

**EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY COURT**

**Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 27 March 2023
at 3.45 pm in the Rivers Suite, Craiglockhart and by Video Conference**

Present: J Boyle (Chair); P Alonzi; Professor N Antonopoulos; E. Bumra; J Chittleburgh; Professor S Cross; Dr K Hewitson (online); A Houghton (online – until item 7); Professor A Machin; S Nairn; O Opaleye; T Oyinlola (online); Professor A Scullion; G Scholefield; P Sim; R Tomlinson (online); P Upton; N Woodcock (online – from item 4); Professor L Yellowlees (online).

Apologies: R Adams; S Brannan; Dr G MacLean; Professor A Nolan (Principal & Vice-Chancellor); Dr H Patrick; Lady Paton (Chancellor’s Assessor).

In attendance: M Greenhalgh (Director of Strategy and Planning & Secretary to Court); C Begbie (Director of People & Services); D Cloy (Head of Governance & Risk); N Graham (Vice Principal, International); Professor N Karodia (DVC & Vice Principal, Learning & Teaching); A McGoff (Director of Finance & Operations); G Hutchison (Dean, School of Applied Sciences) & J Pearson (Environmental Sustainability Manager) (until item 4); Mark Wilkinson (Head of Student Wellbeing and Inclusion) (item 5).

Observing: L Duncan (online).

1. OPENING REMARKS, APOLOGIES, DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND CHAIR’S UPDATES

- 1.1. The meeting was preceded by a presentation by Professor Lis Neubeck on the work of The Centre for Cardiovascular Health, which members had welcomed.
- 1.2. It was noted that Dr Carles Ibanez had stepped down from Court since the last meeting and Dr Gavin MacLean had joined Court as the new EIS nominated member.
- 1.3. Linda Duncan (Co-Opted F&PC member and future Court member) was welcomed to the meeting as an observer. Jamie Pearson (Environmental Sustainability Manager) and Mark Wilkinson (Head of Student Wellbeing and Inclusion), who were attending to support agenda items, were also welcomed to the meeting.
- 1.4. Members noted with sadness the passing of former Court member Professor Alison McCleery on 19 February. Condolences were extended to her family.

- 1.5. The apologies were **noted**.
- 1.6. Members were invited to declare any interest in the matters under consideration on the agenda. No declarations were made.

Part A For discussion and decision

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 DECEMBER 2022 UC(22/23)27

- 2.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 19 December 2022 were **approved**.

3. MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1. There were no matters arising.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY UPDATE UC(22/23)28

- 4.1. The Dean of the School of Applied Sciences and the Environmental Sustainability Manager introduced the paper which provided an overview of progress in the delivery of the University's Environmental Sustainability Strategy including a high-level overview of measures developed to mitigate impact. Reference was made to objectives embedded within the University Strategy, commitments detailed within the Environmental Sustainability Strategy and the impact of Covid-19 on utility consumption, business travel and waste.
- 4.2. Discussion followed during which the need to consider the impact of student travel alongside staff travel and the importance of considering solutions beyond offset were recognised. It was noted that the Travel Policy was being reviewed with this in mind. Regarding the funding required to deliver on heating improvement projects it was noted that some of this would be achieved through business-as-usual building maintenance projects and that further specific investment projects would potentially be identified through Project VISION. The importance of consistently leveraging procurement criteria to contribute to sustainability goals was also recognised. The reporting and communication mechanisms in place through Project VISION were also highlighted. It was agreed that it would be helpful to provide information to staff on the proportion of office furniture being repurposed and it was noted that discussions were taking place regarding the use of alternative energy sources.
- 4.3. Court welcomed and **noted** the report and the progress outlined.

5. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION MAINSTREAMING REPORT UC(22/23)29

- 5.1. The Director of People and Services and the Head of Student Wellbeing and Inclusion introduced the paper which provided an update on the progress made over the last two years (2021 and 2022) to deliver the University's Equality

Outcomes and to note more generally how the University was working to mainstream equality, diversity and inclusion. Insight was provided into how we are tackling some of our known challenges as we better understand the lived experience of our student population and our workforce, particularly those from underrepresented and marginalised groups.

- 5.2. Discussion followed during which the need to consider how best to present the report to stakeholders in a concise manner, highlighting key points with supporting visual presentation, was recognised. It was noted that this would be important to provide assurance on the University's commitment to inclusion to students beyond those with protected characteristics who would already recognise this through their engagement with support services. It was noted that the Inclusion Committee meets 5 times per year to review progress towards achieving targets and the cross-University mechanisms in place to ensure consistency of action were outlined. It was also noted that the Chair of Court and the Head of Student Wellbeing and Inclusion would prepare an appropriate introductory message to incorporate into the final report.
- 5.3. Court welcomed and **noted** the report and the progress outlined.

6. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT UC(22/23)30

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

7. COURT EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS UC(22/23)31

- 7.1. Court received and considered the report which presented the findings and recommendations of the external review of Governance Effectiveness at Edinburgh Napier University undertaken by Advance HE between September and December 2022. The overall finding of good and effective governance with some significant strengths was welcomed, and the initial responses to the report's improvement recommendations by the Effectiveness Review Oversight Group were considered. It was also noted that minor amendments to the University's governance framework documentation would be required to align with the revised version of the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance. These would be considered and brought forward to Court for approval in June by the Oversight Group. It was proposed that Nominations Committee would oversee progress against the recommendations on an ongoing basis.
- 7.2. Members considered the specific discussion areas highlighted in the report and provided feedback. A number of points were noted including:
 - Consideration of Strategic People Issues: The external review asked Court to consider how best to use the expertise of its members with HR experience suggesting whether: (i) a group – to be established on a trial basis or as a time-limited working group – would help provide focus; (ii) framing a consistent space across the programme of Court, pre-Court and Strategy Day sessions would ensure sufficient focus and discussion on people issues; and/or, whether better use of the committees already in place – including consideration of their remits – would be helpful.

- Creation of Meaningful Space for Discussion: the review asked Court to consider varying length/format of meetings based on the cycle of business and to focus agendas around a smaller number of key areas for in depth consideration and discussion.
- 7.3. Members were invited to provide any further feedback to the Vice-Chair including any feedback on the discussion point around enhancing Court's understanding of the University's academic activities.
- 7.4. It was noted that the Oversight Group would meet in May to reflect on Court's feedback on the recommendations and consider any amendments required to the governance framework and associated documentation arising from that feedback and from the revised Code. Recommendations and action plan would be brought to Court in June for final approval.

8. COLLEAGUE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY RESULTS UC(22/23)32

- 8.1. Court considered the report on the results of Your Voice, the University's colleague engagement survey, which provided an update on the themes that had emerged from the survey as well as an overview of the actions being taken by the University to respond to colleague feedback.
- 8.2. Discussion followed during which it was confirmed that the executive was committed to the 75% engagement target for the next survey which was considered achievable. It was suggested that further consideration should be given to the best time of year to maximise engagement with the next survey.
- 8.3. Court **noted** the results and early-stage action planning. It was noted that a further update on progress would be presented at the end of 2023.

9. PROJECT VISION PROGRESS REPORT UC(22/23)33

- 9.1. Court considered the paper which provided an update on progress with delivering Project VISION; Shaping our Future Infrastructure and Estates which would define the investment in Infrastructure and Estates required to support delivery of the University strategy and core strategies and included the digital strategy. It was noted that Project VISION was working towards two key milestones in May and June 2023: to present to Court at the Strategy Day on 19 May 2023 the future size and shape ambitions for the University which would go on to inform the high-level Estate Strategy options. The Estate Strategy options would be presented to Court on 26 June 2023. From this point Project VISION would develop detailed plans on digital and estates which would be brought to Court in October 2023. It was further proposed that an additional online session would be run with Court in May ahead of the Strategy Day to seek initial questions and feedback on the size and shape paper and draft digital strategy which would be circulated in advance. The agenda for the Strategy Day was outlined which would include sessions on size and shape, Business School deep dive and the Pathway College.
- 9.2. Discussion followed during which suggestions were made as to the design of the Strategy Day sessions to ensure sufficient coverage of key areas and

optimise the use of the time available. Concerns were expressed about Court's current preparedness for the decisions being sought and the appropriateness and achievability of the timescales outlined. The Chair undertook to consult with members and the Director of Strategy and Planning & Secretary to Court to ensure that the next steps were shaped appropriately.

9.3. Thereafter Court **noted** the update.

10. REVIEW OF THE CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION* UC(22/23)34

10.1. Court received and **noted** the report which provided the University's financial position as at the end of January 2023.

11. PATHWAY COLLEGE PROPOSAL

11.1. Court noted that the presentation on this item would be provided at the Strategy Day on 19th May.

12. HONORARY AWARDS* UC(22/23)35

12.1. Court **approved** the Honorary Award nominations recommended by the Honorary Awards and Visiting Titles Committee and Academic Board.

12.2. It was noted that consideration was being given to guidance and policy on ethical issues which might have a bearing on the consideration of Honorary Award nominations. Members were also encouraged to make suggestions for nominations.

Part B For information

13. ACADEMIC BOARD MEETING 10 MARCH 2023 UC(22/23)36

13.1. Court **noted** the minutes from the meeting of the Academic Board of 10 March 2023.

14. SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES FOR POST-SCHOOL EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT UC(22/23)37

14.1. Court **noted** the final University response to the questions posed by the consultation.

15. ENSA ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS UC(22/23)38

15.1. Court received and **noted** the Trustees' Report and Financial Statements of Edinburgh Napier Students' Association (ENSA) for the year ended 30 June 2022 and noted an update on current activities and initiatives. Members welcomed the update and the progress demonstrated.

15.2. In response to a query, the planning and budget setting process in place between the University and ENSA was clarified.

16. COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT UC(22/23)39

16.1. Court received and **noted** the paper which provided the annual report on matters relating to the handling, recording, and reporting of complaints received by the University.

17. TOP RISKS MONITORING REPORT (2 of 3)* UC(22/23)40

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

Part C Not intended for discussion

18. REPORTS FROM COURT COMMITTEES

18a Finance & Property Committee meeting on 26 January 2023* UC(22/23)41

18.1. The report was **noted**.

18b Finance & Property Committee meeting on 9 March 2023* UC(22/23)42

18.2 The report was **noted**.

18.c Audit & Risk Committee meeting on 1 March 2023* UC(22/23)43

18.3 The report was **noted** and Court **approved** the recommendation to extend the External Audit Contract with KPMG for one further year to 31 March 2024. Court also formally **approved** the appointment of PWC as the University's internal audit provider from 1 August 2023 for an initial period of 3 years, following the recent tender exercise conducted through Audit & Risk Committee.

18.4 The Convenor of Audit & Risk Committee had recently attended a meeting of the chairs of Scottish university audit committees which had provided re-assurance that the University was effectively managing the key risk areas being experienced by the sector.

19. ANNUAL PLAN MID-YEAR REVIEW UC(22/23)44

19.1. Court **noted** the annual plan mid-year review which presented a mid-year update on progress against the University's Annual Plan for 2022/23.

20. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

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

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