Edinburgh Napier
UNIVERSITY

AB (19/20) 042

EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY COURT

ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held on **6 March 2020** at **0900**
in the Rivers Suite, Craiglockhart Campus

PRESENT:	Professor A Nolan (Principal & Vice Chancellor) (Convenor); Professor A Sambell (Senior Vice Principal & Deputy Vice Chancellor); Professor A Tobin (Vice Principal of Learning & Teaching); Professor N Antonopoulos (Vice Principal of Research and Innovation); Mrs G Boag (Dean, Business School); Professor S Dawkes (School Head of Learning & Teaching); Dr A Fonzone (School of Engineering & the Built Environment); Mr J Fraser (ENSA President); Dr G Hutchison (Dean, School of Applied Sciences); Dr M Leggate (School Officer responsible for Quality Enhancement); Dr D Maclean (Interim Dean, School of Arts & Creative Industries); Dr K Macleod (School of Arts and Creative Industries); Professor Alison McCleery (Professoriate); Dr L Mora (Business School); Professor A Snowden (Professoriate); Dr N Urquhart (School of Computing); Dr H Willis (Interim Dean, School of Health & Social Care); Dr G Wright (School of Applied Sciences).
IN ATTENDANCE:	Mr A McLachlan (Head of International Operations and Admissions); Mr M Greenhalgh (Vie Principal for International (interim)) *(to item 6)* ; Mr D Cloy (University Secretary); Dr C Steen (Clerk).
APOLOGIES:	Ms N Graham (Vice Principal for International); Professor P Barlow (School Head of Research); Dr J Brodie (School Head of Learning & Teaching); Dr P Chapman (School Officer responsible for Quality Enhancement); Dr J Hails (School of Arts & Creative Industries); Professor S Keates (Dean, School of Engineering & the Built Environment); Dr S Logie (Director, School Support Service & Academic Registrar); Dr X Pierron (Business School); Professor S Smith (Dean, School of Computing); Dr S Wells (School of Computing).

1. **WELCOME & APOLOGIES**

   1.1. The Convenor welcomed members who had joined Academic Board since the November 2019 meeting.

   1.2. The apologies were noted.

2. **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 29 NOVEMBER 2019**   AB(19/20)026

   2.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2019 were approved as an accurate record.

3. **MATTERS ARISING**

   a) **Recruitment of Pupils to STEM subjects (item 6.4):** Members were advised that recruitment to STEM subjects continued to be prioritised. Attendance at recent 'offer holder' events had increased.

   Members were encouraged to suggest improvements to 'offer holder' and other such events (e.g. Open Days). There was evidence that applicants attending these events were more likely to choose Edinburgh Napier.

4. **PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**   AB(19/20)027

   4.1. Members were advised that the Scottish Government budget had received parliamentary approval on 5 March 2020. The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) would now be working on funding distribution for 2020/21.

   4.2. The Principal's Report was noted.

5. **2020 ADMISSION CYCLE BRIEFING**   AB(19/20)028

   5.1. It was noted that Scottish domiciled admissions had reduced by 1.62% (against a 4.09% drop experienced by the University's competitor group). The overall reduction was in line with expected demographic changes.

   5.2. Members were advised that UCAS undergraduate applicants would have until 5 May 2020 to respond to offers. The 2020/21 intake would be known shortly after this date.

   5.3. Members were assured that Admissions were monitoring the coronavirus situation closely and contingency plans were being developed.

   5.4. The 2020 Admission Cycle briefing was noted.

6. JANUARY 2020 INTAKE   AB(19/20)029

6.1. The challenges faced by the University, following the larger than expected international student intake in January 2020, were outlined. The concentration of arriving students into a few programmes, primarily in the Business School and School of Computing, had exacerbated pressure on resources (e.g. availability of rooms, catering, and English language provision) in some areas.

6.2. Staff had, in general, reacted positively to the required changes. It was noted that the late arrival of some students and timetabling changes had increased pressure on affected staff. It was highlighted that Deans had been offered additional resources as soon as the scale of the intake had been ascertained.

6.3. It was stressed that the intake levels seen in January 2020 were unlikely to be repeated. Actions put in place since January would improve the University response, e.g. English language provision would become a timetabled module for students rather than a voluntary activity. There was anecdotal evidence that other Universities were considering introducing January intakes and/or offering multiple timetabled cohorts for popular programmes, which would increase supply, and therefore competition, in future.

6.4. The January 2020 intake report was noted.

7. STUDENT ENROLMENTS AND FORECASTS FOR   AB(19/20)030
2019/20

7.1. It was noted that SFC-funded undergraduate numbers were slightly in excess of target but were within the tolerance allowed by SFC. Rest of UK recruitment continued to be a challenge: additional targeted marketing and travel bursaries were being trialled to improve recruitment from this market.

7.2. The student enrolments and forecasts report was noted.

8. STRATEGY 2020 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS: AB(19/20)031
ANNUAL UPDATE OF 2018/19 PERFORMANCE

8.1. The Planning & Business Intelligence team were thanked for the comprehensive report. It was noted that, while many of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were improving/meeting targets, concern remained in two areas: overall satisfaction in the National Student Survey and levels of research income.

8.2. It was noted that, because of the nature of the research grant application/delivery cycle, income tended to be intermittent. It

was suggested that reporting of research income should also include a three-year rolling average to smooth this out. This was agreed.

8.3. It was further suggested that performance against KPIs from 2014 be added to the report to show how far the University had progressed since the introduction of Strategy 2020.

8.4. The annual update on performance against Strategy 2020 was noted.

9.   SHAPING OUR FUTURE   AB(19/20)032

9.1. Members were reminded that work on the new University strategy had commenced in the first half of 2019. Wide-ranging consultation had taken place with students, staff and external stakeholders. It was estimated that approximately 2,000 responses had been received and a third of all staff had contributed in consultation events.

9.2. The three strategic objectives of:

- Build Careers – Create Opportunities;
- Grow Networks – Connect Communities, and
- Advance Knowledge – Deliver Impact.

were outlined and discussed.

9.3. Members were advised that the draft strategy (incorporating Academic Board feedback) would be submitted to Court for approval at its meeting on 23 March 2020.

9.4. Members responded positively to the new strategy. The simplicity and brevity of the three strategic objectives were welcomed. The 'people focus' of the new strategy was strong compared with the 'University focus' of Strategy 2020.

9.5. Attention was drawn to the Learning & Teaching, Research & Innovation and International strategies included in the paper, together with the 'enabling' strategies for People & Services and Finance & Operations. These strategies, together with the eight transformative actions detailed in the paper, would support delivery of the overall strategy.

9.6. It was noted that investment would be targeted at areas of growth in order to improve reputation, impact and income.

9.7. Members were advised that a communications plan was being developed which would be implemented once Court approved the University strategy.

9.8.   Academic Board approved the draft strategy.

10.   LEARNING TEACHING & ASSESSMENT STRATEGY   Verbal Report

10.1.   Members were advised of the move to a 'gold standard' for programme development. It was intended that existing pockets of programme development excellence in Edinburgh Napier would be more widely shared across the University. Students and external stakeholders would be invited to become co-creators of programmes. It was anticipated that all programmes would be validated to the gold standard by 2025.

10.2.   It was suggested that the Learning, Teaching & Assessment (LTA) Strategy should more directly reference the three strategic objectives described in the new strategy. This was agreed.

10.3.   The update on development of the Learning, Teaching & Assessment strategy was noted.

11.   DRAFT RESEARCH & INNOVATION STRATEGY   AB(19/20)033

11.1.   The objective of the Research & Innovation Strategy, to build the reputation of Edinburgh Napier through the delivery of high quality impactful research, was highlighted. Further aims included increasing research income from the current level of c£4m to c£14m over five years and to be included in the top 500 institutions in the Times Higher Education league table for research.

11.2.   In answer to a question, it was confirmed that the University did not plan to run a sabbatical scheme from the centre. It was noted that Schools/subject areas could look to these locally. Shorter term Innovation Fellowships were being considered, some of which might involve academic staff working with industry/ business partners on research-related activities.

11.3.   It was noted that a refined draft of the strategy would be submitted to the 5 June 2020 meeting of Academic Board.

11.4.   The draft Research & Innovation strategy was noted.

12.   2018/19 ANNUAL REPORT: ACADEMIC APPEALS,   AB(19/20)034
COMPLAINTS AND STUDENT CONDUCT

12.1.   Members were asked to pay particular attention to the parts of the report which affected their area and asked that action was undertaken to ensure complaints were not repeated. The growing level of complaints from outwith the University was noted.

12.2. The growth in student appeals based on mental health issues was noted.

12.3. Mr Bews was thanked for his work over the year in handling appeals, complaints and conduct issues and for compiling the annual report.

12.4. The 2018/19 annual report on academic appeals, complaints and student conduct was noted.

13. OUTCOME AGREEMENT WITH SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL 2020/21 TO 2022/23   AB(19/20)035

13.1. Members were reminded that the Outcome Agreement (OA) represented a public, formal agreement with SFC which set out the University's ambitions and targets.

13.2. It was noted that the Senior Vice Principal met with SFC regularly and feedback was that the SFC was happy with the University's OA and overall alignment with Scottish Government priorities.

13.3. It was confirmed that the OA would be formally signed off in April 2020.

13.4. The draft Outcome Agreement 2020/21 to 2022/23 was endorsed.

14. PLANNING PROCESS UPDATE   Verbal Report

14.1. Progress with the planning process was mid-way. All Schools and Professional Services (PS) had submitted plans. The University Leadership Team had held meetings with all School leadership teams: a particular focus of these meetings had been the shape of the medium- to long-term academic portfolio, particularly with regard to taught postgraduate programmes.

14.2. Meetings with the PS had also taken place to understand their priorities and their role in support the Schools.

14.3. The planning process update was noted.

15. ELIR 2019 OUTCOME   AB(19/20)036

15.1. The draft report from QAA was received on 14 February 2020. This was reviewed for factual errors and the report was returned to QAA on 5 March 2020. The final report would be published to the QAA website and shared across the University once available.

15.2. The commendations and recommendations detailed in the paper were welcomed, particularly with regard to recognition for student-led activities.

15.3. The recommendation regarding review of Professional Services relating to student support was noted. It was confirmed that this took place elsewhere in the sector, usually on a five-year cycle.

15.4. The recommendations to publish external examiner's reports and to review English language proficiency and support for students were highlighted.

15.5. Members were asked not to take local action regarding the recommendations contained in the ELIR report: these would be coordinated centrally once the report was publicly available.

15.6. The outcome of the 2019 ELIR review was noted.

16. RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (REF2021) AB(19/20)037 PREPARATIONS

16.1. Members were advised that the current primary focus was on completing impact case studies. The target was to have a full draft of the REF submission available by the end of May 2020.

16.2. Members were asked to ensure that all staff identified as having significant responsibility for research could evidence their 20% research workload (in WAM). The University did not wish to be subjected to unspecified 'punitive measures' for transgressing this metric.

16.3. The update on Research Excellence Framework (REF2021) preparations was noted.

17. CONTINGENCY ARRANGEMENTS – CORONAVIRUS: AB(19/20)038 LEARNING AND TEACHING

17.1. It was noted that the University was maintaining consistency with Scottish Government advice on the coronavirus outbreak. The University Secretary was leading a contingency planning group and a number of preparatory activities were underway.

17.2. It was noted that a short life working group had been established to prepare more detailed contingency arrangements for LTA delivery and associated support. It was proposed to establish a University LTA and Quality Emergency Approvals Group that would operate to take decisions when LTA emergency contingency arrangements were invoked.

17.3. It was suggested that external 'friends' should be consulted when making programme changes. This was agreed.

17.4. Deans had been asked to identify modules which were now complete to help ascertain the number of modules for which alternative methods of assessment might be required. It was recognised that contact with professional bodies would be necessary and would take place as the situation required.

17.5. The main priority was to ensure that students completed their studies and were able to graduate (possibly virtually, if not physically). A secondary priority was to ensure students were able to carry additional credits if required. The third priority was to protect the student experience as far as practical in the circumstances.

17.6. The proposed University LTA and Quality Emergency Approvals Group was approved and the work underway to put in place learning and teaching contingency arrangements for coronavirus was noted.

PART B RECEIPT OF MINUTES

**18.   MINUTE FROM THE LEARNING, TEACHING,   AB(19/20)039
         ASSESSMENT & STUDENT EXPERIENCE
         COMMITTEE HELD ON 19 FEBRUARY 2020**

18.1. The minute from the Learning, Teaching, Assessment & Student Experience Committee held on 19 February 2020 was noted.

**19.   MINUTE FROM THE RESEARCH & INNOVATION   AB(19/20)040
         COMMITTEE HELD ON 19 FEBRUARY 2020**

19.1. Members were advised that the Vice Principal for Research & Innovation would be conducting a review of the research degrees committees (i.e. University and Schools' committees). The recommendations from the recent ELIR review would inform this process.

19.2. The minute from the Research & Innovation Committee held on 19 February 2020 was noted.

PART C ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

**20.   UNIVERSITY TOP RISKS FOR ACADEMIC YEAR   AB(19/20)041
         2019/20**

20.1. The University Top Risks for 2019/20 were noted.

21.   DATE OF NEXT MEETING

At 0900 in the Rivers Suite, Craiglockhart Campus:

05 June 2020