Glasgow Caledonian University Court

Minutes of a Meeting of the University Court held on Thursday 5th February 2026 at 10.00am in the Lantern, Annie Lennox Building

Present:	Yvette Hopkins (Chair), Amit Bhargava, Arlene Cairns, Alan Dickson, Daniel Gallagher, Ellen Gibson, Scott Haldane, Asif Haseeb, Sharon Lowrie, Meg Lustman, Dr Nick McKerrell, Professor Catriona Miller, Oluwatomisin (Tom Tom) Osinubi, Hamza Siddiqi, Austin Sweeney, Anita Volkert, Professor Mairi Watson and Jane Wilson.
Apologies:	Dr Stephen Breslin, Sylvie Freund Pickavance**,** Bill McDonald, Gavin Munn and Osman Rafiq
In attendance:	Jan Hulme, University Secretary & Vice Principal (Governance) Professor Louise Dixon, Pro Vice Chancellor (Education) Paul Queen, Chief Financial Officer Fiona Campbell, Vice Principal (People & Student Wellbeing) Claire Hulsen, Vice Principal (Strategy & Planning) Caroline Bysh, Pro Vice Chancellor (Engagement) Dawn Anderson, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International) Professor John Connolly PVCR(Interim) Professor Sharron Dolan PVCR (Interim) Paul Brown, Director of Governance & Legal Services

Chair's opening remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone to the fourth meeting of the 25/26 academic year and extended a warm welcome to Professor Mairi Watson at her first Court meeting as Principal and Vice-Chancellor. The Chair reflected on the Court dinner the previous evening, which included a fireside chat where Professor Watson shared with governors her personal story, describing the values and influences which have shaped her leadership.

The Chair noted that this would be Jane Wilson's final Court meeting and expressed thanks for her valued contribution to the Court and the University as she steps down from the role.

1. Minutes

1.1 The Chair explained that the minutes of the meeting held on 11th December 2025 had been circulated for approval in advance and there being no changes required, these are **approved**.

2. Matters arising

2.1 The Court **noted** a report on the matters arising from the Court meeting on 11th December 2025.

2.2 In response to questions about the University Estate, the CFO confirmed that there is a considerable amount of work on going to maintain and improve the Estate. The Principal also explained that the Estate Masterplan requires to be reconsidered and that further discussion on this will take place at future meetings of the F&GPC and then Court.

3. Declaration of interests

3.1 A summary of the register of interests was included with the Court papers. The Chair reminded all governors of the need to keep the Declaration of Interest up to date and to let the Department of Governance & Legal Services know of any changes.

3.2 Court **noted** the summary.

4. Items brought by the Chair of Court

4.1 The Chair expressed appreciation to Court for their valuable contribution on key issues of which there two before Court at this meeting, namely the proposed Joint Institute with the University of Jinan in China and the Targeted Voluntary Redundancy process.

4.2 The Chair noted that the Corporate Governance and Nominations Committee will meet on 9 February 2026 to discuss the recruitment of new lay governors, following the upcoming departures of Jane Wilson at the end of February and then Danny Gallacher and Asif Haseeb at the end of July. Governors were thanked for updating their individual skills matrix, which will be essential in guiding the recruitment process.

4.3 The Chair thanked the Executive team for their dedicated work in supporting the transition to Professor Watson's tenure, and particularly thanked Jan Hulme and Claire Hulsen for having acted as Interim Principal and Vice-Chancellor and Interim University Secretary respectively.

4.4 The University Secretary thanked the Executive Team for their support and assistance during the transition period and in ensuring that the University maintained its position and stability during that phase.

4.5 The Chair reminded governors about the Court Strategy discussion, which will be held on 15 April 2026 in the Lantern, Annie Lennox Building.

5. Principal and Vice-Chancellor's Report

5.1 The Principal presented her first report to Court which reflected on her extensive early engagement across the University and with external stakeholders over recent months. Her report outlined key priorities including student outcomes, developing the use of artificial intelligence, research impact, external engagement, financial sustainability, and reputation as well as covering sector challenges, including international recruitment. She expressed her vision for the University's future as leading the way in higher education and highlighted opportunities.

5.2 She referred to the need to review the University's 2030 strategy to ensure that it remains up to date and appropriate for the future. She reflected on the issues that are affecting the University and the Sector in general including the impact of the Scottish Government budget, future funding on university education, the implications of the TET Bill and Government proposals for international student recruitment. She also referred to her visit the London campus and that she will be reviewing options for the London campus.

5.3 In response to questions, the Pro Vice Chancellor (Engagement) explained that the University currently has no direct relationship with the OECD with regard to opportunities for international student recruitment but that this would be looked into. The Vice Principal (Strategy & Planning) outlined that Universities Scotland and the Scottish Government are working on a joint initiative regarding the Fair Work First initiative and other provisions of the TET Bill and that the University will be involved in those wring groups.

5.4 Court **noted** the report.

Action: Pro Vice Chancellor (Engagement) to look into opportunities for working with OECD.

6. Finance and Risk Report

6.1 The Court **noted** the report which was presented by the Chief Financial Officer(CFO) and provided an overview of the organisation's financial position, including forward projections, debt and cash status, key financial performance indicators, and the current corporate risk position.

6.2 The CFO explained the impact of reduced international student recruitment on the University's budget and the continuing need for sufficient cash reserves in order to protect the continued operation of the University. He referred to the Corporate Risk Register and highlighted changes to this and asked governors to provide any queries or feedback that they may have on the Risk Register.

6.3 Court **noted** the report.

7. Targeted Voluntary Redundancy Scheme Proposal ("TVRS")

7.1 The Principal provided an overview of why a TVRS scheme would be necessary. The CFO presented a paper seeking approval for the implementation of a targeted Voluntary Redundancy Scheme proposal, which had been endorsed by the Finance and General Purposes Committee at their meeting on 1 December 2025.

7.2 The paper outlined the University's current financial and operational context, the rationale and approach for the proposed scheme, and the measures in place to ensure the University meets its legal obligations, including the mitigation of compulsory redundancies and compliance with statutory requirements. In response to questions, the Vice Principal (People & Student Wellbeing) explained the potential number of staff affected and the consultation process that will be followed and the mitigations that will be put in place to reduce the impact on staff.

7.3 Court **approved** the implementation of a targeted Voluntary Redundancy Scheme. The following governors opposed the proposal: Dr Nick McKerrell, Professor Catriona Miller, Ellen Gibson and Osman Rafiq.

8. Student President's Report and Students' Association – Trimester A Report

8.1 The Court received an update report on recent activities and initiatives of the Students' Association, highlighting the Trimester A report, participation in the Times Higher Education and Uniforce 2025 conferences, Student Governor training, and the Full-Time Officer Elections 2026.

8.2 The Student President explained the increase in student activity participation, particularly in various societies and sports clubs and also increased participation from students in London. She also explained work that the Students' Association were doing to support students on the introduction of the Rent Guarantor Scheme.

8.3 Court **noted** the report.

9. Student Recruitment – Trimester B 2025-26, UCAS applications 2026-27

9.1 The Court noted a report from the Vice Principal (Strategy and Planning) which provided an overview of key recruitment activity for Trimester B 2025–26, an update on applications for Trimester C, and a summary of undergraduate applications received by the UCAS deadline for the 2026–27 cycle.

9.2 She explained the difficulty with obtaining visas for international students and the time that it is taking to process applications and the level of rejection of visas from some countries. She confirmed that the University has received its highest ever number of applications from home students but that this interest was not level across all programmes.

9.3 Court **noted** the report.

10. UKVI Compliance and Action Plan: Progress Report

10.1 The Vice Principal (Strategy and Planning) provided Court with a report which gave an update on the action to address the UKVI Action Plan and associated matters.

10.2 She also advised that the University was still awaiting the 2024-25 BCA outcomes, notification of changes in roles, and revisions to the UKVI compliance risk on the Corporate Risk Register. She explained that a number of Scottish universities have been affected by the delay in the UKVI issuing visas and areas where the University has had to restrict student recruitment, due to the high level of visa refusals. She confirmed that this is not just an issue affecting the University but most universities in Scotland. In response to questions, she explained the measures that the University is taking in order to support applicants and also that the University is working with overseas agents to consider access for students, including the level of deposits that require to be paid.

10.3 Court **noted** the report.

11. International Strategy

11.1 International Student Recruitment – Strategic Direction

11.1.1 The Principal introduced a report from the Vice Principal (International) which outlined the strategic direction mapped out for high quality, compliant, international student recruitment. The Principal reminded Court of the importance of international student recruitment and the need to grow this fo the future of the University.

11.1.2 The Vice Principal (International) explained the report in more detail and the steps that have already been taken and are being planned to expand international recruitment with new markets being identified. I response to questions, she confirmed that the impact of the UKVI current policies on immigration and student recruitment does require us to consider different markets and our approach to those markets. She confirmed that Court will be kept appraised of progress.

11.1.3 Court **noted** the report.

11.2 **Joint Institute with University of Jinan**

11.2.1 The Court received a report from the Vice Principal (International) which provided an update on progress in the development of the contract with the University of Jinan (UJN) for a Joint Education Institute (JEI).

11.2.2 The report outlined the broad context, reprised the case for the proposal, considered the impact of not proceeding and addressed the points raised at the Court meeting held on 13 November 2025.

11.2.3 Court **noted** that contract discussions and negotiations are almost complete. The main clauses and the basis on which the JEI would operate have been negotiated to reflect sector best practice, and to manage and mitigate the risks highlighted by Court members. In response to questions, she confirmed that no arrangement will be entirely without risk but that the concerns raised by Court are being addressed in negotiations with UJN and in the contract drafting. She reminded Court of the financial and other benefits of entering into the agreement

11.2.4 Court was asked to review the updated information and agree that the University proceeds to the final stage and provides the Executive with the authority to finalise the agreement, with the intention of starting recruitment not later than March 2026 for the first intake in September 2026.

11.2.5 Court **approved** the TNE proposal with the UJN for a JEI. The following governors opposed the proposal: Dr Nick McKerrell, Ellen Gibson and Osman Rafiq.

12. 2025-26 Research Report Quarter 2

12.1 The Court noted the report from Professor John Connolly PVCR(Interim), which summarised key developments in the University's research and innovation activity across Quarters 1 and 2 of 2025/26. The report outlined progress on REF 2029 preparations, implementation of major research policies, trends in submissions and awards, as well as activity designed to strengthen research culture, PGR support, and commercialisation. He explained that Professor Sharron Dollan, also PVCR(Interim) has been supporting research colleagues in seeking to commercialise research projects. The Chair of Court encouraged governors to use their connections to support researchers in getting commercial support for their projects.

12.2 Court **noted** the report.

13. University Senate Business

13.1 Report from meeting of Senate – 3 December 2025

13.1.1 The Court **noted** a report from the Pro Vice Chancellor (Education) which provided a summary of the business discussed by Senate on 3 December 2025.

13.1.3 Cout **noted** the report.

13.2 Senate Disciplinary Committee Annual Report

13.2.1 The Court **noted** the Senate Disciplinary Committee Annual report which provided an overview on student misconduct offences considered under the Code of Student Conduct for the academic year 2024/25.

13.2.2 In response to questions, the Principal acknowledged the growth in conduct cases and the impact that this has on staff and confirmed that the Executive will look at detection tools for AI and other forms of student misconduct but that this would have to be carefully considered as the quality of detection tools can vary.

13..2.3 Court **noted** the report.

13.3 Complaints Handling Procedure Annual Report

13.3.1 The Court **noted** the Complaints Handling Procedure Annual Report which detailed an overview of the complaints recorded by the University in the period 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025.

13.3.3 Court **noted** the report.

14. Standing Committee Business

14.1 People Committee – 27 November 2025

14.1.1 The Chair of the Committee, Austin Sweeney, presented the report. Court **noted** the report of the issues discussed and decisions taken by the People Committee at the meeting held on 27 November 2025.

14.2 Finance and General Purposes Committee – 1 December 2025

14.2.1 The Chair of the Committee, Arlene Cairns, presented the report. Court **noted** the report of the issues discussed and decisions taken by the Finance and General Purposes Committee at the meeting held on 1 December 2025.

14.3 Audit and Risk Committee – 19 January 2026

14.3.1 In the absence of the Chair of the Committee, Alan Dickson presented the report. Court **noted** the report of the issues discussed and decisions taken by the Audit and Risk Committee at the meeting held on 19 January 2026.

15. University's Secretary Report

15.1 The Court **noted** a report from the University Secretary.

15.2 Court **noted** the report.

16. Operations and Communications Update

15.1 The Vice Principal (Strategy & Planning) presented the Operations and Communications Update Report for the period October, November and December 2025. She explained that this was a new report providing information on operational matters which are separate from the Financial Report that was presented earlier in the meeting.

15.2 Court **noted** the report.

17. Date of next meeting

The next Court meeting will be held on Thursday 16 April 2026, with the Court Strategy Session taking place on Wednesday 15 April 2026. Both the Court meeting and the Strategy session will be held in the Lantern, Annie Lennox building.

The Chair of Court thanked Jane Wilson for her work and support for Court and the University during her tenure as a governor.