

University Court

Minutes of the meeting of the University Court held on 21st June 2018

Present: Rob Woodward (Chair)
Dr Morag Ferguson, Daniel Gallacher, Professor Pamela Gillies, Laura Gordon, Dr Bill Gunnyeon, Asif Haseeb, Gordon Jack, Ian Kerr, Austin Lafferty, Neena Mahal, Dr Davena Rankin (by phone), Paul Reynolds, Rachel Simpson, Lesley Thomson, Alistair Webster, Professor Stephanie Young (Vice-Chair)

Apologies: Dr Douglas Chalmers, Tom Halpin, Dr Neil Partlett, Professor Ann Priest, Caroline Stuart

In attendance: Professor Cam Donaldson, Pro Vice Chancellor Research
Jan Hulme, University Secretary & Vice Principal Governance
Claire Hulsen, Director of Strategy and Planning
Alex Killick, Director of People
Seonag MacKinnon, Director of Communications and Public Affairs
Professor James Miller, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Strategy)
Yetunde Ogedengbe, GCU Students' Association
Paul Queen, Director of Finance
Cara Smyth, Vice-President GCNYC
Professor Valerie Webster, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)
Adrian Lui, Equality and Diversity Adviser (for item 8 only)
Riley Power, Head of Governance (Secretary)

Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, noted apologies and extended the thanks of the Court to Dr Carol Emslie and Professor Cam Donaldson for an excellent presentation on Dr Emslie's internationally recognised research on gender, alcohol and health. The Chair advised that Adrian Lui would join the meeting for the discussion on item 8 of the agenda (Equality and Diversity Annual Report) which would now be taken on the agenda after Item 10 (Transfer of assets and liabilities from GCU-NYC, Inc. to GCNYC). The Chair advised that Item 14 (Student Association Trimester 2 Report) would be taken after Item 6 (Student President's Report). The Court formally welcomed Rachel Simpson, the new Student President, and Yetunde Ogedengbe, Student Vice-President, School of Health & Life Sciences, to their first meeting of the Court in their new roles. The Chair also thanked Neil Partlett, Caroline Stuart and Tom Halpin for their service as Court members and noted that these members would demit office as at 31 July 2018. The Chair also extended the Court's congratulations to Dr Davena Rankin on being awarded her PhD for her thesis titled 'The Critical Success Factors for Effective Technology Transfer in the Field of Life Sciences in Scotland.' Dr Rankin would receive the award at the GUC graduation ceremony on 3rd July 2018.

1. Minutes of the meeting of the University Court held on 10th May 2018

1.1 **Approved** prior to the meeting following circulation.

2. Matters Arising

2.1 Court noted a report on the matters arising from the Court meeting on 10th May 2018 and the actions taken since that meeting to address them.

3. Declaration of Interests

- 3.1 Court members noted the Register of Court Members' Interests. The Chair of Court invited members to provide any update to the interests listed in the register.

4. Items Brought by Chair of Court

- 4.1 The Chair noted the following matters:

- 4.1.1 The Governor Link Scheme had been launched and lay governors had all been assigned a link area. It was noted that it would be up to each lay governor to engage with their link area in the manner they saw fit with no prescriptive approach being adopted as part of the scheme. The Chair noted that the scheme would be kept under review and noted that feedback on the Scheme would be sought in advance of the September meeting of Court.

ACTION: Court member feedback on Governor Link Scheme to be obtained in advance of September Court meeting. (Head of Governance)

- 4.1.2 The Chair advised that he was arranging a series of individual meetings with governors in which the key focus would be issues raised in the annual Court effectiveness questionnaires.
- 4.1.3 The Chair advised the Court that search consultants had been appointed to assist in the recruitment of additional lay governors to fill recent and expected vacancies on the Court. A further update on the progress of the recruitment process would be provided at the September Court meeting.

5. Principal & Vice Chancellor and Executive Board Report

- 5.1 Court received a report from the Principal and Vice-Chancellor on substantive matters considered by the Executive Board since the last meeting of Court. The Principal and Vice-Chancellor highlighted topics which included:
- 5.1.1 The Destination of Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE) Survey had delivered strong results for the University, with a particular increase in the proportion of graduates in graduate level employment. This was the highest graduate level employment that the University had achieved and represented a significant improvement over a five year period following renewed focus on this as part of Strategy 2020.
- 5.1.2 The University's campaign to eradicate gender-based violence was very well received and the University had been invited by the SFC to consider submission of a Strategic Investment Fund bid to support the University's plans to develop online training material.
- 5.1.3 The University had won Employer of the Year at the Scottish PA Awards held in May. The award recognised the vital contribution of personal assistants, executive assistants and administrative personnel to the successful running of an organisation.
- 5.1.4 The Principal updated Court on the Universities Scotland Board meeting at which representatives of the SFC had attended. Following the discussion with the SFC at the meeting, it appeared likely that universities in Scotland could expect at best a cash flat funding position for the following year.
- 5.2 Court also noted the Executive Board's priorities for the remainder of 2017-2018 which centred on successful student recruitment, and that the Principal had been appointed as the lead member for Mental Health for Universities Scotland.
- 5.3 Court offered its congratulations to the School of Engineering and the Built Environment on receiving a bronze award from Athena Swan in recognition of its commitment to promoting gender equality among students and staff.

6. Student President's Report

- 6.1 The Student President presented the six monthly report of the Students' Association activities for Trimester 2 in the academic year 2017-18 as well as the sabbatical officers' election manifesto highlights. The Student President agreed to circulate the manifestos of each of the Students' Association's recently elected officers.

ACTION: Student Association elected officers' manifestos to be circulated to Court members. (Head of Governance)

- 6.2 The Student President provided a further report on recent issues and activities which included an update on the Student Mental Health Agreement which had been finalised and submitted to NUS Scotland, an update on the review of the safe taxi scheme, a review of the way in which the workshops on preventing and responding to gender based violence could be delivered in future and the intention to undergo a review of the academic representation model at GCU to ensure alignment with the Schools following the implementation of the refreshed academic department structure. The Student President agreed to provide an update on the Students' Associations Objectives for 2018-19 at the September Court meeting.

ACTION: Students' Association Objectives to be included on September Court meeting agenda. (Head of Governance)

- 6.3 The DVC Academic agreed to hold further discussions with the Student President on the resources in place to support the gender based violence campaign and the collaborative roles of the University and Students' Association in this regard.

ACTION: DVC Academic to meet with Students' Association President to discuss support for Gender-Based Violence campaign activities. (DVC Academic)

- 6.4 The Chair of Court invited members to attend a meeting between the Students' Association Full-Time Officers and the Chair and Vice-Chair to be held on 17th August 2018.

7. University Secretary's Report

- 7.1 The University Secretary provided a report which provided a summary of work relating to areas of governance and legislative changes pertinent to the work of Court and the University.
- 7.2 Court **approved** the proposal to grant the Chair of Court summer vacation delegated authority in accordance with Order 5.4 of the Court Standing Orders.
- 7.3 Court noted a progress report from the University Secretary on the proposed draft amended Statutory Instrument and Court Standing Orders and noted, in particular, that the amended drafts would be presented to the Court following consideration by the Court Governance and Nominations Committee. It was expected that this would be in September.
- 7.4 Court **approved** an amendment to the Public Interest Disclosure Policy to include a section on disclosure to external third parties.
- 7.5 Court **approved** its forward work programme for 2018-19. Court noted that the work programme would change over time as new issues or matters emerged over the course of the session. Court members also noted the summary of key dates and events for 2018-19.
- 7.6 Court noted that the University had recently been advised by Universities Scotland about new reporting requirements from HESA for equality and diversity data on governing body members. The University Secretary noted that the University had sought legal advice from its lawyers to confirm the legal basis upon which the University would be required to collect this data.

7.7 Court noted a report for the period 1 January to 31 December 2017 which contained a summary of requests to the University made under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

8. Draft University Budget 2018-19 (including GCU London and GCNYC)

8.1 Court received the draft budget for GCU and the supporting budgets for GCU London and GCNYC. The DVC Strategy stated that the University Budget had been developed following extensive planning and budgeting activities across the University and robust scrutiny by the appropriate governance bodies over the past seven months.

8.2 The Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee advised Court that the Committee had reviewed the budget twice, in April and June, and had received a clear message from the Executive the budget was prudent and that the University had set targets that would deliver an improved position against the budget. The Chair of the F&GPC noted that management had been asked to review the budget for GCNYC to ensure that the budget expectations were underpinned by a robust evidence base.

8.3 Court tested the draft budget thoroughly and noted the following matters, in particular:

8.3.1 Court members noted that expected performance against the strategic indicator relating to staff costs as a percentage of total income remained above the 2020 target. The DVC strategy agreed that this provided an indication of the scale of the challenge. Court agreed, however, that the indicator could conceal complexity and that it would be helpful to understand how the higher staff costs ratio might contribute positively to high performance in other areas and it might be that this ratio required review.

8.3.2 The Student President queried why there had not been an increase in the Students' Association's block grant for the University and whether this constituted a real terms cut for the Students' Association. The DVC Strategy noted that following a previous 5% increase in the block grant for the Students' Association, there was a cash-flat position. This level of support, however, compared favourably with support provided by other institutions when reviewed against benchmarking data. The Principal and the DVC Academic also assured Court that the block grant was not the only support provided and that the University had worked in partnership with the Students' Association in the provision of other services for students. The Chair noted that the recent appointment of Mr Lafferty as a lay governor link person for the Students' Association under the Governor link scheme would assist Court through providing an additional perspective to ensure an informed discussion on these issues at future Court meetings.

8.3.3 Court members noted that a further report on any partnership activity that the University was undertaking in the Far East would be welcomed. The DVC Strategy agreed to provide such an update to the September Court meeting.

ACTION: Report on University transnational education and partnership activity in the Far East to be provided to September Court meeting. (DVC Strategy)

8.4 In relation to the GCU London budget, the DVC Academic advised Court that the budget was focussed on delivering student number growth, new pathways through degree apprenticeships and continuing to manage the cost base for the campus carefully. Court members queried whether the breakeven position outlined in the budget would be exceeded. The DVC Academic advised that it was fully intended that targets would be exceeded but that the budget was set using prudent assumptions.

8.5 Court members queried the long-term strategy for GCU London and how the University planned to leverage the three campus offering. Court agreed that a further discussion of how the University could leverage the opportunities presented by the three campuses would be an appropriate agenda item for the Court Strategy day in October.

8.6 In relation to the GCNYC budget, the DVC Strategy advised Court that this budget had been carefully considered by the GCU-NYC, Inc. Board and by the F&GPC and had been fed into the GCU budget. The budget

would also be reviewed by the GCNYC Board of Trustees at their meeting on 27th June 2018. The Chair of the GCU-NYC, Inc. Board reported to Court that income from student recruitment and rental income seemed to be on target, returns from the GCU recruitment hub would exceed targets and there had been positive feedback from the MSCHE on the University's accreditation status. The Chair of the Board noted however that despite the development of a strong network of industry and CEO contacts, it had taken longer than anticipated to deliver against other income sources. It was for these reasons the GCU-NYC, Inc. Board and the F&GPC had not approved the original GCNYC budget and had requested that management review the budget to reflect actual performance against budget in 2017-18 and to articulate a marketing strategy that would support the expected student number-focussed budget outcomes. The revised budget presented to Court had addressed this feedback.

8.7 Court members agreed it would be important to understand the long term strategy for the NY campus, as part of the three campus offering, and both the economic benefits and non-cash benefits delivered by GCNYC. The Principal noted that an economic impact study was expected for 2019. Court members agreed it was important to build a clear narrative on the economic benefits delivered by GCNYC and GCU London and their wider impact not just on GCU but on Scotland too.

8.8 Court **approved** the GCU Budget which incorporated the GCU London and GCNYC budgets.

9. Transfer of assets and liabilities from GCU-NYC, Inc. to GCNYC.

9.1 Court considered a report from the DVC Strategy which set out the decision making process for the transfer of assets and liabilities from GCU-NYC, Inc. to GCNYC, following the award of the provisional charter to GCNYC. The report contained a draft proposed transfer agreement. The report also contained details of the tax, legal and accounting implications associated with the proposed transfer. Finally, the report recommended that following the successful transfer of all assets and liabilities from GCU-NYC, Inc. to GCNYC, that GCU-NYC, Inc. be dissolved. Court noted that the proposed agreement had been recommended for approval by the Finance and General Purposes Committee and had been approved by the GCU-NYC, Inc. Board and would be considered by the GCNYC Board of Trustees at its meeting on 27th June 2018. The Chair of the GCU-NYC Inc. Board noted that those Court members who were also members of the GCU-NYC Inc. and GCNYC Boards had a potential conflict of interest in this transaction and as such would not participate in the vote on whether to approve the proposed transfer.

9.2 Court **approved** the draft transfer agreement and the proposal that, once the transfer of assets and liabilities had been completed, GCU-NYC, Inc. be dissolved.

10. Equality and Diversity Annual Report

10.1 Court considered the first annual report on the University's Equality Outcomes 2017-2021 which set progress against the results the University was aiming to achieve to help meet its Equality Act 2010 public sector equality duty obligations, specifically to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. The Equality and Diversity Adviser reported that the University had achieved positive results in relation to gender equality through a number of measures including achieving the Athena Swan Bronze Award, and that the University would now also start focusing in more depth on its commitment to race and disability equality. The Chair of the People Committee advised Court that the Committee had considered the report and was pleased with the University's progress and had recommended the report to the Court for approval. It was suggested that the rubric heading of 'target date' was misleading and should be amended. Court noted that once approved, the report would be published on the University's website. Court also noted that the report complements the more comprehensive Public Sector Equality Duty report required to be published every two years with the next report due to be published in April 2019.

10.2 Court **approved** the Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2018.

11. Schools Refresh Report

- 11.1 Court considered a report from the DVC Academic providing details of the key outputs from the Schools Refresh process and a proposal for the implementation of a refreshed academic department structure to reflect these outputs. The DVC Academic explained that the rationale for the proposals in the paper and in particular the need to ensure a strong sense of purpose within Schools to deliver on the need to be more focussed locally, with SMGs having a greater strategic focus.
- 11.2 Court members welcomed the proposals and the underpinning rationale and sought assurances which were provided by the DVC Academic that the University would also continue to focus on talent management and succession planning within the Schools. The DVC Academic noted that one of the benefits of the proposed structure was the establishment of a clearer career pathway for academic staff through the adoption of five-year rotational senior management positions which would be accompanied by clear expectations on for these roles and pathways to promotion.
- 11.3 The Chair of Court noted that the proposed structure was still to be fully finalised and recommended that Court approve the proposed direction of travel with the Chair of Court to review finally before this was implemented to ensure that the final proposal reflected the paper presented to Court.
- 11.4 Court **approved** the proposal put forward by the Chair to approve the proposals in the paper subject to final review by the Chair.

ACTION: Final proposal for Schools departmental structure to be provided to Chair of Court for review before implementation (DVC Academic)

12. League table update

- 12.1 Court received an update on the University's performance in key University league tables and rankings published in 2017-18.
- 12.2 Court members noted that while a lot of good work had taken place within the University, further work was needed to understand how the University was trending on the metrics used to calculate the league tables for the next year and whether any specific action was needed to improve performance in the rankings. Court members also agreed that further discussion on the NSS and NSS engagement was necessary and that this would be an appropriate topic for the Court at its strategy day in October.

13. Teaching Excellence Framework

- 13.1 Court received an overview of the Teaching Excellence Framework and noted the implications for the Scottish Sector and for GCU of the development of TEF and the sector concerns about TEF applied at subject level. Court was advised that the Executive Board would maintain a watching brief of the TEF and would keep abreast of policy developments. At a sector level, the University continued to engage in discussions through Universities Scotland, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Funding Council.

14. Research Integrity Annual Report

- 14.1 As part of the University's adherence to the Commitments of the Universities UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity, the PVC Research presented the annual report on research integrity to Court for approval. The report:
- 14.1.1 Provided a summary of actions and activities that had been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues;
- 14.1.2 Provided assurances that the processes that were in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct were transparent, robust and fair, and continued to be appropriate to meet the needs of the organisation;

14.1.3 Provided a high-level statement on formal investigations or research misconduct that had been undertaken.

14.2 Court **approved** the report and noted that the final report would be published on the University's website.

(Secretary's note: Report was published on University website following approval at the Court meeting)

15. Report from Senate meeting held on 1st June 2018

15.1 Court noted a summary of the business discussed by Senate at its meeting on 1st June 2018.

15.2 Court **approved** a draft Digital Preservation and Archiving Policy recommended to it for approval by Senate, which had been developed to address gaps within the existing policy framework.

16. Report from Court Standing Committees

16.1 Court noted a summary of the business discussed at the following meetings:

16.1.1 Remuneration Committee meeting held on 14th May 2018;

16.1.2 People Committee meeting held on 15th May 2018;

16.1.3 Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on 4th June 2018;

16.1.4 Audit Committee meeting 11th June 2018.

16.2 Court **approved** the Remuneration Philosophy recommended by the Remuneration Committee subject to review in November to strengthen the reference to ensuring the consistent application of the principles of the remuneration system throughout the University.

16.3 Court **approved** proposed minor amendments to the People Committee terms of reference that were set out in the report to Court.

17. Minutes for Noting

17.1 Court noted the minutes of the meeting of the GCU-NYC, Inc. Board of Directors held on 4th June 2018.

18. Chair's Closing Remarks

18.1 The Chair noted that future Court meetings would commence at 9.00AM and would be preceded with a Court dinner the evening prior, which would commence at 6.00PM.

19. Date of Next Meeting

19.1 The date of the next meeting of Court was 27th September 2018 at 9.00AM preceded by a dinner at 6pm on 26th September 2018.