

**AC (21/22) Minute 3**

**ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

**Minute of the meeting held on Wednesday 9 March 2022**

**Present:** Professor G McCormac (Chair), Ms Nela Cardinanos Gonzalez, Dr A Desbois, Prof I Docherty, Dr P Dudchenko, Dr L Forbat, Dr A Gilburn, Professor K Grant, Professor A Green, Professor A Jump, Dr M Lovatt, Professor H Nehring, Ms A Mackay, Dr E Macleod, Professor M MacLeod, Professor D McGhee, Ms T Miller, Professor R Norman, Professor N Parish, Professor J Phillips, Professor L Sparks, Ms J Stevenson, Dr I Tabner, Professor J Tinson, Dr C Wilson, Professor N Wylie.

**In Attendance**: Ms I Beveridge, Ms J Morrow, Ms E Schofield, Mr D Soutar (secretary), Dr D Telford.

**Apologies**: Mr C Brown, Professor J Donaldson, Professor M Priestley.

**WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

Following his appointment as Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences, the Chair welcomed Professor Derek McGhee to his first meeting of Academic Council.

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| **1.** | **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING** | **AC (21/22)**  **Minute 2** |
|  | The minutes of the meeting held of 1 December 2021 were approved. | |
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| **2.** | **MATTERS ARISING NOT OTHERWISE ON THE AGENDA** |  |
|  | Council noted the following matters arising:  **Amendments to the Statutes:** Further to Council’s endorsement of the amendment, it was considered and approved by University Court and was currently being finalised before a special resolution for submission to Privy Council.  **Annual Report on Academic Council Effectiveness to Court:** Further to Council’s approval of the report, it was considered and approved by University Court. | |
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| **\*3.** | **STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIR AND**  **AN UPDATE ON THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT** | **Oral Report**  **AC (21/22) 20** |
|  | Council received a briefing from the Chair and an update on the external environment, which covered developments relating to matters including:   * As an international institution, the University was deeply concerned by the invasion of Ukraine and had been in recent contact with our Ukrainian and Russian students to offer support. * The recent ten days of University and College Union (UCU) strike action in relation to pay and pensions had taken place between 14 February and 2 March 2022 with action short of a strike also continuing until 3 May 2022. On 8 March 2022, notice had been received from UCU of five further days of strike action to take place on 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25 March. The action was in relation to both pay and USS pension national disputes.   The University continued to be involved in national discussions regarding industrial action via the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA).   * The UK Government had responded to the Post-18 Review of Education and Funding, formally known as the Augar Review, recommending that the tuition fee cap of £9,250 in England be held for a further two years, up to and including 2024/25. Other recommendations included policy changes for widening participation and entry requirements. Council noted that the implications for the Scottish sector would be closely monitored. * University of Stirling graduates Mili Smith and Hailey Duff, and honorary graduate Eve Muirhead, won gold in the women’s curling event at the Winter Olympics whilst current Stirling sports scholar Ross Whyte and recent graduate Bobby Lammie won silver in men’s curling. Additionally, current University of Stirling athletes Scott Meenagh and Hugh Nibloe were currently competing at the Winter Paralympics in para cross-country skiing and wheelchair curling respectively. * On 7 March 2022, Universities UK published its new ‘admissions code of practice’, which was approved by the UUK Board at its January meeting. The code, which was co-owned by UUK and Guild HE, set out the sector’s commitment to maintaining fair admissions processes and systems that are in applicants’ interests, and its development was a key recommendation of the [Fair Admissions Review](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.universitiesuk.ac.uk%2Fwhat-we-do%2Fpolicy-and-research%2Fpublications%2Ffair-admissions-review&data=04%7C01%7Cdavid.soutar%40stir.ac.uk%7Cd141c4c6ff2c4880be8d08da00defe1c%7C4e8d09f7cc794ccb9149a4238dd17422%7C0%7C0%7C637823255011214615%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=SOBQPmqYWTOTyDUym2iXG0wJqbKwqdDa0fCuq4hxF9k%3D&reserved=0) (2020).   Internal discussion had already begun to take place regarding the new code, and it was noted that Professor Leigh Sparks, as Deputy Principal (Education and Students), had signed the code on the University’s behalf.   * The University remained committed to reducing the gender pay gap in accordance with its Equality Outcomes 2021-25.   Academic Council noted the updates. | |
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| **\*4.** | **INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY PLAN** | **AC (21/22) 21** |
|  | Council received a paper providing an update on the Institutional Sustainability Plan, which was presented via six key themes mapped to the UN’s Sustainability Development Goals.  Further to discussion and consultation with a range of groups, including; faculty staff, professional services, the Student’s Union, Trade Union representatives and relevant external partners, work had continued to develop the University’s approach.  It was discussed that particular focus had been on Theme 5: Sustainability in Teaching, Learning and Research, and how the University would undertake these core activities in a more sustainable manner. The overall target of achieving a net zero status by 2040 would be a challenge, but it was considered to be a realistic challenge to achieve.  Academic Council noted the plan and welcomed the update on this important area of work. | |
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| **\*5.** | **AMENDMENT TO ORDINANCES** | **AC (21/22) 22** |
|  | Council received a paper outlining an amendment to the University’s Ordinances, specifically in respect of Ordinance 30: Exclusion from University Campus.  An amendment was proposed to increase the list of individuals who can take action under the ordinance to improve resilience.  Council endorsed the proposed amendment for onwards submission to University Court for approval. | |
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| **\*6.** | **LEARNING & TEACHING UPDATE** | **Oral Report** |
|  | Council received an overview of planned arrangements for learning and teaching in the spring 2022 semester.  It was discussed that the University would receive a report from the Scottish Government’s COVID-19 Advisory Sub-Group on Universities and Colleges, chaired by Professor Linda Bauld, on the Four Harms, and how we continue to minimise the impacts of the pandemic on students. Current focus was on redefining our standard operating processes, when we would return to them, but also ensuring we could pivot to alternative processes should there be a further wave of COVID. Council noted thanks to all staff who had adapted to what has been a very difficult situation.  It was also discussed that there was no appetite to return to pre-pandemic operations exactly as they were. Rather, work would be required ahead of academic year 22/23 to identify what operational processes over the last two years have worked well and would remain.  It was noted that the Learning and Teaching Group continued to monitor the COVID teaching and learning response, and all impacts of the industrial action on students.  Council noted the update on Learning & Teaching. | |
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| **\*7.** | **REPORTS FROM COUNCIL COMMITTEES** |  | |
|  | Reports were received from Council’s Committees as follows: |  | |
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| **\*7.1** | **Education and Student Experience Committee Report: 16 February 2022.** | **AC (21/22) 23** | |
|  | Council received and noted the report from the Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC). | | |
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| **\*7.2** | **University Research Committee Report: 4 November 2021 and 3 February 2022.** | **AC (21/22) 24**  **AC (21/22) 25** | |
|  | Council received and noted the reports from the University Research Committee (URC). | | |
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| **\*7.3** | **Joint Policy Planning and Resources Committee Report: 1 March 2022.** | **AC (21/22) 26** | |
|  | Council received and noted the report from the Joint Policy Planning and Resources Committee. | | |
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| **\*8.** | | **COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS** | **AC (21/22) 27** |
|  | | Council received a paper presenting nominees to be appointed to University Court and the Joint Policy Planning & resources Committee (JPPRC).  Council approved the nominees. | |
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| **9.** | | **ANY OTHER BUSINESS** |  |
|  | | 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 1 June 2022 at 2pm. | |
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