



**EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY COURT**

ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held on **16 October 2020**
at **0900** by Webex videoconference

PRESENT:

Professor A Nolan (Principal & Vice Chancellor) (Convenor *items 1-10*); Professor A Tobin (Vice Principal of Learning & Teaching) (Convenor *items 11-23*); Ms N Graham (Vice Principal for International); Professor N Antonopoulos (Vice Principal of Research and Innovation); Dr C Backhaus (School Head of Research); Professor P Barlow (School Head of Research); Mrs G Boag (Dean, Business School); Dr J Brodie (School Head of Learning & Teaching); Dr S Campbell Casey (School of Applied Sciences); Dr P Chapman (School Officer responsible for Quality Enhancement); Professor S Dawkes (School Head of Learning & Teaching); Mr A Duggal (ENSA President); Dr A Fonzone (School of Engineering & the Built Environment); Mr M Greenhalgh (Interim Dean, School of Engineering & the Built Environment & School of Computing); Dr J Hails (School of Arts & Creative Industries); Professor G Hutchison (Dean, School of Applied Sciences); Dr K James (School of Health & Social Care); Professor A Machin (Dean, School of Health & Social Care); Dr K Macleod (School of Arts and Creative Industries); Dr C Mahoney (School of Health & Social Care); Professor A McCleery (Professoriate); Dr X Pierron (Business School); Professor A Snowden (Professoriate); Mr S Kowshik Uppalapati (Student Campus Representative, Merchiston); Dr N Urquhart (School of Computing); Dr S Wells (School of Computing).

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr A McGoff (Director of Finance & Operations); Ms C Taylor (Director, Information Services); Mr D Cloy (University Secretary); Dr C Steen (Clerk)

APOLOGIES:

Mr P Goyal (Student Campus Representative, Sighthill); Dr M Leggate (School Officer responsible for Quality Enhancement); Dr S Logie (Director, School Support Service & Academic Registrar); Dr D Maclean (Dean, School of Arts & Creative Industries); Dr L Mora (Business School); Mr M Fahad Siddiqui (Student Campus Representative, Craiglockhart); Mr M Thomson (School of Engineering & the

Built Environment); Dr G Wright (School of Applied Sciences).

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

- 1.1. The new members of Academic Board were welcomed to the meeting and the apologies were noted.

2. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 5 JUNE 2020 AB(20/21)002

- 2.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2020 were approved as an accurate record.

3. MATTERS ARISING

- a) There were no Matters Arising.

4. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT AB(20/21)003

- 4.1. It was noted that, due to the rapidly evolving environment, several of the items in the report were out of date.

- 4.2. The Principal's Report was noted.

5. COVID-19: PLANNING AND RESPONSE

(i) Returning To Campus Life AB(20/21)004

- 5.1. The Returning To Campus Life update was noted.

(ii) Learning & Teaching AB(20/21)005

- 5.2. Members' attention was drawn to the section on assessments and degree outcomes, noting that a variety of measures were in place to maintain academic standards during the pandemic. It was noted that there had been an increase in first class degrees and a decrease in lower 2nd class this year compared to previous years. As is previous years, all outcomes had been approved by external examiners.

- 5.3. The Learning & Teaching update was noted.

(iii) Research & Innovation Verbal Report

- 5.4. Members were advised that additional funding received from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) had been used to support research students and 'research only' staff. A number of projects which had not been supported from within this additional funding were now the subject of external funding applications.

5.5. The Research & Innovation update was noted.

(iv) Professional Services Update

Verbal Report

5.6. This agenda item was passed over.

6. UPDATE ON FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2019/20 AND BUDGET 2020/21

AB(20/21)006

6.1. Members were advised that the interim financial position (subject to audit) for 2019/20 was income of c£128m and a loss of c£0.9m. This position had improved from an earlier forecast loss of c£5m and took into account the significant sums expended in supporting staff and students working/studying remotely.

6.2. The LGPS pensions liability increase of c£74m was discussed and it was noted that the University was working with the actuaries to verify this figure. The deficit was caused in part by the underperformance of financial markets due to the effects of the pandemic on the economy.

6.3. The forecast income for 2020/21 was estimated at c£125m. All SFC-funded places had been filled and transnational/global online recruitment was progressing well. CPD and consultancy, student accommodation and catering income were all suffering as a result of the pandemic. The loss in-year was forecast at £2.1m. The University's cash reserves continued to be strong (currently c£37m) and borrowings were low.

6.4. Members were advised that a two-year financial model had been developed, based on constant annual income and projected cost inflation. The model confirmed that the University was in a relatively resilient position over the period.

6.5. The update on the Financial Outturn for 2019/20 and Budget for 2020/21 was noted.

7. STUDENT ENROLMENTS FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2020/21

AB(20/21)007

7.1. Members were advised there were still many uncertainties regarding enrolment and, in particular, student retention rates. SFC-funded places were over-subscribed (due in part to the higher than normal continuation caused by the blanket pass given to Years 1 & 2 for AY2019/20). It was highly unlikely that SFC would seek to clawback funding due to the current circumstances.

7.2. Widening Participation targets had not been achieved, while articulation targets had. The intake of international students in January 2021 was anticipated to be larger than normal.

7.3. The student enrolment report was noted.

**8. ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW AB(20/21)008
2020/21: REVIEW SCOPE AND TIMELINE**

8.1. Members were advised that the review would be undertaken by the University's internal auditors, EY. Work would commence in December 2020 and a draft report would be available in March 2021. It was expected that final recommendations from the review would be considered at the June 2021 meeting of Academic Board.

8.2. The update on the academic governance effectiveness review was noted.

9. ACTION FOLLOWING INVOCATION OF THE EMERGENCY REGULATIONS AB(20/21)009

9.1. Members were reminded of the extensive work which had been undertaken to manage the changes required to programmes as a result of the pandemic and lockdown. The report formally recorded these changes and was intended to reassure Academic Board that quality standards had been maintained.

9.2. The update on actions taken following invocation of the emergency regulations was noted.

10. SCHOOL OF COMPUTING AND SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT: RECONFIGURATION CONSULTATION UPDATE Verbal Report

10.1. The rationale for the proposed reconfiguration was set out, together with the range of communications and opportunities for staff to contribute. It was confirmed that the mechanisms for inclusion of students in the consultation process were being discussed.

10.2. The timing of the reconfiguration consultation (particularly in light of the impact of the pandemic) was queried. In response, the Principal noted that with staff focussed on supporting students in different modes of learning in challenging circumstances, they should raise questions about timing. ULT had given this deep consideration. The academic rationale was strong and this would be considered further by staff to identify the benefits and opportunities that could be realised.

- 10.3. Looking to the immediate and longer term future, it was clear that the University's focus must clearly align with supporting Scotland's recovery from the pandemic, described by an advisor to Scottish Government as an 'education-led' recovery (upskilling/reskilling; business engagement, and support research that will have impact and address Scotland's economic challenges). Areas of growth and sectoral development would be prioritised by the Scottish Government, and ENU needed to be well placed to support these.
- 10.4. A second consideration was noted - the Scottish Funding Council review. The focus was on the coherence of provision (alignment between further and higher education, duplication of provision with a particular focus within regions) and sustainability (primarily financial). Differentiation within the region and optimal internal collaboration and subject alignment within Edinburgh Napier would support the University's positioning in this regard.
- 10.5. It was agreed that a communication addressing concerns raised would be sent to all affected academic and professional services staff. It was noted that the proposed reconfiguration would not take place until the 2021/22 academic year, providing ample time for robust discussion of all options.
- 10.6. The SoC/SEBE reconfiguration update was noted.

11. STUDENT SURVEYS: OUTCOMES AND ACTIONS **AB(20/21)010**

- 11.1. The University's outstanding performance in the National Student Survey (NSS) and effect on league table placings was highlighted.
- 11.2. Members were thanked for their efforts but were asked to guard against complacency: some programmes still required to improve. Members were reminded of the overall satisfaction target of 90% that had so far only been achieved by one School (SACI).
- 11.3. It was noted that a survey on students' trimester 1 experience had recently been concluded and was generally positive. The survey results would be released once they had been considered by the Student Surveys Group later in the day.
- 11.4. The student surveys outcomes and actions were noted.

12. BREXIT UPDATE **AB(20/21)011**

- 12.1. Members were reminded that EU students would be required to pay tuition fees from AY2021/22. It was expected that the overall number of EU students would therefore reduce, and work was

underway to identify the actions required to recruit students to programmes which historically had large cohorts of EU students.

- 12.2. It was noted that the University was developing a policy for taught postgraduate scholarships and/or discounts specifically targeted at the EU market.
- 12.3. The introduction of visas for international students and staff were acknowledged. Support would be available from January 2021 for these cohorts.
- 12.4. Members were advised that the UK university sector had been offered a one-year extension of membership of the EU ERASMUS programme in order to allow students to take up deferred exchange opportunities and for existing funding to be expended in support of these opportunities.
- 12.5. The update on Brexit preparations was noted.

13. REF 2021 PREPARATIONS

AB(20/21)012

- 13.1. Members were advised that the enlarged REF2021 submission would hopefully result in increased REG funding. It was acknowledged that the funding allocation formula was, at this point, still unclear.
- 13.2. It was confirmed that all staff with significant responsibility for research now had their research workload allocation recorded within WAM. It was expected that these records would be audited as part of the REF evaluation.
- 13.3. Impact case studies continued to be optimised and work was underway to refresh the Research & Innovation webpages – these would be ready for the end of December. A full round of quality evaluations would be conducted by external subject experts and it was hoped to have the full evaluation results for the November 2020 Academic Board meeting.
- 13.4. The REF2021 preparations update was noted.

14. HONORARY AWARD NOMINATIONS

AB(20/21)013

- 14.1. The two nominations presented were considered and were recommended to Court for approval.

PART B RECEIPT OF MINUTES

15. MINUTE FROM THE RESEARCH & INNOVATION COMMITTEE HELD ON 8 MAY 2020

AB(20/21)014

15.1. Members were advised that the research structures for all six Schools were being evaluated. A review of the professoriate was being undertaken by two experienced professors, with a view to improving the strategic engagement of the professoriate and mentoring of students.

15.2. The minute from the Research & Innovation Committee meeting held on 8 May 2020 was noted.

16. MINUTE FROM THE MEETING OF LEARNING, TEACHING, ASSESSMENT AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 20 MAY 2020 **AB(20/21)015**

16.1. The minute from the meeting of the Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Student Experience Committee meeting, held on 20 May 2020, was noted.

PART C ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

17. ANNUAL REPORT OF RESEARCH AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE 2019/20 **AB(20/21)016**

17.1. The annual report of the Research and Innovation Committee 2019/20 was noted.

18. LEARNING, TEACHING, ASSESSMENT & STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20 **AB(20/21)017**

18.1. The annual report of the Learning, Teaching, Assessment & Student Experience Committee 2019/20 was noted.

19. QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20 **AB(20/21)018**

19.1. The annual report of the Quality & Standards Committee 2019/20 was noted.

20. TERMS OF REFERENCE, CONSTITUTION AND MEMBERSHIP OF ACADEMIC BOARD 2020/21 **AB(20/21)019**

20.1. The 2020/21 terms of reference, constitution and membership of Academic Board was noted.

21. FORWARD SCHEDULE OF BUSINESS FOR ACADEMIC BOARD 2020/21 **AB(20/21)020**

21.1. The 2020/21 forward schedule of business for Academic Board was noted.

22. Valedictions

22.1. The Convenor noted this would be the last Academic Board meeting for Professor Dawkes, who was moving to a post at Robert Gordon University, and Dr Steen, who was leaving the University. Both were thanked for their contributions to the work of Academic Board.

23. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

All at 0900 in the Rivers Suite, Craiglockhart Campus

27 November 2020

05 March 2021

04 June 2021