

SUMMARY REPORT OF COURT 22nd APRIL 2021

The University Court met virtually today, 22nd April 2021. A key part of its business was to consider and approve the supporting strategies and enabling plans designed to deliver the University's 2030 Strategy.

Attending Court for discussion of the enabling plans were Douglas Little, Director of Estates, and Alan O'Neill, Director of IS. The Court took the opportunity to thank and offer its warm good wishes to Douglas Little, who is retiring at the end of April after 35 years of outstanding service to the University. Court also expressed its appreciation of the contribution of Alan O'Neill, who retires in June after nearly three years during which he has made a highly valued impact.

Farewells and thanks were said to the retiring student governors, Susan Docherty and Tabitha Nyariki. Adil Rahoo, the newly elected Student President, was welcomed as an observer and will join Court as a student governor in June along with the second, as yet unidentified, student governor.

Thanks were also expressed to Professor Cam Donaldson, who is stepping down as PVC Research at the end of the month, but would be continuing in his role as Yunus Chair, and a warm welcome was extended to Professor Andrea Nelson, Dean of the School of Health and Life Sciences, who would be taking over as PVC Research, and was attending Court as an observer.

Two additional Court briefing sessions, one on the draft 2021/22 budget and another on pensions, were brought to Court's attention.

What follows is a high-level summary of the main issues addressed by Court today, which will also appear on the University website. Minutes of the meeting will be published on the University website in due course.

Rob Woodward
Chair of Court

1. Principal & Vice Chancellor & Executive Board Report

The report provided a summary of items arising since the previous Court meeting. The Principal drew attention to the University's strong performance in the QAA's Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR) and the commendations received in many areas including widening participation and the effective use of Student Experience Action Plans. She highlighted the University's recently announced success in the 2021 THE Impact Rankings which saw GCU placed 69th overall out of 1,115 universities globally, and 5th in the World and top in the UK in relation to our contribution to Gender Equality. The Principal also noted sector concerns about the SFC's approach to the final phase of its review of the tertiary sector for the Scottish Government.

2. Chief Operating Officer's Report including Covid management update

The Court noted the report which referred to managing the impact of Covid now and looking ahead to the new session in light of evolving government guidance. She also gave an overview of key developments in finance, staffing, IT and the estate. She shared with Court the key findings from the staff well-being pulse survey conducted earlier in the session as well as plans for further rapid pulse surveys on a more frequent basis to shape responsive policy and practice.

3. Student President's Report

The Student President reported on the activities and initiatives of the Students' Association including the work to develop the new SA strategic plan to 2024/25, the programme of engagement with students and the Association's annual Teaching Awards which will be conferred on 13 May.

4. University Secretary's Report

The Court approved the updated Complaints Handling Procedure as prescribed by the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman for immediate implementation. The Court also approved the appointment, on the recommendation of the Court Governance and Nominations Committee, of Ms Jane Wilson, a GCU alumna with expertise in communications and public affairs.

5. Strategy 2030

Having approved Strategy 2030 previously, the Court today approved the two supporting strategies covering Learning and Teaching and Research together with the enabling plans for People, Infrastructure and Finance.

6. Student Recruitment Report

The Court noted an overview of student recruitment in academic year 2020/21 as at 16th March 2021 and the strong growth evident in most categories including international.

7. 2021 HESA Performance Indicators

The Court noted the report on the 2021 HESA Performance Indicators (PIs) relating to participation of under-represented groups and the teaching quality metrics of projected outcomes and non-continuation, published in February 2021. The University has maintained its strong performance in the 2021 PIs in key areas, particularly within the context of the Scottish sector.

8. REF Final Submission

The Court noted the report on the University's submission for the 2021 Research Excellence Framework. The Court expressed its appreciation of the immense work that had been undertaken across the University to prepare the submission and thanked the PVC for his leadership of the exercise.

9. Report from Senate meeting held on 24th February 2021 and the Extraordinary Meeting on 31st March 2021

The Court noted the business of the Senate meeting on 24th February 2021 and the Extraordinary Meeting on 31st March 2021, the key focus of the latter being consideration of the Learning and Teaching support strategy before its submission to Court.

10. Standing Committee Business

The Court noted reports presented by the Chairs of the Audit, Finance and General Purposes, and People Committees and approved where necessary changes to Terms of Reference and membership. On the recommendation of the People Committee the Court also approved:

- The University's Public Sector Equality Duty Report which describes our progress on mainstreaming equality and delivering our Equality Outcomes.
- The University's refreshed Equality Outcomes for 2021-2025.

11. GCNYC Board of Trustees Report from Meeting on 12th March 2021

The Court noted the report presented by the Chair of the Board on the GCNYC Board of Trustees meeting which took place on 12th March 2021.

12. Media Coverage Analysis – March Update

The Court noted the report which highlights the media coverage received by the University in March.

13. Date of next Court meeting

The next meeting of Court will take place on Thursday 17th June 2021.