

**EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY**  
**UNIVERSITY COURT****Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 13 December 2021  
at 3.45 pm by Teams Video Conference**

**Present:** J Boyle (Chair); Professor A Nolan (Principal & Vice-Chancellor); R Adams; Professor N Antonopoulos; S Brannan; Lord Brodie (Chancellor's Assessor); J Chittleburgh; Professor S Cross; G Cullen; E Divine; H Fyfe; A Houghton; Dr H Patrick; G Scholefield; Professor A Scullion; R Tomlinson; N Woodcock; Professor L Yellowlees.

**Apologies:** C Ibanez; D Mohan; S Nairn.

**In attendance:** M Greenhalgh (Director of Strategy and Planning & Secretary to Court); D Cloy (Head of Governance & Risk); C Begbie (Director of People & Services); Professor N Karodia (Vice Principal, Learning & Teaching); A McGoff (Director of Finance & Operations); M Wilkinson (Head of Student Wellbeing and Inclusion (item 6)).

**Observing:** L Wright (Head of Financial Reporting and Projects).

**1. OPENING REMARKS, APOLOGIES AND CHAIR'S UPDATES**

- 1.1. The meeting was preceded by a Pre-Court Strategy Presentation on Graduate Employability by Adam Watling (Head of Student Futures), which members had welcomed.
- 1.2. The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and welcomed Carolann Begbie (Director of People and Services) to her first meeting. Laura Wright (Head of Financial Reporting and Projects) who was observing the meeting was also welcomed.
- 1.3. It was noted that Mike Thomson had demitted from his role on Academic Board and therefore also his position on Court as member elected from the Board. The process of electing his replacement was underway. It was noted that Stephen Moir, Vice Chair of Court, had demitted from Court due to his appointment as CEO, Cambridge City Council. Thanks were extended to both for their contributions to Court.
- 1.4. The apologies were **noted**.
- 1.5. As a consequence of Stephen Moir's demittal, Court approved the following with regard to the role of Vice-Chair and membership and convenorship of committees:

- Vice Chair Role: Gwyneth Schofield appointed for a two-year term commencing 1 Jan 2022.
  - Convenor Audit & Risk Committee: Jeremy Chittleburgh appointed.
  - Court Member for Finance & Property Committee: Rex Tomlinson appointed.
- 1.6. Members noted an update on the process of recruiting new Court members which would continue in the New Year with the assistance of specialist search consultants NuRole.

## **Part A For discussion and decision**

### **2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 OCTOBER 2021 UC(21/22)18**

- 2.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 2021 were **approved**.

### **3. MATTERS ARISING**

- 3.1. There were no matters arising.

### **4. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT UC(21/22)19**

- 4.1. Court received and **noted** the Principal's written report.

### **5. COVID-19: PLANNING AND RESPONSE UPDATE**

- 5.1. Court received an update on the University's ongoing planning and response activity in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic. It was noted that further changes to guidance and restrictions were anticipated due to the Omicron strain and that planning was underway to adapt to different scenarios in Trimester 2 if necessary. Staff had been advised that working from home had been extended until at least March 2022 ahead of the recent First Minister's announcement, and the hybrid working pilot was not expected to begin until April 2022. The anticipated large January intake of international students of which a significant number were from current 'red list' countries impacted by managed quarantine requirements on arrival was also noted.
- 5.2. Thereafter, Court **noted** the update.

### **6. STUDENT WELLBEING UPDATE UC(21/22)20**

- 6.1. Court received the report which outlined current developments associated with student mental health and covered recent developments in relation to student wellbeing and safeguarding.
- 6.2. Discussion followed during which the supervision and support in place for student mental health and wellbeing staff was outlined. The importance of ensuring a good understanding among broader groups of staff on their responsibilities regarding student wellbeing matters as appropriate to their role was recognised and work underway to provide training and raise awareness in support of this was highlighted. The importance of working in partnership with ENSA in this area was also recognised. The benefits of sharing and drawing upon good practice through professional networks was emphasised and the

desire to build an effective partnership with the NHS with clear roles and responsibilities established was also highlighted. Challenges in recruiting counselling staff in the current high demand environment were also noted. It was recognised that attention should be given to the underlying factors impacting on student mental health such as living costs and employment matters. It was also noted that work was underway to facilitate longer term tracking of outcomes to assess the effectiveness of the services provided.

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

## 7. **AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE**

### (i) **Annual Report 2019/20\***

**UC(21/22)21**

7.1. Court received and **noted** the Audit & Risk Committee's 2019/20 annual report to Court. Thanks were extended to the executive for their positive engagement and prompt actions to respond to matters raised and improve the University's control environment.

### (ii) **Risk Appetite Statement – Annual Review**

**UC(21/22)22**

7.2. Court noted the work that has been undertaken and was ongoing to operationalise and embed the Risk Appetite Statement and Tolerances since it was first approved by Court in October 2019. Court **approved** amendments to the Risk Appetite Statement to change the risk appetite classification and statement for the Learning & Teaching category from 'cautious' to 'open' and to introduce a new category for Information & Cyber Security with an averse risk appetite classification.

7.3. In response to a query, it was noted that existing international partnerships were reviewed on an ongoing basis at executive and School level and that matters arising from such reviews would be escalated to Court where appropriate in terms of the Risk Appetite Statement and Tolerances.

## 8. **APPROVAL OF ANNUAL REPORT AND AUDITED ACCOUNTS 2020/21\***

**UC(21/22)23**

8.1. Court received the paper which was presented to enable Court to discharge its statutory responsibilities in respect of the Financial Statements for 2020/21. It was noted that the statements had previously been considered and recommended for submission to Court by the Finance & Property Committee and the Audit & Risk Committee.

8.2. Thereafter Court **approved** the Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2020/21, **authorised** the Chair of Court and the Principal to sign the Financial Statements on its behalf and **authorised** the Principal and the Finance Director to sign the Management Letter of Representation on its behalf.

## 9. **REVIEW OF THE CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION\***

**UC(21/22)24**

9.1. Court received and **noted** the report which provided the financial position as at the end of September 2021. Court noted an update on the 2022/23 budget allocation for Higher Education which represented a below inflation increase.

## **10. ANNUAL REVIEW OF KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS UC(21/22)25**

- 10.1. Court received the paper and presentation which presented an update against the agreed set of University Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which are used to monitor progress towards the University Strategy, 'Shaping our Future: Driving Distinctiveness'. The report summarised achievements and performance against the 2020/21 Annual Plan and presented the latest figures for the KPIs. Areas of focus for the year ahead were also outlined.
- 10.2. Discussion followed during which members welcomed the report and the good overall progress reflected within it. It was noted that performance measures around widening access and student satisfaction (NSS/PTES) were areas of particular concern and focus.
- 10.3. Thereafter, Court **noted** the report.

## **11. SFC OUTCOME AGREEMENT UC(21/22)26**

- 11.1. Court received the paper which presented the draft of the University's Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council for 2021/22. It was noted that a new performance framework would be developed for colleges and universities for 2022/23 and beyond as an outcome of the SFC Review and that more detail was expected to emerge in the new year. It was noted that the Gender Action Plan referenced in the Agreement would be completed by March 2022.
- 11.2. Court **approved** the draft as the final submission subject to incorporation of further feedback and any necessary updating of data, and **delegated authority** to the Chair of Court to approve the final submission.

## **12. UNIVERSITY RESEARCH INVESTMENT STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION**

- 12.1. Court received a presentation updating on the University's Research Investment Strategy and its implementation. The current position with research, innovation and enterprise activity against a range of performance measures and KPIs was highlighted, the key aims and strategy for research investment were outlined and the key enablers to ensure that the benefits of the investment would be maximised were set out.
- 12.2. In discussion the good progress being made was recognised and Court members were thanked for their engagement and support in this area of activity. It was noted that a paper on the work to integrate the School of Computing and School of Engineering and the Built Environment would be brought to the March Court meeting and that an update on the work of Bright Red Triangle would also be brought to a future meeting.

## Part B For information

### 13. ACADEMIC BOARD MEETING 26 NOVEMBER 2021 UC(21/22)27

13.1. Court **noted** the minutes from the meeting of the Academic Board of 26 November 2021.

### 14. REPORT FROM REMUNERATION COMMITTEE\* UC(21/22) 28

14.1. Court **noted** the report from the Remuneration Committee meeting that took place on 08 November 2021 and accepted the recommendations contained.

### 15. ENSA UPDATE

15.1. Court **noted** an update on current activities and initiatives of the Edinburgh Napier Students' Association (ENSA). Members welcomed the update and the progress demonstrated.

### 16. TOP RISKS MONITORING SCHEDULE (1 of 3)\* UC(21/22)29

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

## Part C Not intended for discussion

### 17. REPORTS FROM COURT COMMITTEES

#### 17a Finance & Property Committee meeting on 17 November 2021\* UC(21/22)30

17.1. The report was **noted**.

#### 17.b Audit & Risk Committee meeting on 17 November 2021\* UC(21/22)31

17.2 The report was **noted**.

### 18. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

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

18.2. It was noted that planning was underway for the Court Strategy Day on 21 February 2022 which would include focus on the Estates Strategy and engagement with Schools.

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