

The Glasgow Caledonian University Court

Minutes of a Meeting of the University Court held on Thursday 11 June 2026 at 9.00am in The Lantern, Annie Lennox Building

Present:

Yvette Hopkins (Chair), Amit Bhargava, Dr Stephen Breslin, Arlene Cairns, Sylvie Freund Pickavance, Daniel Gallacher, Ellen Gibson, Scott Haldane, Asif Haseeb, Sharon Lowrie, Meg Lustman, Bill McDonald, Dr Nick McKerrell, Osman Rafiq, Hamza Siddiqi, Austin Sweeney, Anita Volkert, Professor Mairi Watson, Vida Rudkin, Barbara Allison, Alan Dickson, Chinaenyenwa (Nenny) Ugo, Andrew Craig and Cara Chambers.

Apologies:

Professor Catriona Miller and Sharon Lowrie.

In Attendance:

Jan Hulme, University Secretary & Vice Principal (Governance)
Professor Craig Gaskell, Provost & DVC (Education)
Paul Queen, Chief Financial Officer
Fiona Campbell, Vice Principal (People & Student Wellbeing)
Claire Hulsen, Vice Principal (Strategy & Planning)
Caroline Bysh, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Engagement)
Dawn Anderson, Pro Vice-Chancellor (International)
Professor John Connolly, Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research)
Professor Sharron Dolan, Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research)
Paul Brown, Director of Governance & Legal Services

Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, including Chinaenyenwa (Nenny) Ugo to her first meeting as the Student President and Professor Gaskell, Deputy Vice Chancellor, for whom this was his first meeting of Court in attendance. The Court noted new lay governors; Barbara Allison, Cara Chambers, Andrew Craig, Vida Rudkin and Yvonne Thomson (joining on 1st August) and the reappointment for another three-year term wef 1 August 2026 of Dr Nick McKerrell and Ellen Gibson as trade union nominated governors. She congratulated Hamza Siddiqi on his re-election as a student representative and his reappointment as a student governor.

Reflecting on a successful dinner the evening before and Court's farewell to Daniel Gallacher and Asif Haseeb, she paid warm tribute to them for their excellent contribution to Court over the past nine years. She emphasised that Court dinners were an important informal opportunity for networking and engagement among governors and senior staff.

The Chair noted the positive response to the enhanced governor induction programme which was underway, the forthcoming annual review of Court effectiveness, and a planned refresh of committee memberships and link governor arrangements.

The Chair confirmed meanwhile that Scott Haldane would take up the role as Link governor to the Students' Association for the coming year, when Danny Gallacher steps down as a governor at the end of July. Danny will liaise with Scott on a handover of responsibilities as link governor.

The Chair congratulated Professor John Connolly on his appointment as Director of GCU London and thanked Professor Andrea Nelson for her excellent work in her temporary appointment as Interim Director of GCU London.

The Court noted forthcoming institutional events including the Installation of Professor Mairi Watson as Vice Chancellor on 29 July and the graduation ceremonies in the same week.

The Court noted with sadness the death of a member of staff, Adam Chalmers, and recorded its condolences.

1. Minutes of the Meetings held on 16 April 2026 and 7 May 2026

1.1 The minutes were reviewed and confirmed as an accurate record.

1.2 Court **approved** both sets of minutes without amendment.

2. Declarations of Interest

2.1 No declarations of interest were made.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 The Court confirmed that all substantive matters arising were covered elsewhere on the agenda.

4. Items Brought Forward by the Chair

4.1 The Chair provided further detail on governance developments, noting that the planned 2025/26 annual effectiveness review would consider:

- Governor engagement and contribution

- Alignment with evolving sector expectations of governance

4.2 Court noted that the annual questionnaire would be circulated in the coming weeks with structured one-to-one meetings between the Chair and individual governors held over the summer to support development and effectiveness.

4.3 The Chair confirmed that Alan Dickson had been the sole nomination, duly seconded, as Court Vice-Chair and would assume the role when Meg Lustman stepped down after the September Court meeting. The handover would take place over the summer months.

5. Principal and Vice-Chancellor's Report

5.1 The Principal presented a comprehensive report covering institutional performance, external context and internal transformation. Court received an update on the Programme for Change, noting that collective consultation with the campus trade unions was still underway and there were numerous ways for staff more widely to engage. Recognising the impact on the university community, the Principal acknowledged the constructive role of the unions in support of staff and the Students' Association's support for students in areas potentially affected. The Principal explained the complexity of implementation across professional services and academic areas and emphasised the importance of delivering transformation while maintaining operational stability.

5.2 The Court discussed industrial action by trade unions. The TU nominated governors were invited to provide an update on proposed industrial action and the impact on staff of the implementation of the programme for change. They expressed concerns regarding redundancies, the University's unwillingness to remove the risk of compulsory redundancy, the potential for increased workload pressures and the pace of change.

5.3 The Principal acknowledged these concerns and reaffirmed the commitment to collective consultation, while emphasising the necessity of transformation to ensure long-term sustainability. In response to questions, the Principal explained that student experience and academic standards had been protected during industrial action and that no material impact on progression or outcomes had been observed to date.

5.4 Court discussed the external environment, including increasingly constrained public funding; policy developments affecting international recruitment and sector-wide financial pressures.

5.5 The Principal also provided updates on national discussions on degree awarding differences and fair assessment; adoption of AI technologies to enhance teaching, learning and administration within the University and ongoing engagement with Scottish Government and sector bodies.

5.6 Court **noted** the report and the breadth of challenges and opportunities facing the University.

6. Appointment of Vice-Chair of Court

6.1 Court considered the recommendation regarding appointment of a Vice-Chair.

6.2 It was noted that one duly seconded nomination for Alan Dickson had been received by the closing date, and no election had been required.

6.3 Court **approved** the appointment of Alan Dickson as Vice-Chair.

7. Finance and Risk

7.1 Finance and Risk Report

7.1.1 The CFO presented a detailed financial update, highlighting movement from a forecast deficit to a small surplus position; stabilisation of cash reserves and continued importance of delivery of efficiency measures.

7.1.2 Court discussed the improved position including: the extent to which improvements were one-off or recurring and when costs such as those associated with the programme for change would be accounted for; sensitivity to international recruitment assumptions; and delivery risk associated with Programme for Change savings.

7.1.3 The Corporate Risk Register was reviewed, with particular reference to financial sustainability; Change Programme delivery risks and Estates-related risks, the estate risk had reduced due to recent actions relating to property condition monitoring projects.

7.1.4 Court emphasised the importance of maintaining financial discipline; strengthening scenario planning and clear linkage between strategy and financial planning.

7.1.5 Court **noted** the report.

7.2 UKVI Report

7.2.1 Court received an update on compliance with UKVI requirements including Basic Compliance Assessment (BCA metrics) to date and preparations for the August UKVI Action Plan audit.

7.2.3 Court discussed with concern the impact of further potential policy changes on recruitment and institutional risk as well as the University's projections for international student recruitment over the next few years and the impact on the budget. The Principal explained the need to adjust expectations and approach as well as the steps being taking to address international student recruitment.

7.2.4 Court **noted** the report.

Action: Principal to share with Court the House of Commons Education Committee report on *Higher Education and Funding: Threat of Insolvency and International Students*.

7.3 Student Recruitment Report

7.3.1 The Vice Principal (Strategy & Planning) presented a report on current student recruitment and projections, confirming that home undergraduate recruitment remained strong but that international recruitment applications continued to decline significantly with key markets including India being particularly affected.

7.3.3 In response to questions, the Vice Principal (Strategy & Planning) explained the pressures across the sector as a result of UK policy changes, leading to a lack of confidence in the UK as a destination for international students, but also noted specific downturn in demand from India for GCU. Nevertheless, the Executive were putting in place strategies to address the decline including engagement in-market and diversification of markets.

7.3.4 Court **noted** the report and the associated risks.

8. Strategic Refocus 2035

8.1 The Principal described progress with the Strategic Refocus which had formed the basis of the Court's strategy event in April. She explained that this was mapped to the existing strategy but that it had evolved to consider in more detail the long-term horizon to 2035 with a defined transformation phase in the early years underpinned by three core strategic themes supported by enabling "catalysts".

8.2 Court discussed the clarity and distinctiveness of the proposed themes and commented on the importance of: maintaining a strong student-centred focus; having the right skills mix to effect transformation; the role of the staff voice; an appropriately skilled work force; and shared organisational values. The journey would be mapped and monitored through operational plans.

8.3 Court also discussed values, deliverability and the pace of change given financial constraints, as well as the importance of measurable outcomes.

8.4 Court **endorsed the strategic direction of travel.**

9. Draft Budget 2026–27

9.1 The CFO presented a detailed draft budget for 2026–27. He emphasised the transitional financial position, reflecting the drop in international recruitment and importance of the Programme for Change. The budget has been set in line with the previously agreed Court set targets, reflecting Court's wish to secure a sustainable future for the University, but this was dependent on delivery of identified savings and improved international student recruitment.

9.2 The CFO reminded Court of discussions that took place at the Court Budget Briefing and that the budget was based on key assumptions including student number projections, cost reduction timelines and inflation and pay pressures. He explained that, as in recent years, the budget position would continue to evolve and that Court would be kept apprised of this with regular updates presented to Court in-the coming year. However, the current budget reflected the present position of the University and prudent assumptions about costs and income growth in order to manage the risks.

9.3 Court discussed risks in depth, including sensitivity to international recruitment volatility, potential delays to savings delivery and the key proposal made by the trade unions in the context of the current collective consultation to use the University's cash balance to try to transition to lower income levels over a more prolonged period.

9.4 Court **approved** the draft budget. Dr Nick McKerrell, Ellen Gibson & Osman Rafiq opposed the draft budget. .

10. Strategic Land Proposal

10.1 The CFO presented a paper explaining proposals relating to the University estate strategy and specifically current opportunities for acquisition of land and a separate disposal of land owned by the University. He confirmed that he was seeking Court's authority to enter into negotiations to acquire the land within a defined price bracket and to dispose of an existing piece of land. He explained that the benefit of these proposals is that they were part of the long-term estate optimisation strategy and the purchase presented an exceptional opportunity to secure an asset which aligned with future campus strategy.

10.2 Court engaged in detailed discussion regarding market conditions and timing, financial implications and affordability and potential reputational considerations in the

context of current organisational change and the impact on staff. Concern was expressed about the message to staff during a period of post reductions and the balance between long term opportunity and short-term financial pressures.

10.3 Following discussion, which noted that the acquisition would in balance sheet terms be neutral for the University as it remained an asset, Court **approved the proposal**, recognising the need for careful stakeholder communication. The following governors opposed the proposal and its timing: Dr Nick McKerrell, Ellen Gibson, Osman Rafiq & Hamza Siddiqi.

Secretary Note: Court subsequently electronically **approved** the acquisition of land at the pre-approved price.

11. Student President's Report & Tri B Report

11.1 The Student President presented an update on student activity including the transition to a new team of full-time officers. She reported on the SA's (student associations) teaching awards, and strong engagement levels across student groups with growth in societies and extracurricular participation.

11.2 The Student President provided an update on key campaigns by the Students' Association (SA), including cost-of-living support, academic representation and feedback and the improved consultation processes with the University management.

11.3 In response to a question, the Principal explained that additional security measures were being put in place to reassure students in light of recent disturbances in Northern Ireland.

11.5 Court **noted** the reports.

12. University Secretary's Report

12.1 Court considered governance matters including delegated authority arrangements for the Chair of Court during the summer vacation period; the schedule of meetings for Court and committees for the academic year 2027/28 together with a change to the calendar of meetings for the year 2026/27; the Court Programme of Work for the academic year 2026/27; governance developments affecting the HE sector; and the annual report on FOI activity and compliance.

12.2 The University Secretary also referred to the revised Student Code of Conduct, which appeared later on the Court's agenda for approval, and its implications for the

structure of the Appeal Committee of the University Court (ACUC), for which latter Court's approval was now sought.

12.3 Court noted the report and **approved** the following:

- Delegated authority to the Chair of Court.
 - Court programme of work for 2026/27.
 - Calendar of meetings for 2026/27 & 2027/28.
 - Changes to the structure of the ACUC.
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13. Report from Senate – 3 June 2026

13.1 The Principal presented a report from the Senate meeting on 3rd June including the proposed revised Student Code of Conduct. She explained that this had been developed over some time involving engagement with stakeholders including the Students' Association. It was apparent that technological, pedagogic and societal changes meant that the Code would continue to evolve and that it would be kept under constant review and updated as necessary.

13.3 Court **approved** the revised Code of Conduct.

14. Research Report (Q3)

14.1 Professor John Connolly, Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) presented the latest report on research performance, noting strong growth in research income with a healthy pipeline of applications and that research was continuing to progress against its strategic objectives.

14.2 Court welcomed the positive trajectory and **noted** the report.

15. Standing Committee Business

15.1 Court received reports from its standing committees.

15.1.1 People Committee: The Chair of the People Committee presented a report from the most recent People Committee meeting and sought approval of:

- The updated Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy; and
 - The University Policy Response to the Employment Rights Act 2025
- Both of which were included in the report.

Court **approved** the Health Safety and Wellbeing Policy and the Employment Rights Act Policy Response.

15.1.2: Finance and General Purposes Committee(F&GPC): Court received a report of the issues discussed and decisions taken by the F&GPC meeting held on 18 May 2026.

Court **noted** the report.

15.1.3: Audit and Risk Committee (ARC): Court received a report of the issues discussed and decisions taken by the Audit & Risk Committee meeting held on 26th May 2026. The Chair of the ARC provided feedback from a meeting he had attended arranged by the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) for Chairs of Audit & Risk committees which had examined AI and its impact on the sector.

Court **noted** the report.

15.1.4: Remuneration Committee: The Chair of the Remuneration Committee presented a report of the issues discussed at the Remuneration Committee meeting held on 19th May 2026 which included the context of senior staff remuneration; an update on pensions; the University's Remuneration Philosophy; and draft 2026-27 objectives for the Principal for finalisation in the autumn.

Court **approved** the Remuneration Philosophy and the draft 2026-27 objectives for the Principal.

16. Operations and Communications Report

16.1 Court **noted** operational updates and communications activity.

17. Date of Next Meeting

17.1 Thursday 17 September 2026.

18. Chair of Court: Annual Appraisal

18.1 The Chair and Executive, other than the Principal as a Court member and the University Secretary, withdrew for this item. The item was led by the Vice-Chair of Court. The discussion concluded with Court's expression of appreciation of the work of the Chair and her dynamic, authentic leadership. The Vice-Chair thanked governors and would provide detailed feedback to the Chair.
