**COURT BULLETIN: 27 SEPTEMBER 2012**

Dear Colleagues

This is the third in a series of bulletins on University Court meetings, which will be available on the University website after each meeting. The summaries are not a formal record of the Court meeting.

The University Court held its first meeting of session 2012/2013 on 27 September 2012. The main issues discussed were as follows:

**GCU Brand Strategy**

Mr Stewart Laing, Director of Marketing, gave a presentation on the new GCU brand strategy. Mr Laing outlined the development and consultation processes that had underpinned the “Brighter Futures” brand proposition and presented examples of how this would be delivered visually in the new postgraduate prospectus. Court endorsed the approach and direction of travel of the new strategy,

**Scottish Funding Council Outcome Agreements**

Court was reminded that the Cabinet Secretary, in his Ministerial Letter of Guidance to the SFC, had stated that the SFC must ensure that improved outcomes were delivered by the higher education sector across a range of activities. The SFC had set a requirement for each university to develop an ‘Outcome Agreement’ for 2012-2013

Court considered and agreed the GCU Outcome Agreement for 2012-2013 noting that the final version of the Agreement was broadly in line with the University’s strategic plan and objectives. Widening Access targets were challenging but the achievement of these would be supported by strategic initiatives that were already in place, including College partnerships.

For this first year the Outcome Agreements appeared to be more about the process than the outcomes. The further challenge in future Agreements would potentially be recognised by access to competitive strategic funding for those institutions that met or surpassed their targets.

**People Strategy**

Court members received an update on the development and consultation which had taken place on the People Strategy since it was initially presented to Court in July 2012.

Staff members on Court noted the thorough consultation process and that the comments made by staff and by the Staff Policy Committee were reflected in the final version of the Strategy. It was, however, noted only that the success of some of the proposed plans (e.g. workload planning) could be assessed once they had been implemented.

Court approved the implementation of the People Strategy and agreed that it would be monitored bi-annually by the Staff Policy Committee and annually by Court.

**National Student Survey Review**

Court discusseda summary of the results of the 2012 NSS at University level and by School. Main points discussed included:

Although the University had met its overall student satisfaction target of 85% (an increase of 3% on the previous year), there were some areas where further work was required to improve results for 2013. For example, it was disappointing to note that, at 57%, student satisfaction with assessment and feedback had decreased by 4% in 2012 despite considerable attention having been given to this key area of activity during 2011-2012. This was currently being discussed across the University as a matter of priority.

At 55%, student satisfaction with the Students’ Association was another area of concern in the NSS results. Both the University and the Students’ Association were disappointed with this result and would work together to analyse the cause and to promote improved results in the 2013 survey. 2012 was the first year that a question about satisfaction with the Students’ Union, Association or Guild had been included in the NSS. An analysis of sector results was being undertaken to establish if the term “Union” may have influenced students’ expectations of the services provided by the Students’ Association. The President of the Students’ Association was liaising with other Students’ Associations and NUS on this matter.

A preliminary progress report on action taken to address the areas of concern in the NSS would be submitted to Court at a future 2012 meeting.

**Key Information Sets**

Court noted a progress report on the introduction and publication of Key Information Sets. In particular Court noted that graduate employment rates were an area of concern in the KIS data for some GCU programmes. Although the overall employment rates for GCU graduates were healthy at 94%, further work was needed to explore graduate level employment at programme level.

Further analysis, including sector benchmarking of the KIS data, was required to fully understand these profiles. An update report would be submitted to Court at a future meeting.

**Annual Statement to Scottish Funding Council on Internal Review Activity**

Court approved the annual statement to SFC on internal review activity for 2011-2012 within the University’s teaching quality framework.

**GCU London**

Court received an update on activity at GCU London. Court members who had visited were impressed with the way the campus had developed. GCU continues to meet its student number targets.

**Regular Updates**

The following summary reports are submitted to each Court meeting to keep governors informed of significant matters arising between Court meetings.

* **Chair of Court’s Report**

The Cabinet Secretary has accepted, in principle, the decision by the Committee of Scottish Chairs (“CSC”) to create a Scottish Code of Governance. That work will be overseen by a Steering Group consisting of three university chairs (including the Chair of the GCU Court); Dame Elish Angiolini; and a former rector. The Group is chaired by Lord Smith of Kelvin.

The Chair has participated in a new governor induction session, undertaken the annual 1:1 meetings with governors, held discussions with the Principal on performance in 2011/12 and objectives for 2012/13 and attended the half yearly meeting of the Chairs of the Standing Committees.

* **Principal & Vice Chancellor & Executive Board Report**

The report summarised substantive items considered by the Executive Board since the previous Court meeting on 2 July 2012, including:

* The Scottish Government’s legislative programme for the coming year which includes the anticipated HE Bill due to be introduced to the Scottish Parliament in November. The HE Bill, and other issues, were discussed with the Cabinet Secretary at a Universities Scotland meeting hosted by the University on the 10th September.
* The official launch of the Glasgow School *for* Business and Society by Dr Lena Wilson, Chief Executive of Scottish Enterprise.
* The formation of a partnership with STV in the submission of a bid to deliver Glasgow’s first local television station.
* The Principal’s meeting with the Nobel Laureate and political leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on Thursday, 21 June as part of a British Council delegation at a Foreign and Commonwealth Office reception hosted by the Foreign Secretary William Hague.
* An update on international activities.
* **University Secretary’s Report**

The report included a summary of work relating to areas of governance; legislative changes pertinent to the work of Court and the University; an update on the development of a model complaints handling procedure by the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman; requests for information under Freedom of Information; the merging of the Directorates of Student Experience and Governance and Academic Quality; an update on national pay bargaining; and the reaffirmation by Court of its Statement of Primary Responsibilities. These can be accessed on the Court website.

* **Reports from Court Standing Committees**

Court noted reports from the Audit Committee, the Finance & General Purposes Committee and Staff Policy Committee on issues discussed since the last Court meeting.

Tony Brian

Chair of Court