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**AC (24/25) Minute 2**

**ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

**Minute of the meeting held on Wednesday 27 November 2024**

**Present:** Professor Sir G McCormac (Chair), Professor M Macleod, Ms A Adebayo, Mr J Adithya, Professor K Blair, Professor I Docherty, Dr A Gilburn, Professor K Grant, Dr G MacIntosh, Dr E Macleod, Professor L McCabe, Dr J Morgan, Mr H Mirza, Professor N Parish, Professor H Scott, Professor T Scott, Dr I Tabner, Professor P Townsend, Dr C Wilson

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

**Apologies:** Professor J Donaldson, Professor E Duncan, Professor G Ochoa, Professor D Oliver, Professor J Tinson, Professor A Jump, Professor N Wylie, Mr N Igbokwe, Dr D Griffiths

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| **1.**  | **MINUTES** | **AC (24-25)** **Minute 1** |
|  | The minute of the meeting held on 11 September 2024 was approved. |  |
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| **2.** | **MATTERS ARISING NOT OTHERWISE ON THE AGENDA** |  |
|  | There were no matters arising. |  |
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| **3.** | **STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIR AND****AN UPDATE ON THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT** | **Oral Report** **AC (24-25) 12** |
|  | Council received an update on the external environment, and a briefing from the Chair which covered developments relating to matters including:  * There had been an increase in tuition fee levels confirmed in England, and Scottish ministers had no opposition to raising fees for students from the rest of the UK (RUK) undertaking a programme of study in Scotland. Arrangements were being taken forward to implement the revised fee levels.
* In light of changes to visa requirements that had been introduced in recent months and the impact of these on higher education, further revisions that would mitigate this impact would be positive. There was currently no indication of such change, however, the new Westminster government that had come to power in July 2024 had been explicit in stating that international students continued to be welcome in the UK. It remained to be seen the extent to which this would remain a focus on the agenda for the new government.
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| **4.** | **SFC OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK AND ASSURANCE MODEL** | **AC (24-25) 13** |
|  | Council received an update on the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Outcome and Assurance Model. The paper provided an overview of the new model, and the SFC approach toward assurance and accountability, which would replace the previous Outcome Agreement Framework from 2024/25 onwards.  It had been stated that there was a focus in the new approach on reducing the burden on institutions around reporting and data, however the model remained very new and a range of details had yet to be fully confirmed.  Council noted the paper. |  |
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| **5.** | **SELF EVALUATION ACTION PLAN (SEAP)** | **AC (24/25) 14** |
|  | Council considered the Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP) for 2023/24. Council had received various updates in recent months on the new quality arrangements in Scotland, as provided in the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) which had been launched in June 2024. 2024/25 was a transition year for the new arrangements, including the change to the mechanism for reporting on quality to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). For many years, universities in Scotland had been required to submit reporting in a specified format on an annual basis, and this had been replaced by the SEAP. The draft SEAP had been prepared based on the guidance provided by SFC, and taking account of learning gained through engagement with a range of sector events that had taken place in autumn 2024.  Council discussed that it may be valuable to add reference to the Small Business Charter accreditation that had recently been achieved. Once finalised, the SEAP including the statement of assurance, would be submitted to the SFC by the deadline of 2 December 2024. The guidance from SFC on the SEAP noted a longer-term ambition to have a level of direct student involvement in the SEAP process, and this was the intended approach of the University going forward. The constrained timeline for the preparation of the 2023/24 SEAP and the issuing of guidance regarding this had meant this had been challenging in the current year, although student feedback, and the student input that formed core elements of quality processes were represented in the document. Council endorsed the SEAP for 2023-24. |  |
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| **6.** | **AMENDMENT TO ORDINANCE 58** | **AC (24-25) 15** |
|  | Council considered the proposed amendment to Ordinance 58.  It was discussed that Stirling Management School (SMS) was seeking to introduce a new qualification to those that the University can grant - Master of Accountancy (MAcc). The MAcc would be aimed towards prospective students interested in achieving a professional level qualification accredited by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA).  SMS had been engaging closely with ACCA regarding the potential introduction of the MAcc qualification and would continue to do so. It was noted that ACCA's view was that there was a potential market for the qualification and that it would be attractive to potential students.  If the amendment to the Ordinance was approved to enable the University to grant the MAcc qualification, the intended degree programme would be prepared and submitted for approval through the standard institutional curriculum development process.   Council endorsed the amendment to introduce the new MAcc qualification for onward submission to University Court for approval. |  |
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| **7.** | **MONITORING AND EVALUATION: STRATEGIC PLAN 2030 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS** | **AC (24/25) 16** |
|  | Council received an update on the monitoring and evaluation framework for the Strategic Plan 2030.  The paper set out reflections on the target outcomes of the strategic plan and the suite of indicators that would be used to track and monitor progress.  Members discussed the institutional ambitions that were set out in the strategic plan, the staff cost to income ratio, and the format of reporting on financial surplus.  It was agreed that some footnotes may be helpful regarding financial surplus to ensure clarity.  Members could submit any further comments/feedback to the Deputy Secretary by early December 2024. Council noted the paper. |  |
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| **8.** | **EDUCATION AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES** | **AC (24-25) 17**  |
|  | Council received an update on progress to finalise the Education and Student Experience strategy. The Education and Student Experience Strategy would build on the consultation and feedback received from colleagues across the University and would be shaped around the following priorities and related workstreams to achieve the strategic plan objectives:  * Portfolio, curriculum design and delivery
* Student success
* Academic support
* Student voice
* Employability and graduate outcomes

 Further drafts of the strategy would be shared across various committees and staff groups as it continued to be developed and finalised. Members noted that alignment across the Education and Student Experience Strategy and the Global Engagement Strategy would be valuable, to take account of transnational education and the international focus of the University. |  |
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| **9.** | **NSS FACULTY ACTION PLANS 2024/25 – THEMATIC SUMMARY** | **AC (24-25) 18** |
|  | Council received a report on the thematic summary of faculty NSS action plans for 2024-25. It was noted that the plans were working documents and would be updated as necessary. The institutional action plan brought more consistency of actions across faculties. Three key institutional priorities had been identified as being to improve: assessment and feedback; student voice; and quality of teaching.  Meetings were planned to take place between faculties, the Deputy Principal (Student Experience), the Deputy Secretary and Deputy Principal (Education) to adopt a collaborative approach to considering progress and clarifying interventions needed to complete outstanding actions.   Council noted the paper. |  |
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| **10.** | **COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS**  | **AC (24-25) 19** |
|  | Council approved the appointments to the University Research Committee. |  |
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| **11.** | **REPORTS FROM COUNCIL COMMITTEES** |  |
|  | To receive reports from Council’s Committees: |  |
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| **11.1** | Education Committee Reports: 18 September and 13 November 2024 | **AC (24-25) 20 & 21** |
|  | Council noted the reports. |  |
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| **11.2** | Student Experience Committee Report: 25 September 2024 | **AC (24/25) 22** |
|  | The introduction of a Retention Working Group has progressed the institutional approach to managing student progression decisions, and a discovery workshop had taken place to look at the students’ progression journey in detail.  There was broad agreement on the importance of this work as part of the overall activity to address student retention levels.  Council noted the report. |  |
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| **11.3** | University Research Committee: 28 August and 30 October 2024 | **AC (24-25) 23 & 24** |
|  | University Research Committee: Annual Report 2024 | **AC (24-25) 25** |
|  | There had been positive year-on-year growth in research awards with £23.1M in 2023/24 compared to £16.3M in 2022/23. The City Deal activity was growing, and a series of workshops were to take place to agree ownership of activity.  Council noted the reports. |  |
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| **12.** | **SEMESTER DATES**  | **AC (24-25) 26** |
|  | Council noted the revised semester dates for 2025-26, which had been approved in October 2024 via Chair’s Action. |  |
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| **13.** | **ANY OTHER BUSINESS** |  |
|  | No other business was noted. |  |
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| **14.**  | **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** |  |
|  | Council’s next meeting would take place on Wednesday 12 March 2025 at 2pm.  |  |
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