UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY COURT

Minutes of meeting held on 30 September 2014

Present: Sir Moir Lockhead (in the Chair), Principal, Mr A Arthur, Dr C Black, Dr C Brittain, Ms J Craw (from Minute 23), Ms E Beever, Mr C Duncan, Mr J Hall, Professor P Hannaford, Professor S Heys, Mr G Hunter, Professor N Hutchison, Cllr J Laing, Professor S Logan, Mr D MacFarlane, Professor P McGeorge, Cllr R McKail, Mrs K McPhail, Mr K Murray, Mr B Pack, Mr B Paterson, Professor J Skakle, and Mr D Steyn.

In attendance: Ms I Bews, Professor N Booth, Mr A Donaldson, Mrs D Dyker, Ms K Fowler (Minutes 37-38), Professor M Greaves, Mrs C Inglis, Professor S Kunin, Professor B MacGregor, Mr M McCorkell, Ms T Merrick, Professor A Rodger, Professor M Ross, Mr J Scrimgeour (Minutes 37-38), Ms J Sewel, Rev Professor I Torrance and Mr B Purdon.

Apologies for absence were received from Dr A Baxter, Professor P Edwards and Mrs J Shirreffs.

NEW MEMBERS

1 The Senior Governor welcomed Professor Nuala Booth who was joining the Court as a General Council Assessor with effect from 1 October 2014. The Senior Governor also congratulated Mr Colin Duncan who had been re-elected as a General Council Assessor on Court. The Senior Governor also welcomed Councillor Jenny Laing as the City Council’s new Assessor on Court.

RETIRING MEMBERS

2 The Senior Governor noted that it was Ms Jacquelynn Craw’s last meeting of Court as a General Council Assessor and the Principal paid tribute to the service that she had given to the Court and the University over the last eight years.

3 The Senior Governor reported that due to professional commitments, Professor Pete Edwards had decided to stand down from his position as a Senate Assessor on Court with immediate effect. The Court noted its gratitude to Professor Edwards for his service on Court over seven years.

4 The Senior Governor also noted that Professor Rodger, Vice-Principal for External Affairs, was retiring from the University after 38 years’ service. The Court noted its thanks to Professor Rodger for his contribution to the success of the University at many levels over the course of his career.

Strategy Day: Partnership for the Future

Vision, Values and Context for the Development of the Next Strategic Plan

5 The Principal introduced a discussion paper on the high level issues for consideration in development of the University’s next Strategic Plan (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes). The paper was framed around the following areas which the Court considered in turn: Vision, Values and Context for the Development of the Next Strategic Plan, Students and their Experience, Our Research, and Our People.

6 The Principal highlighted to Court the prospective policy and funding issues that would define the University’s external competitive environment both domestically and internationally. It was anticipated that this would be characterised in particular by further reductions in UK Government spending and increasing competition for available research funding.

7 The Principal provided the Court with an assessment of the University’s current performance against a series of key indicators related to both the student experience and research, benchmarked against selected comparator UK universities.
8 The Court discussed a set of four potential values that might frame the development of the next Strategic Plan: Innovation in our education and research; Independence of thought and action; Sustainable partnerships with all our Stakeholders; Respect for all both within and outwith the University. In discussion, the Court agreed that a further value should be that of Ambition which it considered to be a defining value. It was also suggested that a further value should be that of the University being a safe as well as a respectful community. With regard to all values, it was recognised that it was vital that they were understood by staff and students and embedded in the Institution. It was also noted that there would need to be measurable outputs for the Plan. The Court endorsed these values as a basis for further discussion and development with the University community and its stakeholders.

9 At a number of points during the meeting the importance of Partnerships to the University’s future development was noted. The Court also noted that a point common to all partnerships, with staff, students or other stakeholders, was that the University had to understand their needs.

10 A further common theme was that an International outlook should characterise the University’s activities and the challenge was to permeate this across the Institution and at the level of the individual member of staff.

11 The Court discussed the future external funding regime and in relation to this gave consideration to the issue of cross subsidy of areas of the University. The Court noted that there may be circumstances where it would be appropriate in the future to cross subsidise particular activities provided there was excellence or a wider Institutional value for doing so. Any such decisions should be based around a clear evidence base and with clear expectations for the area concerned.

*Students and their Experience*

12 Professor McGeorge introduced a discussion paper on the key strategic issues for consideration with regard to the Student Experience (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*). The paper and presentation set out three areas which were considered to be central to enhancing the student experience: Improving Retention, Enhancing Feedback, and Increasing the Number of Positive Outcomes.

13 The Court discussed a number of issues set out in the paper and presentation and how these might shape the development of the next Strategic Plan. The key points that were made in the subsequent discussion were recorded as follows:

- Students and their experience were fundamental to the University’s future success. Creating a culture in which excellence in teaching was celebrated, valued and rewarded was key to enhancing that student experience. Improving procedures and processes related to the student experience was important but ultimately it was behaviours and a culture in which staff were focused on providing the very best student experience possible that would make the difference;
- The importance of personalising the student experience was a point common to a number of issues such as early intervention in retention. The Court noted that the needs of local, national and international students, undergraduate and postgraduate students, mature students, students with families, disabled students, part-time students, and online or distance learning students, were varied and that the support for different types of students had to be tailored to suit their needs;
- The Court discussed the concept of education and that it went beyond teaching to be a partnership between the University with each student with responsibilities on each side;
- With regard to employability, the importance of developing the co-curriculum by extending partnerships with employers was highlighted.
Our Research

14 Professor Hannaford introduced a discussion paper on the key strategic issues for consideration with regard to Research (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes). The paper and presentation summarised the University's current research performance as measured by a range of criteria, its future potential and challenges to the fulfilment of that potential.

15 The Court discussed a number of issues set out in the paper and presentation and how these might shape the development of the next Strategic Plan. The key points that were made in the subsequent discussion were recorded as follows:

- That in the context of a research funding environment where funding was likely to be increasingly focused on the very best research, the University would need to focus on where it could be world leading;
- It was recognised that it would be challenging to balance the achievement of the University's ambition to enhance its competitive position as a research-led university with a level of management of performance that was appropriate to the culture of the University;
- There was agreement that given the context of shrinking public funding for research, the University would need to strengthen its focus on developing partnerships with industry and to meet the needs of those partners;
- There was a consensus that Aberdeen should continue to be a University where there would be an expectation that most academic staff would be research active. However, it was noted that staff could be 'research active' to varying levels and in differing ways, and should be recognised as such.

Our People

16 Professor Logan introduced a discussion paper on the key strategic issues for consideration with regard to Our People (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes). The paper and presentation put forward three key areas for the basis of the development of the next Strategic Plan in relation to this theme, being: Recruitment, Retention and Rewards; Enabling Career Aspirations whilst delivering International Excellence; and Organisational Development.

17 The key points that were made in the subsequent discussion were recorded as follows:

- The staff experience and the quality of our staff were fundamental to the quality of the student experience and to the University's academic success;
- The role of the Head of School was identified as being particularly important. The point was also noted, however, that as the most important layer of management to an individual staff member was the one most immediate to them, excellent and inspirational leadership of staff was required at all management levels within the University. In turn, the training and development of staff through continuing professional development, mentoring, and opportunities for staff to learn from excellent practice internationally were key to enabling and supporting successful leaders and managers;
- To be innovative and dynamic, the University needed a culture in which managers were free to manage and which was not risk averse, and where success was celebrated;
- The ambition of the University had to be shared by its staff. Creating this culture of ambition and motivation to improve performance was underpinned by there being a clearly defined set of institutional priorities that in turn informed the annual review process. The importance of effective Human Resources support in facilitating this and in enhancing performance was noted;
- That caring for and valuing its staff should be a key theme for the University;
- The challenges of recruiting and retaining staff in the context of Aberdeen’s high cost of living were discussed. It was noted, however, that Aberdeen, had many positive and very attractive selling points, in particular the strength of its economy, which could be marketed more aggressively to potential staff;
- A number of potential ways to develop more flexible approaches to benefits and recruitment packages was discussed as a means of improving recruitment and retention;
- Providing the types of facilities that staff, particularly academic staff, required was also an important factor in the recruitment and retention of staff;
- A common theme in all of the discussions was that there had to be a partnership with staff and campus trade unions to deliver the University's strategic ambition.

*Engagement, Communications and Branding the Strategy*

18 Ms Merrick introduced a discussion paper on Engagement, Communications and Branding the Strategy (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*). The paper and presentation considered in detail how these three steps of engagement, communications and branding would be necessary to develop and articulate successfully the University's direction and ambition.

19 The key points that were made in the subsequent discussion were recorded as follows:

- The objective should be to ensure that people at all levels of the Institution understood the brand and what the University stood for. These key messages should be concise enough to be summarised on a 'credit card' sized document;
- The development of the Strategic Plan should utilise the networks the University had available to it through Court, Alumni, and other supporters who were positioned to help promote the agreed brand and ambition of the University. Enabling stakeholders to articulate the vision, values and brand of the University in three years' time would be one means of defining that the exercise had succeeded;
- The Court noted that there were many inspirational achievements being made by the University, its staff and its students and the Institution should be more confident in promoting these. As part of this, the power of social media needed to be better harnessed by the University to its advantage;
- If there were challenges resulting from Aberdeen's geographical position, it was also clear that such perceptions could be changed once people visited Aberdeen and in particular the University itself;
- Being an international university 'required' the University's website to be available in key languages.

*Timeline for the Development of the Strategic Plan*

20 The Court noted that following on from the discussions at Court, consultation papers on the development of the Plan would be prepared and shared with staff, students and stakeholders over the Autumn. In December 2014, the Court would receive an update on the results of the consultation and a clear articulation of the direction of travel for Court to consider and approve, with the final version of the plan, taking into account the REF results due to be published in late December, returning to Court for approval in March 2015, in readiness for the new academic year commencing in September 2015.

PRESENTATION FROM THE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

21 Ms Emily Beever, President of the Students' Association, provided Court with a paper and presentation on how the Association measured its success. The presentation highlighted five areas where the activities of the Students' Association were aligned with the aims of the University and where success could be measured, these being: Retention, Active Citizenship, Engagement with the Community, Improvements at the University, and Employability and Personal Development.

22 In discussion, the Court noted that the Students' Association's work in support of students with children had won the National Union of Students' Campaign of the Year Award. The Court discussed the Students' Association's work to increase the numbers of students who were involved in clubs and societies, including international students. The Court also noted the challenge the Students' Association faced in engaging with online students and engendering a sense of belonging to the student community with this group. The Court noted that the Students' Association would be pleased to welcome visits from members of Court and that these could be arranged via the Clerk.
MINUTES

23 The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2014 were approved.

24 The Court also noted the updated Action Log (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

HEALTH AND SAFETY

REPORTS ON ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENTS

25 The Court received and considered a paper (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes) which provided detailed reports on the circumstances of two recent accidents which were reportable to the Health and Safety Executive and the actions which had been taken to prevent recurrences. The Court also received a report on the Operating Board’s consideration of the report. The Court noted that the incidents were:

- A porter working for Campus Services at Johnston Hall bruised his foot when he stumbled at steps into the building;
- An undergraduate student staying at temporary accommodation in an Aberdeen hotel received cuts to his arm when he tripped and fell against light tubes which were being stored in a corridor at the hotel.

26 The Court also noted a progress report which had been provided on actions taken in respect of an accident in the Combined Heating and Power Station which had previously been reported to Court. This included confirmation that the University’s Estates Section operates permits to work for a range of activities. The report also confirmed that risk assessments underpinned all University health and safety arrangements although it was recognised that there would always be opportunities for improvements. The Estates Section was, therefore, currently looking at how it might make better use of the process of risk assessment to help develop method statements.

27 The Court also noted that data on accidents for the full year August 2013 to July 2014 were available and that there had been eight accidents to members of staff which were reportable to the Health and Safety Executive.

REPORT ON HEALTH AND SAFETY CULTURE SURVEY

28 The Court received and considered a paper (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes) which outlined the findings of a health and safety culture survey which had been carried out using the Health and Safety Laboratory’s Safety Climate Tool. The Court also received a report on the Operating Board’s consideration of the report.

29 The Court noted that the survey confirmed that many staff were positive about the University’s approach to health and safety. A small number of staff expressed less positive views, but it was also notable that there was a high proportion of neutral responses across all sectors of the University, indicating that awareness and understanding of health and safety issues were not as well embedded across the organisation as they could be.

30 The Court noted that these findings provided an indication that there was scope to improve performance. Based on an initial analysis of the survey findings, five main areas of action had been identified to strengthen the health and safety culture: Strengthening leadership and Strategy in Health and Safety; Understanding the variance in Health and Safety perceptions and behaviours; Implementing improvements in practice; Reviewing Health and Safety policies and practices; and Appointing a Director of Health and Safety and assessing resource requirements.

REPORT FROM THE PRINCIPAL

31 The Principal noted that there was an update on the 2014 admissions round in the Operating Board Report to Court. The Principal highlighted to Court that there had been a healthy intake of Home/EU and RUK entrants and that postgraduate taught (PGT) figures were on track to meet budget targets, with international PGT numbers ahead of budget target. There
were challenges in the area of Postgraduate Research numbers but intakes for these students took place at various stages in the year, with work ongoing to improve the figures by the end of the academic year.

32 The Principal reported on accommodation provision for new entrants in September 2014 where, due to the proportion of new entrants applying for University accommodation rising by 12% on previous years, there had been an unforeseen shortage of accommodation places. The Principal reported on the steps the University had put in place to address this through, in the first instance, the provision of temporary accommodation ahead of securing permanent solutions for the students involved. Following further discussion of the circumstances and reasons for the shortage, the Court agreed that it should receive a report on how the University would plan to avoid such issues arising again. In addition, the Court agreed it should receive a report on how those students affected were progressing in order to monitor any potential negative impact upon them.

33 The Principal reported that the University had improved its position in the new editions of two important sets of world rankings. The University was ranked 137th in the recently published QS World Rankings, a rise of 11 places, and had risen ten places to a ranking of 178th in the Times Higher World University Rankings.

34 The Principal reported to Court on the transition of two key elements of the OneSource Programme. The MyCurriculum system transition had taken place on 3 September. As this was the first year of a significant change towards a student-owned approach to curriculum choice, it had been considered prudent to provide all students with the opportunity to undertake course selection with support when they were on campus during the Induction week. The MyCurriculum module had been used for Year 1 students with the existing Student Record System being used for the complete range of students. There had been some issues, which was as would be expected with the introduction of such a comprehensive and complex system and the University was reviewing and addressing these issues. The Principal also reported that the Finance module of OneSource was now live following a successful switchover from the old system during the summer.

35 The Principal reported on the forthcoming launch of the Scottish Rugby Union’s BT Sport Academy which would be based at the University’s Hillhead Sports Centre. The Principal noted that this was an exciting and significant new partnership which would help develop further the University’s profile as a centre for sporting excellence and the development of rugby in the north of Scotland. The Principal also noted that the University would be partnering with Aberdeen Football Club to enable it to use the University’s facilities at Balgownie for training purposes.

36 The Principal reported that Professor Logan would retire from the University and his role as Senior Vice-Principal on 31 December 2014. The Principal highlighted the significant service that Professor Logan had given to the University as an academic, an academic leader and latterly as Senior Vice-Principal. The Court noted that the recruitment process for the position of Senior Vice-Principal was underway.

ABERDEEN INSTITUTE OF ENERGY

37 Mr Scrimgeour introduced a paper (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes) which outlined the strategy and supporting operational plan for the Aberdeen Institute of Energy (AIE).

38 The Court discussed the Institute’s plans and noted that there had been a very positive response from a range of international audiences. The Institute was committed however, to supporting the local Energy Industry and this would be the focus of activity in the coming months. In discussion, it was noted that many countries were seeking to develop as regional service centres for the Energy Industry and that there could be a role for the Institute in conveying the experience of how Aberdeen as a city achieved this. The Court also discussed how the Institute would seek to differentiate the University from other universities active in the areas of energy related teaching and research.
Professor Kunin introduced a paper (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes) which provided further information on the implementation of the University's Internationalisation Strategy, including prioritisation of activities and associated resource implications.

The paper reported on the return on investment in student recruitment and the Court noted that, with the exception of Nigeria, growth had been achieved in all targeted markets. The paper also provided detailed regional operational plans, milestones and Key Performance Indicators for the four key regions that had been prioritised for student recruitment.

The Court discussed the return on investment to date in terms of student numbers and it was noted that there was not necessarily a direct correlation such that if current investment levels were doubled that there then be a doubling in the growth. However, further growth could be achieved as the University made available and marketed more programmes tailored to particular markets and through improved conversion activity in-country. The Court discussed the prioritisation of particular markets and was assured that within particular regions the University was focusing on selected countries in the first instance and seeking to understand the distinct drivers of growth within particular countries.

The Court discussed the challenges to international student recruitment resulting from the UK's regulations on immigration and overseas students and where this might restrict growth in the future. The Court also discussed the potential opportunities for the University in transnational education and the possible solution that bringing the University's programmes to students in-country might offer. It was noted that the University was progressing discussions on two such projects and that it would continue to consider selectively further potential opportunities. The Court was also assured that the University was aware of the need to ensure that in-country agents operated in line with the University's ethical standards.

The Court noted the update on the University's Internationalisation Strategy

OPERATING BOARD REPORT

The Court received a report from the Operating Board meeting of 8 September 2014 (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes), the principal items of which were:

Strategic Planning
- Admissions Update;
- Risk and Planning Update;

Financial Planning

Capital Projects
- Report from Advisory Group on Capital Expenditure;
- OneSource Programme Update;

Project Updates
- International Branch Campuses – Context;
- Medical Campus Sri Lanka;
- South Korea Branch Campus;

Pensions
- University of Aberdeen Superannuation and Life Assurance Scheme Funding Scheme Assessment;
- Universities Superannuation Scheme Consultation;

Student Accommodation
- Accommodation Update.
REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

GOVERNANCE AND NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Review of Legal Issues for Reform of Terms of Office of Court Members

45 The Court received a paper (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes) which set out the potential legal and other issues that might require to be addressed in a potential reform of the terms of office of Court members. The paper considered the following issues:

1) Consistency in terms of Office – achieving either three or four year terms for all non-ex officio constituencies on Court;
2) Limits on terms of office and restrictions to prevent members returning to service on Court; and
3) Extending the current power of Court to remove co-opted independent members to all members of Court.

46 The Court noted that the Committee had agreed that with regard to consistency in terms of Office, the current practice of there being both three or four year terms was not inconsistent with the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance and that, on balance, the benefits of specifying the same term for all constituencies were not manifest relative to the time that would be required to implement the change constitutionally.

47 The Court noted that the Committee had considered the issues involved in achieving limits on terms of office and restrictions to prevent members returning to service on Court through other constituencies. The Committee had noted that there was no requirement in the principles of the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance regarding these issues. The Committee had also noted that the achievement of a power for Court to prevent, across all its constituencies, an individual returning to service after having previously served for the recommended maximum terms of office would be complex and potentially sensitive given the elected nature of some of the constituencies. A number of members felt that with regard to both issues there was not, in practice, a problem and the Committee had agreed, on balance, to report to Court that it did not recommend change to current practice in these areas.

48 The Court noted that while not a principle of the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance, the guidelines to the Code stated that a governing body should have the power to remove any member from office. The achievement of such a power might be complex but the Committee had agreed that the University now seek professional legal advice on the steps necessary to do so.

Membership of Court Committees

Remuneration Committee

49 The Court, on the recommendation of the Committee, approved the appointment of Mr C Duncan to succeed Dr Baxter on the Remuneration Committee on her retirement from Court.

Membership of Court and Court-Senate Committees for 2014/15

50 The Court, on the recommendation of the Committee, approved the continuing Court membership of Court/Court-Senate Committees for 2014/15.

Revisions to Standing Orders

51 The Court approved, on the recommendation of the Committee, revisions to the Standing Orders of Court.
The Court noted that, in accordance with Standing Orders, any change must first be notified to Court and then formally adopted at the subsequent meeting. A change to Standing Orders regarding the Rector’s Protocol had been intimated to Court in July and was therefore now formally adopted. The further changes in the paper were being intimated to Court for the first time and would, therefore, not be formally moved until the Court’s December 2014 meeting.

Draft Ordinance for a Revised Composition of Court

The Court noted that the Committee had considered a draft Ordinance that was required to give effect to the changes to the size and composition of Court approved by Court on 1 July 2014.

The Court noted that the Committee had agreed some amendments to the draft Ordinance and that the University should consult with the Privy Council regarding the amended draft Ordinance prior to it being considered by Court.

Compliance with Scottish Code of Good HE Governance and Draft Corporate Governance Statement

The Court noted that the Committee had received a draft Corporate Governance Statement for inclusion in the University’s annual financial statements for 2013/14. This had been informed by a benchmarking review of University governance compliance against the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance and the UK Code on Corporate Governance (Revised 2010).

The Court noted that the Committee had approved the Corporate Governance statement for inclusion in the annual financial statements for 2013/14 subject to a number of suggested amendments being made.

The Court noted a summary of the Committee’s consideration of the University’s compliance with the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance. The Court also received a copy of a recent guidance note from the Scottish Funding Council which confirmed that with effect from 1 August 2014 it would require, as a condition of funding, the University to comply with the principles of the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance and to “follow closely” the supporting guidelines.

Membership of Court and Recruitment of New Member

The Court noted that the Committee considered the recruitment process and proposed skills/experience requirement that would be undertaken for the appointment to a forthcoming vacancy for an independent member of Court. This had taken particular account of the Court’s Statement of Intent on Diversity and improving the gender balance on Court, and the best practice requirements of the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance. The Committee had also approved the proposed text for public advertisement of the vacancy and noted the steps that the University would take to promote the vacancy to under-represented groups including utilising professional networks.

Further Items Reported for Information

The Court noted reports from the Committee regarding its consideration of the following items: A Report on a Potential Teacher Training Collaboration in Bahrain; Report on Attendance at Court and Key Committees in 2013/14; and a Report on the 2014 General Council Assessor to Court Elections.

PARTNERSHIP, NEGOTIATING AND CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

The Court noted a report (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes) of the principal items of business considered by the Partnership, Negotiating and Consultative Committee at its meeting held on 11 September 2014.
ROUTINE BUSINESS

FORMAL RATIFICATION OF VARIATION TO LOAN AGREEMENT WITH BARCLAYS

This Court received a paper (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes) which, further to consideration in July 2014 by Court of the University’s financial strategy and the approval of the renegotiation of the University’s borrowing facility, set out the varied terms upon which the University’s revised borrowing facility was being agreed with Barclays Bank.

62 The Court noted that the borrowing profile approved by Court in December 2013 was based on maintaining the current £30M draw down of the facility until 2014/15 at which point the final £10M of the facility would be drawn down to utilise the advantageous rates. Within this profile was a £10M draw down at fixed interest rates of 2.94% which was repayable on 1 August 2014. The Court, in July 2014, had approved that the University renegotiate the replacement of the £10M draw down repayable at 1 August and the final £10M forecast to be required by April 2015, at fixed interest rates for the remaining term of the facility (until 2036) in line with the Court approved borrowing profile that was also agreed in July “(the “Fixes”)”.

63 The Court noted the key terms of the revised loan agreement were as follows:

1) The terms of the fixing proposal for the drawn tranche to replace the existing fix which expired on 1st August 2014, (the “New Fix”) for an initial amount of £10,000,000 at a start date of 1st August 2014, and end date of 15th September 2036, at a fixed rate of 3.062% including margins, with bullet repayments in four equal instalments, and the fixing to amortise in line with the loan.

2) The terms of the fixing proposal for the remaining £10,400,000 to be drawn on 1st April 2015, (the “Forward Fix”) for an initial amount of £10,400,000 at a start date of 1st April 2015, and end date of 15th September 2036, at a fixed rate of 3.185% including margins, with bullet repayments in four equal instalments, and the fixing to amortise in line with the loan.

3) The remainder of the facility of £10,400,000 to be drawn down on or before 1st April 2015 through an electronic utilisation request signed in accordance with the bank mandate.

4) The Court noted that if the existing tranche was prepaid or repaid for any reason, there would be a break cost relating to the New Fix. There would be a break cost associated with the Forward Fix should the University fail to draw down in accordance with a notice of drawdown. Break costs would also apply to the new tranche in the usual way if the tranche was prepaid or repaid early for whatever reason once the tranche was drawn.

The Court approved the terms of the loan variation, including the proposed notice and delivery of the draw down. The Court also approved and authorised the University to enter into the Fixes; and authorised the Finance Director to agree the Fixes on behalf of the University, and for the University Secretary and a member of Court to execute any associated documentation.

APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL LEGAL ADVISERS

The Court received a paper on the provision of the University’s external legal services (copy filed with the principal copy of the Minutes).

The Court noted that the contract of the current providers of legal services to the University would conclude in January 2015. The Court approved a recommendation from the University Management Group, that a contract extension should not be offered to the current provider of legal services; and that a mini-tender for legal services should be undertaken using the recently agreed Advanced Procurement for Universities and Colleges (APUC) Framework Agreement for the Provision of Legal Services to the Higher and Further Education Sectors in Scotland, England and Wales.
The Court also approved that, as in the past, a Legal Services Tender Group, including a member of Court would be convened to oversee the process.

**INSTITUTION LED REVIEW OF TEACHING QUALITY AND STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE**

The Court received and approved the Annual Report on Institution-Led Review of Quality 2013–2014 for submission to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and approved an Annual Statement of Assurance to SFC that the Court had approved the Annual Report (*copy filed with the principal copy of the Minutes*).

**EXTENSION OF UNIVERSITY POWERS – DELEGATED AUTHORITY**

The Court received an update on the progress of discussions regarding the extension of the University’s current legal powers through a new Ordinance to cover potential new activities such as the establishment of an overseas campus (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*).

The Court noted these developments and approved the recommendation that if such an Ordinance was required, the standard delegated powers should be used to progress the development of a draft Ordinance during the intervening period prior to the meeting of Court in December 2014. The Court noted that the standard delegated authority procedures provided that decisions on matters related to governance that would otherwise require Court approval, but which for reasons of urgency could not be reserved to the next meeting of Court, should be delegated to a small group consisting of the Senior Governor, Convenor of the Governance & Nominations Committee and the Principal.

**FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT**

The Court noted the Management Accounts and Reports for the period to 31 July 2014 (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*).

**REPORT FROM DEVELOPMENT TRUST**

The Court received and noted a paper (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*) which provided details of the Development Trust’s performance since the last report to Court on the 1st of July 2014 and an update to the plans being developed to support the University’s 10 year capital plan.

**REPORT ON STAFF PROMOTION**

The Court received a paper on 2014 Promotion and Contribution Award Exercise (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*). The Court noted the recommendations from the Staff Promotions Committee in relation to the 2014 Promotion Exercise.

The Court also noted the statistics associated with the 2014 Exercise and that further discussion would take place in appropriate forums, including the Partnership and Negotiating Consultative Committee and the Advisory Group on Equality and Diversity.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING:**

The Court noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 9 December 2014, at 9.00am.

I confirm that these Minutes were approved by Court as an accurate record of the meeting to which they relate.

*Signature*

**Senior Governor**

*Date Approved*

*9/12/2014*