

# UNIVERSITY OF YORK

## COURT

Minutes of the annual meeting held on 9 December 2011

The meeting was attended by 55 members and 40 apologies for absence were received.

### 11-12/1 Membership

A list showing the current membership of the Court was **received** for information.

### 11-12/2 Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting held on 13 May 2011 were **approved**.

### 11-12/3 Vice-Chancellor's Report

The Court **received** the Annual Report 2011 and an oral report from the Vice-Chancellor covering the following areas

- general economic context, including government spending cuts and reform of the funding system;
- the University's principal strengths;
- awards and developments relating to the 'excellence' objective of the University Plan;
- exemplars of activities and initiatives in respect of the 'internationalisation' objective;
- statistics relating to 'inclusivity';
- headline financial figures in respect 'sustainability' ;
- examples of high-profile University research projects;
- opening of buildings on Heslington East;
- York Festival of Ideas;
- approach to future challenges by capitalising on principal strengths.

In response to questions from members of the Court, the following points were **noted**:

- The diminution in income from research grants was being closely monitored and mitigating actions taken where necessary. It was noted that, although important in reputational terms, research grant income was not as vital to the University's financial sustainability as student recruitment.

- The government was attempting to open up a market in student places through unrestricted recruitment at the top end of academic achievement (i.e. AAB results at A-level) and provision of additional places for institutions offering lower fee rates. There would be a number of unintended consequences arising from this policy, including implications for examination boards as regards standards and performance verification. The range of different market positions within the sector meant that universities did not necessarily share the same view on such developments.

#### **11-12/4 Treasurer's Report**

The Court **received** the audited accounts of the University for 2010/11 and an oral report from the Treasurer, Mr David Dickson.

The Treasurer drew the Court's specific attention to the following:

- highlights from the accounts;
- results for the year (income, expenditure and surplus);
- cash flow figures;
- balance sheet at 31 July 2011;
- financial indicators (operating surplus as percentage of income, gearing ratio and debt servicing as percentage of income);
- key features from the last five years;
- projected cash flow to July 2015;
- summary of current position and basis for further development.

In response to questions from members of the Court, the following points were **noted**:

- Despite the reduction in capital grants, the University was generating sufficient cash balances to meet its capital requirements (independent of depreciation).
- In terms of the rising income from catering/residences, it was noted that charges for students had risen in line with inflation while additional revenue had been generated through an increased level of conference activity.

#### **11-12/5 Annual Report of the Students' Union**

The Court **received** an 'Impact Report' from the Students' Union for 2010/11 and an oral report from the current President, Mr Tim Ellis.

The President's report covered the following areas of SU activity:

- implementation of the 2010-13 strategic plan;
- sports and societies;
- volunteering and RAG;
- student representation;
- current and future developments.

Following the President's presentation, the following points were **noted** in discussion:

- While the current sabbatical holders were all male, there were a number of active women's officers in non-sabbatical positions within YUSU. Students of both genders were being encouraged to stand for election in 2012.
- YUSU was working closely with the University to implement its graduate employability strategy, including contribution to extra-curricular and academic initiatives and development of alumni links to employers.

#### **10-11/6 Report from the Graduate Students' Association**

The Court **received** the Annual Report from the Graduate Students' Association for 2010/11 and an oral report from the current President, Ms Karin Diaconu.

The President drew particular attention to the Association's achievements and future plans in the following areas:

- representation
- academic advice and support
- sports and events
- finance and legal status

In response to a query, the President reported that its charitable status allowed the GSA to foster more direct links with external organisations, a number of which made a positive contribution to the postgraduate employability agenda.

#### **11-12/7 Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was **noted** as Friday 18 May 2012.

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Note: Following the meeting, Morrell Fellowship awards were presented to the following University benefactors:

- Tony Cann (citation delivered by Professor John Local, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research)
- Graham Paterson (citation delivered by Professor Ed Corrigan, Head of the Department of Mathematics)
- Tony Wild (citation delivered by Professor Paul Walton, Department of Chemistry)