

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN  
POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 10 SEPTEMBER 2019**

*Present:* Anne Minto (Chair), Nuala Booth, George Boyne, Mirela Delibegovic, Karl Leydecker, Lyndsay Menzies, Cecilia Wallback and David Watts; with David Beattie, Debbie Dyker and Ruth MacLure (Clerk).

The following were in attendance for specific agenda items:

Peter McGeorge (Minute 8), Richard Wells (Minutes 9 and 10) and Angus Donaldson (Minutes 12 and 13).

1 DECLARATION AND FORMAL BUSINESS

1.1 There were no declarations of interest.

2 PaRC REMIT AND COMPOSITION

2.1 REMIT AND COMPOSITION

2.1.1 The Committee received its draft Remit and Composition, for formal approval at the first meeting of the academic year. The Committee noted that the document had been updated following Court on 2 July 2019, along with the Schedule of Delegation and Decision-Making between Court and Policy and Resources Committee.

2.1.2 Following a review of the remits of the sub-Committees of Court, an overlap had been identified in the responsibilities of PaRC and the Audit Committee in respect of Risk Management. PaRC therefore agreed to recommend to Court the removal of the Committee's formal role in respect of Risk Management from the remit of PaRC. PaRC would continue to consider risks to the University's strategic goals through its usual business and a copy of the current Risk Register would be made available to PaRC for reference, as a matter of course.

2.1.3 The Committee considered its Composition for 2019-20 and identified a discrepancy between its agreed Composition and that proposed for the coming year. It was agreed to clarify the respective membership or attendance of representatives of the Senior Management Team as follows:

Ex officio:	George Boyne Karl Leydecker
In attendance:	Caroline Inglis

The Chair welcomed Cecilia Wallback to her first meeting of the Committee and noted the intention to appoint a Court member with financial expertise to the position formerly held by James Hall.

2.1.4 It was also agreed that the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee become a sub-Committee of PaRC (*minute 15.2 below refers*).

2.2 SCHEDULE OF BUSINESS

2.2.1 The Committee received and approved its Schedule of Business for 2019-20, noting the need to receive the Employee Engagement Survey in due course. **Action: DD**

2.2.2 The Committee noted that the Research Excellence Framework (REF) did not fall within its remit and that REF updates were on the draft Schedule of Business for Court.

- 3 MINUTES
- 3.1 The Minutes of the Meeting of the Operating Board held on 4 June 2019 were approved.
- 4 MATTERS ARISING
- 4.1 MATTERS ARISING ACTION LOG
- 4.1.1 Head of Business School  
The Committee noted the appointment of a new Head of the Business School, who was due to take up post on 1 December and would be invited to provide a presentation to the Committee in due course.
- 4.1.2 Central Heating Plant  
The Committee noted that the Central Heating Plant project was on the wishlist, rather than committed expenditure, and that this had been corrected prior to presentation of the paper to Court.
- 4.1.3 Health Wellbeing and Safety  
The Chair requested that Health Wellbeing and Safety appear on the agenda as a discussion item at least once a year, with the Head of Health Wellbeing and Safety in attendance.  
**Action: Clerk / DD**
- 4.1.4 It was noted that all other outstanding items in the Action Log were covered within the agenda.
- 5 PRINCIPAL'S INTRODUCTION
- 5.1 SENIOR APPOINTMENTS
- 5.1.1 The Committee noted the appointment of a Director of Advancement, Rob Donelson; and the Vice-Principal for Education, Ruth Taylor, both with effect from November 2019. Rob and Ruth had both attended a recent Senior Management Team Away Day and brought fresh perspectives to the work of the Team.
- 5.2 FINANCIAL POSITION
- 5.2.1 The Committee noted an improved financial position, as reported at 7.1 below. The Board noted that the University had budgeted for a staff pay increase in line with the Pay Negotiations (*the paper at 15.4 below refers*).
- 5.3 NSS RESULTS (*Minute 8 below refers*)
- 5.3.1 The Committee noted that the University was now ranked joint 15<sup>th</sup> for Student Satisfaction in the National Student Survey (excluding small and specialist institutions), compared to 25<sup>th</sup> in the previous year. This good news was tempered by the caveat that this represented a difference of only 0.5% in the absolute score, which at the same time indicated that with further small improvements an even higher ranking was possible.
- 5.4 SIMD20 STUDENTS
- 5.4.1 The Committee noted a predicted increase (from 66 to around 120) in the University's recruitment of students whose home postcodes fell within areas of multiple deprivation as defined by the Scottish government's SIMD20 criteria. The University intended to continue to drive forward improvement in its recruitment of students under the widening access agenda.
- 5.4.2 The AUSA representative queried the retention level of students from SIMD20 postcodes and was assured that progress and retention rates were in line with other cohorts.

- 5.5 STUDENT RECRUITMENT (*Minute 11.1 below refers*)
- 5.5.1 The Committee noted that both International and rest of United Kingdom (rUK) recruitment was currently ahead of target and it was hoped that International student revenue goals would be achieved once the full year picture was known after the January intake.
- 5.6 ABERDEEN 2040
- 5.6.1 The Committee noted ongoing work to develop the Aberdeen 2040 Strategy, with a first draft to be considered in the early afternoon session of the October meeting of Court. The Chair requested a communication be sent to Court to advise members of the need to reserve time in their diaries for the afternoon session. **Action: Clerk**
- 6 UNIVERSITY OPERATIONAL PLAN
- 6.1 The Committee received and considered the draft University Operational Plan, prior to discussion at a forthcoming meeting of the University Management Group. The Committee noted that each action had accompanying metrics, with responsibility for delivery attributed to members of the Senior Management Team, while responsibility for delivery of the overall Plan was shared by the Team.
- 6.2 In discussion, the Committee agreed the need to put actions relating to staff wellbeing and culture higher in the list, to signify their centrality. **Action: GB**
- 6.3 The Committee noted that the incoming Director of Advancement had already indicated that he wished to add further objectives to the Plan, relating to fundraising.
- 6.4 The Committee was keen to see greater concentration on the University's marketing and branding and requested an update on recruitment to two vacant Director-level posts in these areas. The Committee noted the University's intention to readvertise for a single position, to provide senior leadership within Professional Services for a Director of External Relations and Marketing. It was proposed that Lyndsay Menzies be invited to sit on the interview panel for this post. **Action: DD**
- 7 FINANCE
- 7.1 DRAFT OUTTURN – YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2019
- 7.1.1 The Committee received and considered the draft outturn for the year ended 31 July 2019.
- 7.1.2 The Committee noted an underlying surplus of £0.614 million and agreed that this surplus be reinvested. The Committee delegated authority to the Senior Management Team to agree the most appropriate mechanism for this.
- 7.1.3 The overall University deficit was noted to be £54 million which had been caused by significant movements in the valuations of the University's pension schemes. This position would be mirrored across the vast majority of UK Universities, with many reporting significantly larger deficits. The Committee agreed the need to update the paper to reflect the latest position in respect of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS), prior to its presentation to Court. **Action: DB**
- [Note by Clerk: Peter McGeorge joined the meeting at this point.]*
- 8 NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY
- 8.1 Peter McGeorge gave a presentation on key points in a report on the University's performance in the National Student Survey. The Committee agreed that this was a good set of results, noting areas for improvement. The Committee noted that an Institutional Forum was to be held in October, involving a broad cross section of Schools, academic and administrative staff with the aim to share good practice and move the whole institution forward using the available data.

*[Note by Clerk: Peter McGeorge left and Richard Wells joined the meeting at this point.]*

9 THE UK'S EXIT FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION

9.1 The Committee received and noted a report from Richard Wells on the University's preparations for the UK's Exit from the European Union.

10 TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION

10.1 KOREA UPDATE

10.1.1 The Committee received and discussed an update on the latest position in respect of the Korea Campus.

10.1.2 The Committee noted that the matter was nearing a conclusion and that the outcome would appear as a note within the annual accounts.

10.1.3 The Committee recorded its thanks to the team for their work on the project and noted the intention to carry out a "lessons learned" exercise upon its conclusion.

10.1.4 The VP International Partnerships thanked the Committee for its ongoing support and advice.

10.1.5 It was proposed that the Principal take the opportunity to mark his first year in post with a positive press release, mentioning the University's transnational education projects. This was to be considered, with advice from the Head of Communications. **Action: GB**

10.2 SRI LANKA UPDATE

10.2.1 The Committee received and noted an update on the latest position in respect of the University's transnational education project in Sri Lanka.

10.3 QATAR UPDATE

10.3.1 The Committee received and discussed an update on the latest position in respect of the University's transnational education project in Qatar.

10.3.2 The Committee noted ongoing work to consider the full range of opportunities at the Qatar Campus.

*[Note by Clerk: Richard Wells left the meeting at this point.]*

11 STUDENT RECRUITMENT

11.1 NEW ENTRANTS 2019/20

11.1.1 Karl Leydecker spoke to a paper on New Entrants 2019/20, highlighting performance against ambitious targets. The University had done well against target in relation to rUK undergraduate, International undergraduate and recruitment of students from areas in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 20 category. Significant growth was reported in relation to PGT international. However strong conversion and continued growth in the January intake was required to meet the full-year budget target for 2019/20.

11.1.2 The Committee requested further information on the fall in postgraduate research numbers, which was to be provided outwith the meeting. **Action Clerk / AS**

11.1.3 The Committee received an update on offers and acceptances to the Study Group programme and noted that Study Group were working closely with the University's own marketing team.

11.1.4 The Committee recorded its thanks to Alan Speight and his team for their work so far, and in particular for the improvement in SIMD20 numbers, which was noted to be an area of great importance to the Scottish government.

## 11.2 TUITION FEES 2020-21

- 11.2.1 The Committee received and considered a paper which set out proposals for tuition fees for academic year 2020/21 for postgraduate home and international, and undergraduate international students. The Committee noted that undergraduate rUK/EU fees had already been agreed in line with the parameters set by Government.
- 11.2.2 The Committee noted that the proposed approach resulted in significant increases in fee levels, as benchmarking data considered by the Committee showed that most programmes were clearly underpriced.
- 11.2.3 The student representative confirmed Aberdeen University Student Association (AUSA)'s opposition to fee increases as a matter of principle, but commented that she understood the University's position.
- 11.2.4 David Watts requested that the appendix be checked for completion, as he saw no reference to the Masters in Land Economy, accredited through the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.  
**Action: Clerk / Head of Student Recruitment**
- 11.2.5 The Committee approved the proposed approach, which resulted in an increase of postgraduate taught fees in the region of 10% to 20% (international) and 40% to 50% (UK/EU). The Committee felt this reflected the value of a University of Aberdeen degree and agreed to delegate authority to the Principal and Senior Vice-Principal to give final approval to the detail of programme fees within the overall price range set out in the paper.

*[Note by Clerk: Angus Donaldson, Director of Estates, joined the meeting at this point.]*

## 12 KING'S TRANSFORMATION UPDATE

- 12.1 Angus Donaldson gave a presentation on the University's plans to provide accommodation for the Business School and transform the King's Quarter of the Old Aberdeen Campus.
- 12.2 The Committee noted that Lyndsay Menzies was a member of both of the project boards tasked with progressing the transformation and noted the intention to merge the two at a later date.

## 13 CAPITAL PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (CPMC) REPORT

- 13.1 The Committee took the opportunity to seek clarification on some points within the CPMC report, which was on the agenda "for information".
- 13.2 The Committee noted progress in respect of the sale of part of the former Rowett Estate and noted that the overspend reported in respect of an Engineering lab (*paragraph 3.1 of the paper refers*) had been investigated and had not yet been resolved.

### **The Board received and approved the following items:**

## 14 FINANCE

### 14.1 ANTI MONEY-LAUNDERING POLICY

- 14.1.1 The Committee approved the Anti Money-Laundering Policy.

### 14.2 MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORTS TO 31 JULY 2019

- 14.2.1 The Committee received and noted the MMRs to 31 July 2019.

## 15 PEOPLE

### 15.1 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

- 15.1.1 The updated Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy was approved.

15.2 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE

15.2.1 The Committee agreed to recommend to Court that the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee should become a sub-Committee of the Policy and Resources Committee.

**The Board received and noted the following items:**

15.3 UPDATE ON ATHENA SWAN

15.4 PAY NEGOTIATIONS UPDATE

15.5 STRATEGIC INVESTMENT RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN

16 HEALTH, WELLBEING AND SAFETY UPDATE

17 COMMITTEE REPORTS

17.1 DIGITAL STRATEGY COMMITTEE REPORT

17.2 INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

17.3 STUDENT RECRUITMENT COMMITTEE

18 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

18.1 The Committee noted that the schedule of meetings for 2019-20 had been set as follows:

Thursday, 7 November 2019

Tuesday, 4 February 2020

Tuesday, 3 March 2020

Tuesday, 9 June 2020

All meetings would be held in the Court Room, University Office, from 10.00 am – 1.00 pm.

RMac / AM  
20/09/19