



UNIVERSITY COURT

Minutes of meeting held on 7 October 2015

PRESENT

Keir Bloomer (Chair)	Jackie Macdonald
Jim Bradshaw	Miller McLean
Professor Graham Caie CBE	Linda McPherson
Ian Calder	Margaret O'Connor
Craig Cathcart	Adam Roe
Professor Bob Cormack	Judith Sischy OBE
Dr Anthony Falconer OBE	Heidi Vistisen
Professor Alan Gilloran	Professor Petra Wend
Dr Anna Gregor	Sheila Williams
Mark Laing	

IN ATTENDANCE

Irene Hynd	University Secretary (Secretary)
Dr Richard Butt	Dean of School of Arts, Social Sciences and Management
Dr Fiona Coutts	Dean of School of Health Sciences
Malcolm Cutt	Director of Operations and Finance
Gordon Craig	Head of Planning
Riley Power	Governance Officer (Minute Secretary)
John Lauwerys	Consultant and Facilitator, Court Effectiveness Review

1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed members and those in attendance to the meeting. Particular welcome was extended to John Lauwerys, who was observing the meeting as part of the evidence gathering for the review of Court Effectiveness.

Apologies were noted from Rob Rae and Craig Cathcart.

2 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

3 DETERMINATION OF OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

There was no other competent business.

4 ARTICLES OF GOVERNANCE

- 4.1 Members NOTED that the Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh (Scotland) Amendment Order of Council had come into force on 28 September 2015.
- 4.2 Members formally ADOPTED revised Court Standing Orders which had been updated in line with amendments notified to the Court at its meeting on 1 April 2015 and approved by the Court at its meeting on 24 June 2015.

5 CHAIR'S REPORT

- 5.1 The Chair highlighted the revised format for the meeting agenda which was intended to promote discussion of strategic matters somewhat earlier in the meeting than had been the practice. The revision was very much in line with one of the conclusions emerging from the review of Court effectiveness concerning the order of agenda items and the length of the meeting. Members would have the opportunity to evaluate and discuss further when the report of the review was presented to the Court in December 2015.
- 5.2 Pay negotiations between UCEA and the trade unions were progressing, with a number of dispute resolution meetings having been held since the last Court meeting.
- 5.3 The Chair of the Committee of Scottish Chairs (CSC) would meet shortly with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning to discuss further the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Bill. The Cabinet Secretary would give oral evidence to the Education and Culture Committee of the Scottish Parliament shortly, and the Committee was due to publish its Stage 1 report in mid-December.

6 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Members RECEIVED a detailed report from the Principal (COURT (15) 33) highlighting recent news and developments that involved or impacted upon the University. The Principal highlighted in particular that:

- The Equality Challenge Unit had published a report on good practice in promoting the diversity of university court membership across the sector. There were many positive references to QMU in the report and the University was highlighted as a case study in a number of places. The recommendations in the report were in line with current processes for QMU's Court in the context of its relevant governance changes. A copy of the report had been made available to members at this meeting.
- The number of international students that had matriculated to date was above target in both undergraduate and postgraduate categories. In terms of Scottish/EU undergraduate students, it was anticipated that targets would be met for level one entry but would be below target for direct entry students. The number of RUK (undergraduate) students matriculated was significantly below target and most likely affected by the removal of the cap on student number places in England. It appeared that the increase in the international student intake would offset the anticipated shortfalls in Scottish/EU and RUK intake.

- Figures released by HESA in July confirmed that QMU had an improved graduate employment rate of 94.4%

7 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Court held on 24 June 2015 (COURT (15) MINS 03) were APPROVED as a correct record.

8 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

9 MASTERPLAN DEVELOPMENT

The Director of Operations and Finance presented members with an update on a number of proposals that formed the University Masterplan Delivery Strategy for the land around the Craighall campus. Members had been advised in writing in August 2015 of the planned submission of a Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) to East Lothian Council. The PAN submission focussed on an Innovation Zone and a Commercial Zone, and followed on from a period of internal consultation, including the QM150 planning process and the Strategic Update sessions for staff involving Court.

Members welcomed the presentation, and the opportunity to discuss the proposals at this early stage of planning. Members suggested that it would be important to consider further the extent to which any such development would assist in delivery of the University's overall strategic vision, and for the University to draw on all available advice provided by relevant public agencies. Members were invited to provide specific feedback to the Director of Operations and Finance. Further discussion would take place at future meetings of the Court, including the Away Days in February 2016.

10 STRATEGIC PLAN

Members RECEIVED a final draft of the University's Strategic Plan for implementation from Academic Session 2015/16. The version presented incorporated comments arising from consultation with groups across the University, and additions and amendments arising from detailed discussion at Court and Senate. The final draft had also been shaped by discussion at an extraordinary meeting of the Executive Board held in August 2015.

Members were invited to provide any further and final comments on the plan prior to its consideration at the Senate meeting on 21 October 2015. A final version of the plan would come forward to the December meeting of Court for approval.

11 BUDGET OUTTURN 2014/15 AND PROJECTIONS 2015/16

11.1 Members CONSIDERED a paper which provided an update to the 2014/15 financial outturn, along with progress being made on balancing the 2015/16 budget and the financial planning processes being developed in the light of expected financial constraints within the University sector.

11.2 Members NOTED the specific measures set out in the paper to reduce the budget gap for 2015-16, and to develop the University's Strategic Investment plan. Members were broadly

supportive of the proposals contained in the paper, suggesting that they were necessary and appropriate in terms of reducing the immediate budget gap. However, there was agreement that the additional work outlined in the paper was necessary to ensure that the University moved to a position of long-term financial sustainability. Members were advised that, as part of that work, the Senior Management team would be engaging shortly in a facilitated Away Day, a focus of which was the management of future funding challenges. An update of this work would be provided to the Finance and Estates Committee.

12 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- 12.1 Members CONSIDERED the fourth quarter update on the University's performance against key performance indicators for 2014/15. Members noted in particular the importance of continuing to be alert to difficulties in international student recruitment in the face of increased competition and restrictions on student entry visas.
- 12.2 Members RECEIVED an analysis of the University's performance in the 2015 National Student Survey and NOTED that the overall satisfaction remained high at 85%. There had been a 1% decrease in satisfaction compared to the previous year, but levels of satisfaction were 7% above those achieved in the first NSS in 2011. Members NOTED that there was an overall decrease in satisfaction in the Assessment and Feedback category and that work was being undertaken to analyse the results and develop appropriate action in response. Members also NOTED the relatively disappointing results relating to satisfaction with the Students' Union and the work being undertaken by the Students' Union in response.
- 12.3 Members NOTED the interim report produced by the Court Effectiveness Review Group after its meeting on 22 September 2015. On the basis of its analysis of interviews and questionnaires undertaken by Court members, the Group had made good progress in identifying areas for development and enhancement in the Court's current practice. The report of the externally facilitated review would be provided to the December meeting of Court.

13 SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL

- 13.1 Members CONSIDERED a report which detailed the outcomes of institution-led quality review activities at the University during the 2014/15 academic session and HOMOLOGATED Chair's action to approve the Annual Report to the Scottish Funding Council on Institutional Review Activity 2014/15.
- 13.2 Members HOMOLOGATED Chair's action to approve the University Court Statement of Assurance to the Scottish Funding Council.
- 13.3 Members NOTED the Ministerial Letter of Guidance to the SFC and refreshed Guidance to Universities on the development of Outcome Agreements 2016-17. Members also NOTED the timetable and process for the negotiation of the University's 2016/17 Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council.

14 HIGHER EDUCATION GOVERNANCE (SCOTLAND) BILL

Members RECEIVED a copy of the University's submission to the Scottish Parliament Education and Culture Committee and the Scottish Parliament Finance Committee as

previously agreed by the Court. Members also NOTED a copy of the response submitted by the University Chancellor.

15 SENATE

Members RECEIVED the minutes of the Senate meetings held on 25 March 2015 (SENATE (15) MINS 02) and 20 May 2015 (SENATE (15) MINS 03).

15 NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

15.1 Members RECEIVED the minutes of the Nominations Committee (NOM (15) MINS 02) held on 31 August 2015 and APPROVED or NOTED the following:

15.2 Chair of Court

In his capacity as Convener of the Nominations Committee, the Vice-Chair advised that, following the selection process approved previously by the Court, the unanimous recommendation of the Committee was that Dr Frances Dow CBE be appointed to the position of Chair of Court. The Court unanimously APPROVED the recommendation. Dr Frances Dow would take up the position of Chair with effect from 17 March 2016.

15.3 Recruitment of Lay Members

Members NOTED the shortlist of candidates to be interviewed for the vacancies in the lay membership of Court.

15.4 Appointment to Court Committees

Members APPROVED the recommendation of the Nominations Committee that Jackie Macdonald be appointed to the vacancy in membership of the Senior Management Remuneration Committee.

15.5 University Chancellor

Member NOTED progress in considering the shortlist of candidates for the position of University Chancellor being taken forward by the Nominations Committee.

16 AUDIT COMMITTEE

Members RECEIVED the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 15 September 2015 (AUDIT (15) MINS 03). Members NOTED in particular that good progress had been made in the documentation and implementation of audit recommendations and that there were no recommendations currently outstanding.

17 FINANCE AND ESTATES COMMITTEE

Members RECEIVED the minutes of the Finance and Estates Committee meeting held on 22 September 2015 (FEC (15) MINS 04).

18 HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Members RECEIVED the minutes of the Health and Safety Committee meeting held on 17 September 2015 (HSC (15) MINS 03). Members NOTED in particular that, in line with the provisions of the revised smoking policy, construction of a smoking shelter had commenced.

19 SENIOR MANAGEMENT REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

19.1 Members RECEIVED the minutes of the Senior Management Remuneration Committee meeting held on 24 September 2015 (SMRC (15) MINS 02).

19.2 Members CONSIDERED and APPROVED the following policy updates recommended for approval by the Committee:

- amendment to the Senior Management Remuneration Review Policy and Procedure to incorporate agreed procedures for the Professoriate;
- a Severance Pay Policy developed to meet updated requirements of the SFC Financial Memorandum.

19.3 Members APPROVED recommendations brought forward by the Committee concerning senior management remuneration for the period 1 August 2015 to 31 July 2016, having been satisfied that such recommendation was in line with the provisions set out in the Senior Management Remuneration Review Policy and Procedure.

20 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Court will meet on the following dates in 2015-16

2 December 2015
4-5 February 2016 (Court Away Days)
6 April 2016
22 June 2016

Meetings (with the exception of Away Days) commence at 4.00 pm.