

**AC (23/24) Minute 4**

**ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

**Minute of the meeting held on Wednesday 29 May 2024**

**Present:** Professor Sir G McCormac (Chair), Professor K Blair, Professor J Donaldson, Professor E Duncan, Dr A Gilburn, Ms K Gethings, Professor A Green, Dr D Griffiths, Dr M Lovatt, Dr G MacIntosh, Dr J Morgan, Professor G Ochoa, Professor N Parish, Professor J Phillips, Professor T Scott, Professor L Sparks, Dr I Tabner, Professor J Tinson, Dr C Wilson.

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

**Apologies:** Professor I Docherty, Professor K Grant, Professor A Hadland, Professor A Jump, Dr E Macleod, Professor M Macleod, Professor L McCabe, Professor D Oliver, Ms E Schofield, Professor N Wylie.

**WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

Members were welcomed to the meeting and apologies noted. Professor Terri Scott (Interim Deputy Principal, Student Experience) was welcomed to her first meeting of Academic Council. Thanks were extended to Ms Katie Gethings and the other student representatives who had been members of Council during 2023-24 as they attended their final meeting.

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| **1.** | **MINUTES** | **AC (23/24)** |
|  | The minute from the previous meeting held on 6 March 2024 was approved. | **Minute 3** |
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| **2.** | **MATTERS ARISING NOT OTHERWISE ON THE AGENDA** |  |
|  | Following Council’s endorsement of the People Strategy, Researchers Concordat Report and an Amendment to Ordinance 16 – Honorary Degrees at its last meeting, all were approved by University Court in March 2024. |  |
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| **3.** | **STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIR AND**  **AN UPDATE ON THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT** | **Oral Report**  **AC (23/24) 35** |
|  | Council received a briefing from the Chair and an update on the external environment, which covered developments relating to matters including:   * The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accreditation process that had taken place in February 2024 had resulted in the accreditation of Stirling Management School being achieved. This was an important milestone and achievement for the School and the University, and Council recognised the extensive work and preparation that was undertaken in advance of the review. * The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) report on the review of the Graduate Visa Route had been released on 14 May 2024. The recommendation was that the Graduate Route would be retained in its current form. It also made a further range of recommendations, including a mandatory registration system for international recruitment agents. The Government had responded and further details were expected in due course. * The decreased funding settlement for universities in 2024/25 was creating a very challenging operating context for the University and the sector and would inevitably have an impact on planning for the coming academic year. Student recruitment and retention were important institutional priorities for colleagues across the faculties and professional services.   Colleagues were asked to focus on supporting students and ensuring they realise the benefits of completing their studies. * The details of the new national Tertiary Quality Framework were expected to be confirmed by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) in mid-June 2024. The Framework was to be implemented from 2024/25 and it was understood that the first cycle of operation would be a year longer in length, as the first year would be required for transition and for the piloting of the new external review approach.   Council noted the updates. |  |
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| **4.** | **DEVELOPMENT OF COUNCIL COMMITTEES** | **AC (23 24) 36** |
|  | Council received the update on intended changes to Council’s Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC) and its associated sub-committees and panels.  The current structure of ESEC had been in place since 2019, with some elements having existed over a longer period. The proposed changes were planned to take account of ongoing review and reflection on the committee structure and revisions to senior academic leadership structures.  From 2024-25, it was intended that an Education Committee and a revised Student Experience Committee would become committees of Academic Council, replacing ESEC.  Council agreed the proposed changes and noted that new terms of reference, including purpose, remit and composition of the committees would be prepared during summer 2024 and submitted to Council in September 2024. |  |
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| **5.** | **SEMESTER DATES** | **AC (23/24) 37** |
|  | Council received the paper on semester dates.  Discussions had taken place over the past few months on semester dates with various stakeholders. Semester dates were fundamental to many aspects of the University’s operation and delivery including student accommodation and recruitment, as well as learning and teaching, and therefore needed careful consideration. It was acknowledged that there were several areas that could be challenging, but also that a structured consideration of future semester dates was required to ensure the most suitable overall institutional approach. It was intended that this consideration would progress from discussion on semester date setting principles which was planned for the June 2024 meeting of ESEC.  In parallel, there was an operational requirement to have the 2025/26 semester dates in place and published.  Council approved the semester dates for 25/26 and noted the intention for consideration and reflection upon semester date setting principles to take place ahead of dates being set for future years. |  |
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| **6.** | **STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT** | **AC (23/24) 38** |
|  | Council received and discussed the Global Engagement Strategy which was an enabling strategy for the strategic plan.  Council regarded the strategy as a positive development and was pleased to see how it was framed, including the references to linguistic diversity and intercultural skills as well as building lifelong connections with students. It was noted that there could be opportunities for the Alumni team to explore partnerships with international alumni, to foster the University's ongoing engagement with its community.  Any further comments from members could be provided to Professor Neville Wylie (Deputy Principal, Internationalisation).  Council endorsed strategy for onward submission to University Court for approval. |  |
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| **7.** | **REPORTS FROM COUNCIL COMMITTEES** |  |
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| **7.1** | Council received the report from the Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC) meeting held on 22 May 2024.  Council noted the report and particularly that:   * Extensive work had taken place on policy development. Thanks were expressed to Professor Alison Green, the Associate Deans for Learning and Teaching and professional services colleagues for this work. It was anticipated that there would be more policy updates submitted to the June 2024 meeting of the Committee. * The Academic Representation paper was acknowledged as important in terms of matters that are relevant and valued by students. * The focus of the development of a new learning and teaching strategy moved to that of an education strategy, encompassing all aspects of the student experience. A further draft was being developed and would be shared for consultation in due course. * ESEC had supported the policy position set out in the new version of the Student Attendance and Engagement Policy and Procedure.   It was recognised that further development of the procedure and consideration of how it would be put into operation remained necessary next steps. A further draft was expected to be considered by the Committee at its meeting in June 2024. | **AC (23/24) 39** |
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| **7.2** | Council received the report from the University Research Committee meeting held on 2 May 2024.  Council noted the report and particularly that:   * The University had applied to participate in the People, Culture and Environment (PCE) pilot run by Research England. An outcome to the application was expected within the coming week. * There was a strong position at the final quarter of the year with the current value of research awards around £15.8m and a steady flow of grants continuing to be achieved. * A review of the processes and groups that report to the Research Committee, in particular, the ethics process and Research Environment Group, is underway to optimize the context of the new Research and Innovation Strategy.   Council approved the nomination of Professor Rachel Norman as the new professorial representative on the Research Committee. | **AC (23/24) 40** |
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| **7.3** | Council received the report from the Joint Policy Planning and Resources Committee held on 21 May 2024.  Council noted the report. | **AC (23/24) 41** |
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| **8.** | **ANY OTHER BUSINESS** |  |
|  | Thanks were expressed to Professor Judith Philips for the valuable contribution she had made to the University and to Academic Council as Deputy Principal (Research). |  |
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| **9.** | **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** |  |
|  | Academic Council would meet again in the autumn 2024 semester, with the date of the next meeting being confirmed shortly. |  |