

Approved



UNIVERSITY COURT

MINUTES

of the meeting of the University Court held on 18 February 2015 at 2pm in the Boardroom of the University.

Chair: Mr E Frizzell
Vice-Chair: Professor E Wilson

Ms A Boyle	Ms R Donoghue	
Mr J Burt	Mr R Fletcher	Dr J Rees
Ms A Cameron	Mr C Macdonald	Mrs S Scott
Professor D Carson	Mr G MacDougall	Professor N Seaton
Dr A Cornish	Mr A Macmillan Douglas	Mr M Shaw
	Right Rev Dr N Peyton	Mrs H Smith

Secretary: Mrs S Stewart
Clerk to Court: Dr A Ramsay

In attendance: Mr S Bright (for item 40)
Ms C Summers (for items 39 & 42)
Mr B Yuksel

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr M Batho, Mrs L Baxter, Mr D Dorward, Mr M Grossi, Professor S Olivier and Mr J Reid.

NON-RESERVED AREAS OF BUSINESS

54 WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Ms A Cameron and Professor D Carson to their first meeting of Court as, respectively, Senate's nominee and the elected academic staff member.

55 DECLARATION OF POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Chair reminded members of their responsibility to indicate if they had, or could be perceived to have, a conflict of interest in relation to the items for discussion. Mr Frizzell declared a conflict of interest in relation to items 12 and 17 and indicated that he would withdraw at that time.

56 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHAIR'S COMMITTEE HELD ON 9 FEBRUARY 2015

Court noted the above minutes, submitted for information as Enclosure 37.

57 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY COURT HELD ON 17 DECEMBER 2014

Court approved the above minutes, submitted as Enclosure 38, as an accurate record.

58 MATTERS ARISING FROM THESE MINUTES

The University Secretary advised Court that the University response to the Scottish Government consultation on HE Governance had been submitted by the deadline. Mrs Stewart noted that the broader sector reaction would emerge as responses were published. Members were advised that the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) had submitted an interesting and detailed report. Mrs Stewart undertook to circulate the RSE response to Court members. The Chair advised Court that the Cabinet Secretary for Education & Lifelong Learning, Angela Constance, had indicated that she would meet the Chair of the Committee of Scottish Chairs to discuss the consultation.

Thereafter, members noted that there were no further matters arising which were not already on the agenda.

59 SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL INDICATIVE FUNDING 2015/2016

CT/0215/39

[Secretary's note: The Director of Strategic Planning joined the meeting at this point]

The Director of Strategic Planning introduced the above paper, intended to provide members with information on the recently-published Scottish Funding Council's indicative funding announcement for academic year 2015-2016. Members were apprised of the key points of the announcement as follows:

Teaching funding for the sector remained broadly at the same overall level as last year and the funding per student would remain at the same level as 2014-15. The indicative teaching grant for 2015-16 was £17.1m, which was £100k (0.6%) higher than 2014-15 (May 2014 grant letter) as a result of additional places, but represented a real-terms decrease.

The funding announcement also set out changes to the teaching funding model, which would result in a potential reduction of c.£300k in core funding in 2016-17, and a further c.£400k reduction from 2017-18 onwards. Court noted that the University may be able to mitigate this to some extent by changing the balance of provision and would review this further once the final funding announcement had been received.

As expected, the University had received another 40 additional places for articulation from Dundee and Angus College. This was in addition to the places received in 2013-14 and 2014-15.

Mrs Summers advised Court that the SFC was still considering the additional funded places for taught postgraduate programmes and would confirm in April. The University had not filled all of its additional places for the MProf Food & Drink Innovation and the MProf Games Development in 2014-15 but had made the case to SFC to retain the places in 2015-16.

Members noted that the SFC was currently consulting on its research funding grants - Research Excellence Grant (REG) and Research Postgraduate Grant (RPG) - in light of the results of the REF. The indicative funding letter had confirmed that there would be sector-wider funding of £282M for research and knowledge exchange in 2015-16 but had not provided institutional allocations. These were expected to be confirmed in April. SFC had, however, confirmed that there would be an uplift of 0.5% for REG and RPG and that there would be no Global Excellence Initiative Funding in 2015-16. Regional coherence funding would continue in 2015-16 but was being reviewed for 2016-17.

Court was advised that the SFC had indicated that there would be no new funding for strategic initiatives in 2015-16 and that existing funding was fully committed. Finally, capital funding had been reduced to £21m for the sector, most of which was committed to research infrastructure.

Mrs Summers advised Court that the final allocation was expected to be confirmed in April, following the conclusion of outcome agreement negotiations and that Court would receive a further update at that point.

In discussion members noted that, although no additional funding was expected in relation to accelerated degrees, the SFC would be facilitating 0.5FTE for years 2 and 3 of the programme. The Interim Chair of the Audit Committee sought clarification of the position on capital funding and was advised that this was not yet known. Further information was requested on the potential implications of changing the balance of provision and members were advised that the changes to recruitment could mitigate the impact of a reduction in programmes delivered.

Thereafter, Court noted the report.

60 REPORT ON RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (REF) 2014

CT/0215/40

[Secretary's note: at this point, the Head of REIS joined the meeting]

The Principal introduced the above paper, which provided an analysis of the results of the Research Excellence Framework 2014 (REF 2014), and comments on implications for the future direction of research at Abertay. Professor Seaton advised Court that the REF 2014 had replaced the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), last conducted in 2008; was run jointly by the four Funding Councils; and that the results were significant to Universities as they: influenced the perceptions of the quality of research carried out by the University and informed decisions on the allocation of research funding for Abertay and other Scottish Universities through the Research Excellence Grant.

Members noted that, contrary to national trends, Abertay had submitted 30% more staff in more Units of Assessments (UoAs) than for the RAE in 2008. A total of seven UoAs had been submitted to REF 2014, one more than for RAE 2008. In contrast, across the UK as a whole there had been a fall in the number of UoAs submitted (nearly 20% less was submitted than in RAE 2008). A total of 73 Abertay staff members (by headcount) were submitted for REF 2014, as compared to 55 Category A staff (by headcount) in RAE 2008 –

an increase of over 30%. This compared with a slight drop in total numbers of staff submitted across the UK (by about 2.5%).

Professor Seaton commended the work undertaken by the Vice-Principal (Academic) and the Head of REIS in preparing both the submission and the report and advised Court that, overall, the outcome was encouraging, given that the institution had made an inclusive submission half as big again as a typical modern university. He noted that some institutions appeared to have secured higher rankings in the league table published by the Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) by severely restricting the number of staff put forward. Members noted that the University had ranked 110 out of 128 in the THES league table, based on the average score of staff submitted by each institution, but ranked 76th and part of the leading group of modern universities in a subsequent table where “research intensity” had been taken into account.

In discussion, members noted that, although the financial impact on the institution was not likely to be significant, the University’s improved position would attract more research-active staff, which would ultimately benefit the student experience. Moving forward, the University would consider how as an organisation it might increase its contribution to excellent research, the sustainability and development of disciplines and the real world application of new discovery. Court commended the report and requested periodic updates on progress towards the next submission, likely to be in 2018. It was agreed that this could be a focus of the Court Conference in 2016.

Thereafter, Court noted the report.

[Secretary’s note: the Head of REIS left the meeting at this point]

61 SCHEME OF DELEGATION REPORT

CT/0215/41

Court received and noted the above first report on the implementation of the Scheme of Delegation, covering the period from 1 January – 31 December 2014.

One member expressed concern regarding the increase in costs for the Support Enquiry Zone and was advised that this had been discussed at the Finance & Corporate Performance Committee, which had identified the need to record any significant delegated decisions taken between meetings. In discussion, Court noted that the report was a first iteration of performance against delegated authorities and that consideration would be given to the format and presentation of future reports.

Thereafter, Court noted the report.

62 SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL: DRAFT 2015/2016 OUTCOME AGREEMENT

CT/0215/42

The Principal introduced the above paper, which delineated the proposed targets for inclusion in the University’s 2015-2016 Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council. Members noted that a draft outcome agreement based on these targets had been submitted to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC).

Following further consultation with the SFC, a revised draft outcome agreement had been developed which, subject to Court approval, would be

submitted to the SFC by the end of February. Court was advised that the draft had been considered by Senate and that further changes had been made following those deliberations.

Thereafter, Court approved the 2015-2016 Outcome Agreement.

[Secretary's note: The Director of Strategic Planning left the meeting at this point]

63 AUDIT COMMITTEE: MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27 JANUARY 2015

The minutes of the above meeting, submitted as Enclosure 43, were approved. The following matters were noted:

63.1 TRAC Report (paragraph 44.2 refers)
Court noted the Committee's consideration of an internal audit report on TRAC, which had identified two moderate and four low-priority actions.

63.2 Health & Safety Report (paragraph 44.3 refers)
Court noted the Committee's consideration of an internal audit report on health and safety, which had identified one high, three moderate and two low-priority control issues.

Members were also advised that the Committee had discussed in some detail the management of risk and the format for presenting findings and had agreed that the Director of Strategic Planning had undertaken to revise these.

64 FINANCE & CORPORATE PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE: MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3 FEBRUARY 2015

The minutes of the above meeting, submitted as Enclosure 44, were approved. The following matters were noted:

64.1 Outcome Agreement 2015-2016: update (paragraph 42 refers)
Court noted that the Committee had received an update on the development of the 2015-2016 Outcome Agreement and key points arising from the Scottish Funding Council indicative funding announcement for 2015-2016.

64.2 Abertay Management Accounts to 31 December 2014 (paragraph 43 refers)
Court noted that the Committee had received and discussed the University Management Accounts to 31 December 2014 and, in particular, the revised budget 2014-2015, which had been attached as an appendix.

64.3 Debt Management Report (paragraph 48 refers)
Court noted the Committee's consideration of a report on accumulated aged debt.

In discussion, members noted the movement between the original 2014/2015

budget and the revised 2014/2015 budget and requested that more sophisticated strategic modelling and forecasting be made a priority.

65 GOVERNANCE & NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE: MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 JANUARY 2015

CT/0215/45

[Secretary's note: At this point, the Chair of Court declared a conflict of interest and withdrew. Professor E Wilson took the Chair]

The following matter was approved:

65.1 Appointing the Chair of Court

(paragraph 27 refers)

Court endorsed the recommendation of the Committee that the proposed process for appointing the Chair of Court be approved.

Members were advised that the Chair of Court had indicated that he would be willing to serve a second term at the wish of Court. Having held a lengthy discussion at its meeting, the Governance & Nominations Committee wished to make a unanimous recommendation to Court that Mr Frizzell be re-appointed as Chair of Court for a further three-year term to 31 December 2018 from 1 January 2016.

Following discussion, Court unanimously endorsed the recommendation of the Committee to re-appoint Mr Frizzell as Chair of Court for a further three-year term to 31 December 2018.

The following matter was noted:

65.2 Scottish Government Code of Good HE Governance: Implementation Plan update

(paragraph 25 refers)

Court noted the Committee's consideration of the progress being made with regard to the approved implementation plan for complying with the new Scottish Code of Good HE Governance.

Thereafter, the minutes of the above meeting were approved.

[Secretary's note: the following item was brought forward in order to facilitate discussion whilst the Chair was not present]

66 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY COURT HELD ON 17 DECEMBER 2014 – RESERVED AREAS OF BUSINESS

CT/0215/49

Court approved the above minutes, submitted as Enclosure 49, as an accurate record.

[Secretary's note: the Chair of Court re-joined the meeting at this point.]

The Vice-Chair advised Mr Frizzell of Court's unanimous decision to re-appoint him as Chair of Court. Mr Frizzell thanked Court for its confidence and support, noting that it was his intention, with Court, to do what he could to enable the University to move forward and to safeguard its future.

67 PEOPLE, HEALTH & EQUALITY COMMITTEE REPORT

CT/0215/46

Court received and approved the minutes of the above meeting as a correct record.

The following matter was approved:

67.1 Policy on Shared Parental Leave

(paragraph 42 refers)

Court endorsed the recommendation of the Committee that the policy on shared parental leave be approved.

The following matters were noted:

67.2 Freedom of Information Review: Revised Procedure

(paragraph 41 refers)

Court noted the Committee's approval of a proposal to revise the procedure for reviewing Freedom of Information requests.

67.3 Equality action plan and Equality Outcomes

(paragraph 43 refers)

Court noted the Committee's consideration of the University's Equality Action Plan as part of its Public Sector Equality Duty set out in the Equality Act 2010.

67.4 Equality and Diversity Overview

(paragraph 43 refers)

Court noted that the Committee had received a report on Equality & Diversity, which was attached to the minute as Appendix 2.

68 SENATE: REPORT OF THE MEETING HELD IN FEBRUARY 2015

CT/0215/47

Court received and noted a report on issues discussed at Senate's meeting in February 2015. In particular, Court noted that Senate had welcomed 8 new members and had debated at length a discussion paper on academic governance and the membership of Senate. Members welcomed the decision by Senate to approve a new programme leading to the award of MSc in Mental Health Nursing.

69 REPORT ON FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS IN 2014

CT/0215/48

Court received and noted a report detailing requests made under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act between 1 January and 31 December 2014. Members were advised that requests continued to increase in volume and in complexity but that, of the 186 FOI requests received, only 2 responses had been outwith the 20 working day time-limit, at 21 days and 22 days respectively.

Court commended the work of the Corporate Governance team in discharging the University's responsibilities in this area.

70 ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

70.1 V&A at Dundee

Court noted recent reports in the media relating to the expected cost of the V&A at Dundee and requested assurance from the Principal in relation to the commitments made thus far by the University.

Professor Seaton provided members with an update on the current position regarding the V&A Dundee project, noting that construction was expected to begin during March. Court was advised of the University's continued intention to fund only activities in line with Abertay's mission and that the institution was not committed to any capital investment or to funding the operational deficit.

70.2 Visit to Dundee Business School

The Chair of the Governance & Nominations Committee commended the visit by members to the Dundee Business School, which had preceded the meeting. Mrs Scott reminded Court of the value of wider engagement with the University community and urged as many members to attend such events in future.

71 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Court noted that the next meeting would take place on Saturday 25 April 2015 at the Dunkeld Hilton Hotel, following the annual conference.

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CHAIR