

SUMMARY REPORT OF COURT 25th June 2020

The University Court met virtually today, 25th June 2020 and welcomed the new Student President, Susan Docherty, and the new student observer, soon to be the second student governor, Tabitha Nyariki to their first meeting in these roles. Court also expressed warm thanks for the contribution of Dr Bill Gunnyeon and Lesley Thomson who are demitting office as governors at the end of July.

What follows is a high-level summary of the main issues addressed by Court today, which will also appear on the University website. The Court's key business included review and approval of the draft budget for 20/21 prepared in the context of the extraordinary circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic. A series of virtual meetings led by the Principal has been scheduled in the coming weeks to allow staff to hear about the budget and ask questions.

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 in the context of the impact that Covid-19 has had on the institution. Issues included: the government commissioned review of FE/HE by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), the modest new funding to help research withstand the impact of Covid, the remarkable, diverse contribution of staff and students to supporting our communities and efforts to control and counter the effects of the pandemic, and the preparations which are in train for the start of the new academic year on 5th October. Noting the shifting context in which the University needed to plan for that, the Principal emphasised the vital importance of agile management which anticipated and addressed new issues as we operate in a particularly uncertain macro environment. The Court also noted steps taken to respond to the Black Lives Matter movement.

2. Safe Campus Opening

The Court noted a report from the Chief Operating Officer on the planning that the University has been undertaking to determine what needs to be implemented to successfully enable the start of the new Academic Session. Through the establishment of a series of work streams, the University has put in place a substantial return to campus work programme to address the complex requirements of a safe return to campus for staff and students.

3. Chief Operating Officer's Report

The Court noted the report on the key activities across the Chief Operating Officer portfolio, much of it taking place in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. All the directorates have been focussed on two priorities: firstly, looking after staff and students during lockdown and facilitating continued work/study wherever possible; and secondly, planning for a future return to campus.

4. Student President's Report

The Student President reported on the activities of the Students' Association since the previous Court meeting and confirmed that the incoming Full Time Officers for 2020/21 took office on 1st June 2020. The Student President also presented a report on the activities of the Students' Association in

Trimester 2 of the 2019/20 academic year, which is aligned to The Bigger Plan 2020 and the Students' Association strategic plan. The close co-operation between the Student Association and the Executive leadership team was noted and praised.

5. University Secretary's Report

The Court noted in particular the proposed changes to the Court Standing Orders following the approval of the final version of the GCU Amendment Order of Council 2020, which will amend the GCU Order of Council 2010 in line with the requirements of the HE Governance (Scotland) Act 2016. The final version of the Court Standing Orders will be submitted to Court in September for approval prior to the Amendment Order coming into force on 1st October 2020.

6. Draft University Budget 2020/21

Court approved the draft University Budget 2020/21, which had been extensively debated and reviewed at the extraordinary Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 19th May, the formal Finance & General Purposes Committee on 1st June and at the additional Court briefing and discussion of the draft budget on 15th June 2020.

7. GCNYC

There was coverage of: GCNYC's response to the pandemic, the impact that Covid-19 is having on current operations, a financial evaluation and the plans under the new leadership impacting 2020/21.

8. League Tables and Rankings 2019/20 Review and Analysis

The Court noted a report from DVC Strategy which provided a summary of the key University rankings and league tables released to date in academic year 2019/20. The Court noted gains and losses and in particular that The Sunday Times ranked four of the University's subjects in the top ten in the UK and The Complete University Guide ranked five of the University's subjects in the top ten in the UK, including Optometry, which was ranked 1st in the UK.

9. 2020/21 Trimester A Student Recruitment

The Court noted a report from DVC Strategy which comprised an update on the recruitment position for Trimester A 2020/21 for undergraduate and taught postgraduate entry as well as an overview of student numbers in respect of non-standard provision.

10. Student/Staff Ratios

The Court noted a report from DVC Strategy which provided an overview of Student Staff Ratios within the Scottish University Sector based on 2018/19 HESA data released in May 2020.

11. Widening Access Update

The Court noted a report from the DVC Strategy which provided an update on recently published sector level reports in the area of widening access and demonstrates the University's continued strength in delivering widening access with quality and at scale.

12. Annual Statement on Research Integrity

The Court approved the annual statement on research integrity presented by the PVC Research which is prepared as part of the commitment of the University to meeting the commitments of the Universities UK Concordat to support Research Integrity.

13. Report from Senate meeting held on 8th June 2020

The Court noted the business of the Senate meeting on 8th June 2020. Court approved the revised Senate Standing Orders which had been amended to reflect the changes to the Statutory Instrument to ensure its consistency with the HE Governance (Scotland) Act 2016.

14. Standing Committee Business

The Court noted a report presented by the Chair of the Remuneration Committee and approved the senior staff remuneration philosophy for the coming year. Reports were also presented by the Chairs of the People, Audit, and Finance and General Purposes Committees.

The Court unanimously approved the recommendation from the Court Governance and Nominations Committee sitting as the Chair of Court Nominations Committee under the convenership of the Vice-Chair of Court that the Chair of Court be re-appointed for a second term of three years with effect from 5th February 2021.

The Court approved the recommendation of the Court Governance and Nominations Committee to appoint two new lay governors to the Court with effect from 1st August 2020, Mr Bill McDonald (appointed as Chair designate of the Audit Committee) and Mr Austin Sweeney.

15. Media Coverage Analysis – May Update

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

16. Date of next Court meeting

The next meeting of Court will take place on Wednesday 9th September 2020.