

## **Glasgow Caledonian University Court**

### **Minutes of the University Court held on Thursday 15 June 2023 at 9am in person in the Boardroom, Britannia Building.**

**Present:** Rob Woodward (Chair), Prof Stephen Decent, Daniel Gallacher, Ellen Gibson, David Halliday, Dr. Lyle Gray, Asif Haseeb, Ian Kerr, Sharon Lowrie, Meg Lustman, Neena Mahal, Bill McDonald, Dr Nick McKerrell, Professor Catriona Miller, Chidozie Nwaigwe, Sylvie Freund Pickavance (attended remotely from 9.30am), Austin Sweeney and Jane Wilson.

**Apologies** Jennifer Abali, Peter Baguley, Amit Bhargava and Jan Hulme.

**In attendance** Susan Mitchell, Chief Operating Officer & DVC  
Professor Mike Mannion, (Interim) VP Global Engagement  
Professor Andrea Nelson, (Interim) Provost and DVC.  
Professor Alastair Robertson, Pro Vice Chancellor (Learning and Teaching).  
Fiona Campbell, Vice Principal, People and Student Wellbeing.  
Claire Hulsen, VP Strategy and Planning,  
Prof Rachel Baker and Prof Anita Simmers Joint (Interim) PVC Research,  
Paul Queen, Chief Financial Officer.  
Paul Brown, Director of Governance & Legal Services.

#### **Chair's opening remarks**

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all of those present including Chidozie Nwaigwe to his first meeting as Student President. The Chair explained that Chidozie was the recipient of a Magnus Magnusson Award from the University in respect of a project that he was undertaking in his home village in Nigeria. This was a project to help with the provision of clean water using solar powered equipment. The Chair explained that Chidozie had prepared a video and that this would be shown to Court before the business of the meeting. The Chair congratulated Chidozie on the excellent work that he had undertaken and the positive impact of this on his local community and reminded Court that this is an excellent example of the positive support and assistance that the University is able to provide through its various common good initiatives.

The Chair noted Amit Bhargava's apologies but thanked him for his presentation at dinner the evening before the meeting.

Chidozie's video was shown to Court and received full support and commendation.

#### **1. Minutes**

- 1.1 Court noted that the minutes of the Court meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2023 had been **approved** by prior circulation.

#### **2. Matters arising**

- 2.1 The Court noted a report on the matters arising from the Court meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2023 and the actions taken to address them.
- 2.2 In respect of the cyber security training for governors, the DVC( Operations) informed Court that the new provider KnowB4, were preparing the final stages of the new cyber security training and that when this is finalised, this will be rolled out to governors.

### **3. Declaration of interest**

- 3.1 A summary of the register of interests was included with the court papers. There was no update but Court members were reminded to advise the University Secretary or the Director of Governance & Legal Services of any changes to their position or if any agenda items gave rise to a conflict of interest.

### **4. Items brought by the Chair of Court**

- 4.1 The Chair reminded governors of the concern that had been identified about the potential security of Convene and the importance of updating their systems to ensure that the necessary fix is in place.
- 4.2 The Chair reminded governors of the graduations that will take place on 30th June and 1st July and encouraged as many governors as possible to attend.
- 4.3 The Chair updated Court on the lay governor recruitment process that was ongoing and that interviews had taken place with a strong list of candidates and that he hoped to be able to provide a recommendation to Court shortly.
- 4.4 The Chair referred to the recent staff governor meeting and the helpful discussion that took place regarding the current situation with the industrial action. The Chair invited Dr Lyle Gray to provide Court with a brief update on the industrial action.
- 4.5 Dr Gray, provided Court with an update on the current situation and in particular, the impact of the UCU marking assessment boycott. Dr McKerrell then advised that at present, the EIS were not involved in any industrial action but that the EIS are balloting their members on possible action relating to this year's settlement negotiations. Ellen Gibson informed Court that Unison are also balloting their members on possible strike action and that the ballot closes on 31<sup>st</sup> July.
- 4.6 The Principal explained that management continue to be involved in local negotiations but that it was disappointing that there is a lack of national negotiation by which the University is bound for an ultimate solution. In response to questions from staff governors, the (Interim) Provost and DVC explained that considerable effort was being made in order to ensure the academic integrity of marking despite the boycott and that the SQA were content with the approach being adopted by the University. The Principal confirmed that there would be an analysis of the PAB's and that the views of external examiners would be taken into account in order to ensure that lessons can be learned from the process to date.

### **5. Principal and Executive Board report**

- 5.1 The Principal presented his report which included updates on key areas of the University's business including possible collaboration with Glasgow University, particularly in the healthcare field where both universities have expertise and may benefit from closer collaboration.
- 5.2 The Principal explained that the new Provost & DVC would now start on 1<sup>st</sup> August and that Professor Nelson would stay in post during August as part of a transition. In addition, as part of that transition, Professors Simmers and Baker would remain in their interim posts until the end of August.
- 5.3 The Principal informed Court that the University had been awarded its full CAS application and now has an allocation of 5500. It was acknowledged that the UKVI change of rules on dependant visas may have an impact on international student numbers but that this would be carefully monitored. The Principal confirmed that Nigeria and India continue to make up the majority of the University's international student population but that work is undergoing in order to diversify the source location of international students. The Principal also highlighted that home student recruitment remains a concern and that he will continue to focus on this. In response to questions asked, the Principal informed Court that the University is looking at the current Masters provision and would be considering development of more integrated Masters courses.

- 5.4 In response to questions about student accommodation, the DVC (Operations) confirmed that the University continues to monitor the availability of accommodation throughout the city, particularly affordable accommodation. The VP People & Student Wellbeing explained that the University is examining accommodation in a number of locations. She confirmed that the University continues to work with Safestay on temporary accommodation for students and that the position is better than it was at this time last year with arrangements in place to accommodate students in need of emergency and temporary accommodation.

## 6. DVC (Operations) Report

- 6.1 The Court noted a report from the Deputy Vice Chancellor(Operations) (DVC(O)) that gave an overview of key issues since the last Court meeting in April 2023.
- 6.2 The DVC(O) explained that in relation to the current level of debt, this is being constantly monitored and whilst it is increasing, this is related to the increasing number of international students and was to be expected given the increase in International income. She explained that , there are current issues with students from Nigeria being unable to transfer funds due to policy changes in country; this has increased debt levels but recent changes to the Nigerian banking rules should help alleviate the situation. She reminded Court that in order to graduate, students require to clear any outstanding debt and that the level of debt always diminishes in advance of graduations.
- 6.3 The DVC( O) provided Court with an explanation of the proposal to enter into a partnership with Halo in relation to the provision of student accommodation. She explained that the University needed a partner to assist with such a large capex project and that Halo have extensive experience of such projects. She explained that discussions have taken place with a number of possible partners and that Halo are considered to be the most suitable for this work, because of the wider value they can bring. In response to questions about the level of expenditure and possible procurement issues, the DVC(O) explained that Court is being asked to approve the continuation of discussions with Halo but that no formal contract would be entered into without appropriate procurement requirements being followed and Court's approval. She explained that at this stage Court approval is being sought to allow continuing discussions with Halo in order to continue to develop a specific proposal and that this would then come back to Court for approval .
- 6.4 Court **approved** continuing discussions with Halo on the joint property project subject to any proposed project being brought back to Court for approval.

## 7. Student President's report

- 7.1 The Court noted a report from the Student President highlighting recent activities and initiatives undertaken by the Student's Association. He explained that the Students' Association was focussing on student engagement, particularly that of Home Undergraduate students. He explained that the Association was providing and promoting more events with opportunities for students to engage with each other and with the Association. He explained that lack of student engagement is not unique to GCU and is a sector wide issue.
- 7.2 Professor Alastair Robertson, Pro Vice Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) explained that it is hoped that the implementation of the Student Partnership Agreement, will support student engagement. He confirmed that he will continue to work with the Student President in order to finalise the Agreement
- 7.3 In response to questions about the demographics in student elections and overall student engagement, the Student President explained that the Student's Association were working on

involving more home students in order to ensure better engagement in student activities across the whole University population.

## **8. Students' Association Trimester 2 Report**

- 8.1 The Student President presented the report on the Student Association activity during Trimester 2. He explained that there had been a focus on diversity and improving a sense of belonging for students. He explained that the student advice centre has seen an increase in the number of students seeking advice. He explained that the hardship funds do help but that international students have more difficulty accessing these.
- 8.2 The Principal explained that the University was continually monitoring the hardship funds and access to these and that he would be working with past and present Student Presidents on how to develop these funds to be more inclusive. The VP People & Student Wellbeing advised that the University has enhanced the money available to international students and that support would continue to evolve.

## **9. University Secretary's Report**

- 9.1 In the absence of the University Secretary, the Director of Governance & Legal Services presented the report. The Court noted the report from the University Secretary which included the Court Forward Work Plan for 2023/24.
- 9.2 The University Secretary report also sought authority from Court to grant delegated authority to the Chair of Court for the summer vacation period. This is in accordance with the standard practice for the summer period.
- 9.3 Court **approved** the Court Forward Work Plan for 2023/24 and granted delegated authority to the Chair of Court for the summer vacation period.

## **10. Draft Budget 2023-2024**

- 10.1 The DVC(O) explained in more detail, the manner in which the draft budget had been prepared and the 3 scenarios which were dependent on a number of factors including the increase in the number of CAS certificates awarded to the University. She explained that having secured the increase in CAS numbers, this pointed to scenario 3 being the most likely outcome but that there were other factors that would have to be considered before a final choice could be made. She explained that careful consideration has been given to the increased cost of expansion in London as well as the impact of inflation on University costs. She explained that there were still a number of factors which are uncertain at that time but that it is expected that by the next F&GPC meeting in September, these factors will have been clarified. She explained that at this point, she was seeking approval of the base case budget, option B but that it is hoped that a more positive outcome, scenario C can be achieved subject to those outstanding uncertain factors.
- 10.2 In response to questions the DVC(O) advised that confirmed pay rises have been built into the budget and a contingency exists for further changes. The Principal confirmed that the budget allows for staff number increases to meet increasing demands but that it is anticipated that investments will be released in 3 phases with the first having already been released, the second immediately if the Court approves the budget and the third following the F&GPC meeting in September.
- 10.3 Court **approved** the budget.

## **11. GCNYC Draft Budget 2023-2024**

- 11.1 The Court received a report from the CFO outlining the draft budget for GCNYC. It was explained that this budget was only for a 1 year period as it is difficult to plan beyond that period given the current position with GCNYC. The CFO explained that the outcome of ongoing discussions would determine what the final position would be for GCNYC but that it continued to require GCU's support until the position is clarified.
- 11.2 The Chair of GCNYC explained that whilst the report provides a reduction in income due to the recruitment freeze, overall there would be a saving of approximately \$400K in costs. She explained that GCNYC would continue to require funding from GCU in order to enable it to continue operations and complete arrangements to dispose of the long term liability for GCNYC.
- 11.3 Court **approved** the GCNYC budget and the associated increase in the maximum level of funding for GCNYC. Dr Nick McKerrell, Ellen Gibson and Professor Catriona Miller wished it noted that they opposed the GCNYC budget and the required increase to the maximum funding level.

## **12. Student Recruitment Report**

- 12.1 The VP Strategy & Planning provided an update on student recruitment. She explained that results day for Scottish school pupils is 8<sup>th</sup> August and that detailed plans are in place to support a more centralised approach to the confirmation and clearing process. She explained that the market for articulation students is still challenging with mature student applications falling and reducing intakes at colleges, and that applications for controlled nursing remained low across the sector but the University would seek to maximise conversion rates. It was noted that every effort was being made on the recruitment of increased numbers of Graduate Apprenticeships.
- 12.2 The Principal explained that there is a need for a coordinated approach to Home student recruitment and that the University will continue to focus on this as well as seeking to grow GAs.
- 12.3 It was noted that deposits for Trimester A international PGT students were currently lower than the previous year. The data would be monitored closely given the recent announcements on student immigration rules potentially impacting on the attractiveness of the UK market and also the payment challenges being faced by applicants from the key Nigerian market.

## **13. Update on GCNYC**

- 13.1 The Chair referred to the report from the Principal updating Court on the current position with GCNYC. The Chair explained that a significant amount of work was ongoing and that further details would follow in due course.
- 13.2 The Chair of GCNYC highlighted that the College still has obligations to its students and staff which are being appropriately managed. The Principal advised that by the Autumn, he would be able to provide a more detailed and specific report on progress.

## **14. Research Development Concordat Standing Committee Business**

- 14.1 Professor Anita Simmers presented the paper which explained the Researcher Development Concordat/HR Excellence in Research Award Action Plan (2022 – 2025) updated to include in the final two columns, progress to date in the AY2022-23 and any proposed new actions at this interim date of

8<sup>th</sup> June 2023. She explained that this is the first in an annual review process that is required on each of the 3 years period for the report.

14.2 Court **approved** the report.

## 15. University Senate: Report from meeting of Senate held on 5 May 2023 & 7 June 2023

15.1 The Principal presented this report which provided an update on an additional ordinary meeting of Senate which was arranged for 5<sup>th</sup> May to highlight contingency arrangements set out in the guidelines, approved by Senate in 2006, for handling missing marks in circumstances of industrial action and consider the tools developed to support Programme Assessment Boards (PABs) in implementing the guidelines. The report also outlined an issue that had occurred with the Ipsos National Student Survey and an error on the part of Ipsos which had affected the outcome for GCU.

15.2 The Principal then presented the report on the regular Senate meeting which took place on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2023. The Principal highlighted that in response to questions that had been raised about academic integrity following the marking assessment boycott, a review of academic integrity would be undertaken and reported to Senate in due course with subsequent reporting to Court.

15.2.1 Court **noted** the reports.

## 16. Standing Committee reports

16.1 Audit Committee- 30<sup>th</sup> May 2023

The Chair of the Committee, Bill McDonald, presented the report and explained that the University auditors would be transferring from EY to PwC from 1<sup>st</sup> August and that he intended to have a final meeting with EY to close out their audit programme. He confirmed that the Committee had reviewed the PwC audit plan and agreed this with PwC.

16.1.1 Court **noted** the report.

16.2 Finance & General Purposes Committee – 24<sup>th</sup> April & 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2023.

16.2.1 The Chair of the Committee, Ian Kerr, presented the report on matters discussed at the Committee meetings on 24<sup>th</sup> April and 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2023.

16.2.2 Court **noted** the report.

16.3 People Committee – 18<sup>th</sup> May 2023

16.3.1 The report was presented by Neena Mahal, Chair of the Committee. She explained the presentation that the Committee had received about the Emily Charter on GBV and also that H&S training would be provided for People Committee members but that this would also be offered to all governors. Court **noted** the report of the People Committee.

16.3.2 The Vice Principal, People and Student Wellbeing then presented the draft Children on Campus Policy and sought Court approval for this. In response to questions, she explained the rationale and need for the policy and those who had been consulted in formulating the policy. She explained that the policy would continue to evolve in reaction to the reality of the situation on campus but that in principle, the policy was as proposed to Court.

16.3.3 Court **noted** the report and **approved** the Children on Campus Policy.

#### 16.4 Court Governance & Nominations Committee – 3<sup>rd</sup> May & 6<sup>th</sup> June 2023

- 16.4.1 Rob Woodward, Chair of the Committee, presented the report of the Court Governance & Nominations Committee meetings that took place on 3<sup>rd</sup> May and 6<sup>th</sup> June 2023. The Chair provided an update on progress of the appointment of a new Chancellor and confirmed that this remains highly confidential.
  - 16.4.2 The Vice Chair of Court presented a paper that outlined a proposal for the future appointment of a new Chair of Court. In response to questions about the detail of the process and in the absence of the University Secretary, the Vice Chair agreed that the paper would not proceed at this point and that the issues raised would be considered and responded to in due course with any required changes to the paper being presented to Court in due course.
  - 16.4.3 The Chair presented a proposal to Court regarding one of the governors taking a sabbatical. Court approved the sabbatical.
  - 16.4.4 The Chair then presented a proposal to Court that in view of the current membership of the People Committee, it would be sensible to add an additional lay governor to that committee and he proposed that Austin Sweeney be appointed to the People Committee. Court approved that proposal.
  - 16.4.5 Court **noted** the report and **approved** the governor sabbatical and the appointment of Austin Sweeney to the People Committee.
- #### 16.5 Remuneration Committee- 7<sup>th</sup> June 2023
- 16.5.1 The Chair of the Committee, Meg Lustman, presented the report of the matters discussed at the Committee meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2023. She explained the proposal for the Senior Staff Remuneration Philosophy and that this had been recommended by the Committee for Court approval.
  - 16.5.2 Court **noted** the report and **approved** the Senior Staff Remuneration Philosophy.

#### 17. GCNYC Board of Trustees Report from Meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023

- 17.1 The Court noted a report presented by the Chair of the GCNYC Board of Trustees, Sylvie Freund Pickavance, of the Board of Trustees meeting that took place on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2023. She sought Court approval of the proposal to appoint Euan Rellie as a trustee of GCNYC to replace Johnnie Walker who had stepped down due to pressure of work. In response to comments about the detail of the proposal, it was agreed that the proposal for the appointment of the new trustee would be circulated electronically for Court approval.
- 17.2 Court **noted** the report.

**Secretary's Note: The paper and proposal were circulated electronically and approved by Court on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2023.**

#### 18. Media Coverage Analysis

- 18.1 The Court noted the report that highlighted the media coverage received by GCU from February to April 2023.

#### 19. Date of Next Meeting

19.1 The Court noted that the next scheduled meeting would take place in person on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2023 at 9.00am with dinner taking place the evening before on 20<sup>th</sup> September.