Report from the meeting of Senate held on 24th February 2021

1.   **Principal and Vice Chancellor's and Executive Board Report**

Senate received a report from the Principal and Vice Chancellor and Executive Board to update members on substantive items considered by the Executive Board since the last meeting of Senate.

The Principal informed Senate that Executive Board had agreed to hold graduate ceremonies in 2022 for students for whom it had not been possible to hold traditional graduations due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, opportunities for graduates to have photographs with their robes and certificates were also being explored.

It was noted that sector discussions were underway with the Scottish Government to see if students arriving from overseas could undertake the mandatory self-isolation in supported university accommodation rather than in government appointed hotels. It was further noted that SAAS had changed the terms of the student winter hardship funds and international students, who had previously been ineligible, could now apply for these.

2.   **Response to Covid 19**

Senate was informed that currently there were no cases of Covid-19 in Caledonian Court, and there had not been any for several months. Current plans to support the return to campus for essential purposes were working well, and following feedback from some risk assessments, plans had been revised. It was not yet known what level of physical distancing, if any, the University would have to adhere to in the 2021/22 academic year, however plans based on 2m, 1m and zero physical distancing had been drawn up.

3.   **SDC Annual Report 2019/20**

The SDC Annual Report 2019/20 which reported on student misconduct offences considered under the terms of the Code of Student Conduct during Session 2019/20 was noted. The overall number of cases referred to the Senate Disciplinary was marginally lower than in the previous year. Misconduct in exams and contract cheating/ghostwriting remained the most frequent forms of misconduct and there had been an increase in the number of incidents of the latter. This was a common problem in the sector. The report included the May and August assessment periods, when the University had moved to online assessment. The Chair of Senate Disciplinary Committee (SDC) informed Senate that SDC had taken a supportive approach to academic misconduct during this period where students had evidence of substantial Covid-19 related mitigation.

4.   **Complaints Annual Report 2019/20**

Senate noted the Complaints Annual Report 2019/20. There had been 178 Stage 1 (frontline) complaints and 12 stage 2 complaints (complaint investigation) received.   Of the stage 2 complaints, 9 were not upheld, 2 were partially upheld and one was upheld. One complaint was referred by the complainant to the SPSO on completion of the University's complaints handling procedure, but this was not taken forward for investigation by the SPSO. Whilst there had been an increase in reported stage 1 complaints, the number of staged two complaints had remained stable, indicating stage 1 were being appropriately responded to.

5.   **Reports from Standing Committees**

Senate noted reports from the following standing committees: -

- Academic Policy and Practice Committee 27th January 2021
- University Research Committee 3rd February 2021
- International Committee held on 4th February 2021
- Glasgow School for Business and Society held on 16th December 2021
- The School of Computing Engineering and the Built Environment held on 9th December 2020
- The School of Health and Life Sciences held on 9th December 2020 and 3rd February 2021

6.   Strategy for Learning 2030

Senate received an update on the development of Strategy for Learning 2030.   The update outlined the key aspects of the draft new learning and teaching strategy which had been developed taking account of initial feedback from Executive Board, Staff, Students Association and students.   The primary goal of the new Strategy was "Transforming Education" to be delivered via five Delivering Transformative Education intentions:-
- Champion equality of participation and attainment for all student
- Deliver excellence in teaching and the student experience, underpinned by our holistic approach to student support
- Enhance the employability of our students and graduates through collaborative and active learning
- Embed a commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals within our research-led, globally aware curriculum
- Facilitate innovative learning which supports flexible provision and a blend of campus, off-campus, and multi-campus experiences.

Delivery of the Strategy would be supported through three Strategic Enabling Plans (Infrastructure, Finance and People, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provided a guiding framework for all Enabling strategies, plus Schools would each have operational plans.

Senate noted the draft Strategy for Learning 2030 and that it would be further developed taking account of the issues raised in discussion, prior to consideration at a special meeting of Senate on 31st March 2021.

7.   GCU Athena Swan Institutional Silver Submission

A report on the GCU Athena Swan Institutional Silver submission was noted. The submission had been prepared following wide consultation with Schools and professional support departments. In addition to this institutional submission, 'department' applications were also made by SCEBE (at silver level) and GSBS (at bronze level), and SHLS intended to submit in the next application round, April 2021. It was hoped that the outcome of the Institutional Silver application would be known by late April 2021.

8.   Research Degrees Committee

Senate approved the award of 5 PhDs and 1 DBA.

9.   2030 Research Strategy

Senate considered the draft 2030 Research Strategy, and was informed by the PVC Research that it had been developed following extensive consultation across the University involving over 300 people. The guiding framework for the University's research was the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), issued by United Nations in 2015, applying to all countries, in place until 2030, and which were an integral part of the overall University Strategy 2030.

The strategic research goals were to:
- Devise and carry out cutting-edge, interdisciplinary research, addressing the SDGs via our three societal challenges of Healthy Lives, Inclusive Societies and Sustainable Environments;
- Capture and promote evidence of research impact with our stakeholders in public and private sectors and in civil society;
- Extend our research capacity and capability, striving for the highest standards of excellence;
- Contribute to the continued development of academic culture and sense of community within the University through Group, Centre and cross-campus working on research-with-purpose; and
- Strengthen our research-teaching nexus.

The SDGs and the societal challenges would be addressed through a research architect consisting of:

- Cross-cutting research, facilitated by our approval and renewal process for endorsement of new and existing Research Centres, themed against the SDGs; and
- A set of less-formal research groups, of varying size and disciplinarity, some addressing multiple and single SDGs, some operating within, outside and across Research Centres and Schools

University resources would be targeted at facilitating the highest quality research within and across Centres, Research Groups and campuses, and through international partnerships.

In line with GCU 2030 Strategic Indicators, success would be measured against seven research outcomes.

Senate welcomed the use of the SDC framework and it was agreed to endorse the draft Research Strategy 2030, subject to the inclusion of issues raised in discussion, for submission to Court for approval.

10   **Senate Standing Orders**

Senate agreed changes to its Standing Orders to make explicit reference to the electronic approval of business. This was in line with a recent amendment to Court's Standing Orders. Court is requested to **approve** the addition of the following paragraph in Senate's Standing Orders at paragraph 3.10 :-

Electronic Approval
On occasion there may be a need to refer a matter to Senate for approval between scheduled meetings but neither the use of the Chair's delegated power (see 2.4) or an an Extraordinary meeting (see 3.4) is deemed appropriate. This may be because the matter for approval is a formality which, while not expected to require discussion, needs a formal Senate decision; or where the significance of the decision is such that it is better presented to Senate at the time rather than for post hoc homologation. Frequently, such matters will already have been raised with Senate at a scheduled meeting and may have been approved in principle pending additional information or clarification. In such circumstances, the Senate may receive and approve a formal proposal electronically.

11.   **Other Matters Approved/Noted/Received for Information.**

- The schedule of Senate and Senate Standing Committee meetings for Academic Session 2021/22

- Honorary Appointments.
- Recent academic staff appointments.
- Research Bulletin for Trimester A 2020/21
- An update on Graduations Ceremonies
- The summary report from the meeting of University Court held on 11th November 2020