

Approved



## **UNIVERSITY COURT**

### **MINUTES**

of the meeting of the University Court held on 25 April 2015 at 1.30pm in the Hilton Dunkeld House, Dunkeld.

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

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

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

In attendance: Mr C Marshall  
Mr B Yuksel

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Dr A Cornish, Mr D Dorward, Mr I McDonald and Mrs S Scott.

### **NON-RESERVED AREAS OF BUSINESS**

#### 72 WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Mr C Marshall to his first meeting of Court as President-elect of the Abertay Students' Association.

#### 73 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. None was declared.

#### 74 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHAIR'S COMMITTEE HELD ON 3 APRIL 2015

Court noted the above minutes, submitted for information as Enclosure 50.

75 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY COURT HELD ON 18 FEBRUARY 2015

Court approved the above minutes, submitted as Enclosure 51, as an accurate record, subject to one minor amendment.

76 MATTERS ARISING FROM THESE MINUTES

The Chair advised Court that the Cabinet Secretary for Education & Lifelong Learning, Angela Constance, had met with the Chair of the Committee of Scottish Chairs to discuss the Scottish Government's consultation on HE governance. Ms Constance had indicated a desire for consensus with the sector.

The University Secretary advised Court that the main grant letter had been received from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) in line with the indicative funding.

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

77 THE FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT: GOVERNMENT FUNDING AND COST PRESSURES

CT/0415/52

The Principal introduced the above paper, intended to provide Court with information on reported and planned funding developments and their potential impact on the University. Professor Seaton noted changes in Scottish Government funding for HE and apprised members of imminent changes in the University's cost base.

Court was advised that the University's improved performance in the 2014 REF would result in a £110K increase in Abertay's block grant for research by 2017-2018. However, the change in the formula for allocating funding to teaching made it almost certain that the University would lose c£300K in core funding in 2016-2017 and a further c£400K from 2017-2018 onwards. In addition, it had been announced that Regional Coherence funding would definitely cease after 2015-2016, although it was possible that a funding stream broadly aligned with the objectives of the scheme might continue.

The General Election created further uncertainty, given the Manifesto commitment of the Labour Party to reduce tuition fees in England, which would most likely have the effect of reducing fee income from RUK students from 2016-2017 onwards. Further strain would be placed upon the Universities finances by the nationally-negotiated pay awards, the recurrent increase in pension costs and a change to the employers' National Insurance Contribution. The Principal advised Court that the 2015-2016 draft budget would be presented at the next meeting of the Finance & Corporate Performance Committee (FCPC) and then to Court in June. Members requested that the paper delineated a number of potential scenarios for Court to discuss.

In relation to staff cost pressures, members asked if there was the possibility of redundancies and if so whether consideration would be given to another voluntary severance scheme. The Principal said that there no plans for compulsory redundancies, although it was likely that, as in recent years, a

small number of posts would become redundant. In such cases, the University would in the first instance seek to retrain or redeploy the member of staff affected. If compulsory redundancy were to be considered, the Executive would discuss this with Court.

Thereafter, Court noted the current position and indicated that it expected to be kept abreast of developments.

78 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

CT/0415/53

The Vice-Principal (University Services) introduced the above paper, which set out the 19 KPIs contained in the new Strategic Plan, the current baseline and the proposed 2020 position, noting that the paper delineated very clearly the direction the University wished to take for its future trajectory.

Court noted that the Finance & Corporate Performance Committee had commended this very clear and comprehensive expression of intent by the University. It was noted that, whilst Court could expect twice-yearly updates on progress, some KPIs contained in the plan would only be reported upon annually.

Court then considered an initial overview of aspects of Abertay's performance compared with other institutions. Members were advised that the University would also plot its own data going forward in order to extract the maximum benefit from this exercise.

Thereafter, Court approved the KPIs and the proposed 2020 position.

79 AUDIT COMMITTEE: MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 APRIL 2015

The minutes of the above meeting, submitted as Enclosure 54, were approved. The following matters were noted:

79.1 Review of Schools and Services Report

(paragraph 58.2 refers)

Court noted the Committee's consideration of an internal audit report on Schools and Services, which had identified two moderate and three low-priority actions.

79.2 Financial Controls Risk-Assessment Report

(paragraph 58.3 refers)

Court noted the Committee's consideration of an internal audit report on financial controls risk assessment, which had identified two low-priority control issues.

80 FINANCE & CORPORATE PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE: MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 31 MARCH 2015

The minutes of the above meeting, submitted as Enclosure 55, were approved.

The following matters were noted:

80.1 Abertay Management Accounts to 28 February 2015

(paragraph 55 refers)

Court noted that the Committee had received and considered the

University Management Accounts to 28 February 2015, presented in a new format which aligned with statutory accounts headings.

80.2 Abertay Treasury Management Policy (paragraph 57 refers)

Court noted that the Committee had approved the draft Treasury Management policy, noting that this had been revised to incorporate elements of best practice from the draft strategy produced by external consultants Sector in November 2013 and to reflect current policy elsewhere.

80.3 Debt Management and Write-Off Policies (paragraph 58 refers)

Court noted the Committee's approval of a review of Debt Management and Write-Off policies, noting that the policy on student debt had been revised to reflect the Office of Fair Trading ruling of 2014 in relation to non-tuition fee debt.

80.4 Debt Management Report (paragraph 63 refers)

Court noted the Committee's consideration of a report on accumulated aged debt which highlighted the improved position of overdue debt from SEGi and commercial debt.

81 GOVERNANCE & NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE: MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 MARCH 2015

CT/0415/56

The following matters were noted:

81.1 Scottish Government Code of Good HE Governance: Implementation Plan update (paragraph 32 refers)

Court noted the Committee's consideration of progress made with regard to the approved implementation plan for complying with the new Scottish Code of Good HE Governance. Members were advised that the Code had now been fully implemented but would be reviewed regularly in future to ensure continued compliance.

81.2 Annual and periodic Court effectiveness reviews: A discussion paper (paragraph 33 refers)

Court noted that the Committee had considered a review of current practice and proposals for a new approach to the annual and periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of Court and its committees. Members noted that further work would be undertaken and that the Committee would discuss the matter again.

81.3 Relationship between Court and Senate and the effectiveness of Senate (paragraph 34 refers)

Court noted the Committee's consideration of a paper which delineated the responsibilities delegated by Court to Senate and which considered the assurances available to Court that Senate was operating effectively. Members noted that further work would be undertaken and that the Committee would discuss the matter again.

- 81.4 Revised Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Policy  
(paragraph 35 refers)  
Court noted the Committee's consideration of the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) policy, which had been reviewed as part of a general periodic review and revised to incorporate comments received from the Joint Liaison Group. Members noted that, pending further changes, this revised policy would be submitted to Court for approval.

Thereafter, the minutes of the above meeting were approved.

## 82 PEOPLE, HEALTH & EQUALITY COMMITTEE REPORT

CT/0415/57

Court received and approved the minutes of the above meeting. The following matters were noted:

- 82.1 Harmonisation update  
(paragraph 54 refers)  
Court noted that the Committee had received notice that work would begin shortly to address a number of issues across different staff groups in the University.
- 82.2 Equality and Diversity Mainstreaming report  
(paragraph 55 refers)  
Court noted the Committee's consideration and endorsement of the Equality and Diversity Mainstreaming report, which the University was legally obliged to publish by April 30 2015 under its Public Sector Equality duties. The mainstreaming report was submitted as Enclosure 58 for Court's attention as a separate agenda item. Court accepted the report and commended the work of the University in this area.
- 82.3 Draft Race Equality Charter Mark Bronze Award application and action plan  
(paragraph 56 refers)  
Court noted that the Committee had received and considered a draft version of the Race Equality Charter Mark (RECM) application and action plan. Members noted that the final document had been submitted to the Equality Challenge Unit on April 10 and commended the work of the RECM Self-assessment team in preparing the application.
- 82.4 ECU HEI Scotland briefing paper  
(paragraph 57 refers)  
Court noted the Committee's consideration of a paper outlining a range of Equality and Diversity projects taking place across Scotland.
- 82.5 British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill  
(paragraph 58 refers)  
Court noted that the Committee had received an update on the British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill, which identified BSL as another language in Scotland.
- 82.6 Health and Safety Committee: Minute of meeting and Annual Report  
(paragraph 63 refers)  
Court noted that the Committee had received and accepted the

minutes of the Health and Safety Sub-Committee and the University's annual report on Health and Safety, which was submitted for Court's attention as Enclosure 59.

83 COURT AND COURT COMMITTEE DATES FOR SESSION 2015-2016

The proposed Court dates for session 2015/2016 were noted. One amendment was identified and committee Chairs were requested to provide feedback to the University Secretary or Clerk to Court by the end of April 2015.

84 OBSERVATIONS ON THE MEETING

The Chair invited Court to comment on the conference which had taken place that morning and also upon the business of Court conducted at the meeting. Members felt generally that the conference had been positive, informative and had covered a wide range of topics, with a large amount of material to be absorbed. There had been much that was positive to report but it was felt that the University should not shy away from discussing those aspects which had been less positive. It was suggested also that Court might benefit in future from hearing from students and that appropriate contact might be incorporated in pre-Court tours.

85 ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

Court noted that this would be the last meeting attended by Professor Derek Carson, who was leaving the University to take up a position at the University of the West of Scotland. On behalf of Court, the Chair wished Professor Carson every future success.

86 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Court noted that the next meeting would take place on Wednesday 17 June 2015.

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**CHAIR**