

**MINUTES OF THE COURT MEETING (UC) UNIVERSITY OF THE
HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS
HELD ON MONDAY 17th November 2014 AT 17.00 HRS
IN ROOM EO3, EXECUTIVE OFFICE, NESS WALK, INVERNESS**

- PRESENT:** Garry Coutts (Chair)
Dr Fiona McLean (Vice Chair)
Willie Printie
Gillian Berkeley - VC
Eileen Mackay - VC
Andy Rogers -VC
Michael Gibson
Peter Campbell – VC
Professor Ian Bryden - VC
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Fiona Larg (Chief Operating Officer & Secretary(COOS))
Crichton Lang (Deputy Principal)
- APOLOGIES:** Professor Clive Mulholland (UHI Principal and Vice-chancellor)
Dr Michael Foxley – (Chair of UHI FE Regional Board)
Anton Edwards
Professor Kenneth Miller
Dr David Worthington
Rachel Parker
Vicki Nairn
Malcolm Burr
James MacDonald
Iseabail Mactaggart
Angus Ross
Dr David Alston

ITEM		ACTION
1	<p>SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON HE GOVERNANCE LEGISLATION</p> <p>(session recorded)</p> <p>A special meeting of Court was called to consider the consultation document which had recently been issued by the Scottish Government on proposed legislation for governance of higher education.</p> <p>It was noted that a joint working group had been set up by University Scotland to respond at a sector level. This group comprised representatives from the Committee of Scottish University Chairs, principals and secretaries. The group was due to hold its first meeting on 25th November and initial input had been requested from each university prior to that date.</p> <p>It was noted that the Court will have an opportunity to give detailed feedback on the questions asked in the document by 31 January 2015.</p> <p>The members presented discussed the document and agreed a summary response as follows:</p>	

- An early meeting with the Cabinet Secretary should be sought by the university sector to allow a better understanding of the issues the government is seeking to address in proposing legislation in this area
- Legislation would appear premature given that the university chairs dedicated a lot of time to putting a revised code of governance for higher education in place, all universities have signed up to this code and a report on baseline compliance has been prepared. The first year of full reporting against the code is 2015/16. More time should be allowed to assess whether the code is fulfilling its purpose before legislating.
- The university sector in Scotland is made up of very diverse institutions in terms of mission, size and structure. It is therefore difficult to have prescribed sizes, memberships, titles etc for university courts, academic council and principals.
- The Court confirmed that are committed to accountability and transparency for the use of public funding but do not believe that legislation is required. These responsibilities are set out in the financial memorandum with Scottish Funding Council and compliance is a condition of funding.
- UHI has worked hard to ensure diverse Court membership both in terms of gender and background. The Court is committed to continuous improvement in this area and has set a target to work towards 40% female representation.
- The Court expressed concern that if legislation was put in place changes could be made in future which may be more onerous and could impact negatively.

It was agreed that the COO/Secretary would circulate these points to Court members unable to attend and submit to University Scotland.

COO/S

The COO/S was asked to invite Court members to join a small working group to formulate a response to the questions set out in the consultation document.

COO/S

There being no further business the meeting was closed.

