



Queen Margaret University  
EDINBURGH

**UNIVERSITY COURT**

**CONFIRMED Minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2017**

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**PRESENT**

Dr Frances Dow CBE (Chair)	Frank Lennon OBE
Elaine Acaster OBE	Jackie Macdonald
Dr David Banks	Sarah Philips
Carolyn Bell	Megan Richardson
Jim Bradshaw ( <i>by tele-conference</i> )	Dr Eurig Scandrett
Dr Richard Butt	Stewart Sands
Professor Graham Caie CBE	Dr Andrew Scott
Colin Duffus	Professor Petra Wend
Dr Anthony Falconer OBE	Dr Laura Young MBE
Cynthia Guthrie	

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Professor Brigid Daniel	Dean of School of Arts, Social Sciences and Management
Professor Fiona Coutts	Dean of School of Health Sciences
Gordon Craig	Head of Planning
Malcolm Cutt	Director of Operations and Finance
Steve Scott	Director of Campus and Commercial Services
Irene Hynd	University Secretary (Secretary)
Gerry O'Hare	Governance Adviser (Minute Secretary)

**1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

The Chair welcomed members and those in attendance to the meeting. Particular welcome was extended to new Court members Elaine Acaster, Sarah Philips, Stewart Sands and Dr Andrew Scott. Brigid Daniel, who was attending the meeting in her capacity as the new Dean of the School of Arts, Social Sciences and Management, was also welcomed to the meeting.

Apologies were noted from Linda McPherson, Miller McLean, Ken McGarrity and Margaret O'Connor.

**2 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

There were no conflicts of interest declared. In the interests of transparency, the Chair reminded Court that she held an Honorary Fellow title, awarded by the University of Edinburgh. The Chair had no other relevant connection to that University in relation to the business of the Court.

### **3 DETERMINATION OF OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

- (a) There was no other competent business determined.
- (b) There was no business arising from the Items for Information.

### **4 CHAIR'S REPORT**

Members were advised that the Committee of Scottish Chairs (CSC) had been particularly engaged in discussion of the Revised Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance. The Code was currently out for public consultation, and Court would have the opportunity to discuss this item later in its agenda.

### **5 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

Members had RECEIVED a detailed report from the Principal (COURT (17) 20).

In addition to the particular matters highlighted in the report, the Principal advised members of the published outcome of the Teaching Excellent Framework (TEF) exercise, the results of which had been released recently. The five Scottish Universities that had participated in the exercise had performed well, with three having been awarded a Gold rating, and the remaining two having been awarded Silver. Across the UK, of the 231 institutions that had entered the TEF, 26% had received a gold award, and 50.2% had received silver.

Members were advised that, following the tragic event at Grenfell Tower in London, concerns had been raised about cladding on properties across the UK. The University had carried out a detailed review of materials present in external elevations across the estate. This identified some window systems with aluminium faced insulation infill panels. An inspection had confirmed that these were not of the same design as those in Grenfell and did not have a combustible core. Given this, and the fact that the University had modern low-rise buildings with extensive fire detection and alarm systems, the assessment was that there was no cause for concern around occupant safety. The University would continue to liaise with the relevant authorities as and when new information emerged.

### **6 MINUTES**

- 6.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 5 April 2017 (COURT (17) MINS 02) were APPROVED.
- 6.2 There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere in the agenda.

### **7 PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT**

Members considered paper (Court (17) 21) which set out proposals to expand the portfolio of programme provision and degree awards approved by the University.

Introducing the proposals, the Principal advised that the Scottish Government, with the support of the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS), had engaged in discussion with the University Executive on the possibility of the University delivering Initial Teacher Education. If progressed, the proposal had the potential to result in a 17% increase in the University's on-campus student numbers, and in additional Scottish Funding Council (SFC) grant funding and fee income (from 2018/19) as set out in full in the briefing paper.

The Principal further advised that a key objective of the University's QM150 strategy was to increase its share of SFC funded places, and that the delivery of initial teacher education provision would resonate clearly with the University's vision to be a university of ideas and influence. The university has a long history of educating teachers, with formal teacher education being part of the portfolio until the 1970s. Similarly, the teaching of home economics in one form or another formed part of QMU's history, from its early origins to the launch of the BA Home Economics in 1977. As a new provider of teacher education, there was an opportunity for the University to design and develop a teacher education programme that was different to that currently being offered. The University would offer an integrated approach taking advantage of the opportunity for synergies and efficiencies with the current academic portfolio.

The Director of Operations and Finance spoke to the financial aspects set out in the paper. As this would be a significant area of new provision for the University, there would be necessary set up costs in advance of the first intake of students, suggested as being in 2018-19. Funded places associated with the BEd Primary programme would build up as additional cohorts of students entered the programme. In advance of any substantial funding being realised from additional funded places and tuition fee income from students, the University would incur additional set-up costs, which fell into three broad categories: staff, marketing and physical infrastructure. In recognition of this, the Scottish Government had invited the University to provide details of the up-front costs that would allow the University to develop and deliver the programmes in line with GTCs requirements.

In discussing the proposals, a number of members were concerned to understand the reasons for the current provider disinvesting in this area, and to understand expected tolerance levels in terms of annual fluctuations in allocation of funded places. Members noted that postgraduate funded places were more likely to be subject to fluctuations in response to workforce planning. Concern was expressed in relation to the timing of the initiative, the impact of start-up costs on cash flow, but also in terms of capacity to deliver on other key initiatives. Members supporting the proposal suggested that it provided a unique and exciting opportunity, which represented a vote of confidence in the University. Members were advised that the campus had been designed originally to accommodate a student population of the size anticipated, were the University to expand its portfolio as described.

The Convener of the Finance and Estates Committee (FEC) confirmed that an earlier iteration of the proposals had been subject to robust discussion at the Finance and Estates Committee, as a result of which a more developed business case had been requested, and had now been produced. The Chair advised that she had been present at the Senate discussion of the proposals, and that Senate members' enthusiasm for the development had been very much in evidence, but it was important to temper that with consideration of the financial implications.

Members noted that the proposals would be subject to the University's programme approval process, which included a full risk analysis and approval of the business case by the Portfolio Development Group.

After full discussion of the points set out in the paper and above, it was agreed that the proposals be approved in principle, subject to satisfactory resolution of the financial matters and confirmation of student numbers from the Scottish Government.

## **8 THIRD QUARTER REVIEW – TO APRIL 2017**

### **8.1 Members RECEIVED the Management Accounts for the nine months to 30 April 2017.**

Members NOTED that the Q3 revenue had been restated on an FRS 102 basis. The forecast income from tuition fees had increased slightly in light of invoices processed and there had been a minor increase in other income, relating primarily to student related activities such as printing charges. As previously reported non-staff expenditure had been reduced or deferred to secure the £400k reduction required to balance the budget.

In addition to the information in the management accounts, the University had settled a long running claim against Carillion relating to the building of the University campus, the receipt for which was being held in reserve.

The Convener of the Finance and Estates Committee advised that FEC had asked for a review of institutional policy on the treatment of depreciation and capitalisation of maintenance expenditure as a contribution to an improvement on the bottom line. Discussions would take place between the University and Ernst and Young regarding the possible change in accounting policy and subject to these discussions, the changes could be made to the year-end accounts.

### **8.2 Members RECEIVED an update report on institutional KPIs.**

The Head of Planning highlighted key points from the report. There had been an improvement in forecast fee income for quarter 3 but it was still below target. As previously reported the number of students recruited from SIMD20 postcodes was below target. In discussion with SFC the University's Outcome Agreement target for students from SIMD20 postcodes had been reduced to 11% for 2017/18, working up to 15% by 2019/20.

In the Complete University Guide published in April 2017, the University had moved from 93<sup>rd</sup> place to 92<sup>nd</sup>. The League Table Group continued to work on improving the University's league table position. As a result of the work of the Group, there had been significant improvements in the Destination of Learners from HE survey and this would influence The Times league tables due in autumn 2017.

The number of research active staff had dropped slightly below the target of 120 at 116. The reason for this drop in-year was being investigated.

## **9 FINANCIAL FORECASTS AND BUDGET FOR 2017/18**

MINUTE REDACTED – the record of discussion under minute 9 is exempt from disclosure under Section 33 (1) (b) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

## **10 LOCAL LAND – MASTERPLAN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

MINUTE REDACTED – the record of discussion under Minute 10 is exempt from disclosure under Section 33 (1) (b) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

## **11 SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL**

### **11.1 Outcome Agreement Funding**

The Scottish Funding Council had published its final funding announcement for 2017/18.

Members NOTED that overall funding from teaching and research was £90k higher than in 2016/17. However, this was largely accounted for by the increase in Research Excellence Grant funding of £136k, as the final element of the transitional funding increase resulting from the REF 2014 worked its way through the system. The University, along with all but one of the other post-92 universities, had lost funding as a result of the change in methodology for calculating teaching funding, comprising the tightening of tolerance bands. This had led to a negative impact of £107k for 2017/18. This was offset by some transitional funding to ensure the reduction in funding was no more than 0.8%. Members noted that a plan to remove tolerance bands from 2018/19 could lead to a further reduction in funding of around £300k in 2018/19. As SFC would be reviewing the funding model, it was not possible to calculate what the actual impact of further tolerance band reductions would be.

### **11.2 Outcome Agreement 2017-2020**

Members NOTED the confirmed Queen Margaret University Outcome Agreement 2017-20 with the Scottish Funding Council. The final version of the Outcome Agreement had been approved by the Chair on behalf of the University Court under powers delegated to the Chair by the Court at its meeting on 5 April 2017.

## **12 HIGHER EDUCATION (SCOTLAND) GOVERNANCE ACT 2016**

Members RECEIVED an update on the University's compliance with the Higher Education (Governance) Act 2016.

Discussions had taken place with the Scottish Government and representatives of each of the 19 Scottish Universities. The purpose of these discussions was to clarify the process involved in amending institutions' Statutory Instruments in light of the 2016 Act. The Scottish Government had outlined a new procedure for amending Statutory Instruments, designed to be more streamlined and with increased opportunity for discussion.

Members NOTED the details of the process that would be undertaken by the University in pursuance of amendments necessary to comply with the provisions of the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016.

## **13 SCOTTISH CODE OF GOOD HE GOVERNANCE**

Members CONSIDERED a proposed response to the Consultation on the Revised Code 2017.

The majority of members who expressed a view supported the overall tone and content of the response, and in particular, the strong statements expressed concerning the highly prescriptive nature of the Revised Code. One member who expressed a contrasting view undertook to provide written comments to the Secretary. The Secretary undertook to accommodate additional comments within the response, as far as it was practicable within the timescale provided. The response would state that the views expressed were those of the majority of Court members, but that on some points, there was a diversity of opinion.

## **14 WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY**

Members RECEIVED the revised University Whistleblowing Policy. Members noted that the policy had been revised to bring it in line with best practice, and that the document had benefited from detailed review of published guidance, and from comment and advice provided by representatives of the Campus Trade Unions. The revised policy would be relaunched to all staff, and action taken to publicise the policy in a visible manner on campus, and to reference it in key employee documents.

Members APPROVED the revisions to the University's Whistleblowing Policy.

## **15 MAINSTREAMING REPORT AND EQUALITY OUTCOMES 2017-20**

Members NOTED the confirmed Queen Margaret University Mainstreaming Report and Equality Outcomes, with supporting Equal Pay Review, which was published on 30 April 2017.

The final version of the Mainstreaming Report and Equality Outcomes had been approved by the Equality and Diversity Committee, and considered and approved by the Chair on behalf of the University Court under powers delegated to the Chair by the Court at its meeting on 5 April 2017.

## **16 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND DATA PROTECTION**

Members NOTED the annual compliance report on Freedom of Information, Environmental Information Regulations, Data Protection and Records Management activity in 2016.

## **17 SENATE**

17.1 Members RECEIVED the minutes of the Senate meeting held on 29 March 2017. Three specific items of importance had been drawn to the attention of the Court, namely, Review of QMU Research Centres, Scottish Funding Council Outcome Agreement (minute 10.2 above refers) and Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR).

17.2 Members RECEIVED the minutes of the Senate meeting held on 10 May 2017. Four specific items of importance had been drawn to the attention of the Court, namely, application numbers for 2017-18, the Doctoral Student Conference, Second Quarter KPI report 2016-17 (minute 7.2 above refers) and the Complete University Guide table.

## **18 FINANCE AND ESTATES COMMITTEE**

18.1 Members RECEIVED the minutes of the Finance and Estates Committee meeting held on 15 May 2017 (FEC (17) MINS 02). All matters brought to the attention of the Court were covered elsewhere on the Court agenda.

18.2 Members RECEIVED the minutes of the Finance and Estates Committee meeting held on 2 June 2017 (FEC (17) MINS 03). All matters brought to the attention of the Court were covered elsewhere on the Court agenda.

18.3 Members RECEIVED the minutes of the Finance and Estates Committee meeting held on 19 June 2017 (FEC (17) MINS 04). There were no matters brought to the attention of the Court.

## **19 AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE**

Members RECEIVED the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 24 May 2017.

MINUTE REDACTED – the record of discussion under minute 19 is exempt from disclosure under Section 33 (1) (b) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

## **20 NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE**

Members RECEIVED the minutes of the Nominations Committee meeting held on 14 June 2017 (NOM (17) MINS 02).

Members APPROVED the following Committee appointments recommended by the Nominations Committee:

- Professor Graham Caie and Elaine Acaster to be appointed to the Audit and Risk Committee.
- Professor Graham Caie to be appointed to the Convenership of the Audit and Risk Committee when the current Convener demits office.
- Jackie Macdonald to be appointed to the Equality and Diversity Committee.

Members NOTED that vacancies on the Finance and Estates Committee would be considered in light of the outcome of the forthcoming lay court member recruitment round. Discussion on future membership of the Senior Management Remuneration Committee was held over until later in the year. Further recommendation would come forward in respect of the Health and Safety Committee.

## **21 HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**

Members RECEIVED the minutes of the Health and Safety Committee meeting held on 8 June 2017 (HSC (17) MINS 03). There were no items brought to Court's attention

## **22 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY COMMITTEE**

Members RECEIVED the minutes of the Equality and Diversity Committee meeting held on 27 April 2017 (EDC (17) MINS 02). All items brought to the attention of the Court were covered elsewhere on the Court agenda.

## **23 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Court will meet on the following dates in 2017 and 2018:

4 October 2017  
6 December 2017  
7 and 8 February 2018  
4 April 2018  
27 June 2018

With the exception of the Court Away Days, all meetings begin at 4.00pm