



Queen Margaret University

EDINBURGH

## UNIVERSITY COURT

### CONFIRMED Minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2018

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#### PRESENT

Dr Frances Dow CBE (Chair)  
Elaine Acaster OBE  
Jim Bradshaw  
Carolyn Bell  
Dr Richard Butt  
Professor Graham Caie CBE  
Colin Duffus  
Dr Anthony Falconer OBE  
Cynthia Guthrie  
Frank Lennon OBE  
Jackie Macdonald

Ken McGarrity  
Linda McPherson  
Ruth Magowan  
Melanie Moreland  
Margaret O'Connor  
Megan Richardson  
Stewart Sands  
Dr Eurig Scandrett  
Dr Andrew Scott  
Professor Petra Wend  
Dr Laura Young MBE

#### IN ATTENDANCE

Professor Brigid Daniel  
Professor Fiona Coutts  
Gordon Craig  
Malcolm Cutt  
Irene Hynd  
Gerry O'Hare  
Steve Scott

Dean of School, Arts, Social Sciences and Management  
Dean of School, Health Sciences  
Head of Planning  
Director of Operations and Finance  
University Secretary (Secretary)  
Governance Adviser (Minute Secretary)  
Director of Campus and Commercial Services

#### 1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed members and those in attendance to the meeting. Particular welcome was extended to new members Ruth Magowan, Senate appointee on Court, and Melanie Moreland, Lay Court member. Apologies were noted from Sarah Phillips.

#### 2 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

#### 3 DETERMINATION OF OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

(a) There was no other competent business determined.

(b) There was no business arising from the Items for Information.

#### **4 CHAIR'S REPORT**

The Chair advised that members of the Committee of Scottish Chairs (CSC) had the opportunity on 10 January 2018 to meet with Mike Cantlay, recently appointed Chair of the Scottish Funding Council. In discussion, Dr Cantlay had emphasised the importance of his role in representing fully the interests of the Further and Higher Education sector on the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board.

#### **5 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

- 5.1 Members RECEIVED a detailed report from the Principal (COURT (17) 41), which highlighted recent news and developments within the University and within the HE sector. Sectoral matters advised included industrial action planned by UCU in response to proposed changes to the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) pension scheme; the extension of the 'Tier 4' visa pilot to a further 23 institutions, including 2 Scottish Universities; and continued lobbying by Universities UK and Universities Scotland on the impact of Brexit on higher education in general. The recent announcement by the Scottish Government that European Union students entering in 2019/20 would not be liable for tuition fees for the duration of their study had been welcomed by the sector.
- 5.2 Members were advised that, as part of the University's strategy to maximise student recruitment and promote the acceptance of offers by applicants the University had moved to a fully centralised admissions process, with decisions on applicants being taken largely by Admissions Officers. The University had also reviewed elements of its Admissions Policy, and was piloting differential offers where contextualised admission markers were evidenced. This work was being advanced by a short-life Task Group, which was meeting weekly under the direction of the University Secretary. In response to a query, members were advised that minimum requirements for entry to programmes were being retained, and that a range of student support arrangements were in place as part of the University's approach to widening access, progression and retention.
- 5.3 In terms of more recent events, members noted that Universities Scotland had hosted a reception at the Scottish Parliament to increase awareness amongst MSPs of the ways in which Scottish Universities are working to widen access. Two student ambassadors from a care-experienced background represented the University, and shared their personal experiences of entering higher education.
- 5.4 MINUTE REDACTED – the record of discussion under minute 5.4 is exempt from disclosure under Section 33 (1) (b) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

#### **6 MINUTES**

##### **6.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2017**

The unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2017 (COURT (17) MINS 05) were APPROVED as an accurate record.

##### **6.2 Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

## **7 FINANCIAL UPDATE**

MINUTE REDACTED – the record of discussion under minute 7 is exempt from disclosure under Section 33 (1) (b) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

## **8 LAND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

Members RECEIVED an update on recent activity and progress with the Local Land Development project and the City Deal process (Court Paper (18) 03).

The proposed Local Development Plan remained under consideration by the Scottish Government Reporter, with a report anticipated around spring/summer 2018.

An updated version of the Outline Business Case (OBC) for Edinburgh City Region Deal funding had been submitted jointly by ELC and QMU to both Governments on 21 December 2017. Feedback received in late January 2018 was being reviewed, and a further meeting would be arranged with governments prior to a further update of the OBC being produced.

Scottish Enterprise Legal and Business Infrastructure teams were providing support to discussions between QMU and ELC on the possible construct of a joint venture to undertake the development. MINUTE REDACTED – the record of discussion under minute 8 is exempt from disclosure under Section 33 (1) (b) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

A Project Steering Group, chaired jointly by the Chief Executive Officer ELC and the Principal, was being formed. Invitations to serve on the Group had been issued to representatives from the food and drink sector. Two Lay members of the University Court would be appointed to the Group through the Nominations Committee procedure.

Once the City Deal processes and timescales were confirmed, the Court would be provided with the final version of the OBC to review, supported by a clear explanation of the commitments which the University would be making, prior to any decision to enter into an agreement.

## **9 SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL – OUTCOME AGREEMENT 2018-21**

Members RECEIVED a further iteration of the draft Queen Margaret University Outcome Agreement (OA) being negotiated and developed with the SFC for 2018-21 (COURT (18) 04).

At its meeting in December, the Court had noted the Ministerial Letter of Guidance to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), and the latter's associated guidance for colleges and universities, issued on 26 October 2017. Based on that guidance, and on the preliminary discussion at the University Court and the Senate, a DRAFT revision of the University's Outcome Agreement 2017-20 had been submitted to the Scottish Funding Council on 15 December 2017.

Members were reminded that a key development had been the introduction of the term 'intensification'. Ministers had asked SFC to 'intensify' the Outcome Agreement process in order to 'secure greater progress with priority outcomes', and SFC Outcome Agreement teams were working closely with institutions to ensure 'a shared understanding of the implications of intensification'. A meeting with the University's Outcome Agreement Manager in early January had confirmed this approach, with the University being required to provide further information in respect of its performance against a number of national performance measures.

Members had been advised at the December Court meeting that the next iteration of the University's Outcome Agreement would take the form of a summary of progress against the University's current 3-year outcomes, with appropriate commentary provided on amendments and new provisions. There had been no dissent at the meeting to that suggested approach, which was reflected in the DRAFT Outcome Agreement presented for discussion. A Near Final version would be brought to the 4 April 2018 meeting of the University Court.

Members NOTED the information set out above, and undertook to offer written comments to the University Secretary outwith the meeting.

## **10 GOVERNANCE**

### **10.1 Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016**

Members RECEIVED an update from the University Secretary on the University's compliance with the Higher Education (Governance) Scotland Act 2016. Members were reminded that a number of amendments were required to the University's Statutory Instrument and supporting Standing Orders to reflect the provisions of the Act. A paper would be presented to the Court meeting on 4 April 2018.

### **10.2 Committee of University Chairs Draft Remuneration Guidance**

Members RECEIVED the Draft Remuneration Guidance issued by the Committee of University Chairs (CUC), which was out for consultation. The Committee of Scottish Chairs (CSC) was reviewing the Guidance, and would most likely respond on behalf of the Scottish HE sector. Along with other Universities, the University did not intend to respond to the consultation directly.

### **10.3 Senior Management Remuneration Committee – Short-Life Working Group**

*(Secretary's Note: Non Court members in attendance withdrew for this item).*

Members were reminded that, at its meeting on 6 December 2017, the Court had approved the formation of a Short Life Working Group to review the University's Senior Management Remuneration Review policy. The paper presented to the Court updated members on progress to date.

Members NOTED that, the terms of reference and membership of the Group having been agreed, the Group had met twice in January to agree the approach and scope of the policy review. A number of preliminary matters had been agreed as set out in the paper, and it was intended that a draft policy would be presented for discussion and approval at the 4 April 2018 meeting of Court.

In discussion, members commented variously on possible approaches to recognising contribution, of the need to be aware of the current discourse on senior remuneration, and of the requirements of the revised Code of Governance. Members were reassured that the Working Group was fully aware of developments in the HE sector, including the recently issued draft CUC guidance.

Members' suggestions would be considered for incorporation in the revised policy.

## **11 COMPLIANCE WITH THE CONCORDAT FOR RESEARCH INTEGRITY**

Members APPROVED the University's Annual High Level Statement on Compliance with the Concordat for Research Integrity.

## **12 SENATE**

Members RECEIVED the minutes of the Senate meeting held on 13 December. 2017. A number of items of importance had been drawn to the attention of the Court, including:

### *Minute 6.2.1 - REF 2021*

A working group was examining proposals on how best to identify staff with a 'significant responsibility for research' within the University. Senate recognised the need to conclude on this matter with some urgency.

### *Minute 8 - Scottish Funding Council*

Positive feedback had been received on the University's Self Evaluation of its 2016-17 Outcome Agreement, with the University having been recognised as continuing to make an effective contribution to the Scottish Government's priority objectives. Noting the access targets established in the 2017-20 Agreement, Senate members signalled their agreement that any targets agreed for 2021 should reflect those established for 2020. Senate was not minded to amend targets, but agreed that the University should continue to respond to the recommendations of the CoWA report.

### *Minute 10: Portfolio Review*

Members noted that a number of actions had been progressed, and that further communication on the review would be issued to staff, where such information was not commercially sensitive.

### *Minute 11: Teaching Excellence Framework*

Senate agreed that the University should not participate in year three of the Teaching Excellence Framework. Work to improve the University's performance in a number of key indicators in support of the Student Experience would continue.

### *Minute 13: Admissions Policy Update*

Senate considered and approved proposed revisions to the Admissions Policy and the Contextual Admissions Policy.

## **13 HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**

Members RECEIVED the minutes of the Health and Safety Committee meeting held on 14 December 2017 (HSC (17) MINS 04). There were no items brought to Court's attention.

## **14 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Court will meet on the following dates in 2018 and 2019:

4 April 2018 at 3.00 pm  
27 June 2018 at 3.00 pm

3 October 2018 at 3.00 pm  
5 December 2018 at 3.00 pm  
6-7 February 2019 (Court Away Days)  
3 April 2019 at 3.00 pm  
26 June 2019 at 3.00 pm