

University Court

Wed 15 June 2022, 14:00 - 16:00

In person at Ness Walk and by VC (Webex)



Attendees

Board members

Alastair MacColl (Chair), Andrea Robertson, Angus Campbell, Beverly Clubley, Brian Crichton (Chair Perth College UHI), Calum Ross, David Sandison, Duncan Macaulay, Fiona McLean, Heather Innes, Jo de Sylva, Linda Kirkland, Malcolm Burr, Mei-Li Roberts, Murray Easton, Poonam Malik, Rosemary McCormack, Sara O'Hagan

In attendance

Gary Campbell, Jen Vanderhoven, Lorna Walker, Neil Simco (Vice Principal Research & Impact), Niall McArthur, Sheena Stewart, Vicki Nairn, Roger Sendall, Nicholas Oakley (Clerk)

Meeting minutes

1. *CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS/OPENING ADDRESS

Verbal

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the members.

Alastair MacColl

 Court Agenda 15 June 2022.pdf

1.1. *Apologies

Note

No apologies were noted.

Alastair MacColl

1.2. *Declarations of Interest

Note

No declarations of interest were made.

Alastair MacColl

1.3. *Notification of other business

Note

No other business was notified.

Alastair MacColl

1.4. *Starring

Discussion

Alastair MacColl

1.5. *Welcome new members and staff (ME, SS)

Note

The Chair welcomed Murray Easton to his first Court meeting as a member. The Chair also welcomed Sheena Stewart, University Secretary, to her first meeting since her appointment.

Alastair MacColl

2. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

2.1. *Approval of the minutes of 16 March 2022

Approve

The Court **resolved** to **approve** the minutes of the meeting of 16 March 2022 as a true and accurate record.

 UC21-22-021 Minutes_University Court_160322 (1).pdf

2.2. *Matters Arising

Note

The Court **noted** the matters arising as being either complete or on the agenda.

 UC21-22-022 Court - matters arising.pdf

2.2.1. - External Effectiveness Review

Note
Nicholas Oakley

Nicholas Oakley, Governance and Policy Manager, reported on the external effectiveness review. AdvanceHE had now been appointed, with initiation meetings scheduled for July, and observations of Court, FGPC and Audit in September and October, with a report on effectiveness to follow in late November.

[UC21-22-022a 220608 Effectiveness Review Update.pdf](#)

2.3. Review of Any Delegated Decisions

Note

There were no delegated decisions to review.

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

Note

2.4.1. - Audit Committee

The Court **noted** the Audit Committee meeting draft minutes

[UC21-22-023 Minutes_Audit Committee_230522.pdf](#)

2.4.2. - Finance & General Purposes Committee

The Court **noted** the Finance and General Purposes Committee minutes. The Chair of FGPC, Linda Kirkland, reported that the draft minutes did not adequately capture the level of discussion, particularly on the approval of the EO budget item, and that the minutes will be updated to reflect the concerns and issues raised by the Committee about the EO budget's lack of transformative ambition.

[UC21-22-024 Minutes_Finance & General Purposes Committee \(FGPC\)_020622.pdf](#)

2.4.3. - Regional Strategy Committee

The Court **noted** the Regional Strategy Committee draft minutes.

[UC21-22-025 Minutes_Regional Strategy Committee_030522 \(2\).pdf](#)

2.4.4. - Academic Council

The Court **noted** the Academic Council draft minutes.

[UC21-22-026 Academic Council draft minutes \(10 March 2022\).pdf](#)

2.4.5. - Honorary Awards Committee

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

[UC21-22-027 Minutes_Honorary Awards Committee_250522_Redacted.pdf](#)

2.4.6. Foundation

The Court **noted** the Foundation draft minutes.

[UC21-22-027a Draft Minutes_UHI Foundation_110522.pdf](#)

3. *VICE CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

Note
Todd Walker

Prof Todd Walker, Principal and Vice Chancellor, introduced the Vice Chancellor's report to the Court. Court **noted** the update.

[UC21-22-028 PVC Report to Court 15 June.pdf](#)

4. *HISA REPORT

Note
Heather Innes

Heather Innes, HISA President, introduced the HISA report. In response to queries she reported that a new approach to the roles and expectations of HISA officers was underway and would continue throughout her term, with a focus on professional practice, increased expectations, and enhanced support for officers.

[UC21-22-029 HISA Update UHI Court June 22.pdf](#)

5. *STARRED ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

5.1. *One UHI & UHI Conference

Verbal
Todd Walker

Prof Todd Walker, Principal and Vice Chancellor, reported on the two-day conference at Nairn at which academic partner chairs, principals, members of the university senior executive team, and some members of the Court had held a facilitated discussion on the future of the partnership. Todd Walker thanked the Chair of Court for organising the event, which had proved a positive opportunity to discuss a range of issues in an open, revealing, and challenging manner, and had been well facilitated to ensure all participants' opinions had been captured.

Prof Walker reported that the primary outcome of the conference had been a commitment from all principals and chairs to work together for the ongoing success of UHI. Follow-up actions had been recorded, including communications to participants and to all staff, as well as a further meeting at the end of August.

The Chair invited other members of the Court who had attended the conference to report their thoughts on the conference and outcomes.

The participants reported that the staff and student voices present had been useful, and the commitment from all partners to discuss opportunities for radical change was especially welcomed.

The Chair reported that three operating models had been discussed, including significant integration; a 'parallel' model (separation of further education and higher education); and a 'federal plus' model. The Chair reported that the meeting at the end of August would be to determine the preferred model, and thereafter initiating a short change programme to produce meaningful results. The other participants present at the conference noted, in response to questions from other members, that the 'preferred' model may be a blend of several of the cited models and that no decision had yet been made on these. They also stated that it was important to learn lessons from past exercises, and ensure capacity and resource was implemented to drive change once a decision had been reached.

Court members then discussed the conference outputs. Members asked to be kept updated on the conference and future work emerging, and the Chair agreed to ensure transparency and particularly that all Court members were kept updated on developments.

The members also noted that any significant changes would require endorsement by stakeholders, particularly the SFC and the Scottish Government. They also noted the importance of transparency and collective agreement and particularly that Court and Academic Partner Boards be appropriately involved and informed.

Court members heard that communications about the conference, in particular the agreed principles, would be circulated before the end of the week and a summary of the conference discussion and models under consideration would be provided to Court members before the next meeting (although noting that this would be provided confidentially at this stage). It was also noted that an extraordinary meeting of Court would be held to provide members with further opportunities for feedback and involvement.

5.2. *Student Recruitment Campaign

Discussion
Todd Walker

Prof Todd Walker, Principal and Vice Chancellor, reported on the student recruitment challenges. In the discussion about this item the following key points were noted:

- The ongoing challenges that were faced by the partnership without a central or coordinated marketing team and strategy, an issue that consistently appears on risk registers, and requires both a behavioural and structural shift to address.
- That recruitment for a Director of Recruitment and Admissions, and a new role of Head of International Student Recruitment, would be commencing imminently.
- That a review commissioned of the applicant journey was expected to report in the Autumn.
- That significant effort (and expense) has been made to push the university on social media, but that early intelligence indicates that there may be issues with the curriculum offering that makes these campaigns not as effective as they could be.

The Court **noted** the student recruitment update.

 UC21-22-030 Student Recruitment.pdf

5.2.1. *Branding update

Note
Jen Vanderhoven

Dr Jen Vanderhoven, Vice Principal Engagement, reported on the branding update, highlighting in particular the developments and activities since the last Court meeting. She reported additional investment on student recruitment activities, as well as plans and next steps for improving the website to make it more stakeholder friendly and accessible. A UHI merchandising shop would also be launched in cooperation with HISA to further raise the profile of the university.

Court **noted** the update and asked to be kept updated on developments. They also recommended that a means of tracking the impact and return of the various activities be implemented where feasible.

5.3. *Presentation of REF 2021 Results

Discussion
Neil Simco

Prof Neil Simco, Vice Principal Research and Impact, reported on the REF results, with a significant improvement and an excellent result. He noted that the REF was highly competitive and UHI had done exceptionally well. In particular:

- The overall grade point average increased from 2.76 to 2.96. This was supported by very strong performances in outputs and, particularly, impact.
 - Research outputs (60% of the assessment) significant improvement from the 2014 performance in regard to 4* outputs, rising from 11% of outputs in 2014 to 26% in 2021. Overall performance increased from 2.66 to 2.89GPA.
 - Research impact (25% of the assessment) significant improvement from the 2014 performance in regard to 4* performance, rising from 12% to 49% of the total impact results being deemed to be 4*.
 - This performance now ensures that for impact the University has risen by 16 places in the Times Higher Education table to joint 49th in the UK. Overall impact performance increased from 2.99 to 3.30. This is an especially good outcome given the mission of the university to have impact on communities within the region and beyond.
- Neil Simco then briefed the members on the next steps and how the university planned to maximise the impact and accelerate areas of improvement. He highlighted the need to showcase the excellent results; focus on and continue to invest in the research environment, particularly staff development (early career), equality and diversity, Athena Swan application, PhD studentships, research infrastructure and capital spend.

The Court **noted** the REF results and congratulated Neil Simco, his team, and the university's research community on the excellent results.

UC21-22-031 REF Results 2021.pdf

5.4. *Regional Strategy Committee proposal

Approve
Sheena Stewart

Sheena Stewart, University Secretary, introduced a proposal to reform the regional strategy committee, and invited discussion from members. She reported that one focus since her appointment had been to simplify and remove duplication across the university's governance structure and committees, and the proposal was intended to contribute to this aim. She also reported her intention to work with Chairs of all committees to develop workplans for each of the committees.

The Court discussed the proposal. They were in favour of keeping both staff and student members on the reformulated committee for transparency and inclusion, and were keen to improve representation and involvement of all academic board chairs and remove potential conflicts of interest. They requested assurance that appropriate analysis had been done to ensure that the legislative requirements on the university as the Regional Strategic Body were met between the reformulated committee and the university's Finance and General Purposes Committee's terms of reference. They also requested that the proposal be considered further by the Regional Strategy Committee at its next meeting. Finally, they noted that more clarity was required around decision-making structures across the partnership.

Action: Sheena Stewart to provide Court assurance that the university continues to meet its obligations as a Regional Strategic Body in the reformulation of the Regional Strategy Committee. (Secretary; September 2022)

Action: Proposal to reform RSC be discussed at the next RSC meeting and feedback sought from all Academic Partner Board Chairs (Secretary; September 2022)

Action: A decision-making/ governance schematic for the university partnership be developed to clarify roles and responsibilities (Secretary; September 2022)

The Court **noted** the proposal and requested that the University Secretary present a further update following the completion of the above noted actions to the next Court meeting.

UC21-22-032 Regional Strategy Committee proposal 060622.pdf

5.5. *New Foundation vision and ambition

Approve
Jen Vanderhoven & Fiona
McLean

Fiona Mclean, University Rector, reported on the new Foundation vision and ambition. Foundation had originally been created as a forum of key stakeholders when UHI was being established, and it was enshrined in the university's articles of association. More recently Foundation has lost its way, lacked vision and purpose, and was no longer meaningful for members, with membership dropping and attendance at meetings poor.

Fiona Mclean reported that the proposal offered an opportunity for Foundation to act as a key forum for formal consultation and stakeholder engagement, and Dr Jen Vanderhoven, VP Engagement, had been key in driving this. Foundation was now seeking Court's support for the new vision to create a Foundation that offered a new chapter in the way the university connects with stakeholders. Next steps included working on structures and members, and launching a recruitment campaign over the coming months.

Court **approved** the Foundation proposal and asked to be kept updated on developments.

UC21-22-033 New Foundation vision and ambition.pdf

5.6. *Key Strategic Projects - Consolidated Progress Report

Discussion
Max Brown

Max Brown, Director of Transformation, reported on the key strategic projects. In response to a question on the rural and islands college merger, and the benefits of incorporation, Max Brown advised that all of the Boards involved had agreed on incorporation but that discussions with SFC were ongoing to ensure financial flexibility.

Court **noted** the update on strategic projects.

Members then discussed the curriculum review as a substantive item, and the Chair invited Prof Gary Campbell, Vice Principal Students, to report on progress. Concerns were raised that responsibility for the curriculum was unclear with so many committees, fora, and responsible officers named in the report. Court requested simplification of the decision-making processes around curriculum.

Prof Gary Campbell reported on a meeting of the Partnership Planning Forum (PPF) on 13 June at which a substantive update on the curriculum review had been discussed. This included the presentation of a five year plan for curriculum; as well as approval of the 2023/24 programmes, which involved the removal of nine programmes in that tranche. He reported that the decision around this latter item had been effectively derailed as, despite extensive prior consultation and analysis, further analysis and modelling had been requested before some members would take a decision on the matter.

The Court heard that without majority approval by PPF the decision would revert back to Academic Council, however, the matter had been highlighted as an example of the issues faced by the university's decision-making committees when faced by decisions that had material impact on partners. Despite "EO" (the university) having ultimate responsibility for the higher education curriculum there were issues in making and enacting decisions about the curriculum that undermined the university's ability to manage its curriculum effectively.

Court members expressed their concerns that decision-making had been delayed despite the relatively minor changes being requested, and stressed the need for greater accountability and a collaborative regional approach towards the curriculum.

Court **noted** the curriculum update and **requested** that Prof Gary Campbell provide the members with an update on the curriculum review at the next meeting. Court also expressed their hope that the developments discussed under item 5.1 Nairn Conference would provide a solution to these and similar curriculum issues to ensure full control, accountability, and effectiveness of the university's curriculum.

 UC21-22-034 Court update strategic projects June 2022, draft.pdf

5.7. *MAATIC Moray Growth Deal: Update

Discussion
Gary Campbell

Prof Gary Campbell, Vice Principal Students, reported on developments on the MAATIC Moray Growth Deal project. He reported that, as highlighted in the paper, the main development had been that Boeing had now offered a digital (rather than actual) aeroplane. On this basis, the project team were submitting an issue report to the Moray Growth Deal (MGD) programme board to report this change together with a request for three months to realign the project to focus on the development and exploitation of digital technologies. The revised focus would be on immersive technologies such as virtual and augmented reality and their application to existing and emerging opportunities, offshore wind, space and aerospace, digital manufacturing.

The UK Government (UKG) have confirmed that they would support this modification if the programme board agreed with the refocus. If the programme board agree that the original investment objectives can be achieved by this revised balance of industries, then the full business case will be developed on that basis and be brought back to Court prior to submission to UKG.

Court **noted** the MAATIC project update.

 UC21-22-035 MAATIC update for Court.pdf

6. UNSTARRED ITEMS

6.1. New Academic Partner Agreements

Noted without discussion.

Note
Roger Sendall

 UC21-22-036 New AP Agreements Updated 15 June 2022.pdf

6.2. Academic Partner Quarterly Status Reports

Noted without discussion.

Note
Nicholas Oakley

 UC21-22-037 220608 Academic Partner Status Reports.pdf

6.3. Confirmation/Appointments Changes to Assigned College Boards

Approved without further discussion.

Approve
Roger Sendall

 UC21-22-038 Court AP Board Appointments June 2022.pdf

6.4. Risk Management Report and High-Level Risk Register

Noted without discussion.

Note
Roger Sendall

 UC21-22-039 Risk Management Report & High-level Risk Register.pdf

6.5. Academic Partner Financial Monitoring

Noted without discussion.

Note
Niall McArthur

 UC21-22-040 - AP Mid year returns 21-22.pdf

7. RESERVED BUSINESS

7.1. *TechOne Review/Finance system update

[RESERVED ITEM]

Discussion
Vicki Nairn & Max Brown

7.2. *Financial Sustainability paper discussed by FGPC

For information only.

[RESERVED ITEM]

Information
Vicki Nairn

7.3. *UHI EO Budget 2022/23

[RESERVED ITEM]

Approve

8. DATE OF NEXT COURT MEETING:

8.1. 21 September 2022 - Business meeting

9. AOB

There was no other business and the Chair closed the meeting at 16:35