

**EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY**  
**UNIVERSITY COURT**

**Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 21 March 2022**  
**at 3.45 pm in the Rivers Suite, Craiglockhart and by Teams Video Conference**

**Present:** J Boyle (Chair); Professor A Nolan (Principal & Vice-Chancellor) (online); Professor N Antonopoulos; S Brannan; Lord Brodie (Chancellor's Assessor); J Chittleburgh; Professor S Cross (online); H Fyfe; A Houghton (online); A Machin (online); S Nairn; Dr H Patrick; Professor A Scullion; R Tomlinson; N Woodcock (online).

**Apologies:** R Adams; G Cullen; E Divine; C Ibanez; D Mohan; G Scholefield; Professor L Yellowlees.

**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); G Hutchison (Dean, School of Applied Sciences) (item 6); J Pearson (Environmental Sustainability Manager) (item 6); A McLachlan (Head of Student Recruitment and Admissions) (item 11).

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

- 1.1. The meeting was preceded by a tour of the Business School followed by a short discussion focussing on the strengths of the School and its challenges. Brief summaries of key areas of activity within the School around CPD courses, research and employability were also provided. It was noted that a full presentation on the School's vision would be given at the Strategy Day on 28 April.
- 1.2. The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and welcomed Alison Machin (newly elected Academic Board member on Court) to her first meeting. Gary Hutchison and Jamie Pearson who were attending for the Environmental Sustainability Update item were also welcomed to the meeting.
- 1.3. It was noted that the recruitment process for lay Court members was currently in progress. There had been a good response with 23 applications received and 9 shortlisted with a number of interviews already held and more scheduled to conclude at the end of this week. It was noted that a good range of diversity was represented within the applications being considered.
- 1.4. The apologies were **noted**.

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

### **2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 DECEMBER 2021 UC(21/22)32**

- 2.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2021 were **approved**.

### **3. MATTERS ARISING**

- 3.1. There were no matters arising.

### **4. COURT/SLT STRATEGY DAY FEEDBACK**

- 4.1. The Chair invited members to provide feedback and reflections on the proceedings and outcomes of the 21 Feb 22 Court/SLT Strategy Day.
- 4.2. Members had welcomed the opportunity to visit the schools but would have liked the opportunity to ask questions afterwards. It was also suggested that particular areas of challenge should be identified as a focus, and that common themes arising from the school visits and presentation sessions should be captured and summarised.
- 4.3. The feedback was **noted** and would be considered in finalising the agenda for the 28 April Strategy Day which would be circulated to members in advance.

### **5. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY UPDATE UC(21/22)33**

- 5.1. Court received the paper and presentation which provided an overview of progress in the delivery of the University's Environmental Sustainability Strategy and outlined a range of challenges and opportunities.
- 5.2. Discussion followed during which the challenge of embedding the strategy across the University was recognised as was the need to identify and focus on particular institutional priorities in this area. In response to a query about leadership capacity to deliver the strategy it was noted that efforts were underway to engage the wider University leadership in a more co-ordinated way and it was recognised that success would be achieved when environmental sustainability was embedded within all areas of activity.
- 5.3. Court welcomed and **noted** the presentation and the progress outlined. It was noted that a further report on progress would be brought to Court in March 2023.

### **6. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT & COVID UPDATE UC(21/22)34**

- 6.1. Court received the Principal's written report and received an update on the University's ongoing planning and response activity in relation to the current phase of the Covid-19 pandemic. The expected confirmation of SFC funding at a rate significantly below inflation was noted, as were the wide range SFC consultations currently underway arising from the SFC Review of Coherent

Provision and Sustainability. With regard to the war in Ukraine, it was noted that the University had reached out to Ukrainian and Russian staff and students to offer support. It was also noted that good progress was being made in the recruitment process for the Dean of the Business School.

6.2. In response to a query about the University's engagement in discussions on the matters under dispute in the UCU and Unison strike action it was noted that the University engaged regularly at national level through UCEA on such matters with a particular focus at present on the current year's pay negotiations. It was further noted that the University engaged locally on these matters with its recognised trade unions on a regular basis through its scheduled fortnightly consultation meetings.

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

## **7. STAFF WELLBEING UPDATE REPORT**

**UC(21/22)35**

7.1. Court received the report which provided an update on staff health and wellbeing over the last 12 months looking at wellbeing indicators such as absence levels and utilisation of support services as well as the measures that the University had taken to support wellbeing and keep staff safe on campus and at home. An overview was also provided of plans to develop and enhance support for staff wellbeing in the future which would include seeking to build on synergies between student and staff wellbeing areas, focus on preventative measures, building on insights from the upcoming Employee Engagement Survey and establishing a clear strategy and outcomes against which progress would be reported in future.

7.2. Discussion followed during which it was noted that matters such as specialist equipment requirements for staff, the need to maintain team connectivity and ethos and confidentiality considerations were all being considered and factored into plans for bringing teams back onto campus as part of the hybrid working trial. The importance of recognising the role of the leader and manager in hybrid working and the need to provide appropriate training and support was also highlighted.

7.3. Thereafter, Court **noted** the report. It was noted that a further update on progress would be brought to Court in December 2022 along with the results of the Employee Engagement Survey.

## **8. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION UPDATE**

8.1. Court received an update on the current position with Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) reporting and **noted** that a full EDI report on progress and challenges would be brought to the next Court meeting in June.

## **9. IHRA ANTI-SEMITISM DEFINITION POSITION**

**UC(21/22)36**

9.1. Court received the paper which provided the background to the IHRA Anti-Semitism Definition and the position taken by the University to date regarding

its adoption; that the University would not formally adopt the IHRA definition but that it would take it into account when considering any instances where an accusation of antisemitism was made. It was noted that the University has a clearly articulated commitment to diversity and inclusion and has policies and procedures to protect against all forms of discrimination. Therefore, it was considered that there was no need to adopt a specific position on Antisemitism. It was noted that the University addressed each instance of discrimination or prejudice through rigorous University processes and would do the same with any antisemitic expression or act.

- 9.2. Thereafter Court **confirmed** the University's position regarding the adoption of the IHRA Anti-Semitism Definition; that the University would not formally adopt the IHRA definition but that it would take it into account when considering any instances where an accusation of antisemitism was made.

## **10. REVIEW OF THE CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION\* UC(21/22)37**

- 10.1. Court received the report which provided the financial position as at the end of January 2022. Whilst a strong result was anticipated for 2022 it was anticipated that next year would be challenging due to inflationary and income pressures. The recent completion of the purchase of a site adjacent to the Construction Scotland Innovation Centre (CSIC) supported by Scottish Government funding was also noted.
- 10.2. In discussion, the challenging public funding environment and importance of securing diverse income streams was noted.
- 10.3. Thereafter Court **noted** the report.

## **11. STUDENT RECRUITMENT UPDATE UC(21/22)38**

- 11.1. Court received the paper and presentation which provided an overview of student enrolments for 2021/22 following the Trimester 2 intake in January and presented the admissions update for students entering in 2022/23 following the UCAS application deadline on 26th January 2022. An explanation of each student fee segment was provided, and the actions being taken to ensure number targets are achieved were outlined.
- 11.2. Discussion followed during which the factors behind the drop in Business School applications were explained. Regarding widening participation, it was noted that the overall pool of MD20 students was relatively static, and action was required at school and college level to increase the qualifications of MD20 applicants to improve this position. Regarding the capacity challenges presented to Schools from the larger than expected January 2022 taught postgraduate international student intake, it was noted that earlier deadlines for applications, deposits and closing courses had been put in place to enable better management of this in future.
- 11.3. Thereafter, Court **noted** the update.

## **Part B For information**

### **12. ACADEMIC BOARD MEETING 4 MARCH 2022 UC(21/22)39**

12.1. Court **noted** the minutes from the meeting of the Academic Board of 4 March 2022 and noted the approval by the Academic Board to merge the School of Computing and School of Engineering and the Built Environment to form the new School of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment with effect from 1 August 2022.

### **13. ENSA ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS UC(21/22)40**

13.1. Court received and **noted** the Trustees' Report and Financial Statements of Edinburgh Napier Students' Association (ENSA) for the year ended 30 June 2021 and noted an update on current activities and initiatives. Members welcomed the update and the progress demonstrated.

### **14. COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT UC(21/22)41**

14.1. Court received the paper which provided the annual report on matters relating to the handling, recording, and reporting of complaints received by the University. It was noted that much of the increase in complaints received during the reporting period could be attributed to constraints imposed because of the pandemic and it was anticipated that numbers would reduce as the pandemic receded.

14.2. In discussion it was noted that a factor in the increase in response timescales was the complexity of the cases being dealt with. It was noted that no cases had been upheld by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman and that this was a testament to the robustness of the processes in place and followed within the University. It was also recognised that many issues of concern were addressed and resolved locally before escalating to the level of a formal recorded complaint.

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

### **15. TOP RISKS MONITORING SCHEDULE (2 of 3)\* UC(21/22)42**

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

### **16. COURT EFFECTIVENESS UPDATE**

16.1. Court **noted** an update on plans for taking forward the review of Court Effectiveness in the upcoming academic year.

## Part C Not intended for discussion

### 17. REPORTS FROM COURT COMMITTEES

**17a Finance & Property Committee meeting on 27 January 2022\*** **UC(21/22)43**

17.1. The report was **noted**.

**17b Finance & Property Committee meeting on 10 March 2022\*** **UC(21/22)44**

17.2 Members were advised that the Pensions Review Group had concluded that it had done all that it could for the time being in terms of information gathering and did not recommend making any changes to the University's pension arrangements at the current time. It was noted that work would continue within the University to investigate the overall staff reward structure.

17.3 The report was **noted**.

**17.b Audit & Risk Committee meeting on 2 March 2022\*** **UC(21/22)45**

17.4 The report was **noted** and Court **approved** the recommendation to extend the Internal Audit Contract with EY for a further final year.

### 18. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

18.1. The dates of future Court meetings and plans being considered for the format of the June Court meeting were **noted**.

18.2. Members were encouraged to complete and return their annual review forms which would shortly be circulated.

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