

**EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY  
UNIVERSITY COURT**

**Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 20 June 2022  
at 2.30 pm in the Rivers Suite, Craiglockhart and by Teams Video Conference**

**Present:** J Boyle (Chair); Professor A Nolan (Principal & Vice-Chancellor); R Adams; Professor N Antonopoulos; S Brannan; Lord Brodie (Chancellor's Assessor); J Chittleburgh; Professor S Cross; E Divine; Dr K Hewitson; A Houghton; A Machin (online); S Nairn; T Oyinlola (online); Professor A Scullion (online); P Sim; R Tomlinson; P Upton; N Woodcock; Professor L Yellowlees.

**Apologies:** C Ibanez; Dr H Patrick; G Scholefield.

**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).

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

1.1. The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and welcomed new Court members Kirsty Hewitson, Tayo Oyinlola and Paul Sim to their first Court meeting. Elaine Hunter (Director of Property and Facilities) who was attending for the Project SOFIE Update item was also welcomed to the meeting.

1.2. The apologies were **noted**.

**Part A For discussion and decision**

**2. (i) MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 MARCH 2022 UC(21/22)46**

2.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2022 were **approved**.

**(ii) MINUTE OF THE COURT BUSINESS ITEM TAKEN AT UC(21/22)47  
THE COURT/SLT STRATEGY DAY ON 28 APRIL 2022**

2.2. The minute of the meeting held on 28 April 2022 was **approved**.

**(iii) MATTERS ARISING**

2.3. 8.1: Equality, Diversity & Inclusion: It was noted that the full Equality, Diversity and Inclusion report would be brought to the October 2022 Court meeting.

#### **(iv) COURT EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW**

- 2.4. Court **noted** an update on plans for the conduct of the Court Effectiveness Review next session which was recommended to be facilitated by Advance HE. Fieldwork would take place between October and January with an initial report submitted to Court in March 2022 and any final recommendations being brought to Court in June 2023. It was noted that the Vice-Chair would shortly be appointing the final members of the Court Effectiveness Oversight Group.

#### **3. COURT/SLT STRATEGY DAY FEEDBACK UC(21/22)48**

- 3.1. Members considered the paper which provided Court with a summary of the feedback provided by members following the Strategy Day held on 28 April 2022. A number of themes arising around distinctiveness, campus experience, flexibility of learning and teaching delivery, franchise model for TNE delivery and ways of responding to new entrants were highlighted and it was noted that these dovetailed with existing plans. Areas of challenge and potential future growth were outlined, and the importance of prioritisation was recognised. It was noted that market data would be considered against areas of academic expertise to inform priority areas.
- 3.2. It was noted that a further Strategy Day would be held later in the year which would potentially focus on themes around people and culture and stakeholder engagement.
- 3.3. The feedback paper was **noted**.

#### **4. REPORT FROM NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE ON COURT AND COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP\* UC(21/22)49**

- 4.1. Court received the paper which reported on the proceedings of the Nominations Committee meeting held on 9 May 2022 and presented recommendations for approval regarding the membership and convenorship of Court committees for 2022/23.
- 4.2. Court **noted** the report and **approved** the recommendations regarding the convenorship and membership of the standing committees of Court as detailed in the paper and contained in Annex A.

#### **5. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT UC(21/22)50**

- 5.1. Court received the Principal's written report and the challenging funding outlook for the sector, with a flat cash settlement announced for the next 4 years, was highlighted. It was also noted that the UK's participation in the Horizon Europe research funding programme was in doubt due to the ongoing dispute with the EU regarding the Northern Ireland Protocol and the UK government was being lobbied on their alternative plans.
- 5.2. In discussion, members reflected on the challenging funding outlook and range of future uncertainties in the policy environment.
- 5.3. Thereafter, Court **noted** the report.

## **6. RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (REF) RESULTS**

**UC(21/22)51**

- 6.1. Court considered the report which provided an overview of the University's Research Excellence Framework (REF2021) results. The strong results were recognised as a step change for the University, evidencing that we are a research-led institution, conducting a diverse range of high-quality, world-leading and internationally excellent research, which is impacting on a wide-range of beneficiaries for societal good. Regarding continued research growth and development, it was noted that there now needed to be a shift in narrative and culture towards aspiring to be world leading. Opportunities and risks around the attraction and retention of research talent were recognised as was the need for a fundamental change in approach to workload allocation to take account of research activity. Court would receive further updates on progress with these matters at future Research & Innovation sessions provided by the Deputy Vice Chancellor and Vice Principal of Research & Innovation.
- 6.2. Discussion followed during which it was noted that the focus on future development would not be limited to areas of existing research excellence, but that a combined approach would be taken to boost key world leading areas whilst pulling up other areas in need of support to ensure that areas of world leading research were surrounded by an environment of research excellence. The importance of research outcomes informing the curriculum was recognised as was the importance of recognising the value of scholarship in workload allocation. The benefit of building a reputation plan that communicates the step change in the University's research profile to external audiences was also recognised.
- 6.3. Thereafter, Court **noted** the report and congratulated all involved in the achievement of this successful outcome.

## **7. REVIEW OF THE CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION\***

**UC(21/22)52**

- 7.1. Court received and **noted** the report which provided the University's financial position as at the end of April 2022.

## **8. PLANNING AND BUDGETING 2022/23 to 2024/25\***

**UC(21/22)53**

- 8.1. Court received the paper which presented the primary outcomes of the Planning and Budgeting process carried out in 2021/22 relating to plans and budgets for 2022/23 and key performance indicators (and their associated targets) for the University Strategy, Shaping our Future: Driving Distinctiveness, which was approved in 2020. It was noted that the priorities, plans and budgets presented were aligned to the priorities of the strategy. It was noted that detailed financial scenario planning was undertaken and considered by Finance & Property Committee and that inflation was a significant threat.
- 8.2. Discussion followed during which the factors behind the budgeted increase in RUK student fee income were explained. In relation to potential budgetary risks arising from cost inflation affecting Project SOFIE infrastructure investments it was noted that this would comprise a number of separate

projects with decisions on major capital expenditure being submitted for Court approval, which would enable mitigating actions to be taken if necessary. It was noted that solutions for a number of immediate space related challenges within Schools (observed during the strategy day visits) had been found and were now being progressed with the relevant Schools. Regarding international student recruitment, it was noted that indicators remained strong but that efforts continued to review the market, respond to challenges, and avoid overexposure to single territories.

- 8.3. Thereafter, Court **approved** the budget for 2022/23 and **noted** the University Annual Plan, including Key Performance Indicators for the next three years.

## **9. PROJECT SOFIE UPDATE**

- 9.1. Court received a presentation updating on progress with the development of the University's Estates Strategy which was being delivered through Project SOFIE (Shaping our Future Infrastructure and Estates Strategy) and would identify a programme of investment in our infrastructure and estates to underpin delivery of the University Strategy. The arrangements for project governance and associated delivery workstreams were highlighted, including integration of the overarching digital strategy, and the programme timeline was outlined. An update was planned to come to Court in October 2022, presentation of options in December 2022 and final report in March 2023.
- 9.2. Discussion followed during which the composition of the workstreams was explained and the staff and student engagement undertaken and planned was outlined. It was noted that a design consultant would be appointed shortly to support the planned engagement. It was also noted that the project would continually review and adjust to take account of any emerging developments. In terms of timing, it was noted that significant project proposals would emerge following completion of the Strategy, but that a number of investments supporting hybrid working and other smaller improvement projects were already in place. The presentation slides would be circulated to members following the meeting which would clarify key decision points. There was also a request for the Digital Strategy to appear more clearly in the plan.
- 9.3. Thereafter, Court **noted** the update.

## **10. HONORARY AWARD REGULATIONS**

**UC(21/22)54**

- 10.1. Court received the paper which set out proposals to revise the regulations and procedures for the award of honorary degrees, emeritus professorships and visiting titles. It was noted that these were currently governed by two sets of regulations: one for honorary degrees and one for emeritus and visiting titles. It was proposed to amalgamate these into one set of regulations overseen by a new Honorary & Visiting Titles Committee. These changes had been approved and recommended by ULT, Honorary Awards Committee and Academic Board. Members noted the opportunity presented by the new regulations to strengthen efforts to achieve a more diverse range of nominations from Schools, building on existing actions to achieve wider representation.

10.2. Court **approved** the revised Regulations and Procedures for the Award of Honorary Degrees and Conferment of Emeritus and Visiting Titles.

## 11. HONORARY AWARDS\*

UC(21/22)55

11.1. Court **approved** the Honorary Award nominations recommended by the Honorary Awards Committee and Academic Board. It was agreed that Schools should strengthen efforts to ensure that a greater range of diversity is represented in future proposals, in line with the revised Honorary Award Regulations now approved.

## Part B For information

## 12. ACADEMIC BOARD MEETING 3 JUNE 2022

UC(21/22)56

12.1. Court **noted** the minutes from the meeting of the Academic Board of 3 June 2022 and **approved** the proposal from Academic Board as detailed in the minute that Achille Fonzone (SEBE) and Simon Wells (SOC) be permitted to complete their terms of office as Academic Board members, which conclude in September 2023, as a transitional provision further to the School Merger.

## 13. SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL ANNUAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT REPORT

UC(21/22)57

13.1. Court received the paper which presented a draft of the Annual Report on institution-led review and enhancement activities to the Scottish Funding Council.

13.2. Court: **a) approved in principle** the format and outline content of the draft report; **b) authorised** the Vice-Principal (Learning & Teaching) to sign-off the final version of the SFC Annual Report prior to this being submitted to the Council by 30 September 2022 and **c) authorised** the Chair of University Court to sign and date the statement of assurance to be emailed to the Council with the final report.

## 14. HEALTH & SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT

UC(21/22)58

14.1. Court received and **noted** the paper which provided the Annual Report on Health & Safety management. Thanks were extended to all involved for the work reflected in the report and congratulations were extended to the Health & Safety Team for achieving the ROSPA Order of Distinction Award.

## 15. ENSA UPDATE

15.1. Court received and **noted** a presentation on Edinburgh Napier Students' Association's key activities and progress over the past year, which highlighted the achievements of the Sabbatical Officers against their manifestos. Members welcomed the report, the contribution of the Sabbatical Officers and

acknowledged the positive relationship and collaboration which currently existed between the University and ENSA.

## 16. RISK MANAGEMENT

### a) University Top Risks for 2022/23 UC(21/22)59

16.1. Court **approved** the Top Risks Register for 2022/23 as recommended by the Audit & Risk Committee.

### b) Top Risks Monitoring Schedule (3 of 3) UC(21/22)60

16.2. Court **noted** the report which provided the final assessment of confidence in the management of the University's top risks for academic year 2021/22.

## Part C Not intended for discussion

## 17. REPORTS FROM COURT COMMITTEES

### 17a Finance & Property Committee meeting on 26 May 2022\* UC(21/22)61

17.1. The report was **noted**.

### 17.b Audit & Risk Committee meeting on 1 June 2022\* UC(21/22)62

17.2 The report was **noted**.

## 18. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

18.1. The dates of future Court meetings were **noted** as follows:

### Court (Mondays at 3.45 pm)

31 October 2022  
19 December 2022  
27 March 2023  
26 June 2023

### Graduations

26 & 27 October 2022  
5 - 7 July 2023  
25 & 26 October 2023

## VALEDICTIONS

It was the last meeting of Lord Brodie (Chancellor's Assessor) and Emily Divine (ENSA Sabbatical) and thanks were extended to both for their contribution to Court. Thanks were also extended to Heloisa Fyfe (ENSA President) who had demitted office at the beginning of June.

## Part D Reserved Item

### 19. CHAIR OF COURT ANNUAL REVIEW FEEDBACK

*[The Chair of Court left the meeting during this item]*

- 19.1. The Vice-Chair of Court presented a summary of the feedback received from members following the annual review of the performance of the Chair of Court. The feedback would be shared with the Chair of Court. Court **considered** and **noted** the report.

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