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**ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

**Minute of meeting held on 1 December 2021**

**Present:** Professor G McCormac (Chair), Professor A Bowes, Mr C Brown, Ms N Cadinanos, Professor I Docherty, Professor J Donaldson, Dr P Dudchenko, Dr Forbat, Professor K Grant, Professor A Green, Professor A Hadland, Professor A Jump, Ms A Mackay, Dr E Macleod, Professor M MacLeod, Ms T Miller, Professor H Nehring, Professor J Phillips, Professor M Priestley, Professor L Sparks, Ms Jill Stevenson, Dr I Tabner, Dr D Telford, Professor J Tinson, Professor T Whalley, Dr C Wilson, Professor N Wylie.

**In Attendance:** Ms I Beveridge, Mr D Soutar, Ms J Morrow, Ms E Schofield.

**Apologies:** Dr A Desbois, Dr A Gilburn, Professor R Oram.

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| **1.** | **MINUTES** | **AC (21/22) Minutes 1** |
|  | The minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2021 were approved. |  |
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| **2.** | **MATTERS ARISING NOT OTHERWISE ON THE AGENDA** |  |
|  | Council noted the following matters arising:   * Annual report on institution-led review: Further to Council’s endorsement of the report, it was considered and approved by University Court and was subsequently submitted to Scottish Funding Council (SFC) within the specified deadline. |  |
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| **3.** | **STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIR AND**  **AN UPDATE ON THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT** | **Oral Report**  **AC (21/22) 12** |
|  | Council received a briefing from the Chair and an update on the external environment, which covered developments relating to matters including:   * Campus Central opened on 29 November 2021. The new building doubled the central space and had created new study and social spaces, as well as a new location for the Student Services Hub, and the Institute for Advanced Studies. External landscaping had created Queens Court as a new social courtyard. It had been very positive that students had begun using the new space as soon as it had opened. A formal opening of both Campus Central and the Sports Centre would be organised in due course. * The University and College Union (UCU) had asked members of 58 of the 152 UK higher education institutions balloted – including the University of Stirling – to take part in three days of national strike action between Wednesday 1 and Friday 3 December 2021, inclusive. In addition, members had been asked to undertake action short of a strike, planned to last until spring 2022. Communications had already been sent to students and FAQ information was available on the website. Communication would be ongoing during the period of industrial action. * In light of the easing of social distancing restrictions, work was underway to plan for graduation ceremonies to once again take place in 2022. Planning would ensure that 2020 and 2021 graduates had the opportunity to take part in an in-person, on-campus graduation during 2022, and that ceremonies would also take place for those students who would graduate in 2022. More details regarding the plans and arrangements would be available soon and communications would then be circulated to graduates, students and staff.   Academic Council noted the updates. |  |
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| **4.** | **PLANNING FOR SPRING 2022 LEARNING AND TEACHING** | **AC (21/22) 13** |
|  | Council received a paper providing an overview of planned arrangements for learning and teaching in the spring 2022 semester.  It was noted that the paper set out the principles that had been agreed to guide planning for spring 2022. Further to discussion and consultation with a range of groups, the Students’ Union and Trades Unions, and detailed considerations of the varying impact of among students of reduced levels of face-to-face teaching, there would be an expansion of face-to-face delivery in spring 2022.  The paper had been prepared prior to the very recent emerging situation regarding the Omicron variant of Covid19. It was possible this variant would lead to the approach to delivery in spring 2022 requiring to be revisited, however it was intended the proposed approach would be continued at present but retained under review.  Academic Council noted the planned arrangements for spring 2022. |  |
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| **5.** | **AMENDMENT TO THE STATUTES** | **AC (21/22) 14** |
|  | Council received a paper outlining amendments to the University’s Statutes, specifically in respect of Statute 9, following endorsement of proposals by the Scottish Government.  Amendments were proposed to: section 1(d) to remove an erroneous designation of ‘Provost of Stirling Council’ and replace with ‘Provost of Stirling’; section 4(a) and (d) to facilitate the opportunity to extend the service of lay members of University Court beyond the standard term, in exceptional circumstances; and section 6(i) to add provision to emphasise the need for University Court to provide leadership in equality and diversity.  It was noted that following endorsement by Council, Court would be asked to approve the revised version of the Statute and make a special resolution for submission to the Privy Council for approval.  Council endorsed the proposed amendments for onwards submission to University Court for approval. |  |
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| **6.** | **ANNUAL REPORT ON ACADEMIC COUNCIL EFFECTIVENESS TO COURT** | **AC (21/22) 15** |
|  | Council received a report on its effectiveness in the preceding academic year, 2020/21.  It was noted that the report outlined Council’s remit, membership and operation in 2020/21, and summarised key items of business that had been considered.  Council discussed that enhancing the data provided in the report regarding gender balance, by also including a comparison between the potential and actual balance, would be valuable.  Council approved the report for onwards submission to University Court. |  |
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| **7.** | **REPORTS FROM ACADEMIC COUNCIL’S COMMITTEES** |  |
|  | Reports were received from Council’s Committees as follows: |  |
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| **7.1** | **Education and Student Experience Committee Report**: 10 November 2021 | **AC (21/22) 16** |
|  | Council received and noted the report from the Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC). |  |
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| **7.2** | **University Research Committee Report**: 25 August 2021 | **AC (21/22) 17** |
|  | Council received and noted the report from the University Research Committee (URC). |  |
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| **7.3** | **Joint Policy Planning and Resources Committee Report**: 23 November 2021. | **AC (21/22) 18** |
|  | Council received and noted the report from the Joint Policy Planning and Resources Committee. |  |
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| **8.** | **COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS** | **AC (21/22) 19** |
|  | Council received a paper presenting nominees to be appointed to the University Research Committee and the ESEC Academic Panels.  Council approved the nominees. |  |
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| **9.** | **ANY OTHER BUSINESS** |  |
|  | Council acknowledged that the meeting would be the last one Professor Alison Bowes would attend as Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences as she would shortly step down from that role, although would nonetheless remain a member of University staff. Sincere thanks were expressed to Professor Bowes for her contributions over the years in which she had been a member of Academic Council.  Council noted that there were no other items of business. |  |
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| **10.** | **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** |  |
|  | Council noted that the date of the next meeting would be Wednesday 9 March 2022 at 2pm. |  |
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