



Approved  
Circulated

UC(22/23)013

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

**Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 31 October 2022  
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 Antonopoulos; S Brannan; E. Bumra; J Chittleburgh; Professor S Cross; A Houghton; C Ibanez; A Machin; S Nairn; Lady Paton (Chancellor's Assessor); Dr H Patrick (online); O Opaleye; G Scholefield; Professor A Scullion; P Sim; R Tomlinson; N Woodcock; Professor L Yellowlees.

**Apologies:** Dr K Hewitson; T Oyinlola; P Upton.

**In attendance:** M Greenhalgh (Director of Strategy and Planning & Secretary to Court); D Cloy (Head of Governance & Risk); C Begbie (Director of People & Services); N Graham (Vice Principal, International); 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 Lady Paton (Chancellor's Assessor), Olumuyiwa Opaleye (ENSA President) and Ekamdeep Bumra (ENSA Co-President) to their first Court meeting.
- 1.2. The apologies were **noted**.
- 1.3. Members were reminded to return any outstanding register of interests forms and charity trustee declarations.

**Part A For discussion and decision**

**2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 JUNE 2022 UC(21/22)046**

- 2.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2022 were **approved**. It was noted that the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report would be considered at the Court/SLT Strategy Day on 23 November, and formally reported to the December 2022 Court meeting.

### **3. MATTERS ARISING**

#### **Court Effectiveness Review (2.4)**

- 3.1. Court **noted** that the Court Effectiveness Review, supported by Advance HE, was now underway. The questionnaire had been circulated, and a 64% completion rate had been achieved across all respondent categories which would enable benchmarking to be undertaken. A series of follow-up interviews and focus groups (to which all members were invited) were scheduled over the next month. Findings, expected to identify opportunities for improvement and innovation in Court's effectiveness, would be presented to the Oversight Group in February and reported to Court in March, with final approvals of any matters arising at June Court. It was hoped that publication of the revised Scottish Code of Good HE Governance would coincide with the review timeline to allow any required changes to be brought forward in parallel by the Group.

#### **Court/SLT Strategy Day (3.1)**

- 3.2. Court **noted** that the next Strategy Day would take place on 23 November and would provide a deeper insight into the work of the People and Services Directorate. Content would include consideration of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report, a world café session with People & Services colleagues, a session with the 'human library' (a diverse cross-section of people from across the University) and would also include an external stakeholder engagement session.

### **4. COURT AND COURT COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

**UC(22/23)01**

- 4.1. Court considered the paper and:

(i) **noted** its membership for 2022/23.

(ii) **noted** the ongoing F&PC Chair recruitment exercise.

(iii) **noted** the previously approved membership and convenorship of its standing committees for 2022/23. It was noted that some minor amendments would be made to the table for accuracy.

(iv) **approved** the appointment of Adrienne Scullion to the role of Vice-Chair for the remainder of her term of office on Court, to 31 July 2023.

### **5. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

**UC(22/23)02**

- 5.1. The Principal introduced her written report and highlighted the challenging funding environment and outlook. Concern was noted regarding the UK government's potential stance regarding international students.
- 5.2. In discussion the range of support available and activity underway to support student and staff mental health and wellbeing were outlined and it was noted that full reports covering staff mental health and wellbeing and student mental health and wellbeing would be brought to the December and March Court meetings respectively. There would also be an opportunity to explore these issues at the upcoming Strategy Day. Regarding workload issues, it was noted that this was

reviewed by University leadership within their Schools and Directorates to identify and address any challenges arising, and that line managers were also encouraged to address wellbeing and career aspirations as part of their ongoing review discussions with staff. It was noted that the upcoming Employee Engagement Survey would provide a further source of feedback in this area. It was also observed that hybrid working feedback indicated that colleagues valued the flexibility this provided which mitigated workload pressures. In response to a query about the current challenges in the private rental accommodation market arising from changes to renting rights, it was noted that although there had been a reduction in private longer term rental accommodation in Edinburgh, new restrictions on short-term letting being brought in by Edinburgh City Council would likely result in greater availability of accommodation for longer term rent within the city.

5.3. Court **noted** the report.

**6. FINANCIAL REPORT: PROVISIONAL OUTTURN FOR 2021/22\* UC(22/23)03**

6.1. Court received the paper which reported on the provisional financial outturn for the year ended 31 July 2022.

6.2. The positive financial position presented was welcomed. In discussion, it was acknowledged that the University should be alert to the strategic opportunities that the ongoing period of financial volatility might present within the Higher Education market.

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

**7. STUDENT SURVEYS: OUTCOMES AND ACTIONS UC(22/23)04**

7.1. Court received the paper which summarised the latest (2022) results of the sector-wide student experience surveys: the National Student Survey (NSS) and the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and which also included a summary of the results from Module Evaluation surveys undertaken internally during the academic year 21/22. The paper also detailed the actions that would address the outcomes of the student experience surveys in 2022 to enhance the student experience. It was noted that School level action plans were scrutinised and monitored by the Student Success Group and that programme level actions were monitored at School level.

7.2. Discussion followed during which it was noted that small changes within programmes impacting the experience of students in a given year could result in significant variances in NSS results compared to prior years, but that in all cases Schools were actively seeking to understand and address the issues in consultation with students. Regarding a query as to whether the current KPI of 90% student satisfaction in the NSS was realistic, it was considered that this remained an appropriate ambition and was achievable, recognising that many areas had already achieved or exceeded 90%, and that efforts would continue to support the achievement of this across all areas. It was agreed that it would be helpful to undertake a deep dive into the actions plans of a School at a

future Strategy session. It was noted that a query from a member regarding the administration of module evaluation surveys would be followed up outwith the meeting by the Vice-Principal (Learning & Teaching). It was also recognised that a number of actions arising required support and ownership from professional services who were actively engaged in their co-delivery.

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

## **8. REPORT ON LEAGUE TABLE PERFORMANCE**

**UC(22/23)05**

8.1. 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 highlighted the factors behind the changes and developments which would impact our positioning in future. It was recognised that student number versus resources metrics had a significant impact and that ongoing and planned investments in staff and facilities would improve league table positioning. It was also recognised that the University's performance was measured against its KPIs.

8.2. In discussion, the lack of uniformity in criteria between league tables was acknowledged and it was suggested that it may be appropriate to concentrate on the Times World University rankings which is impactful on international recruitment. The alignment of the University's strategy and KPIs with some core league table metrics was emphasised and it was recognised that delivering the strategy would improve the University's league table positioning.

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

## **9. UNIVERSITY RESEARCH & INNOVATION UPDATE**

9.1. Court received a presentation which provided an overview of the University's Research & Innovation Strategy and KPIs, successes and achievements over the past 18 months and new strategic developments under consideration.

9.2. In discussion it was noted that the infrastructure resources required to support the ongoing delivery of the Research & Innovation Strategy were being considered in the context of Project VISION, and that the current approach to academic staff recruitment, combined with specific business cases for further targeted appointments, would deliver the required staff resource. It was noted that the Vice Principals oversaw all academic staff recruitment to ensure that appointments of the required standard were achieved. It was noted that a query from a member regarding space availability for early career researchers would be followed up outwith the meeting by the Vice-Principal (Research & Innovation).

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

## 10. PROJECT VISION UPDATE

- 10.1. Court received a presentation updating on progress with project VISION (Shaping our Future Infrastructure & Estate Strategy, formerly named project SOFIE). It was noted that Nomad had been engaged as consultants and were currently working with staff, students, and external stakeholders to gather information to inform proposals. It was also highlighted that discussions were taking place on potential collaborations with external bodies and that architects were working up plans for potential development of our current campuses and options for additional space. Current and ongoing infrastructure developments including lab refurbishments and office adaptations to support hybrid working were also noted.
- 10.2. In discussion it was noted that the project structure was designed to ensure all the necessary information was gathered and could be considered holistically to inform proposals and their prioritisation and reflected learning from past estates projects. It was also noted that achieving improvements to sports facilities in the longer term was an aspiration of the project. It was noted that a written update on the project progress would be provided in the first quarter of the 2023 calendar year.
- 10.3. Thereafter, Court **noted** the update.

## 11. PATHWAY CENTRE UPDATE\*

UC(22/23)06

- 11.1. Court received the paper and presentation which outlined a proposal for a new Embedded Pathway Centre to support international undergraduate student recruitment within Edinburgh Napier University and provided an overview of the strategic aims of the project. It was noted that further work was taking place to consult on the proposal and prepare an academic plan, business case and timetable which would be brought back to Academic Board and Court for further consideration. In discussion, a member who had experience of the potential partner from another institution offered insights and would discuss further with the Vice Principal (International) outwith the meeting.
- 11.2. Court **noted** the update on the proposal which was subject to further development and would be brought back to a future meeting.

## 12. ENSA STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

UC(22/23)07

- 12.1. The ENSA President introduced the update on Edinburgh Napier Students' Association's progress against its Strategic Plan 2021 – 2024.
- 12.2. Court welcomed the positive progress outlined and **noted** the update.

## **Part B For information**

### **13. ACADEMIC BOARD MEETING 14 OCTOBER 2022 UC(22/23)08**

13.1. Court **noted** the minutes from the meeting of the Academic Board of 14 October 2022.

## **Part C Not intended for discussion**

### **14. REPORTS FROM COURT COMMITTEES**

#### **14.a Nominations Committee meeting on 26 September 2022\* UC(22/23)09**

14.1. The report was **noted**.

#### **14.b Finance & Property Committee meeting on 22 September 2022\* UC(22/23)10**

14.2 The report was **noted** and members **approved** the minor updates to the Committee's Terms of Reference, as detailed in the appendix to the minute.

#### **14.c Audit & Risk Committee meeting on 12 October 2022\* UC(22/23)11**

14.3 The report was **noted**.

### **15. FORWARD SCHEDULE OF COURT BUSINESS 2021/22 UC(22/23)12**

15.1. Court **noted** the forward schedule.

### **16. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

16.1. The dates of future Court meetings and events were **noted**. Members were encouraged to attend graduation ceremonies if possible.

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