

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

**Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 30 October 2023**  
**at 3.00 pm in the Rivers Suite, Craiglockhart Campus and by Videoconference**

**Present:** J Boyle (Chair); Professor A Nolan (Principal & Vice-Chancellor); G Akshil; P Alonzi; Professor N Antonopoulos; R Cairns; D Chapman (online); Professor M Chipulu; J Chittleburgh; L Duncan; Dr K Hewitson (online); A Houghton; Professor A Machin; Q Miao; S Hall; S Kumar; M Melville; T Oyinlola (online); Dr H Patrick; Lady Paton (Chancellor's Assessor); P Sim; R Tomlinson; P Upton (online); Professor L Yellowlees.

**Apologies:** Professor S Cross.

**In attendance:** M Greenhalgh (Director of Strategy and Planning & Secretary to Court); C Begbie (Director of People & Services); D Cloy (Head of Governance & Risk); N Graham (Vice Principal, International); Professor N Karodia (DVC & Vice Principal, Learning & Teaching); A McGoff (Director of Finance & Operations); A Quickfall (Head of Planning and Business Intelligence) (from item 7); M Wilkinson (Head of Wellbeing and Inclusion) (item 12).

**Observing:** M Fasoula (HR Partner)

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

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, and it was noted that the meeting had been preceded by a Business School update presentation and discussion, presented by the Dean of School Christine Cross.
- 1.2. The Chair welcomed new Court members Geou Akshil (ENSA President); Ryan Cairns (ENSA Co-President); new lay members Malcolm Melville, Debs Chapman and Sonia Kumar and Professor Max Chipulu (Elected Academic Staff member). Mirella Fasoula (HR Partner) observing the meeting as part of her professional development was also welcomed.
- 1.3. It was noted that Ralph Adams and Gwyneth Scholefield had demitted Court since the last meeting and thanks were extended for their contributions to Court and the University. The successful graduation ceremonies of the previous week were also noted.
- 1.4. The apologies were **noted**.

- 1.5. Professor Yellowlees highlighted her SFC Board membership under declarations of members' interests.

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

### **2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 JUNE 2023 UC(22/23)060**

- 2.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2023 were **approved**.

### **3. MATTERS ARISING**

#### **Pathway College (3.1)**

- 3.1. Court **noted** an update on progress with the establishment of the University's international pathway college, the Edinburgh Napier University International College (ENUIC), which had been launched in July and would welcome its first students in January 2024.

### **4. COURT AND COURT COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP\* UC(23/24)01**

- 4.1. Court considered the paper and:

- (i) **Noted** its membership for 2023/24.
- (ii) **Noted** the outcome of the lay member recruitment process and the report on other Court membership matters.
- (iii) **Approved** the updated membership and convenorship of its standing committees for 2023/24.
- (iv) **Noted** the Chair of Court Appointment Process.
- (v) **Approved** the updated election regulations, subject to an amendment to refer to non-academic staff as professional service staff.

### **5. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT UC(23/24)02**

- 5.1. The Principal introduced her written report and highlighted the reviews published by the Scottish Government over the summer which were expected to heavily influence the future direction of tertiary education policy and funding. Members were encouraged to review the detailed analysis of these documents and the potential impacts on the University which had been prepared and was appended to the report. It was noted that Court would be kept apprised of policy developments in the University's external environment as they arose in future meetings/strategy sessions. The deal agreed between the UK Government and the European Union on the UK's association to the Horizon Europe research and innovation funding programme was also highlighted and welcomed as a positive development.
- 5.2. In discussion members highlighted the importance of analysing the change and acting on the risks including the risk of missed opportunity. The siloed nature of the reports and lack of an overarching view and clear path for implementation was noted as a concern.
- 5.3. Court **noted** the report.

## **6. ENSA STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE**

**UC(23/24)03**

- 6.1. The Edinburgh Napier Students' Association (ENSA) President and Co-President introduced the update on ENSA's current activities and progress against its Strategic Plan 2021 – 2024. A number of key concerns for students and potential future initiatives were highlighted.
- 6.2. In discussion the funding increases provided to ENSA by the University for the current year were noted and the regular ongoing dialogue between ENSA and the University on challenges, initiatives and sources of funding was recognised. The Development Trust was highlighted as a potential funding route for future initiatives. Challenges with accommodation availability in the private rental sector which impacted particularly on international postgraduate students was also acknowledged and discussed.
- 6.3. The Chair passed on the recognition of the ENSA staff and CEO that the Sabbatical team were doing a terrific job this year.
- 6.4. Court welcomed the positive progress outlined and **noted** the update.

## **7. FINANCIAL REPORT: PROVISIONAL OUTTURN FOR 2022/23\***

**UC(23/24)04**

- 7.1. Court received the paper which reported on the provisional financial outturn for the year ended 31 July 2023.
- 7.2. The positive financial outcome presented was welcomed. In discussion, the pension discount rate was explained and the accounting policy on recognising tuition fees was clarified. An update on the transition from EY to the new internal audit provider PWC was also provided.
- 7.3. Thereafter, Court **noted** the report.

## **8. INTERNATIONALISATION STRATEGY UPDATE: TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION (TNE) DEVELOPMENTS\***

**UC(23/24)10**

- 8.1. Court received the paper and presentation which updated members on progress against the Internationalisation Strategy and current discussions and developments regarding new transnational education (TNE) projects.
- 8.2. Discussion followed during which members noted the importance of ensuring the risk profile of TNE developments was carefully managed and the need, as discussed at F&PC previously, to take account of environmental sustainability objectives when delivering the strategy. The importance of robust quality assurance processes in relation to the franchise model were recognised as crucial to ensure the mitigation of reputational risk. It was recognised that the growth of global online would impact demand for ENSA's advice services which

would be considered through ongoing resource discussions. The requirement for partner institution staff to meet AACSB standards in respect of Business School programmes was noted and it was noted that guidance was in place to ensure parity of standards and support for delivery staff employed in country.

8.3. Court **noted** the update.

## **9. ANNUAL REPORT ON STUDENT SURVEYS**

**UC(23/24)05**

- 9.1. Court received the paper which summarised the latest (2023) 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). In addition, the paper provided a summary of the results from Module Evaluation surveys undertaken internally at Edinburgh Napier during the academic year 2022/23. It was noted that enhancement actions were focused around marking and assessment, organisation and management and community and belonging. The role of the Student Success Group in agreeing and monitoring the actions to address the outcomes of the student experience surveys to enhance the student experience was also highlighted.
- 9.2. Discussion followed during which it was noted that a new benchmarking score for all universities had been introduced to the NSS following the decision to stop using the overall satisfaction question in England. It was noted that the Student Success Group examined localised action plans down to modular level and enabled learning points and good practice to be transferred to other programmes. It was agreed that it would be helpful to capture greater detail on these aspects in future reports. In relation to a query as to whether the 90% satisfaction score remained an appropriate target it was noted that there were variations in performance across Schools and that some Schools were already close to achieving that target. It was therefore considered appropriate to retain the ambition given some Schools were already close to achieving it and the need to strive for consistency.
- 9.3. Thereafter, Court **noted** the update.

## **10. ANNUAL REPORT ON LEAGUE TABLE PERFORMANCE UC(23/24)06**

- 10.1. Court received the paper and a presentation which provided a summary of Edinburgh Napier's current rankings in the four main UK league tables, as well as the Times World University rankings, and the Entrepreneurial Impact Report 2023. The changes in our position this year, the reasons behind those changes and the factors which would impact our positioning in future were highlighted. An explanation of the Guardian League Table methodology was also provided. It was recognised that student number versus resources metrics had a significant impact and that future investments in facilities would improve league table positioning.

10.2. In discussion the lack of clarity on how NSS scores would be used for league tables in future was noted. The sensitivity of different international markets to league table rankings was acknowledged. It was also noted that the University closely monitored its performance against our competitor set.

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

## **11. 'YOUR VOICE' UPDATE**

**UC(23/24)07**

11.1. Court received the paper which provided an update on the progress made against the actions taken as a result of colleague feedback from the November 2022, 'Your Voice', engagement survey. It also provided an update on the University approach to Continuous Listening and the Pulse Survey planned in November.

11.2. Discussion followed during which the coverage of the Pulse Survey was clarified and it was noted that there were differentiated improvement targets for different Schools and Services. The ongoing work to address issues impacting workload was highlighted and the discussions taking place concerning the balance of teaching and research workload allocations for academic staff were noted. It was recognised that adjusting action plans frequently in response to ongoing feedback was a challenge to capacity which needed to be considered.

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

## **12. COLLEAGUE AND STUDENT WELLBEING REPORT**

**UC(23/24)08**

12.1. Court received the paper which provided an update on the work undertaken to support student and colleague mental health and wellbeing in 2022/23 and which commented on current issues.

12.2. In discussion the uncertain position regarding future government funding for student mental health support was acknowledged and it was noted that consideration was being given to how to sustain the delivery of services in the event of a loss of funding, recognising their critical importance. It was noted that an update would be provided to Court on the position once the future funding situation was known. The range of engagement mechanisms used to promote services to students and colleagues was also highlighted. Court expressed thanks to the mental health and wellbeing team for their important work in this area.

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

## **13. PROJECT VISION UPDATE**

**UC(23/24)09**

13.1. Court received the paper and presentation which provided an update on the progress of Project VISION and mapped out the inputs which would be brought to Court culminating in the presentation of the Estate Masterplan in March 2024. It was noted that Court would be updated in December on the analysis

of space utilisation data and that the project risk register was reviewed at each project board meeting and considered by Audit and Risk Committee at each of its meetings. It was also noted that an independent advisor/assessor to Court on Project VISION would soon be appointed with a remit to assess plans and provide assurance. It was requested that this role be in place by December.

13.2. Discussion followed during which the importance of ongoing monitoring of progress against risks by Audit and Risk Committee on behalf of Court was recognised. It was noted that an internal audit had recently been completed on Project Vision and that F&PC would also consider project risks. It was also confirmed that ENSA would be engaged in the development of options for sports facilities as these emerged. It was confirmed that there was confidence that the various components were progressing such that the necessary information would be available for Court to consider the proposed Estate Masterplan in March. It was also noted that quick wins which would demonstrate an immediate response to student feedback were being considered and progressed. It was confirmed that a separate Court strategy session would be organised to allow sufficient time for consideration of the Masterplan.

13.3. Court **noted** the update.

**14. SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL OUTCOME AGREEMENT 2023/24** **UC(23/24)11**

14.1. Court received the paper which presented the University's Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) for 2023/24.

14.2. Court **approved** the Outcome Agreement.

**Part B For information**

**15. ACADEMIC BOARD MEETING 13 OCTOBER 2023** **UC(23/24)12**

15.1. Court **noted** the minutes from the meeting of the Academic Board of 13 October 2023. The approval of the Sabbatical Policy at the meeting was highlighted.

**Part C Not intended for discussion**

**16. REPORTS FROM COURT COMMITTEES**

**16.a Finance & Property Committee meeting on 2 October 2023\*** **UC(23/24)13**

16.1. The report was **noted**. It was confirmed that the meeting was quorate given that a date change had impacted the level of attendance. It was noted that

the committee was reviewing delegated authority levels and governance arrangements.

**16.b Audit & Risk Committee meeting on 3 October 2023\*** **UC(23/24)14**

16.2 The report was **noted** and members **approved** the extension of the appointment of KPMG as external auditors for a further year. It was noted that committee constitutions and terms of reference were contained in the Court Handbook and published on the intranet.

**16.c Nominations Committee meeting on 9 October 2023\*** **UC(23/24)15**

16.3 The minutes were **noted**.

**17. FORWARD SCHEDULE OF COURT BUSINESS 2023/24** **UC(23/24)16**

17.1. Court **noted** the forward schedule. It was noted that the forward schedule would be amended in future presentation to highlight items of business where a decision was required.

**18. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

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

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