



## **AGENDA for the Business Committee Meeting on Thursday 29 February 2024 at 5.15pm in the Raeburn Room, Old College**

1. Welcome and Apologies
2. a. Minutes of the Meeting of 7 December 2023 Paper 1  
b. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting of 7 December 2023
3. a. Minutes of the extra-ordinary Meeting of 22 January 2024 Paper 2  
b. Matters arising from the Minutes of 22 January 2024
4. Court meeting on 26 February – agenda To Follow  
Observations by General Council Assessors on open agenda items
5. Reports from the Standing Committees
  - a. Academic Standing Committee Paper 3  
[Academic Standing Committee - Reports | The University of Edinburgh](#)
  - b. Finance and Services Standing Committee Paper 4  
[Finance and Services Standing Committee - Reports | The University of Edinburgh](#)
  - c. International Standing Committee Paper 5  
[International Standing Committee - Reports | The University of Edinburgh](#)
  - d. Public Affairs Standing Committee Paper 6  
[Public Affairs Standing Committee - Reports | The University of Edinburgh](#)
6. Process and timetable for election of Convener and Vice-Convener Paper 7  
Role and responsibilities of Convener Paper 7a
7. Comments and Reflections on February 2024 Half-Yearly Meeting
8. Draft Resolutions of the University Court [Tabled]
9. Report from the Secretary of the General Council Paper 8
10. Meeting Simon Fanshawe – next Rector Paper 9
11. Any other competent business
12. Date of next meetings: 2 May (Raeburn Room); 27 June (ECCI)

### Notes on the Agenda

- Notice of any questions under item 9, and of any matters, which Members may wish to raise under item 11, should be given to the Secretary and Convener not less than 24 hours before the meeting.

**Minutes of the Business Committee Meeting held on Thursday 7 December 2023  
5.15pm in the ECCI, Infirmary Street, Edinburgh**

**Present**

Sir Philip Mawer, Convener of the Business Committee  
Mr Gordon Cairns, Vice-Convener of the Business Committee  
Dr William Duncan, Secretary of the General Council  
Mr Arron Ashton  
Mr Jock Millican (online)  
Professor Alice Brown  
Dr Bruce Nelson  
Lady Joyce Caplan  
Professor Graeme Reid  
Mr John Clifford  
Mr Devin Scobie  
Ms Ann Cormack  
Rt. Rev Brian Smith  
Mrs Almira Delibegovic-Broome  
Ms Krystyna Szumelukowa  
Ms Candice Donnelly  
Dr Frances Dow  
Ms Kate Hawley (online)  
Professor Stephen Hillier  
Ms Alison MacLeary, Assistant Secretary of the General Council

**1. Welcome and Apologies**

The Convener welcomed everyone to the final meeting of semester one.

**Apologies** - Douglas Alexander, Manya Buchan, Alistair Dunlop, Elisabeth Feldstein, Kirsty MacGregor, Francis McManus and Sarah Wolffe.

**2. Minutes of the Meeting of 12 October 2023**

The minutes were approved.

**3. Matters arising from the Minutes of 12 October 2023**

The Convener reported that he and the Secretary had met with Chris Cox on 23 November and promptly followed this up with a letter suggesting how to create greater synergy between GC and D&A in their communications with alumni, given the increasing number of overseas members. It was noted that communications from the GC should primarily relate to its governance role. They had also suggested a follow up joint meeting with both Chris Cox and VP International, Professor James Smith, to discuss engagement with overseas alumni clubs.

**4. Topics for consideration arising from the Standing Committee meetings**

The minutes of the various Standing Committees previously circulated were noted.

These covered the meetings of:

- a. Academic Standing Committee on 1 November and 23 November.
- b. Constitutional Standing Committee on 9 November.
- c. Finance & Services Standing Committee on 21 November.
- d. International Standing Committee on 26 October and 16 November.
- e. Public Affairs Standing Committee on 19 October and 29 November.

In addition, the SC Conveners had produced short summary notes, previously circulated, of key issues arising from each of their committee meetings in Semester one. PM invited discussion and the following four issues were raised.

1. **Student Satisfaction and Well-being.** Different aspects of this had arisen at several meetings.

**a. The ASC meeting on 1 November heard from Lucy Evans, Deputy Secretary (Students), about various initiatives to try to improve the student experience and the University's low National Student Survey (NSS) ranking.**

- SH applauded the more pro-active hands-on approach the University is now giving under Lucy Evans' initiative to this longstanding issue by embedding the student experience within University activity, e.g. through providing peer assisted learning and by improving student support systems and better recreational areas and sports facilities;
- In response to a query about the questions asked in NSS surveys and how these might influence the answers, it was explained that the questions tend to be the same each year in order that trend analyses can be carried out. However, a final question asking for an overall satisfaction rating had been removed from the surveys at English universities, although retained in Scotland and concern was expressed that this could disadvantage Scottish institutions;
- It was noted that there was a lower satisfaction rate for home students and it was suggested this could be related to the increasing accommodation and financial challenges they face, which may not necessarily apply to international students from more affluent backgrounds;
- The lack of an upward trend at Edinburgh in relation to assessment and feedback was considered particularly problematic given the low rankings for this aspect; a situation made worse by the large number of students at Edinburgh affected by the Marking and Assessment Boycott (see agenda item 7 below)
- The low level of staff satisfaction at Edinburgh was also thought to be a contributing factor;
- It was agreed that attempts to improve student satisfaction would also need to address the lack of sense of community which can often be felt within a highly devolved, disparate institution.

**b. At the ASC meeting on 23 November with the EUSA President, Sharan Atwal, another issue affecting student well-being had been raised, concerning student safety on campus and freedom of expression.**

- At one of several student protests held in Bristo Square about the Israel/ Gaza conflict there had been police intervention and arrests, whereas many students felt strongly that the University's own security team should have been more visible to deal with the situation internally rather than rely on police involvement; in discussion it was noted that the police intervention came after superficial damage to property and that Bristo Square is a public area, not part of the campus;
- This incident had exacerbated safety concerns given the increased risk of violent Antisemitic or Islamophobic behaviour generated by the Israel/ Gaza conflict;
- It was agreed that universities should be places that allow the safe expression of different views and that *proportionate* levels of security should be on hand to support these types of events.

**c. The FSSC meeting on 21 November with Gary Jebb, Director of Place, had discussed the availability of suitable student accommodation and its impact on the student experience.**

- The University guarantees accommodation for all 1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduate or postgraduate students and the planned addition of 3000 extra beds should help maintain this guarantee,

but concern was highlighted about the cost and availability of suitable accommodation for returning students; all four of the Edinburgh universities are working together to address this;

- There is a need to improve the ‘town and gown’ relationship as there is an increasing perception within the City that the Universities are contributing to the recently declared ‘Edinburgh housing emergency’ by attracting more fee-paying students who can afford higher rents, thereby exacerbating the homelessness situation; instead, these students should be viewed as making a valuable contribution to the local economy;
- Given its interest in promoting good community relations, it was suggested in discussion that PASC should seek a meeting with the City Council Leader, Cllr Day.

### 2. Global Strategy

**ISC had met VP International, Professor James Smith on 16 November who had outlined plans for producing a new Global Strategy which is expected to be launched in 2024.**

- The new Global Strategy will need to align with other University strategies, such as Curriculum Transformation, and Research and Innovation, and KS noted that the latter is expected to be published shortly;
- KS drew attention to the increasing number of international students studying at the University and the need for the University to maintain its standards so that it can retain its place within international rankings and continue to attract international students;
- General concern was expressed about the impact that major changes just announced by the UK Government introducing stricter rules about visas and income thresholds, all designed to reduce inward migration, would have on attracting and retaining overseas staff and students.

### 3. Communications with General Council members

- CD spoke about PASC’s focus on increasing engagement with GC members through digital methods e.g. the website and improvements to the Billet template, but pointed out that the move to G4 has resulted in the University being currently unable to provide analytic data on usage of the site;
- AC raised the need to engage alumni via social media;
- CD also reported that PASC had received a presentation from Dave Gorman, Director, Social Responsibility and Sustainability, at its meeting on 29 November, about the positive impact and excellent performance of the University’s social investment fund.

### 4. Committee meetings in 2024

- PM invited feedback from members about how the structure of BC meetings could be improved;
- AA welcomed the covering notes from SC Conveners circulated prior to the meeting that had highlighted key issues from their recent SC meetings, as this had generated useful discussion;
- WD reported that there will be one further meeting of ASC, CSC, ISC and PASC in January/February 2024 and they will then have their fourth (final) meetings later in the year;
- FSSC will have two meetings in Semester 2: one with Catherine Martin, VP Corporate Services, and the other meeting with Director of Finance, Lee Hamill. As the topics to be discussed with Catherine Martin will cover security, staff satisfaction, catering and accommodation – all topics of particular interest to ASC - its members will be invited to join online rather than expect her to have a separate meeting with ASC; the meeting with Lee Hamill will, as usual, be for members of FSSC only.
- As the Research and Innovation Strategy had recently been approved by Court, it was agreed that Professor Christina Boswell, VP Research and Enterprise, should be invited to give a presentation about it to the Business Committee.



## 5. Observations by General Council Assessors

The agenda for the Court meeting on 4 December – see Appendix 1 - had been circulated previously and this showed which items were closed and which were open. Jock Millican explained he had been unable to attend Court but he had been fully briefed by Sarah Wolffe and Douglas Alexander who had attended and he gave the following report:

- Visit to the Edinburgh Futures Institute (EFI). A visit to EFI took place before the formal meeting at the College of Art; it will be an impressive facility when the extensive refurbishments are complete in 2024.
- Item 3 - The Principal's Report
  - Keen to improve the University's communications and reputation, which is perceived to be much higher outwith Scotland than within;
  - Congratulated Jane Hillston, Head of the School of Informatics, on being awarded the British Computer Society's Lovelace medal and the first person awarded BCS top three awards;
  - The College of Medicine and Vet Medicine (CMVM) had won research grants totalling £268m;
  - Presentations had taken place in Edinburgh and at the Westminster Parliament on an independent review of the economic impact of the University: this showed a £7.5bn contribution to the UK economy in 2021/22;
  - Adult Human Female film has now been screened but two complaints were received from Court members relating to the security measures at the screening;
  - The Principal had made a successful short visit to the USA accompanied by Chris Cox (D & A) and Professor Shannon Vallor, Baillie Gifford Chair in the Ethics of Data and Artificial Intelligence;
- Item 4 – Committee business
  - a. Court USS Sub Group – reported on positive changes to the USS pension scheme;
  - b. Senate – this had been a difficult meeting but all were resolved to move forward constructively;
- Item 5 – People and Money. Discussion of the Report that Court had commissioned from PA Consulting was a closed item, but Court had decided that the full Report would be published soon. [Secretary's note: the PA Report was circulated to the Business Committee on 11 December along with the covering message sent to staff from the Senior Leadership Team];
- Item 6 - Performance Measures to Support Strategy 2030 – this item was closed but some aspects will be covered in the Annual Report and Accounts;
- Item 9 - Annual Report and Accounts 2022/23 – will be published in January following final completion of the audit;
- Item 10 - Progress relating to the University's Grade Scale Review will be announced shortly;
- Item 11 – Student Experience. The discussion was closed but significant improvement had been achieved in some areas, while acknowledging that much more work was needed;
- Item 14 - Research and Innovations Strategy had been approved and will be published shortly;
- Item 16 - General Council Membership & Registration Ordinance. It was agreed that a period of formal consultation should take place with General Council and Senate over the proposed changes.

### Query

It was noted that 18 of the 29 Reports presented to Court were closed. In response to a query about how it was decided which items were open or closed and why so many were closed, JM explained

that closed items relate to subjects which are financially, reputationally or commercially sensitive, but added that the outcomes of closed items are often made public in due course.

### 6. Ordinance 186 – consultation with GC about proposed changes to GC membership

- Business Committee was pleased to hear that Court was content that the Draft New Ordinance (see Appendix 2) relating to GC Membership and Registration should now proceed to a statutory consultation to receive feedback from the GC membership and others. This would inform consideration of this matter at the next Court meeting on 26 February.
- The BC approved the following process of consultation with GC members:
  - Notice sent in mid- December to members (either by email or letter) from the Secretary inviting comments by end January on the proposed changes;
  - Details of the proposed changes to be available on the General Council website;
  - Reminder email to GC members from the Secretary in mid-January;
  - Report to Business Committee in early February summarising the responses received;
  - Convener's report to the 17 February Half Yearly meeting to present responses and allow discussion then if necessary;
  - Secretary to notify Court Services on 19 February of outcome of consultation with General Council, so this can be reported to Court meeting on 26 February;
  - Court to decide in February whether to proceed and if any further modifications should be made to the revised Ordinance, before it is sent to the Scottish Universities Committee of the Privy Council and then to the Privy Council itself for approval.

It was agreed that the notice to members should adopt a neutral position, simply inviting comments for or against the proposed changes, noting that the case for the changes was set out in the report to Court and that this would be available on the General Council website.

### 7. Marking and Assessment Boycott (MAB) – update

- The Secretary drew attention to a note received that day from Lucy Evans (Deputy Secretary, Students) and circulated prior to the meeting;
- Members were pleased to read that all final year students had received their results by mid-November, noting that UCU had lifted the Boycott in early September and that UCU had subsequently failed to achieve a mandate for continuing the Boycott;
- Members were concerned to read, however, that a legacy issue from prioritising final year students' assessments was that some continuing students had not received their assessments and were not expected to receive them until the next calendar year;
- It was agreed that further information on the number of students who have yet to receive their marks should be obtained because, if significant, this could affect student satisfaction ratings and have longer term consequences for the University's reputation.

**ACTION:** The Secretary was asked to find out how many continuing students were affected by the Boycott.

### 8. Report from the Secretary of the General Council

- A report previously circulated - see Appendix 3 - provided an update on the production of a substantially redesigned edition of Winter Billet following the decision by Communications and Marketing to outsource its production to Lane Agency, and a list of the 13 Candidates for election in February to the 7 vacancies arising on the Business Committee. BC welcomed the large number and diversity of candidates standing for election;

- WD drew attention to **Draft Resolutions Nos. 112/2023 – 114/2023 being approved** in correspondence by the Business Committee.

**9. Any other competent business**

The Convener reminded members that the GC Christmas Reception will take place on Tuesday, 12 December.

**10. Date of the next meeting**

The next meeting would take place on Thursday, 29 February 2024 at 5.15pm in the Raeburn Room.

University Court Meeting - Monday, 4 December 2023

Appendix 1

AGENDA

[Version for General Council Business Committee, indicating whether papers are open or closed]

OPENING ITEMS

- |  |        |
|--|--------|
| <b>1. Minute</b> [OPEN version of minute to be published shortly]<br>To approve the minute of the meeting and note of the seminar held on 9 October 2023 | A1, A2 |
| <b>2. Matters Arising</b> [OPEN] & Review of Action Log [CLOSED]<br>To raise any matters arising and review the Action Log                               | A3     |
| <b>3. Principal's Report</b> [OPEN]<br>To note a report from Peter Mathieson, Principal  | B      |
| <b>4. Committee Business</b>   |        |
| • Senior Lay Member's Overview [OPEN] Verbal   |        |
| • Court USS Sub-Group [OPEN]   | C1     |
| • Policy & Resources Committee [CLOSED]  | C2     |
| • Nominations Committee [OPEN]   | C3     |
| • Audit & Risk Committee [CLOSED]  | C4     |
| • Remuneration Committee Annual Report [CLOSED]  | C5     |
| • Knowledge Strategy Committee [CLOSED]  | C6     |
| • Senate [OPEN]  |        |

KEY ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION/DECISION

- |  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>5. People and Money</b> – External Review Report [CLOSED but the External Review Report and a summary management response will be published shortly]<br>To consider the report presented by PA Consulting and the management response presented by Leigh Chalmers, Vice-Principal & University Secretary. | D        |
| <b>6. Performance Measures to Support Strategy 2030:</b> 2022-23 Year-End Report [CLOSED but measures will feature in the published Annual Report and Accounts] To consider a paper presented by Rona Smith, Deputy Secretary Governance & Strategic Planning  | E        |
| <b>7. Audit &amp; Risk Committee Annual Report</b> [CLOSED]<br>To consider the annual report presented by Douglas Millican, Convener of Audit & Risk Committee   | F        |
| <b>8. Risk Management Post Year-End Assurance Statement</b> [CLOSED]<br>To consider the assurance statement presented by Catherine Martin, Vice-Principal Corporate Services   | G        |
| <b>9. Finance To consider papers presented by Lee Hamill, Director of Finance</b><br>• Director of Finance's Report [CLOSED]<br>• Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23 [CLOSED but will be published in January]<br>• Letter of Representation [CLOSED]  | H1 H2 H3 |

- 10. Grade Scale Review [CLOSED but will be announced shortly]** I  
To approve a paper presented by Peter Mathieson, Principal & ViceChancellor
- 11. Student Experience Update [CLOSED]** J  
To consider a paper presented by Colm Harmon, Vice-Principal Students
- 12. Students 'Association and Sports Union Reports** K1 K2  
To consider the reports presented by Sharan Atwal, Students 'Association President
- Students 'Association Report [OPEN]
  - Sports Union Report [OPEN]
- 13. Edinburgh Futures Institute [CLOSED]** L  
To approve a paper presented by Gary Jebb, Director of Place
- 14. Research & Innovation Strategy [CLOSED but strategy was approved and will be published shortly]**  
To approve the strategy presented by Christina Boswell, Vice-Principal Research & Enterprise M
- ITEMS FOR NOTING OR FORMAL APPROVAL**
- 15. Externally Facilitated Court Effectiveness Review [OPEN aside from costings, which are commercially confidential]** N  
To approve
- 16. General Council Membership & Registration Ordinance [OPEN]** O  
To approve
- 17. Health and Safety Annual Report [OPEN aside from one section and annexes]** P  
To note
- 18. Development & Alumni: Granting of Probate [CLOSED – relates to an individual legacy]** Q  
To approve
- 19. Donations & Legacies and Alumni Relations Activity [CLOSED]** R
- 20. Resolutions [OPEN]** S  
To approve
- 21. Any Other Business [None raised]**  
To consider any other matters
- 22. Date of Next Meeting**  
Monday, 26 February 2024, 9.30am-5pm (including Court seminar)

Appendix II

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH ORDINANCE No. [insert new number]

GENERAL COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP AND REGISTRATION

Changes from the current Ordinance 186 are shown in red

At Edinburgh, the [Number] day of [Month], [Year]

WHEREAS the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966, Section 10(1), provides that the University Court shall cause to be maintained a register of members of the General Council in accordance with provisions to be prescribed by Ordinance:

AND WHEREAS in terms of Sections 3 of the said Act and of paragraphs 1 and 5- of Part I of Schedule 2 thereto, the University Court has power to amend by Ordinance the composition, powers, and functions of, 'inter alia', the General Council, and to prescribe the conditions under which the register of members of the General Council is to be maintained:

AND WHEREAS the University Court deems it expedient to amend the composition of the General Council and to amend the conditions under which the register of members of the General Council is to be maintained:

THEREFORE the University Court of the University of Edinburgh, in exercise of the powers conferred upon it by Section 3 of the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966, and with particular reference to paragraphs 1 and 5 of Part I of Schedule 2 to that Act, hereby statutes and ordains:

1. The General Council of the University of Edinburgh shall consist of:

- (a) all persons who **having successfully met the requirements of an academic award other than an Honorary Degree and have graduated from the University of Edinburgh and** whose names shall be recorded in the Register of Graduates referred to in Section 3 of this Ordinance, in accordance with the provisions of this Ordinance:
- (b) all persons on whom the University has conferred an Honorary Degree or on whom it has conferred the award of Honorary Fellow of the University. [Note: this provision does not apply to those appointed by Colleges or Schools as Honorary Fellows.]
- (c) during their tenure of office -
  - (i) the Chancellor of the University;
  - (ii) the members of the University Court;
  - (iii) **the Chaplain to the University.**

[Drafting note: all Professors, Readers, Senior Lecturers, Lecturers are now included under (d) below]

(d) **during the tenure of their appointment: all staff of the University appointed to roles assigned to University Grade 8 or above and their grade equivalent(s).**

(e). **those 'ex officio' members in Clause 1(c) who accept the invitation to retain their membership of the General Council on demitting office or completion of their period of appointment;** [Drafting note: former Professors are now included under (f) below]

(f) **former staff (admitted previously as per Clause (d) above) who accept the invitation to retain their membership of the General Council after being employed by the University for a period of at least three years in a role assigned to Grade 8 or above or equivalent and who leave University employment except when dismissed or in other similar categories of case as may be determined by the Registrar.**

2. The University Court shall from time to time appoint a Registrar of the General Council, upon such conditions as the Court may determine, and the Court shall provide such assistance for the performance of the Registrar's duties as it may consider necessary. The office of Registrar may be held in conjunction with any other office in the University.

3. The Registrar shall ensure that a Register of Graduates is maintained, recording the full names of all persons on whom the University has conferred an **academic award** other than an Honorary Degree, the address of each graduand at the time of registration for graduation, the date of graduation, and the **award** conferred.

4. The Registrar shall also ensure that a Register of Members of the General Council is maintained, recording

(a) the full names in alphabetical order and addresses (where known) of all graduates whose names are recorded in the Register of Graduates and who are not known to be dead, or presumed dead failing contrary information after eighty years from the date of graduation, together with, in each case, the first **academic award** recorded in the Register of Graduates, and the year of graduation in that **academic award**.

(b) the full names, in alphabetical order, and addresses (where known) of all other members of the General Council not known to be dead and the offices in virtue of which they qualify for membership.

5. .... [Omitted by Ordinance No. 202, now superseded by Ordinance No. 213]

5. If any person whose name is not included in the Register of Members shall consider that it should be so included, it shall be competent for him or her to appeal to the University Court **and** if the Court considers that such person's name should be included in the Register of Members - in terms of this Ordinance, it shall direct the Registrar to amend the Register accordingly. The decision of the Court shall be final.

6. Ordinance No **186** (General Council Membership and Registration) is hereby revoked.

7. This Ordinance shall come into force after its approval by **His** Majesty in Council on a date to be determined by the University Court.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF .....

Approved by Order in Council, dated [insert date when known]

**General Council Business Committee – 7 December 2023  
Secretary's Report**

**1. Billet**

Two editions of Billet are issued each year to General Council members primarily to inform them of the forthcoming Half Yearly Meetings in February and June, and to provide information on the work of the Business Committee and the Standing Committees. 800 members receive paper copies of Billet and c. 140,000 are sent it electronically. The extended production schedule and much of the cost relates to producing the papers copies. Hitherto, Billet was produced in-house by CAM (Communications and Marketing) but it is no longer able to do so and this has been outsourced to Lane Agency, which has completely redesigned Billet in an attempt to attract more General Council members to read it and as a result attend the Half Yearly Meeting, either in person or online. There is a significant increase in the cost arising from outsourcing the production of Billet, as well as much additional work falling to the General Council Office.

**2. Election for Business Committee 2024/25**

There are 13 Candidates competing for 7 places on the Business Committee next year and details about the Candidates, their Proposers and Seconders are given on the General Council website and in Billet. The election will again be handled by Civica Election Services, with voting papers issued in early January and the results announced at the HYM on 17 February 2024.

**3. Election of next Rector**

The Rector is elected by students and staff every three years. The next election will be from Tuesday 27 February to Friday 1 March 2024. In the absence of the Chancellor, the Rector chairs General Council Half Yearly Meetings.

**4. Draft Resolution Nos. 112/2023 – 114/2023**

These Resolutions were approved by correspondence by the Business Committee

**5. Protocol for re-appointment of General Council Assessors to Court**

This Protocol produced between the Business Committee and Court was discussed with the Assessors who are also basically content with it. The final stage is for Court Services to draw up a time line for the various stages so these are well aligned with the annual cycle for other appointments to Court. Due to staff changes and other workload pressures on Court Services,



doing this has been delayed but will be discussed at meeting with the newly appointed Head of Court Services, Dan Wedgwood on 7 December

Dr William Duncan  
Secretary to General Council

December 2023

**Minutes of the Extra-ordinary Business Committee Meeting  
held on Monday 22 January 2024  
Online via Teams**

<b>Present</b>	Sir Philip Mawer, Convener of the Business Committee
	Mr Gordon Cairns, Vice-Convener of the Business Committee
	Dr William Duncan, Secretary of the General Council
	The Rt. Hon. Douglas Alexander
	Ms Kate Hawley
	Mr Arron Ashton
	Professor Stephen Hillier
	Professor Alice Brown
	Ms Kirsty MacGregor
	Ms Manya Buchan
	Professor Francis McManus
	Mr John Clifford
	Dr Bruce Nelson
	Ms Ann Cormack
	Professor Graeme Reid
	Mrs Almira Delibegovic-Broome
	Mr Devin Scobie
	Ms Candice Donnelly
	The Rt. Rev. Brian Smith
	Dr Frances Dow
	Ms Krystyna Szumelukowa
	Ms Elisabeth Feldstein
	Ms Mary Gunn
	Ms Alison MacLeary, Assistant Secretary of the General Council

**1. Welcome and Apologies**

Due to the widespread travel disruption caused by severe storms, it was not possible to meet as planned as a hybrid meeting in the Raeburn Room and the meeting was moved wholly online. As a result, the Convener asked the Vice Convener to chair the meeting, in case of difficulties with his broadband link. Gordon Cairns welcomed members to the extra-ordinary meeting of the Committee and explained that its main purpose was to discuss a draft response, prepared by the Secretary and Convener, that would go in final form to Court from the General Council about the recently published PA Consulting report on the implementation of the People and Money system and the lessons to be learned from this.

**Apologies** – Arron Ashton, Joyce Caplan, Alistair Dunlop, Jock Millican and Sarah Wolffe.

**2. Representation to University Court about major system changes and follow up to the PA Consulting report on People and Money implementation**

The Convener reminded members that the report of PA Consulting's External Review, commissioned by Court, had been published after the Business Committee meeting in December 2023 and circulated to BC members in mid-December along with the message to staff about the report from the University's Senior Leadership Team.

Following helpful input from the General Council Assessors, the Convener and Secretary had written to Janet Legrand, Senior Lay Member of Court, on 8 January to express concern about the situation and requesting a meeting. This had taken place on 18 January. They had also written separately to the Principal, copying to him the letter sent to Janet Legrand.

Significant concerns over what the PA report revealed had resulted in the convening of this extra-ordinary meeting to discuss the report and what representations about it the Business Committee

should make to Court and the Senior Leadership Team. It was desirable to do this ahead of the Principal's presentation to the General Council (GC) Half Yearly Meeting (HYM) on 17 February, when it was inevitable this issue would be raised.

DA thanked the Secretary and Convener for their diligence and measured way of dealing with this highly sensitive issue.

GC referred the Committee to the paper setting out a draft response to Court and invited members to comment on the overall tone of the document and to offer any drafting suggestions.

Members warmly supported the document, which was considered an excellent summary of the key priorities among the 'lessons to be learned' from the PA review. They were pleased to see its positive and constructive approach and recognised the need to maintain a careful balance in the GC positioning itself as a 'critical friend' to the University. Although, the GC is part of the formal governance structure of the University, it does not possess executive powers. It should nevertheless reflect the very real concerns within the wider University community on this topic and be prepared to act to the limit of its authority, whilst taking care not to exceed that limit. It was agreed to adopt a respectful but not supine tone in the representations to be made to Court and the Senior Leadership Team.

The PA report raised serious questions about leadership and governance, both at the level of Court and the senior executive levels responsible for planning and implementing P&M. This aspect needed to be handled sensitively, seeking clarity about where responsibility lies in sorting out the many issues created by P&M, through applying a 'lessons learned approach,' rather than the GC appearing to apportion blame.

The following comments were noted during the discussion of the draft text:

The letter from the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to staff about the PA Consulting External Review accepted all the findings of the report and included several commitments from the SLT that the report's recommendations would be acted upon. We should ask what progress is being made in delivering on these commitments, but it was agreed that this query should be addressed in the first instance to the Principal and there would be timely opportunity to do this at the HYM in February.

*Para 3: Further work required to make People and Money fit for purpose.* It was suggested that the text should ask if the main scope and strategy for the next phase of work would revert to further organizational transformation or simply be focused on system implementation? Also, would a suitably qualified external partner be brought in to assist (as recommended by PA)? There also needed to be more clarity about the timescales for further work and how the situation would be monitored and by whom.

*Para 5: University Initiatives Programme Board*

Will the relevant skill set for managing change and programmes be part of the selection process for participants? How will Court exercise governance over the proposed Board and ensure transparency in how it operates?

**Action: - Members should email WD (copying in PM) with any specific comments relating to paras 1 – 6 of the draft text by noon on Friday 26 January.**

**3. Feedback to consultation on Ordinance 186**

WD reported the following for information:

- 2 notices had been sent to around 140k members (i.e. those for whom there is contact information within the GC Register); one notice in mid-December and the other in mid-January.
- Members were asked to submit their views to the Secretary by 31 January.
- There had been a rather modest response so far, with 36 responses in favour of the proposed changes and 20 supporting retaining the status quo.
- Within this latter group there was an almost equal split between those who were opposed to the inclusion of non-degree holding graduates and those opposed to opening membership to professional staff.
- Several of the negative responses had been expressed in rather trenchant terms and if critics of the proposals were to adopt a similar tone when the matter is discussed at the HYM, this would need careful handling, although there is no formal Motion on the proposals to be debated at the HYM.
- Members may also need to be reminded that it is the University Court that decides whether to seek Privy Council approval to the changes in the Ordinance and that the General Council has no power of veto over this.

**4. Consequential arrangements for Half Yearly Meeting on 17 February 2024**

- WD and PM will meet with the Principal on 1 February to brief him on any issues that might be raised at the February HYM.
- The Secretary will urge the Principal to avoid 'corporate speak' when responding to questions and will ask for a reduced number of slides to be used during the presentation.
- There would be need to allow for last minute flexibility in the event of demonstrations outside the McEwan Hall such as had taken place at last year's February HYM. WD will meet with the University Secretary, Leigh Chalmers, to discuss security arrangements.

***Action:- Members are invited to contact WD and PM with any topics that they anticipate might be raised during the meeting, e.g. issues arising from recent media reports, so that these can be brought to the Principal's attention prior to the HYM.***

**Any other competent business**

PM reminded BC members to register for the Playfair Library Lunch on Saturday 17 February before the deadline of 2 February.

**5. To note date of next meeting – 29 February 2024.**

**Minutes of the Academic Standing Committee Meeting held at 4.30pm on Wednesday 23 January 2024 in the Cheviot Room, Charles Stewart House**

**Present:** Stephen Hillier, Convener of ASC  
Alice Brown  
Brian Smith  
William Duncan, Secretary of the General Council  
Philip Mawer, Convener of Business Committee - online  
Gordon Cairns, Vice Convener of the Business Committee  
Alison MacLeary, Assistant Secretary of the General Council

**In attendance:** Professor Michael Rovatsos, School of Informatics  
Kirsty MacGregor (FSSC) – online  
Bruce Nelson (FSSC) - online

**1. Welcome and apologies**

The Convener (SH) welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Professor Rovatsos to speak to the committee about the impact of developments in Artificial Intelligence (AI) on areas of the University's activity.

Apologies received from Joyce Caplan and Graeme Reid.

**2. Presentation by Professor Michael Rovatsos, Personal Chair, Artificial Intelligence, School of Informatics**

**a. Introduction**

- Professor Rovatsos began by explaining that AI has been around for at least the last 80 years and still using methods developed in the 1970-90s;
- What has changed dramatically is an exponential explosion of data and the availability of computing systems able to very quickly process huge amounts of information;
- AI systems are computer systems that perform tasks which would otherwise be carried out by humans, and where these tasks involve:
  - automated decision making or decision support provided to human users and/or
  - the creation of artefacts normally produced by humans (text, imagery, etc).
- Generative AI and large language models such as Chat GPT have broad capabilities e.g. can answer questions, write poems and sketches, provide recipes etc., by accessing all of the data which is available online and replicating patterns within the data;
- AI systems perform these tasks by using complex data-driven algorithms in ways that cannot usually be fully scrutinised by a human operator, because the amount of data exceeds human abilities and/or the underlying computational structures are too large or complex to interpret;
- As a result, regulation of AI itself may not be possible and the focus is more likely to be on how to organise governance of its use in a multiplicity of different settings.

**b. Report on Internal Adoption of AI.**

- Professor Rovatsos shared slides based on a report from the Short-Life Working Group he led on re the Internal Adoption of AI;
- This short-life working group was convened in late September 2023 and involved 17 academic, professional services, and student colleagues;
- Brief included questions covering all areas of University activity, and asked for recommendations to address risks and opportunities;
- Built on previous work done with the Data Ethics Committee headed by Professor Shannon Vallor, whose recommendations were brought to the University Executive in 2021-22, and update with latest advances in AI;
- Produced a balanced picture of how AI can transform Higher Education but concern often dominated enthusiasm in internal and external discussions; need to establish what is the strategy and risk appetite;
- Identified areas where direct action needs to be taken straight away but a strategic and multi horizon approach is needed to address longer term issues;
- The Report set out 13 recommendations on how the University should approach AI within areas such as teaching/assessment, research, and operations;
- Teaching and Learning
  - Use of AI in assessment needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency;
  - Arts and Social Sciences rely on written work and question marks now raised about originality;
  - Provides an opportunity to review methods of assessment;
  - What is the guidance for staff and students and how should AI tools be used; what are their limitations?
  - Using AI to support students is an area of great opportunity;
  - University’s strength in areas such as AI/Computing and the Social Sciences mean that it is well placed to lead on research on the long-term impact of AI
  - Safeguarding the integrity of assessment is a priority
- Research
  - AI has the potential to transform the nature of scientific enquiry e.g. robots and labs, better analysis of medical data, use of sensors and the environment to better understand climate change
  - Share data from the University’s data driven research and combine across disciplines e.g. finance and health to look at the mental health impact of financial problems
  - Pursue initiatives around the long-term impact of AI
  - Need to raise awareness of new risks to research integrity e.g. using automated systems to peer review publications
- Operations
  - There is great potential for AI to enhance efficiency and work satisfaction
  - Often not about ‘smart’ AI, simple but onerous tasks can be made easier
  - The key roadblocks are poor data maturity and legacy IT systems
  - Lack of data strategy and coherent data management specifically highlighted
  - Widespread lack of awareness – upskilling will be essential
- The recommendations in the report were structured across the following 3 categories and include examples of key priorities:

1. **Managing Risks:** safeguarding the integrity of assessment methods; governance and regulation of AI functions in third-party software and use of University data; provide AI awareness training to managers; establish an AI related risk register
2. **Developing Capabilities:** Leadership needed in this area i.e. appoint a Senior Responsible Officer for AI and resource support roles; create a central AI communications hub and community of practice; develop and implement an AI Impact Assessment process
3. **Creating Opportunities:** e.g. working with student bodies to conduct research which explores the impact of AI on University communities and activities; integrate basic AI awareness across the curriculum and professional training; challenges insofar as the tech continues to evolve and still far away from developing a long-term strategy for AI.

### Working Group Conclusions

- University's AI excellence should inform how internal adoption is navigated; Edinburgh University is leading organisation on AI within the HE sector;
- Users, academics and service providers need to work together to co-create solutions and encourage innovation and accountability; Government bodies, HE networks, and researchers actively engaged with the topic;
- Rapidly evolving technology and AI economy – hard to keep up with developments;
- Policy lags behind technological developments, this might change in 1-2 years
- Fragmented global landscape, many different policy approaches;
- University Governance
  - Ethical principles in data, algorithmic and AI systems were established in 2021
  - Mechanisms to implement these have not been established
  - It is unclear 'where the buck stops' in terms of institutional responsibility
  - AI risk management needs to be developed and embedded in existing frameworks
  - The climate and sustainability impact of AI needs to be explored further
  - Financial implications are hard to anticipate
- The rise of AI creates both challenges and opportunities for the University, which will be complex to navigate;
- Digital transformation programmes can cost a lot and results are often not seen straight away; other considerations include:
  - Low staff satisfaction may result in resistance to innovation
  - Low IT and data maturity, lack of institutional data strategy
  - Structural impediments to collaboration between IT providers and users
  - Widespread lack of understanding of use of AI and its impacts
  - Concerns around championing AI merely as a 'productivity enhancement'
  - Gap between lived student experience and corporate strategy
  - Huge variations in terms of digital skills and access
  - Anxieties around possible AI futures (impact on jobs, learning, science)
- There is a need to enhance capability and adapt ways of working to maximise benefits and minimise risks;
- Many of the recommendations imply substantial investment and may cause significant disruption to current structures and processes;
- Strategic decisions have to be taken regarding overall level of ambition and risk appetite
- Need to think through how the approach is communicated to staff and students; how they can engage with AI-related activities will be essential.

### Discussion

- 'Big Data' is a controversial term because in almost all areas, especially in science, there is not nearly enough data and much of it is complex and not of high quality;
- The promise of big data is huge but there are very few areas where large amounts of data are actually used – most organisations only use around 1% of the data they produce;
- The furore around Generative AI which behaves in an intelligent way and has potential for future development has brought the seriousness of this issue to immediate and wider attention and the University feels that it must respond to the speed of change;
- EU regulations within its AI Act takes a product safety approach
- The broader purpose for which AI can now be used mean that different applications of AI should be regulated, not AI itself, just like we don't regulate electricity, instead we regulate microwaves, ovens and power stations which is the right thing to do because the consumer shouldn't have to worry about whether its AI or not;
- AI systems are stochastic; a concern is if we don't understand what happens in the 'black box', how can we control it?;
- Computers are deterministic but emulate randomness to predict different answers at different times - can be influenced by employing parameters to make it sufficiently predictable although should not be used for important decisions/diagnosis as there is not a high enough level of predictability and consistency;
- Challenges with plagiarism – academics together with their students could assess flaws of Chat GPT within their work, which would exercise their critical/analytical faculties or just revert back to exam-based assessments;
- Risks related to dependence on the superiority of Chat GPT in written work causing students to lack confidence in their own abilities;
- Embed transferable and critical skills within the curriculum – this is being addressed within the Curriculum Transformation project;
- What is the University planning to do to guarantee the accuracy of its assessments? This is being discussed at the Senate Education Committee and also within the Assessment Strategy Group;
- Guidance for staff and students was reviewed and updated; students are encouraged to talk to their teacher to be given advice about what counts as academic integrity in the context of the assessment of each course;
- The field is becoming more quantitative and more data driven and there is more evidence that we can be more rigorous about the ethical standards that we have;
- There is an opportunity now to be able to track the biases in human based decisions and to try to avoid replication this or other biases in automated decision systems.
- At present it is still speculative about whether advanced AI could have a conscience but it should be in the hands of humans to exercise responsibility

The Convener thanked Professor Rovatsos for his outstanding and fascinating presentation which provided a comprehensive overview of an extremely complex area.

### **3. Minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2024**

The minutes were approved.

### **4. Matters arising from the meeting held on 23 November 2024**



**Action:-** *WD will arrange a joint meeting of FSSC and ASC with Dr Catherine Martin, Vice-Principal Corporate Services, who has oversight of the University's security operations within her remit.*

**5. Draft Resolutions**

Draft Resolution No. 1/2024: Alteration of the title of Personal Chair of Sociology of Emotions and Relationships

Draft Resolution No. 2/2024: Alteration of the title of Personal Chair of European Politics

**Action:-**

- *DR No. 2/24: WD will contact Court Services for clarification re the altered title of 'Personal Chair of Neuropolitics';*
- *The Draft Resolutions will be forwarded to the Business Committee for consideration before the response deadline of 19 February.*

**6. Any other Business**

None.

**7. Preparations and date of the next meeting**

Tbc.

**Action:-** *A doodle poll will be sent to SC Conveners about their availability for meetings in the period April-May 2024.*

**Minutes of the Finance and Services Standing Committee**

**4.30pm on Monday 30 January 2024**

**Cheviot Room, Charles Stewart House**

**Present:** Almira Delibegovic-Broome, Convener, FSSC  
Kirsty MacGregor  
Bruce Nelson  
William Duncan, Secretary of the General Council  
Philip Mawer, Convener of the Business Committee  
Gordon Cairns, Vice Convener of the Business Committee  
Alison MacLeary, Assistant Secretary of the General Council

**In attendance:** Lee Hamill, Director of Finance

**1. Welcome and apologies**

The Convener of FSSC, Almira Delibegovic-Broome KC, welcomed members of the committee to hear a presentation from the Director of Finance on the University's Annual Report and Accounts to end July 2023, including discussion. The meeting also referenced the General Council budget for 2023-24.

**Apologies:** Manya Buchan and Frances Dow.

**2. Presentation by Lee Hamill, Director of Finance**

**A. Annual Report and Accounts for the Year to 31 July**

- LH provided advance copies of the University's Annual Report and Accounts to 31 July 2023, which was signed off by Court and auditors in December 2023 and which will be available to download online from February: [Annual Report and Accounts | The University of Edinburgh](#);
- The published document adopted the same structure as in previous years: an Integrated Report produced as a team effort, which goes out to a wide range of stakeholders, including staff/students, Government and other funding bodies/HE institutions, and includes the following highlights from 2022/23:
- The Report begins with introductions from the Janet Legrand (on behalf of Court) and the Principal and contains information about the Universities involvement in Cop27;

- The 'approach to reporting' section on page 6 raises material issues such as economic pressures, industrial action e.g. marking and assessment boycott, and progress on the USS pension scheme, which has returned to a surplus position; People and Money was not considered a material issue and so has not been highlighted in this section of the report;
- Total income grew by £87m;
- University consistently ranks in the top 30 of the two most influential league tables; noted that the QS ranking has gone down from 15<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> and the THE ranking has gone from 29<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>; rankings tend to fluctuate each year and the reasons for this are complex and driven by e.g. research success, student satisfaction and other indicators;
- EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest, Tax, Depreciation and Amortisation) is the key financial metric used to measure the University's underlying financial performance and achieved 10.7% of income in the last financial year (baseline target is 7-9%);
- Benefitted from the Mastercard Foundation and investment in the Treasury function which outperformed budget (+£20m);
- University's endowment fund performance is measured over decades and on this timescale has performed well, but there had been an overall drop in the capital value of investments last year and in turn this had reduced the value of the General Council Prince Philip Fund; some of the endowment fund is invested in student accommodation via the Deaconess building on the Pleasance;
- The investment committee for the University's own pension scheme (SBS), which is a sub-committee of the independent SBS Trustees, has the authority to invest monies in student accommodation;
- The University received letters demanding a boycott of companies such as Amazon.com, Blackrock and Booking.com that are alleged to be contributing to funding the current conflict between Gaza and Israel. The University is careful to refute any factual errors in how this is being presented and will only invest in funds that are in line with its own ethical investment policies;
- Capital Expenditure has been maintained, with spend on land and buildings at around £100m each year, and is invested in the University's physical Estate, equipment and digital infrastructure (e.g. Edinburgh Futures Institute) and infrastructure; this is funded through donations, borrowing and University generated surplus income as shown through EBIDTA;
- The University has an existing approved Capital Plan through to 2027/28 and is currently developing a capital investment plan for the following five years. Noting that this will also help to address the carbon zero pledge to 2040; the University has 550 buildings within its Estate resulting in a significant carbon footprint;

- Following its triennial revaluation, dated at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, and employee contributions have been reduced from 9.8% to 6.1% of salary, effective as at January 2024;
- LH reported that an online pension information session is delivered by Mercer each year to help staff understand how pensions operate, this is well attended by staff but questions and comments are mostly asked by those who are nearing retirement;
- The Strategy and Value model is linked to Strategy 2030 so unchanged from previous years and uses infographics (p.13) to illustrate all areas of capital i.e. financial, people, networks, estate, and knowledge exchange;
- It was noted that the diagram (p.17) places core IT infrastructure as a priority high risk;
- The Operational Review (p.23) provides an opportunity to spotlight the breadth of the University's activity, achievements in e.g. research, and special anniversaries such as the Royal Dick Veterinary School bicentenary (p.31);
- The Director of Finance's financial review (p.41) is written by Lee Hamill and attempts to summarise and explain the main financial areas such as capital investment and pensions in a way accessible to a lay reader;
- The Summary I & E table (p. 44) shows the year-on-year movement in University's share of the deficit recovery plan in USS pension provision based on a standard set of actuarial assumptions applicable to every institution that is a member of the scheme. This is a non-cash movement of the difference between the pension scheme assets and liabilities, and this difference can vary significantly from year to year: in 2022 it was £234m; whereas in 2023 it was +£53m;
- The Report section concludes with a section on Governance (p. 50) and this is followed by the Financial Statements (from p.67).
- Staff costs – pay bargaining is negotiated nationally and the sector overall was unable to afford a pay increase for all staff to match inflation;
- Grades 1-5: An 18 month pay deal instead of a one-year settlement, which is equivalent to a 4% pay increase;
- Grades 6-10: – From January 2024 there will be a 3.7% increase in net take home pay as a result of the USS pension contribution changes and we expect similar for SBS members will follow next year (though this will be dependent on the outcome of the statutory valuation);
- Reductions in national insurance contributions and Scottish Government tax changes for higher rate earners will also affect net salaries;

**B. People and Money**

- LH reported that the financial information had been provided by the People and Money system to enable the auditor to sign an unqualified approval of the University Accounts as shown on page 64;
- A roadmap being produced by the Senior Leadership Team will set out the remaining stages of the People and Money implementation process and will be published in February 2024;

**C. Key issues emerging for the coming year**

- PENSIONS – next valuation March 2026; need to reframe USS scheme in a more positive way so not faced with deficit coming back and contributions increasing again which directly affects the prospects for industrial action;
- Challenging to recruit in areas such as professional services and hospitality;
- Grade scale review – huge amount of work on benchmarking to ensure salaries are sector competitive;

The Convener thanked LH who said he is happy to answer any further questions directly and he left the meeting.

**3. Minutes from the meeting held on 21 November 2023**

Members approved the minute from the meeting.

**4. Matters arising from the minutes of 21 November 2023**

**Item 7: General Council Budget 2023-24**

- WD reported that the GC budget allocation from the University is £64k;
- An additional £2k has been received in payments for the February HYM lunch;
- Largest proportion of costs:
  - Billet – Winter issue approx. £18k and estimate similar for the Summer issue. This is due to outsourcing of the publication/distribution of Billet to an external media agency and brings communication costs back in line to pre-Covid levels;
  - HYMs – **February 2024**: approx. £3k in AV/tech support/refreshments;  
**June 2024**: estimate around £15k for catering/AV/tech/publication costs. There will be no charge for using the Edinburgh Futures Institute for core University business;
- Estimate an end of year surplus of around £5k after other costs i.e. Christmas

reception; additional catering costs e.g. committee meetings and other miscellaneous charges have been deducted.

**5. Preparation for the next meeting**

- The committee agreed that the next meeting should review the University's security and accommodation Estate. Invite members of ASC to join this meeting as there are cross-cutting issues to explore;
- This will be followed by a final meeting with either the University's Chief Information Officer or Director of HR;

***Action:- WD to invite Catherine Martin, Vice-Principal Corporate Services, to a meeting in April;***

***Invite Gavin McLachlan, Vice-Principal and CIO, and Librarian to the University to a final meeting in May***

**6. Any other business**

The Convener thanked the committee for providing questions for the speaker in advance of the meeting, contributing to a useful and substantive discussion.

**Minutes of the International Standing Committee held at 4pm  
Thursday 18 January 2024  
Cheviot Room, Charles Stewart House**

**Present:** Krystyna Szumelukowa, Convener of ISC  
Ann Cormack (online)  
Mary Gunn (online)  
Francis McManus  
William Duncan, Secretary of the General Council  
Philip Mawer, Convener of the Business Committee  
Gordon Cairns, Vice-Convener of the Business Committee  
Alison MacLeary, Assistant Secretary of the General Council

**1. Welcome and apologies**

Krystyna Szumelukowa (KS) welcomed everyone to the meeting to discuss a further draft of the University's Global Strategy towards 2030.

Apologies received from John Clifford.

**2. Minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2023**

The minute had been previously circulated and was approved.

**3. Matters arising from the minutes of 16 November 2023**

- PM and WD had met with Chris Cox on 23 November and followed this up with a letter suggesting they have a future meeting with him and Professor James Smith, VP International, about how to develop better links with alumni groups;
- Ann Cormack has received two invitations from the London Alumni Club and will follow up;
- Rebecca Jones, Director of Alumni Relations, has offered to organise a welcome event for the two representatives of the Brussels Alumni Club on Friday 16 February as they will be in Edinburgh to attend the General Council Meeting on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> February;
- The proposed meeting on SE Asia postponed to the final meeting of session 2023/24.

**4. Discussion of the University's Draft Global Strategy towards 2030**

The Committee discussed Paper 2 previously circulated. The following comments were noted during the discussion:

- WD explained that meetings of the Global Executive due to take place in autumn 2023, had been postponed until 29 January and would include discussion of the Global Strategy. He had obtained a draft text of the Global Strategy and it would be timely to have comments from ISC on this.
- The draft identifies key priorities towards 2030 guided by key principles (6 priorities), people (6 action points) and partnerships with 7 key action points for its implementation.
- It is hoped there will be opportunities to develop this draft further before it is finalised as it does not appear to be as complete as it needs to be. For example, the learning pathways for 20,000 international students and the regional partnership maps in the previous November document to the ISC would help set the context for the implementation of the strategy.
- It is not clear for whom this version of the Strategy is written and therefore the extent of its publication.

- An introduction would be helpful to clarify how this review is reflective of measured outcomes of the current strategy and the necessity for differences and new directions.
- There should be an assessment of the impact of proposed changes necessitating the need for the diversification of revenue sources and more robust revenue streams (as hinted at by the 1.1 billion young people referenced in Africa and India).
- Is the University's current business model, which is highly dependent on significant numbers of overseas fee-paying students, sustainable? c51% of the overall student community are international, but the document does not address factors such as the future size/shape of the University and the impact of increasing numbers of international students on the UK student experience, the services and infrastructure of the university and the city of Edinburgh.
- The various action points should also indicate a timeline/owner for each and a mechanism to measure progress towards the specified outcomes.
- The document should include a strategy for alumni engagement, especially overseas alumni. Alumni should be considered as a potential resource for the University from both a funding (fundraising) or implementation/partnership perspective.
- It is recommended that a new Partnership action point 8 should be added to make explicit the role of local and global alumni in support of each other and the endeavours of the university. The current University Strategy 2030 and the current Global Engagement Plan include more significant references than the current draft.
- *Page 7 - Action point 7:* How will the new Global Executive Group differ from the existing one? Is this the governance body for the implementation of the Strategy and to whom would it report?
- It should be made more explicit as to how this review of the Global Strategy now relates to other University Strategic Reviews, such as Research and Innovations and Curriculum Transformation.
- Who will be responsible for the executive delivery of the Strategy?
- It would be helpful to see a "skills matrix" of leadership roles tasked with strategy development and implementation as part of the strategy document, to avoid such issues as experienced with the implementation of the People and Money programme and to mitigate potential risks to the University's reputation and culture.

Next steps:

***Action: - WD will attend the next meeting of the Global Executive on 29 January and will flag up issues discussed above.***

***Check which version of the draft document is available at this meeting and confirm with Professor James Smith if the draft is ready for wider circulation and the proposed timeline to submit a formal response from the General Council.***

KS reported on the following items for information:

**5. Confucius Institute (CI) – 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024 visit and update**

In September 2023 the CI was "moved" from the School of Literature, Languages and Culture (LLC) to Edinburgh Global. The reason for this was not to diminish the input into the activities of the CI from LLC but to strengthen the way in which the CI was placed within the international strategy of the University.



The range of activities within CI in outreach to the university community and to the general public and the business community retains its interest and quality but there is now more emphasis on flexible language learning including online courses. This is partly the result of the Covid impact and also the visa constraints on hosting language teachers from China. Teaching is online or in person with no hybrid.

Llinos Jones, the CI General Manager, is developing a programme to inform staff across the university of the work of the CI. For example, a series of pilot lunches were held in August 2023 to develop a greater appreciation of CI opportunities to staff and students beyond LLC. The advisory board overseeing the governance of the MOU and CI is chaired by the Principal with equal representation from Fudan University, Shanghai. Juliette Macdonald (ECA) and Alex Thomson (LLC) are currently listed on the board and it seems that some clarity is needed on representation from Edinburgh Global.

It will be interesting to see how the CI improves its standing during 2024 after the response to political challenges being voiced when the ISC met in November 2022. The alumni link based in Shanghai is now Grace Guan.

#### **6. Edinburgh Global event – “Education Beyond Borders”**

January 23 is the official launch of Education Beyond Borders at the Playfair Library with presentations and a reception: up to 30 students a year will be supported from across the world who have been forcibly displaced due to conflict, violence, or persecution. The Fellowship Programme for academics at risk will be expanded. Edinburgh is Scotland’s first University of Sanctuary and will be working with UNHCR and the Council for Academics at Risk.

#### **7. Any other competent business**

None.

#### **8. Date of next meeting**

A final meeting will take place during April/May, date tbc, and will focus on the SE Asia region in more detail.

**Public Affairs Standing Committee Meeting held on Monday 5 February 2024  
4.30pm in the Cheviot Room, Charles Stewart House**

**Present:** Ms Candice Donnelly, Convener of PASC  
Mr Arron Ashton  
Ms Elisabeth Feldstein (online)  
Mr Devin Scobie  
Dr William Duncan, Secretary of the General Council  
Alison MacLeary, Assistant Secretary of the General Council  
Sir Philip Mawer, Convener of the Business Committee  
Mr Gordon Cairns, Vice-Convener of the Business Committee

**In attendance:** Mr Chris Bruce, Managing Director, Lane  
Ms Ann Cormack (ISC) - online

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

The Convener of PASC, Candice Donnelly (CD), welcomed everyone to the first meeting of Semester 2, and introduced Chris Bruce (CB), Managing Director of Lane to feedback on Winter Billet 2024 and look ahead to options for Summer Billet 2024.

**2. Presentation from Chris Bruce, Managing Director, Lane**

- Lane is an award-winning multimedia company based in Edinburgh which has operated for 17 years and has 40 staff with marketing experience in a variety of sectors and whose clients include Edinburgh Airport. Previously worked with departments across the University e.g. to do with Data Driven Innovation (DDI), but Billet was the first project with the General Council (GC);
- Billet Winter 2024
  - Lane had engaged with CAM re what was acceptable (e.g. fonts and colour palette) within the University brand as the publication style was a radical departure from what had been done previously;
  - Compliant as far as possible within industry standard guidelines in terms of colour visibility;
  - The initial concept was to explore different routes for the cover and inside spreads to create a bolder and more impactful version of Billet than previous issues with an illustrative style that meant pertinent information could be pulled out, for example, by using infographics;
  - The brief was to create an engaging new look and feel for Billet to increase the profile of the GC and an awareness of the February HYM but acknowledged the limitations within a printed version and spoke about the benefits of using film and animation within a digital alternative;
  - One obvious improvement was having a perforated tear-off slip to register for the Playfair Lunch;
  - WD remarked on how efficiently Lane had managed the tight production schedule;
  - PM said that while the traditional version of Billet may be missed by some, he welcomed a more contemporary approach, which had seemed to work very well, and highlighted the cover design, which better illustrated the purpose of the HYM than text alone;

- CD suggested adding more engaging content to future editions that could celebrate some achievements of the University;
- Digital Solution going forward
- CB shared a marketing website created for MOWI, the world’s largest salmon producer, which showed the potential of a digital alternative to paper Billet and how the General Council could continue to engage a global audience and be more sustainable/accessible;
- Benefits included easy navigation, translation into different languages and which reverts to required standards of accessibility;
- Built-in analytics would give insight into information such as user demographics;
- Once the site was built it can be reused and updated for the next version;
- Powerpoints within the different sections can be downloaded easily and challenges with opening links on different devices would be eliminated as users would be accessing the website directly instead of a pdf attachment and also works very well for mobile users;
- Would have to consider if there is budget available for the ambitions of a GC digital site and whether the University would support this and allow a microsite to be built alongside its existing structure (EdWeb);
- Consider, too, how more engaging content can be created and digitised and how this could be utilised more effectively throughout the year;
- The timescale for creation of a GC microsite would be at least 3 months (includes creating content) so not possible for Billet Summer 2024 and looking to the Winter 2025 issue at the earliest;
- Proposed retaining the style used in Winter 2024 Billet for Summer 2024 but develop the colour palette;
- WD pointed out that the procurement of Summer Billet may have to go out to a tender process.

The Convener thanked CB for an interesting and informative presentation and he left the meeting.

**Action:-**

- *Slides used during the presentation will be circulated.*
- *WD will arrange a meeting about the benefits for the University in producing a digital version of Billet;*
- *CB will provide a briefing about how the microsite would be built and how it would work in practice;*
- *AM will ask D & A for stats on the open rates for Billet which can be accessed via Dot Digital.*

### **3. Apologies for absence**

Apologies received from Kate Hawley.

### **4. Minutes from the meeting held on 29 November 2024**

The minutes were approved.

**5. Matters arising from the meeting held on 29 November 2024**

Item 2: WD is currently exploring investment options for GC legacy funds;

Item 7: WD and PM will meet with D & A and Professor James Smith, VP International, about possibilities for more effective engagement with international alumni.

**6. Future Events**

- HYM, Saturday 17 February 2024, McEwan Hall and Playfair Library
  - The Secretary had met with Leigh Chalmers (University Secretary) about contingency planning in the event of any disruption to proceedings from student demonstrations, and Lucy Evans (Deputy Secretary, Students) who will attend the meeting in place of Leigh Chalmers and will assume responsibility for any security requirements;
  - WD and PM had met with the Principal to brief on questions likely to be addressed at the HYM;
- HYM, Saturday 15 June 2024, Edinburgh Futures Institute (EFI)
  - WD and AM had an initial site visit to EFI on 2 February with another planned for 1 March to look at areas still under construction;
  - There may be a need to manage different entrances for the business meeting (70 people max) and conference area (lecture theatre and ancillary tech facilities). The meeting and event will be livestreamed;
  - The sessions on AI will include an overview presentation and five speakers talking to different themes, including a Q & A, with a break for lunch and is expected to finish at 3.15pm;
  - This will be a stand-alone General Council event and WD in the process of setting up a small organising committee;
  - There will be no charge for the use of premises but will be catering costs.

**7. Any other business**

None.

**8. Preparations for next meeting**

AM will liaise with CD re a date for the final meeting of PASC in April/May and invite a representative from The Student newspaper to speak to the committee about their experience of engaging with the student body and other University stakeholder groups.

**ELECTION OF CONVENER AND VICE-CONVENER OF THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE**

**Process and timetable**

At its meeting on 12 October, the Business Committee considered a detailed paper (copied below) on the process and timetable for election of the next Convener and Vice Convener. This has been annotated to show the decisions taken then – highlighted in blue text.

**According to the timetable agreed then (shown in Appendix 2), the Business Committee would at its meeting on 29 February confirm the arrangements for the elections to take place ( if required) in April for the next Convener, and in May/June for Vice Convener.**

Please note that in accordance with the Constitutional Arrangements, those eligible to stand for election as Convener or Vice-Convener are : all current members of the Business Committee and those who served on the committee in the previous two years – viz 2021/22 and 2022/23 – but only current members of the Business Committee will be entitled to vote.

**A paper outlining the role and responsibilities of the Convener has been produced by Sir Philip and is shown in Paper 7a.**

Dr William Duncan

Secretary to General Council

26 February 2024

**Business Committee – 12 October 2023**

**Paper 5**

**ELECTION OF CONVENER AND VICE-CONVENER OF THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE**

**ANNOTATIONS IN BLUE TEXT BELOW SHOW THE DECISIONS MADE BY THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE**

The current Convener and Vice Convener will both demit office on 31 July 2024. Their successors need to be chosen beforehand by the Business Committee, with the outcome reported to the June 2024 HYM.

**1. Process**

The process to be adopted for the election of Convener and Vice Convener is set out in some detail in the Constitutional Arrangements – see Appendix 1 to this report.

The Regulations were agreed in 1994, but as far as I am aware, have never been put to practical test as there has only ever been one candidate for each post. We do not know if this will be the case again and hence the Business Committee should review the whole process in case there is a competitive election for either or both posts.

Whereas the choice of who will be the next Convener and Vice Convener lies entirely in the hands of the Business Committee, the process to be used must be consistent with the Constitution. If Business Committee wishes to make any substantive changes to the process, these would need to be approved at the February Half Yearly meeting, with a Motion included in Winter Billet.

In my view the process set out in the Regulations is reasonable, but there are some aspects, outlined below, which are either not specified in the Regulations, or where clarification would be helpful. Provided these are within the discretion of the Business Committee, there would be no need to put these forward for approval by the HYM.

**a. Eligibility to stand for election.**

Rule 1 says – ‘The Convener shall be a serving member of the Business Committee or shall have served on the Committee within the past two years’. As written, this would allow any of the 4 Assessors to Court to stand for election. In my view it should be made clear when seeking nominations, that because of the conflict of interest it would create, if any of the Assessors were elected as Convener or Vice Convener he or she would be expected to stand down as an Assessor.

**AGREED**

**b. Candidate Supporters**

Rule 1 says – ‘Any person so qualified may be nominated with the nominee's consent by two members of the Business Committee who shall sign the nomination paper,..... and shall return the nomination paper to the Secretary of the Council before the closing date for the receipt of nominations.’

As the Convener and Secretary are responsible for opening the ballot forms and declaring the result, neither should be supporters to any candidate.

**AGREED**

**c. Withdrawal of Candidature**

There is no provision in the Rules for withdrawal after being proposed and seconded. Suggest we should adopt the same approach as stated in the Protocol for elections to the Business Committee, which says – “At any time before the date set for the return of voting papers, a Candidate may withdraw, or the Candidate's Proposer or Seconder, may withdraw the nomination. Such withdrawal must be intimated to the Secretary in writing and signed by the Candidate, or by the Candidate's Proposer or Seconder as the case may be.” [The reference above to ‘in writing’ should include sent by email.]

**AGREED**

**d. Postal ballot or electronic ballot?**

**Rule 2 says** – ‘The Convener shall be elected by a postal ballot of the Committee’. The procedures say – ‘...ballot papers containing the names of duly nominated candidates ... shall be despatched by recorded delivery post to all members of the Business Committee.’

When these Rules were written, it was not possible to conduct the ballot electronically. It now is and would be preferable. As the Regulations for elections to Business Committee allow electronic voting, it should be within the discretion of Business Committee to use electronic voting for Convener/ Vice Convener election without the need for a Motion to the HYM?

**ELECTRONIC BALLOT AGREED**

**e. What if there is only one candidate either for Convener or Vice Convener or both posts?**

The Constitution is silent about the process for approval if there is only one candidate for either role. In such circumstances, if there is only one (different) candidate for each post and this is approved by the BC, each should be considered to be elected unopposed.

**AGREED**

**AGREED THAT THE ABOVE POINTS DID NOT REQUIRE A MOTION TO BE PUT TO THE FEBRUARY 2024 HALF YEARLY MEETING**

## **2. Timetable for election**

As no timescale is set out in the Constitution for the election of Convener and Vice Convener, the timetable is at the discretion of the Business Committee.

A draft timetable is given in Appendix 2, modelled on that adopted by the Business Committee in 2020. The sequence then was the Business Committee decided first on the next Convener and then who will be the next Vice Convener.

### **THE TIMETABLE SHOWN IN APPENDIX 2 WAS AGREED**

William Duncan

October 2023

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **PART V. THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE**

#### ***Appointment of Convener and Vice-Convener***

9. The Business Committee shall appoint a Convener and a Vice-Convener from among its number or from among those who have served on the Committee within the past two years. The appointees shall serve for up to four years from the date of their taking up office. On the expiry of their respective four year periods as Convener and Vice-Convener, they shall be eligible for re-election to their respective offices, each for a further four years. At the expiry of this further period of four years, neither shall be eligible for re-election to the office which they have just completed except in the event of prevailing circumstances deemed by a majority of the Business Committee to be exceptional, in which case the period of office of either or both may be extended for such further period as the Business Committee deems fit according to the special circumstances, but not exceeding one year. Part III of *The General Council of the University of Edinburgh Regulations for General Council Elections* specifies the details of the process whereby the Convener and Vice-Convener are elected.

### **REGULATIONS FOR ELECTION OF CONVENER AND VICE-CONVENER OF THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE**

The rules and procedures for the election of the Convener and Vice-Convener of the Business Committee were adopted by the Business Committee meeting on 23 June 1994.

#### **Rules for the Election of the Convener and the Vice-Convener of the Business Committee**

1. The Convener shall be a serving member of the Business Committee or shall have served on the Committee within the past two years. Any person so qualified may be

nominated with the nominee's consent by two members of the Business Committee who shall sign the nomination paper which shall include a statement about the nominee of not more than one hundred words, and shall return the nomination paper to the Secretary of the Council before the closing date for the receipt of nominations.

2. The Convener shall be elected by a postal ballot of the Committee from those nominated.
3. The Convener shall hold office for a period of four years and shall preside at meetings of the Committee.
4. In circumstances deemed by a majority of the Business Committee to be exceptional, the Convener shall be eligible for reappointment for one additional year at the invitation of the Committee.
5. The appointment of the Convener shall take effect not later than 1 August in the year of the election.
6. When for any reason the Convener ceases to serve on the Committee before the Convener's term of office ends, the vacancy so arising shall be filled by a member appointed in accordance with the provisions of Rules 1. to 4. Such member shall take office immediately upon election and the term of office shall extend for a period of four years from 1 August coincident with or next following the date of the Convener's election.
7. The same rules shall be followed for the election of the Vice-Convener.

### **Procedure for the Election of the Convener and the Vice-Convener of the Business Committee**

The additional procedures to be observed are as follows:

- (i) As soon as possible after the closing date for receipt of nominations, ballot papers containing the names of duly nominated candidates, the names of their proposers and seconders and the statements about the candidates shall be despatched by recorded delivery post to all members of the Business Committee. A statement about a candidate will be printed only to the end of the last sentence preceding the one hundred and first word if the statement is longer.
- (ii) Enclosed with the ballot paper shall be an envelope addressed to the Secretary of the Council, stamped and marked with the letter 'B'.
- (iii) Envelopes containing ballot papers received from members of the Committee shall be kept unopened by the Secretary of the Council, who shall be responsible for the safe-keeping of all ballot papers.
- (iv) A period of four weeks shall elapse after despatch of ballot papers to allow a reasonable time for them to reach members of the Committee who may be away from home.



- (v) A returning Committee consisting of the Convener and Secretary of the Council shall meet at a time to be arranged for the purpose of opening the envelopes containing the ballot papers and counting the votes. In the event of either of these Office-bearers being a candidate, such Office-bearer shall be ineligible to serve on the returning Committee, and the Business Committee shall appoint instead one of its members who is not a candidate for either office.
- (vi) In the event of there being only two candidates, the candidate obtaining the greater number of votes shall be elected. In the event of a tie, the returning Committee shall determine by lot which candidate shall be selected. In the event of there being more than two candidates, members of the Committee shall indicate their order of preference of all or any number of these candidates on the ballot papers and if one candidate does not obtain an overall majority the election shall be decided by use of the single transferable voting system. The majority of votes required for election under this system shall be determined relative to the number of valid ballot papers received.
- (vii) The result of the election shall be announced at the Business Committee meeting immediately following the counting of the votes.

### **Single Transferable Vote**

More than two nominations make it necessary to use the single transferable vote procedure as follows:

If no candidate has obtained a clear majority of first preference votes the candidate with the lowest number of such votes is eliminated.

The second preferences of the eliminated candidate's supporters are then examined and these votes are transferred to the remaining candidates as first preference votes.

This transference should ensure a clear majority for one of the remaining candidates, but if necessary it can be repeated after elimination of the candidate who at this stage has the lowest number of first preference votes.

If, when a candidate has to be eliminated, two or more candidates are each credited with the same number of votes and are lowest, regard shall be had to the total number of votes credited to each of those candidates at the latest count at which they had unequal values, and the candidate with the smallest value at that count shall be excluded. If two or more candidates are lowest and are each credited with the same value at all counts, the returning Committee shall arrange the papers of such candidates according to the next available preferences recorded thereon for continuing candidates, including the candidates in question, and shall exclude that lowest candidate for whom the total value of the next available preferences expressed is smallest, and if the total values of the next available preference recorded for two or more of the candidates in question are then equal and smallest, the returning Committee shall determine by lot as between the candidates last mentioned which candidate shall be excluded."

## APPENDIX 2

### ELECTION OF CONVENER AND VICE-CONVENER OF THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE

#### DRAFT TIMETABLE

**2023**

**21 September – draft report to Conveners Group**

**12 October - report to Business Committee to decide on process/timetable**

**22 November – deadline for Motion in Billet (if necessary)      NO MOTION NECESSARY**

**2024**

**17 February – HYM to consider any Motion (if submitted)      NO MOTION SUBMITTED**  
- announcement of those newly elected or re-elected to BC

**29 February - Business Committee to confirm arrangements for elections**

**1 March – Notify current Business Committee members and those who served in 2021/22 and 2022/23 of their eligibility to stand for election as Convener or Vice Convener**  
- nomination forms available for Convener

**22 March – closing date for Secretary receiving nominations for Convener**

**1 April – ballot form for Convener issued to Business**

**29 April – closing date for voting for Convener**

**2 May – Business Committee told result of ballot for Convener**

**3 May - nomination forms available for Vice Convener**

**17 May – closing date for Secretary receiving nominations for Vice Convener**

**7 June – closing date for voting for Vice Convener**

**10 June – Business Committee told of ballot result for Vice Convener**

**15 June – HYM: announcement of next Convener and Vice Convener**





**ELECTION OF CONVENER AND VICE-CONVENER OF THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE**

**Some Notes on the Role of Convener of the Business Committee**

Working in partnership with the Secretary of the General Council and the Vice-Convener of the Business Committee, the main **responsibilities** of the Convener are to:

- Ensure that the statutory responsibilities of the General Council (GC) in the governance of the University are fully met.
- Help develop and implement the Business Committee's vision and strategy for fulfilling the Committee's role on behalf of the Council.
- Chair the meetings of the Business Committee (BC) and report on its behalf to meetings of the Council.
- Represent the Council and Committee both within the University and externally.

The **commitments** of the Convener include but are not limited to:

- 1) **Half Yearly Meetings of the General Council**, in February and June:
  - a) Preparation of a written report to be circulated in Billet.
  - b) Delivery of a supplementary oral report at each meeting.
  - c) With the Secretary, agreeing the Agenda for each meeting and contributing as necessary to briefing for the Rector and the Principal.
  - d) Identifying points likely to be raised in questions from the floor and potential answers to them.
  - e) Attending the meetings.
  - f) February only – presiding at the lunch after the meeting and introducing the speaker (if any).
- 2) **Meetings of the Business Committee** (normally 5 per academic year):
  - a) With the Secretary, planning the business of the Committee during each academic year.
  - b) For each meeting, approving the agenda and agreeing any speaker(s).
  - c) Preparing for and chairing each meeting.
  - d) Approving the draft minutes of the meeting for circulation to BC members.
- 3) **Standing Committee (SC) Meetings** (currently some 16 to 18 per year):
  - a) With the Secretary, assisting the relevant Convener to plan each Committee's programme of work for the year.
  - b) Attending the meetings and contributing to discussion and follow-up as appropriate.
- 4) **Conveners Meetings**:
  - a) With the Secretary, planning for these meetings (2 – 3 a year) at which the Officers meet with the SC Conveners to discuss practical matters and shape the overall work programme of the BC.

- b) Preparing for and chairing these meetings.
- 5) **Induction Meeting for New Members of the BC:**  
With the Secretary, welcoming new members and overseeing arrangements for this meeting, which also includes contributions from the SC Conveners.
- 6) **Events:**
- a) Attendance at Graduations and other occasional ceremonies.
- b) BC Christmas Reception – agreeing arrangements for and presiding at this event.
- c) Presiding on other semi-social occasions as necessary.
- 7) **Informal Meetings:** participation as required in informal meetings with the Principal, members of Court (including the Assessors), other members of the Senior Leadership Team, senior academic staff and officers of EUSA. Additionally, there are occasional meetings of the Conveners and Secretaries of the General Councils of the 4 ‘Ancient’ Scottish Universities.
- 8) **Regular Contact:** as necessary, either in person or remotely, with the Secretary and Assistant Secretary of the GC (at least once a week), as well as with the Vice Convener, SC Conveners, members of the BC, etc. as required.
- 9) **Drafting:** reports, papers, letters and emails in connection with any of the above.

The **time commitment** is variable but during term time averages a minimum of one day a week. A good deal depends on the working arrangement the Convener establishes with the Secretary and the Vice-Convener: for example, the Convener is expected to attend meetings of the Business Committee and the General Council in person but may choose to attend other meetings (such as those of the Standing Committees) remotely. On occasion and as agreed between them, the Vice-Convener may also deputise for the Convener, e.g. at ceremonial or other events.

### **Skills and Qualities Required**

The following is not an exhaustive list nor is it in priority order – each holder of the role will undertake the role in their own way - but is hopefully a helpful indication of some of the skills and qualities members may wish to look for in a Convener:

- A keen concern for the wellbeing of Edinburgh University and all who make up its varied community and for the reputation and standing of the General Council.
- Substantial experience of, and demonstrable skill in, chairing formal meetings (including those of larger committees, and hybrid as well as in person or online meetings).
- Ability to fulfil the high-level representational aspects of the role, both within and beyond the University.
- An understanding of the role of the General Council – formal and informal - and the complexities of the University’s governance and organisation.
- A willingness and ability to work closely with the Secretary (and, as appropriate, the Assistant Secretary) of the General Council in developing a sense of strategic

direction for the Council and its Business Committee and in implementing decisions of the Council and the Committee.

- An ability to work sensitively alongside a diverse group of able, volunteer members of the Council and Business Committee, helping to maintain a sense of common purpose and consensus through valuing the contribution of each of them to the task in hand.
- An ability in undertaking the role to deploy their previous experience, without being hide-bound by it.
- An alertness to the evolution of Scottish and UK Government policies towards the HE sector and to their changing implications.

February 2024

**General Council – Business Committee on 29 February 2024**

**Report by Secretary**

**1. Business Committee submission to University Court on People and Money, Lessons Learned**

This will be presented to the 22 April Court meeting, along with response from Senior Leadership Team, and we will receive response from Court thereafter.

**2. Simon Fanshawe - next Rector**

He has accepted an invitation to attend the next Business Committee meeting on 29 February and will arrive at 6.30pm for an informal 'meet and greet' session at the end of the meeting.

His statement setting out his reasons for wanting to become Rector and what he would hope to achieve in the role is given in Paper 9.

**3. Elections to Business Committee**

The successful seven candidates announced at the HYM on Saturday are in alphabetic order.

- Nikhil Agarwal
- Professor Richard Andrews
- Lucy Blackburn
- Almira Delibegovic-Broome KC
- Professor John Gillies OBE
- Mrs Tamara Raidt
- Professor Graeme Reid

In accordance with the Protocol for elections to the Business Committee, the election results, including the number of votes cast for all candidates, is shown in the General Council website

Congratulations to Almira and Graeme on their re-election. The others will join the Business Committee from 1 August.

Two of those elected - Nikhil Agarwal and Tamara Raidt - are based overseas and Professor Andrews lives Yorkshire. All are keen to attend Business Committee meetings in person as often as their other commitments allow.

Given the difficulties that unopposed elections can create, it is most encouraging to have a strong field of candidates and a level of voting well above the norm for other University elections. The turn out this year – at just under 6000 votes – was slightly less than last year, despite regular reminders from Civica.

**4. Forthcoming meetings and dates**

**a. Business Committee meetings in 2023/24**

**2 May.** Janet Legrand, Senior Lay Member, will attend. Meeting in Raeburn Room.

**27 June.** Final meeting for 2023/24. Newly elected members invited to attend as Observers. Meeting at ECCI, Infirmary Street, **followed by reception in St Cecilia's Hall**



**to thank those retiring by rotation and to welcome new members.** Invitations to this reception will be sent separately.

### **b. Standing Committee Meetings for 2023/24**

Academic Standing Committee – 28 May at 4.30pm, Ochil room, Charles Stewart House  
All members of the Business Committee are invited via Teams to hear the presentation from Professor Colm, VP Students on the Curriculum Transformation project.

Finance and Services Standing Committee – for members of FSSC only

- 11 April - Dr Catherine Martin, VP Corporate Services (joint meeting with ASC)
- 21 May - Gavin MacLachlan, Vice-Principal and Chief Information Officer

International Standing Committee - tbc

Public Affairs Standing Committee – tbc

### **c. Business Committee meetings for 2024/25**

Please note the dates proposed for meetings next academic year are:

Thursday 10th October 2024 – presentation on Research and Innovation Strategy

Thursday 5 December 2024

Thursday 27 February 2025

Thursday 1 May 2025

Thursday 26 June 2025

The meetings will all be in the Raeburn Room beginning at 5.15pm

### **d. Half Yearly Meetings**

15 June 2024 – Edinburgh Futures Institute

15 February 2025 – McEwan Hall

### **e. Christmas Reception**

Tuesday 10 December 2024 in the Talbot Rice Gallery.

**Dates of Business Committee meetings in academic years 2024/5 and 2025/6**

The Business Committee meeting dates are normally set so that it meets shortly after the University Court. Court has now decided the dates it will meet in academic years 2024/5 and 2025/6, and this enables the dates of Business Committee meetings to be set for the same period

Setting the dates well in advance is helpful, particularly for new members, those who are not local and need to arrange their travel in advance, as well as in securing the use of high demand rooms like the Raeburn Room.

Following the same pattern as before – viz 5 meetings a year, all on Thursdays - the ordinary Business Committee meeting dates will be:

<b>2024/25</b>	<b>2025/26</b>
<b>10 October</b>	<b>16 October</b>
<b>5 December</b>	<b>4 December</b>
<b>27 February</b>	<b>5 March</b>
<b>1 May</b>	<b>30 April</b>
<b>26 June</b>	<b>25 June</b>

A reminder notice of the date will be sent to all the Business Committee members at the start of each academic year, but meanwhile continuing members are asked to note these dates in their diaries

Dr William Duncan

Secretary to General Council

28 February 2024

**Vote Simon Fanshawe – Your Rector, Your Voice**

Being nominated to stand as Rector of Edinburgh University is a great honour. It is a University with a past legacy and current practice of stellar research and wonderful teaching.

Not only do I have **roots in the city** and a track record of **campaigning for Human Rights** (particularly LGBT equality), but I **care deeply about higher education** and the role of universities in public life.

I was **Chairman of the governing Council of the University of Sussex** in 2007-13. Working with staff, students and the Executive, we returned the University to the top twenty in all the league tables and created a fourfold increase in surplus which enabled us to spend 40% more on widening participation and invest in a capital programme that hugely improved the quality of student accommodation and revamped a significant proportion of the teaching buildings.

I was **one of the six co-founders of Stonewall** in 1989 and in 2011 co-founded the international LGBT charity Kaleidoscope.

**I spent a good part of my childhood in Edinburgh and Stirling.** My father was in a Scottish regiment, and I attended primary school in Davidson's Mains. I appeared at the Edinburgh Fringe for 10 years from 1982 and won the Perrier Award for Comedy there in 1989. My sister and her family still live in the city.

So, Edinburgh (along with Brighton, where I live, and Wiltshire, where I went to school) is one of three compass points of my life

**I am standing as Rector pledging to work on three related themes:**

- To work with the University community of all staff and students to **embrace and promote the free exchange of ideas** as the core purpose of the University
- To work with students, staff and the University management to bring about **improvements in the student experience**, in particular any enhancement of student support, and to help build a **greater sense of academic community**.
- To **facilitate bridges across any divides** between staff, between students, between staff and students and between the University community and the management – helping to improve communication all round.

The Rector has **great convening power** across the University and it should be used to explore and heal. As institutions, Universities are not merely players in national debates, they are the forum for them. We must promote fearlessness in the expression of lawful views. It's not just our legal obligations, it's our moral obligation to contribute well to civil society and the discussions which lead to a Good Society. As the then Poet Laureate John Masefield said in his inspiring speech just after WW2 to the students at Sheffield University, "wherever a University stands, it stands and shines; wherever it exists, the free minds of

men and women, urged on to full and fair enquiry, may still bring wisdom into human affairs”.

Recovering from Covid has been a momentous task for Universities. Inevitably **restoring the quality of the student experience** has been challenging. While, as reported in The Student in August last year, 70% of students are happy with their experience there is space to restore further the quality of that experience and address **improvements in staff working conditions**. The role of Rector offers an opportunity to convene discussions on the most effective ways of achieving these improvements.

**Staff and students have recently experienced difficulties with processes and new policies.**

Through the People and Money (P&M) IT system staff found themselves out of pocket, and there was, according to the report published in December last year, a “profound impact on the wellbeing” of the staff who had to try and deal with the backlog created by the system. These kinds of events impact on institutional trust. Since being nominated I have already been told by staff and students of some of their anxieties about implementation of the curriculum transformation project and the new student support model.

My work in companies and organisations is precisely based on the diversity of identities, backgrounds and viewpoints of staff and colleagues. I spend my time, and have developed considerable skill, **working to enable colleagues to collaborate through their differences towards a common aim**. In my work it is not my own views that particularly matter but the fact that *‘you have a view and experiences and I have different ones’*. **Bringing those views and experiences together to disagree well** and so find a way forward together is my professional and personal expertise. It is why I called my book “The Power of Difference”.

**I stand in order to promote dialogue.** What I hope to bring to the role of Rector is my experience of Universities, my track record of success in campaigning for equal rights for LGBT people, and my professional work to embed true diversity in companies and organisations. I will do all I can to reinforce the core role of a University as a place where no one is fearful of expressing their lawful views, backed by research and curiosity, to support protest but not disruption and to help to add to an environment where we all relish disagreeing well with each other in order to find the best solutions for the common good.