

**AC (24/25) Minute 1**

**ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

**Minute of the meeting held on Wednesday 11 September 2024**

**Present:** Professor M Macleod (Chair), Ms A Adebayo, Professor K Grant, Professor A Green, Professor A Jump, Dr E Macleod, Professor L McCabe, Professor D Oliver, Professor N Parish, Professor T Scott, Dr I Tabner, Dr C Wilson, Professor N Wylie

**In attendance:** Ms I Beveridge, Ms J Morrow, Dr D Telford

**Apologies:** Professor K Blair, Professor I Docherty, Professor J Donaldson, Professor E Duncan, Dr A Gilburn, Dr D Griffiths, Ms A Higgins, Professor Sir G McCormac, Dr G MacIntosh, Dr J Morgan, Professor G Ochoa, Ms E Schofield, Professor L Sparks, Professor J Tinson

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| **1.** | **REMIT, COMPOSITION AND MEMBERSHIP** | **AC (24/25) 1** |
|  | The current remit, composition and membership for Academic Council were noted. |  |
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| **2.** | **STANDING ORDERS** | **AC (24/25) 2** |
|  | Council’s Standing Orders were noted. |  |
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| **3.** | **MINUTES** | **AC (23/24)**  **Minute 4** |
|  | The minute of the meeting held on 29 May 2024 was approved. |  |
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| **4.** | **MATTERS ARISING NOT OTHERWISE ON THE AGENDA** |  |
|  | Further to the item on the development of Council committees that was discussed at the previous meeting, the terms of reference for the new Education Committee and the Student Experience Committee were provided to Academic Council in paper AC (24/25) 11. |  |
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| **5.** | **STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIR AND**  **AN UPDATE ON THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT** | **Oral Report**  **AC (24/25) 3** |
|  | Council received an update on the external environment, and a briefing from the Chair which covered developments relating to matters including:   * The external operating environment remained challenging in several respects. It was positive however, that the new Labour government that came to power in June 2024 had been explicit in stating that international students continued to be welcome in the UK. * The University had been successful in achieving an institutional silver Athena Swan award, becoming only the fifth Scottish university to do so. The Athena Swan Charter was a framework to address gender equality. The five-year action plan that accompanied the submission for the award would continue to be progressed. * The University’s students who competed in the summer 2024 Olympic Games in Paris had been very successful, with one silver and two gold medals having been won. * Two staff members had been shortlisted for a 2024 Times Higher Education (THE) Award – Professor Vikki McCall in the category of Most Innovative Teacher of the Year and Professor Angela Creese in the Outstanding Research Supervisor of the Year category. In addition, the Communications and Marketing team had been shortlisted for the Outstanding Marketing / Communications Team of the Year, and the University itself had been shortlisted for the University of the Year award. |  |
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| **6.** | **AMENDMENT TO ORDINANCE 58** | **AC (24/25) 4** |
|  | Council considered the proposed amendment to Ordinance 58.  It was agreed that the PGDE qualification would be a positive addition to the University’s awards. Although the initial focus would be on the subject areas of Chemistry and Physics, there may be future scope to extend the disciplines that could be delivered with the qualification, including beyond STEM subjects.  Council endorsed the amendment for onward submission to University Court for approval. |  |
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| **7.** | **STUDENT NUMBERS** | **AC (24/25) 5** |
|  | Council received a report on the forecast student intake and indicative population for the 2024/25 academic year.  The operating context in respect of student numbers remained challenging, however the forecast was relatively positive. There had been a re-doubling of effort to achieve this forecast position which had been vital. Nonetheless, there remained more to be done in order to maximise the University’s student numbers, including on the retention, as well as the recruitment of students.  Student retention was not currently at the levels required. A Student Retention Working Group had been established as a forum to provide focus and direction to the range of activity necessary to facilitate improvement in levels of retention.  Numbers of students studying via one of the University’s Transnational Education (TNE) partnerships continued to be key within the overall student body. It was noted that there was a strategic objective to significantly increase these numbers and that progress in respect of this was on track. |  |
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| **8.** | **STUDENT surveys** | **AC (24/25) 6** |
|  | The paper on student surveys was noted.  Council acknowledged that the 2024 National Student Survey (NSS) results had been disappointing and unsatisfactory, and the critical impact of such results in respect of the University's standing and offering in the sector.    Council discussed that the feedback received from students through surveys continued to be valuable and important in informing planning and actions in continuing enhancement of the student experience. Feedback required to be acted upon through a range of actions. Mechanisms for capturing the student voice and closing the feedback loop would be key areas of focus going forward, and close attention would be given to the feedback gathered through the early module check-in process in the autumn 2024 semester.  A whole institution focus on responding to student feedback would be required to build on the positive experience already delivered, and address areas for enhancement. |  |
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| **9.** | **TERTIARY QUALITY ENHANCEMENT FRAMEWORK** | **AC (24/25) 7** |
|  | Council noted the update on the new Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) and the completion of Phase 1 activity.  The University had completed its work on Phase 1 activity in summer 2024 with the publication of the action plan in response to the Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) that had taken place in November 2023. The plan was available from the University’s website and the Quality Assurance Agency’s (QAA) website.  The new framework represented a significant change at the national level, as the first quality framework applicable to both colleges and universities in Scotland. Whilst many of the elements of the new framework remained similar to the arrangements already in operation in universities such as the requirement to carry out institution-led review and to engage with external review, specific arrangements had been revised. This included the external review approach, with ‘Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review’ replacing the previous Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) methodology. Furthermore, the annual report on quality that had been a requirement for many years was no longer required, and had been replaced by revised reporting arrangements.  The requirements of the new framework would be implemented within the University’s arrangements and Academic Council would continue to receive updates on academic quality assurance and enhancement arrangements as appropriate. |  |
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| **10.** | **ANNUAL REPORT ON ACADEMIC COUNCIL EFFECTIVENESS TO COURT** | **AC (24/25) 8** |
|  | The annual evaluative report from Academic Council to the University Court, for session 2023/24 was considered.  The report provided University Court with assurance of Council’s effective operation and the items of business it had considered during the previous academic year.  It was discussed that the appointment of a new Deputy Principal (Research and Innovation) that had been confirmed would facilitate consideration of the Research Committee in respect of its scope, remit and focus, similarly to the consideration that had already been given to Council’s committees focussing on education and the student experience. Such consideration would be important to ensure Council continues to have insight into the full range of activity relevant to its Committees and their work.  Council approved the report for onward submission to University Court. |  |
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| **11.** | **REPORTS FROM COUNCIL COMMITTEES** |  |
|  | To receive reports from Council’s Committees: |  |
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|  | It was noted that the report from the most recent meeting of the University Research Committee and the Committee’s 2023/24 Annual Report were not yet available. These documents would be circulated to members by email as soon as possible. |  |
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| **11.1** | Education and Student Experience Committee Report: 19 June 2024 | **AC (24/25) 9** |
|  | Council noted the report and acknowledged that the meeting on 19 June 2024 was the last meeting of ESEC, since the new Council committees (Education Committee and Student Experience Committee) had replaced ESEC in the governance structure. |  |
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|  | Education and Student Experience Committee Annual Report 2023/24 | **AC (24/25) 10** |
|  | Council noted the report and that ESEC had continued to undertake and meet the requirements of its remit in the previous academic year. |  |
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| **12.** | **COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS** |  |
|  | Council approved the appointments to the Academic Panels and noted the terms of reference for the new Education Committee and Student Experience Committee, that had been prepared further to Council’s discussion at its previous meeting regarding the development of its committees. | **AC (24/25) 11** |
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| **13.** | **ANY OTHER BUSINESS** |  |
|  | Council noted the meeting as being the last for both Professor Leigh Sparks (Deputy Principal Education and Students) and Professor Alison Green (Dean for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience) prior to their retirement.  Sincere gratitude was expressed to Professor Sparks for the hugely significant contribution and impact he had achieved in his career at the University which had spanned more than 40 years, and a range of different roles and portfolios.  Similar sincere thanks were also given to Professor Green for her work for the University and the important, wide-ranging contributions she had made, including during the challenging period of the global pandemic.  Both colleagues were further thanked for their contributions to the work of Academic Council and wished very well in their retirements.  Council noted that the next on-campus, undergraduate Open Day would take place on Saturday 14 September 2024 and colleagues were encouraged to attend and support this important event. |  |
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| **14.** | **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** |  |
|  | Council’s next meeting would take place on Wednesday 27 November 2024 at 2pm. |  |
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