

Glasgow Caledonian University Court

Minutes of the University Court held on Thursday 16th November 2023 at 9am in The Lantern.

Present: Rob Woodward (Chair), Jennifer Abali, Professor Steve Decent, Daniel Gallacher, Ellen Gibson, Dr Lyle Gray, David Halliday, Ian Kerr, Sharon Lowrie, Meg Lustman, Neena Mahal, Bill McDonald, Dr Nick McKerrell, Chidozie Nwaigwe, Professor Catriona Miller, Austin Sweeney, and Jane Wilson.

Apologies Amit Bhargava, Asif Haseeb, Sylvie Freund Pickavance.

In attendance Jan Hulme, University Secretary and Vice Principal (Governance).
Susan Mitchell, Chief Operating Officer & Deputy Vice Chancellor
Professor Ehsan Mesbahi, Provost & Deputy Vice Chancellor
Professor Mike Mannion, Acting DVC
Professor Andrea Nelson, Pro Vice Chancellor (Research).
Professor Alastair Robertson, Pro Vice Chancellor (Learning and Teaching).
Fiona Campbell, Vice Principal, People and Student Wellbeing.
Claire Hulsen, Vice Principal (Strategy & Planning)
Paul Queen, Chief Finance Officer.
Paul Brown, Director of Governance & Legal Services.
Ms Carol Burns, Associate Advance-HE for item 5 only

Chair's opening remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked those who were able to attend the event the previous evening to mark the opening of the Hamish Wood Gallery in the Sir Alex Ferguson Library and to welcome members of the late Professor Wood's family including his daughter and grandson. Also present were Barry and Linda Atherton who painted the portrait of Professor Hamish Wood CBE, the University's first Chair of Court.

The Chair also thanked Professor Peter Jones, Director of GCU London, for his presentation on the history, development and growth of the London campus and its success in attracting increasing numbers of students and the opportunities and risks he saw ahead.

The Chair informed Court that Carol Burns, Associate of Advance HE, would join the meeting remotely for discussion on the Quinquennial Court Effectiveness Review.

The Chair congratulated all of those involved in the positive progress that the University is making in the various league tables, including most recently, the Times Good University Guide where the University is ranked 50th making a significant improvement on last year's table.

1. Minutes

- 1.1 Court noted that the minutes of the Court meeting held on 21st September 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 21st September 2023. The Chair confirmed that the Cyber Security and GBV training are still under development and will be carried forward.

3. Declaration of interest

- 3.1 A summary of the register of interests was included with the court papers. This had been updated to account for changes intimated by governors. 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 provided an update on the appointment of the new Chancellor, a process being overseen by the CGNC, and discussions held and in prospect. It was confirmed that there were no specific duties associated with the Chancellor's role specified in the University's Statutory Instrument or the Amendment Order 2020.
- 4.2 The Chair confirmed that meetings were continuing with recruitment consultants regarding new governor appointments and in particular, for the Chair Designate of the F&GPC committee, and a governor with knowledge of property & estates. The CGNC would report to the Court in due course.
- 4.3 The Chair thanked those governors who attended the graduations in London. He confirmed that there were approximately 700 graduates over the 2 days and that the graduations were an excellent celebration of the hard work of staff and students alike and all that the University stands for. He also thanked all of those governors who would be attending the upcoming graduations on 28th & 29th November in Glasgow.
- 4.4 The Chair thanked everyone for their participation in the Court Strategy Day that took place in October and expressed that it was a very useful and informative day with everyone contributing to the day and the plans for the revised strategy. How the work of refreshing the 2030 strategy in a highly consultative way was addressed in more detail in the paper appearing later on the agenda.

5. Report on Quinquennial Review

- 5.1 The Chair welcomed Carol Burns, Associate, Advance HE, to the meeting and a discussion took place regarding the report and findings from the Quinquennial Review.
- 5.2 Carol thanked those who had been involved in the preparation of the draft report and described the process that she had followed and her recommendations. She explained that in her opinion, the Court of Glasgow Caledonian is engaged, innovative and dynamic. While some of the practices which she recognised appeared to work well for the Court were less usual, her own recommendations were based on her knowledge and experience of the sector.
- 5.3 Court discussed the report and its positive tenor. It considered the recommendations and sought clarification of certain conclusions not all of which were consistent with their own experience and observations, particularly those relating to the University's management of risk.
- 5.4 In conclusion, Court considered the report and **recommended** that it be remitted to the CGNC for further consideration based on the points raised at the Court meeting, with a view to a further report to Court on which recommendations the CGNC would commend as appropriate for adoption by Court. The Chair confirmed that an additional meeting of the CGNC would be convened as soon as possible, to carry out that review. The opportunity would also be taken to clarify and correct a few details in

the draft with Ms Burns. The Chair thanked Ms Burns warmly for engaging with the Court, giving useful pointers and providing food for thought.

Carol Burns left the meeting.

ACTION: Quinquennial Review Report to be referred back to CGNC for consideration of final recommendations and for these to be returned to Court for approval.

6. Industrial Action

- 6.1 The Chair invited the VP, People and Student Wellbeing to describe the current position. The VP, explained the current position in relation to each of the unions involved nationally and the most recent discussions with regards to exploring a local resolution and confirmed that not all campus trade unions were able to withdraw their dispute or provide assurances of no industrial action for 12 months.

Staff governors and notably those with a formal union affiliation then explained the position from the various union perspectives. Only Unison currently had a mandate for action and this would be in place until the end of January 2024. The two other principal unions, EIS and UCU, had not obtained a new mandate for industrial action in recent ballots. However, they believed that this belied the continuing dissatisfaction amongst staff about the current pay position and they hoped that local negotiations would continue and might bring resolution. The Chair considered that it would help Court if, for a future meeting, information was available about the universities which had taken local action to resolve the dispute, the nature of that action and the extent to which it had resulted in greater stability and improved industrial relations. The VP People and Student Wellbeing, undertook to provide a note on this for Court.

ACTION: VP People and Student Wellbeing, to provide an update for Court on the various arrangements agreed locally by other universities and their impact.

7. Principal and Executive Board Report

- 7.1 The Principal presented his report which provided a summary of items arising since the previous Court meeting. Where these topics were covered by other agenda items, they had not been included in this report.

The Principal expressed profound dismay and deep concern at the situation in the Middle East and explained the work that the University and the Students' Association were doing in order to help those affected in the university community, both staff and students.

The Principal provided an update on the Advanced Higher Hub noting that both the GCC and the SFC have confirmed that this is the last year that they will provide funding support for it and that as such, this will be the last year that the University can deliver the programme. GCC has advised that it is reviewing provision of Advanced Highers across the city. In response to questions about the proposed closure of the Hub, the Principal explained that the overwhelming majority of those who benefit from the Hub go on to study at other universities.

- 7.2 In response to questions about the staff working in the Hub and the impact on them, the Principal and the VP People and Student Wellbeing, assured Court that the staff and their welfare was of paramount importance and that discussions were in train.

- 7.3 The Principal explained that the “New to GCU “student survey which is open to all Home UG students, achieved excellent results with 93% of those students feeling welcomed to the University and providing positive feedback on their induction to the University. He explained that many students had given the content of courses and employability as reasons for choosing the University. The Principal thanked all of those staff involved and the Students’ Association in helping to make this a successful start to the students’ time at the University. The Principal acknowledged that the increase in Home UG students this year has put pressure on staff in some areas where the increases have occurred and he thanked them for their continued commitment to the University and its students. Recognising that there were acute pinch points to be addressed at pace, he explained that, at a university-wide level, increases in the home undergraduate numbers had to a large extent been offset by decreases in international numbers although these balancing phenomena tended not to occur in the same academic areas. The resourcing implications were well understood and the focus was on aligning resources to needs, while appreciating that shifting resources in circumstances of potentially falling income could take time. His intention was to return to Court on this topic with developed thinking. The Principal described steps being taken including the recent briefing of the Leadership Forum to ensure these leaders were equipped to cascade a consistent and comprehensive account of the position and how it was being addressed.
- 7.4 The Principal provided an update on the strategy refresh that had been discussed at the Court Strategy event in early October. He explained that the process was designed to be collaborative with staff, students and external stakeholders all having input to the proposals and that at the heart of the strategy is community and civic engagement allied to a global outlook. There would be a focus on the right size and shape to ensure that the University best reflects the actual needs of the students and the community which it serves, both home and international. He explained that in international terms, the University, like other HE institutions, was exposed to the impact of restrictive changes in UK immigration rules but that work was ongoing to manage this both in Glasgow and in London and the situation was being monitored closely.

In response to questions about the strategy and the University’s income, the Principal explained that diversifying income is a priority and he referred to the ways this might be achieved. Moreover, it is important that investment proposals intended to diversify and increase income are rigorously tested and evaluated. Following a question about a decision prior to the Principal’s appointment, the Chair requested information on the associated governance framework to ensure clarity.

- 7.5 Following a full discussion amongst governors, the Chair reiterated that at present, the University was in a transition phase and that the strategy refresh would enable Court to reassess the everchanging needs of and environment in which the University operates and that when complete, he was confident that this would help secure the long term future of the University.

8. Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Vice Chancellor report

- 8.1 The Court noted a report from the Chief Operating Officer (COO) and Deputy Vice-Chancellor that gave an overview of key issues since the previous Court meeting.
- 8.2 The COO/DVC noted that the report was longer than usual in response to a request at the preceding meeting to address the matter of student numbers versus teaching resources. Reflecting on the different budget scenarios discussed by Court earlier in the year, continued uncertainty arising from changes in Westminster policy on immigration and on cost-of-living more generally, relative to other popular international student destinations, meant continued volatility and uncertainty in student

recruitment. She explained the overall impact of changes in both International and SFC student populations on staff recruitment. The significant change in more than +30FTE of staff was indicative of continued investment in resources, and acknowledged that more was needed in some areas of particularly high student recruitment. She explained the communications that are being rolled out around this which would dispel any misperceptions that there was a staff recruitment freeze.

- 8.3 The COO/DVC updated Court on the work that is ongoing at the new site at Vallance Road in London and that the work was on track for a January opening.
- 8.4 In response to a question about potential redistribution of funds derived from recent student funding and SFC clawback in respect of those universities with significant home student under recruitment, the Principal explained that at present, the SFC are not certain about what funding may become available to them as a result. Should any of the clawback funding from some universities become available to the sector for redistribution, he would press the University's claim given its strong home recruitment.
- 8.5 In response to a question about the level of student debt, the CFO explained that the figures were in part a proportionate reflection of the greatly increased number of international students. The figures were presented in a different way as a result of data availability due to the transition between student systems. The report highlighted that older (and therefore by definition riskier) debt continued to come down and represented a much smaller proportion of the overall debt position. Full reporting on debt will continue to be provided to F&GPC.
- 8.6 In response to questions about recent student recruitment and variation of the entry requirements, the Executive had discussed this at length with Deans and Vice Deans and they would have been discussed at school management meetings. He confirmed that the evidence showed that the University had been significantly above entry the requirements of other modern universities.

9. Student President's report

- 9.1 The Court **noted** the report from the Student President, highlighting recent activities and initiatives undertaken by the Student's Association. He explained the work that had been ongoing in order to ensure improving engagement amongst students and that this was reflected in the increased number of students attending meetings and events.
- 9.2 He explained the Winter Warmer programme to provide sustenance for students who might otherwise struggle. He explained the work of the Student Pantry which is a food bank to help students who are struggling due to the financial crisis. He thanked the Executive for their support and said these initiatives would help to reduce stress on students and enable them to focus on their studies. In this regard he further expressed his appreciation of the 24 hour lab in the Students Association which was welcomed by students juggling busy lives.

10. Revised Students' Association Elections Schedule

- 10.1 The Court **considered** a report from the Students' Association that proposed slight alterations to the Constitution particularly around the election process and entitlement to stand.
- 10.2 In response to questions, he explained the proposal to change the requirements for those standing for election to be students for the full period of their proposed term as otherwise, students leave part way through their year of office and that causes problems for the Association.

10.3 Court **approved** the Revised Students' Association Elections Schedule.

11. University Secretary's Report

11.1 The Court noted a report from the University Secretary. She reminded governors of the development opportunities available to them both internally and from external providers such as Advance HE. She noted that there was a tendency for much of the Advance HE programme content to be more tailored to the sector south of the border. However, the induction events for new governors were particularly commended. Any governor interested in participating in any of the scheduled Advance HE events were invited to contact her or the Chair of Court.

12. Update on Strategy Refresh

12.1 The Court **noted** a report that was introduced by the VP Strategy and Planning, which set out in detail the approach to the Strategy 2030 refresh which had featured in the preceding discussions. She highlighted the key points, the process that was being followed and the touch points with Court. She confirmed that the consultation process was ongoing and that it is intended to provide Court with an update in February next year.

13. Strategy 2030 KPI Report 2022-23

13.1 The Court received the annual KPI report on the University's performance in 2022-23 against the current set of institutional key performance indicators (KPIs). The VP Strategy and Planning advised that the report will be the last in the current format given the strategy refresh and the associated review of KPIs.

13.2 The VP Strategy and Planning reported that the University performed very strongly against a number of its Strategy 2030 KPIs, with a small number of areas seeing less than optimal outcomes. This included UK taught PG programmes but that this is an area of concern throughout the UK Sector.

13.3 In response to questions about the University's sustainability goals, she confirmed that the latest data was not yet available but was being compiled to a timeline associated with a report that would be submitted to the Scottish Government at the end of November. An update on the 2022-23 data will be provided to Court. She explained that the University is leading on monitoring not only the estate and staff but also in monitoring students and their sustainability footprint.

13.4 Secretary Note:

As noted at Court under the item on the 2022-23 KPI Report, the dataset relating to our KPI on environmental sustainability was imminent. This is now available, and shows modest increases in Scope 1 and 2 emissions, with the Scope 2 increase due to the carbon intensity of electricity from the national grid. These are the two Scopes which we have most control over as an organisation, and the data reflect a positive position, with outcomes in both below the pre-pandemic levels of academic year 2018-19. There was a more significant increase in Scope 3 emissions, predominantly due to student related travel emissions but also encompassing an increase in supply chain emissions. As discussed at Court, the University is ahead of many in the sector for reporting on Scope 3 emissions.

13.5 On the basis of the data, it is proposed that the RAG status for our institutional KPI is changed from Green to Amber.

- 13.6 The KPI will be reviewed in consultation with Court as part of the strategy refresh process, and we will also take the opportunity to consider options and opportunities in respect of student travel related emissions.

14. Student Recruitment Report

- 14.1 The Court **noted** the report from the VP Strategy and Planning on the student recruitment for Trimester A 2023-24, at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, as at 6 November 2023. An early view of Trimester B 2023-24 was also provided.
- 14.2 In response to questions, she explained that the target number of students had been set appropriately ahead of the academic year and that the University had applied for and obtained an additional CAS allocation based on previous years' recruitment and anticipated recruitment. However, the UKVI immigration rules had changed and this was having an impact on recruitment and applicant behaviour for Trimester A and B this year. expected to have an impact on applications for Tri B.

15. League Table Report

- 15.1 The Court **noted** a report from the VP Strategy and Planning which summarised the highlights of the University's strong performance in the UK leagues tables - the Guardian University Guide, the Mail University Guide, the Times / Sunday Times Good University Guide (all published in September 2023), and the Complete University Guide (published in June 2023).

16. Update on GCNYC

- 16.1 The Principal updated Court on the current position with GCNYC. The Principal explained that extensive work continues and that further details of progress would follow in due course as key milestones were achieved.

17. GCU Corporate Risk Register

- 17.1 The court noted a report providing updates on Risk following the Risk Management Forum (RMF) that was held on the 25th October 2023. The COO explained that some risks have been closed with some new ones being added.
- 17.2 The COO explained that the Risk Register is a fluid report and that it reacts to issues that face the University from time to time. In response to questions, it was agreed that the Register should be updated to record the fact that there is continuing dialogue between management and unions regarding the current industrial action.
- 17.3 Court **approved** the Corporate Risk Register.

18. University Senate: Report from meeting of Senate held on the 12th September and 18th October 2023

- 18.1 The Court noted reports of the Senate meetings held on 12th September and 18th October 2023. Key highlights from the meeting reports included the SFC Annual Report on Institutional-led Review of Quality for Academic Year 2023, the update on the review of the Fit to Sit Policy, the review of the impact of MAB on Student Decisions and Academic Quality – Interim Report. The reports also provided information on the Module Monitoring and Closing the Feedback Loop 2023/2024, Generative

Artificial Intelligence and Education at Glasgow Caledonian University, NSS Outcomes 2023 Results Overview, NSS Outcomes 2023 – Areas for University-wide enhancement.

In response to a question about changes to the academic calendar, the Principal, emphasised that this was still at the consultation stage and that staff and the Students' Association would be fully engaged in the discussion. Any proposals for change would be put forward only after thorough consultation. He observed that the University had an unusually high number of teaching weeks compared with other institutions and there was merit in reviewing that.

19. Standing Committee Business

19.1 People Committee – 28th September 2023

- (i) The Chair of the Committee, Neena Mahal, presented a report of the People Committee meeting on 28th September 2023. She highlighted the training on Health & Safety that was provided and the benefit to governors in participating in that.
- (ii) Court **noted** the report.

19.2 Audit Committee – 23rd October 2023

19.2.1 The Chair of the Committee, Bill McDonald, presented the report of the Audit Committee on 23rd October 2023. He informed Court of the refocus and rationalisation of the cyber security report and the benefit in streamlining the report and actions.

19.2.2 Court **noted** the report

19.3 Court Governance & Nominations Committee- 31st October and 8th November 2023

19.3.1 Court **noted** the report of the Court Governance & Nominations Committee on 31st October and 8th November 2023 and recommendations relating to Court and Committee memberships.

19.3.2 Court **approved** i) the reappointment to Court for a second term of Amit Bhargava and Jane Wilson ii) the appointment of Alan Dickson to the Audit Committee; and iii) the appointment of Alan Dickson on a temporary basis of up to 12 months as an additional member of the Remuneration Committee.

19.3.3 Court **approved** the Terms of Reference for the Committee and its composition.

19.4 Remuneration Committee – Annual Report 2023

19.4.1 The Chair of the Remuneration Committee, Meg Lustman, presented the Committee Annual Report detailing the work that had been carried out by the Committee in the year 2022-23 and the basis of all decisions about the salaries and terms and conditions for the Principal, Executive Board members of staff and those staff earning more than £100,000 p.a.

19.4.2 Court **noted** the report.

19.4.3 **The Principal and those in attendance with the exception of the University Secretary and the Vice-Principal, People and Student Wellbeing, left the meeting at this point.**

19.4.4 The Court was then asked to approve: i) the proposed salary for the Principal as recommended by the Committee; and ii) the Committee's terms of reference, reflecting that if Alan Dickson's

temporary appointment is approved by Court, this will be reflected in the final version of the terms of reference.

19.4.5 Court **approved** the proposed salary for the Principal as recommended by Committee with one abstention.

20. Summary of Principal's Objectives

20.1 The Chair presented the Principal and Vice-Chancellor's Objectives for 2023/24, noting that these had been recommended to Court for approval by the Remuneration Committee. The Court discussed the objectives and concluded that, although some important areas of business were not reflected as separate objectives, they were sufficiently covered in the overall drafting. The Court **approved** the Remuneration Committee's proposal to set the key themes of the objectives for the following year annually in May and revisit them to finesse and agree measures in the autumn of the year in question.

20.2 Court **approved** the Principal's Objectives for 2023/24.

20.3 **The Principal and those in attendance returned to the meeting at this point.**

20.3.1 Court **approved** the Committee's terms of reference, noting that these would require to be amended to reflect Alan Dickson's temporary appointment to the Committee, as approved by Court.

21. GCNYC Board of Trustees Report from Meeting on 27th September and 12th October 2023

21.1 The Court **noted** a report presented by Professor Mike Mannion as President of GCNYC, from the GCNYC Board of Trustees from the meetings held on the 27th September and 12th October 2023.

21.2 He reminded governors that the next Commencement in New York would take place on 16th December and that it is hoped that as many of the trustees as possible will be able to attend in person, Commencement and the Board meeting would take place on 15th December.

22. Media Coverage Analysis

22.1 The Court noted the reports for August, September and October 2023.

23. Date of Next Meeting

23.1 The Court noted that the its next meeting was a special meeting on **14 December 2023** to consider and approve the annual accounts which, on account of the current audit process, were no longer available in time for the court's November meeting. The next ordinary meeting of court would take place on **Thursday, 8th February 2024 at 9.00am** on campus, with dinner the night before on **7th February**.