

UNIVERSITY SENATE

Minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2021

- Present:** Professor P Gillies (Chair), Dr B Ahmed, Professor B Alkali, Dr T Boutaleb, Ms J Burt, Ms F Campbell, Professor M E Farrag, Dr M Ferguson, Dr K Fryer, R Gowans, Dr L Grey, Ms J Hulme, Mr N Kayani, Dr C Khamisha, Mr A Kilpatrick, Mr S Latta, Mr T McAlear, Dr B McConville, Dr K McPherson, Mrs W Mazzucco, Dr C Miller, Professor J Miller, Professor G Morison, Professor A Nelson, Dr V Ness, Ms T Nyariki, Dr A O'Hagan, Dr S Ogden, Dr A Pierotti, Mr A Rahoo, Dr S Rate, Professor A Robertson, Professor A Simmers, Mr B Smith, Professor B Steves, Ms L Tareen, Dr K Thomson, Dr O Uthmani and Mr V Waters
- Apologies:** Dr K Bannigan, Professor J Lennon, Professor G Loffler, Professor M Mannion, Dr N Northway and Professor O Pahl
- In Attendance:** Mrs C Hulsen, Director of Strategy and Planning,
Mr S Lopez, Academic Registrar
Ms J Main, Director of Student Life
Mrs S Mitchell, COO
Mr R Ruthven, Director of Library Services

Mrs D Donnet, Clerk to Senate
- Observers:** Mr P Brown (Governance), Mrs J Burns (Executive Support), Mrs L Clark (Governance), Mrs K Cleary (People Services), Mr C Fitch (Lay Governor), Mr D Gallagher (Lay Governor), Mr I Kerr (Lay Governor), Ms L McAleavy (QAE), Mrs L McGinley (Governance)

Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone to the second meeting of Senate in academic session 2021/22.

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

- 1.1 Senate **noted** the minutes of the meeting of Senate held on 20 October 2021 that had previously been approved by circulation.

2. Matters Arising

- 2.1 Senate **noted** a report on the matters arising from the Senate meeting on 20 October 2021 and the actions taken since that meeting to address them.

3. Principal & Vice Chancellor and Executive Board

- 3.1 Senate **noted** a report from the Principal & Vice-Chancellor that provided an update on substantive items considered by the Executive Board since the last meeting of Senate as well as informing on issues relating to learning, teaching, research and the wider higher education sector.
- 3.2 The Principal reported the results of the Thriving Learners Survey research project, led by Universities Scotland and undertaken by The Mental Health Foundation, that had recently been published. The project focussed on higher education student experiences in Scotland, and comprised a survey of around 15,000 Scottish HE students, including almost 2,000 GCU students, administered between April and June 2021, and interviews and focus groups with people working in student mental health and wellbeing services within HEIs. The survey responses indicated a number of serious causes for concern to the sector. The GCU outcomes were largely in line with the sector average across the majority of questions and where differences existed, these may be due to the distinct demographics of the GCU population. The majority of students reported their own wellbeing as low and the general health of survey respondents in both sector data and the GCU sample was lower than the Scottish national figure for adult general health. Over 30% of students reported either moderately severe or severe symptoms of depression, and over a third reported they had experienced a serious psychological issue for which they felt they required support. One fifth reported suicidal ideation or a suicide attempt, and a significant proportion of students reported self-harm.
- 3.3 These survey results were clearly a cause for concern, and work would continue to highlight the wellbeing and other support that was available in the University. The Head of the Department of Psychology reported that work was underway to explore how placements for students undertaking the Doctorate in Psychology might support wellbeing in the University.

4. Response to Covid-19

- 4.1 The Chief Operating Officer reported that cases of Covid-19 within the University remained low and there had been no transmission within a learning and teaching setting. The new Omicron variant meant that the situation was changing rapidly, and the University would continue to follow Government guidelines. At the moment it was intended that the blend of online and on campus teaching would go ahead as planned for the remainder of the trimester, but that would be reviewed if guidelines were changed. Consideration was being given to plans for online and where required on campus exams in the new year. Staff were being strongly recommended to postpone their Christmas celebrations. A drop-in vaccine bus would be on campus on 14th December and staff and students were encouraged to attend to get required vaccinations.
- 4.2 In discussion, a member who was a TU officer, praised the University for the responsive, inclusive and cautious way the pandemic had been managed. He urged caution in holding in person meetings as that increased the opportunity for spreading the virus, and this may impact on the ability to continue with essential face to face teaching. Where teaching staff were in a higher risk category they should speak to their manager.
- 4.3 The University's approach was also welcomed by a student member who reported that there was a very high level of compliance regarding face coverings in a teaching setting, however this was less so in areas such as the library, which was disappointing. There was concern amongst level 4 students in particular, many of whom would welcome more on campus activity.
- 4.4 The Chair acknowledged the importance of on campus activity, especially in light of the earlier discussion on mental health, and reassured Senate that this was being monitored. The requirement to wear face coverings throughout the campus would be reinforced.
- 4.5 Senate **noted** the update

5. Standing Committee and School Board Summary reports

5.1 Senate **noted** reports from the following standing Committees and School boards:-

5.2 Academic Policy and Practice Committee (APPC) held on 3 November 2021. In summarising the business covered, reference was made by the Acting PVC Learning and Teaching to the proposal to create a new Learning Enhancement Sub Committee of APPC to replace the Learning and Teaching Subcommittee (LTSC) and Enhancing the Student Experience Steering Group (ETSE). Communication about this and the revised committee structure would be shared with schools and relevant professional support departments.

5.3 University Research Committee held on 17 November 2021. In addition to the matters detailed in the summary report, in response to a question regarding paternity leave for PGR students the VP Research informed Senate that the approach to childbirth and adoption leave recognised, in line with best practice across the sector, the varying makeup of a family. Male PGR students on a studentship received 2 weeks paid leave. In discussing the Committee's consideration of whether the University should become a signatory of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), an initiative relating to a re-evaluation of how research is assessed, particularly in relation to a perceived over-reliance on metrics based on journal impact factors, the VP Research indicated that further work into this would be done.

5.4 International Committee held on 4 November 2021. The Deputy Vice Chancellor reported the continuing increase in international recruitment and this look set to continue into Tri B. Additional resources and revised processes had been put in place to minimise the number of late arrivals with the aim of returning to a pre-pandemic position. The situation regarding the arrival of overseas students and quarantine/vaccination would be carefully monitored. The Principal reassured Senate that resources were being reviewed and additional academic staff agreed for academic departments were there had been an increase in student numbers.

5.5 The School of Computing Engineering and the Built Environment School Board held on 6 October 2021.

5.6 The Glasgow School for Business and Society School Board held on 20 October 2021.

6. Strategy for Learning 2030: Draft Implementation Roadmap until the end of 2022/23

6.1 Senate considered a report outlining guidance on priorities and target outcomes for learning and teaching to help inform Schools' and Services' 2022/23 operational plans, and provide an implementation roadmap for Strategy for Learning 2030 until the end of 2022/23. The roadmap had been designed to align with operational planning, and priority actions developed in consultation with stakeholders. The documentation was not intended to be prescriptive but provide guidance, and it would be reviewed and updated as required.

6.2 In discussion, it was acknowledged that there was a high number of actions for Schools, but it was for each School to agree what their priority actions would be and it was agreed to make this clearer in the documentation.

6.3 It was noted only one research centre was mentioned in the documentation, and it was clarified that this was named as an example only, and that it would be amended to make it more generic. Senate was informed that work was underway to ensure that student wellbeing was appropriately reflected in the roadmap.

6.4 Senate **endorsed** in principle the draft Strategy for Learning 2022/23 implementation roadmap and that amendments would be made in light of members' feedback, with the plan being updated in early 2022 following an analysis of Schools and Services Learning and Teaching-related operational plans.

7. Student Survey Approval Process

- 7.1 Senate **noted** a paper outlining the new Student Survey Approval Process for inclusion in the University's Student Survey and Evaluation Policy. The new process had been informed by a sector review and developed in consultation with the Student Survey Working Group. The paper also highlighted amendments to the Student Survey and Module Evaluation Policy as a result of the new approval process, including additional text included in the policy covering the approval process itself as well as guidance around the process, and updates to Section 2 ('Coverage') of the policy.
- 7.2 The Student Survey Approval Process had been considered by Deans Group and Executive Board, and approved by APPC.

8. Research Degrees Committee

- 8.1 Senate **approved** the award of 2 PhDs.

9. Senate and Standing Committees Calendar of Meetings 2022/23

- 9.1 Senate **approved** the Senate and Standing Committees Calendar of Meetings 2022/23.

10. Programme Withdrawal

- 10.1 Senate **approved** the withdrawal of the Degree Apprenticeship Quantity Surveying (GCU London) programme. It was noted that the demand for the DA Quantity Surveying didn't materialise, despite interest from the sector, and there were no students on the programme.

11. Generic Award Proposal: Health and Social Care Studies

- 11.1 Senate **approved** a proposal to provide a generic exit award for post graduate students within the School of Health and Life Sciences. There was already one exit award within the School, MSc Life Sciences, however this did not align to the current Nursing and Community Health and AHP programmes within the School. This new generic award would be at PgC, PgD and Masters level and entitled, MSc Health and Social Care Studies.

12. University Research Committee Terms of Reference 2021/22

- 12.1 Senate **approved** the updated University Research Committee Composition and Terms of Reference 2021/22.

13. Academic Appointments

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

14. Summary Report of Court

- 14.1 Senate received the summary Report of the meetings of University Court held on 11 November 2021.

15. Professional Recognition of Teaching and Supporting Student Learning through HEA Fellowships (UKPSF, 2011) in 2019-2020 and 2020 - 2021

- 15.1 Senate received notification of Staff achieving professional recognition of teaching and supporting student learning through HEA Fellowships (UKPSF, 2011) in 2019-2020 and 2020 – 2021.

16. Senate **noted** that the **date of the next meeting was Wednesday 23 February 2022.**

17. Chair's Closing Remarks

- 17.1 The Chair encouraged Senators to visit the online Points of Pride exhibition which had been launched the previous day, noting that it had received more submission than in previous years. She thanked all staff and students for their continued hard work and commitment in challenging circumstances and wished all well for the extended festive break.