

Glasgow Caledonian University Court

Minutes of the University Court held on 17 February 2022 at 9am via Online Conferencing Facilities

Present: Rob Woodward (Chair), Dr Douglas Chalmers, Dr Morag Ferguson, Campbell Fitch, Daniel Gallacher, Ellen Gibson, Professor Pamela Gillies, Asif Haseeb (joined at 10.20am), Ian Kerr, Sharon Lowrie (joined at 9.40am), Meg Lustman, Neena Mahal, Bill McDonald, Dr Nick McKerrell, Tabitha Nyariki, Professor Ann Priest, Adil Rahoo, Austin Sweeney, and Jane Wilson.

Apology: Amit Bhargava, Sylvie Freund Pickavance, David Halliday, Professor Alastair Robertson, Pro Vice Chancellor (Learning and Teaching)

In attendance: Jan Hulme, University Secretary and Vice Principal (Governance)
 Professor James Miller, Deputy Vice Chancellor
 Susan Mitchell, Chief Operating Officer
 Professor Andrea Nelson, Pro Vice Chancellor (Research)
 Paul Queen, Director of Finance
 Fiona Campbell, VP People and Student Wellbeing
 Claire Hulsen, Director of Strategy, Planning and Business Intelligence
 Deborah Donnet, Acting Head of Governance (Secretary)
 Paul Brown, Director of Governance and Legal Services

Chair's opening remarks

The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting and congratulated Professor Alastair Robertson on his recent appointment as PVC Learning and Teaching and Fiona Campbell on her appointment as VP People and Student Wellbeing. The Chair also congratulated Professor Cam Donaldson on his inclusion in the world's top 500 academics in the field of economics and finance.

The Chair reminded Court that following comments from governors in the Court Effectiveness review that papers for Court be more succinct than some of the papers before the Court today were shorter summary reports but that the full reports were available to view on Convene.

1. Minutes

Court noted that the minutes of the Court meeting held on 11th November 2021 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 11th November 2021 and the actions taken since that meeting to address them.
- 2.2 The Chair highlighted that discussion on the Court Effectiveness Review that was to be considered by the Court Governance and Nominations Committee at its February meeting did not take place as that meeting was superseded by the Search Committee for the new Principal and VC. The Review will be considered at the next CG&NC meeting on 5th May 2022.

3. Declaration of interest

A summary of the register of interests was included with the court papers. Court members were invited to advise the University Secretary or the Director of Governance and Legal Services if any agenda items give rise to a conflict of interest.

4. Items brought by the Chair of Court

- 4.1 The Chair reminded Court that it had been agreed to seek a new lay governor to support the University's civic engagement agenda. Whilst a number of good applications had been received, there was not the diversity of applicants that was hoped for. It had been decided to re-advertise with a slightly different role specification in order to attract a more diverse group of applicants, and the search consultants, Nurole, had also been asked to reach out to some potential candidates. The Chair reminded Court that the aim was to appoint someone well connected in the civic network in Glasgow and the West of Scotland, and he asked governors to consider any contacts that they may have who may be suitable for the role and pass their details to him or the University Secretary.
- 4.2 Court was reminded that the quinquennial externally facilitated Court effectiveness review was due to take place in summer 2022 but that in view of the transition from the Principal to her successor at the end of the calendar year, he believed that it would be a more worthwhile exercise if it were undertaken after the new VC was settled in post. The Court Governance and Nominations Committee at its next meeting in May would consider the timing.
- 4.3 The University's annual Stakeholder Event was due to take place that afternoon and Governors and their contacts were encouraged to sign up to attend if they had not already done so. So far 300 people had registered, an increase on last year's attendance. The theme was Sustainability and the University's role in that in light of COP26.
- 4.4 The Chair reminded Court that there were a number of Court Briefings coming up and encouraged governors to engage with these. Details of dates and times would be confirmed as soon as possible. The Chair thanked the Deputy Vice Chancellor and the Director of Strategy, Planning and Business Intelligence for their excellent recent briefing on the TNE work being undertaken by the University.

ACTION: Director of G & LS to confirm dates and topics for upcoming Court briefings.

- 4.5 The Chair sought approval for the addition of David Halliday, the Professional Support Services Staff Governor, to join the Search Committee for the new Principal and VC. Court **approved** this. This meant that the Search Committee membership was now complete, although the Committee had agreed to keep under review the value of an external member with experience of academic leadership at the highest level for the final stages of the process. While there was a need to keep the Committee relatively small, he was mindful of the considerable expertise among the wider lay governor group and would expect to draw on that expertise too.

5. Update from Search Committee and Framework proposal from the Search Committee for the new Principal and VC

- 5.1 The Principal left the meeting whilst this item was being discussed.
- 5.2 The Chair presented a report from the first meeting of the Search Committee that set out the governance and process framework for the recruitment exercise for the new Principal and VC. The paper included recommendations for the process and timeline as well as the parameters of

operation and delegated authority of the Search Committee and its responsibility for reporting to Court. The Chair advised that the Framework retained scope to be flexed in order to react to events as they occurred. He invited governors to contact him at any time with suggestions or concerns.

A concern was raised about potential internal candidates and attendees other than governors being present for progress reports and associated discussion at meetings of Court. The Chair confirmed that the current documentation was not deemed sensitive or of a nature to confer advantage on any potential candidate. However, as the process progressed there would continue to be careful prior assessment of the appropriateness or otherwise of non-court members' attendance for the presentation of reports and discussion at Court meetings.

It was proposed that there should be an opportunity for short-listed candidates to interact with staff and the Chair confirmed that a suitable means of doing so was to be devised.

The Chair advised that the Search Committee would meet on a monthly basis, and a report from it would become a standing item on future Court meetings for as long as the process continued.

The Chair thanked members of the Search Committee in advance for their time commitment and assistance in the work of the Search Committee.

Court **approved** the Framework.

5.3 The Principal re-joined the meeting.

6. Principal and Executive Board Report

6.1 The Principal presented her report which provided a summary of items arising since the previous Court meeting.

6.2 The Principal raised one additional item which was not in her report as the information had just been announced. The outcome of the latest Biggar Economics review assessing the impact of GCU highlighted the success of GCU and its civic contribution to Glasgow, Scotland and globally, with the global impact amounting to £1.7 billion GVA and 14,360 jobs in 2020-21. The review reported that GCU was a "valuable asset" to Glasgow and that the figures for GCU's contribution to Glasgow and beyond clearly demonstrate this. This was an excellent report and reflected the excellent work being done by everyone at GCU.

6.3 The Chair welcomed this excellent report and congratulated everyone involved.

6.4 In response to expressions of concern about the TEF, the Principal informed that in Scotland, where participation in TEF was not mandatory, there had been considerable discussion within the Scottish HE sector and there was consensus that the enhancement led approach to quality remained rigorous, creative and effective. Participation in the TEF was not supported as an alternative. The University along with other Scottish HEIs would therefore continue to monitor the planned TEF changes but would not in any case intend to participate in the TEF themselves.

6.5 Some discussion took place around the NSS and the changes proposed to this for the 2023 NSS. The Principal pointed out that it was difficult at this stage to assess the implications for the University as it was not known what the new survey would look like but that we would continue to engage with the sector to influence national policy.

- 6.6 The Director of Strategy, Planning and Business Intelligence highlighted the 2022 NSS survey was already running throughout the sector and that a sample of students would be invited to participate in a pilot to inform the questions for the new NSS. The outcomes would not be shared with universities on an individual basis, but would contribute to the consultation on the new NSS in summer 2022. It is expected that the questions for the new NSS will be confirmed in autumn 2022. It was agreed that Court would be kept informed of developments with regard to the NSS.

Action: Director of Strategy, Planning and Business Intelligence to place in Convene details of the pilot NSS scheme and keep Court apprised of progress.

- 6.7 The extent of poor mental health among the student population described in the Thriving Learners report was deeply concerning for the sector. The Principal emphasised the importance of an integrated approach to ensure universities promoted environments that were conducive to good mental health and did not simply address the issue through crisis management. The Court was scheduled to have a seminar on the topic later in the year.

7. Chief Operating Officer report

- 7.1 Court noted the Chief Operating Officer's report which included an update on the return to campus and the safe running of the academic session as well as updates on financial forecasts for Q1, the GO Digital project, improvement of cyber resilience and the progress of the Student Information Management System (SIMS) project.
- 7.2 The COO updated Court on the new approach to Covid 19 being taken by the Scottish Government and the change in emphasis to "personal, civic and corporate" responsibility. There will be specific guidance for the HE & FE sectors and guidance on management of local outbreaks. The University will continue with the current approach involving Executive Board, the Students' Association and the unions to ensure our safe operation and the ability to react to any future outbreaks.
- 7.3 The COO confirmed that the Baxter Storey equal pay claims had now all been settled and compensation paid out.
- 7.4 In response to questions about Storm Dudley, the COO confirmed that we have arrangements to react to future storms and that our new technology would allow us to switch to online learning if necessary but that we do try and have managed to keep some facilities open for students and their support, including the library.

8. Student President's Report

- 8.1 The Student President reported on the activities of the Student's Association since the previous Court meeting and in particular that they had managed to have their first face to face meeting in almost 2 years. The Student President informed Court that they had been doing work on students' mental health as well as work on equality & diversity and in particular, supporting disabled students. It was agreed that the Court's deep dive briefing on mental health noted earlier should include the complementarity of support provided by the University and the Association.
- 8.2 Following discussion, the Student President reported on the wellbeing sessions that had been carried out for students and that the focus from the Association had been on in-person activities such as sports to assist students and offer them a better environment for engagement with other students and that this was going well. With regard to the "Nightline" service, the Student

President confirmed that they were still struggling to get volunteer numbers back up to pre-pandemic levels but that they were continuing to work on this.

8.3 The Chair noted that following elections, the identity of the next Student President and other elected officers would be known on 11th March. They would take up their roles at the end of May.

8.4 Court **noted** the Student President's update.

Action Director of G & LS: include in the Court's briefing on Mental Health the complementarity of support provided by the University and the Students' Association

9. Students' Association Trimester 1 Report

Court **noted** the report from the President of the Students' Association activities for Trimester 1.

10. University Secretary's Report

10.1 The Court **noted** the report from the University Secretary which included an update on governor recruitment.

10.2 The University Secretary deferred presentation of the dates for meetings of Court and its Committees in 2022-23 and 2023-24 in light of the number of changes that had occurred and others which were pending since the 2022-23 dates had first been published a year ago. The schedule would be circulated for approval by e-mail and meeting invitations would be then be issued for the dates for both years.

10.3 The University Secretary confirmed that Graduations were on track to recommence in person in July and that graduates who had not had the opportunity to attend a graduation ceremony due to the pandemic, would be invited to a graduate ceremony in April.

11. Student Recruitment Report 2021-22 Trimester B

11.1 The Court noted a report from the Deputy Vice Chancellor providing a high-level overview of student recruitment in academic year 2021-22 Trimester A and B as at 7 February 2022. The Deputy Vice Chancellor confirmed that the University would meet all SFC Outcome Agreement commitments regarding recruitment.

11.2 Discussion took place around the continuing success of international student recruitment and in response to questions, the Deputy Vice Chancellor advised that whilst EU student numbers were reported as down, they were now classified as overseas students with the associated international fee payer status. This had changed the way their numbers were presented and they were now mostly contained within international student numbers. At present, the Scottish Government strategy for supporting EU students in Scotland as well as the planned International Education Strategy was still awaited. An update on the idea of a potential European Foundation would be submitted to Court when there was any further development.

11.3 Overall, the University was performing well in international recruitment as, whilst in general numbers were up across the sector, this did not apply to every university. The increasing cultural diversity of the University was considered very positively but it was recognised that this brought requirements to ensure international students were appropriately inducted and supported. The University was working closely with the Students' Association in this regard.

- 11.4 Home undergraduate recruitment required careful monitoring and was being impacted by various factors.

12. Senate Disciplinary Committee Annual Report

- 12.1 The Court **noted** the report from the Acting Head of Governance, which provided an overview of student conduct issues arising during session 2020/21 under the Student Code of Conduct. It was highlighted that we have seen an increase in incidents of gender based violence but that this was hopefully as a result of increased awareness and reporting rather than an increase in offences. Court was reassured that the University had clear support mechanisms for both parties involved. Whilst there are no formal statistics on this trend within the sector, from informal discussions with other HE institutions, this increase is commonplace across the sector.
- 12.2 Discussion took place around the increase in ghost writing and plagiarism and the impact that Covid 19 has had on those. Court was informed that relative to the overall number of students, it is not a widespread problem but the trend was upwards. The Chair confirmed that Court would need to be kept apprised of this.

ACTION: PVC L&T to provide information on action on plagiarism and proctoring

13. Complaints Handling Procedure Annual Report

The Court noted the annual overview of complaints received by the University in the period 1st August 2020 to 31st July 2021. Court noted that complaints were becoming more complex and challenging to investigate. Very few complaints were related to the University's response to the Covid-19 pandemic and they did not impact on the overall number of complaints which were in line with previous years.

14. Research Update Trimester A

The Court noted the report from Professor Andrea Nelson, PVC Research, which informed Court about research related matters for Trimester A.

15. University Senate: Report from meeting of Senate held on 8th December 2021

- 15.1 The Court **noted** the report.
- 15.2 The Chair reminded Court that Senate has an open invitation to governors to attend Senate as observers should they wish to do so. The Chair encouraged governors to take up this opportunity as it helps keep governors connected with and informed of the responsibilities it delegates to the Senate.

16. Standing Committee Business

16.1 Audit Committee – 24th January 2022

Court noted the report.

16.2 Finance & General Purposes Committee – 6th December 2021 (including approval of revised Terms of Reference)

Court **noted** the report and approved the changes to the Committee's Terms of Reference in relation to the financial measures that would trigger exception reporting to the Committee.

Court **Approved** the changes to the terms of reference.

16.3 People Committee

16.3 (i) 2nd December 2021

Court **noted** the report.

16.3 (ii) 2nd February 2022

The Court **noted** the report presented by Neena Mahal of the Special meeting of the People Committee on 2nd February 2022, which discussed the proposed integrated approach to monitor the progress of the People Enabling Plan and reporting on progress towards its 2030 goals.

16.3 (iii) Organisational KPI for Staff Engagement

Fiona Campbell, VP People and Student Wellbeing, presented a report to Court outlining a proposal for a new externally and internally validated organisational index of Staff Engagement and associated Key Performance Indicator(KPI). The report proposed a new KPI of 75% target measurement of staff engagement which reflected the new methods of measuring staff engagement and was more reflective of the sector as a whole.

Court **Approved** the new staff engagement index KPI at 75%.

16.4 Remuneration Committee – 20th December 2021

Court **noted** the report from the Special Remuneration Committee meeting on 20th December 2021 to consider the remuneration parameters of staff at GCNYC.

17. GCNYC Board of Trustees Report from Meeting on 8th December 2021

In the absence of Sylvie Freund Pickavance, Chair of the Board of Trustees of GCNYC, Professor James Miller, Secretary to the Board of Trustees of GCNYC presented a report to the Court on the business discussed at the GCNYC Board of Trustees meeting held on 8th December 2021. Court **noted** the report.

18. Media Report

The Court noted the Media Coverage Analysis Update Report for December 2021 and January 2022.

19. Date of next meeting

The next Court meeting will take place on Thursday 21st April 2022. The Chair indicated that it was his hope the meeting would take place in person and that there would also be a Court Dinner on the 20th April but this would be confirmed nearer the time in light of prevailing conditions and Scottish Government advice.