

University Court

Wed 22 September 2021, 14:00 - 16:30

MS Teams

Attendees

Board members

Alastair MacColl (Chair), Todd Walker, Florence Jansen, Fiona McLean, Mei-Li Roberts, Rosemary McCormack, Kyle Gee, Lesley A. Cole, Sara O'Hagan, Brian Crichton, Andrea Robertson, Angus Campbell, Heidi May, Linda Kirkland, Malcolm Burr, Poonam Malik, Sarah Helps

Absent: Beverly Clubley

In attendance

John Kemp, Roger Sendall, Gary Campbell, Lydia Rohmer, Donna Heddle, Lorna Walker, Niall McArthur, Nicholas Oakle (Clerk), Margaret Antonson (- in part), Maggie Croft (- in part), Gordon Dyett (- in part), Tony Blow (- in part)

Meeting minutes

1. *CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS/OPENING ADDRESS

Alastair MacColl, the Chair of Court, opened the meeting and welcomed the members. The Chair also welcomed Kyle Gee to his first Court meeting, and congratulated Fiona Mclean on her appointment as the University Rector.

The Chair noted that it was his first Court meeting, and thanked members of the Court and the partnership for the warm welcome they had extended him since his election and appointment as Chair of Court.

 Court Agenda 22 Sept 2021.pdf

1.1. *Apologies

Apologies were **noted** from Beverly Clubley and Stuart Gibb.

1.2. *Declarations of Interest

Andrea Robertson declared an interest in item 6.9 - Appointment of Permanent Vice Chair. There were no other declarations of interest.

1.3. *Starring

The Chair moved and the members **agreed** to remove item 6.1 from the agenda, and noted that this paper will be forthcoming after the meeting for a decision by circulation. The Chair also moved and the members agreed to star and hold discussions before approval of items 6.6 and 6.9.

1.4. STAND Presentation

The Chair welcomed the members of Stand to the meeting and invited Lydia Rohmer to introduce the visual and branding identity project. L Rohmer gave members a short briefing on the background, context, and progress to-date on the project, highlighting the importance of the work in light of strategic changes. L Rohmer then introduced Stand, who gave a short presentation on the branding project.

The Court heard that the project's objectives were to develop a clear way of describing what UHI is; a way to express UHI's unique structure and offer; and a way for partners to explain their relationship with UHI. The naming strategy had been developed taking these objectives into consideration, with a visual identity system that was flexible enough for all partners to use. The tagline 'UHI is where learning means more' was noted. The Court were also presented with the new brand marquee and examples of promotional materials, as well as the image strategy for incorporating photography about place (aerial views), subjects and specialisms, and people, into marketing materials. Also covered were proposed colour schemes and Gaelic and bilingual strategies, as well as marketing campaigns and example merchandise. A proposed implementation timeline was presented.

The Court heard that sessions with individual partners were ongoing to address some outstanding queries and concerns. Stand has also undertaken further workshops with HISA and colleges to provide more detailed engagement and sense check of proposals, as well as with current and prospective students (local and rUK).

The Chair thanked the Stand members for the presentation and invited HISA to open the Court discussion on the project. Florence Jansen, HISA president, praised the project, which she and HISA saw as a positive move in the right direction to a more coherent partnership for students. The project also helped solve a perceived 'identity crisis', and clear up confusion amongst prospective and current students about the partnership's identity and mission.

The Principal and Vice Chancellor, Prof Todd Walker, supported F Jansen's remarks and commended the team for the excellent work as demonstrated in the presentation. He stated that the proposal for a unified brand that created a clear typology for naming, was a strong brand and strapline that was forward-thinking and one that the partnership could grow into, and was timely in light of the university's tenth anniversary.

Court members then discussed the project and the following key items were noted:

1. Members warmly welcomed the project which they regarded as timely, unifying, and collaborative. They especially welcomed the commitment in the project to celebrate and respect the diversity and uniqueness of individual academic partners whilst also providing a coherent and cohesive brand identity. Members were also pleased that HISA were supportive of the project and the benefits.
2. That the use of the 'UHI' and the removal of the term 'college' was a branding and marketing move only; there were no plans to change the legal identities of the academic partners or the university.
3. That additional stakeholder engagement was ongoing and focus groups planned. The members welcomed the extensive internal stakeholder consultation reported, and asked that the planned further consultation with prospective students also consult other external stakeholders such as businesses, local communities, regional agencies etc. L Rohmer reported that the response from the majority of stakeholders and communities has been overwhelmingly positive. The outstanding issues were mainly around detail of implementation.
4. Members queried the risks or challenges to implementation, including the costs. L Rohmer noted that an implementation plan would be reviewed by Partnership Council. She noted that a large portion of the costs could be absorbed into existing activity or routine replace/refresh cycles, and that one-off costs around building signage represented the highest implementation costs. A detailed inventory analysis and costing of this was now ongoing as part of the implementation plan.

The Chair moved and the members agreed to **approve** the branding and visual identity project and to commence implementation in coordination and consultation with Partnership Council. The Chair reiterated the Principal and Vice-Chancellor's appreciation to Lydia Rohmer and her team, as well as the Stand consultants, for their presentation and work towards the project's objectives.

[Maggie Croft, Gordon Dyett, Tony Blow, Margaret Antonson left the meeting]

2. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

2.1. *Approval of the minutes of 16 June 2021

Court **approved** the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 June 2021 as a true and accurate record.

 UC21-22-136 Minutes_University Court_160621.pdf

2.2. *Matters Arising

Court **noted** the matters arising paper. Prof Donna Heddle gave members an update on the Arctic Gateway Centre project, and the launch date of January 2022.

 UC21-22-137 matters arising.pdf

2.3. *Review of Any Delegated Decisions

There were no delegated decisions reported.

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

2.4.1. - Audit Committee - 26 September 2021

Court **noted** the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 26 August 2021.

[UC21-22-138 Minutes_Audit Committee_260821.pdf](#)

2.4.2. - Finance & General Purposes Committee - 9 September 2021

Linda Kirkland, Chair of Finance and General Purposes Committee (FGPC), highlighted two items from the minutes of the previous FGPC meeting. L Kirkland reported that a curriculum review presentation had been welcomed by the FGPC members, and that the Committee had noted that it was intricately linked with other projects and strategic aims of the university, including residences occupancy, financial sustainability, and student recruitment.

She also noted that the Committee had reviewed the Finance System project and after due consideration of the issues and risks made several recommendations. A further presentation on the finance system was expected at the next joint meeting of the FGPG and Audit Committees in November 2021.

Court **noted** the minutes of the FGPC meeting held on 9 September 2021 and the verbal update.

[UC21-22-139 Minutes_Finance & General Purposes Committee \(FGPC\)_090921\(1\).pdf](#)

2.4.3. - Regional Strategy Committee - 14 September 2021

Court **noted** the minutes of the Regional Strategic Committee held on 14 September 2021.

[UC21-22-140 Minutes_Regional Strategy Committee \(RSC\)_140921 Draft.pdf](#)

2.4.4. - Academic Council/Activity Report

The Court **noted** the Academic Council activity report. Prof Gary Campbell, who chaired the last Academic Council meeting, advised Court that Academic Council were keen to issue a joint statement to reflect on broad commitments to the curriculum based on articles of association.

[UC21-22-141 Academic Council Officer s Report.pdf](#)

2.4.5. - Remuneration Committee - 1 July 2021

Dr Poonam Malik, Chair of Remuneration Committee, highlighted three matters discussed at the last meeting. These included the appointment of external consultants to advise on remuneration, a cost-of-living increase, and approval of the new senior structure.

Court **noted** the minutes of the meeting Remuneration Committee held on 1 July 2021.

[UC21-22-142 Minutes_Remuneration Committee_010721.pdf](#)

2.4.6. - Nominations Committee - 3 August 2021

Andrea Robertson, Chair of Nominations Committee, highlighted three matters discussed at its last meeting. She reported that there had been a limited response to recently advertised vacancies for Further Education Regional Lead and for Independent Members of Court; Court members were asked to advertise or promote the opportunities across their networks, or make suggestions for increasing the reach of these vacancies directly to the Acting Secretary, Roger Sendall.

A Robertson asked Court to note that Nominations Committee had recently reviewed its terms of reference, which included taking responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness reviews of Court and its committees, and that this was later on the agenda for Court's approval.

One Court member expressed concern that in previous versions of the minutes of the meeting circulated to Court members individual applicants had been identified. A Robertson apologised and reported that this had been an administrative mistake and that an appropriately redacted version issued immediately when this oversight had been identified.

Court **noted** the minutes of the meeting of the Nominations Committee held on 3 August 2021 and the verbal update.

[UC21-22-143 Minutes_Nominations Committee_030821.pdf](#)

3. *VICE CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

Prof Todd Walker, Principal and Vice Chancellor, introduced his report. He noted that items 6.2 and 6.3 on the Court agenda were not starred, but wanted to highlight to members the success around student experience they reported. He asked members to join him in recognising and celebrating the hard work of staff across the partnership in achieving these results.

T Walker reported that FGPC had been informed of ongoing challenges to student recruitment, with further education (FE) and higher education (HE) applications down compared to 2020-21. He reported that across the sector there had been a report of a 'trickle-up' effect, whereby expanded provision had led to more students being offered – and accepting – places at higher-ranked universities in Scotland.

John Kemp, Interim Chief Operating Officer, further expanded on the recruitment challenges, particularly around further education. He reported that further detailed analysis was ongoing and that no discernible pattern had yet been identified at a subject level. He also noted, as well as changes more broadly to demand, that a specific change to the method for student enrolments and related technical issues may have negatively impacted enrolment figures this year. The Court requested an interim briefing on recruitment in 4 weeks.

Action: J Kemp to provide recruitment update paper to Court on or by 20 October.

T Walker highlighted the part of his report concerning the recent media interest following an interview he gave to the press in which he had used the term "vanity courses" to describe parts of the university's curriculum. T Walker apologised for the mistake and the use of the term, and clarified and contextualised his comments, and reported on the internal and external engagement programme that had been initiated as a result of the media piece. He also reported that he had reflected extensively on the incident and the feedback it generated, and recognised the passion and esteem the community and the stakeholders held for both the university and its curriculum and mission.

Florence Jansen, HISA President, expressed HISA's disappointment that both the report, the verbal update, as well as the stakeholder engagement plan they described, lacked focus on student engagement and due recognition of the impact of the comments on the university's students.

T Walker then reported on the development of six strategic themes that had emerged from a development day with the Chair of Court and Principals Executive Group and arising from the university's newly approved Strategic Plan. These included: leadership, partnership model, curriculum, research excellence, income diversification, and positioning. The Court noted the strategic themes and the Chair reported his intention to hold thematic meetings of the Court on these key strategic areas.

Court **noted** the vice-chancellor's report and verbal update.

 UC21-22-144 P&VC Report to Court 22 September 2021.pdf

4. *HISA REPORT

Florence Jansen, HISA President, introduced the HISA report. She reported that the new executive was now working in a blended environment given the return to campuses following easing of pandemic restrictions; that the student voice review was ongoing; and that by-elections were scheduled.

Court members queried whether F Jansen and HISA felt adequately supported around mental health issues. F Jansen reported that there was increased capacity and training for mental health support, there was collaborative partnership working, and that both HISA and UHI had applied additional resource. She also reported that a new mental health phoneline has been developed in cooperation with the university. F Jansen reported that HISA and the university were providing sector-leading practice for mental health support but that work could always be done to raise awareness of these services amongst students.

Court **noted** the HISA report and the accompanying verbal update.

 UC21-22-145 HISA Update Sept 21 final.pdf

5. *STARRED ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

5.1. *Branding Presentation: Stand Agency

[Discussed under item 1.4]

 UC21-22-146 Branding Project.pdf

5.2. *SRUC UHI Final Report

Prof Todd Walker, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, reported on the SRUC report. T Walker advised that Court were asked to endorse the approach as recommended in the paper, namely that a select committee constituting senior executives from SRUC and UHI be appointed under a heads of term arrangements to review options, with a focus on advantages, opportunities, and deliverability.

Court members discussed the proposal. Members expressed concerns given the significant number of other change management activities underway involving the senior executive, and whether the proposal represented clear and realisable benefits for the university. Members also queried whether further progress should first await a clearer direction from the Scottish Government on the SFC review.

Court **noted** the update and endorsed the proposal, and asked that the heads of terms were reversible and no commitments were made by the university at this stage.

 [UC21-22-147 SRUC Court paper Sept21.pdf](#)

5.3. *Project Update Report for Change Workstreams

Dr John Kemp, Interim Chief Operating Officer, provided Court members with an update on the change workstreams. Court members then discussed the report. In the discussion the following key points were noted:

1. That there was a significant amount of change activity and that the executive should ensure that communications about these be appropriately cascaded across the partnership to ensure appropriate consultation, constructive feedback, and buy-in.
2. In the curriculum review, HNCs and HNDs were being reviewed on a case-by-case basis. One Court member emphasised the value of these HNCs and HNDs to certain partners. Further education was also not necessarily an 'inward attractor' as described in the report.
3. An update on the Executive Office restructure was sought and provided by Todd Walker. He advised that the baseline cost had now been established, but that the consultation feedback was still being processed, and as such the final structure and the associated costs were not yet known. He advised that as soon as these were identified these would be reported to Court. Court stressed the importance that the restructure be a method to achieve future financial sustainability; to this end Court urged that the costs of the restructure be carefully evaluated and managed before implementation to achieve this aim.

The Court **noted** the update report.

 [UC21-22-148 Project Update report for Change Workstreams update Sept 2021.pdf](#)

5.4. *Academic Partner Agreement Update

Roger Sendall, Acting Secretary, updated members on progress on the partner agreements. He reported positive progress on the matter, with dates of a discussion forum now agreed, good engagement in the process, and the expectation of final agreement anticipated for May 2022.

The Chair **noted** the update.

 [UC21-22-149 AP Partner and Service Level Agreements Update .pdf](#)

5.5. *MAATIC Moray Growth Deal

Professor Gary Campbell, Vice Principal Strategic Developments, gave members an update on the MAATIC Moray Growth Deal. He reported that the outline business case was now completed and Court approval for an advance on funding of £500k was sought to further development and the final business case. He noted that the project was fundamentally connected to the curriculum review and would allow an expansion and enhancement of the engineering and aviation portfolio.

Linda Kirkland advised that Finance and General Purposes Committee had reviewed the proposal and recommended it for Court's approval following receipt of further details on the nature and purpose of the expenditure. She noted that the decision was not completely without risk, but that it was a measured risk that had significant benefits.

The Chair moved and the members resolved to **approve** the MAATIC funding proposal. The Chair asked that clear lines of responsibility and accountability be embedded and that the Court were updated on progress.

Action: G Campbell to provide update report to Court on MAATIC Moray Growth Deal.

 [UC21-22-150 MAATIC Moray Growth Deal.pdf](#)

5.6. *Merger Alignment of Four Academic Partner Update

Lydia Rohmer, Vice-Principal (Tertiary), gave Court a verbal update on the merger project.

L Rohmer advised Court of the developments, including a recent visioning event and the decision on 17 September by Argyll College UHI to withdraw from the merger. A Shadow Partnership Board would be meeting on 23 September to commence activity on merger between the remaining three partners (Lews Castle College UHI, North Highland College UHI, and West Highland College UHI) with a view to completing the merger by January 2023.

The Court **noted** the update and advised that thorough local stakeholder engagement would be vital for success, especially given the wider awareness that the project now has.

6. UNSTARRED ITEMS

6.1. Annual Quality report to SFC (institution-led review AY 2020-21) - to follow

[This item deferred and paper to follow for approval by circulation].

6.2. National Student Survey Results

Noted without further discussion.

 UC21-22-152 National Student Survey Results.pdf

6.3. Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey results

Noted without further discussion.

 UC21-22-153 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey results.pdf

6.4. *Academic Partner Quarterly Status Reports

Members requested that this item be starred for discussion.

Members noted that the quality and quantity of the reports were mixed; and that Court members would find value in partners raising key issues and risks and ways in which the Court and the university could assist or mitigate these risks. Members queried whether the template or the requirements could be better communicated to partners to this end. It was also noted that one report specifically asked for an appropriate feedback loop to respond to concerns raised via these reports.

Action: Acting Secretary to review the status report requests, emphasise the importance of these reports with partners, and respond specifically to the partner seeking clarity on feedback loops.

 UC21-22-154 September 2021 AP Court Status Reports.pdf

6.5. Amended Nominations Committee Terms of Reference

Members **approved** the amended nominations committee terms of reference without further discussion.

 UC21-22-155 Amended Nominations Committee ToR.pdf

6.6. Confirmation/Appointments Changes to Assigned College Boards

Members **homologated** the independent chair interim appointments without further discussion.

 UC21-22-156 NHC and IC independent chair interim appointments.pdf

6.7. Risk Management Report and High-level Risk Register

Members **noted** the risk management report without further discussion.

 UC21-22-157 Risk Management Report September 2021 (1).pdf

6.8. Academic Partner Financial Monitoring

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

 UC21-22-158 - Summ AP FFRs 20-21.pdf

6.9. *Confirm Appointment of Permanent Vice Chair and Senior Independent Court Member

[A Robertson declared an interest in this item].

Members **approved** the vice chair appointment without further discussion.

 UC21-22-159 Vice Chair Appointment Confirmation.pdf

7. *AOB

There was no other business and the Chair closed the meeting at 16:05.

