

EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY COURT

**Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 2 November 2020
at 3.45 pm by WebEx Videoconference**

Present: J Boyle (Chair); Professor A Nolan (Principal & Vice-Chancellor); R Adams; S Brannan; Lord Brodie (Chancellor's Assessor); J Chittleburgh (until item 11); G Cullen; A Duggal; C Guest; H Fyfe; A Houghton; C Ibanez; Dr S Jiwa; S Nairn; Dr H Patrick; Professor A Scullion; M Thomson; N Woodcock; Professor L Yellowlees.

Apologies: Dr S Moir; G Scholefield.

In attendance: D Cloy (Secretary to Court); Professor N Antonopoulos (Vice Principal, Research & Innovation); K Dewar (Director of People & Services); N Graham (Vice Principal (International)); A McGoff (Director of Finance & Operations); Professor A Tobin (Vice Principal, Learning & Teaching); T Clark, Dr J Rees, Dr D Bird (ENSA) (items 1-4).

1. OPENING REMARKS, APOLOGIES AND CHAIR'S UPDATES

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and welcomed new members Ankit Duggal, Heloisa Fyfe, Sharon Nairn and Mike Thomson. Tom Clark (Interim Chair of ENSA Trustee Board), Dr Jenny Rees (Interim Head, ENSA) and Dr Dee Bird (Chief Executive, ENSA), attending for the ENSA Constitution item, were also welcomed to the meeting.
- 1.2. The apologies were **noted**.
- 1.3. The Chair of the Remuneration Committee provided an update on the approach being taken to the Remuneration Committee's business this year in the context of no pay award. It was noted that in April ULT had all committed to not accepting a pay increase this year. While staff had received a pay spine increase this year, no cost of living award had been awarded. As no pay increase would be awarded, a full Remuneration Committee meeting would not be held this year. It was noted that the Chair of the Remuneration Committee would meet staff, TU and ENSA Court members to gather feedback on ULT performance this year and would share this feedback with the Principal and Chair of Court as part of a discussion around ULT performance. This meeting would take place in November. It was anticipated that the Remuneration Committee would follow a normal meeting cycle going forward and would be convened should there be any matters arising. It was also noted that the Chair of Court had undertaken the Principal's performance review.

Part A For discussion and decision

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 JUNE 2020

(i) Open Minutes **UC(19/20)67**

2.1. The open minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2020 were **approved**.

(ii) Reserved Minutes*

2.2. The reserved minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2019 were **approved**. **UC(19/20)33**

2.3. The reserved minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2020 were **approved**. **UC(19/20)48**

2.4. The reserved minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2020 were **approved**. **UC(19/20)68**

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1. There were no matters arising.

4. EDINBURGH NAPIER STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION (ENSA)

a) Update from the Chair of ENSA Trustee Board **UC(20/21)01**

4.1. The Chair of the ENSA Trustee Board introduced his update to Court on the actions undertaken and underway to improve and strengthen ENSA's governance and management and improve the working relationship with the University in response to Court's previous concerns. Regret was expressed for the problems that had arisen over the past few years. A number of points were highlighted including the audit work that had been commissioned to inform changes, changes in senior management and Trustee Board membership, a Court member attending the Trustee Board, close working and co-operation with the University and the proposed revised ENSA constitution and Financial Memorandum with the University.

4.2. Discussion followed during which members welcomed the position presented in the report and the positive progress being made.

b) Draft Revised ENSA Constitution & 1994 Education Act Code of Practice **UC(20/21)02**

4.3. The Chair of the ENSA Trustee Board introduced the paper presenting the revised ENSA Constitution, which had addressed earlier Court feedback, and the associated 1994 Education Act Code of Practice. The rationale behind seeking to incorporate via the Corporate Trustee model was outlined and Court affirmed its support for this approach. The proposed changes to the democratic structures of the Association and roles of Sabbatical Officers were outlined by

the ENSA President and Vice-President. The accountabilities of Sabbatical Officers under the proposed Constitution were also discussed and clarified.

- 4.4. Discussion followed focussed on the proposal to remove the requirement for a student referendum as part of the process for approving changes to the Constitution. Members considered this was an important democratic provision and that it should remain within the Constitution. It was acknowledged that the currently low levels of student engagement in elections was an issue, but it was considered that further work could be done to improve this situation and improve engagement in the future.
- 4.5. Thereafter Court **a) approved in principle** the draft revised ENSA Constitution subject to re-instatement of the student referendum provision for the approval of Constitution changes and; **b) approved** the 1994 Education Act Code of Practice.
- 4.6. Following the student referendum process it was hoped that the final Constitution would be presented to Court at its strategy day on 22 February 2021 for final approval.

5. COURT AND COURT COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP UC(20/21)03

- 5.1. Court considered the paper and:
 - (i) **noted** its membership for 2020/21 and the outcome of the lay Court member recruitment exercise;
 - (ii) **noted** the previously approved membership of its standing committees for 2020/21 and **approved** the recommendations to fill further vacancies as set out in the paper, and;
 - (iii) **approved** the proposal that Andy Houghton observe, and join in due course, the ENSA Trustee Board as Court member.

6. UNIVERSITY CHANCELLOR APPOINTMENT PROCESS AND CRITERIA UC(20/21)04

- 6.1. Court **noted** that the current Chancellor, Dr David Eustace, would demit office on 31 July 2021 on completion of his 6-year appointment and **approved** the proposed selection criteria and process to manage the appointment of the next University Chancellor.

7. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT UC(20/21)05

- 7.1. The Principal introduced her written report and highlighted the Phase 1 Report of the SFC's review of Coherence and Sustainability in Scotland's Universities and Colleges which had been published on 20th October.
- 7.2. Court **noted** the report.

8. COVID-19 PLANNING AND RESPONSE UPDATE UC(20/21)06

- 8.1. Court received the paper which provided an update on the University's ongoing planning and response activity in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. A further

update was provided on the current situation with the Voluntary Severance Scheme and it was noted that the impact of this, and other cost saving measures that had been implemented, meant that no large scale compulsory redundancies were being sought at the current time.

- 8.2. Discussion followed during which the importance of engaging students to ensure they felt part of the University community given the constraints of the current circumstances was recognised. It was noted that a number of measures intended to engage students and strengthen the sense of community were being developed by the University and ENSA.
- 8.3. Thereafter, Court **noted** the update.

9. FINANCIAL REPORT: PROVISIONAL OUTTURN FOR 2019/20* **UC(20/21)07**

- 9.1. Court received the paper which reported on the provisional financial outturn for the year ended 31 July 2020. With regard to the pension deficit situation, the importance of Court having a full appreciation of the direction of travel and options available was recognised.
- 9.2. Thereafter, Court **noted** the report.

10. REVISED BUDGET FOR 2020/21* **UC(20/21)08**

- 10.1. Court **approved** the updated budget for 2020/21.

11. BREXIT UPDATE **UC(20/21)09**

- 11.1. Court received the paper which provided an update on developments relating to the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union, and the University's response and preparedness.
- 11.2. Discussion followed during which it was noted that there had been no discernible impact on the recruitment and retention of EU staff since 2016. It was further clarified that a decision regarding student study abroad activity in Trimester 2 would be taken shortly.
- 11.3. Thereafter Court **noted** the update.

12. STUDENT RECRUITMENT UPDATE **UC(20/21)10**

- 12.1. Court received the paper which provided an update on student recruitment for the academic year 2020/21.
- 12.2. Court **noted** the update.

13. STUDENT SURVEYS: OUTCOMES AND ACTIONS **UC(20/21)11**

- 13.1. Court received the paper which summarised the 2020 results of the National Student Survey (NSS) along with details of the actions being taken to address the outcomes of that survey.

13.2. Discussion followed during which Court welcomed the improved NSS results. The means by which the results were shared within Schools, and through University communication channels, were noted.

13.3. Thereafter, Court **noted** the update.

14. REPORT ON LEAGUE TABLE PERFORMANCE UC(20/21)12

14.1. Court received the paper which provided a summary of league table rankings for the University across the three main league tables in the UK as well as the Times World University rankings.

14.2. In discussion the importance of publicising these positive results through the University's communication channels was recognised. It was noted that ways in which the staff student ratio could be improved was a continued area of focus.

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

15. RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK 2020/21 UPDATE

15.1. Court received an update on the University's preparations for the REF 2020/21. It was noted that a full paper would be provided to the next Court meeting on 14 December.

15.2. In discussion, the work undertaken to develop and build the University's research culture since 2014 was recognised, and it was confirmed that support would be provided to develop the research profile of staff who were not currently at the stage of being submitted to the REF.

15.3. Thereafter, Court **noted** the update.

16. NOMINATIONS FOR HONORARY AWARDS* UC(20/21)13

16.1. Court **approved** the proposals for Honorary Awards, as recommended by the Honorary Awards Committee and approved by Academic Board. It was noted that the Honorary Awards Committee was now operating with its expanded membership, including a Court member, and that the Committee was working to ensure that nominations brought forward presented a stronger affiliation with the University.

Part B For information

17. ACADEMIC BOARD MEETING 16 OCTOBER 2020 UC(20/21)14

17.1. Court **noted** the minutes from the meeting of the Academic Board of 16 October 2020 and noted the Academic Governance effectiveness review taking place from December.

Part C Not intended for discussion

18. REPORTS FROM COURT COMMITTEES

18.a Nominations Committee meeting on 28 September 2020* UC(20/21)15

18.1. The report was **noted**.

18.b Finance & Property Committee meeting on 15 July 2020* UC(20/21)16

18.2 The report was **noted**. It was noted that, following the additional F&PC meetings which had taken place over the summer to provide additional Court oversight due to the pandemic circumstances, the normal pattern and frequency of meetings would now resume.

18.c Finance & Property Committee meeting on 14 August 2020* UC(20/21)17

18.3 The report was **noted**.

18.d Finance & Property Committee meeting on 15 September 2020* UC(20/21)18

18.4 The report was **noted**.

18.e Finance & Property Committee meeting on 15 October 2020* UC(20/21)19

18.5 The report was **noted**.

18.f Audit & Risk Committee meeting on 15 October 2020* UC(20/21)20

18.6 The report was **noted**.

19. FORWARD SCHEDULE OF COURT BUSINESS 2018/19 UC(20/21)21

19.1. Court **noted** the forward schedule. It was noted that an item on next steps with the new University Strategy would be brought to the next Court meeting on 14th December, and that a pre-Court strategy presentation on the Innovation Hub would also be scheduled ahead of that meeting.

20. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS AND EVENTS

20.1. The dates of future Court meetings were **noted**.

20.2. It was noted that a Court discussion session to review the Phase 1 Report of the SFC's review of Coherence and Sustainability in Scotland's Universities and Colleges would be organised which would feed into the University's response.