

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

COURT

Minutes of the annual meeting held on 27 November 2015

The meeting was attended by 58 members and 39 apologies for absence were received.

15-16/1 Membership

A list showing the current membership of the Court was **received** for information. Court members welcomed the new Chancellor as Chair (Professor Sir Malcolm Grant) and the newly appointed Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost (Professor Saul Tendler)

15-16/2 Vice-Chancellor's Report

The Court **received** the Annual Report 2015 and an oral report from the Vice-Chancellor (Professor Koen Lamberts) which covered the following areas:

- current context for higher education (including the government's Autumn statement and its recently published green paper, *Fulfilling our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice*);
- University achievements in the last year (including outcomes in the Research Excellence Framework [REF], National Student Survey [NSS] and various league tables);
- work completed and in progress to implement the University Strategy;
- ongoing challenges and key priorities for the coming year.

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

- (a) The shortfall in recruitment of postgraduate taught overseas students in the current academic year could be explained by a number of different factors (including economic downturn in China, growing international competition and stricter Home Office entry requirements).

- (b) The picture regarding greater regional devolution remained unclear in Yorkshire with a number of competing bids to government in response to the 'northern powerhouse' initiative. The University would seek to work with whatever new structures might emerge and had actively lobbied government against an exclusive emphasis on the larger metropolitan areas.
- (c) The various newspaper league tables employed different methodologies and input measures, hence the variability in the University's relative position. Data from the NSS was variously employed to indicate general satisfaction, with the University currently focusing on its performance in the 'assessment and feedback' sub-section of the survey. The new Teaching & learning Strategy and institutional pedagogy were also designed to address issues raised in student surveys. Entry tariffs (i.e. applicant A-level scores) and spend-per-student were also performance indicators used by some league tables.
- (d) The University's recruitment of medical students was constrained by the fixed allocations arising from government policy and issues of placement capacity in the region. Deficiencies of workforce planning within the NHS were also acknowledged, with some attempts to address this in the nursing area included in the recent government spending review announcement.
- (e) The new Research Strategy sought to promote synergy across academic disciplines by focusing on seven research themes, each led by an academic 'Research Champion'. The University had a strong tradition of such interdisciplinary work and would focus on its acknowledged strengths to gain competitive advantage and access to new funding opportunities. An area of particular challenge for the University, for reasons related mainly to its subject mix, was to increase its industrial research base and income.

15-16/3 **Treasurer's Report**

The Court **received** the audited accounts of the University for 2014/15 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);

- key financial performance indicators (retained surplus as percentage of income, gross debt, annual cash generated, net liquidity days);
- growth over the period since 2011;
- projected cash flow over next four years.

In conclusion the Treasurer commented that, in a globally competitive environment, the University needed to continue to invest in facilities and people, which in turn required identifying new sources of finance. The external environment (e.g. increases in NI payments, requirement under new accounting standards to reflect the USS deficit in the balance sheet, new 'apprentice levy' announced in the CSR etc.) provided a number of financial challenges, to which the University was working hard to develop an appropriate response, including identification of efficiency savings and new methods of income generation.

In response to a query from a Court member, it was noted that the Senior Management Group monitored and responded to a wide range of comparative benchmarking data that clearly illustrated the University's relative financial position (e.g. in respect of surplus generation, borrowing, liquidity etc.).

15-16/4 Faculty of Arts and Humanities

The Court **received** a presentation from the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities (Professor Mark Ormrod) on the work of the Faculty. Court members **noted** the details provided in respect of the following:

- departments and interdisciplinary research centres comprising the Faculty;
- national and international rankings;
- student recruitment challenges;
- China Culture Investment Group (CCIG) project in the Department of Theatre Film and Television;
- White Rose College of the Arts & Humanities;
- Humanities Research Centre;
- examples of successful research projects;
- public engagement and sharing research;
- internationalisation;
- graduate employability;
- Digital Creativity Hub.

In response to a query from a Court member, it was **noted** that the Department of Music was responding to undergraduate recruitment challenges (in part related to demographic factors) by further developing its postgraduate provision, in particular through establishing links with international conservatoires, while at the same time maintaining its traditional strengths in areas such as composition and musicology.

15-16/5 Annual Reports from the Students' Union and Graduate Students' Association

The Court **received** the annual reports from the Students' Union (SU) and Graduate Students' Association (GSA) for 2014/15.

The SU President (Ben Leatham) and the GSA President (Dr Rasha Ibrahim) highlighted key successes and impacts as they related to student representation, sport, volunteering, health/wellbeing and community engagement. The primary components of the income and expenditure of both student organisations were also **noted**.

In response to a query from a Court member, it was **noted** that the University's highest ever position in the British Universities and Colleges sport league (36th) was calculated on the basis of the results from a range of different inter-university sports leagues.

15-16/6 Refugee Week 2016

The Chancellor **reported** that in response to the current international crisis the SU was marking 'Refugee Week' on 18-22 January 2016 with a range of events to engage with education about refugees and asylum. One element of this involved fund-raising to provide scholarships for refugee academics and students, and the Chancellor invited members of Court to support this initiative via financial contribution to the fund.

15-16/7 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was **noted** as Friday 29 April 2016.
