

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

COURT

Minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2016

The meeting was attended by 77 members and 28 apologies for absence were received.

15-16/8 **Appointment of Pro-Chancellor**

The Court **approved** the recommendation that Ms Julia Unwin (Chief Executive of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation) be appointed as a Pro-Chancellor for three years from 1 August 2016 to 31 July 2019, in succession to Mr Deian Tecwyn.

15-16/9 **Report from the Vice-Chancellor**

The Court **received** a verbal update on general developments from the Vice-Chancellor (Professor Koen Lamberts), with particular reference to the following:

- recent examples of research excellence across the three faculties;
- growth in research income since 2012/13;
- successes and achievements of individual members of academic staff;
- recent developments (especially implementation of the institutional pedagogy, establishment of an International Pathway College, chairmanship of the N8 group of northern universities and opening of a White Rose Universities office in Brussels);
- opportunities provided by the government's new 'Teaching Excellence Framework' and further development of a campus master-plan;
- current management priorities.

During discussion of the Vice-Chancellor's report, the following points were **noted**:

- (a) In the event of the United Kingdom voting to leave the European Union in the forthcoming referendum (so-called 'Brexit'), there would be considerable impact on the University in respect of access

to research funding, mobility of academic staff and students and opportunities for research collaboration. However, given its charitable status under the law, the University had decided not to adopt a campaigning position but rather to remain neutral and provide a space for discussion of the key issues. To this end a number of high-profile discussion events would shortly be held with a range of speakers from across the political spectrum, with the intention of clarifying the implications for the UK of a change in its relationship to the EU.

- (b) As part of the work on a new campus master-plan, further consideration would be given to the role played by the King's Manor. This would build on the outcome from an earlier review which had confirmed the value to the University of having a presence in the centre of York.
- (c) With regard to the University's position in current league tables, it was noted that there was a growing number of such tables, each using different input measures and weightings (which explained the variation in position). University management was currently embarking on a detailed analysis of all the tables in order to ascertain whether they provided any specific messages of relevance to future strategy. It was also acknowledged that some strategic decisions only had an impact on league table positions several years later and that as a general rule it was not advisable to allow newspaper rankings to dictate strategy and policy.

15-16/10 Alumni Relations and Mentoring

The Court **received** a presentation from Mary Haworth (Director of Development and Alumni Relations), Lucy Worthington and Chris Barnes (Development and Alumni Relations Office) on supporting the employability of York graduates, especially through mentoring by other alumni. The following aspects were noted:

- higher than average rates of benefaction by the York alumni community (as an indicator of the 'warmth' felt towards the institution);
- alumni engagement activities, including establishment of professional networks in different employment sectors;
- launch of an online mentoring platform, which also allowed international alumni to remain connected;

- use of the new platform for reporting on the spread of alumni engagement (e.g. by department, country etc).

Arising from a live demonstration of the new platform, the following points were noted in response to queries from Court members:

- (a) Mentoring was available to all York students regardless of year group. The number of mentees taken on depended on the capacity of the mentor and the manner in which each relationship developed.
- (b) As alumni numbers naturally varied by department, take-up of the opportunity to act as a mentor would be monitored. Regular guidance and communication was undertaken with all mentors, who were drawn from a range of age groups/graduating classes.
- (c) Direct personal interaction was not an element of the international online delivery model, but this could still be arranged if the mentor in question was relatively local.

15-16/11 York Festival of Ideas

The Court **received** a preview from Joan Concannon (Director of External Relations) of the York Festival of Ideas 2016 programme, noting the following:

- the festival as an opportunity to showcase University research and engage with external partners;
- thanks to all sponsors who contributed to the programme and allowed the festival events to remain free of charge;
- links between the central theme for 2016 (*'Tick Tock'*) and the seven themes of the University's research strategy;
- the launch night programme;
- themes for individual days of the festival;
- main headline speakers and media partners.

15-16/12 Research Presentation on Face Recognition

The Court **received** a presentation from Professor Mike Burton (Department of Psychology) on his research into the science of face recognition, which included the following:

- exploration of the best conditions/characteristics for effective face recognition;
- collaboration with the Australian passport office in mock passport checks;
- outcomes from the research and messages for organisations wishing to recruit staff skilled in facial recognition (e.g. the Metropolitan Police's 'super recogniser unit');
- application of the research to the passport application process;
- collaboration on brain scanning with the York Neuro-Imaging Centre.

The following points were noted in response to queries from Court members:

- (a) Although other forms of identification might be superior to facial recognition (e.g. DNA testing, iris scanning etc), these were difficult to employ with non-compliant individuals.
- (b) The research had confirmed the relative inaccuracy of automated facial identification methods in use at some airports (as had been widely reported in the media).

15-16/13 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was **noted** as Friday 25 November 2016.
