

University Court

Wed 16 June 2021, 14:00 - 17:00

By VC Microsoft Teams

Attendees

Board members

Garry Coutts (Chair), Andrea Robertson (Vice Chair), Angus Campbell, Anton Edwards, Brian Crichton, David Sandison, Florence Jansen, Heidi May, Kirsty Macpherson, Malcolm Burr, Michael Foxley, Poonam Malik, Sarah Helps, Sara O'Hagan, Todd Walker, Rosemary McCormack

Absent: Mei-Li Roberts, Jack Shetata

In attendance

Beverly Clubley (Observer), Gary Campbell, John Kemp (Acting Chief Operating Officer), Lorna Walker, Roger Sendall (Acting University Secretary), Niall McArthur (- in part), Margaret Antonson (- in part), John Maher (- in part), Rhiannon Tinsley (- in part), Stuart Gibb, Neil Simco, Nicholas Oakley (Clerk)

Meeting minutes

1. IN CAMERA MEETING - Principal and Vice Chancellor

The Committee began with an in camera session with the Principal and Vice Chancellor and Court members, commencing at 14:00 and ending at 14:25.

1.1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Chair opened the meeting, welcomed the members, and noted the declared apologies from Mei-Li Roberts.

 Court Agenda 16 June 2021.pdf

1.2. Declarations of Interest

There was one declaration of interest, from Lydia Rohmer, in item 7.1

Verbal

1.3. Notification of other business

No other business declared.

Verbal

2. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

2.1. *Approval of the minutes of 17 March 2021

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting on 17 March 2021 as a true and accurate record.

 UC20-21-107 Minutes_University Court_170321.pdf

2.2. *Matters Arising

The Committee reviewed the matters arising. All actions were **noted** as complete or ongoing.

Members then discussed the loss of EU structural funds and the significant impact of their removal on the university partnership, with concerns raised about the University's ability to conduct strategic projects and the perceived inadequacy of the announced replacement funding streams. The Principal and Vice Chancellor, Prof Todd Walker, reported that he had raised the matter with the Scottish Government, and that Universities Scotland is also raising awareness on behalf of the sector.

 UC20-21-108 matters arising.pdf

 UC20-21-108a Loss of EU structural funds - Update.pdf

2.3. *Review of Delegated Decisions

There were no delegated decisions reported.

2.4. *Minutes of Committees of Court since last Court meeting:

2.4.1. Audit Committee

The Committee discussed the Audit Committee minutes.

In the Chair of Audit Committee's absence, the Acting Secretary, Roger Sendall, reported on progress on academic partner agreements which were noted in the minutes as a matter of ongoing concern. Partner Chairs met on 25 May 2021, and legal advice that Inverness College UHI had taken was shared. The University now awaited a response to a revised proposal presented to academic partner boards, based on a 12 month agreement with a stipulated review date. The University had also committed to develop a more mutual partner agreement that included a three year review period. The Committee requested that a substantive item to be added to the next Court meeting in September 2021 if these were still outstanding by that time.

The Committee **noted** the minutes and the Acting Secretary's verbal update.

Action: Status of academic partner agreements reported to the next Court meeting. (Owner: R Sendall)

 UC20-21-109 Minutes_Audit Committee_240521.pdf

2.4.2. Finance and General Purposes Committee

The Committee discussed the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting minutes.

Linda Kirkland, Chair of F&GPC, reported that at its meeting the Committee had focused on many cross-cutting themes, and that the curriculum review would be the focus of the next scheduled meeting alongside recruitment, senior vacancies, and capacity to deliver.

The Committee **noted** the minutes and the Chair's verbal update.

Linda Kirkland reported that a single item meeting on the setting of rents for residences had also taken place. Agreement was sought and forthcoming on rents, service solution principles, and budget-setting for welcome events.

The Committee **noted** the minutes and the Chair's verbal update.

 UC20-21-110a Minutes_Finance and General Purposes Committee (FGPC)_030621.pdf

 UC20-21-110b Minutes_FGPC Residences Decisions - single item agenda_180521.pdf

2.4.3. Regional Strategy Committee

The Committee discussed the minutes of the Regional Strategy Committee (RSC) and the matters arising. The following topics were discussed:

RSC Effectiveness. The Chair, Garry Coutts, reflected on the need to ensure that the RSC interacted with other University committees appropriately and avoided any duplication of activity. The Chair also recommended that time be taken following the appointment of a new Chair to reflect further on the RSC's effectiveness and place within the governance apparatus of the University.

Regional Economic Partnerships. The Further Education Regional Lead, Michael Foxley, queried progress on the Regional Economic Partnerships. The Acting Chief Operating Officer, John Kemp, reported that meetings with the senior team at Highland and Islands' Enterprise (HIE) were ongoing. Members involved reported that there was good engagement at the senior level for collaboration that needed to be operationalised; members agreed to raise this at the regularly scheduled senior meetings.

Gaelic. Prof Neil Simco reported that Gaelic matters noted in the RSC minutes were ongoing and that the mini prospectus was being prepared for a launch in time for the next academic year. Work was also ongoing on the fourth Gaelic language plan. The Chair requested that Neil Simco and the team assure themselves that marketing activity around the prospectus was suitably high profile and effective.

The Committee **noted** the minutes and the matters arising updates.

 UC20-21-111 Minutes_Regional Strategy Committee (RSC)_040521.pdf

2.4.4. Academic Council/Activity Report

The Committee discussed the Academic Council report.

The members requested further details and a progress update on the Arctic Gateway Centre. Neil Simco reported that the project was continuing to progress at pace and agreed to bring forward a formal update to the next Committee meeting pending discussion with the Vice-Chair, Andrea Robertson.

Action: Produce progress report on Arctic Gateway Centre for review at next Court agenda-setting meeting (Owner: Neil Simco)

The Acting Secretary, Roger Sendall, reported that at its most recent meeting Academic Council had full attendance of the new membership agreed by Court.

The Committee **noted** the report and the matters arising updates.

 UC20-21-112 AC Officers Report (11 March 2021).pdf

2.4.5. Foundation

The Committee discussed the Foundation meeting minutes. The Chair and Rector, Anton Edwards, reported that it was his final meeting of the Foundation as the Rector before his retirement. He reported on the negative impact of Covid-19 health and safety measures on the foundation meetings and members' ability to operate effectively. He also noted that he had prepared a summary of duties of the role of Rector and Chair of Foundation to reflect upon his time in the position and to further assist and encourage recruitment. He asked the members to note and the clerk to formally record his thanks to all the Foundation members for the support they provided to him as a Chair.

The Chair of Court and the Committee members expressed their thanks to Anton Edwards for his service as Rector and Chair of Foundation.

The Committee **noted** the minutes and the Chair's verbal update.

 UC20-21-113 Draft Minutes_UHI Foundation_120521.pdf

2.4.6. Honorary Awards Committee

The Committee **noted** the Honorary Awards Committee minutes.

 UC20-21-114 Minutes_Honorary Awards Committee_280521.pdf

3. *CHAIRMAN/PRINCIPAL'S COMMENTS

3.1. *Vice Chancellor's Report

The Principal and Vice Chancellor, Prof Todd Walker, provided members with his report. In addition to the items included in the paper, Prof Walker also reported

- The death of a further education student at the Inverness residence on 11 June. Support was being provided to the student's family, as well as staff and students. The Committee members expressed their sadness and condolences.
- Prof Walker reported on further updates on the SRUC report, noting that it would be delivered to the assurance group on 24 June before further review by the University and SRUC executive teams, who would thereafter hold further discussions and begin producing indicative timelines.
- The Herald Higher Education Awards 2021 was being held on 17 June, and included two nominees from across the university partnership.

The Committee **noted** the vice chancellor's report and the verbal update.

 UC20-21-115 P&VC Report to Court June 2021_ Update Version.pdf

3.2. *Quarterly Status Report

The Committee **noted** the academic partner quarterly status reports without further discussion.

 UC20-21-116 June 2021 AP Court Status Reports.pdf

3.3. *Blueprint

The Committee discussed the Blueprint update paper.

The Acting Chief Operating Officer, John Kemp, introduced the report. He noted that several risks were emerging, particularly around the estates strategy given pandemic pressures and changing nature of the learning environment, as well as the ability and capacity of the University to quickly improve income generation.

Members discussed the paper and update report. They queried the university's decision-making protocols for terminating unsuccessful or ineffective projects or plans, and particularly how projects were monitored against delivery.

The Committee **noted** the blueprint paper and verbal update.

 UC20-21-117 Court paper on Blueprint080621.pdf

3.4. *Update on Change Management Actions

The Committee **noted** the update on the change management actions without further discussion.

 UC20-21-118 Court update on Management Actoins June 2021.pdf

4. HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS STUDENT'S ASSOCIATION

4.1. *HISA Update

[HISA CEO, James Lindsay, joined the meeting]

The HISA President, Florence Jansen, introduced the HISA update paper. She highlighted changes to the class representative system as well as HISA efforts around Gaelic via the Gaelic Representation project.

The Committee **noted** the paper and the update, and expressed their appreciation for Florence Jansen, her senior team, as well as HISA more widely for their invaluable work over the preceding year and particularly their support for students during the pandemic.

 UC20-21-119 HISA Update UHI Court June 21.pdf

 UC20-21-119 HISA Funding 2021-22.pdf

4.1.1. HISA Budget

The HISA President, Florence Jansen, introduced a paper on the HISA budget. She reported that two budgetary uplift options were being presented, with the second option having been endorsed by Partnership Council.

The Committee discussed the proposal and options presented. In the discussion, it was noted that the paper should have been presented to F&GPC before Court; it was **agreed** that this process be followed in future years and that the HISA funding model ought to be reviewed at F&GPC. The members also advised the HISA CEO and President that they not use reserves for long term commitments but only special or time-limited projects, and to keep the Vice Chancellor and University Chief Operating Officer briefed on longer-term commitments.

The Committee **approved** option 2 as presented in the paper, an increase of 5.06%.

Action: F&GPC to review HISA funding model (including approval process and timelines) at a future meeting.

[James Lindsay left the meeting]

5. COMMITTEE & MEMBERSHIP

5.1. *2021 Results from Chair of Court Election

The Acting Secretary, Roger Sendall, reported that Alastair MacColl has been elected chair, with 77% of the vote. He reported that turnout was low, with 215 votes cast, but that this was not dissimilar to other universities' experiences in Chair elections.

The Committee **noted** the result.

 UC20-21-119a Chair of Court Election Results.pdf

Verbal
Roger Sendall

5.1.1. Discussion regarding expanding the electorate

The Committee discussed expanding the franchise to make it more representative and tertiary (to include further education and academic partner staff). They heard that this would require a change to either the university structure, current legislation, or articles of association which exclude these staff and students. Prof Walker also reported that he had raised with the Higher Education minister directly.

Whilst noting the current legal and structural impediments, the Committee **agreed in principle** that the University look to move to expand the franchise to include further education student and staff of academic partners, and agreed to seek legal advice and recommendations for a report to the next Court meeting in September to this end.

Action: Seek legal advice and produce report, including risks and process, on expanding the Chair of Court election franchise for review at the next Court meeting. (Owner: R Sendall)

5.2. *Corporate Calendar: Increase in Meeting Frequency

The Committee **approved** the increase in meeting frequency as presented in the paper without further discussion.

 UC20-21-120 Court & Committee Meeting Dates .pdf

5.3. Appointments to Assigned College Boards

The Committee **homologated** the appointments to assigned college boards without further discussion.

 UC20-21-121 MC independent member re-appointments-1.pdf

6. STRATEGY & PLANNING

6.1. *Draft Strategic Plan (including operating plans)

[Margaret Antonson joined the meeting]

The Principal and Vice Chancellor, Prof Todd Walker, and the Director of Marketing, Margaret Antonson, presented an update on the draft strategic plan.

The Committee **approved** the strategic plan, and authorised the senior executive to develop the operating plans for presentation at the Court meeting in September 2021.

Action: Produce operating plans from strategic plan for Court review in September 2021 (Owner: T Walker/ M Antonson)

 UC20-21-122 Strategic plan consultation report.pdf

 UC20-21-122a Draft Daring to be Different Strategic Plan 2021-25.pdf

 UC20-21-122b Operational and enabling plan template.pdf

6.2. *Branding Update

The Vice Principal – Tertiary, Lydia Rohmer, provided members with an update on the branding project. The Committee **noted** the update.

[Margaret Antonson left the meeting]

 UC20-21-123 Branding project update for Court.pdf

7. GOVERNANCE & RISK

7.1. Alignment of Academic Partners: Options Appraisal

[Lydia Rohmer, Principal of West Highland College UHI, declared an interest in this item]

The Committee reviewed the alignment of academic partners options appraisal paper. The Principal and Vice Chancellor, Prof Todd Walker, reported that the involved academic partner principals and board chairs were meeting with discuss the next steps and the creation of a steering group, with the timelines being dictated by the involved boards. The Committee noted the importance of a full Islands Impact Assessment that included representations from community planning partners.

Prof Todd Walker summarised the university's position as being fully supportive of the merger, would advocate for it as the Regional Strategic Body, and would provide resources to enable the project's success. The Committee members, including HISA representative, supported and **approved** the proposal.

 UC20-21-124 Court update college alignment 2021.pdf

7.2. Corporate Risk Register

The Committee **noted** the corporate risk register without further discussion.

 UC20-21-125 Risk Management Report June 2021.pdf

7.3. Student Residences update

The Committee **noted** the student residences update without further discussion.

 UC20-21-126 Student Residences Update .pdf

7.4. Non-Competitive Action Form - Library Services

The Committee **homologated** the non-competitive action decision by circulation for library services without further discussion.

 UC20-21-127 210507 EBSCO NCA Purchase.pdf

7.5. Public Sector Equality Duty Report 2021

The Committee **noted** the public sector equality duty report without further discussion.

 UC20-21-128 210609 PSED Outcome Overview.pdf

8. ACADEMIC BUSINESS

8.1. *ELIR Reflective Analysis - within meeting documents area

[Rhiannon Tinsley joined the meeting]

The Academic Registrar, Rhiannon Tinsley, introduced the ELIR reflective analysis report, noting that it had been endorsed by Academic Council.

The Committee **approved** the ELIR Reflective Analysis report.

[Rhiannon Tinsley left the meeting]

9. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE

9.1. *2021-22 University Budget (including 3 Year Forecast and allocations to Academic Partners)

[Niall McArthur joined the meeting]

The Director of Corporate Services, Niall McArthur, introduced the 2021/22 university budget. He reported that the overall deficit was £4.9 million, after pension and service concession non-cash adjustments (without these it is £1.2 million), compared to a projected deficit of £7.5 million in 2020/21. He also noted that University Executive Office was £81k below the £1.560 million saving that was estimated due to the residences planned reduction being slightly higher compared to the original figure and the savings achieved being slightly below the target of £900k.

The Committee **approved** the proposed budget for the university, **agreed** the allocations to the academic partners, and **noted** that the budget would be monitored as part of the existing blueprint workstream as described in the paper.

 UC20-21-130 Budget paper 09.06.21.pdf

9.2. *2020-21 Q3 Reforecast

The Committee **approved** the 2020-21 quarter 3 reforecast without further discussion.

 UC20-21-131 Q3 YTD Management Accounts & reforecast.pdf

9.3. 2020-21 Q3 Management Accounts

The Committee **noted** the 2020-21 quarter 3 management accounts without further discussion.

9.4. *Academic Partner Financial Monitoring (FFRs)

The Committee **noted** the academic partner financial monitoring paper without further discussion.

[Niall McArthur left the meeting]

 UC20-21-133 AP Finance monitoring.pdf

10. FAREWELL to Chair of Court, Rector and FE Lead

Verbal

The Principal and Vice Chancellor, Prof Todd Walker, reported that it was final Court meeting of Garry Coutts, Chair of Court, Anton Edwards, Rector, and Michael Foxley, Further Education Regional Lead. Prof Walker lead Committee members in a celebration of these members' accomplishments and service to the University Court and the University partnership. The Court recorded their formal vote of thanks to Garry, Anton, and Michael for their dedication, service, and commitment to the university over their respective tenures.

11. RESERVED BUSINESS

The Committee held a confidential briefing on two items.

[Non-members of Court and attendees, except for the Clerk, left the meeting]

11.1. *New Senior Structures

11.2. *Cyber Security Incident: Update

12. DATE OF NEXT COURT MEETING

The Chair closed the reserved business items and closed the meeting at 17:55.

12.1. 22nd September 2021

