

## **UNIVERSITY SENATE**

### **Minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2023**

**Present:** Professor Steve Decent (Chair), Dr Bipasha Ahmed, Professor Babakalli Alkali, Dawn Anderson, Professor Tuleen Boutaleb, Professor Iain Cameron, Fiona Campbell, Sofia Congradyova, Professor John Connolly, Dr Diane Dickson, Professor Mohamed Emad Farrag, Dr Karen Fryer, Professor Helen Gallagher, Dr Lyle Gray, Professor Christine Horrocks, Jan Hulme, Claire Hulsen, Naveed Kayani, Dr Rob Kivits, Steven Latta, Professor Simon McKerrell, Samantha MacLean, Wendy Mazzucco, Professor Ehsan Mesbahi, Susan Mitchell, Professor Andrea Nelson, Dr Val Ness, Chidozie Nwaigwe, Uchenna Ohanaka, Dr James Paterson, Dr Mark Phillipson, Dr Shirley Rate, Professor Alastair Robertson, Dr Adrian Pierotti, Dr Emmanuel Silva, Professor Anita Simmers, Professor Bonnie Steves, Dr Laura Sweeney, Dr Karen Thomson, Aiebee-Iberedem Tim, and Anita Volkert.

**Apologies:** Professor Mark Anderson, Daniel Byron, Dr Sharon Jackson, Professor John Lennon, Jackie Main, Tom McAlear, Professor Angela O'Hagan, Professor Ole Pahl, Robert Ruthven, Professor Anita Simmers, Brian Smith and Dr Omair Uthmani

**In Attendance:** Professor John Connolly, Chair Senate Disciplinary Committee  
Professor Peter Jones, Director GCU London  
Stephen Lopez, Academic Registrar  
Avril Williams, Deputy Director of Student Life  
Deborah Donnet, Clerk to Senate, Head of Governance and Legal Services

**Observers:** Julie Burns (Vice Chancellor's Office), Louise Clark (Governance and Legal Services), Professor Louise Dixon, (PVC Education Designate), Dr Hannah Maytum (Vice Chancellor's Office), Gary Steele (Library Services).

### **Chair's Opening Remarks**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the third meeting of Senate in academic session 2023/24, and in particular those who were attending for the first time. Professor Louise Dixon, PVC Education Designate, who was visiting the University prior to taking up her post in February and was attending Senate as an observer, was introduced.

#### **1. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

1.1 The Chair informed Senate that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2023 had been approved by prior circulation.

## 2. Matters Arising

- 2.1 Senate **noted** a report on the matters arising from the Senate meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2023 and the actions taken since that meeting to address them.
- 2.2 Senate received a verbal update from the Academic Registrar on the ongoing review of the Fit to Sit Policy. Arising from the review of the feedback on the current policy, it was intended to make changes to the policy and how it was operationalised. Senate **noted** the update and that a draft final review paper would be submitted in January to UEG and then Education Committee, before its submission to the February meeting of Senate for approval.

**Action: PVC L&T – Final paper on Review of Fit to Sit to be submitted to January meetings of UEG and Education Committee, with the final paper to be submitted to the February meeting of Senate for approval.**

## 3. Principal's Report to Senate

- 3.1 Senate **noted** a report from the Principal and Vice-Chancellor that provided an update on substantive items considered by the University Executive Group since the last meeting of Senate. The Principal gave a verbal report on the following issues that had arisen since the drafting of his paper:
- 3.2 Whilst the recent Home Office announcements regarding immigration did not directly relate to student recruitment, there was ongoing concern in the sector that the government's approach could give the impression that the UK was not welcoming to international students, and this could have a significant impact on student numbers and income.
- 3.3 The UK visa changes for health and social care workers gave concern about the NHS being able to recruit skilled staff, meaning there may be a need to increase the UK's capacity to produce more healthcare graduates. As the only university in Scotland that had met its nursing targets, the University was in a strong position to help meet any gap in demand and the Principal had been in touch with the SFC about this.
- 3.4 The Minister for Higher and Further Education recently announced the start of the anticipated review of HE and FE funding and regulatory organisations. The University would engage in the review as appropriate, and it was mindful of the impact the review would have on employees within the organisations concerned.
- 3.5 The SFC would receive its funding letter from the Scottish Government on 19<sup>th</sup> December and significant cuts were expected. The University would engage in with the SFC in the usual way, and Senate will be kept informed.
- 3.6 It had been announced that the REF will be delayed by one year. The decision was made in order to give universities more time to deal with the complexities associated with the REF. This additional time will give the University more time to look at a number of internal issues and as such, the delay was welcomed. REF results will now be published in December 2029.

## 4. Complaints Annual Report 2022/2023

- 4.1 Senate **noted** a report that provided an overview of the recorded complaints received by the University in the period 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022 and 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023.
- 4.2 The Head of Governance and Legal Services highlighted the main points of the report, noting that whilst there had been an increase of reported stage 1 complaints, the number of stage 2 complaints was well within the normal range for the University, and the vast majority complaints were appropriately responded to at stage 1.

- 4.3 Data on complaints will be available on the website in line with SPSO requirements, and it was intended to enhance processes for the internal recording of complaints, and it was likely that that would result in an increase in the number of complaints being formally recorded and reported on.
- 4.3 It was noted that a number of stage 2 complaints related to support for students with a disability. Whilst these complaints had not been upheld, they highlighted the increasing challenges in this area. The PVC People and Student Wellbeing, advised that there had been an increase in the number of students with multiple disclosures, and she reported that a review of how the University delivered disability support was underway. It was intended to streamline procedures for routine interventions, to create capacity to deal with more complex cases.
- 5. Senate Disciplinary Committee Annual Report 2022/2023**
- 5.1 The Head of Governance and Legal Services presented the Senate Disciplinary Committee Annual Report 2022/2023 that provided an overview on student misconduct offences considered under the terms of the Code of Student Conduct during Session 2022/23.
- 5.2 The report outlined the numbers of academic misconduct cases had risen significantly in recent years, and this trend had continued into 2022/23, with the University recording for the first time, misconduct relating to the inappropriate use of AI. This was an issue for the whole sector, and the challenges in detection raised concern that inappropriate use of AI may be more widespread than was being reported. Guidance for both staff and students on the inappropriate use of AI had been developed and further work on this was progressing. The Student President indicated that many students were aware of AI and how it could support their studies, but it was important that all students were aware of what was appropriate. This was especially important where assessments were blind marked and therefore markers did not have the benefit of being able to compare the assessment with other work submitted by the student. The importance of assessment design was also crucial.
- 5.3 In discussion, concern was also raised about the increase in the number of confirmed cases of ghost-writing and the increasingly worrying, and in some cases criminal, methods used by some ghost-writers. The potential wellbeing impact on students was raised, and whilst the University had a responsibility to address academic misconduct, it was also vital to encourage students to come forward and to ensure that students were supported throughout the process. Where appropriate, students would be supported to report criminal behaviour to the police.
- 5.4 Encouraging students to engage with support, both academic and wellbeing, at an early stage to help prevent them committing academic misconduct was essential, and the current review of the personal tutoring model would take this into account. It was also important to engage with students at an early stage in their academic journey in the University, especially international students who had experienced a different educational approach to the one adopted in the UK, so that it was clear what was expected of them regarding academic integrity. It was agreed that the PVC Learning and Teaching would explore with Wellbeing and Governance and Legal Services, enhancing the academic integrity advice and signposting of support offered to students, and the Student President and the Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor for Global Engagement would consider action aimed towards international students.
- 5.5 The Chair of Senate Disciplinary Committee (SDC) thanked colleagues in Governance and Legal Services for the often challenging work that was undertaken in relation to investigating and responding to misconduct, and highlighted that the team worked closely with the PVC Learning Teaching and other colleagues across the University.
- 5.6 It was noted that pool of members of SDC had increased to cope with the increase in the number of cases, and it was queried whether more could be done to ensure the staff membership appropriately reflected the diversity of the student population. It was agreed that Governance and Legal Services would consider how to increase the diversity of staff members on SDC.

5.7 Senate otherwise noted the SDC Annual Report.

**Action: PVC Learning and Teaching to explore with Wellbeing and Governance and Legal Services enhancing the advice and signposting offered to students, and the Student President and the Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor for Global Engagement to consider action aimed towards international students. Head of Governance and Legal Services to consider how to increase the diversity of staff members on SDC**

## 6. Research Report for 2023/2024 Quarter 1

6.1 Senate **noted** a report that outlined the key research policy changes affecting the University and a summary of quarter 1 2023/24 research submission, awards and 'success' rates by volume and value to GCU, by School.

## 7. External Review of Research

7.1 The PVC Research introduced a report that set out the recommendations received following an external, independent review of research that had been undertaken over summer and autumn 2023. The report outlined the engagement to date with the research leadership community in discussing the recommendations, and provided an initial University response.

7.2 Eleven recommendations had been offered by the external panel and these related to investment and focus, preparations for next REF, the University's research strategy, and the ecosystem for research at Glasgow Caledonian. Senators were invited to consider the recommendations and provide any feedback to the PVC Research.

7.3 Senate **noted** the report and that an update report would be submitted to Senate in due course.

**Action: All Senators to provide feedback to PVC Research. Update report to future meeting of Senate**

## 8. Student Recruitment Update – Tri A 2023-24

8.1 Senate **noted** a report that provided a high-level overview of student recruitment for Trimester A 2023-24, at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, as at 30 November 2023, and gave an early view of Trimester B 2023-24 figures.

8.2 The VP Strategy and Planning informed Senate that the University was finalising data as at 1<sup>st</sup> December to be submitted to the SFC that would form the basis for funded places in 2024/25 and it was hoped that this year's very successful undergraduate recruitment would put the University in a good position.

8.3 It was reported that international recruitment for Tri A had been challenging, and whilst the position for Tri B looked more positive, deposit conversion was key.

## 9. Standing Committee and School Board Summary Reports

9.1 Senate **noted** reports from the following Standing Committees and School Boards: -

- Education Committee held on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023
- University Research Committee held on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023
- International Committee held on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2023
- The Glasgow School for Business and Society held on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2023
- The School of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment held on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2023
- The School of Health and Life Sciences held on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2023

## **10. Research Degrees Committee**

10.1 Senate **approved** the award of 7 PhDs.

## **11. Senate Chair's Action**

11.1 Senate **homologated** a Chair's Action to approve the following changes to the SDC membership 2023/24:

- The appointment of Frances MacInnes as the second SDC Vice Chair; and
- a number of new SDC members from Schools, GCU London and the Students' Association.

11.2 As discussed at 5.6 above, consideration would be given to increasing the diversity of staff members on SDC.

## **12. Programme Withdrawals – GCU London**

12.1 Senate **approved** the following programme withdrawals.

- MSc International Diplomacy and the Digital State
- MSc International Security and Diplomacy
- MSc International Business, Trade and Diplomacy
- MBA Applied Professional Practice (Security Operations)

## **13. Regulations for the Award of Research Degrees**

13.1 Senate **approved** a proposed amendment to the current Regulations for the Award of Research Degrees, that required that the final revised version of the candidate's thesis/portfolio is received by academic registry before the candidate can receive the award letter from Academic Registry.

**ACTION: Chair of Research Degrees Committee to ensure that policy is updated and available on the website**

## **14. Academic Appeals Committee Membership 2023-26**

14.1 Senate **approved** the School Board-endorsed nominees to serve on the Academic Appeals Committee for the period, 2023 – 2026.

14.2 The PVC Learning and Teaching informed Senate, that there had been no need to call a meeting of the Academic Appeals Committee within the last 10 years.

## **15. Senate and Standing Committees Calendar of Meetings 2024/2025**

15.1 Senate **approved** the Senate and Standing Committees Calendar of Meetings for 2024/2025.

15.2 It was raised that the October 2024 Senate meeting clashed with the school holidays for some local authorities. The Clerk to Senate advised that scheduling the October meeting of Senate was challenging, but the date would be reviewed to see if it was possible to get a suitable date outwith common school holiday dates.

**Action: Clerk to Senate to explore options for Senate on October 2024.**

## 16. Digital Assessment Policy - Anonymous Marking for Digital Assessment

16.1 Following a review undertaken by Academic Development and Student Learning of the affordances of current digital learning platforms, it was proposed to amend the Digital Assessment policy. The review found that current digital assessment tools and workarounds do not support online anonymous marking by more than one assessor, and as such, anonymous marking cannot be used for online exams marked by more than one assessor. It was therefore proposed that the following clause in the policy be removed:

*7.2 For formal online exams wherever possible all markers are expected to observe the principles and practice of anonymous marking.*

16.2 Senate **approved** the amendment and **noted**, that the Assessment Regulations Sub-Committee would undertake a review of the University's holistic approach to digital assessment over the coming academic session with recommendations presented to Education Committee in May 2024.

**Action: PVC Learning and Teaching to ensure that the Digital Assessment Policy is updated and available on the website.**

## 17. Proposed Assessment Regulations Change – Taught Postgraduate Students

17.1 The PVC Learning and Teaching presented a report that outlined that the review of the Fit to Sit Policy had highlighted that a significant number of students were submitting Extreme and Exceptional Extenuating Circumstances (EEEC) and appeals, with particular concern and focus on students who had failed to achieve their final award due to having exhausted attempts at a single module. It was therefore proposed to amend the Assessment Regulations relating to taught postgraduate programmes to allow students who were 15 credits short of the 180 credits required for a masters degree, and met other specific criteria, an extra-ordinary additional attempt for a single failure.

17.2 The paper recommended that proposed new regulation (outlined below) be added to section 14. "Maximum Number of Attempts at a Module" of the Assessment Regulations and is approved by Senate for immediate use by Progression and Award Boards (likely first use will be February 2024), for taught Masters students who have exhausted attempts at just one 15 credit module, where the module cannot be compensated and where the student cannot achieve their final award (i.e. MSc).

17.3 In discussion it was raised that granting an additional attempt may cause issues for students whose visas were due to expire. In response, it was explained that the change in policy was designed to support students complete their degree, and in the vast majority of cases would not necessitate the student attending classes. Where attendance was an essential requirement, then a visa extension would be considered on a case by case basis. It was clarified that that students benefitting from this extra-ordinary additional attempt would undertake the re-sit at the next available diet for that module and there would be no early retrieval options.

17.4 Concern was raised that one of the proposed amendments was that "*A Fit to Sit declaration will not be permitted against this extra-ordinary additional attempt*", and that this may disadvantage students who had legitimate, unanticipated reasons for not being able to undertake the assessment at the required time, and it was agreed that this amendment be removed. Following discussion about what constituted an attempt at an assessment that this clause be amended to give some scope to take account of different scenarios.

17.5 Senate **approved** the following new section to be added to the Assessment Regulations for Taught Programmes to apply from the February 2024 Progression and Assessment Boards:

*14.2 Discretionary Attempt (Postgraduate Taught Programme)*

*Where a student studying on a Postgraduate Taught Programme has reached the final stage of their programme but has failed and exhausted all normal attempts on a single module, the PAB will have discretion to allow the student an extra-ordinary additional attempt at the failed assessment. The student must have successfully completed the assessment criteria for all other modules within the programme and must meet all of the following criteria;*

- I. This discretion can only apply where a student has exhausted all normal attempts at a single 15 credit module, having successfully completed all other elements;*
- II. The student must have fully engaged with the module and attempted all assessment elements of the failed module;*
- III. The Project/Dissertation module for the programme is excluded from this regulation;*
- IV. The failure cannot be as a result of sanctions imposed for academic misconduct;*
- V. The student must submit/re-enter the failed assessment at the next available opportunity but cannot exceed the standard maximum period of registration for the programme;*
- VI. Where a programme has Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body accreditation, there may be core elements of assessment where this discretion cannot apply.*

17.6 It was noted that there would be guidance issued to Progression and Award Boards on the implementation and communications to students too.

**Action: Academic Registrar to update Assessment Regulations for Taught Programmes and ensure they are available on the website, and communications to be issued to students.**

**18. Honorary Appointment**

18.1 Senate was informed that the following honorary appointment had been awarded by the University Executive Board.

<b>Post</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>School</b>
Honorary Professor	Elaine Boyd OBE	GSBS
Honorary Professor	Mukami McCrum MBE	SHLS

**19. Academic Appointments**

19.1 Senate received a paper on academic appointments made since the last meeting of Senate.

**20. Summary Report of Court**

20.1 Senate received the summary reports of University Court held on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

**21. Date of the Next Meeting**

21.1 Senate noted that the date of the next meeting was Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024, with the Senate Strategy Session on the morning of Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024.