

Glasgow Caledonian University Court

Minutes of the University Court held on 9th September 2021 at 9am via Online Conferencing Facilities

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

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)
Professor Alastair Robertson, Acting Pro Vice Chancellor (Learning and Teaching)
Paul Queen, Director of Finance
Fiona Campbell, Director of People
Claire Hulsen, Director of Strategy
Deborah Donnet, Acting Head of Governance (Secretary)

Chair's opening remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first court meeting of the 21/22 academic year, and in particular, Mr Amit Bhargava who was attending his first Court Meeting. Mr Bhargava provided Court with a brief summary of his career and areas of expertise.

Professor Alastair Roberston was also welcomed to Court in his capacity as the recently appointed Acting Pro Vice Chancellor (Learning and Teaching).

Dr Morag Ferguson was congratulated on her re-election as Senate's member on Court for a further year which coincided with the last year of her final term as an elected Senator.

The Chair had hoped that the current meeting might have been held in a hybrid mode but the need for face coverings indoors on campus had meant that this was not feasible.

1. Minutes

- 1.1 Court **noted** that the minutes of the Court meeting held on 27th June 2021, including a recent late amendment, 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 27th June 2021 and the actions taken since that meeting to address them.
- 2.2 The Chair highlighted that the Court Briefing on sexual misconduct originally scheduled for 14th September 2021 had been rescheduled and would now take place in the new year. The rescheduled briefing would allow inclusion of the results from the Universities Scotland report on sexual misconduct which had yet to be published and draw on practical experience of the Report and Support tool for reporting inappropriate behaviour which was expected to be launched later in the year.

- 2.3 With reference to the action relating to the IHRA declaration, the Chair advised that the Principal would be submitting a caveat to Senate for consideration and this would subsequently be submitted to Court for approval.

3. Declaration of interest

- 3.1 A summary of the register of interests was included with the court papers. Court members were invited to advise the University Secretary or the Acting Head of Governance if any agenda items gave rise to a conflict of interest.

4. Items brought by the Chair of Court

- 4.1 Court was thanked for its recent approval of a sabbatical for Peter Baguley and it was hoped to welcome him back to meetings at the end of the calendar year.
- 4.2 A paper setting out the findings of the Annual Court Effectiveness review 2020/21 had been circulated. The consensus among Court members was that the Court was performing well. While there was no sense that Covid had undermined good governance, governors had missed in person interaction which contributed to the collegiality and networking underpinning a strong governing body. Three key themes had emerged:
- a) Committee papers were too lengthy and it was planned to address this by making as many as possible of the substantive papers for mandatory reading shorter and in the style of high quality executive summaries with inclusion of key governance information currently found in the coversheet of papers. The same level of detail as currently presented would continue to be made available to Court: it was recognised that some governors would want more extensive information depending on the topic and, for example, their committee affiliation. Detailed material relating to the substantive papers would be presented in a separate suite of supporting documentation for each meeting. Court would, however, always have to address some lengthy documents, for example where these reflected mandatory requirements and Court approval such as the Annual Financial Statements and Outcome Agreement Reports.
 - b) There was support for the capability to host hybrid meetings without there being any diminution of experience for those involved either in person or remotely. Once restrictions reduced sufficiently, the expectation was that all formal Court meetings would routinely be held in person, while seminar type events and all committees would continue to operate virtually, with only occasional in person meetings.
 - c) The annual virtual stakeholder event should continue to be held routinely on line to maximise reach, with consideration being given to how best to ensure optimum engagement with staff, students and external stakeholders and build the Civic University theme. This did not preclude other means of engaging with stakeholders on campus and face to face.
- 4.3 For the last item on the agenda, the Chair of Court's Annual Appraisal, the Chair would withdraw and the Vice Chair of Court, Meg Lustman, would take the chair.

5. Principal and Executive Board Report

- 5.1 The Principal presented her report which provided a summary of items arising since the previous Court meeting.
- 5.2 Appended to the report was a proposal outlining changes to the Executive leadership portfolios for the delivery of Strategy 2030 and given the retirement of one member of the Executive team. The proposals included new services to support the staff and student experience and boost corporate capability. Following extensive discussion, including reassurance around the financial implications and that the changes would serve the best interests of both staff and students, Court **endorsed** the proposals.

6. Chief Operating Officer report

- 6.1 The court **noted** the report from the Chief Operating Officer (COO) which addressed matters such as: the safe return to campus; the University's response to the recent cyber incident; a delay to release 2 of the student information management system implementation; and the details of mental health training for staff and students in partnership with SAMH.
- 6.2 In relation to the safe return to campus, it remained an evolving environment and the COO reported that universities had been asked to go beyond the published ministerial guidance for the sector, which meant that there would be some restrictions that did not apply in other areas of society. All students would have some on campus activity and lateral flow tests were available on campus for both staff and students. Close monitoring of cases would continue, as would regular dialogue with the Scottish Government and Public Health Scotland. Against this background the University was continuing to take an approach that tended to the risk averse, and, for example, face coverings would be continued to be required indoors.
- 6.3 Court was informed that reports on the SIMS project and the cyber incident would be submitted to the forthcoming Finance and General Purposes and Audit Committees respectively, and Court would be kept updated via their reports to Court.
- 6.4 It was noted that the newly appointed Directors of Estates and of Information Technology had taken up their posts.

7. Student President's report

- 7.1 The Student President reported on Students' Association activities since the previous Court meeting. Key points highlighted included the Students' Association retaining their "Excellent" SOS-UK Green Impact Award; plans for Fresher's Week with a variety of on campus and virtual events; the re-opening of the Students' Association Building from 20th September with work continuing to assess what facilities within the building could re-open; plans for COP26; ongoing discussions with Glasgow City Council and the University of Glasgow on restrictions on new student accommodation; the development of the Strategic Plan 25; the SA's success at the SPARQS award, winning the "Students' Association-led initiative" award for the Association's work in supporting GCU Programme Leaders to recruit and support Class Reps in a remote working environment; and the award of £24,000 additional funding from the Scottish Government which will be used to recruit an additional Student Advisor for the Advice Centre in 2021-22.
- 7.2 Ms Nyariki also informed Court of plans for the forthcoming Black History Month and Court was challenged to wear red on 22nd October 2021 in support of Show Racism the Red Card.
- 7.3 Court welcomed the work being undertaken by the Students' Association and requested details of forthcoming events that may be of interest to governors.

ACTION: Student President to provide list of events to the Secretary for circulation.

8. University Secretary's Report

- 8.1 The Court noted a report from the University Secretary and approved:
- a) a minor amendment to the previously agreed Statement of Primary Responsibilities for inclusion in the Annual Financial Statements 2020-21;
 - b) the Statement of Primary Responsibilities for 2021-22; and
 - c) the Modern Slavery Statement for the financial year ended 31st July 2020.

9. Interim Report on Student Recruitment

- 9.1 The Court noted a summary from the Deputy Vice Chancellor on the acceptances to the undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes in Trimester A as at 30th August 2021. The DVC emphasised that although this was an advanced point in the Trimester A recruitment cycle, there would continue to be some flux in the undergraduate position until the census date in December. There was no indication at this stage that there would be any increase in attrition by that date. There will be further conversions for home taught postgraduate students, as well as at research postgraduate level and on to Graduate Apprenticeship programmes. The position would be discussed in more detail at the Court Strategy event on 29th September 2021.
- 9.2 The report also provided an early view of Trimester B, and there had been a significant increase in international TPG applicants as compared to the same time last year, with a slight decrease in the number of home/EU/RUK TPG applicants.
- 9.3 Court **noted** the report and that the picture would continue to evolve around the start of term.

10. Renewal of the Facility Letter and Resolution – Bank of Scotland plc

- 10.1 The Court approved, subject to a minor amendment, the Facility Letter for the University, Glasgow Caledonian University Company Limited and Glasgow University Academy Limited with Bank of Scotland plc.

11. Annual Report on institution-led review of quality and governing body statement of assurance for AY 2020/21

- 11.1 The Court received a report from the Acting PVC (Learning and Teaching) on the Annual Report on Institution-led Review of Quality and the Governing Body Statement of Assurance for the academic year 2020/21 which was part of the University's reporting arrangements to the Scottish Funding Council. The Court **approved** the report.

12. The National Student Survey 2021

- 12.1 The Court **noted** a report from the Deputy Vice Chancellor, which provided an overview of the National Student Surveys (NSS) 2021 results, and recognised that, while there were areas of excellent performance, the pandemic had inevitably had an impact on results across the sector. Overall the University received an overall satisfaction score of 78%, 7 percentage points down on the previous year. Schools were triangulating the results with our own internal feedback to get a better understanding of where enhancements were required.
- 12.2 The University performed well above the sector's scores in all of the new additional questions relating to satisfaction with the University's management of Covid-19, showing substantially

higher outcomes in terms of provision of useful information, timely information to students and access to learning resources and delivery of learning and teaching.

- 12.3 In discussion it was acknowledged that the overall satisfaction level contradicted high levels of satisfaction elsewhere in the survey and the University's own triangulation of results would be important to help understand why.

13. Graduate outcomes 2018/19

- 13.1 The Court **noted** a report from Deputy Vice Chancellor which provided a high level summary of the 2018/19 graduate cohort outcomes for the Scottish sector. Graduate Outcomes was administered centrally by HESA, and graduates were surveyed approximately 15 months after completing their studies. The University had 90% of graduates in employment and/or further study, above the Scottish rate of 88%, placing the University second equal in Scotland in this measure. The proportion of graduates in full-time employment was 65%, compared to the Scottish sector rate of 57% which placed the University first equal in Scotland alongside Heriot-Watt University.
- 13.2 This was only the second year for this survey, which replaced the former DLHE survey which collected graduate destination data six months after graduation. As such HESA had advised that data results should be regarded as experimental.

14. Annual Update: African Leadership Project

- 14.1 The Court **noted** a report on the progress of the African Leadership College Partnership to end of session 2020-2021. The ALU (the parent group) had developed their new Strategic Plan which sought to re-energise the vision, refresh the academic focus of the group, redesign the model of delivery and grow student numbers while recognising the significant challenges many Africans continue to face. The University would continue to support the delivery of the current portfolio as approved and will guide ALC regarding academic standards, pedagogy and delivery modes in relation to the new strategy. Further information and detail on proposed changes would be provided to Court for consideration in due course.
- 14.2 The teach-out plan was being finalised by academic departments and would be subject to the University's usual quality assurance procedures.

15. GCNYC Board of Trustees Report from Meeting on 25th June 2021

- 15.1 The court **noted** the report of the meeting which took place on 25th June 2021 presented by the Deputy Vice Chancellor and the Chair of the GCNYC Board of Trustees.

16. Research Trimester C Report 2020-21

- 16.1 The Court **noted** a report from the PVC Research which highlighted the continuing strong performance in being awarded external funding for research and innovations funds from both commercial and non-commercial sources.
- 16.2 The University was awarded almost £1.3 million in 20/21 by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) to mitigate against the impacts of COVID.
- 16.3 The University would be making several formal contributions to the United Nations Climate Change Conference - COP26, as well as planning a range of activity across the academic year to

raise awareness of our work in this area and the role that the University could play with respect to the climate emergency.

17. Media Report

17.1 The Court noted the Media Coverage Analysis Update Report for July 2021.

18. Date of next meeting

18.1 The next Court meeting will take place on Wednesday 11 November 2021, and it was hoped that it would be possible to hold this meeting in person, with a Court dinner being held the evening before, to which the three recently retired lay governors had been invited. This would be dependent on COVID restrictions on campus and confirmation of arrangements will be provided in due course.

18.2 The Court Strategy event will be held on the morning of 29th September 2021, with the focus being on student recruitment. The programme and background reading will be circulated in advance of the event. This will be a virtual meeting.

19. Chair's Appraisal

19.1 The Chair of Court having left the meeting together with all who had been "in attendance", other than the University Secretary, the Vice-Chair took the chair and led the discussion with governors on the Chair's performance. After satisfactory conclusion the Vice-Chair undertook to feed back to the Chair of Court.