

EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY COURT

**Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 25 October 2021
at 3.45 pm in the Rivers Suite, Craiglockhart Campus and by Videoconference**

Present: J Boyle (Chair); Professor A Nolan (Principal & Vice-Chancellor); R Adams; Professor N Antonopolous; S Brannan; Lord Brodie (Chancellor's Assessor) (from item 13); J Chittleburgh*; Professor S Cross*; G Cullen*(until item 11); E Divine (until item 11); H Fyfe; A Houghton; C Ibanez; D Mohan (until item 11); Dr S Moir; Dr H Patrick; G Scholefield; Professor A Scullion; R Tomlinson; N Woodcock; Professor L Yellowlees.

Apologies: S Nairn; M Thomson.

In attendance: M Greenhalgh (Director of Strategy and Planning & Secretary to Court); D Cloy (Head of Governance & Risk); G Day (Interim Director of People & Services); N Graham (Vice Principal, International); Professor N Karodia (Vice Principal, Learning & Teaching); A McGoff (Director of Finance & Operations).

Observing: W Whitehorn (University Chancellor)

[* attended by videoconference]

1. OPENING REMARKS, APOLOGIES AND CHAIR'S UPDATES

1.1. The meeting was preceded by a pre-Court presentation "Beyond COP26 Climate Change Conference and Outcomes" which those members attending had welcomed.

1.2. The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and welcomed the new University Chancellor, Will Whitehorn, who was observing the meeting. Emily Divine (ENSA Co-President) and Nazira Karodia (Vice Principal Learning & Teaching) were welcomed to their first Court meeting.

1.3. The apologies were **noted**.

Part A For discussion and decision

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 JUNE 2021 UC(20/21)83

2.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2021 were **approved**.

3. MATTERS ARISING

13.1 Appointment of Secretary to Court

- 3.1. Court **noted** that Michael Greenhalgh was appointed by Court to the role of Secretary to Court by written resolution with effect from 1 August 2021.

4. COURT AND COURT COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP UC(21/22)01

- 4.1. Court considered the paper and:
- (i) **noted** its membership for 2021/22
 - (ii) **noted** the planned lay Court member recruitment exercise, and;
 - (iii) **noted** the previously approved membership and convenorship of its standing committees for 2021/22.
- 4.2. With regard to Court member recruitment, members were encouraged to use their networks to help identify suitable candidates. The issue of gender balance highlighted in the paper was noted and the need to continue working to achieve wider diversity on Court was also recognised.

5. SUB COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE AMENDMENTS UC(21/22)02

- 5.1. Court **approved** the minor amendments to the Terms of Reference of Finance & Property Committee and Nominations Committee as proposed by those committees.

6. COURT EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS UC(21/22)03

- 6.1. Court **approved** the framework for consideration of matters relating to the enhancement of Court effectiveness in the current year and to oversee the substantive, externally facilitated, Court effectiveness review as mandated by the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance to take place in 2022/23. The Chair recognised the range of added value contributions currently being made by members.

7. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT UC(21/22)04

- 7.1. The Principal introduced her written report and invited questions and comments from members. In discussion a number of points were noted. With regard to the regulatory environment, a recommendation for a potential change to charity law which could see the SFC become the sole regulator for Universities was highlighted by a member. With regard to the upcoming UK budget it was acknowledged that potential changes affecting Higher Education in England could have consequential impacts in Scotland. The meetings that had been held between the Principals of the Edinburgh universities and colleges to discuss potential areas for further enhancements to collaboration were highlighted, as was the University's achievement of a ranking in the 500-600 top world universities by the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2022. It

was recognised that improved research citations and wide ranging international activity had been significant contributory factors in this increase. With regard to potential strike action within the sector it was noted that Unison were currently balloting their members regarding strike action over the pay award. Progress with the establishment of the University's Research Centres was highlighted and it was noted that members would be invited to meet the Heads of the Research Centres in the Spring.

7.2. Court **noted** the report.

8. COVID-19 PLANNING AND RESPONSE UPDATE

8.1. Court received an update on the University's ongoing planning and response activity in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

8.2. Discussion followed during which the value of providing flexibility to staff to determine the best approach to teaching in their own context based on their experience of delivery during the pandemic was recognised. It was also noted that the internal audit currently being undertaken by EY into the University's response to Covid would incorporate learnings from other sectors.

8.3. Members who had taken part in a recent visit to the Schools of Engineering and the Built Environment and Computing noted the enthusiasm and engagement of the staff they met and their happiness to be working together again back on campus. It was recognised that the need to attract more women to work and study in STEM subjects remained a key issue and area of focus both for the University and nationally.

8.4. Thereafter, Court **noted** the update.

9. FINANCIAL REPORT: PROVISIONAL OUTTURN FOR 2020/21* UC(21/22)05

9.1. Court received the paper which reported on the provisional financial outturn for the year ended 31 July 2021.

9.2. In discussion, the factors which had contributed to the University's strong financial performance in the face of recent challenges and relative to many others in the sector were highlighted and it was recognised that this position was a reflection of the University's longer term financial strategy which had sought to build resilience. It was suggested that the issue of staff pay relative to inflationary pressures might be considered in the context of the University's financial performance.

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

10. STUDENT SURVEYS: OUTCOMES AND ACTIONS UC(21/22)06

10.1. Court received the paper which summarised the latest (2021) results of the sector-wide student experience surveys: the National Student Survey (NSS), the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). The paper also detailed the actions that

would address the outcomes of the student experience surveys in 2021 to enhance the student experience.

10.2. Discussion followed during which ways of sharing internal and external good practice to improve the experience of postgraduate research students was outlined. It was noted that the establishment of the University Research Centres would positively impact the postgraduate student experience and that the possibility of developing a graduate school was also being considered. It was noted that Schools had full access to detailed survey performance data and that analysis of 3-5 years' worth of data was being undertaken to inform the development of data-led actions across each subject area. It was also suggested that the inclusion of more granular data showing how Schools were progressing would be helpful in future reports. Engagement with students and ENSA (through its student representative structures) as part of the Student Surveys & Student Voice Group was highlighted.

10.3. Thereafter, Court **noted** the update.

11. REPORT ON LEAGUE TABLE PERFORMANCE

UC(21/22)07

11.1. Court received the paper and a presentation which provided a summary of league table rankings for the University across the three main league tables in the UK as well as the Times World University rankings, and set out the University's ambition for future league table positioning and the main drivers which would enable this. The alignment of the University's strategy and KPIs with league table metrics was emphasised and it was recognised that delivering the strategy would improve the University's league table positioning.

11.2. In discussion, issues with responses to the graduate outcomes survey which impacted on the University's result were noted. Work underway to increase awareness of the survey and reach with graduates to help address this was highlighted. Ongoing and planned investments in staff and facilities which would further improve league table positioning were also highlighted.

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

12. SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL REVIEW RESPONSE

UC(21/22)08

12.1. Court received the paper which provided Court with the University's response to the Scottish Funding Council review of coherent provision and sustainability as sent to the Scottish Government. The Scottish Government's response to the review was still awaited.

12.2. In discussion it was noted that other Universities would hold different views on aspects of the review, and that the proposal for a single tertiary model for Quality Assurance was of particular concern.

12.3. Court **noted** the submission.

13. INTERNATIONALISATION STRATEGY UPDATE

UC(21/22)09

13.1. Court received the paper which provided an update on developments relating to the implementation of the Internationalisation Strategy 2021-2025 which was considered by University Court in June 2021 and subsequently approved by ULT later the same month. With regard to expanding global opportunities for staff and students, an update was provided on the University's application for Turing funding. With regard to progress made to strategically develop TNE provision, an update was included on the development of a new model of franchise for the University, and an update on the development of a new International Centre proposal was also provided.

13.2. In discussion an update was provided on the current position with the proposal to establish a Joint Education College in China, in partnership with Guangxi University of Science of Technology. Members suggested a number of opportunities for making connections through networks in relation to the new International Centre proposal.

13.3. Court **noted** the update.

14. MOUNTAIN BIKE INNOVATION CENTRE UPDATE

UC(21/22)10

14.1. Court received the paper which provided an update on the Mountain Bike Project. The update covered the background to the project, key information from the Business Case, additional insights into the wide range of broader benefits to Edinburgh Napier University and set out the academic vision and future focus of the research and innovation landscape.

14.2. Court **noted** the update.

15. NOMINATIONS FOR HONORARY AWARDS*

UC(21/22)11

15.1. Court **approved** the proposal for an Honorary Award, as recommended by the Honorary Awards Committee and approved by Academic Board. Members were encouraged to bring forward ideas for nominations.

Part B For information

16. ACADEMIC BOARD MEETING 15 OCTOBER 2021

UC(21/22)12

16.1. Court **noted** the minutes from the meeting of the Academic Board of 15 October 2021.

17. ENSA STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

UC(21/22)13

17.1. The ENSA President introduced the update on Edinburgh Napier Students' Association's progress against its Strategic Plan 2021 – 2024.

17.2. Court welcomed the positive progress and **noted** the update.

Part C Not intended for discussion

18. REPORTS FROM COURT COMMITTEES

18.a Nominations Committee meeting on 27 September 2021* **UC(21/22)14**

18.1. The report was **noted**.

18.b Finance & Property Committee meeting on 23 September 2021* **UC(21/22)15**

18.2 The report was **noted**.

18.c Audit & Risk Committee meeting on 29 September 2021* **UC(21/22)16**

18.3 The report was **noted**.

19. FORWARD SCHEDULE OF COURT BUSINESS 2021/22 **UC(21/22)17**

19.1. Court **noted** the forward schedule.

20. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

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