UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
OPERATING BOARD
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 5 MARCH 2019

Present: Ms A Minto (Chair), Principal, Professor N Booth, Professor M Delibegovic, Mr J Hall (by telephone), Professor K Leydecker, Mr D MacFarlane, Ms L Menzies, Mr L Ogubie and Dr D Watts; with Mr D Beattie, Mrs D Dyker and Ms R MacLure (Clerk).

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs C Inglis.

The following were in attendance for specific agenda items:
Professor R Wells (Minute 52), Professor A Speight (Minute 53) and Mr C A Anagboso (Minute 54.1).

46 WELCOME
46.1 The Chair welcomed the new Senior Vice-Principal, Professor Karl Leydecker, to his first meeting of the Board.

47 DECLARATION AND FORMAL BUSINESS
47.1 There were no declarations of interest.

48 MINUTES
48.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2019 were approved.

49 MATTERS ARISING
49.1 MATTERS ARISING ACTION LOG
49.1.1 It was noted that all outstanding items were covered within the agenda.

49.2 SCIENCE TEACHING HUB
49.2.1 Professor Leydecker provided an update on the outcome of contractual negotiations in respect of the Science Teaching Hub.

[Note by Clerk: The following items were raised from the “for information only” section of the agenda at the request of Board members.]

49.3 REPORT FROM THE DIGITAL STRATEGY COMMITTEE (DSC)
49.3.1 Mr MacFarlane requested clarification of a point within the DSC report, which referred to the “HR / Payroll Optimisation Project”. The Board noted that this was an upgrade to current software, to include a self-service element and accompanying training, at minimal cost.
49.4 GRADUATE APPRENTICESHIPS

49.4.1 Mr MacFarlane commended the University on securing its first graduate apprenticeship scheme in Engineering.

49.5 REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (CPMC)

49.5.1 Ms Menzies queried a reference within the CPMC report to additional costs in the King’s Quad Refurbishment Project. The Board noted that the Principal had requested a report on this matter for the next meeting of CPMC. The Board noted that the University had already carried out a reprioritisation of other projects to ensure that the Capital Plan remained within the budget agreed by Court. Concern was expressed that cost escalation appeared to be a recurrent theme within the capital programme. The Principal reported that Professor Leydecker would be taking a fresh approach to management of the capital programme, in his role as Chair of CPMC.

50 PRINCIPAL’S INTRODUCTION

50.1 The Principal provided an update on the University's strategy development process, with a consultation under four themed workstreams: Inclusive, Interdisciplinary, International and Sustainable.

50.2 The Board noted that the University had approved 50 new Teaching and Research posts in priority areas, to be funded in the first instance through cash generated by asset sales. The detail of these posts was to be shared with Heads of School shortly. Mr MacFarlane stressed the need to include KPIs for this investment. Action: DD

50.3 The Scottish Funding Council had issued its annual funding letter, which showed a reduction of £1.4m compared to the previous year. While the University intended to challenge this outcome, it was indicative of the need to become less reliant upon government funding. The Board noted that the University’s revised Five Year Financial Plan was to be brought to the June meeting. Action: DB

51 FINANCE

51.1 UPDATE ON ACQUISITION OF THE BOND

51.1.1 The Operating Board received a paper seeking agreement that if the University’s Treasury Policy and associated counterparty list did not have the required flexibility to accommodate deposits of a scale of up to £60 million, delegated powers would be given to a sub-group of the Board, in conjunction with the Director of Finance, to amend these policies if required.

51.1.2 The Board agreed that it would be appropriate to invite members of the Bond Working Group to join this new group. Mr MacFarlane indicated his willingness to participate. Action: DB

51.1.3 The Board noted the Principal’s intention to review the remit and composition of the existing Investment Committee, as well as a lack of appetite for further borrowing in the foreseeable future. Future investment was expected to be supported by a fundraising campaign by the Development Trust.

51.1.4 The Board commended the University on work undertaken to secure the Bond and agreed the need for reassurance that repayments would be enabled through the achievement of student recruitment goals. It was agreed to include projected student numbers with corresponding financial outcomes and a plan for their achievement within the anticipated paper from the Vice-Principal for Student Recruitment, in June. This would also be fundamental to the Five Year Financial Plan. Action: AS / DB

51.1.5 The Board approved the proposals contained within the paper.
51.2  **PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS 2019/20 TO 2021/22.**

51.2.1 The Board received and was invited to approve planning assumptions for use in preparing financial budgets for the years 2019/20 to 2021/22.

51.2.2 The Board discussed ongoing work in relation to the Universities’ Superannuation Scheme (USS) and the need to set aside provision for increased future employer contributions.

51.2.3 The Board noted that School budgets would be subject to change in response to their respective levels of income generation, with incentivisation for growth beyond a 6% baseline. The Board looked forward to receiving updates at future meetings. It was agreed to make clear within the paper (at paragraph 3.3.13) the consequences of failure to achieve this level of growth. Action: DB

51.2.4 It was agreed to consider the redirection of existing marketing resource to areas in which market opportunities had been identified. Action: AS

51.2.5 Operating Board approved the paper, noting that the assumptions within it would be subject to change going forward.

51.3 **MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORTS TO JANUARY 2019**

51.4 **INVESTMENT COMMITTEE REPORT**

51.4.1 The Board received and noted a paper which provided an update on the investment performance of the University Endowment, Development Trust and Northern College Pension Fund Portfolios, which were monitored at quarterly meetings of the Investment Committee.

51.4.2 It was agreed to review the remit and composition of the Investment Committee to support future activities. Action: KL / DB

[Note by Clerk: Professor Richard Wells, Vice-Principal for International Partnerships, joined the meeting at this point.]

52  **TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION**

52.1 **KOREA CAMPUS UPDATE**

52.1.1 The Board received and noted an update on the latest position in respect of the Korea Campus.
STUDENT RECRUITMENT

53.1 ADMISSIONS UPDATE

53.1.1 The Board received an update on Student Admissions statistics. The paper summarised actual performance in relation to January 2019 entrants, and forecasts performance in relation to:

- September 2019 UG entrants (on-campus only)
- September 2019 PGT entrants (on-campus only)
- PGR entrants 2018/19 and 2019/20
- Online programmes

53.1.2 The Board asked to receive further information on whether or not the University promoted teacher training as an option for people interested in changing career. Action: AS

53.1.3 The Board also asked for information on the University’s recruitment activities in the US to be included in the paper planned for the June meeting. Action: AS

53.1.4 It was agreed to consider offering assistance with travel costs to and from home at the beginning and end of each term to students from areas of multiple deprivation. Action: AS

53.2 STUDENT RECRUITMENT COMMITTEE REMIT AND COMPOSITION

53.2.1 The Board received and approved a proposal that the Student Recruitment Committee (SRC) change its reporting line to become a sub-Committee of the Operating Board. It had formerly reported to the University Management Group with an interface to the University Committee for Teaching and Learning (UCTL). The latter relationship was to continue.

PEOPLE

54 PRESENTATION ON STAFF SATISFACTION SURVEY

54.1 The Board received a presentation from Mr Tony Anagboso, HR Partner, to accompany a paper (carried forward from the last meeting) on the recent staff satisfaction survey, including the result of the additional stress survey, with an indication of next steps.

54.1.1 The Board noted that the survey had taken place in July 2018 and expressed concern at the low response rate. Mrs Dyker asked the Board to note that the University and College Union (UCU) had conducted a simultaneous campaign to discourage participation, due to concerns about the potential identification of individuals.
The Board agreed the importance of benchmarking and gathering comparative data over time. It was agreed to consider use of a sector-standard questionnaire to allow wider comparisons to be made.  

**Action:** DD

**[Note by Clerk: Mr Anagboso left the meeting at this point]**

### 54.2 MANAGEMENT OF WORK-RELATED STRESS POLICY

- **54.2.1** The Board received and approved the Policy, and associated Guidance, on the Management of Work-Related Stress which had been carried forward from the meeting on 1 February 2019.

The Board received and approved the following items:

- **55** PNCC REPORT AND POLICIES:
  - **55.1** DATA PROTECTION POLICY
- **55.2** INFORMATION SECURITY POLICY
- **55.3** RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY

### 56 HEALTH, WELLBEING AND SAFETY UPDATE

- **56.1** The Board noted that an interim appointment had been made, following the departure of Mr Naveed Qamar, Director of Health, Safety and Wellbeing.
- **56.2** The Board agreed that it would be helpful to be notified of changes to personnel in senior positions.  

**Action:** DD

The Board received and noted the following items:

- **57** GRADUATE APPRENTICESHIPS
- **58** COMMITTEE REPORTS
  - **58.1** CAPITAL PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT
  - **58.2** DIGITAL STRATEGY COMMITTEE REPORT
- **59** REGULARITY AND LENGTH OF OPERATING BOARD MEETINGS
  - **59.1** The Chair opened a discussion on the regularity and length of Operating Board meetings, noting that the next meeting was scheduled to take place some months hence, in June 2019.
  - **59.2** Various options were considered, including the establishment of an online forum for exchange of views between meetings and the provision of regular updates from the Principal on matters of key importance. Members of the Board expressed willingness to review the remit and name of the Board, to better define its role in relation to that of Court. It was agreed that the Senior Vice-Principal should lead this work as part of an overall review of the sub-Committees of Court, and would provide a progress report at the next meeting.  

**Action:** KL

- **59.3** Pending the outcome of the review, it was agreed to continue as previously planned, with the next meeting of the Operating Board to be held on Tuesday, 4 June 2019 in the Court Room, University Office, from 10.00 am – 1.00 pm.
- **59.4** The Board noted Professor Booth’s apologies for absence from this meeting.
60 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

60.1 Subject to further review, 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, 4 February 2020
- Tuesday, 3 March 2020
- Tuesday, 9 June 2020

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

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