

Edinburgh Napier University

University Court

**Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 9 December 2024
at 3.45 pm in Room 1/53, Craigmlockhart Campus and by Videoconference**

Present: R Tomlinson (Chair); Professor A Nolan (Principal & Vice-Chancellor); Professor P Andras; Professor N Antonopoulos; R Cairns; Professor M Chipulu; J Chittleburgh; Professor S Cross; L Duncan; E Eghan; Q Miao; S Kumar; M Melville; Dr H Patrick; Lady Paton (Chancellor's Assessor); P Sim; P Upton (online); H Wareing; Professor L Yellowlees.

Apologies: P Alonzi; D Chapman; Dr K Hewitson; T Oyinlola.

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); A McGoff (Director of Finance & Operations); C Cunningham (Head of DLTE); A Outram (Court adviser on Project VISION); L Wright (Head of Financial Reporting and Projects); G Hutchison (Dean, School of Applied Sciences).

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

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. It was noted that the meeting had been preceded by a Pre-Court session on External Engagement produced by the Director of Marketing & External Relations and the Deputy Vice Chancellor and Vice Principal of Research & Innovation.
- 1.2. It was noted that Paolo Alonzi would demit from Court following this meeting. Thanks were extended for his contribution.
- 1.3. The apologies were **noted**.

Part A For discussion and decision

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 OCTOBER 2024 UC(24/25)13

- 2.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 28 October 2024 were **approved**.

3. MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1. There were no matters arising.

4. REPORT FROM REMUNERATION COMMITTEE*

UC(24/25)14

- 4.1. Court **noted** the report from the Remuneration Committee meeting that took place on 18 November 2024.

5. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

UC(24/25)15

- 5.1. The Principal introduced her written report which included appended reports on Project VISION, the Pathway College and the annual review of Key Performance Indicators.
- 5.2. The provisions of the Scottish Government Budget statement of 4th December were highlighted, which represented a 1.7% cash terms uplift but 0.7% real terms cut.
- 5.3. Project VISION: Members noted the key points from the report which provided a summary of proposed steps to progress Masterplan options for Merchiston and Craiglockhart while limiting the financial impact to the University and an update on progress of the Digital Strategy implementation, highlighting recent deliveries in this academic year.
- 5.4. In discussion, the need to communicate effectively with students in advance of campus works was noted and the executive would follow up on this point with the ENSA President. Members reflected on the challenge of securing the right decant space at the right time and emphasised the importance of keeping the University community informed on the current status of Project VISION through planned communications in the New Year.
- 5.5. Pathway College Update: Members noted the key points from the report which updated on the Edinburgh Napier University International College (ENUIC) since its launch in January 2024. The reasons behind student withdrawals were noted and the actions being taken to improve retention and progression were outlined.
- 5.6. Annual Review of Key Performance Indicators 2023/24: Members noted the key points from the report which provided an update against the agreed set of University Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which are used to monitor progress towards the University Strategy, summarising achievements and performance against the 2023/24 Annual Plan and presenting the latest figures for the KPIs.
- 5.7. In discussion, the link between KPIs, the Annual Plan, School/Service plans and individual staff objectives was explained, and it was confirmed that there was a desire to maintain stretch targets which set the ambition for the University. It was confirmed that achievement of KPI targets was not linked to remuneration. Members reflected on the importance of continuing to focus on effective performance management, recognising the context of the University environment. It was suggested that it would be useful to include comparative information against other Universities in future reports.
- 5.8. Court **noted** the report.

6. STUDENT RETENTION

UC(24/25)16

- 6.1. Court received an update on progress against the University's Enhancing Retention plan for the academic year 2023-24.
- 6.2. In relation to a query about the increase in the proportion of good honours degrees achieved, the robust processes in place to assure academic quality and standards were highlighted. In relation to the impact of Covid disruption on new students, it was noted that, whilst an improvement in attendance and engagement was now being seen, Covid impact issues remained apparent with each age group moving into University and would remain a continued area of focus in the medium term.
- 6.3. Court welcomed the positive progress outlined and **noted** the update.

7. AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24*

UC(24/25)17

- 7.1. Court received and **noted** the Audit & Risk Committee's 2023/24 annual report to Court.

8. APPROVAL OF ANNUAL REPORT AND AUDITED ACCOUNTS 2023/24*

UC(24/25)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 2023/24. 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.
- 8.2. Thereafter Court **approved** the Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2023/24, **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 CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION*

UC(24/25)19

- 9.1. Court received the paper which reported on the financial position as at the end of October 2024 and was given an update on the current forecast. The range of mitigating actions being taken by the University to achieve its budget were highlighted. It was recognised that achieving the budget would be challenging due to the ongoing difficult financial environment. It was noted that Finance and Property Committee would continue to focus on the financial position and mitigating actions through its upcoming meetings.
- 9.2. Thereafter, Court **noted** the report.

10. UNIVERSITY RESEARCH AND INNOVATION UPDATE UC(24/25)20

10.1. Court **noted** the update on progress with Research and Innovation activity at the University, which had been presented to Finance & Property Committee previously.

11. SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL SUBMISSION: FIVE-YEAR KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND INNOVATION FUND (KEIF) STRATEGY* UC(24/25)21

11.1. Court received the paper which provided a draft of the University's Knowledge Exchange & Innovation Fund (KEIF) Strategy alongside draft KEIF metrics and an addendum providing further information on these metrics.

11.2. Discussion followed during which it was clarified that the KEIF Strategy had been fully considered and reviewed by ULT/SLT and reflected existing elements of the University's Research & Innovation Strategy whilst also allowing space for further innovation.

11.3. Thereafter, Court provided initial **approval** for the draft KEIF Strategy as presented, noting that the draft was subject to change ahead of its submission and that a further submission would be presented to Court for retrospective approval in March 2025, which would consist of the final strategy document and metrics, as submitted to the SFC by 31 January 2025.

12. EDINBURGH NAPIER STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION UPDATE UC(24/25)22

12.1. Court received the paper which provided an update on ENSA activities and initiatives and presented ENSA's interim annual plan for 2024/25. It was noted that members would be invited to the online session on 17 December where the results of ENSA's Student Voice Survey would be presented.

12.2. Court welcomed the positive progress outlined and **noted** the update.

13. HONORARY AWARDS* UC(24/25)23

13.1. Court **approved** four of the Honorary Award nominations recommended by the Honorary Awards and Visiting Titles Committee and Academic Board. Approval of one nomination was deferred subject to further due diligence by the Honorary Awards and Visiting Titles Committee.

Part B For information

14. ACADEMIC BOARD MEETING 22 NOVEMBER 2024 UC(24/25)24

14.1. Court **noted** the minutes from the meeting of the Academic Board of 22 November 2024.

15. TOP RISKS MONITORING REPORT (1 of 3)*

UC(24/25)25

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

Part C Not intended for discussion

16. REPORTS FROM COURT COMMITTEES

16.a Finance & Property Committee meeting on 21 November 2024*

UC(24/25)26

16.1. The report was **noted**.

16.b Audit & Risk Committee meeting on 25 November 2024*

UC(24/25)27

16.2 The report was **noted**.

17. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

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

VALEDICTION

It was noted that this was the last meeting of Principal and Vice Chancellor Professor Andrea Nolan ahead of her retirement on 31st December. Thanks were extended for her significant contribution to the University and to Court throughout her 11 years of leadership.

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