**UNIVERSITY SENATE**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2023**

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| **Present:** | Professor Steve Decent (Chair), Dr Bipasha Ahmed, Fiona Campbell, Dr Diane Dickson, Professor Mohamed Farrag, Dr Karen Fryer, Professor Helen Gallagher (Vice Professor Anita Simmers), Dr Lyle Grey, David Grimm, Jan Hulme, Claire Hulsen, Dr Sharon Jackson, Dr Catriona Khamisha, Professor John Lennon, Tom McAlear, Professor Mike Mannion, Samantha MacLean, Wendy Mazzucco, John Mavileth, Mrs Susan Mitchell, Professor Andrea Nelson, Chidozie Nwaigwe, Professor Ole Pahl, Louisa Richardson, Professor Alastair Robertson, Professor Carl Schaschke, Linda Shearer, Brian Smith, Professor Sheila Smith, Professor Bonnie Steves, Dr Karen Thomson, Dr Omair Uthmani and Professor Bruce Wood |
| **Apologies:** | Professor Rachel Baker, Professor Tuleen Boutaleb, Dr Jane Burt, Professor Iain Cameron, Sofia Congradyova, Naveed Kayani, Dr Kerri McPherson, Irene Mains, Dr Val Ness, Professor Angela O'Hagan, Dr Adrian Pierotti, Prof. Anita Simmers and Prof Craig Thomson. |
| **In Attendance:** | Stephen Lopez, Academic Registrar <br> Dr Linda Walsh, Vice Chair, Senate Disciplinary Committee <br> Robert Ruthven, Director of Library Services <br> Jackie Main, Director Student Life <br> Dr Shirley Rate, Vice Dean GSBS and Chair of Assessment Regulations Sub-Committee <br> Wilfred Obi, Vice-President SCEBE <br> Soloman Ajala, Vice President SGSB <br><br> Deborah Donnet, Head of Governance and Legal Services and Clerk to Senate |
| **Observers:** | Paul Brown (Governance and Legal Services), Louise Clark (Governance and Legal Services), Lizzie Reather (People Services). |

**Chair's Opening Remarks**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the fifth meeting of Senate in academic session 2022/23 and in particular to the new student members.

**1.      Minutes of Previous Meeting**

1.1     The Chair informed Senate that the minutes of the previous meetings held on 22nd February 2023 and 5th May 2023 had been approved by prior circulation.

**2.      Matters Arising**

2.1     Senate **noted** a report on the matters arising from the Senate meeting on 5th May 2023 and the actions taken since that meeting to address them.

2.2     In response to a question about the guidelines for Progression and Award Boards (PABs) on how to deal with missing marks as a result of the ongoing industrial action, as agreed by Senate on 5th May 2023, the Deputy Vice Chancellor advised that there had been regular meetings to monitor this. A lot of work had been undertaken across Schools, and as result there was a high degree of confidence that assessments had been appropriately reallocated. Overall, it was expected that there would only be a very small number of missing marks and Registry was collecting data in order to get an idea of the overall impact, and whether further PABs would be required once the industrial action was concluded.

## 3.     Principal's Report to Senate

3.1     Senate **noted** a report from the Chair on matters and priorities relating to academic functions, teaching & learning and research.

3.2     The Principal provided Senate with an update on GCNYC, as had been communicated by him in an all staff email the previous week. He reiterated that it was the University's strong preference to find a partner to take over operations, and discussions on this were ongoing. GCNYC staff were being supported and students were also aware of the position.

3.3     The Principal congratulated colleagues in the Blood Borne Virus (BBV) Prevention Team, which won the prestigious Research Project of the Year Award at the recent Herald Higher Education Awards. Congratulations were also extended to The Scottish Cold Case Unit and the MINT (Mentoring, Internships, Networking & Talks) team which were also nominated for awards.

3.4     The Deputy Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer was invited to give an update on a recent data breach. She informed Senate that the matter had been responded to correctly and very promptly by those involved, thereby significantly limiting the impact of the breach. The PVC Learning and Teaching was taking forward action to prevent a similar breach, and all those involved had been supported. Senate was informed that the incident reinforced the need for all staff to complete the data protection training.

3.5     Following a question about the recent Home Office changes to immigration policy that would impact international students seeking dependants' visas from January 2024, the Principal advised that UUK had lobbied on behalf of the sector. The University was modelling what the impact of the change of policy would be, and would be closely monitoring the situation

## 4.     2022-23 Student Recruitment

4.1     Senate **noted** a detailed update on student recruitment for the academic year 2022-23 and an early view of applications for study in Trimester A 2023-24.

4.2     VP Strategy and Planning indicated that efforts were being made to ensure the University met SFC targets and clearing would play a role in that. It was very important to achieve our SFC targets against the backdrop of removal of funded places across the sector. In looking at the early position on international applications, it was noted that the UK government announcement may impact on recruitments, and there was also an commentary on some of the context and challenges being faced in some of our key markets.

4.3     Senate welcomed receiving such a detailed update and it was requested that future reports contain more horizon scanning information so that Senate was aware of the external factors that impacted the University.

## 5.     GCU Module Evaluations Summary - Trimester A and Trimester B 2022-23

5.1     The VP Strategy and Planning introduced a paper that provided an overview of the key outcomes of the Trimesters A and B 2022-23 module evaluations, for GCU overall, by School and GCU London, and by module level.  It was noted that overall satisfaction had increased in Tri A by 2pp to 82% and by 3pp in Tri B also to 82%, and these were the highest levels of overall satisfaction since module evaluations were centralised in 2016/17.

5.2     In discussion, it was noted that the response rate (30% in Tri A and 23% for Tri B) was on a par with previous years.  It was confirmed that consideration was being given to how to increase engagement with the survey, and ensuring visibility of changes made as a result of feedback received was seen as being crucial, as was explaining why it was not possible to make some changes in light of feedback provided.  It was also intended to work with the Students' Association to get an understanding of all the surveys students were asked to complete, to try to avoid survey fatigue

5.3     The Senate **noted** the overview.

**6.      PVC Research: Research Report for 2022/2023 - Quarter 3**

6.1     The Deputy Vice Chancellor presented the research report for the third quarter of 2022/2023 that provided an update on the research activity including the relevant grants for that period.

6.2     The Senate **noted** the report and that it would be streamlined in order to highlight headlines and trends, with operational detail being provided direct to Schools**.**

**7.      Culture, Employment & Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) 2021 Update**

7.1     The Director of the Graduate School presented the CEDARS survey outcomes at GCU for 2021. The CEDARS outcomes had been incorporated into the University HR Excellence in Research (HREiR) Award submission as part of the Researcher Development Concordat (RD Concordat)/HREiR Action Plan. The report outlined and updated on the three key areas for focus from CEDARS 2021: 1) Fairness of treatment 2) Career support and development, and 3) Equality, Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment.

7.2     The Senate **noted** the update.

**8.      Researcher Development Concordat/HR Excellence in Research Award 2022/23**

8.1     The Director of the Graduate School presented the updated Researcher Development Concordat/HR Excellence in Research Award Action Plan (2022 – 2025).

8.2     Senate **noted** the report and that it would be submitted to Court for approval.

**9.      Standing Committee & School Board Summary Reports**

9.1     Senate **noted** reports from the following Standing Committees and School Boards :
        • Academic Policy and Practice Committee held on 3rd May 2023.
        • University Research Committee held on 6th April 2023.
        • International Committee held on 9th February 2023 and 4th May 2023.
        • School of Engineering and the Built Environment held on 15th February 2023 and 10th May 2023.
        • Glasgow School for Business and Society held on 1st March 2023.
        • School of Health and Life Science held on 19th  April 2023.

**10.    Research Degree Committee**

10.1	Senate **approved** the award of 13 PhDs, 1 PhD by Previous Publication, 1 Prof.D, 2 DBAs, 1 DMan and 1 MPhil.

10.2	It was raised that there was an error in the report as presented to Senate and that a student listed as being presented for a PhD by previous publication should be listed as PhD. The awards approved above reflect the correction of this error.

**11.	Assessment Regulations Sub Committee (ARSC)**

11.1	The Chair of the Assessment Regulations Sub-Committee presented the Sub-Committee's recommendations, endorsed by APPC in May 2023, as follows:-

11.2	Student Attendance and Engagement Policy
Senate **approved** revisions to the Student Attendance and Engagement Policy to make it more robust. The revised Policy would sit alongside a new attendance monitoring system and enable early intervention and support for taught students. It was noted that the policy related to taught students only but review of a similar policy for research students was being undertaken.

11.3	A student member raised a concern about an unexpected withdrawal notification that a student had received, and Senate was informed that there was a range of notifications and safeguards in place prior to a withdrawal email being sent. It was agreed that the Academic Registrar would look into this case. In discussion, it was highlighted that the new attendance monitoring system would, for the first time, enable students to view their own attendance dashboard data so this would help with the early identification of any issues with a student's attendance swipes. It was raised that not all students had smartphones or computers, and Senate was reminded that equipment was available for those students to borrow.

11.4	Terms of Reference and Standard Operations of Progression and Award Boards and Associated Groups
Senate **approved** minor amendments to the Terms of Reference and Standard Operations of Progression and Award Boards and Associated Groups. The amendments included updates to terminology, revisions to the Confidentiality Appendix, on the advice of GCU Data Protection colleagues, and separate endorsement forms for external examiners.

11.5	Minor revisions to the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy.
Senate approved minor changes to the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy. The changes involved minor terminology revisions and a statement to advise that Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies limitations may apply.

11.6	In discussion, it was highlighted that the RPL policy was a key element in attracting mature learners who may not have academic qualifications, but had relevant life and work experience, and this was an important element in the University's approach to widening access.

11.7	Assessment Policy Review; minor regulation updates, in light of proposed Degree Algorithm amendment (Banded Grading Working Group)
In light of amendments to the Degree Algorithm (see item 13.3 below) Senate approved minor revisions to the classification regulations, (Section 19 of the University Assessment Regulations (Taught Programmes)). It was highlighted that the revisions would not impact any currently registered undergraduate student and would apply to those entering first year undergraduate study in September 2023, and then be implemented when that cohort reached their third and fourth years of study.

11.8	Assessment Policy Review (Digital Assessment)
Senate noted that a review of the Digital Assessment policy, with a focus on the current approach to invigilation and the University's current anonymous marking practices, would be undertaken by a short-life task and finish group.

11.9 Code of Student Conduct
Senate noted that a short-life working group had been established to map the professional/academic input to misconduct cases, recommend resource requirements and explore potential technical/IT solutions to support streamlining.

11.10 Concern around the increasing inappropriate use of AI in assessments, and PhD theses in particular, and the challenges in detecting it were raised. It was acknowledged that the use of AI will become an essential skill, but it was important that it was used appropriately. The Director of the Graduate School informed that workshops for PhD students on the ethical use of IA were to be arranged. It was also considered that discussions around assessment design and the development of policy on appropriate use of AI were required.

**ACTION: PVC L&T to consider action in relation to discussions around assessment design and the development of policy on appropriate use of AI**

11.11 Early Retrieval
Senate received an update that advised that APPC had agreed that a pilot scheme in the School of Health and Life Science for early retrieval, be suspended until further notice. In discussion, it was raised that this would be problematic for some programmes with professional body requirements. Senate **agreed** that the APPC decision stand, and that exceptions would be considered on a case by case basis.

**ACTION: SHLS to discuss with PVC L&T as required, exceptions to suspension of early retrieval.**

**12. GCU Awards Portfolio – Optometry**

12.1 Senate approved a report that presented the details and rationale for the development of a 5-year integrated Master's programme to replace the current 4-year BSc(Hons) Optometry programme with two additional programmes that would be added including:
   * Master of Optometry with Independent Prescribing (MOptom (IP))
   * Master of Optometry (MOptom)

**13. Banded Grading Working Group**

13.1 Senate considered a report that provided a set of recommendations emerging from two work-strands of the Banded Grading Working Group as follows:-

13.2 Proposed Updates – Banded Grading Framework
The PVC Learning and Teaching provided background on the work undertaken. Subject to clarification on the rubric, which would be picked up by the Working Group in implementing the proposals, Senate **approved** the proposals to:
   a. pause to full banded grading implementation but retain the Senate approved evaluative and descriptive narratives and align to GCU's current percentage approach to marking; and
   b. review the position after 24 months, to consider the merits of a move to full banded grading.

13.3 Updates to Degree Algorithm Design
The PVC Learning and Teaching provided background on the work undertaken. In discussion, it was agreed that reference should be made to SCQF levels as opposed to the year of study. Senate **approved** the proposals to

   a. to retain a 'Best 180' approach, but with slight amends; all 120 credits in Year 4 to be included, alongside the next best 60 credits undertaken in Year 3; and
   b. For classification at borderline: profiling considerations should be set at a maximum of two percentage points from the next grade boundary rather than the current three percent boundary.

13.4    It was further noted that the Assessment Regulations would be updated to reflect this change.

**ACTION: PVC L&T and Academic Registrar take forward action as outlined.**

**14.    Programme Withdrawal**

14.1    The Dean of School of the Glasgow School for Business and Society presented a paper that proposed the withdrawal of the joint MSc Health History with the University of Strathclyde, due to low student numbers, lack of return on GCU staff investment in the programme and misalignment with the strategic direction of the PG programmes in GSBS.

14.2    Senate **approved** the withdrawal of the programme.

**15.    Education Committee**

15.1    Senate **approved** renaming the Academic Policy and Practice Committee to the Education Committee in order to make the remit clearer and bring the title of the committee in line with Senate's corresponding Research Committee.

**16.    Appointment of the Chair of the Senate Disciplinary Committee**

16.1    Senate **approved** the appointment of Professor John Connolly Head, of the Department of Social Sciences, as Chair of Senate Disciplinary Committee (SDC) with an initial three year term of office commencing on 1st August 2023. Additionally, Dr Linda Walsh's term of office as Vice-Chair was continued, on an extraordinary basis, for one further year.

16.2    The Chair informed Senate of proposals discussed at University Executive Group the previous day to ensure the resilience, efficiency and effectiveness of the SDC in light of the increasing number of cases, and that a report seeking Senate's electronic approval of these, would be circulated in due course.

**ACTION: Clerk to Senate to circulate report re changes to SDC for Senate's electronic approval.**

**17.    Honorary Appointments**

17.1    Senate was informed that the following honorary appointments were awarded by the University Executive Board.

| Post | Title | Field of expertise | School |
|------|-------|--------------------|--------|
| Professor Emeritus | Professor Kay Currie | Nursing | SHLS |
| Professor Emeritus | Professor Agnieska Klemm | Construction Materials | SCEBE |
| Honorary Professor | Soumen Sengupta | Strategy and Public Health | Yunus Centre |
| Honorary Professor | Ross McGuffie | Public Health | Yunus Centre |
| Hon Research Fellow | Dr Katherine Zappone | Human Rights | WiSE Centre, GSBS |
| Hon Fellow (extension) | David Wyllie | | SHLS |
| Hon Clinical Fellow (extension) | Dr Saket Priyadarshi | Sexual Health and Blood Borne Viruses | SHLS |

**18.    Academic Appointments**

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

**19.      Summary Report of Court**

19.1     Senate received summary reports of the meetings of the University Court held on 16<sup>th</sup> February & 20<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

**20.      Date of the Next meeting**

20.1     Senate noted that the date of the next meeting was on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2023

**21       AOCB**

21.1     The Student President raised a point regarding the payment of deposits by international students and the DVC and COO agreed this could be discussed further at their regular catch-up.

**Chair's Closing Remarks**

The Chair expressed thanks to those members whose terms of office would come to an end at the end of July, and to the former student members whose terms of office had concluded at the end of May.