

COURT**Minutes**

In the Chair: Ms Morag McNeill

Date of Meeting: 3 February 2022

Present also: Dr Richard Armour
Professor Scott Arthur
Professor Lynne Baillie
Professor Mark Biggs
Ms Hannah Copeland
Professor Marc Desmulliez
Mr Graeme Dickson
Dr Fadi Ghaith
Mr Steve Heathcote
Mr Brian Henderson
Ms Emily Lucy King

Mr Paul Lewis
Dr Bill MacPherson (part meeting only)
Mr Cameron Millar
Mr Jürgen Munz
Ms Marta Phillips
Mr Chris Pirie
Mr Alan Robertson
Mr Mike Tumilty
Mr Graham Watson
Professor Richard Williams
Ms Dorothy Wright

In attendance: Ms Ruth Moir (Secretary)
Mr Richard Claughton
Ms Sue Collier
Ms Lucy Everest
Mr Andrew Jefferson
Professor Ammar Kaka

Professor Steve McLaughlin
Professor Mercedes Maroto-Valer
Dr Gill Murray
Professor John Sawkins
Lord Vallance
Mr John McDermott (Clerk)

Apologies for absence: Mr Gary Kildare, Professor Mushtak Al-Atabi

M22/01 WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed all participants to the first meeting of 2022, making special mention of Professor Maroto-Valer and Professor McLaughlin, who both were attending their first meeting since taking office on 1 January 2022 respectively as Deputy Principal (Global Sustainability) and Deputy Principal (Research and Impact).
The apologies for absence were noted.

M22/02 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The Chair invited declarations of interest relating to the matters under discussion. No new declarations were made.

M22/03 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Court approved the minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2021 as a fair record, subject to the inclusion in minute M21/103 (Report from the Remuneration Committee) of an action point for regular updates to come to the Court via reports from the Staff Committee on the work being carried out to review the gender balance across the University pay grades and to tackle existing pay gaps at the University.

The Court approved the notes from the Strategy Day held on 4 November 2021 as a fair record and noted that the notes provided a clear description of the agreed way forward for Court on environmental and sustainability matters.

M22/04 MATTERS ARISING / COURT ACTION LOG

04.1 The Court received and noted the Action Log.

04.2 With reference to M21/99.1, the Court noted that the independent review of the ERP system was under preparation, with the internal auditors to meet in the near future to agree the parameters of the review. It was agreed that the chairs of the Finance Committee and the Audit and Risk Committee would have opportunity to review the brief for the internal auditors before it was agreed.

04.3 With reference to M21/63 the Court noted that the review of the Strategic Performance Indicator for 'Resource efficiency' would be informed by the overall planning process in 2022 and therefore the outcome would be in a position to be reported at a meeting of Court in either September or November 2022.

M22/05 REPORT FROM THE CHAIR (Oral report)

The Chair of Court gave some verbal remarks, including to congratulate all concerned with the recent recruitment day on the Edinburgh campus, and with the recruitment campaign as a whole. The Chair had attended the event and expressed pleasure at seeing so many prospective students on campus, as well as the staff and student helpers supporting the event. It was hoped that this experience would bode well for the planned increase of on-campus activity.

The Chair also expressed pleasure at attending the recent award ceremony of the Queen's Anniversary Prize for pioneering research in the field of photonics.

The Chair reported some recent topics of discussion at the Committee of University Chairs and noted that Heriot-Watt appeared to be ahead of the curve on a number of important common areas of concern. One such was the recruitment of staff, where the University's values, and other matters put the University in a positive light.

On a less positive note, the Chair reported that discussions at a national level with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) suggested that the settlement for 2022/23 would very likely pose challenges for the budgeting process for the next financial year.

At the invitation of the Chair, Mr Robertson, Chair of the Infrastructure Committee, gave some reflections on his recent visit to the new Dubai campus, where he had been highly impressed by the new campus facilities, surroundings and location in Knowledge City. A particular cause for congratulation was the attainment of Gold status by the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), the most widely used international green building rating system. Mr Robertson had also been highly impressed by the staff and students he had encountered on what had been the first day of the Semester and the overall atmosphere of the new campus. The Court welcomed the successful conclusion of what had been a significant change project.

Mr Robertson reported that he had also participated in the interview process for the new Vice-Principal and Provost (Dubai) (ref **M22/11** below), in which he had been struck by the depth of breadth and inclusiveness of the process, as well as the calibre of the candidates.

M22/06 UPDATE FROM THE PRINCIPAL AND VICE-CHANCELLOR (Paper Ct1/22/01)

The Court considered the report presented by the Principal and noted the contents, which drew attention to strategic topics and many areas of activity since the previous meeting of the Court.

The Court noted that all members would be forwarded as a matter of course the regular all-staff news emails, which included links to the periodic Principal's blog postings. Members were encouraged to provide feedback that the information they receive is relevant to their role as governors and trustees.

The Court noted the latest position regarding the provisions surrounding the Pandemic and that staff, students and visitors would continue to follow the regulations and guidance in the appropriate national administrations.

XXX(...)XXX Reserved section (Ref Sections 30, 33 FOI(S)A).

It was noted that a future meeting of Court would be invited to discuss the governance arrangements for the combined Edinburgh Business School/School of Social Sciences (EBS/SoSS). The current provisions, which had supported the merger of the Schools in 2019 had been intended as a transitional arrangement and had served the University well under the expert guidance of Lord Vallance, who had continued to Chair the EBS Board through the pre- and post-merger period. It was noted that there would be further developments in due course.

At the invitation of the Principal, the Global Chief Operating Officer (GCOO) presented Court with some detail on the encouraging position of Student recruitment to on-campus programmes in the January intake *{the presentation is available on [Admincontrol](#)}*. The Court thanked the GCOO for the insightful presentation and depth of analysis.

XXX(...)XXX Reserved section (Ref Sections 30, 33 FOI(S)A).

Further comments and observations arising during discussion included regret at the ongoing industrial action being taken on the Scottish campuses by members of the trade union UCU as part

of the national action on pensions, pay, and other issues. The frustrations of staff on these matters were recognised, as was the disruption being experienced by some students and colleagues.

Further discussion centred on staff turnover and it was noted that the leavers survey could be analysed more deeply to identify reasons for departure, and that leavers interviews could also be conducted more widely. It was recognised to be preferable to retain staff where appropriate and to ensure timely appointment of replacement staff where necessary.

It was noted that reports of bullying and harassment were lower than benchmark but that the aim was to have zero incidents. Rich feedback had been gained from the recent survey on this topic and senior colleagues would consider the implications of the findings before initial discussions would be conducted at the Staff Committee before a report would be put to the Court. Strong themes included communication and relations at work, with a view to ensuring a culture in which that behaviour was not tolerated. The intention was to have an institution where people flourish and feel valued.

The Court welcomed the report and follow-up discussion and thanked the Principal and his executive colleagues for the information provided.

M22/07 FINANCE ASSURANCE REPORT (Paper Ct1/22/02)

The Principal and Vice-Chancellor introduced the updated Finance Assurance Dashboard, which kept the Court (and the Finance and Audit and Risk Committees) apprised of the progress of various important elements in the ERP implementation programme and the other changes underway in the Finance Division.

XXX(...)XXX Reserved section (Ref Sections 30, 33 FOI(S)A).

After discussion, the Court took reassurance from the report, although noted that the situation remained serious. The Court welcomed and supported the continuing involvement of the Principal and the Executive team in maintaining a close oversight of the risks and mitigating actions, including clear communication with staff. The Court thanked the Principal, the Global Chief Operating Officer (GCOO), the Global Chief Financial Officer (GCFO), and all staff involved in taking forward this matter, and for the clear and helpful report.

M22/08 REPORT FROM THE STUDENT UNION

The Court received and noted a verbal report from the Student Union (SU) as presented by the SU President. The President highlighted in particular: a positive financial situation, with a clean bill of health, evidenced by losses of circa £37k for the year against a forecast deficit of £200k due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This had been attained in part through reducing staffing costs and gaining support from furlough schemes. There was continued uncertainty due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Court further noted that one of the SU Vice-Presidents had recently resigned and that the position would remain vacant until the new cohort of sabbaticals took office in June 2022. Other matters included the training of student advocates, a virtual freshers event, and new societies being inaugurated, including one focused on Net Zero.

The Court noted that some areas of work the SU conducted with the University authorities – and in tandem with the student representative bodies in Dubai and Malaysia – included seeking to resolve concerns over the online assessments. There also had been an increasing occurrence of academic conduct issues, and the SU was playing its part in communicating with students to help avoid these. It was noted that the University had a suite of resources in place, including an Advice Hub, which was informed by an academic integrity working group. The student representatives had an important role in helping ensure the messages are picked up by students at course level across the campuses. It was further noted that this topic contributed to a significant load on the professional services and academic staff too. The matters were, however, being dealt with.

The Court welcomed the report and congratulated the President and her team on the continued tremendous work.

M22/09 ANNUAL REPORTS FROM THE DUBAI AND MALAYSIA CAMPUSES (Paper Ct1/22/03)

The Court received and noted the Annual Reports from the Dubai and Malaysia Campuses.

In further discussion the Court noted that the operation in Dubai had experienced significant transition over the previous eighteen months, with two moves of location, involving significant challenges, which had been overcome through agility and teamwork in a truly global effort. The

benefits of relocating to the new campus were already beginning to be evident with the highest ever intake being recorded in both September 2021 and January 2022. The campus was well positioned to deliver enhanced contribution to the delivery of Strategy 2025 even in the changing education landscape in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which was an increasingly competitive environment. The involvement of the University in Expo 2020, held in Dubai in late 2021 and early 2022 had created significant opportunities, which would be followed up on and enhanced. The Court requested that a report on the benefits attained from the Expo would be brought to a future meeting. As reported in M22/06 above, the Court noted that future developments would include engaging with the CAA in the UAE which was important to support growth opportunities for the operation in Dubai.

In discussion it was noted that a new Chair had been appointed to the Heriot-Watt University Malaysia Board, Datuk Yasmin Mahmood. It was agreed to invite Datuk Yasmin to present to a future Court meeting. In addition, the recently appointed Pro-Chancellor (Malaysia), Professor Tan Sri Dr Jemilah Mahmood, would formally be installed at a forthcoming graduation ceremony in Malaysia. The Court further noted that colleagues on the Malaysia Campus had won competitive research funding, which was the start of progress towards the strategic objective of growing research activity on that campus. This was in tandem with the ongoing positive education programme which was a feature of the operation in Malaysia to empower students and enhance confidence and employability in our graduates.

The Court recorded thanks to Professor Kaka and Professor Al-Atabi, the Provosts and Vice-Principals in Dubai and Malaysia, and their respective teams for their diligent and creative work in what had been an exceedingly challenging period. Both reports contained very positive and uplifting developments. It was requested that future reports would contain more forward-looking content, including projections to the end of the Strategy 2025 period.

M22/10 EXTENSION TO INTERIM APPOINTMENT OF AN EXECUTIVE DEAN OF A PRIMARY ACADEMIC UNIT (EDINBURGH BUSINESS SCHOOL/SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES) (Paper Ct1/22/04)

The Court received and approved, in accordance with Ordinance F8, a proposal submitted by the Vice-Principal and Provost on the recommendation of the Senate Committee for Interim Business and Effectiveness (SCIBE) to extend the appointment of Professor Heather McGregor as Acting Executive Dean of the Primary Academic Unit currently titled 'Edinburgh Business School/School of Social Sciences' from 1 March 2022 to 31 August 2022.

The Court noted that Professor McGregor was holding the position whilst the process was underway to recruit a longer-term Executive Dean for the PAU. It was noted that there had been a highly positive response to the recruitment process, with some very strong candidates. Interviews were scheduled for late March, with a recommendation to be

The Court expressed thanks to the Vice-Principal and Provost for the ongoing work in this regard and to Professor McGregor for her continuing service as Acting Executive Dean.

M22/11 APPOINTMENT OF PROVOSTS AND VICE-PRINCIPALS (DUBAI AND MALAYSIA) (Paper Ct1/22/05)

The Court received and approved proposals submitted by the Principal and Vice-Chancellor on the recommendation of the Senate to:

- a) appoint Professor Heather McGregor as Provost and Vice-Principal (Dubai) for an initial term to take effect from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2027; and
- b) re-appoint Professor Mushtak Al-Atabi as Provost and Vice-Principal (Malaysia) for a consecutive second term from 1 August 2022 to 31 July 2027.

The Court noted that the Senate had agreed to recommend these appointments at its meeting on 27 January 2022. The appointment to the position of Provost and Vice-Principal (Dubai) was in accordance with Ordinance J2 and followed an extensive selection procedure, which had included a member of Court participating as a member of the Selection Committee as well as considerable involvement from staff and students on the campus. The member of Court who had participated in the selection reported on the robustness and inclusiveness of the process which had resulted in a

unanimous decision to recommend the preferred candidate, with other candidates also impressing the Committee.

The Court noted that the reappointment to the position of Provost and Vice-Principal (Malaysia) was in accordance with Ordinance J3 and that the recommendation to reappoint had also gained the unanimous approval of the Board of Heriot-Watt University Malaysia (HWUM). The position also carried the title and responsibilities of Chief Executive Officer of HWUM. The Court welcomed the approval from the HWUM Board.

M22/12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

12.1 Court rolling programme of business (as at January 2022) (Paper Ct1/22/06)

The Court noted the rolling programme of forward business. Members were reminded of the open invitation to propose via the University Secretary items for inclusion on future agendas.

M22/13 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the additional meeting to consider the Annual Accounts and Financial Statements for 2020/21 would take place on **Wednesday 23 February 2022**.

The next business meeting would take place on **Thursday 24 March 2022**.

Chair's Signature

Date