

**Minutes of the University Court held on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2023 at 9am in person in the Boardroom, Britannia Building.**

**Present:** Rob Woodward (Chair), Amit Bhargava, Prof Stephen Decent, Chukwuma Egbujor, Daniel Gallacher, Asif Haseeb, Ian Kerr, Sharon Lowrie, Meg Lustman, Neena Mahal, Austin Sweeney, Laiba Tareen and Jane Wilson.

**Apologies:** Peter Baguley, Sylvie Freund Pickavance, David Halliday, Ellen Gibson, Dr Lyle Gray, Dr Nick McKerrell, Professor Catriona Miller and Bill McDonald

**In attendance:** Jan Hulme, University Secretary and Vice Principal (Governance)

Susan Mitchell, Chief Operating Officer & DVC (Operations)

Professor Mike Mannion, (Interim) VP Global Engagement

Professor Andrea Nelson, (Interim) Provost and DVC

Professor Alastair Robertson, Pro Vice Chancellor (Learning and Teaching)

Fiona Campbell, Vice Principal, People and Student Wellbeing

Claire Hulsén, VP Strategy and Planning

Prof Rachel Baker and Prof Anita Simmers Joint (Interim) PVC Research

Paul Queen, Chief Finance Officer

Paul Brown, Director of Governance & Legal Services.

Deborah Donnet, Deputy Director of Governance & Legal Services for items 12 and 13

**Chair's opening remarks**

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the Principal to his first Court meeting as well as welcoming Prof Rachel Baker and Prof Anita Simmers in their capacity as Joint (Interim) PVC Research as well as the other posts that had altered as a result of the new University Executive Group. The apologies were as noted.

**1. Minutes**

- 1.1 Court noted that the minutes of the Court meetings held on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2022 and 12<sup>th</sup> December 2022 and 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 17<sup>th</sup> November 2022 and the actions taken to address them.

### 3. Declaration of interest

- 3.1 A summary of the register of interests was included with the court papers. There was no update but 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 explained that unfortunately, there were no staff governors at the meeting today. The two TU nominated governors and two other staff governors were not attending in light of industrial action taking place on the day of Court. The Professional and Support Services Staff Governor had notified well in advance that he would be unable to attend this Court meeting for reasons unrelated to the industrial action. . The regular staff governor meeting had taken place with the Chair, the Vice-Chair and the University Secretary earlier in the week and staff governors had been invited to provide comments on various issues which could be shared with Court in their absence. The Chair explained that in response the trade union appointed governors had provided contributions which would be shared with Court at relevant points.
- 4.2 The Chair informed Court that there is a meeting of the Court Governance & Nominations Committee next week which will be considering the composition of Court and also the need to appoint a new chancellor and that this would be a good opportunity to expand the process to make it more open and democratic.
- 4.3 The Chair congratulated those involved in the Annual Stakeholder event and that it had gone well and was a good way in which to reach out to a wider audience and that year on year it seems to be growing.
- 4.4 The Chair referred to the wider societal cost of living pressures and the industrial action which was continuing. He had invited the TU nominated governors to comment on the position and their statement was shared with the Court. In response, the Principal and the VP People and Student Wellbeing explained that pay and associated negotiations were conducted nationally at sectoral level. Nevertheless, constructive discussions were continuing locally to see if a basis could be found for reaching agreement with the campus unions without breaching the national parameters. The situation was made more complex by the fact that not all the campus unions had the same scope for local negotiation as some were working within a very firmly held national position.

### 5. Principal and Executive Board report

- 5.1 The Principal presented his report which included a summary of his first few weeks in office, and he gave an account of his early impressions of the current position of the University, which were strongly positive. With an excellent platform for further growth and development, he set out what he considered the priorities for the University to be. He explained that he wished to focus on 1) GCU core business of education and research, 2) building community and 3) external engagement.
- 5.2 The Court discussed and endorsed the Principal's vision, analysis and areas for focus.
- 5.3 **ACTION: Director of Governance & Legal Services to arrange a Court Briefing to hear and discuss the Principal's views on and priorities for GCU following his first 100 days in office.**

## **6. COO/DVC (Operations) Report**

- 6.1 The Court noted a report from the Chief Operating Officer (COO) that gave an overview of key issues since the last Court meeting in December 2022. These included confirmation of the Q1 position and that the Q2 position which would soon be confirmed was showing continuing strength in international students and income but that home student numbers were below that expected.
- 6.2 In addition she explained that the point in time comparative debt position of the University may be increasing but that this was to be expected with the significant increase in international students but that debt is not increasing as fast as student income and that enhanced recovery procedures are in place which is helping to improve those figures which would be greatly reduced by the year end.
- 6.3 The COO/ DVC(O) explained that considerable work was ongoing with regard to the University estate and improvement to this. She explained that a new masterplan was being prepared which is looking at the whole University estate and its future needs, including London.
- 6.4 The COO/ DVC( O) provided an update on SIMS and explained that it had broadly been implemented and that the problems that had occurred in Tri A had not been repeated in Tri B. In response to questions, she explained that the position would continue to be monitored and any further development would take place as required. She explained that the work was now to ensure that business processes were well aligned with SIMS capabilities.
- 6.5 The COO/DVC( O) explained that with regard to home recruitment, this year GCU would be focussing on clearing but also with more open days and applicant focus events on campus. In response to questions, Professor Simmers explained the clearing process and the change in the way applicants now approached the whole university application process. As a result clearing no longer implied a reduction in the required entrance requirements for students or the quality of the applicants, and the sector, including the University, could now use clearing as a tool to broaden access.

## **7. Student President's report**

- 7.1 The Court noted a report from the Student President highlighting recent activities and initiatives undertaken by the Student's Association.
- 7.2 In response to questions, the Student President outlined the work that the student association was doing in order to improve student engagement and turnout at the upcoming student elections as well as support that would be offered to any students affected by the earthquake in Turkey & Syria.

## **8. Students' Association Trimester 1 Report**

- 8.1 The Court noted the report from the Student President, that provided an update on Students' Association activities for Trimester A in the academic year 2022/23.
- 8.2 In response to questions, the Student Vice President referred to the University's strong performance in the ISB results and highlighted that the vast majority of students were very positive about their experience at GCU. He highlighted that accommodation and the cost of living crisis were significant issues for the students but acknowledged that these were being addressed by the University.

## **9. University Secretary's Report**

- 9.1 The Court noted a report from the University Secretary that provided an update on the ongoing finance oriented lay governor recruitment, including the appointment of an FGPC Chair Designate, and that lay governor recruitment was due to be discussed at an upcoming meeting of the Court Governance & Nominations Committee.
- 9.2 The University Secretary referred to the calendar of Court and Committee meetings and the practice of publishing firm dates for a two year period on a rolling basis. However, there were occasions when circumstances drove the need to make changes to the published dates. Such a need had been identified and were expected to affect the September and February dates in the next two year cycle. These dates would be finalised as soon as possible and notified provisionally to governors, with the amended calendar being brought to the April Court.
- 9.3 The Court considered the proposal for an amendment to its Standing Orders, following the previous meeting at which Court had agreed the approach to be taken to determining 'in attendance' presence of individuals at Court and Committee meetings.
- 9.4 The Court **approved** the amendment to the Standing Orders.

## **10. Student Recruitment Report**

- 10.1 The Court received a report from the VP Strategy and Planning on student recruitment providing an update on the intake to Trimester B in academic year 2022-23 as at 8 February 2023. The paper also included a high level overview of taught postgraduate full-time student recruitment to show a combined Trimester A and B view to date.
- 10.2 In response to questions, the VP S&P, explained that applications from home undergraduate students were down but that this was a sector wide issue and that articulation from colleges had reduced as a result of Covid.

## **11. Update on GCNYC**

- 11.1 The Court noted the College's financial position and following discussion endorsed a preliminary review of how this could be addressed.

## **12. Senate Disciplinary Committee(SDC) Annual Report**

- 12.1 The Court noted a report on student misconduct offences considered under the terms of the Code of Student Conduct during Session 2021/22.
- 12.2 The Deputy Director of Governance & Legal Services provided an explanation of the work of the SDC and that the biggest increase in this was in plagiarism and ghost-writing but that this was a sector wide issue and that the University is taking steps to address it.
- 12.3 **Court noted the terms of the report.**

### 13. Complaints Handling Procedure Annual Report

- 13.1 The Court noted a report that provided an overview of the complaints received by the University in the period 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2022.
- 13.2 The Deputy Director of Governance & Legal Services explained the broad nature of complaints that the University received and the process for dealing with these and that she was in close contact with other universities regarding the issues affecting the sector and the commonality of complaints and the challenging SPSO determined timescales for dealing with such complaints.
- 13.3 **Court noted the terms of the report.**

### 14. Research Update Trimester A

- 14.1 The court noted a report providing updates on the Research report for Q2 in academic year 2022/23, summarising research and innovation applications, awards and 'success' rates by volume and value to GCU, by School.
- 14.2 The (Interim) Provost and DVC explained the terms of the report and that this was the first time that all of the Schools had been able to provide data and that the assessment of the recent REF results was still being monitored.

### 15. University Senate: Report from meeting of Senate held on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2022

- 15.1 The Court noted a report that provided a summary of the business discussed by Senate at its meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> December. Prof Mike Mannion as the Vice-Chair of the Senate presented the paper as that was the last meeting of the former Principal.

### 16. Standing Committee Business

- 16.1 Audit Committee – 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023

In the Chair of the Audit Committee's absence the Chair of Court indicated that the report was for noting.

- 16.1.1 Court **noted** the report.

- 16.2 Finance & General Purposes Committee – 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022

- 16.2.1 The Chair of the Committee, Ian Kerr, presented the report. Court **noted** the report of the issues discussed at the Committee meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

- 16.3 People Committee – 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022

- 16.3.1 The report was presented by Neena Mahal, Chair of the Committee. Court **noted** the report of the People Committee highlighting the issues discussed and decisions taken by the People Committee meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022.

16.3.2 The report also included proposed amendments to the Committee's Terms of Reference for approval from the Court.

16.3.3 Court **noted** the report **approved** the proposed amendments to the Committees Terms of Reference.

#### 16.4 RemCo (Extraordinary meeting) – 6<sup>th</sup> December 2022

16.4.1 Meg Lustman, Chair of the Committee, presented the report of the Extraordinary RemCo meeting that took place remotely on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2022. The report also included the revised Terms of Reference for the RemCo.

16.4.2 Court **noted** the report and **approved** the revised Terms of Reference.

### 17. GCNYC Board of Trustees Report from Meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2022

17.1 The Court noted a report presented by Professor Mike Mannion from the last meeting of the GCNYC Board of Trustees held on the 9<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

### 18. Media Coverage Analysis

18.1 The Court noted the report that highlighted the media coverage received by GCU in October, November & December 2022.

### 19. Date of Next Meeting

19.1 The Court noted that the next scheduled meeting would take place in person on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2023 at 9.00am with dinner taking place the evening before on 19<sup>th</sup> April.