

EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY COURT**Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 19 December 2022
at 3.30 pm in Room 1/53, Craigmackay Campus and by Videoconference**

Present: J Boyle (Chair); Professor A Nolan (Principal & Vice-Chancellor); R Adams; Professor N Antonopoulos; P Alonzi; S Brannan (until item 6); J Chittleburgh; Dr K Hewitson (online); A Houghton; Professor A Machin; S Nairn; Lady Paton (Chancellor's Assessor); Dr H Patrick; T Oyinlola (online); Professor A Scullion; P Sim; R Tomlinson (online); P Upton (online); N Woodcock; Professor L Yellowlees.

Apologies: E. Bumra; Professor S Cross; C Ibanez; O Opaleye; 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); N Graham (Vice Principal, International); Professor N Karodia (Vice Principal, Learning & Teaching); A McGoff (Director of Finance & Operations).

Observing: David Langley (Advance HE) (online); Ella Ritchie (Advance HE) (online).

1. OPENING REMARKS, APOLOGIES AND CHAIR'S UPDATES

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and welcomed new Court member Paolo Alonzi to his first meeting. David Langley and Ella Ritchie (Advance HE) who were observing the meeting as part of the review of Court effectiveness were also welcomed.
- 1.2. It was noted that Paolo Alonzi had been appointed to Court from 1 December 2022 and would work with the current Convenor of Finance & Property Committee (F&PC) over the remainder of the session with a view to taking on Convenorship of F&PC from 1 August 2023. It was also noted that Linda Duncan had been appointed to co-opted membership of F&PC from January 2023 and to membership of Court from 1 August 2023.
- 1.3. The apologies were **noted**.

Part A For discussion and decision**2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 31 OCTOBER 2022 UC(22/23)13**

- 2.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2022 were **approved**.

3. MATTERS ARISING

Court Effectiveness Review (3.1)

- 3.1. Court received an update on progress with the Court Effectiveness Review and noted that the post questionnaire focus groups and 1:1 interviews had now taken place and the review report was due to be delivered in early February 2023, which would then be considered by the Court Effectiveness Steering Group and reported to Court in March with initial reflections on opportunities for enhancements and innovation. Any final recommendations and matters requiring approval would then be brought to Court in June. The Advance HE Consultants acknowledged the positive engagement they had experienced from members and officers during the review and thanks were extended to all concerned for their contributions.

Court/SLT Strategy Day (3.2)

- 3.2. Court reflected on the Strategy Day which had taken place on 23 November and had provided a deeper insight into the work of the People and Services Directorate, a session on stakeholder engagement and an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion session with the Human Library. Members largely welcomed the event, which they had found informative and enjoyable. It was noted that consideration was being given to future engagement with the Human Library as part of the University's work to mainstream inclusion, but no definite plans were in place currently. Members reflected that the sessions within the People and Services Showcase had not been long enough to allow sufficient time for questions and it was agreed that it would be useful to re-introduce pre-Court presentations to allow a deep dive into areas of strategy and service delivery. Consideration would be given to appropriate topics to include and the commitment of members to attend the sessions was requested. It was noted that pre-sessions could also be recorded for members unable to attend.

Project Vision (10.1)

- 3.3. Court received an update on progress with Project Vision (Future Infrastructure & Estate Strategy) since the last meeting. It was noted that the Digital Strategy Workstream was being incorporated and that proposals would be developed based on the project inputs over the next two quarters and brought to Court. It was noted that consideration would be given to the most appropriate timing and format to run this session with Court.

4. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

UC(22/23)14

- 4.1. The Principal introduced her written report and highlighted the publication of the Scottish Government's interim purpose and principles for post-school education, research and skills and recommended that all members read it. It was noted that ULT and SLT would consider the report and its implications in January and update Court after that. It was also noted that concern remained regarding the UK government's potential stance regarding international students.

- 4.2. Members noted the ongoing strike action and received an update on the pay negotiations which had taken place with the University's recognised trade unions. It was noted that the University's offer had been rejected but remained in place and the trade unions had been invited to consider alternative options to distribute the value of the offer. It was also noted that national pay negotiations through UCEA were likely to be brought forward for 2023/24.
- 4.3. Thereafter, Court **noted** the report.

5. STAFF WELLBEING REPORT

UC(22/23)15

- 5.1. Court received the report which provided an update on activity and progress since the last Health and Wellbeing Update which was presented to Court in March 2022. The report outlined the activity undertaken in support of colleague health and wellbeing and provided information on the uptake of support services including Occupational Health. It was noted that outcomes from the Colleague Engagement Survey would be presented to Court at its next meeting in March.
- 5.2. In discussion it was noted that other Universities were experiencing the same challenges around mental health and workload. It was noted that participation in mental health training for line managers was strongly encouraged and it was suggested that consideration be given to whether it should be mandated. It was agreed that future reports should include analysis of trend data, comparator data and include success criteria for the initiatives undertaken. It was noted that the next report would be presented in March.
- 5.3. Thereafter, Court **noted** the update.

6. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ANNUAL REPORT

UC(22/23)16

- 6.1. Court considered the report which gave an update on progress made against the University's respective Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) plans for the period 1st September 2021 to 31st August 2022. It provided insight into how we are tackling some of the known challenges as we better understand the lived experience of our student population and workforce, particularly those from marginalised groups. It was noted that the University's Mainstreaming Inclusion Report which is published every 2 years would be shared with Court in advance of its publication in April 2023.
- 6.2. Discussion followed during which the reduction in female academic promotions in the last round was considered. It was noted that historically the success rate on applications had been broadly equal between male and female applications and it was noted that there had been fewer applications from female academics this year. Although it was recognised that it was too soon to know if this was a trend, it was a concern which would be monitored closely and examined further to identify and address any factors which may be contributing to the lower rate of applications and success. It was noted that work currently underway around

retention and succession would also feed into this. It was noted that an update on this matter would be brought to the June 2023 Court meeting.

- 6.3. Members noted the activities being undertaken to attempt to encourage more men into nursing, which included greater male nurse presence in marketing materials, events, and involved school outreach activity. The University's well-established girls in STEM programme which also included school outreach work was also highlighted.
- 6.4. In response to a query about outcomes of cases raised under Report and Support, it was noted that the student wellbeing team offered support to the reporting individual in all cases, but the outcomes varied depending on the matter reported, and whether other members of the University community were involved, in which case University conduct procedures would be followed as appropriate. It was noted that more detail on this area would be included in future reports. In response to a query about ethnicity pay gap reporting, it was noted that this was currently challenging given the low levels of disclosure of ethnicity details by staff and that work would be undertaken next year to encourage higher levels of declaration of protected characteristics which would improve reporting accuracy. The importance of considering intersectionality in equality, diversity and inclusion matters was also recognised.
- 6.5. Thereafter, Court **noted** the report.

7. AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22* UC(22/23)17

- 7.1. Court received and **noted** the Audit & Risk Committee's 2021/22 annual report to Court.

8. APPROVAL OF ANNUAL REPORT AND AUDITED ACCOUNTS 2021/22* UC(22/23)18

- 8.1. Court received the paper which was presented to enable Court to discharge its statutory responsibilities in respect of the Financial Statements for 2021/22. It was noted that the statements had previously been considered and recommended for submission to Court by the Finance & Property Committee and the Audit & Risk Committee. Positive feedback from the auditors on their engagement with executive was noted.
- 8.2. In discussion, the marketing benefits of the annual review section were acknowledged and current activity to present the accounts to different audiences internally and externally was outlined. It was agreed that consideration should be given to other ways in which the report and accounts could be summarised and communicated to key stakeholder groups (staff, student and external).
- 8.3. Thereafter Court **approved** the Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2021/22, **authorised** the Chair of Court and the Principal to sign the Financial Statements on its behalf and **authorised** the Principal and the Finance Director to sign the Management Letter of Representation on its behalf.

9. REVIEW OF THE CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION* UC(22/23)19

- 9.1. Court received and **noted** the report which provided the financial position as at the end of October 2022. Court also noted an update on the 2023/24 budget allocation for Higher Education which represented a below inflation increase.

10. ANNUAL REVIEW OF KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS UC(22/23)20

- 10.1. Court received the paper and presentation which presented an update against the agreed set of University Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which are used to monitor progress towards the University Strategy, 'Shaping our Future: Driving Distinctiveness'. The report summarised achievements and performance against the 2021/22 Annual Plan and presented the latest figures for the KPIs. Areas of focus for the year ahead were also outlined.
- 10.2. Discussion followed during which the importance of building capacity to support academic areas where there was strong confidence that student number growth could be achieved was recognised. It was also noted that the student number related challenges outlined were reflected in the Top Risks register.
- 10.3. Thereafter, Court **noted** the report.

11. SFC OUTCOME AGREEMENT UC(22/23)21

- 11.1. Court received the paper and presentation which presented the background to Outcome Agreements along with the draft of the University's Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council for 2022/23. It was noted that the SFC was currently developing its accountability and impact framework following its review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability and it was expected that a draft of the Outcome Agreement process would be presented to the sector in Spring 2023.
- 11.2. In discussion the importance of articulating the University's position through its positioning of the Outcome Agreement was recognised.
- 11.3. Court **approved** the draft as the final submission subject to incorporation of further feedback and any necessary updating of data, and **delegated authority** to the Chair of Court to approve the final submission.

12. STUDENT RETENTION

- 12.1. Court received the presentation which provided the background to the current reduction in student retention/progression rates and outlined the actions being taken to address the situation. It was noted that early anecdotal indications were that a similar reduction was being experienced by some other universities and that societal effects following the impact of the pandemic were believed to be amongst the contributing factors. The improvement actions being taken focussed around the key themes of organisation and management, assessment and feedback and community and belonging were highlighted and the monitoring mechanisms in place were outlined.

12.2. In discussion the importance of early warning systems available to colleagues to identify lack of student engagement along with the development of the necessary skills and capacity to be able to provide support were recognised. The need to consider whether strategic drivers were emerging from this area and how to incorporate them was also recognised. In terms of resources, it was noted that the improvement actions were being embedded within existing processes to ensure they can be delivered and sustained.

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

13. INTERNATIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION UPDATE

13.1. Court received the presentation which provided an update on progress to date, challenges, and opportunities against the four strategic dimensions of the Internationalisation Strategy: International Student Community on Campus; Global Opportunities for Students and Staff; Transnational Education (TNE) and Global Online; International Research Partnerships. It was noted that a proposal regarding the establishment of an embedded pathway college would be brought to Court at its March meeting,

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

Part B For information

14. ACADEMIC BOARD MEETING 2 DECEMBER 2022 UC(22/23)22

14.1. Court **noted** the minutes from the meeting of the Academic Board of 2 December 2022.

15. REPORT FROM REMUNERATION COMMITTEE* UC(22/23)23

15.1. Court **noted** the report from the Remuneration Committee meeting that took place on 7 November 2022.

16. TOP RISKS MONITORING SCHEDULE (1 of 3)* UC(22/23)24

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

Part C Not intended for discussion

17. REPORTS FROM COURT COMMITTEES

17a Finance & Property Committee meeting on 17 November 2022* UC(22/23)25

17.1. The report was **noted**.

17.b Audit & Risk Committee meeting on 17 November 2022* UC(22/23)26

17.2 The report was **noted**.

18. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

18.1. The dates of future Court meetings were **noted**.

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