

EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY COURT

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 25 March 2024
at 3.45 pm in the Rivers Suite, Craiglockhart and by Video Conference

Present: J Boyle (Chair); Professor A Nolan (Principal & Vice-Chancellor); Professor P Andras; G Akshil; P Alonzi (online from item 6); Professor N Antonopoulos; R Cairns; D Chapman; Professor M Chipulu; J Chittleburgh (online); Professor S Cross; L Duncan; A Houghton; Q Miao (online); S Hall; S Kumar; Dr K Hewitson (online); M Melville; T Oyinlola (online); Dr H Patrick; Lady Paton (Chancellor's Assessor); P Sim; R Tomlinson; P Upton.

Apologies: Professor L Yellowlees.

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); L Conlan (Head of Reward, ER and Engagement) (item 7); G Hutchison (Dean, School of Applied Sciences) (item 6); J Pearson (Environmental Sustainability Manager) (item 6).

Observing: F Mason (Head of Business Engagement and IP Commercialisation).

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

- 1.1. The meeting was preceded by a presentation: Hub for Success: Our Commitment to Care Experienced Students, by Lorraine Moore (Hub Manager) and Barbara Kidd (Head of Development) which members had welcomed.
- 1.2. Professor Peter Andras who had joined Court as the member appointed by being elected by the Academic Board from among its Academic Staff membership was welcomed to the meeting.
- 1.3. Fiona Mason (Head of Business Engagement and IP Commercialisation) was welcomed to the meeting as an observer. Jamie Pearson (Environmental Sustainability Manager), Gary Hutchison (Dean of School of Applied Sciences) and Lee Conlan (Head of Reward, ER and Engagement) who were attending to support agenda items, were also welcomed to the meeting.

- 1.4. It was noted that the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Annual Report originally scheduled for this meeting had been deferred to the June meeting to allow for input from the newly appointed Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- 1.5. The apologies were **noted**.
- 1.6. Members were invited to declare any interest in the matters under consideration on the agenda. No declarations were made.

Part A For discussion and decision

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 DECEMBER 2023 UC(23/24)32

- 2.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2023 were **approved**.

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Student Mental Health Support

- 3.1. An update on the funding position for student mental health support was provided. It was noted that the current funding provided by the Scottish Government would end in August and was not expected to be renewed. Discussions were taking place within the University on how to maintain the service.

4. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT UC(23/24)33

- 4.1. The Principal introduced her written report. It was noted that confirmation of Scottish Funding Council (SFC) funding allocations was awaited.
- 4.2. Court **noted** the report.

5. REPORT FROM NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE: PRINCIPAL APPOINTMENT UC(23/24)34

- 5.1. Court received the report from the Nominations Committee meeting of 2 February 2024 which updated on the establishment of the Appointment Committee for the role of Principal and Vice-Chancellor, requested delegated authority for the Appointment Committee to make the appointment and updated on the appointment process. The paper also updated on the appointment of the independent Court assessor for Project Vision and made recommendations on committee membership matters.
- 5.2. In response to a query concerning professional services staff representation on the Appointment Committee, the rationale for the Committee composition which had been approved by Nominations Committee in accordance with its remit and which met the requirements of the Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance, was outlined. It was noted that professional services colleagues

had been included in the process to date through participation in the focus groups run by Odgers Berndtson to inform the role description and candidate brief, and that there would be further opportunity for professional services colleagues to be included in the selection process as it progressed.

5.3. Thereafter, Court:

- i) **Noted** the establishment of the Principal Appointment Committee.
- ii) **Delegated authority** to the Principal Appointment Committee to make the appointment.
- iii) **Noted** the update on the appointment process and timeline.
- iv) **Noted** the appointment of Andy Outram as independent assessor to Court on Project Vision.
- v) **Approved:**
 - i. The appointment of Sonia Kumar to Audit & Risk Committee.
 - ii. The appointment of Peter Andras to Nominations Committee.
 - iii. The appointment of Debs Chapman as the Court appointed Director on the ENSA Corporate Trustee from 1 August 2024.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY: REPORT ON PROGRESS

UC(23/24)35

- 6.1. The Dean of the School of Applied Sciences and the Environmental Sustainability Manager introduced the paper which provided an overview of progress in the delivery of the University's Environmental Sustainability Strategy including a high-level overview of measures developed to mitigate impact. Reference was made to objectives embedded within the University Strategy and commitments detailed within the Environmental Sustainability Strategy.
- 6.2. Discussion followed during which the need to reconcile our growth ambitions with the need achieve our sustainability targets was recognised and the issue of replacing gas for heating was acknowledged as the biggest challenge to achieving our net zero target. Regarding the carbon footprint of building work, it was confirmed that a tool was used to calculate this as part of the procurement process.
- 6.3. Court welcomed and **noted** the report and the progress outlined.

7. 'YOUR VOICE' PULSE SURVEY RESULTS

- 7.1. Court received a presentation on the results of the 'Your Voice' colleague pulse survey which had take place to monitor the effectiveness of the actions taken in response to feedback from the 2022 colleague engagement survey. A 73% engagement score had been achieved which exceeded our 72% target and was an increase from the 69% score from the 2022 survey. Detail was provided on participation rates, the engagement score, comparisons to the 2022 survey, key themes and next steps. It was noted that a further, final colleague engagement survey would be undertaken in June 2024, after which a continuous listening approach would be implemented.
- 7.2. In discussion it was noted that benchmark data would be obtained for reporting with the results of the next survey and that further detail would be provided in

the next report on how the SLT-led working groups were gaining traction. The mechanisms through which common issues with the student experience were factored in were also highlighted.

7.3. Court **noted** the presentation and welcomed the progress and activity outlined.

8. INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT UPDATE

8.1. Court received a presentation updating on the environmental and policy factors impacting international student recruitment and detailing the range of actions being taken by the University to address the position including the establishment of the Edinburgh Napier University International College (ENUIC).

8.2. Members recognised the challenging market conditions which were expected to continue for up to two years and endorsed the diversification strategy being adopted. The importance of diversity in the composition of classes for international postgraduate students to ensure a positive student experience was also recognised.

8.3. Court **noted** the presentation.

9. REVIEW OF THE CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION* UC(23/24)36

9.1. Court received and **noted** the report which provided the University's financial position as at the end of January 2024. An overview was provided of the extremely challenging outlook for the next financial year in the context of the income challenges from the downturn in international student recruitment and reduced public funding.

9.2. Regarding the impact of the current recruitment freeze on existing staff workloads and the ability to deliver priorities, the £10m increase in spending on staff put in place in the previous year was highlighted. It was noted that vacancies were being monitored on a weekly basis and opportunities were being sought for colleagues to move into different teams across the University to ensure resource was deployed in the areas needed. It was also confirmed that key roles were being prioritised for replacement. In response to a query, the University's financial dealings with Barclays were clarified and it was confirmed that the University's financial arrangements were considered in line with the University's Ethical Financial Investment Policy.

9.3. Court **noted** the update.

10. QUALITY ENHANCEMENT AND STANDARDS REVIEW UC(23/24)37 OUTCOME REPORT

10.1. Court received the report which presented the outcome of the University's recent Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR). The outcome report was published on the QAA website on 15th February 2024 and confirmed that the review team had confidence that Edinburgh Napier University was making effective progress in continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision to enable effective arrangements to be

in place for managing academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience. This was the best possible outcome for this QAA review method. There were three areas of good practice identified, one improvement recommendation and a number of enhancement suggestions. It was noted that an action plan was being developed to address the recommendation on postgraduate student experience which would be brought to Academic Board in June.

10.2. Court welcomed the positive outcome and **noted** the report.

11. STUDENT RETENTION* UC(23/24)38

11.1. Court received the paper which presented a mid-year update on the University's Enhancing Retention plan for the academic year 2023-24. The paper outlined actions taken to improve retention which were proceeding as planned and indicators of progress which were comparing favourably to measures at current points in previous post-pandemic academic cycles.

11.2. Court welcomed the progress outlined and **noted** the report.

12. ENSA ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS UC(23/24)39

12.1. Court received and **noted** the Trustees' Report and Financial Statements of Edinburgh Napier Students' Association (ENSA) for the year ended 30 June 2023 and noted an update on the activities and initiatives led by the Sabbatical Officers. Members welcomed the update and the progress demonstrated.

12.2. It was noted that the Chair of ENSA had demitted office in February 2024 and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) was leaving in May 2024. It was noted that interim arrangements were in place and that the recruitment process to replace the CEO was underway, with the Chair recruitment to follow the appointment of the new CEO.

13. COURT SCHEDULE OF DELEGATED FINANCIAL AUTHORITY UC(23/24)40

13.1. Court received the paper which presented Court's Schedule of Delegated Financial Authority which had been updated to incorporate amendments to levels of delegated financial authority considered and agreed by Finance and Property Committee.

13.2. On recommendation of Finance & Property Committee, Court **approved** the updated Court Schedule of Delegated Financial Authority.

Part B For information

14. ACADEMIC BOARD MEETING 8 MARCH 2024 UC(23/24)41

14.1. Court **noted** the minutes from the meeting of the Academic Board of 8 March 2024.

15. COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT* UC(23/24)42

15.1. Court received and **noted** the paper which provided the annual report on matters relating to the handling, recording, and reporting of complaints received by the University. It was noted that further analysis of student conduct complaint data would be undertaken to identify if any further work was required to address student conduct issues with particular groups.

16. TOP RISKS MONITORING REPORT (2 of 3)* UC(23/24)43

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

Part C Not intended for discussion

17. REPORTS FROM COURT COMMITTEES

17a Finance & Property Committee meeting on 25 January 2024* UC(23/24)44

17.1. The report was **noted**.

17b Finance & Property Committee meeting on 7 March 2024* UC(23/24)45

17.2 The report was **noted**.

17.c Audit & Risk Committee meeting on 28 February 2024* UC(23/24)46

17.3 The report was **noted**.

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.