court; Tom Zanelli (NSA President who had demitted office early); Liseli Sitali who had completed her year as an NSA Sabbatical Officer and Lady Clark who was standing down as the Chancellor's assessor.
- 20.2. Ahead of her retirement at the end of June, Court also recorded its thanks and appreciation to Professor Dame J K Stringer DBE (Principal & Vice-Chancellor) for her leadership of the University and contribution to the work of Court over the past ten and a half years. Best wishes were extended to Professor Stringer for her future endeavours.
- 20.3. The Principal thanked Court for its advice and support throughout her time in office and wished the Court, the incoming Principal and the University well in their future endeavours.

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