

# University Court

18 September 2019, 14:00 to 16:00

EO1-EO2, 12b Ness Walk, Inverness IV3 5SQ (Dial in code:

79686@uhi.ac.uk)



## Present

Garry Coutts (Chair), Fiona McLean (Vice Chair), Crichton Lang (Interim Principal and Vice Chancellor), Willie Printie (Audit Committee Chair), Andrew Rogers (FGPC Chair), Alan Simpson (HISA President), Anton Edwards (Rector - Chair of Foundation), Rosemary McCormack (Staff Governor), Andrea Robertson (Independent), Neil Stewart (Chair Inverness College UHI), Gareth Davies (Staff Governor), Alistair Dodds (Independent), David Sandison (Chair NAFC), Heidi May (Independent), Kirsty Macpherson (Independent), Linda Kirkland (Independent), Poonam Malik (Independent), Natasha Morgan (HISA Representative), Michael Foxley (Chair FERB), Roddy Burns (Independent), Fiona Larg (Chief Operating Officer & Secretary), Neil Simco (Vice Principal Research & Impact), Stuart Gibb (Vice Principal International & External Engagement), Lydia Rohmer (Vice Principal - Tertiary), Diane Rawlinson (Vice Principal Further Education), Gary Campbell (Vice Principal Strategic Developments), Roger Sendall (Head of Governance & Records Management), Margaret Antonson (Head of Marketing and Planning - in part)

## Meeting minutes

### 1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Chair opened the meeting and noted that a quorum was present.

[Agenda - University Court -18 September 2019.pdf](#)

#### 1.1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Sarah Helps and Alan Simpson.

#### 1.2. Declaration of Interest

Heidi May declared a potential conflict of interest with agenda item 2.4 as a member of NHS Highland senior management.

#### 1.3. Notification of other business

Kirsty Macpherson requested an update in relation to the University Assembly and Programme Board discussions. It was noted that these topics would be addressed as part of item 3.2.

#### 1.4. Starring

Items 4.1, 8.3 and 9.1 were starred for discussion.

### 1.5. PRESENTATION - UNIVERSITY BRANDING

Court received a presentation from the Vice Principal Tertiary setting out progress in connection with the above project. A copy of the presentation slides are appended to and form a part of this minute. It was noted that Court was supportive of the direction of travel and the good progress made to date.

[UHI Court Branding Project\\_Background Information\\_18092019.pdf](#)

## 2. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

## 2.1. Approval of the minutes from 19 June 2019

Court approved the minutes of the meeting held on 19th June 2019 subject to the addition of reference at item 6.1 to highlight the importance of strong links between the FE Regional Board and the Scottish Government.

 [UC19-048 Minutes\\_University Court\\_190619.pdf](#)

## 2.2. Matters Arising

Court reviewed the paper setting out actions and matters arising from the previous meeting. The following points were noted:

- The EIS and GMB unions had been contacted and had each identified representatives who would be appointed to Court in accordance with the requirements of the HE Governance Act. New members would be Sarah O'Hagan and Lesley Cole.
- Court requested a briefing paper on the University's process to award academic titles via the Academic Titles Review Board and the Honorary Awards process for consideration at the next meeting.
- Tertiary Committee discussions - The Chair advised that he had convened a meeting with AP Chairs to discuss the proposal to evolve FERB into a tertiary forum. It was noted that independent members of FERB should also be engaged in any discussions.

 [UC19-049 Court Matters Arising.pdf](#)

## 2.3. Review of Delegated Decisions

None.

## 2.4. Minutes from Committees of Court since last Court meeting:

### 2.4.1. Finance and General Purposes Committee

Court noted the minutes of the meeting held on 5th September 2019. The chair of FGPC highlighted the following points:

- The DOCR would provide a financial briefing session for members of FGPC and Court on 24th September 2019.
- The Academic Partner financial monitoring paper highlighted four APs with serious financial challenges (red risk status). FGPC noted that two additional partners were also experiencing difficulties and the DOCR was liaising with all of these partners.
- FGPC had considered a possible TRAC(t) process for use across the partnership and had agreed that it made sense to adopt a common methodology and to learn from existing processes rather than to reinvent a bespoke process.
- The University had received a generous legacy donation of shares valued at approximately £1M to benefit higher education within Orkney. The committee was keen to maximise positive media coverage associated with the donation.

 [UC19-050 Minutes\\_Finance & General Purposes Committee \(FGPC\)\\_050919.pdf](#)

### 2.4.2. Audit Committee

Court noted the minutes of the meeting held on 29th August 2019.

 [UC19-051 Minutes\\_Audit Committee\\_290819.pdf](#)

### 2.4.3. FE Regional Board

The Chair of FERB provided a brief report in connection with the meeting held on 3rd September 2019. The minutes of the meeting were noted.

 [UC19-052 Minutes\\_Further Education Regional Board\\_030919\(2\).pdf](#)

### 2.4.4. Academic Council/Activity Report

Court discussed the officer's report and summary of Academic Council discussions held on 14th June 2019. Court members noted that the Academic Council was carrying a number of vacancies and that the Interim Principal and Vice Chancellor was currently seeking to refocus the work of the Academic Council to consider strategically important curriculum matters and to reinvigorate membership. It was noted that the majority of academic decisions were taking place at a delegated committee level currently and there was a need to review this processes to ensure that decisions were made in the correct forum.

 [UC19-053 AC Officers Report 14 June 2019.pdf](#)

### 2.4.5. Remuneration Committee

Court noted the minutes of the meeting held on 19th June 2019. The following points were noted:

- Court noted that whilst the University had agreed to implement a 2.1% cost of living pay increase in 2019/20 across all pay grades, the University was currently offering rates of pay that were below the sector average and Court requested that the Remuneration Committee should undertake a strategic review of pay policy including an assessment of any risks associated with the current remuneration policy and the university's ability to attract and retain good staff.

 UC19-054 Rem comm minutes0619.pdf

## 3. CHAIRMAN/PRINCIPAL'S COMMENTS

### 3.1. Quarterly Status Report

Court noted the above reports covering the period 1st June to 31st August 2019.

 UC19-055 September 2019 SMT and AP quarterly report.pdf

 UC19-055a GSC SMT Status Report -Sept 2019.pdf

### 3.2. Vice-Chancellor's Report

Crichton Lang

Court received a report from the interim Principal & Vice Chancellor. The following points were noted:

- The university has made some very significant and important progress in a number of key areas over the past few years, however, these successes are not particularly visible to key stakeholders because the university does not celebrate or promote them enough and this has meant that such positive news is often overshadowed by internal issues and challenges. There is a clear need to try to adjust the current narrative and to focus on the excellent work that is being achieved by the University partnership and to actively promote the added value that is provided by the institution across the region.
- Requests for financial assistance should not be framed in the context of support to keep the individual partners afloat but as a genuine investment to build upon existing success and to facilitate potential improvements and impacts associated with our regional collegiate delivery model.
- Whilst the Programme Board have not identified any new or novel solutions, the review process has provided a useful forum for developing a consensus view on the need for change. There is a clear willingness to cooperate and work differently and more efficiently within existing structures across the university and many actions to improve processes are being actively progressed.
- Court agreed to collectively discuss the final recommendations developed by the Programme Board at the next meeting of Court in advance of the Assembly meeting.

 UC19-056 VC Status Report.pdf

### 3.3. Financial Sustainability Plan

Fiona Larg

Court discussed a paper prepared jointly by the Principal and Vice Chancellor and the Chief Operating Officer and University Secretary comprising a report on actions to improve the University's long term financial sustainability including an associated action plan with identified responsible officers and timelines. Court agreed to approve the document.

The following points were noted:

- Progress against the action plan would be monitored as a standing item through FGPC with regular updates provided to Court.
- Court accepted and welcomed the recommended action to review activities within the University's executive office, however, they noted that it was equally necessary to review functions and activities within academic partners and to consider the allocation and expenditure of resources throughout the partnership on a collective regional basis consistent with the proposal to progress a partnership wide 5 year financial sustainability plan.
- There was a need to develop a culture that was focused on continuous improvement as opposed to just reducing costs so as to ensure that the quality of service delivery was maintained or enhanced.
- Court was concerned that the Director of Corporate Resources was identified as the officer responsible for the majority of the recommended actions and projects and queried if he would have sufficient capacity to progress all the work streams. It was noted that the DOCR would lead the work streams and that support and available resource to deliver agreed actions would be kept under review.

 UC19-057 Financial Sustainability Plan.pdf

## 4. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE

#### **4.1. Academic Partner Financial Monitoring**

Court noted the paper prepared by the DOCR containing a summary of academic partner management accounts and cash flow statements.

 [UC19-058 AP Fin Mon - 2018-19.pdf](#)

#### **4.2. Budget Challenges Update**

Court discussed the paper UC19-059 providing an update on budget challenges for 2019/20. Court noted the improved position resulting from savings achieved following purchase of the CFHS and as a result of securing some additional funding that had resulted in a reduced savings target of £257k. The original savings target was £370k and some members of Court suggested that it would be prudent to continue to seek to achieve the higher target.

 [UC19-059 - Budget Update - 2019-20.pdf](#)

#### **4.3. Student residences update**

Court discussed paper UC19-060 providing an update on progress to improve controls associated with operating the student residences and a summary of current occupancy.

Court noted that whilst applications and forecast occupancy had improved substantially on the previous year the university remained exposed to financial risks whilst the residences were not fully occupied. Court noted that FGPC and the Residences Steering Group were actively monitoring operations and progressing work to identify savings and to reduce costs in tandem with activities to increase non student income. Most recently, work was progressing to develop a business case in relation to the potential purchase of the Elgin and Dornoch residences from the landlord through a preferential loan issued through the Scottish Government.

 [UC19-060 Residences Update.pdf](#)

 [UC19-060a Residences Applications Update 12 September 2019.pdf](#)

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### **5. ACADEMIC BUSINESS**

#### **5.1. Annual report to SFC on institution-led review in AY 2018-19**

Court approved the annual report for submission to the Scottish Funding Council.

 [UC19-061 SFC annual report Court.pdf](#)

#### **5.2. National Student Survey Results 2019 (NSS) report**

Court was pleased to note the results of the above survey.

 [UC19-062 NSS report.pdf](#)

#### **5.3. Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)**

Court commended staff on the positive results and performance reported in the above survey.

 [UC19-063 PTES 2019 Report.pdf](#)

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### **6. COMMITTEE & MEMBERSHIP**

#### **6.1. Annual Effectiveness Reviews**

##### **6.1.1. Court future work plan**

Court considered the draft corporate governance calendar and format for a future actions plan provided by the Head of Governance and Records Management. Court agreed to adopt the structure and format of the plan as a key document.

 [UC19-064 Court action plan corporate calendar .pdf](#)

##### **6.1.2. Update following committee discussions**

Court noted paper UC19-065 providing a summary of committee discussions in relation to the annual effectiveness review process.

 UC19-065 Effectiveness review update.pdf

## **6.2. Amended FERB Terms of Reference - quorum**

Court approved the proposal to amend the quorum of FERB.

 UC19-066 FERB Quorum.pdf

## **6.3. Assigned College Board Appointments**

Court approved the recommended appointments contained within paper UC19-067.

 UC19-067 Assigned College Board appointments.pdf

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# **7. STRATEGY & PLANNING**

## **7.1. Critical/Key Performance Indicators**

Court noted paper UC19-068.

 UC19-068 CPI-KPI reports.pdf

## **7.2. Brexit Update**

Court noted paper UC19-069.

 UC19-069 190903 Brexit Update.pdf

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# **8. GOVERNANCE & RISK**

## **8.1. Corporate Risk Register**

Court noted paper UC19-070.

 UC19-070 Corporate Risk Register.pdf

 UC19-070bCommon risk scores by AP.pdf

## **8.2. Academic Partner Agreements**

Noted.

 UC19-071 Academic Partner Agreements - update.pdf

## **8.3. Draft Partnership Wide Commitment**

Court considered paper UC19-072 that had been developed and agreed through the Partnership Council. Court agreed to fully endorse the document and to ask academic partner boards of management to do the same.

 UC19-072 Partnership Wide Commitment.pdf

Garry Coutts

## **8.4. Remuneration Policy updated**

Court approved the updated policy document.

 UC19-073 Remuneration Policy updated.pdf

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# **9. REPORTS & CIRCULARS**

## **9.1. HISA Report**

Court noted the HISA update report prepared jointly by the President and Chief Executive of the students' association.

 UC19-074 HISA Court Update Sept 19 (002).pdf

## **9.2. University Foundation - Proposal for a "University Day"**

Crichton Lang

Court considered a proposal from the Rector to develop and promote a more high profile public meeting and conference than in previous years. Court noted that this years Foundation Conference and Public Meeting had been very well received but attendance numbers had fairly been limited and there was opportunity exists to celebrate the university partnership through an expanded event. Court agreed to support the proposal and noted that the Foundation and the senior management team would be asked to consider appropriate themes and timing for such an event.

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## **10. DATE OF NEXT COURT MEETING: 27 November 2019**