

Edinburgh Napier University
University Court**Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 11 December 2023
at 3.40 pm in Room 1/53, Craiglockhart Campus**

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

Apologies: Professor M Chipulu; Dr K Hewitson; A Houghton; P Upton.

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 Watling (Head of Student Futures)(item 7); L Wright (Head of Financial Reporting & Projects)(until item 10).

1. OPENING REMARKS, APOLOGIES 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 strategy presentation on the skills development landscape presented by Professor Sally Smith (Head of Graduate Apprenticeships and Skills Development) and Kirsty Connell-Skinner (Programme Manager, Housing, Construction & Infrastructure (HCI) Skills Gateway).
- 1.2. It was noted that the Principal had announced that she would retire at the end of 2024 and that the process for appointing her successor would commence in the New Year.
- 1.3. It was noted that this was the last meeting of Professor Machin who was leaving the University to take up a new position in February 2024. Thanks were extended for her contribution to the University and to Court.
- 1.4. Congratulations were extended to Professor Bill Buchanan who had been named Most Innovative Teacher of the Year at the 2023 Times Higher Education (THE) Awards. Congratulations were also extended to lay Court member Sonia Kumar for winning the Inspiring Woman of the Year 2023 award at the 2023 Scottish Cyber Awards.
- 1.5. The apologies were **noted**.

- 1.6. 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 30 OCTOBER 2023 UC(23/24)17

- 2.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 30 October 2023 were **approved**.

3. MATTERS ARISING

Student Mental Health Support (12.2)

- 3.1. Court **noted** that there were no new developments to report at this time and an update would be provided at the next meeting.

Independent Advisor/Assessor to Court on Project VISION (13.1)

- 3.2. Court **noted** an update on the position with the appointment of an independent advisor/assessor to Court for Project VISION.

4. REPORT FROM REMUNERATION COMMITTEE* UC(23/24)18

- 4.1. Court **noted** the report from the Remuneration Committee meeting that took place on 13 November 2023 and **approved** the revised Remuneration Committee Policies and Processes document.
- 4.2. The Convenor reflected on a recent meeting of the Convenors of University Remuneration Committees which had provided assurance that the University was at the leading edge of good practice in this area.

5. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT UC(23/24)19

- 5.1. The Principal introduced her written report and highlighted the ongoing complex regulatory and policy environment affecting the Scottish Higher Education Sector, and the changes in the international student recruitment market which would be covered next on the agenda.
- 5.2. Members welcomed the initial results of the colleague engagement 'Your Voice' Pulse Survey, where a 73% engagement score had been achieved which exceeded our 72% target and was an increase from the 69% score a year ago. A full report on the outcomes would be brought to the next meeting.
- 5.3. In response to a query, it was noted that nursing student applications were down against the same point in the cycle last year, consistent with experience elsewhere in the sector.
- 5.4. Thereafter, Court **noted** the report.

6. INTERNATIONAL RECRUITMENT UPDATE

- 6.1. Court received a presentation which updated on current international market conditions and their impact on student recruitment. The actions being taken by the University to address the issue were highlighted including progress with the establishment of the Pathway College. It was noted that international recruitment was considered regularly by Audit and Risk Committee through the Top Risks Register and by Finance & Property Committee.
- 6.2. In discussion it was noted that the Pathway College would open up other markets by surmounting qualification recognition issues and that several non-visa sensitive markets were also being prioritised. It was noted that the University works collaboratively to share best practice across the sector and benefitted from market insights through relationships with partners such as Oxford International. The importance of continuation was recognised and it was noted that measures had been put in place to improve the continuation position of international students on 2 year masters programmes. It was agreed that further information detailing the University's priority markets would be brought to a future Court meeting.
- 6.3. Thereafter, Court **noted** the update.

7. EMPLOYABILITY STRATEGY UPDATE

UC(23/24)20

- 7.1. Court considered the report and presentation which provided an update progress with the implementation of the Edinburgh Napier University Employability Strategy which had been created to positively impact students and graduates from across all schools and programmes within the University.
- 7.2. Discussion followed during which the resources and support provided for international students was highlighted. It was noted that efforts were ongoing to focus support on early years graduates including securing alumni mentors and presenters. The issue of the current approach to graduate outcome data not recognising successful outcomes for students whose career paths entailed self-employed/freelance roles was recognised and it was noted that the sector had provided feedback to HESA on that point.
- 7.3. Thereafter, Court **noted** the update.

8. AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23*

UC(23/24)21

- 8.1. Court received and **noted** the Audit & Risk Committee's 2022/23 annual report to Court.
- 8.2. The detail of a low rated outstanding cyber security action was clarified, and it was confirmed that Audit & Risk Committee focussed on themes emerging across different audit reports such as data issues.

9. APPROVAL OF ANNUAL REPORT AND AUDITED ACCOUNTS 2022/23* **UC(23/24)22**

- 9.1. Court received the paper which was presented to enable Court to discharge its statutory responsibilities in respect of the Financial Statements for 2022/23. 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.
- 9.2. Members welcomed the improved presentation of the report and recognised the marketing and promotional potential of the annual review section.
- 9.3. Thereafter Court **approved** the Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2022/23, **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.

10. REVIEW OF THE CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION* **UC(23/24)23**

- 10.1. Court received and **noted** the report which provided the financial position as at the end of October 2023.

11. ANNUAL REVIEW OF KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS **UC(23/24)24**

- 11.1. Court received the paper 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 2022/23 Annual Plan and presented the latest figures for the KPIs.
- 11.2. Discussion followed during which the challenge of achieving our SIMD target, which had been impacted by the downturn in college direct entrants, was noted. It was noted that the University's Widening Participation Strategy was being reviewed and would be brought to Court for discussion when ready. It was noted that certain KPI targets would be re-adjusted where appropriate.
- 11.3. Thereafter, Court **noted** the report.

12. PROJECT VISION: CAMPUS OPTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL **UC(23/24)25**

- 12.1. Court received the paper and presentation which provided an options appraisal and recommended approach towards agreeing the headline masterplan for investment in, and changes to, our current campus estate to deliver the objectives of Project Vision. It also provided a summary update on work ongoing in parallel to inform site-specific masterplans and highlighted next steps.

- 12.2. In discussion it was clarified that the location of Schools across the campuses was being considered within the scenarios.
- 12.3. Thereafter, Court **noted** the paper and presentation and **approved** the proposal to develop further detail on option '3A Refurbish Merchiston and expand the rest of the campuses as required' as described in Section A and B of the paper and within the appendices, noting that all capital expenditure associated with the progression of this option would be approved on a case-by-case basis in line with normal process through Finance & Property Committee.

13. QUALITY ENHANCEMENT AND STANDARDS REVIEW UPDATE

- 13.1. Court received an update on the background to the University's Quality Enhancement and Standards Review and on the areas covered by the review itself which took place on 7 December. It was noted that the outcome would not be known until January and would be reported to Court once received.
- 13.2. Court **noted** the update.

14. HONORARY AWARDS*

UC(23/24)26

- 14.1. Court **approved** the Honorary Award nominations recommended by the Honorary Awards and Visiting Titles Committee and Academic Board, subject to further due diligence regarding one of the nominees.
- 14.2. The recent increase in the number of names being proposed was welcomed but there was still more work to do, and members were encouraged to bring forward nominations. An overview of the nomination process was provided.

Part B For information

15. ACADEMIC BOARD MEETING 24 NOVEMBER 2023

UC(23/24)27

- 15.1. Court **noted** the minutes from the meeting of the Academic Board of 24 November 2023.

16. ENSA UPDATE

- 16.1. Court **noted** an update on current initiatives and activities of the Edinburgh Napier Students' Association. Members welcomed the update.

17. TOP RISKS MONITORING SCHEDULE (1 of 3)*

UC(23/24)28

- 17.1. Court **noted** the Top Risks monitoring schedule.
- 17.2. It was confirmed that Cyber Security was an area of particular Audit and Risk Committee and internal audit focus and that the rating of the Cyber Security Risk fully reflected the ongoing level of threat and remained appropriate.

Part C Not intended for discussion

18. REPORTS FROM COURT COMMITTEES

18a Finance & Property Committee meeting on 15 November 2023* **UC(23/24)29**

18.1. The report was **noted**.

18.b Audit & Risk Committee meeting on 15 November 2023* **UC(22/23)30**

18.2 The report was **noted**.

19. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

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

19.2. It was **noted** that the next Strategy Day was proposed to be held on 26 March 2024.

Part D Reserved business

20. CHAIR OF COURT SUCCESSION* **UC(23/24)31**

[To avoid any conflict of interest, the Chair of Court, Vice Chair of Court and Principal left the meeting while this item was considered. The item was presented by the Chair of Audit & Risk Committee on behalf of Nominations Committee]

20.1. Court considered and **approved** the approach proposed by Nominations Committee, as set out in the paper, to managing succession in the role of Chair of Court in 2024/25 to ensure continuity and stability during a period of senior leadership transition. The Chair of Court appointment process would commence in autumn 2024 once the vacancy had arisen with the Vice-Chair acting as interim Chair in accordance with Court's Standing Orders until a new Chair is appointed. The outgoing Chair would continue to sit on the Principal Appointment Panel beyond the end of their term as an external advisor.

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