UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
OPERATING BOARD
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 1 FEBRUARY 2019

Present: Ms A Minto (Chair, by video conference), Principal, Professor N Booth, Professor M Delibegovic, Mr J Hall (by teleconference), Professor P Hannaford, Mrs C Inglis, Mr D MacFarlane (by teleconference), Mr L Ogubie and Dr D Watts; with Mr D Beattie and Ms R MacLure (Clerk).

Apologies for absence were received from Ms L Menzies.

The following were in attendance for specific agenda items:

Mr D Beattie (Minute 35), Professor A Speight (Minute 36), Mr A Donaldson (Minutes 36.2 and 37), Professor R Wells (Minutes 38 and 39); Professor J Paterson and Dr S Hill (Minute 38), Dr H Sveinsdottir (Minute 39) and Dr E Rattray (Minute 40).

31 DECLARATION AND FORMAL BUSINESS

31.1 There were no declarations of interest.

31.2 CAPITAL PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

31.2.1 The Chair invited members of the Board to identify any papers marked “for information”, which required discussion. The Capital Programme Management Committee (CPMC) Report was highlighted.

31.2.2 The Board noted that Lend Lease was no longer operating in Scotland and there was therefore no risk of the company tendering for future construction projects at the University.

31.2.3 The Board noted that the King’s Quad Project had crossed the £1m financial threshold for reporting to CPMC and therefore appeared in this report for the first time. The additional costs reflected a requirement to increase the flexibility of the space.

32 MINUTES

32.1 The Minutes of Meetings held on 13 November 2018 and 17 January 2019 were approved.

33 MATTERS ARISING

33.1 MATTERS ARISING ACTION LOG

33.1.1 It was noted that all outstanding items were covered within the agenda.

33.1.2 It was agreed to ensure that the Principal’s Advisory Group paperwork was circulated sufficiently far in advance of the next meeting to allow time for its full consideration by David MacFarlane. Action: Director of People

34 PRINCIPAL’S INTRODUCTION

34.1 The Principal provided an update on current activity to progress the 50 strategic appointments and investment in the estate approved by Court. The Board noted optimism in response to the need for a corresponding increase in the University’s revenue stream.

34.2

34.3 The Principal had visited the University’s Qatar campus to launch Phase 2 of the project, with anticipated growth to 7000 students over the next ten years.
34.4 The Board also noted the establishment of the University's first degree apprenticeship scheme, in Engineering. It was agreed to receive an overview of the apprenticeship model, for information, at the next meeting.  

**Action:** Vice Principal for Learning and Teaching

### FINANCE

#### BOND UPDATE

35.1.1 The Board received an oral update from the Director of Finance on the acquisition of a Bond. The Board noted a good level of interest from potential investors in the UK and from the United States. It was agreed to make available to Court a copy of the University's presentation to Investors.  

**Action:** DB

#### STRATEGIC INVESTMENT FOR ACADEMIC GROWTH

35.2.1 The Board received and considered a paper describing progress to appoint to the strategic investment posts *(minute 34.1 above refers)* and the work required to critically review the applications from Schools to establish these posts, including estimated income projections. The Board noted ongoing work to progress the sale of property and other assets to fund the investment. The Board noted that Development Trust and Endowment funding was contingent upon the alignment of posts to specific funds. The Board noted the intention to advertise the new posts in March.  

35.2.2 It was agreed to bring a paper to the March meeting, outlining the quantum of posts and their sources of funding.  

**Action:** DB

#### DRAFT BUDGET TIMETABLE 2019-20

35.3.1 The Board received and noted the Draft Budget Timetable 2019-20. A paper on Planning Assumptions was to be brought to the next meeting.  

**Action:** DB

#### POLICIES FOR APPROVAL: ADVANCES, EXPENSES, CREDIT CARDS

35.4.1 The Board received and considered updates and amendments to the University's policies for Advances, Corporate Credit Cards and Expenses and Benefits.  

35.4.2 It was noted that members of academic staff should claim individual society membership subscriptions against tax, as an allowable personal expense.  

35.4.3 The Operating Board approved the policies, subject to further update to reflect previously agreed reductions to eligibility criteria for the issue of corporate credit cards and for advances to be offset against salaries if outstanding for an excessive time period.  

**Action:** DB

#### MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORTS, DECEMBER 2018

35.5.1 The Board received and considered the Monthly Management Reports for December 2018, noting that the next issue would include enhanced reporting on Research Grants and Student Recruitment.  

35.5.2 The Board noted that some Schools continued to show significant deficits and noted the University's intention to address these through the revised budget regime.  

*Note by Clerk: Mr Beattie left, and Professor Alan Speight and Mr Angus Donaldson joined the meeting at this point*

### STUDENT RECRUITMENT

#### STUDENT ADMISSIONS UPDATE

36.1.1 The Board received and considered a paper outlining admissions statistics in relation to admissions for January and September 2019 entry.
36.1.2 The Board noted that the last date for student registrations had passed following publication of the paper and that final figures were expected to show some improvement on the previous year.

36.1.3 The Board agreed that it would be helpful to separate out student numbers on controlled and non-controlled programmes, in future reports. **Action: AS**

36.1.4 Board members urged the University to work with the City to promote Aberdeen as a student destination of choice. **Action: AS**

36.1.4 The Board noted the University’s efforts to boost student numbers under the Widening Access agenda, with a commitment to ensure that 10% of new Scottish undergraduate students in 2019/20 were from the most deprived 20% of postcodes under the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) definition.

36.1.5 The student representative asked the Board to note that the incremental rise in tuition fees was a matter of concern to students.

36.2 STUDENT RECRUITMENT STRATEGY AND ACCOMMODATION PLANNING

36.2.1 The Board received and considered an update on the University’s long-term strategic intent for the future student population, and the resulting impact on student accommodation provision. The Board noted immediate priorities, and the effects of modelling changes to the balance of the student population, as well as its overall size.

36.2.2 The University’s accommodation strategy was noted to be focussed on first year undergraduates. Targeted information and support would continue to be provided to postgraduate students, advising them of the available University and private sector accommodation options. The Board noted that dedicated accommodation was also set aside for students participating in the Widening Access programme, and international students who had been awarded scholarships and/or packaged offers of study and accommodation.

36.2.3 Following some discussion, it was agreed to return to a future meeting (June was proposed) with modelling of longer-term student population ambitions. **Action: AS**

[Note by Clerk: Professor Speight left the meeting at this point]

37 SCIENCE TEACHING HUB UPDATE

37.1 Mr Donaldson provided the Board with an oral update on the Science Teaching Hub Project.

37.2 In December, Court had approved that the project proceed to the construction phase, subject to projected costs meeting the agreed budget of £37.7M. If projected costs could not be brought within budget, the project would not proceed, and the Project Board would revert to Court on next steps. The Board noted that the University had worked with the contractor to bring the proposed construction costs within the agreed budget.

37.3 The Board agreed to receive on an update on the outcome of contractual negotiations at its next meeting. **Action: SVP / AD**

[Note by Clerk: Mr Donaldson left and Professor Richard Wells, Professor John Paterson and Dr Stephen Hill joined the meeting at this point]
38  TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION

38.1 STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL: KOREA CAMPUS UPDATE

38.1.1 The Board received and discussed a paper on recent developments relating to the Korea Campus.

38.1.2 A further update was noted to be required at the next meeting, including financial provisions.  
**Action:** RW / DB

38.2 STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL: QATAR CAMPUS UPDATE

38.2.1 The Board received and noted an update on recent developments in the University of Aberdeen Campus, Qatar.

[Note by Clerk: Dr Hulda Sveinsdottir joined the meeting at this point]

39 STRATEGIC PLANNING

39.1 BRITAIN’S EXIT FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION – UPDATE

39.1.1 The Board received and noted an update on activities being undertaken by the University to mitigate the impact of Britain’s exit from the European Union (EU) and strategies in place to manage risks arising from a possible ‘no deal’ exit.

[Note by Clerk: Professor Wells and Dr Sveinsdottir left and Dr Liz Rattray joined the meeting at this point]

40 RESEARCH

40.1 STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL: REF 2021 PREPARATIONS

40.1.1 The Board received and considered a paper on progress with the preparation of the institutional submission for REF20201.

40.1.2 The Board noted that the University was recently in receipt of extensive REF guidance, which was to be summarised for communication to the academic community.

40.1.3 The Board expressed concern about the number of staff not associated with the output of REF-able papers. The Principal reported recent meetings with Heads of School to review this issue and indicated that improvement plans had been put in place and would be monitored in respect of these members of staff.

[Note by Clerk: At this point, the Principal, Mrs Inglis, Mr Ogubie and Professor Deligobevic indicated that they were all required to attend another meeting and left the meeting.]

41 FUTURE MEETINGS

41.1 The Chair expressed concern at the lack of time available to consider the full agenda and indicated her intention to raise this issue with the Principal prior to the next meeting. Consideration was to be given to reinstating the May meeting.  
**Action AM / GB**
42 PEOPLE

42.1 HEALTH, WELLBEING AND SAFETY UPDATE

42.1.1. The Board received and noted an update on recent accidents and incidents and subsequent actions taken.

42.2 STAFF SURVEY REPORT and MANAGEMENT OF WORK-RELATED STRESS POLICY

42.2.1 The Board agreed that these items should be put on the agenda for the March meeting, for attendance by the Director of People. 

Action: DD

The Board received and noted the following items:

43 MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS REACH NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2018

44 COMMITTEE REPORTS
44.1 CAPITAL PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT
44.2 DIGITAL STRATEGY COMMITTEE REPORT
44.3 PARTNERSHIP AND NEGOTIATING CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

44.3.1 The Board received an update from the Partnership Negotiating and Consultative Committee meeting, held on 17 December 2018, and approved revisions to the policies on Work-Related Stress and revisions to the Recruitment and Selection Policy in relating to the University Gaelic Plan.

45 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

45.1 It was noted that the schedule of meetings for 2018-19 was as follows:

- Tuesday, 5 March 2019
- Tuesday, 4 June 2019

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

45.2 It was noted that the schedule of meetings for 2019-20 had been provisionally set as follows:

- Tuesday, 10 September 2019
- Thursday, 7 November 2019
- Tuesday, 28 January 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.

45.3 The Chair indicated her intention to discuss the future schedule of meetings with the Principal, highlighting the long gap between meetings in March and June (Minute 41.1 above refers).

RMac/mg
05/02/19