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**AC (24/25) Minute 3**

**ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

**Minute of the meeting held on Wednesday 12 March 2025**

**Present:** Professor Sir G McCormac (Chair), Ms A Adebayo, Professor K Blair, Professor I Docherty, Professor E Duncan, Dr A Gilburn, Dr G MacIntosh, Professor L McCabe, Professor D Oliver, Dr I Tabner, Professor J Tinson, Professor P Townsend, Dr C Wilson

**In attendance:** Ms I Beveridge, Ms A Higgins, Ms J Morrow, Dr D Telford, Ms E Schofield

**Apologies:** Mr J Adithya, Professor J Donaldson, Professor K Grant, Dr D Griffiths, Mr N Igbokwe, Professor A Jump, Dr E Macleod, Professor M Macleod, Mr H Mirza, Dr J Morgan, Professor G Ochoa, Professor N Parish, Professor H Scott, Professor T Scott, Professor N Wylie

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| **1.** | **MINUTES** | **AC (24-25)**  **Minute 2** |
|  | The minute of the meeting held on 27 November 2024 was approved. |  |
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| **2.** | **MATTERS ARISING NOT OTHERWISE ON THE AGENDA** |  |
|  | Council noted the following matters arising from the previous minutes:    Item 5 – Self Evaluation Action Plan (SEAP) – The University submitted a signed copy to Scottish Funding Council in December 2024.    Item 6 – Amendment to Ordinance 58 – Submitted and approved at University Court. Ordinance 58 had been updated. |  |
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| **3.** | **STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIR AND AN UPDATE ON THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT** | **Oral Report**  **AC (24-25) 27** |
|  | Council received an update on the external environment, and a briefing from the Chair which covered developments relating to matters including:   * The Scottish Government budget for 2025/26 and continued financial pressure on higher education, impacted by UK immigration policy and the turbulence of world events; * The Home Office approval of its Remote Delivery Policy, formalising requirements for proportions of on-campus and online teaching delivery for international students; * The recent award successes including the shortlisting of the University for the Times Higher University of the Year Award, and the Athena Swan Silver award that had been granted to Biological and Environmental Sciences; * The success of our student athletes at recent BUCS and world events, including tennis, golf, swimming and skiing.  The Men’s Tennis 1st team won the BUCS national league, adding to the individual, doubles and championship titles. The Women’s swimming team won the BUCS long course championship for the first time, beating Loughborough to the title. Five athletes have also been selected for the GB Students at the World University Winter Games. * The introduction of the Scottish Government’s Tertiary Education and Training Bill to bring together funding and responsibility for apprenticeships, work-based learning and training for employment under the Scottish Funding Council (SFC).  The Bill also proposed changes to the powers and governance of the SFC. A recent WONKHE update provided further information on this topic. |  |
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| **4.** | **UPDATE ON UK VISAS AND IMMIGRATION AUDIT** | **Oral Update** |
|  | Council received an update on the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) Audit that took place from 25-27 February 2025.    The audit had taken place as part of the standard cycle of activity associated with the University’s licence with UKVI. A team of five auditors undertook interview meetings and sampling of student visa holders records. The auditors were information gatherers and another UKVI team would make the decision on the outcome of the audit. The next stage was for a report to be prepared by the auditors, and it was anticipated that it would be some months before the outcome was received.    There were no concerns raised at the time of the audit and the auditors acknowledged that they had received all information required during the audit.    Thanks were expressed to all the colleagues involved in the preparation and the audit itself.    The ongoing work that takes place within the University in respect of compliance monitoring and management had been extremely important in respect of the process.    Council noted the update. |  |
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| **5.** | **INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES (IAS)** | **AC (24/25) 28** |
|  | Council received an update on IAS activity. IAS reports formally via both the Education and University Research Committees. Key points of update were:    *Studentships*  The current 3-year studentship cycle was coming to an end and the next studentship competition was live with the target being to offer at least 20 through the process. Thanks were expressed to the Research Development Manager in IAS and academic colleagues who had put forward proposals for studentships. Around 20% of the cohort joined from 1 March or later. C. 60 studentships were additional to other PhD registrations across the University.    *Student numbers*  Student numbers on core PhD programmes were growing slowly, against a sector-wide background of contraction. There were 40% fewer UKRI funded studentships than five years ago.    *Supervisor Training*  The work that had been ongoing in recent years on training for supervisors, including a comprehensive framework, was continuing with positive development being maintained. The Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) that had taken place in 2023 had highlighted this area as one of positive practice which underlined the progress that had been achieved.    *Student Satisfaction*  Based on the Postgraduate Research Student Survey (PRES), overall PGR student satisfaction was steadily increasing and was approaching 85% (three percentage points higher than the sector average), however response rates remained very low. The quality of supervision was consistently highly rated whilst areas for improvement included support for teaching opportunities, the depth of the wider research environment and sense of community. It was noted that in terms of research culture, there had been a five percentage points increase since 2020.    Council noted the update. |  |
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| **6.** | **RESEARCHERS CONCORDAT** | **AC (24-25) 29a-29d** |
|  | Council received the 2024-25 Annual Report on the Researcher Concordat.    As part of the ongoing development of culture within the research environment, the University remained a signatory on the Researcher Concordat.    A range of staff and the Research Excellence Group had contributed to the action plan for the period 2023-2026. The content of the plan focussed on matters including enhancing the environment and career development.    Members welcomed the Concordat and acknowledged its importance and impact.    Council endorsed the Annual Report for onward submission to University Court for approval. |  |
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| **7.** | **RENAMING OF STIRLING MANAGEMENT SCHOOL** | **AC (24-25) 30** |
|  | Council received a proposal to amend Ordinance 69.  Stirling Management School had established a strong reputation for its teaching, research excellence, and significant local and national economic contributions. This vital contribution, along with recent milestones such as the prestigious AACSB accreditation and the reaccreditation of the Small Business Charter (SBC), had further elevated the school's status, positioning it alongside top global business institutions.  To reflect these developments, its international standing, comprehensive offerings and commitment to supporting the business community, it has been agreed to rename Stirling Management School as the University of Stirling Business School.  Council endorsed the amendment to Ordinance 69 to reflect this amendment, for onward submission to University Court for approval. |  |
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| **8.** | **DEVELOPMENT OF COUNCIL COMMITTEES** | **AC (24-25) 31** |
|  | Council noted that the title of the University Research Committee had been revised to the University Research and Innovation Committee.    The title and remit of the University Research Committee had been in place for a significant period of time, and with the launch of the new institutional strategic plan and associated enabling plans, it was now appropriate to update the name of the Committee to better reflect the institution’s enhanced focus on research and innovation activity. |  |
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| **9.** | **COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS** | **AC (24-25) 32** |
|  | Council approved the appointments to the University Research and Innovation Committee and Joint Policy, Planning and Resources Committee proposed in the paper. |  |
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| **10.** | **REPORTS FROM COUNCIL COMMITTEES** |  |
|  | Council noted the minutes from Council’s Committees: |  |
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| **10.1** | **Education Committee Minutes: 5 February 2025** | **AC (24-25) 33** |
|  | The meeting had covered a range of items of business. These had included the ongoing development of the Education and Student Experience Strategy, continuing developments in the Academic Integrity landscape, and activity delivered by the Institute for Advanced Studies. |  |
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| **10.2** | **Student Experience Committee Report: 20 November 2024** | **AC (24/25) 34** |
|  | The Student Experience Committee (SEC) had become a sub-committee of Academic Council from 2024/25. Two key areas of business at the meeting were noted. The first and main area of consideration for the committee was the Retention Working Group that had been established and that was progressing the institutional approach to managing student progression decisions. Personal Tutor and Student Feedback task and finish groups had been undertaking focussed work on these areas and a further area of review would be on commuting students' experience. The meeting had also discussed student welcome and induction and the ongoing development of provision in this area. |  |

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| **10.3** | **University Research Committee: 19 February 2025** | **AC (24-25) 35** |
|  | Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) activity had made significant progress, with three live KTPs. It was noted that to have one KTP per faculty, per year would be positive.  It was noted that Enterprise activities were being reviewed. |  |
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| **10.4** | **Joint Policy, Planning and Resources Committee Annual Report 23-24** | **AC (24-25) 36** |
|  | The report was noted. |  |
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|  | **Joint Policy, Planning and Resources Committee Report: 4 March 2025** | **AC (24-25) 37** |
|  | The institutional Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund Strategy (KEIF) was noted as an appendix to the JPPRC report.    The SFC’s University Innovation Fund had evolved and been replaced by the KEIF. Universities were required to submit a KEIF strategy in order to receive monies from the fund. The strategy would further provide SFC with confirmation on the University's plans to use funding and how this would contribute to national policy priorities. |  |
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| **11.** | **ANY OTHER BUSINESS** |  |
|  | Congratulations were expressed to Adelayo Adebayo who had been re-elected as the Student Union's Vice President (VP) Education for 2025-26.    Council also formally noted the reappointment Laura Shaw as Sports President as well as the election of Ellie Hammond to the position of VP Communities. Finally, Justine Pedussel (formerly VP Communities) had been elected as Union President.    Council expressed best wishes to them all for the year ahead. |  |
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| **12.** | **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** |  |
|  | Council’s next meeting would take place on Wednesday 4 June 2025 at 2pm. |  |