

## ACADEMIC COUNCIL

## Minutes of meeting held on 14 March 2018

**Present:** Professor G McCormac (Chair), Mr M Adie, Professor A Bowes, Dr P Coffee, Prof M Cusack, Dr A Desbois, Professor J Donaldson, Professor A Green, Ms J Hagerty, Ms K Howie, Professor M MacLeod, Professor H Nehring, Professor R Oram, Dr T Parkes, Professor J Phillips, Professor S Punch, Professor L Sparks, Ms J Stevenson, Professor T Whalley

**In Attendance:** Ms I Beveridge, Ms E Hensens (Secretary), Dr J Rogers, Ms J Morrow, Ms E Schofield

**Apologies:** Professor L Bauld, Professor S Bolton, Dr P Dimeo, Professor H Migaud, Mr M McCrindle, Ms A Smallenbroek

1. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING** **AC (17/18) Minutes 2**  
The minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2017 were approved.

Thanks and best wishes were extended to Matt Adie at his last meeting of Academic Council.

2. **MATTERS ARISING NOT OTHERWISE ON THE AGENDA**  
Council **noted** that there were no matters arising that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

3. **STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIR** **AC (17/18) 18**

#### **Students' Union Elections**

Following the conclusion of the Students' Union elections the Chair congratulated the new and re-elected members of the sabbatical team.

#### **Deputy Principals**

The Chair confirmed that Professor Sparks would assume the role of Deputy Principal, Education and Students, therefore transferring portfolio from Internationalisation and Graduate Studies. Recruitment for a new Deputy Principal with the Internationalisation role would commence shortly and interim arrangements would remain as previously advised until that process was completed.

#### **EU student tuition fees**

The Scottish Government recently announced that students from EU member states commencing studies at Scottish universities in 2019 would continue to receive equivalent benefits as Scottish students. For funding purposes, this confirmed that immediately post-Brexit, EU students will continue to form a part of the funded student population by the Scottish Funding Council and would therefore continue to compete with Scottish students for entry to Scottish universities.

#### **Review of UK post-18 education**

The Prime Minister and UK Education Secretary launched a review of tuition fees and funding for post-18 education across England in February 2018. The review is due to report

in early 2019. While tuition fees are a devolved matter, significant changes to the tuition fees for Rest of UK (RUK) students could have a serious impact on institutional income targets. For example, if a tuition fee cap for RUK of £6000 per annum were introduced the University of Stirling would lose c. £2m per annum.

#### **Universities Superannuation Scheme**

National strike action currently taking place in respect of a dispute over the proposed changes to the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) was confirmed as continuing. This followed a rejection of the negotiated agreement by the University and College Union (UCU) Learning and Teaching Committee. The University continued to work to ameliorate the impact of action at the University of Stirling on students.

#### **Advance HE**

Following a period of consultation the merger of the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU); Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE) and the Higher Education Academy (HEA) was underway and the new sector agency will be known as Advance HE. The merger followed the recommendations of the Bell review for a single sector agency for learning and teaching, equality and diversity and leadership and governance in higher education. The agency new structure would be in place for 1 August 2018.

#### **Athena Swan**

Following discussion it was confirmed that a consultation on the future of the Athena Swan arrangements was anticipated and members would be encouraged to contribute and engage with the process to support continued development of the scheme.

4. **TEACHING EXCELLENCE AND STUDENT OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK (TEF)** **AC (17/18) 19**  
Council received the updated on the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework TEF.

Council noted that the pilot of TEF continues with changes to the model and approach made each year to date, including the introduction of the 'subject level TEF' in the coming year. As outlined in the paper a detailed analysis of the University of Stirling data had been undertaken to evaluate where the University would place and the assessment showed an outcome of silver. Progress would continue to be monitored, particularly in light of the introduction of new metrics related to degree classifications and Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO).

Whilst changes to the methodology continue to be introduced, and participation levels in Scotland remain low it had been agreed that the University would not participate at this time however TEF indicators would be used where possible to identify actions to support the provision of the best possible teaching experience and the pursuit of world class research.

5. **ENHANCEMENT THEME UPDATE** **AC (17/18) 20**  
Council received an update on the national Enhancement Theme 2017-20 – Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience.

Council noted that actions identified as part of the University of Stirling's engagement with the Enhancement Theme would seek to make a difference to the work of both staff and students without increasing the burden upon them. Three work streams had been identified including; Learning Analytics, Personal Development Planning and the improvement of evidence and data available for colleagues to inform interventions at programme and faculty level.

**6. GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

Council approved revisions to Ordinance 66 to enact membership changes to Academic Council as recommended by the Review of Academic Council Effectiveness, and approved at the meeting of the 29 November.

**7. REPORTS FROM COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES**

**7.1 EDUCATION AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE AC (17/18) 22 (i)  
AC (17/18) 22 (ii)**

Council received the report from the meeting of the Education and Student Experience Committee held on 13 December 2017 and 21 February 2018.

Council requested that access be provided to the papers of meetings to facilitate the dissemination of information within departments.

**7.2 RESEARCH COMMITTEE AC (17/18) 22 (iii)**

Council received the report from the meeting of the Research Committee held on 7 February 2018.

In particular it was noted that the review of all research centres and the consideration of new applications for research centres was ongoing and reports would be returned to centre directors in due course.

**7.3 JOINT POLICY PLANNING AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE AC (17/18) 22 (iv)**

Council received the report from the meeting of the Joint Policy Planning and Resources Committee (JPPRC) held on 6 March 2018.

In particular it was noted that the Scottish Funding Council indicative funding allocations for AY 2018-19 had been received which indicated a 1.1% increase compared to the previous year. The University's indicative overall uplift was 2.5% compared to the final grant of AY 2017-18 and 1.4% above 2018-19 budget assumptions.

Updates have been made the performance monitoring reports to support colleagues and members of Court to engage with the complex data presented and the assessment of progress against outcomes.

It was reported that updates had been made to the accommodation allocation process and increases to the weekly rent had been approved for new build properties, Alexander Court family flats and all off campus properties whilst all other properties and the remaining accommodation in Alexander Court would see rent frozen for the coming year.

It was confirmed that the University would shortly publish its British Sign Language Action Plan and a gender pay gap statement in line with legislative requirements.

The draft Outcome Agreement was also received by JPPRC which noted the particular focus on widening access.

**8. COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS AC (17/18) 23**

Council approved the proposed appointment to the Education and Student Experience Academic Panel and noted that panel membership would be reviewed in light of the Equality Action plan to ensure appropriate gender balance amongst the members.

**8. RESEARCH AND INNOVATION SERVICES UPDATE**

Council received a presentation update on the progress of the Research Performance Improvement Group (RPIG) as adopted by the Research Committee. The RPIG process has identified a range of issues including: academic leadership of research, the management of expectations in relation to research performance, research support and development, understanding institutional research themes and programmes, understanding REF 2021 requirements, engagement in PGR supervision, prioritisation of research and a well-embedded research culture. Further analysis has informed the development of the action plan and the presentation outlined the key areas in which actions will be taken including:

- Research Funding – changes had been made to the support provided to staff applying for funding and to the Research and Innovation Services team structure to better underpin this activity
- Research Excellence Framework (REF) – information and advice had been updated for staff and Postgraduate Research (PGR) students to ensure greater awareness of the changes in the REF 2021 methodology. A full ‘mock’ REF is planned.
- Postgraduate Research Community – as a result of the recognition that the research community is key to the achievement of the research related goals consideration has been given as to how PGR students are supported and engaged and the research community across staff and students is enhanced in partnership with the Stirling Graduate School. This will include consideration of models of supervision and exploring developments of professional doctorates amongst others.

Achievement of the plan would be supported by strong partnership between various groups within the university including the international office, faculties, the Graduate School and others.

Council discussed how future developments could be supported and influenced through groups such as Universities Scotland, particularly in light of the changing political and economic landscape post-Brexit.

Council noted the importance of achieving a balance of activity across the student population and the need for sharing best practice to support these developments.

**Erica Hensens**  
**Head of Academic Quality and Governance**  
**Academic Registry**  
**March 2018**