UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY COURT

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 30 June 2015

Present: Ms M Chapman (Rector) in the Chair, Principal, Sir Moir Lockhead, Mr A Arthur, Dr C Black, Professor N Booth, Dr C Brittain, Ms E Beever, Mr C Duncan, Mr J Hall, Professor P Hannaford, Professor S Heys, Professor N Hutchison, Professor J Kilburn, Cllr J Laing, Mr D MacFarlane, Professor P McGeorge, Cllr R McKail, Mrs K McPhail, Mr K Murray, Dr N Oren, Mr B Pack, Mr B Paterson, Mrs J Shirreffs and Mr D Steyn (by teleconference).

In attendance: Mr D Beattie, Ms M Burgoyne, Ms G Clarke, Mr A Donaldson, Mrs D Dyker, Professor M Greaves, Mrs C Inglis, Mr M McCorkell, Professor B MacGregor, Ms T Merrick, Professor M Ross, Ms S Richardson, Ms J Sewel, Professor I Torrance and Mr B Purdon (Clerk).

Apologies were received from Professor J Skakle.

PRESENTATION ON CONSTITUTIONAL FUTURES FOR SCOTLAND AND THE UK

232 The Court received a presentation from Professor Michael Keating, Professor of Politics, on “Constitutional Futures for Scotland and the UK” and the research being undertaken through the Centre for Constitutional Change.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

233 The following declarations of interest were noted:

Mr A Arthur – Officer of the University of Aberdeen Branch of the University and College Union (UCU);
Mr B Paterson – Officer of the University of Aberdeen Branch of Unite the Union;
Ms E Beever – Employee of the National Union of Students.

MINUTES

234 The Minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2015 were approved.

235 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

236 The Court received and considered a paper (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes) which provided details of one accident which was reportable to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE). The Court also received a report on the Operating Board’s consideration of the report. The Court noted the incident concerned a Postgraduate Student who injured her shoulder when she tripped over a doorway baffle. The incident was reportable to the HSE as the student had attended the Accident & Emergency department for treatment, rather than seeking local first aid.

237 The Court also received details of one further incident which was not reportable to the Health and Safety Executive where a projector fell off a ceiling in a University building. No injuries occurred but the incident was recorded as a near miss.

238 The Court noted that the University had appointed a Director of Health, Safety and Wellbeing.
STANDING REPORTS

REPORT FROM THE RECTOR

239 The Rector noted her thanks to all involved in the Graduation ceremonies.

Rector’s Assessor

240 The Rector informed Court that she had appointed Mr Doug Heywood, as her Rector’s Assessor.

Student Sabbatical Officers

241 The Rector noted that it was Ms Beever’s and Mr McCorkell’s last meeting as President of the Students’ Association and President for Sport respectively. The Rector thanked Ms Beever and Mr McCorkell for their support and for their service to the student community. The Rector welcomed Ms Clarke and Ms Burgcyne to the meeting as President-Elect of the Students’ Association and President-Elect for Sport respectively.

REPORT FROM THE SENIOR GOVERNOR

242 The Senior Governor introduced his report to Court (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

243 The report included a copy of a policy statement on gender balance on Courts that had been agreed by the Committee of Scottish Chairs of HE Institutions. The statement committed Courts to achieving a minimum of 40% of each gender among their respective independent memberships on a timescale that would vary depending on the circumstances of each particular institution. Progress would, however, be evaluated across the sector by 2018. While the statement only applied to independent members, the intention was that Courts would encourage those other bodies and constituencies who appointed or elected members to support the principle of gender balance.

244 The Court was reminded that its own commitment to gender balance was to maintain a minimum of 25% female membership with the aspiration to reach 40% over time and that this applied to all members rather than just independent members. It was noted that the Court currently fell short of the 40% aspiration and that while the implications of the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Bill could potentially impact further on the achievement of gender balance, the Governance and Nominations Committee had agreed that consideration was needed of what further steps on gender balance were required.

245 The report also reminded Court of the importance of observing the confidentiality of Court business and discussions.

REPORT FROM THE PRINCIPAL

246 The Principal introduced his written report (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes) on recent developments within the University.

247 The Court noted that Mr D Beattie had been appointed as Director of Finance with effect from 1st July.

248 The Principal reported on the implications of the General Election result for Higher Education. The reported noted that the referendum on membership of the European Union (EU) could have far reaching implications for higher education. The Conservative manifesto had also included a number of further commitments with implications for universities, in particular the introduction of a ‘Teaching REF’. While this would apply to England, it was possible that it may also have to include Scotland.

249 The Principal noted that the forthcoming budget was expected to result in very significant cuts in public expenditure. While this would have consequences for the funding made available to
the Scottish Government, it was possible that the research budget at the UK level from which Research Councils were funded might be protected. The Principal also noted that the Scottish Funding Council had commissioned a working group, of which he was a member, to develop a ten year public capital funding strategy for Scottish Higher Education. This offered an opportunity to create a better system of capital support for universities and the Principal would keep Court advised of its progress.

250 The Principal reported on the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Bill which had been published following the circulation of Court papers. The Principal noted that there was at this stage a number of aspects of the Bill where it was unclear what the policy intention was and what the impact on the governance arrangements of individual universities would be. While further analysis and clarification of the Bill with Scottish Government officials was required, the Principal brought the following points to the attention of Court:

- The Bill included the scope for there to be an election of the Chair of governing bodies, however, there would be further consultation with higher education stakeholders regarding what the exact appointment process would be. The issue of most concern was that the Bill gave Scottish Ministers the power to determine and vary the appointment process through regulations rather than in primary legislation. This was a characteristic of other aspects of the Bill and was a significant extension of Ministerial rather than legislative control of the governance of universities, which in turn could have implications for the charitable status of universities should this be deemed to render them public bodies. This was a key issue that would be of concern to all universities. As a result, Universities Scotland was seeking legal advice on this specific aspect of the Bill and the University would consider whether it required to seek further legal advice specific to its position. The Court agreed it would be helpful to be briefed further on the legal advice received by Universities Scotland.

- While the Bill appeared to end the right of Rectors to chair the ancient universities, including Aberdeen, the consequences of this and what the role of Rectors would be given the increase in student membership of governing bodies, had not been articulated clearly.

- The Bill proposals required all governing bodies to include two elected staff members, two members nominated by trade unions (one by academic trade unions and one by non-academic trade unions), two members nominated by the Students’ Association, and two members nominated by the graduates’ association. If passed as law, this would have implications for the current size and composition of the Court and would require a further review of the revised composition that Court had agreed, ‘in principle’, to move towards.

- The Bill also included proposals around the composition of Senates and a strengthening of existing legislation around the protection of academic freedom.

- The Bill included reference to the resource implications arising from the proposals, such as the remuneration of Chairs. These appeared to underestimate the time commitment required.

251 The Principal noted that the University had moved from 79th to 55th in the Leiden World rankings and this was welcomed by Court. The Principal reported on the University’s rankings in The Guardian’s league tables and noted that this had included some strong performances in some academic areas but that there remained areas where improvement would be required.

252 The Principal also reported on the implications of changes to the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) and the increased costs to employers which would result.

253 The Principal reported on the progress of discussions around the ‘City Deal’ bid.
STRATEGIC PLANNING

PLANNING AND RISK REPORT

254 The Court received a six-monthly update on Planning and Risk against the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes). The report also provided Court with an update on the embedding of risk management across the University. The Court noted that the report was the final update against the current Strategic Plan and associated KPIs and targets, prior to the launch of the new 2015-2020 Strategic Plan in September 2015.

255 The Court noted that since the last report in December 2014, the net scores of three risks: Failure to Improve Research Performance in relative terms; Failure to meet the RUK population target; and Failure to adequately maintain the Estate and address condition and functional obsolescence had increased. In discussion, it was noted that the risk related to the Estate had risen due to proposals to reduce recurrent capital and infrastructure budgets in the next financial year. The Court also discussed the actions being taken to address relative research performance and the recruitment of RUK students, although it was noted that the lifting of the ‘cap’ on recruitment by English universities made this an even more competitive market.

256 The Court agreed that it would be helpful if future reports on performance against target over time (Appendix D of the paper) were to use the same quantitative measures as the KPI reports.

257 The Court approved the Planning and Risk Report and Corporate Risk Register and noted the ongoing work on development of risk management processes.

NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

258 The Court received a paper on the development of the University’s new Strategic Plan and the underpinning KPIs and targets (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

259 The Court noted a report on the detailed consultation process that had been undertaken and which had informed the development of the Plan. Subject to Court approval of the Plan, a series of case studies would be added to the narrative of the Plan prior to its publication in September 2015.

260 In discussion, the Court welcomed the aspiration of the Plan and the positive vision for the future development of the University that it set out. It was noted that the implementation and achievement of that vision would be challenging given the financial and competitive environment. It was suggested that the Court would need to understand fully those challenges and support the measures considered necessary to enable the transformational change and investment required to deliver the aspiration of the Plan. It was noted that the Plan, Financial Budgets and the Capital Plan, were all linked and essential to securing the future success of the University.

261 The Court agreed that the draft Plan be amended to include: a specific reference to the role of the Students’ Association, to emphasise earlier in the document the commitment to the health, safety and wellbeing of the community, and to consider where the importance of people in the draft might be emphasised further. The Court agreed to approve the Plan subject to these amendments being made.

Strategic Plan KPIs and Targets

262 In parallel with the development of the Strategic Plan, detailed analysis and management discussion had been undertaken to develop appropriate KPIs and targets for delivery of the Plan. Standard definitions of the terms 'KPI' and 'target' had been set. These definitions and levels had been chosen for their ability to:
- give consistency across the life of the Plan through the setting of broad, high-level KPIs intended to highlight areas of the University's performance of particular strategic importance and institutional health; and
- facilitate a degree of flexibility in the underpinning targets, which will allow them to evolve as the University's performance evolves across the life of the Plan.

263 The Court noted that targets had been developed at three levels:

a. strategic institutional
b. operational institutional
c. devolved

264 The Court also noted how the draft KPIs had been mapped to a draft set of Corporate Risks.

265 In discussion, the Court agreed that the number of KPIs should be reduced and that these, where possible, should be measurable in quantitative terms. It was agreed that the Court would receive at its next meeting revised KPIs and high-level strategic targets. In addition, it was intended to bring to Court, for information, the operational plans that were being developed across the University in support of the objectives set out in the Strategic Plan.

UNIVERSITY BRAND

266 The Court received a paper and presentation on the work that had been undertaken towards the development of a refreshed University brand (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes). The report highlighted the scope and key findings of the brand analysis and definition exercise which had been undertaken and which would inform the University's future marketing, communications and wider External Relations activities, including the launch of the new Strategic Plan.

267 In discussion, the Court noted that the brand analysis had involved engagement with both internal and external stakeholders and comparison with key competitor institutions. In implementing the recommendations of the exercise, it was confirmed that the intention was to ensure there was consistency in the brand across University departments. While the refreshed brand would be incorporated into marketing and communications activities, the University's visual identity would, initially, remain unchanged.

RESOURCE PLANNING

BUDGETS 2015/16

268 The Court received a paper outlining proposed Revenue budgets for 2015/16 and the supporting Financial Strategy together with a summary of the Operating Board’s consideration of the paper (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

269 In discussion, the Court noted that the current financial structure of the University beyond 2015/16 would need to be addressed to generate the level of surpluses necessary to enable the sustained investment required for the Strategic Plan and the capital plan. The potential negative impact of reducing recurrent capital budgets, on a temporary basis, was also noted. In this context, the Court emphasised the need for the budgets in 2016/17 and 2017/18 to be kept under review with a view to reaching a sustainable position earlier and to enable strategic investment to be brought forward. The forecast deficit position of a number of academic areas in future years was noted and it was suggested that the Court should also be advised of how this would be addressed, together with how the University could increase and diversify its income. The Court noted that the proposals for options for financial sustainability were intended to achieve this, and that this included management identifying areas for investment and disinvestment.
The Court agreed to:

1) Approve the budgets for 2015/16 and to note the indicative budgets for 2016/17 and 2017/18, and the savings to be delivered through the parallel proposals on options for financial sustainability.

2) Approve the revised target surpluses of £3M for 2015/16, £5.5M in 2016/17 and £7.7M in 2017/18 in line with the review of the capital plan and to offset the time to deliver necessary savings through delivery of the options for financial sustainability.

3) The Court also agreed that it should receive an update in the course of 2015/16 on how the indicative budgets for 2015/17 and 2017/18 might be revised further to increase surpluses and to enable the timing of the capital plan to be brought forward.

10 Year Capital Plan

The Court received and considered an updated 10 Year Capital Plan (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes). The plan had been revised to align with the draft budget proposals and included the following:

- updated spend profiles and timing on the projects reflecting the latest information available;
- retaining the £5.5M annual allocation for Recurrent Programme Expenditure, with a temporary reduction of £2M per annum for 2015/16 and 2016/17 to offset a reduced target surplus. This was a temporary measure which would impact on the estate and infrastructure if prolonged;
- a reduced profile of fundraising compared with that in the paper submitted in December 2014, with projections now based on modelling and advice from external consultants;
- maintaining the borrowing at £40M;
- revised timings associated with cash receipts from disposal of land on the Rowett site;
- alignment with the draft budget, in terms of surplus and delivery of the staffing strategy;
- delaying the New Energy Building by pausing the scheme before the issue of tender documentation, in order to ensure that the scheme is fully compatible with strategic planning and opportunities arising through the City Deal;
- re-phasing the linked projects in the centre of the campus (King’s College and Taylor/Wright buildings);
- providing for an increased budget envelope for OneSource to £9.4M;
- making £1.5M available for working capital for the South Korea campus for 4 years.

Following discussion the Court:

- noted the revised assumptions around the timing of land sales and fundraising targets, and the impact of these on the availability of cash;
- noted that the revised plan was aligned with the draft budget;
- noted the proposed re-profiling of prioritised projects, in particular the New Energy Building;
- noted the updated 10 year plan and approved the continued delivery of the capital programme following the routine review and revision to cash flow profiles;
- agreed that the Plan would be kept under review as part of the proposed further review of budgets for 2016/17 and 2017/18.

Options to Support Financial Sustainability

The Court received a paper (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes) which provided an update on the present financial circumstances and on the steps that had been taken to seek to address the resulting forecast funding gap of £10.5M.

The Court noted that since the previous meeting every effort had been made to identify options to close the funding gap. Specifically:
The Voluntary Severance and Early Retirement (VS/ER) scheme initiated in March was forecast to deliver recurrent savings of £3.5M by the closing date of the scheme on 10 July 2015.

Further efficiencies and opportunities for savings had been identified through a review of recruitment activity, changes to working practices and a review of operating expenditure.

Further potential savings through measures such as postponing the implementation of staff salary increases or staff promotions had been considered but not pursued.

The use of capability management across all areas of the University aimed at addressing under-performance, improving productivity and growing income.

A review of Professional Services support across the University was to be undertaken which would focus on centralising key administrative activities and procedures from College and School structures with the aim of generating recurrent staff savings of at least £3.0M over the course of the next two years.

These steps and associated savings, alongside expected income growth, had reduced the funding gap to £2.9M for 2015/16; £4.6M for 2016/17; and £1M for 2017/18.

As a result, consideration of options for generating further savings had been undertaken including:

- A move to compulsory redundancy.
- An extension of the VS/ER scheme on its current terms for a further period with a direct move to compulsory measures if insufficient savings were generated from the extended scheme.
- Generating savings through management of staff turnover.

The Court noted that critical to the decision-making on next steps was the ability to generate the surpluses necessary to fund the investment required to remain competitive within the higher education sector and to deliver the strategic plan.

In parallel, since March 2015, as a result of the University's unwillingness to rule out the implementation of a process of compulsory redundancy as part of ongoing efforts to achieve financial sustainability across the University, the Aberdeen Branch of the University and College Union (AUCU) had balloted its members on strike action. This ballot had returned a positive vote in relation to the proposal for (i) continuous industrial action in the form of action short of strike commencing 1 July and (ii) two days of strike action on 1 and 6 July.

In this context, the University and AUCU entered into discussions with a view to reaching a mutually acceptable position on achieving the long-term future financial stability of the University. As a result of these discussions, an agreement between the University and representatives of the AUCU had been reached on the following:

- Withdrawal of the proposal that had been made by management to seek a mandate from the University Court for a programme of compulsory redundancies
- Seeking approval for an extension of the current Voluntary Severance/Early Retirement (VS/ER) Scheme to 10 November 2015
- A commitment to identifying academic areas for investment and areas for disinvestment
- A commitment to continuing the normal monthly activities of the Joint Consultative Committee on Redundancy Avoidance (JCCRA), with a commitment to no other staff being placed at risk of redundancy during the period of the extended VS/ER Scheme
- A commitment to managing reductions in staffing numbers wherever possible through robust vacancy management processes including redeployment, natural turnover and a freeze on external recruitment
- A commitment that the restructuring of professional support services across the University will not result in compulsory redundancies and will instead rely on natural turnover and redeployment
- An agreement from AUCU to suspend its planned programme of industrial action which had been due to commence on 1 July.
On this basis, the recommendation to Court that it approve the extension of the Voluntary Severance/Early Retirement scheme to 31st October and a commitment to proceed to a programme of compulsory redundancies for academic staff from 1 November 2015 if the extension of the voluntary scheme failed to generate all of the required savings was withdrawn.

The Court approved a revised proposal to extend the current Voluntary Severance/Early Retirement Scheme to 10 November 2015, with no requirement for a commitment to proceed to a programme of compulsory redundancies beyond the normal Court approved procedures on Redundancy and Redundancy Avoidance procedures.

The Court also agreed that, as part of the further review of budgets discussed above, it would receive at its next meeting a report on the areas for investment and disinvestment that had been taken forward by management.

REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

The Court received a report from the Remuneration Committee outlining how it had implemented the Senior Staff Pay Policy for 2015, which had been agreed at the last meeting of Court (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

The Court noted that the Remuneration Committee had approved recommendations for 28 consolidated salary awards and that the total cost of the recommendations amounted to £96k.

The Court noted that the Remuneration Committee discussed the gender pay gap and noted the negative variance for the institution of 13.19% between the median male professorial salary (£77,905) compared to the median female professorial salary (£67,633) which reflected length of tenure in post. These figures relate to non-Clinical Professorial staff. It was also noted that 46% of females were paid within the lowest 2 salary bandings for professorial staff compared to 33% of males, in some cases reflecting professorial tenure and pattern of recruitment to post. The Remuneration Committee noted that, following the application of the recommendations, the median gender pay gap would be 7.27%.

The University Court noted the outcomes of the 2015 Remuneration Committee.

BUSINESS FOR EXTENDED MEETING IN SEPTEMBER

The Court received a paper on the agenda for its extended meeting on 30 September 2015 (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

The Court agreed that the focus of the meeting should be on the implementation of the new Strategic Plan and on the progress of the options agreed for achieving future financial sustainability. It was also proposed to include as part of the day a briefing from the University’s lawyers CMS Cameron McKenna to update members on the role and responsibilities of charitable trustees and developments within the law in this regard. In addition a number of other possible agenda items were suggested for consideration, subject to the constraints of available time:

- A presentation on OneSource including the progress of the project to date and the benefits that the project would deliver.
- The operational impact of efficiency savings identified as part of the review of options for financial sustainability.
- An update on the potential integration of the Development Trust into the University.
- The approach being taken to integrate strategic, financial and academic planning at University and School level;
- A report on the activities undertaken to recruit students, in particular RUK and International students.
- A summary of the key issues defining the strategic environment in which the University was operating.
OPERATING BOARD REPORT

The Court received a report from the Operating Board meetings held on 5 May and 6 June 2015 (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

The principal items of the report that were noted by Court were:

- Reports on Student Admissions for September 2015;
- Tuition Fees for 2016/17;
- Reports from the Capital Programme Monitoring Committee;
- Reports on OneSource Development and Review by Audit Committee;
- Reports on the Low Carbon/Renewable Energy Project;
- Report on the conclusion of the Sri Lanka Campus Project;
- Proposal to Develop a Teaching Training Institute in Bahrain;
- Report on the progression of the South Korea Branch Campus;
- Report on the impact of the UK Immigration Health Surcharge Fee;
- Report on the Business Case Planning for Student-Focussed Partnerships;
- Report on the Athena SWAN Institutional Bronze Renewal;
- Interim Report on Equality/Mainstreaming and Equality Outcomes;
- Investments Update;
- Monthly Management Reports;
- FRS102 Update;
- Report on SFC Funding Allocation;
- Report on the Voluntary Severance Scheme;

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

GOVERNANCE & NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

The Court noted a report of the principal items of business considered by the Governance & Nominations Committee at its meeting on 1 June 2015 (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes). The Court approved the following:

Establishment of a Benefactor Award

The Court, on the recommendation of the Committee, approved a proposal to establish a new award, to recognise individuals who, or organisations which, have made significant philanthropic contributions to the University of Aberdeen by the bestowing of the distinction of "Benefactor to the University". The Court also approved the process for the consideration of the awards.

Reappointment of an Independent Member of Court

The Court, on the recommendation of the Committee, approved the reappointment of Mr David MacFarlane as an independent member for a further (second) term of three years from 1 August 2015.
Appointment to the Operating Board

The Court, on the recommendation of the Committee agreed that Ms Anne Minto be appointed to a vacancy for an independent member of Court on the Operating Board with effect from 1 August 2015.

Appointment to UASLAS Board of Trustees

The Court noted that the Committee had considered a vacancy for a Court nominated member of the Board of the University of Aberdeen Superannuation and Life Assurance Scheme (UASLAS) Trustees. The vacancy had resulted from the retirement of Professor Angela Black, former member of the Business School. The Court had previously agreed that rather than nominating a member of Court to the role, it would nominate a suitable individual to the position and that the Deed of Trust had been amended to reflect this.

The Court, on the recommendation of the Governance & Nominations Committee approved the appointment of, Mr Mark Whittington, Head of the Business School, as the Court nominee to the Board of UASLAS Trustees.

The Court also noted an update on other recent changes in the membership of other categories of Trustees, including the appointment of Ms Jacquelyn Craw as an employer nominated Trustee and her further appointment as Chair by the Trustees.

In addition, the Court noted the Committee’s consideration of the following business:

- HE Governance Bill and Chairs Policy Statement on Gender Balance;
- Declarations of Interest: The Committee noted that under the Scottish Code of Governance an independent member was “defined as both external and independent of the Institution” and that the Court had previously agreed that this would be interpreted as “meaning that any member of Court who is employed by the University or who is a student of the University would not be an ‘independent member’”. The Committee noted independent appointed members and General Council Assessors were subject to this. The Committee agreed that the Court had committed to adhering to the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance and that while exceptions could be made on a case by case basis, the general position should be brought to the attention of all members of Court. The Committee also noted that the current declaration of interests form did not include a specific reference to being a registered student of the University. It was, therefore, agreed to amend the form to include this and to write to all members of Court to ensure that the requirements of the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance were made clear.
- Changes to Composition of Court: Update on Draft Ordinance. The Committee agreed, that further progression of the draft Ordinance should be deferred until the implications of the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Bill for the composition of governing bodies were clarified;
- Power of Court to Remove Members from Office;
- Annual Governor Self Appraisal;
- Board of Directors of Aberdeen Sports Village;
- Annual Reports on Research Grants and Contracts Awards to the University and donations from the Development Trust;

PARTNERSHIP, NEGOTIATING AND CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

The Court noted a report of the principal items of business considered by the Partnership, Negotiating and Consultative Committee at its meeting on 14 May 2015 (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes). In addition the Court approved the following:

- Amendments to the Adoption Leave Procedure, Maternity Procedure, Parental Leave Procedure and the Paternity/Co-Paternity Procedure.
- Amendments to the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Policy; and
- Amendments to the Probationary Policy and Procedures.

AUDIT COMMITTEE
The Court noted a report of the principal items of business considered by the Audit Committee at its meetings on 22 April and 3 June 2015 (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

RESEARCH POLICY COMMITTEE

The Court noted a report of the principal items of business considered by the Research Policy Committee at its meeting on 24 March 2015 (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

The Court noted a report of the principal items of business considered by the Student Affairs Committee at its meeting on 11 May 2015 (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Court noted a report of the principal items of business considered by the University Committee on Teaching and Learning at its meeting on 13 May 2015 (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

ROUTINE BUSINESS

CHANGES TO THE ACADEMIC STRUCTURE AND BUDGETARY MODEL

The Court received a paper (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes) which outlined changes to the existing College and School academic structure and budgetary model. The changes were in response to the challenging environment for higher education in Scotland and the wider UK, and intended to ensure that the university had the necessary academic leadership and accountability, aligned with optimal academic structures, to deliver both financial sustainability and academic excellence as anticipated in the new strategic plan. The Court also received a draft Resolution to formalise the establishment of a School of Business as a stand-alone unit outside the College structure.

The Court noted the proposed changes involved:

- Devolving budgets to Schools and the introduction of an annual planning and accountability process at School and College level;

- Adjustments to the organisation of Schools within the three College system to:
  - Create a School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition (name to be confirmed after consultation with the current faculty) to provide the necessary focus of activities around medicine and health sciences;
  - Establish the Business School as a stand alone unit outside the College model reporting to the Senior Vice-Principal.

In addition, the planned relocation of Music from the School of Education to the School of Language & Literature - which would link cognate disciplines more overtly and create new opportunities in the creative arts - would progress. Consultation regarding whether the current location of the disciplines of Archaeology and of Scandinavian Studies remained appropriate would also be undertaken.

The adjustments to the academic structure would take effect from 1 August 2015.
In discussion, the Court noted that the proposals had been considered by Senate which had approved the proposals in principle including the draft Resolution, and agreed to move forward with implementation. An extra-ordinary meeting of Senate was being convened in August to enable consideration of the more detailed issues associated with implementation.

The Court approved, in principle, the proposals, which included the required draft Resolution to formalise the establishment of the School of Business as a stand-alone unit outside the College model, subject to the Senate’s further consideration of the detailed implementation of the proposals. In accordance with the process for the creation of Resolutions set out in the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966, the Resolution would be subject to consultation with the General Council, and public display within the University for the statutory period.

**Review of Principal Committees and Advisory Groups**

The Court received a report on the conclusion of a review of the University’s Principal Committees and Advisory Groups (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*). The Court noted that the review had focused on improving the efficiency, effectiveness and transparency of decision-making, mapping of committee remits to the University Strategic Plan objectives, clarifying their powers and relationships to other committees, and embedding institutional commitments, such as equality and diversity, within their operation.

The recommendations of the review, which had been approved for its part by Senate, included:

- All University Strategic Objectives were now mapped to an oversight committee
- Committee titles and remits had been reviewed and where necessary revised to provide clarity of remit, powers and relationship to other committees
- 6 committees had been abolished with their responsibilities subsumed within other committees
- A number of governance and operational enhancements had been introduced including an approval process for the setting up of new committees or groups

The review also included, as previously endorsed by Court, the abolition of the Risk Management Committee with other committees having formally considered and approved their revised remits. Any changes requiring further Court or Senate approval would be taken forward as necessary, however, the new structure would be fully operational during the new academic year 2015/16. Any changes requiring amendment to Ordinances (e.g. changes to titles of some committees) would also be progressed with the Privy Council.

The Court endorsed the closure of the 2013-2014 Committees Review approved the implementation of its proposals, where necessary, with Senate. The Court also noted that any further changes required to the Principal Committees in the light of the new Strategic Plan 2015-2020 would be considered as part of its approval and implementation.

**Senate Report**

The Court noted a report of the principal items of business considered by the Senate at its meetings of 29 April 2015 and 10 June 2015 (*copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes*). The Court approved the following:

*Draft Resolution No 279 of 2015 [Changes to General and Supplementary Regulations]*

The Court, on the recommendation of the Senate, approved the Resolution, which enacted changes in Degree Regulations recommended by the Quality Assurance Committee since January 2015. The Court further agreed that in accordance with the provisions of Section 6 (2) of the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966, to approve the Resolution forthwith in order that the amended provisions might be applied with effect from the start of the new academic year.
Draft Resolution No  of 2015 [Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic)]

315 The Court approved the draft Resolution No of 2015 [Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic)] from the Senate and agreed to forward it to the General Council and to make it generally available in terms of Section 6 of the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966.

Validation of Trinity College Bristol with Bristol Baptist College

316 The Court, on the recommendation of the Senate, agreed that Trinity College Bristol with Bristol Baptist College be validated to deliver research degree programmes subject to the recommendations detailed in the draft agreement.

REVISED CODE OF PRACTICE TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH THE EDUCATION ACT 1994

317 The Court received and approved revisions to the Code of Practice to Ensure Compliance with Part II of the Education Act 1994 (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

318 The Court, on the recommendation of the Audit Committee approved a revised set of University Financial Regulations (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

STRATEGIC PLAN FORECASTS (SPF) 2014-15 TO 2017-18

319 The Court received and approved the Strategic Plan Forecasts 2014-15 to 2017-18 together with the Finance Director’s commentary for submission to the Scottish Funding Council (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

DEVELOPMENT TRUST ACTIVITY

320 The Court received a report (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes) on the activities and fundraising performance achieved by the Development Trust.

VACATION POWERS

321 The Court noted that during the period 30 June 2015 and 30 September 2015, matters requiring urgent decision would be undertaken under the standing delegated authority as previously agreed by Court, being:

(i) that routine decisions required to be taken between meetings be delegated to a small group consisting of the Senior Governor, the Principal and the Senior Vice-Principal, subject to any such decisions being reported to the next meeting of Court.

(ii) that decisions on financial or estates matters that would otherwise require Court approval, but which for reasons of urgency cannot be deferred to the next meeting of Court, should be delegated to a small group consisting of the Senior Governor, the Convenor of the Operating Board, the Principal and Senior Vice-Principal or three of the four should one be unavailable.

(iii) that decisions on matters related to governance that would otherwise require Court approval, but which for reasons of urgency cannot 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.

ORDINANCE NO 144 [AMENDMENT TO THE POWERS OF THE UNIVERSITY COURT]

322 The Court received a copy of Ordinance No 144 [Amendment to the Powers of the University Court] which had been approved by Her Majesty in Council on 10 June 2015 (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT

323 The Court noted the Management Accounts and Reports for the period to 30 April 2015 (copy filed with the principal copy of the minutes).

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

324 The Court noted that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 30 September 9am to 5pm followed by Dinner.

Maggie Chapman

30/09/2015
Date Approved