

## **Glasgow Caledonian University Court**

### **Minutes of the University Court held on 8th September 2022 at 9am in Rooms 15 & 16 of the CEE**

**Present:** Rob Woodward (Chair), Amit Bhargava, Chukwuma Egbujor, Campbell Fitch, Sylvie Freund Pickavance, Daniel Gallacher, Professor Pamela Gillies, Dr Lyle Gray, David Halliday, Asif Haseeb, Ian Kerr, Sharon Lowrie, Meg Lustman, Neena Mahal, Bill McDonald, Dr Nick McKerrell( left at 10.30), Professor Catriona Miller, Austin Sweeney, and Jane Wilson( joined 9.20) .

**Apologies** Ellen Gibson & Laiba Tareen.

**In attendance:** Jan Hulme, University Secretary and Vice Principal (Governance)  
Susan Mitchell, Chief Operating Officer  
Professor Andrea Nelson, Pro Vice Chancellor (Research)  
Professor Alastair Robertson, Acting Pro Vice Chancellor (Learning and Teaching)  
Paul Queen, Director of Finance  
Fiona Campbell, Vice Principal, People and Student Wellbeing  
Claire Hulsén, Director of Strategy  
Paul Brown, Director of Governance & Legal Services.

#### **Chair's opening remarks**

The Chair welcomed Professor Catriona Miller as the new academic staff elected governor, Dr Lyle Gray as the new Senate elected governor and Peter Baguley, lay governor, who was returning after a period of sabbatical leave. The Chair also congratulated David Halliday on his re-election for a second term as Professional and Support staff governor.

The Chair advised that Item 13 being the "Annual Update: African Leadership Project", would be deferred until the November Court meeting.

#### **1. Minutes**

- 1.1 Court **noted** that the minutes of the Court meeting held on 16th June 2022, 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 16<sup>th</sup> June 2022 and the actions taken since that meeting to address them.
- 2.2 Regarding the cyber security training, it was highlighted that the COO is currently working with Sharon Lowrie on appropriate cyber security training for governors and that this would be provided as soon as possible.
- 2.3 With reference to the action on GBV training, it was noted that an online briefing had taken place on this subject on 15<sup>th</sup> June but that given the importance of this issue, further training may follow.

### **3. Declaration of interest**

- 3.1 A summary of the register of interests was included with the court papers. Court members were reminded of the importance of this being kept up to date and invited 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 congratulated Professor James Miller on his appointment as the Vice-Chancellor of UWS. He expressed warm thanks for Professor Miller's tireless dedication and the contribution he had made to the University's success. He wished him well in his new role where he hoped there would be scope for the two institutions to work well together.
- 4.2 The Chair provided a brief report on the recent Court Effectiveness Review, highlighting key findings, and thanked governors for their participation and assistance with that. The Chair advised Court that a detailed report will be brought to the next CG&NC meeting in October with a view to further report to Court in November. The summary table of responses is included in the University Secretary's report and overall, it demonstrated that the Court was in a strong place and working effectively.
- 4.3 The planned Strategy Away Day for October this year will be deferred until next Spring in order to allow the new Principal to participate in that event. The Away Day in October will now become an online briefing on the University's New Digital Learning Programme. This will take place on the 27<sup>th</sup> October.
- 4.4 The Chair confirmed that a review of the composition of the various Court Standing Committees had taken place in light of changes in Court membership and that this was nearing completion. The Chair has spoken with the Committee Chairs and the individuals affected and intends to present the proposed changes to CG&NC for review and recommendation to Court for approval.
- 4.5 Court was informed that at its last meeting, the Board of GCNYC approved a request to Court to appoint 2 new lay governors to replace Mr Gordon Jack and Professor Ann Priest, who had retired from the Board and this too is a matter under current consideration and again, would be brought to CG& NC for recommendation to the Court following consultation with the Chair of the Board of Trustees.
- 4.6 The Chair remarked that the Summer graduations had been a joyous occasion and implored that all governors attend graduations or at least 2 in any year. For those not living in Scotland, there are graduations that take place in London.
- 4.7 For the last item on the agenda, the Chair of Court's Annual Appraisal, the Chair would withdraw and the Vice Chair of Court, Meg Lustman, would take the chair.

### **5. Principal and Executive Board Report**

- 5.1 The Principal presented her report which provided a summary of items arising since the previous Court meeting.
- 5.2 Additional items to report on included a recent Universities Scotland Away Day at which there was a presentation by John Underhill of University of Aberdeen and Paul de Leeuw of Robert

Gordon University on ENERGY TRANSITION & SUSTAINABILITY in the Scottish HE Sector. The Principal reported that this was an excellent presentation and that the presenters had offered to attend other universities in order to provide an overview of their plans which proposed a coordinated approach to sustainability and its procurement amongst Scottish universities. She proposed that Court might wish to issue an invitation to them.

- 5.3 The Principal provided an update on proposals from John Swinney regarding the emerging Scottish budget and plans for savings but that the universities were still lobbying the Scottish Government for proper funding. In Scotland, research is underfunded compared to the English HE Sector. The Principal highlighted that whilst Professor Andrea Nelson, PVC Research, had obtained good research funding partners, the problem with Horizon funding in Europe is affecting research and more investment is required.
- 5.4 Recruitment challenges at undergraduate level are an issue for the HE Sector in Scotland and a number of institutions are facing the possibility of clawback from the SFC due to under recruitment.
- 5.5 Student accommodation remains at crisis levels for students in Scotland, particularly in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen for various reasons including changes to legislation which is disincentivising landlords to remain in or enter the vitally important private rental market. The University is aware of the potential pressure and is taking steps to address it.
- 5.6 The Principal acknowledged the support of governors and others for the recent fundraising event for the Sir Alex Ferguson Foundation which raised a total of £175K for the Foundation. Thanks to Sir Alex for his continued support for the work of the Foundation, helping students who need additional support.
- 5.7 The Principal confirmed that Professor Mike Mannion would be taking over the role of DVC in an acting capacity, when Professor James Miller leaves at the end of October, the matter having been discussed with the Principal Designate too.
- 5.8 The cost of living crisis is a significant factor in current national pay negotiations involving UCEA in which the GCU is involved. GCU recognises the impact of the cost of living crisis and the Chair and EB have been examining ways in which the University can support staff. Further details on this will be presented at a future Court meeting. Likewise, in relation to students, GCU recognises that this will be a hard winter for students and the Student Hardship Fund is carefully considering what more can be done to further support students.
- 5.9 In response to various questions from governors, the Principal advised as follows:
  - Regarding international students and their welfare, the University was working on this, especially for those students from Pakistan who will have been affected by the floods;
  - The new Director of Estates will be assessing ongoing issues including carbon management;
  - On the Advanced Higher Hub, as this has evolved over the years, the time is right to consider the costs and impact and the extent to which it is fulfilling its purposes.
  - The VP People & Student wellbeing provided an update on the national pay negotiations and discussions with UCEA as well as local discussions with campus unions. Unison currently have planned strike action and the UCU and EIS are each currently balloting their members on strike action. The University will not know the results of these until late October.
  - Referring to enthusiasm in some quarters for a devolved approach to pay negotiations, the Principal explained that a Scottish only negotiating basis was discussed at Universities

Scotland but it was acknowledged that throughout the UK, some universities are stronger than others and in England, some are even in "Special Measures". Within the HE Sector, staff often move within the UK which encourages innovation and this has always been the position. A devolved approach to pay negotiations could alter the scope that individuals would see for mobility within the sector and that would be to the detriment not only of Scottish universities but of the UK as a whole. However, some development of the current national negotiating machinery could be productive for all parties.

**Action:** Court **noted** the Principal's report and requested to be kept informed of developments in the industrial action.

Chair of Court to **extend an invitation** to an invitation to John Underhill and Paul de Leeuw to Present to Court on Sustainability.

- 5.10 The VP People and Student Wellbeing, presented a paper seeking Court's approval for proposed changes in GSBS largest department, the Department of Management and Human Resource Management. The proposal is to split the department into two new & distinct departments based around their core subject i.e. Department of Management and the Department of Human Resources Management. The VP People and Student Wellbeing explained that the purpose of the split was to address the growth in numbers of students within the department and to allow each of the individual departments to better focus their work and resources. She explained that consultation had been ongoing with staff and that no concerns had been raised. There will be no negative impact on students as a result by this change.

**Action:** Court **approved** the creation of the new department.

## 6. Chief Operating Officer report

- 6.1 The court **noted** the report from the Chief Operating Officer (COO) which gave an overview of key developments in finance, staffing, IT and the estate as well as the University's management of the continuing impact of Covid.
- 6.2 The COO reported that release 2 of the SIMS project had now been completed and that all students are now on the new system. Release 3 will take place in December and at that time the SIMS project will be mostly complete. A small team of people will then monitor and maintain the programme. The COO advised that ongoing training on SIMS was being provided to staff in conjunction with management in each department and staff are encouraged to highlight any potential issues as the programme is rolled out.
- 6.3 The COO explained the creation of the new interprofessional simulation centre in SHLS which has created a multifunctional teaching and learning/events space with which the school. This is a unique facility and governors are encouraged to visit the simulation centre.
- 6.4 The COO referred to a Critical Incident Management Event that GCU had hosted involving participants from other universities in Glasgow as well as the emergency services and utility providers. The event was hosted and coordinated by David Halliday and was a considerable success.
- 6.5 In relation to the safe return to campus, it remained an evolving environment and the COO reported that various events were planned for Freshers week and that it was not just 1<sup>st</sup> year students that were being provided with an induction but all students who may have missed out on attendance at the University so far. Particular attention will be paid to both staff and students who may have additional requirements to enable them to return safely to campus.

- 6.6 In response to comment from governors regarding the ongoing energy crisis and the severe impact on elements of the local community and the possible use of the University's buildings as a "warm space", the COO confirmed that this would be considered by the EB.

## 7. Student President's report

- 7.1 In the Student President's absence the Student Vice President, Chukwuma Egbujor reported on Students' Association activities since the previous Court meeting drawing particular attention to the work carried out to maintain the Excellent award for the SOS-UK Green Impact Award. Key issues raised included the accommodations crisis in Glasgow as well as student space in London and visas to study in the UK.
- 7.2 In response to issues raised, the Principal and COO explained that whilst the University is aware of some problems with visas, these issues are outwith GCU's control as they are dealt with by the Home Office who are having difficulty in resolving some issues which may cause delays or problems for some students. Whilst GCU does all that it can to support home and international students including through its hardship fund, the University cannot resolve the visa problems as these lie with the Home Office. Nevertheless, the welfare team will always do what they can to support students.
- 7.3 Court welcomed the work being undertaken by the Students' Association and requested details of forthcoming events that may be of interest to governors.

**ACTION:** The Chair reminded governors of the list of events attached to the Student Report and encouraged governors to attend these whenever possible.

## 8. University Secretary's Report

- 8.1 The Court noted a report from the University Secretary and the implementation of Primary Responsibilities. The University Secretary proposed a minor alteration to Responsibility 9 in respect of the accounting policies. The proposed change would amend this responsibility to reflect that appropriate accounting policies are the remit of the EB and the Audit Committee and therefore, Court's Primary responsibility is to **ensure** that these policies are appropriate for GCU and applied correctly. The revised wording for Primary Responsibility 9 would therefore be;

"To ensure that suitable accounting policies are selected and then applied consistently."

Action : Court **approved** the amendment to the Primary Responsibilities.

- 8.2 The Modern Slavery Statement for the financial year ended 31st July 2022 was presented to and **approved** by Court.

## 9. 2022-23 Student recruitment – Interim report

- 9.1 The Court noted a summary report from the Deputy Vice Chancellor, presented by the COO in the DVC's absence, which provided a summary of the applications and unconditional firm acceptances to undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes in Trimester A as at 26

August 2022. Although an advanced point in the Trimester A recruitment cycle, there continues to be flux in the overall position and a final view of the new intake will be available following the commencement of teaching on 27 September and the close of registration thereafter.

9.2 Claire Hulsen, Director of Strategy & Planning, reported that an early view of Trimester B applications is also provided. Tri A required to close early to international applicants as places had all been filled with applications being deferred to Tri B. So far there are 500 firm acceptances from international students compared to 200 at the same point last year. She explained that the graduate visa route was helping drive the number of applications but also in markets where GCU already has a presence such as in India, Nigeria and Pakistan, the University now had an established reputation which assists with student recruitment. It was explained that whilst bad debt is a consideration with international students, the bad debt provision has not increased in percentage terms despite the increasing number of international students being admitted. London student numbers, postgraduate and predominantly international, continue to rise. GCU is recruiting staff to ensure that quality teaching and welfare support continues to be available for the increasing number of students in London. The move to more permanent contracts from fixed term will help drive the recruitment of quality staff.

9.3 In discussing the home market, it was explained that the recruitment difficulties faced by Colleges had an impact on undergraduate numbers articulating into the University, but that this is an issue for the whole HE Sector. Covid has had an impact on colleges as well as a buoyant labour market which has reduced college student numbers and therefore, articulating numbers to the HE Sector impacting on the ability to recruit to overall SFC targets. Graduate Apprentice (GA) numbers had been building up to a level of 257 last year however, the reduction in Scottish Government funding for GA's means that the University was seeking to recruit to approximately 200 this year.

9.4 Court **noted** the report.

## **10. Annual Report on institution-led review of quality and governing body statement of assurance for AY 2021/22**

10.1 The Court received a report from the PVC (Learning and Teaching) on the Annual Report on Institution-led Review of Quality and the Governing Body Statement of Assurance for the academic year 2021/22 which was part of the University's reporting arrangements to the Scottish Funding Council. The Court **approved** the report.

## **11. The National Student Survey 2021**

11.1 The Court **noted** a report presented by the Director of Strategy & Planning in the absence of the Deputy Vice Chancellor, which provided an overview of the National Student Surveys (NSS) 2022 results, and that the results for GCU were generally positive with an improvement in overall satisfaction from last year in the context of declines across the sector. Some outstanding results were in evidence but not every department scores well. The increase in the nursing contingent can have a significant impact on the overall score and the impact of Covid and its effect on those students is still having a significant effect on the numbers. The 2022 survey did not take account of Covid in the questions that it asked.

11.2 It is recognised that the process which feeds into the league tables is a "rough and ready" tool. At present, the NSS are reviewing the questionnaire for implementation of a new questionnaire for 2023 but that it is still subject to final clarification and proposals are awaited following a consultation from OfS during the August period, to which the University submitted an

institutional response as well as contributing to the sector response from Universities Scotland. It is hoped that the new 2023 questionnaire would be released to the sector as soon as possible.

## **12. Graduate outcomes 2019/2020**

- 12.1 The Court **noted** a report from Deputy Vice Chancellor presented by the PVC Learning & Teaching and the Director of Strategy which provided a high level summary of the 2019/20 graduate cohort outcomes for the Scottish sector. The University had 93% of graduates in employment which is 1<sup>st</sup> equal in Scotland. 79% of graduates are in highly skilled jobs. Graduate Outcomes was administered centrally by HESA, and graduates were surveyed approximately 15 months after completing their studies.

## **13. Annual Update: African Leadership Project**

- 13.1 This paper was deferred until the next Court meeting.

## **14. GCNYC Board of Trustees Report from Meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2022.**

- 14.1 The court **noted** the report of the meeting which took place on 22nd July 2022 presented by the Chair of the GCNYC Board of Trustees.

## **15. Media Report**

- 15.1 The Court noted the Media Coverage Analysis Update Report for the period to the end of August 2022.

## **16. Date of next meeting**

- 16.1 The next Court meeting will take place on Thursday **17th November** 2022. The meeting will be in a hybrid format and will not be preceded by a dinner on the evening before. Instead the next Court dinner would be held on **22<sup>nd</sup> November** on campus following the graduations that day and would be an opportunity to thank the Principal for her contribution to GCU.
- 16.2 The next Court briefing will be held on the 27<sup>th</sup> October 2022 on Digital Learning with further details to follow. This will be a virtual event.

## **17. Chair's Appraisal**

- 17.1 The Chair of Court having left the meeting together with all who had been "in attendance", other than the University Secretary, the Vice-Chair took the chair and led the discussion with governors on the Chair's performance. After satisfactory conclusion the Vice-Chair undertook to feed back to the Chair of Court.