

EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY COURT

**Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 22 March 2021
at 3.45 pm by Webex Video Conference**

Present: J Boyle (Chair); Professor A Nolan (Principal & Vice-Chancellor); R Adams; Lord Brodie (Chancellor's Assessor); J Chittleburgh; Professor S Cross; G Cullen; A Duggal; C Guest; A Houghton; C Ibanez; Dr S Jiwa; Dr S Moir; D Mohan; J Morrison-Ross; S Nairn; Dr H Patrick; G Scholefield; Professor A Scullion; N Woodcock; Professor L Yellowlees.

Apologies: Professor N Antonopolous; S Brannan; H Fyfe; M Thomson.

In attendance: D Cloy (Secretary to Court); G Day (Interim Director of People & Services); N Graham (Vice Principal (International)); A McGoff (Director of Finance & Operations); Professor A Tobin (Vice Principal, Learning & Teaching); B Kidd (Head of Development & Alumni Relations (item 4)); C Millar (Head of HR Capability & Engagement) (items 7 & 13).

Observing: L Napier (HR Partner).

1. OPENING REMARKS, WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and welcomed Lucy Napier (HR Partner) who was observing the meeting as part of her induction.
- 1.2. Members noted an update on the recruitment process for the next University Chancellor.
- 1.3. The apologies were **noted**.

Part A For discussion and decision

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

UC(20/21)41

UC(20/21)43

- 2.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2020 were **approved**.
- 2.2. The minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2021 were **approved**.

3. MATTERS ARISING

(i) Meeting of 22 February 2021: ENSA Constitution

- 3.1. It was noted that, following consideration of the ENSA constitution approval item, consultation had taken place with the University's solicitors and an analysis of the legal position had also been undertaken by Lord Brodie. It was concluded that the only way for ENSA's revised constitution to be properly approved, avoiding any possible risk of subsequent challenge, was to ensure the 10% voter turnout threshold required under the current constitution was fully met. ENSA had been advised of this and had re-opened the referendum. The constitution would be brought to Court again in June for approval provided the required 10% threshold had been achieved.
- 3.2. Further to Court's wish to support ENSA to run its sabbatical elections against the new sabbatical roles as set out in the schedule to their proposed revised Constitution, if this was permitted under the terms of the current Constitution, it was established (and confirmed by legal advice) that this could be achieved as an amendment to the existing schedule to the current Constitution through the process set out in the current Constitution for schedule changes. ENSA had duly satisfied the required steps in terms of Trustee Board and Student Council approval and the University Secretary, as permitted, gave final approval to the schedule change on 2 March 2021. The Sabbatical Elections were currently underway using the new roles. The change approved was for Schedule 7, sections 1 to 4 of the current (2012, amended 2015) Constitution to be replaced by Schedule 5 of the proposed new Constitution.

4. DEVELOPMENT TRUST UPDATE

- 4.1. Court received and discussed the presentation from the Head of Development & Alumni Relations on the philanthropic fundraising activity being undertaken by the Development & Alumni Relations team. J Chittleburgh declared his interest in this matter as his employer, Chiene + Tait, were currently the auditors for the Development Trust. Court welcomed the presentation and the work being undertaken, and noted that larger projects against which fundraising would be targeted were currently being scoped. It was noted that the Development Trust was currently seeking to recruit new members, including a treasurer, and Court members were asked to bring these opportunities to the attention of any relevant contacts.
- 4.2. Thereafter, Court **noted** the update.

5. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

UC(20/21)44

- 5.1. The Principal introduced her written report and highlighted the progress being made on appointing key senior roles including the Director of People and Services, Director of Property and Facilities, and Vice-Principal Learning and Teaching.
- 5.2. Thereafter, Court **noted** the Principal's report.

6. COVID-19: PLANNING AND RESPONSE UPDATE

UC(20/21)45

- 6.1. The Principal introduced the paper, which provided an update on the University's ongoing planning and response activity in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic. The results from the Trimester 1 assessments were highlighted, in particular the improved performance of students from the most socioeconomically deprived communities (SIMD20ⁱ) compared with the previous year (90% pass rate in 20/21 compared with 83.4% in 19/20). In addition the pass rate for all students for Trimester 1 was the same as the previous year (91.1%).
- 6.2. Court **noted** the report and complimented the work being undertaken by staff across the university in light of the ongoing pandemic related restrictions.

7. STAFF & STUDENT HEALTH & WELLBEING UPDATE

UC(20/21)46

- 7.1. The Interim Director of People and Services introduced the report, which provided an overview of the Health & Wellbeing support provided to the University's students and staff during the course of the pandemic and how those services had been taken up.
- 7.2. Discussion followed during which it was clarified that future staff surveys would return to a style covering a broad set of employee experience measures to achieve a holistic view. It was noted that the cost/benefit of external mental health and wellbeing support services was subject to ongoing review, and the importance of continuing to promote the Employee Assistance Programme was emphasised. The positive results in student engagement measures resulting from the activities of the Student Engagement Team established within the School of Health & Social Care were recognised and welcomed and the partnership working with ENSA to update and agree a new shared Mental Health Agreement was noted. Work undertaken to mitigate the potential gender impacts of the pandemic including flexible working options and adjustments to the academic promotions process was also highlighted.
- 7.3. Thereafter, Court **noted** the report and agreed that periodic updates on this area would be received at future Court meetings.

8. UNIVERSITY STRATEGY UPDATE AND KPIs

UC(20/21)47

- 8.1. The Principal introduced the report, which provided an update on progress to date against the University Strategy and Annual Plan and the proposed set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that would be used to measure our success. It also outlined progress and planning for stakeholder engagement to support implementation of the Strategy.
- 8.2. Discussion followed during which it was clarified that the international student targets were informed by our current performance and had been agreed with Schools following extensive discussion. These targets were considered to be challenging but achievable. An overview of the mechanism by which the levels in the Gold Curriculum would be assessed was also provided.

8.3. Court **noted** the progress on strategy engagement and the Annual Plan and **endorsed** the strategy level KPIs.

9. REVIEW OF THE CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION* UC(20/21)48

9.1. The Director of Finance and Operations introduced the report which provided the financial position as at the end of January 2021, and highlighted a number of key points. In discussion, with regard to insurance, it was noted that there was appropriate cover in place for cyber risk, and that a claim had been submitted for Covid related business interruption costs.

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

10. BREXIT UPDATE UC(20/21)49

10.1. The Vice-Principal (International) introduced the report on the latest developments relating to the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union (EU) and the implications for the University of the UK-EU trade deal agreed in December 2020, which Court considered and discussed. The importance of encouraging staff to apply for European research funding was emphasised and the activities being undertaken to promote this to staff were highlighted.

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

11. STUDENT RECRUITMENT UPDATE* UC(20/21)50

11.1. The Vice-Principal (International) introduced the update on student enrolments for 2020/21 following the January 2021 intake, across on-campus, global online and TNE programmes, and an update on applications for the September 2021 intake following the UCAS deadline of 29 January 2021.

11.2. Discussion followed during which it was noted that the increase in SIMD 20 applications was encouraging, but that focus was now required on conversion of these applicants to enrolments. An overview of the approach and priorities for conversion activity was provided.

11.3. Thereafter Court **noted** the update.

Part B For information

12. ACADEMIC BOARD MEETING 5 MARCH 2021 UC(20/21)51

12.1. Court **noted** the minutes from the meeting of the Academic Board of 5 March 2021. The ongoing discussions to progress with a structured collaboration

between the School of Engineering & the Built Environment and the School of Computing, led by a single Dean for both Schools, were highlighted.

13. UPDATE REPORT FROM THE BAME INCLUSION SHORT LIFE WORKING GROUP UC(20/21)52

13.1. The Interim Director of People & Services introduced the paper which reported on the work and outcomes of the Short Life Working Group established to look at BAME inclusion and to bring forward recommendations which would form the basis of a racial equality action plan.

13.2. Discussion followed during which it was recommended that the University should sign up to the Advance HE Race Equality Charter now whilst evaluating the approach and timescale to achieving the Charter award in due course.

13.3. Court **noted** the report and recommendations and looked forward to receiving the racial equality action plan once finalised. Thanks were extended to the Group for their work in this area.

14. ENSA ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS UC(20/21)53

14.1. The ENSA President introduced the Trustees' Report and Financial Statements of Edinburgh Napier Students' Association (ENSA) for the year ended 30 June 2020, which Court **noted**.

15. COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT* UC(20/21)54

15.1. The University Secretary introduced the annual report on matters relating to the handling, recording and reporting of complaints received by the University.

15.2. Court **noted** the report and thanks were extended to Richard Bews (Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Manager) for his contribution in managing this area of work for the University.

16. CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCHERS CONCORDAT: ANNUAL REPORT UC(20/21)55

16.1. Court received and **noted** the report which described the plans to implement the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.

17. TOP RISKS MONITORING SCHEDULE (2 of 3)* UC(20/21)56

17.1. Court **noted** the Top Risks monitoring schedule.

Part C Not intended for discussion

18. REPORTS FROM COURT COMMITTEES

18.a Audit & Risk Committee meeting on 3 March 2021* **UC(20/21)57**

18.1. The report was **noted**. Court **approved** the recommendation to extend the Internal Audit Contract with EY for a further year. The Convenor highlighted the delay to the start of the Cyber Maturity audit due to operational pressures within the Information Services team, but noted that this was not of significant concern given the considerable effort being directed to cyber security by Information Services staff currently. Positive feedback received from the Internal and External Auditors in private session with Audit & Risk Committee members regarding the quality of engagement of the executive with audit activity was also highlighted.

18.b Finance & Property Committee 28 January 2021* **UC(20/21)58**

18.2 The report was **noted**. It was noted that the pension review group was scheduled to have its first meeting the following day.

18.c Finance & Property Committee 11 March 2021* **UC(20/21)59**

18.3 The report was **noted**.

19. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS / OTHER UPDATES

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

19.2. The Annual Stakeholder Event and mini Court Strategy Session scheduled for 12 May was **noted**.

19.3. Members were encouraged to complete and return their annual review forms which would be circulated shortly.

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

ⁱ Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation: 20% most deprived (income, resources, opportunities) data zones in Scotland.