



ACADEMIC COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting held on 13 September 2017

Present: Professor G McCormac (Chair), Professor S Bolton, Professor A Bowes, Dr P Coffee, Prof M Cusack, Dr A Desbois, Professor J Donaldson, Professor A Green, Ms J Hagerty, Professor M MacLeod, Ms K McCabe, Professor R Oram, Dr T Parkes, Professor J Phillips, Professor M Priestley, Professor S Punch Ms A Smallenbroek, Professor L Sparks, Professor T Whalley

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

Apologies: Mr M Adie, Professor L Bauld, Professor K Boyle, Professor C Caldwell, Dr P Dimeo, Ms K Howie, Professor H Migaud, Professor H Nehring, Dr D McArdle, Professor L Robinson, Ms J Stevenson

1. REMIT AND MEMBERSHIP **AC (17/18) 1**
The current remit and membership of Council was noted.

2. STANDING ORDERS **AC (17/18) 2**
Academic Council's Standing Orders was noted.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING **AC (16/17) Minutes
4**
The minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2017 were approved.

Thanks and best wishes were extended to Ms Kathy McCabe, Director of Information Services at her last meeting of Academic Council.

4. MATTERS ARISING NOT OTHERWISE ON THE AGENDA
Council noted the following:

Minute 5. Court approved the Employability Strategy in June 2017.

Minute 7. Court approved Ordinance 58 in June 2017.

5. STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIR **AC (17/18) 3**
5.1 Academic Leadership

During the ongoing recruitment of the Deputy Principal (Education and Students) the portfolio would be managed by Professor Malcolm MacLeod (Senior Deputy Principal) and Professor Leigh Sparks (Deputy Principal (Internationalisation and Graduate Studies)) who would be supported by Professor Tim Whalley (Institutional Dean for Student Experience) and Professor Alison Green (Institutional Dean for Teaching Quality Enhancement).

5.2 Transfer of Nursing Provision to UHI

Following a significant project coordinated by colleagues in both University of Stirling and UHI the Highlands and Western Isles nursing provision had successfully transferred to UHI with the first UHI intake having been recruited. Significant consideration had been given to supporting both staff and students through this transition period and work would be

ongoing for some time until all remaining University of Stirling students have graduated.

5.3 International Student Policy Review

In August 2017 the Office of National Statistics published research which noted that the number and percentage of international students over-staying their student visa was significantly smaller than that which had previously been asserted by the UK government. The Home Secretary had commissioned the Migration Advisory Committee to review the economic impact of international students and had indicated a willingness to consider removing international students from government targets for reduced migration.

Members of Council were encouraged to support the University of Stirling's approach to welcoming international students to the University, Scotland and the UK.

5.4 USS Pension Scheme

Correction to AC (17/18) 3 3.4 from *'the Universities Superannuation Scheme was £17.5m deficit'* to *'the Universities Superannuation Scheme was £17.5bn in deficit'*.

It was reported that discussions between Universities UK and USS were ongoing and staff would continue to be updated as necessary.

6. STUDENT INTAKE AND POPULATION PLANNING

AC (17/18) 4

Council received a report providing a forecast of the student population at this point of the 2017/18 intake of students. Council noted that significant work had been undertaken by all colleagues in the achievement of the current position:

- The Home/EU undergraduate (UG) forecast was 7.8% above the indicative target for 2017/18 and therefore within the 10% over-recruitment threshold set by the Scottish Funding Council. Rest of UK (RUK) undergraduate numbers were forecast to be at the largest recruitment levels since the introduction of the differential fee regime. The current forecast indicated an 18% higher firm acceptance level for overseas UG students
- The Home/EU postgraduate taught (PGT) recruitment was forecast above target against the strategic plan. Overseas application numbers were significantly up, however there were indications that this was not translating to a comparable increase in accepted offers and signalled a need to consider the approach to conversion activities. Council noted that there were still a number of weeks to go until this population would stabilise
- PhD student number forecasts indicated that Home/EU enrolments would remain static with overseas numbers slightly up. Council noted the early stage of the year and the forecast status of the numbers, but also that the current forecast would mean the goals identified in the strategic plan would not be met
- Over coming months more detailed analysis of the final numbers would be undertaken including a review of current approaches to ensure practice could build on the areas of success in future years.

It was noted that positive progression results for INTO University of Stirling had been supported by significant engagement by faculties.

Council discussed a number of potential areas for development in the approach to supporting applicant conversion and in particular highlighted a need for the identification and sharing of successful conversion strategies in relation to key populations.

7. STUDENT SURVEYS

AC (17/18) 5

Council received a report providing an overview of the results of the 2017 National Student Survey (NSS), Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES).

NB: A correction to the report was notified following the meeting:

Section 9 corrected table:

Summary Scale	University	Sector Average	Stirling Quartile
Teaching & Learning	87%	82%	1
Engagement	83%	79%	1
Assessment & Feedback	80%	74%	1
Dissertation/Major Project	80%	78%	2
Organisation & Management	77%	74%	1
Resources and Services	84%	85%	3
Skills Development	81%	78%	1
Information	90%	85%	1
Overall	87%	82%	1
Average	83%	79%	1

Council noted:

- A range of new questions had been introduced to the NSS methodology in 2017 making direct comparison difficult.
- The NSS outcome included some disappointing results in certain subjects and the internal Stirling Experience Survey completed by 3rd year students in 2016/17 indicated a lower level of satisfaction than desired as the cohort transferred into their final year.
- Overall satisfaction at the University of Stirling decreased by 3% to 86% but remains ahead of both the UK and Scottish average of 84% and 85% respectively. The Scottish and UK averages decreased by 1% and 2% respectively. Scottish and UK averages in a number of areas including; organisation and management, learning resources and student voice were ahead of Stirling
- An action plan to address issues raised by these results is being led by the Dean for Student Experience.
- The figures of the postgraduate surveys had shown broadly positive results with PRES 3% ahead of sector average and PTES at 2% ahead of sector average.
- For PRES, Stirling improved from 83% overall satisfaction to 85%, an outcome very close to the previous internal APRES which saw results above the sector average. The 2017 survey shows the sector had improved to 82%.
- The Stirling Graduate School was taking forward work with faculties in relation to the outcomes of these surveys.
- In NSS and PTES there were areas for improvement indicators such as 'Organisation and Management' which were within the University's control. That said, PTES at 87% remains 2% ahead of the sector average.

Council discussed the importance of the ownership across the University's faculties and professional services in progressing and supporting student experience improvements at module, programme and institution level, which would support improvements across all experience surveys. Facilitating a greater understanding of student expectations and how these could be managed was also considered with an agreement that there was a need for

both proactive and reactive strategies when dealing with student feedback. The impact of a successful student induction programme was also considered alongside improvements in the communication of information to and from students.

Council noted opportunities regarding the use of data to inform decision making with the introduction of Canvas supporting the collection of learning analytics and engagement information. The new Enhancement Theme would also support work in this area.

8. DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT UPDATE AC (17/18) 6

Council received the report providing an overview of progress on digital developments to date. Council noted that the implementation of Canvas had been successfully achieved within a challenging timeframe with feedback from staff and students indicating this development had been well received. It was acknowledged that work to ensure that Canvas was fully utilised would continue for some time with training and support required throughout this transition period. The reporting of concerns and questions would be particularly important at this time to ensure any issues were dealt with expediently.

Following implementation the broader use of data gathered via Canvas, for example learner engagement would be considered.

Council noted that the Dean of Stirling Management School would support the ongoing work in regard to online delivery in the coming months.

Council thanked all members of staff involved in the implementation of Canvas for their work in achieving a successful outcome.

9. ANNUAL REPORTS FROM COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES

9.1 ANNUAL REPORT FROM EDUCATION AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE AC (17 18) 7 (i)

Council received a report from the Education and Student Experience Committee for 2016/17, which gave a comprehensive overview of the work of the Committee over the year.

Council noted that Learning and Teaching Reviews were continuing as scheduled in 2017/18 and planning for the next Enhancement-led Institutional Review in 2020 had already begun. The sectoral development of the new National Enhancement Theme 'Evidence Based Enhancement' was underway, providing an opportunity for the University to progress activity on this topic over the coming three years.

As previously reported there continued to be a focus on the communication of outputs from ESEC and its subcommittees and this would be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

9.2 ANNUAL REPORT FROM RESEARCH COMMITTEE AC (17 18) 7 (ii)

Council received a report from the Research Committee for 2016/17 which provided an overview and evaluation of the work of the Committee. The following points were noted:

- A dip in application volumes in 2015-16 was reflected in the value of contract awards and new research grants in 2016/17 and this had been a key focus of the committee throughout the year which had developed a number of building blocks to support the ongoing progress in these areas.
- There would be a full mock-REF exercise in 2018 which would support preparation

for the next REF in 2021.

Council noted both reports and its satisfaction that the Committees were fulfilling their requisite duties.

- 10.* HONORARY APPOINTMENTS** **AC (17 18) 8**
Council endorsed proposals by the Senior Deputy Principal for the approval of Honorary Appointments under the terms of Ordinance 22.
Action: Academic Registry, HR and relevant Faculties
- 11. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES** **AC (17 18) 9**
Council received a report on appointments to Committees and approved the nominations as proposed.
Action: Secretary
- 12. ANNUAL REPORT ON INSTITUTION-LED REVIEW** **AC (17 18) 10**
Council noted and endorsed the annual report to the Scottish Funding Council on institution-led review in 2016/17. The report would now proceed to University Court for approval.

Erica Hensens
Head of Academic Quality and Governance
Academic Registry
September 2017