

# University Court

Wed 16 November 2022, 14:00 - 17:00

By VC (Microsoft Teams)



## Attendees

### Board members

Alastair MacColl (Chair), Andrea Robertson, Angus Campbell, Beverly Clubley, Derek Lewis, Duncan Macaulay, Fiona McLean, Heather Innes, Linda Kirkland, Madeleine Anne Rose Brown, Malcolm Burr, Mei-Li Roberts, Murray Easton, Poonam Malik, Rosemary McCormack, Sara O'Hagan, Vicki Nairn

Absent: Calum Ross, Jo de Sylva

### In attendance

Gary Campbell, Lorna Walker, Max Brown, Margaret Antonson, Neil Simco, Nicholas Oakley (Clerk), Roger Sendall, Sheena Stewart

## Meeting minutes

### 1. Preliminary Items

**Verbal**

Alastair MacColl

#### 1.1. \*Welcome and Apologies

**Note**

The Chair opened the meeting. Apologies were notified from Calum Ross and Jo De Sylva. The Court welcomed Derek Lewis to his first meeting.

Alastair MacColl

#### 1.2. \*Declaration of Interest

**Note**

None.

Verbal

#### 1.3. \*Notification of other items

**Note**

An update on UHI Shetland finances was requested [see item 9].

Verbal

#### 1.4. \*Review of Any Delegated Decisions

**Note**

None

Verbal

#### 1.5. \*Starring

**Discuss**

Item 7.1 Project Zero was requested to be starred for discussion.

Verbal

### 2. Minutes of Court meetings

#### 2.1. \*Approval of the minutes of 21 September 2022

**Approve**

The minutes of the previous meeting on the 21 September 2022 were approved as an accurate record.

[UC22-23-068 Minutes\\_University Court\\_210922.pdf](#)

#### 2.2. \*Matters Arising

**Note**

The matters arising were noted as completed or on the agenda.

[UC22-23-069 Matters Arising.pdf](#)

### 3. \*Interim Principal and Vice Chancellor Update

The Chair invited the newly appointed Interim Principal and Vice Chancellor, Vicki Nairn, to reflect upon her priorities and ambitions in her new role. Vicki Nairn reported that alongside financial sustainability, student recruitment, retention, and income generation were amongst hers and the partnership's key priorities, as well as dialogue and close working with partners and external stakeholders, particularly the Scottish Funding Council (SFC).

In addition to these priorities Vicki Nairn noted the following key issues from her report:

1. Potential clawback of £4.5m of higher education (HE) funding due to below target 2022/23 recruitment. She reported that efforts were underway to maximise in-year recruitment, and a cross-partnership meeting to maximise January 2023 starts was scheduled.
1. Members heard from other Senior Executive Team (SET) members that marketing and recruitment practitioner groups were sharing good practice around both recruitment and retention, with activities ranging from personal academic tutor engagement with individual students, post-enrolment and induction support, and a focus on what was colloquially known as "leaky pipes", i.e. areas, processes, and periods with high levels of withdrawal rates during the entire recruitment process.
1. SET had been redesigned, and was now working closely and collaboratively on their assigned objectives and within their respective portfolios. There were no plans to backfill the vacated Vice Principal Operations position (formerly held by Vicki Nairn), with these responsibilities redistributed across the SET and senior management team. This reformulation was reported as providing a saving of approximately £450k.

Court **noted** the Interim Principal and Vice Chancellor's report and verbal update.

 UC22-23-070 iPVC report to Nov 22 Court V2 FINAL.pdf

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### 4. \*HISA REPORT

Heather Innes, HISA President, introduced her report. In addition to the report, Heather Innes read a statement on UHI 2024, with the following key points made:

UHI was at a critical point for the future of the organisation; and HISA had significant concerns about the need for prompt change and progress throughout the UHI partnership and the need for it to impact positively on the student experience. She urged Court members and all of the academic partners to make the necessary radical and innovative changes. She highlighted the importance of the university to students and the region. She reported that failure to agree, and where necessary compromise in the interests of the partnership, would mean students could continue to face hard decisions on their future within the region.

Heather Innes reported HISA's frustration that the organisation continued to talk about the need for change, but still confronted with obstacles that have previously slowed or stopped progress. She also reported that HISA felt it needed to be more involved in the process of change and key decision making, particularly with reference to how HISA was working with some of the academic partners.

She closed by requesting that Court and the partnership make progress with the vital changes and improvements needed.

Court welcomed the HISA statement, and **noted** the written update report. Members asked whether HISA were being appropriately involved in and consulted on the UHI2024 workstreams that aimed to provide the transformational change HISA were seeking. HISA reported that they were involved with UHI 2024, and agreed to discuss HISA representation in UHI2024 further with the Chair.

 UC22-23-071 HISA November Court Update.pdf

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### 5. \*Items for discussion (strategic)

## 5.1. \*UHI2024 update

Discuss

Vicki Nairn/Max Brown

Max Brown, Director of Transformation, reported on the UHI 2024 workstreams. He reported that the programme board overseeing the workstreams would be meeting on 24 November, with a further update including detailed proposals, with objectives and interlinked timelines, to be brought to the next Court meeting in December 2022. He also reported that risk mitigation papers would be presented to Court alongside the proposals.

Members discussed the detail of the report. It was reported that different perceptions exist across the partnership and stakeholders about the nature and the ambition of the UHI2024 workstreams, and particularly whether radical, unconstrained transformation would be actively encouraged or appropriately supported. In the discussion on this matter, Court noted that, as highlighted at the Nairn conference, the university partnership operational model needed immediate and radical transformation rather than minimal or evolutionary changes. The executive leads of the workstreams would be given this brief, resources, and licence to plan their workstreams on this basis.

Action: Max Brown to advise workstream leaders of the need to consider radical proposals.

 UC22-23-072 UHI2024 - Update - Court - November 22.pdf

## 5.2. \*Student Recruitment Presentation

Discuss

Gary Campbell/C Wheatland

[Margaret Antonson and Davie Sandison joined the meeting]

Gary Campbell, Vice Principal Students, reported that Charlotte Wheatland had been appointed Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions, and that a new Head of International Student Recruitment would also be joining on 1 December. He then presented the recruitment timelines, as well as priorities and risk areas.

Members discussed recruitment and noted the importance of the whole offer to students, including curriculum, facilities, amenities, experience, support, reputation, and accommodation, as well as community and economic drivers, in improving student recruitment.

Members **agreed** to hold a special Court session on recruitment strategy, with a further request that a one-page document outlining the strategy be presented to a future meeting of Court.

Action: Session on recruitment at Court in February 2023, including a recruitment strategy document for review.

## 5.3. \*International Recruitment update

Discuss

Gary Campbell

Gary Campbell, Vice Principal Students, reported on a new international recruitment approach. He reported that UHI needed to further enter the competitive international student market but that there was limited resource to do so. UHI also does not have significant international reputation, and there were risks of overcommitting, particularly around UKVI certification. He reported that further consultation will occur at the next Partnership Council meeting with academic partner principals.

Court **noted** the update and **requested** a business plan outlining reasonable targets, actions, costs, benchmarks, priority areas, and risk mitigation and training around UKVI. There was also recognition for the need to improve and streamline the application process and shift to more focused arrangements with better quality prospects.

Action: International recruitment plan to be developed and return to Court for further discussion.

 UC22-23-073 International recruitment update.pdf

## 6. Items for approval/endorsement

### 6.1. \*Risk Policy and Risk Appetite/High-level Risk Register

Approve

Roger Sendall

Court **approved** the risk policy and risk appetite/ high-level risk register.

 UC22-23-074 Court Risk Report 112022.pdf

## 7. Items for noting

### 7.1. \*Rural and Islands College Merger update

Note

Max Brown

**Noted** without further discussion.

 UC22-23-075 Court - Merger update - November 22.pdf

### 7.2. \*Key Strategic projects update

Note

Max Brown

**Noted** without further discussion.

 UC22-23-076 Change management - November 22.pdf

### 7.3. \*Student Numbers Report

**Noted** without further discussion.

 UC22-23-077 Court student numbers report.pdf

 UC22-23-077 Court student numbers report\_coversheet.pdf

**Note**

Margaret Antonson

### 7.4. Project UHI Zero

Members noted concerns that UHI was potentially falling behind on net zero activity and that this was a high priority for students and communities. Court heard that Sheena Stewart, University Secretary, had assumed executive responsibility for net zero. A sustainability manager had been appointed to further enhance the university's resource and expertise in this area.

Court **noted** the update and **requested** that a further discussion on Net Zero activities be presented to a future Court meeting.

Action: Future Court agenda item on Net Zero (March or June 2023).

 UC22-23-078 UHI Zero Court November Update.pdf

**Note**

Jen Vanderhoven

### 7.5. Red Button report 2021-22 Annual Report

Court noted the red button annual report. In response to a query on how the process worked and how feedback was actioned, it was reported that the EO team reviews requests and triages to the relevant owner/ team, with responses and actions taken tracked by the team for resolution, with system and process changes then taken through the relevant committees.

 UC22-23-079 Red Button 21-22 Annual Report.pdf

**Note**

Iain Morrison

### 7.6. Academic Partner Agreements Update

**Noted** without further discussion.

 UC22-23-080 COURT New AP Agreements Update 112022.pdf

**Note**

Roger Sendall

### 7.7. Academic Partner Quarterly Status Reports

Court noted the academic partner quarterly status reports. It was noted that distant islands allowance was regularly raised as an issue, and Court requested a more systematic and political approach be made on behalf of the partnership to make progress.

Action: Vicki Nairn and Angus Campbell to discuss distant islands allowance plan.

 UC22-23-081 November 2022 Academic Partner Status Reports.pdf

**Note**

Nicholas Oakley

### 7.8. Annual Compliance Report

**Noted** without further discussion.

 UC22-23-082 2022 Annual Compliance Report.pdf

**Note**

Roger Sendall

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## 8. Minutes from Committees of Court

### 8.1. Partnership Forum

**Noted** without further discussion.

 UC22-23-083 DRAFT Minutes\_Partnership Forum\_031122.pdf

**Note**

### 8.2. Academic Council

**Noted** without further discussion.

 UC22-23-084 draft AC minutes (21 Sept 2022).pdf

**Note**

### 8.3. Nominations Committee

**Noted** without further discussion.

**Note**

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## 9. \*Any Other Business

Discuss  
All

### UHI Shetland Financial Position

Vicki Nairn, Interim Principal and Vice Chancellor, noted that UHI had been providing regular cash advances to UHI Shetland as they were experiencing ongoing financial cashflow issues. The matter had been raised with Scottish Funding Council (SFC) in October 2022; but merger funding had not yet been received from the SFC, and the UHI Shetland deficit forecast was increasing.

SFC have issued initial cash advance of £500k and UHI were seeking a further £4m against an original forecast deficit of £2m. Vicki Nairn reported that she expected a fuller response from the SFC in the coming days and agreed to keep the Chair and members, as well as FGPC, updated with developments.

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## 10. \*Reserved Business

### 10.1. \*Remuneration Committee

Court **noted** the remuneration committee minutes. It was noted and agreed that the minutes be updated to better reflect the solution on the taxation matter raised.

Note  
Sheena Stewart

### 10.2. \*Any Other Reserved Business

There was no other business and the Chair closed the meeting at 16:45.

Note  
All

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## 11. Date of Next Court meeting - 15 December 2022 - Business meeting/Virtual