

Glasgow Caledonian University Court

Minutes of the meeting of the University Court held on 25th June at 9am via Online Conferencing Facilities

Present: Rob Woodward (Chair) (until item number 21.2 on the agenda)
Professor Pamela Gillies, Gordon Jack, Professor Ann Priest, Sylvie Freund Pickavance, Campbell Fitch, Peter Baguley, Eilidh Fulton, Daniel Gallacher, Dr Bill Gunnyeon, David Halliday, Asif Haseeb, Sharon Lowrie, Meg Lustman, Neena Mahal, Alistair Webster, Stephanie Young (Vice-Chair), Ian Kerr, Lesley Thomson, Dr Morag Ferguson, Dr Douglas Chalmers.

Apologies: None

In attendance: Jan Hulme, University Secretary & Vice Principal Governance
Professor James Miller, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Strategy)
Susan Mitchell, Chief Operating Officer
Susan Docherty, Student President
Tabitha Nyariki, GCU Students' Association
Paul Queen, Director of Finance
Professor Valerie Webster, Deputy Vice Chancellor (LTSE)
Professor Cam Donaldson, Pro Vice Chancellor (Research)
Lucy Strachan, Head of Governance (Secretary)
Fiona Campbell, Director of People Services
Claire, Hulsen, Director of Strategy

Chairs Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed Court Members and noted that this would be the last Court meeting that Bill Gunnyeon and Lesley Thomson would be attending as they step down from being governors at the end of July. The Chair thanked them both for their insights which have been of significant value to the University and for the commitment that they have demonstrated as governors. The Chair also welcomed Susan Docherty who was attending her first meeting since becoming Student President and Tabitha Nyariki who was attending her first meeting as an observer for the Student Association.

1. Minutes

1.1 Court noted that the minutes of the Court meeting held on 23rd April 2020 had been approved by prior circulation.

2. Matters Arising

2.1 Court noted a report on the matters arising from the Court meeting on 23rd April 2020 and the actions taken since that meeting to address them.

3. Declaration of Interests

3.1 Court noted the register of interests of members and those in attendance. Court members were invited to advise the secretariat of any change to their registered interests as they arose.

4. Items Brought by the Chair of Court

4.1 The Chair informed Court that the Strategy Day planned for the 23rd September 2020 would be a half day event due to the fact that it was highly likely that this would need to be a predominantly online event. A second half day session would be planned for later on in the year.

- 4.2 The Chair confirmed to Court that material had been recently received from a third party external to the University and known to the institution for many years. It followed the letter that the individual had sent to all Court Members in February. On the basis of an initial review there was no sign of any new issues but the material would again be reviewed meticulously. The Chair would let the Court know when this was complete, and once the campus was fully open, the material could be made available if any court member wished to see it.
- 4.3 The Chair confirmed to Court that the Court Appraisal Questionnaire would be issued to all Court Members shortly and that specific questions had been added to seek input from Court Members on the recent move to a virtual platform in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Once the Questionnaire has been issued, one to one meetings would be set up between the Chair and each individual Court Member in order to discuss their feedback.
- 4.4 Court noted that item number 18.5 on the agenda, which deals with the re-appointment of the Chair of Court, would be moved to the last item on the agenda to allow the Chair to leave the meeting prior to the item being discussed.

5. Principal's and Vice-Chancellor and Executive Board Report

- 5.1 The Principal set out her report which provided a summary of items arising since the previous Court meeting in the context of the impact that Covid-19 has had on the institution. Issues included:
- 5.1.1 the government commissioned review of FE/HE by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC);
- 5.1.2 the modest new funding to help research withstand the impact of Covid;
- 5.1.3 the remarkable, diverse contribution of staff and students to supporting our communities and efforts to control and counter the effects of the pandemic; and
- 5.1.4 the preparations which are in train for the start of the new academic year on 5 October.
- 5.2 Noting the shifting context in which the University needed to plan for, the Principal emphasised the vital importance of agile management which anticipated and addressed new issues as the University operates in a particularly uncertain macro environment.
- 5.3 Court discussed the need to ensure that the University is at the forefront of adapting to the changes arising in the sector as a result of Covid-19 and it was agreed that this would be revisited at the Court Strategy Day in September. Court also considered the timing of the launch of Strategy 2030 and it was agreed that this would be kept under review to ensure that the timing was appropriate in the context of wider events.
- 5.4 The Court also noted steps taken to respond to the Black Lives Matter movement, in particular the support of the University for #BlackoutTuesday across its social media platforms which marked the protest against racial inequality and the personal reflection on events written by the Principal and featured on Caledonian Connected. Court further noted that the Principal and the Student President are drafting communications to all students which detail the measures the University is taking to ensure the eradication of racism at the University and to help combat social inequalities and injustice in the communities the University serves.

6. Safe Campus Opening

- 6.1 The Court noted a report from the Chief Operating Officer on the planning that the University has been undertaking to determine what needs to be implemented to successfully enable the start of the new Academic Session. Through the establishment of a series of work streams, the University has put in place

a substantial return to campus work programme to address the complex requirements of a safe return to campus for staff and students.

- 6.2 Court discussed the need to ensure that governors were kept up-to-date with the plans for the safe reopening of campus and it was agreed that regular conversations would take place with the Committee Chairs who would consider whether engagement was required with the wider Court membership.

ACTION: Committee Chairs to be kept informed of changes to the plans for the safe reopening of campus. (COO)

7. Students' Association Reports

- 7.1 The Student President reported on the activities of the Students' Association since the previous Court meeting and confirmed that the incoming Full Time Officers for 2020/21 took office on 1st June 2020.
- 7.2 The Student President also presented a report on the activities of the Students' Association in Trimester 2 of the 2019/20 academic year, which is aligned to The Bigger Plan 2020 and the Students' Association strategic plan.
- 7.3 Court noted the quality of the reports provided by the Student President and praised the close co-operation between the Student Association and the Executive leadership team.

8 Chief Operating Officer's Report

- 8.1 The Chief Operation Officer presented her report on the key activities across her portfolio, much of it taking place in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. Court noted that all the directorates have been focussed on two priorities: firstly, looking after staff and students during lockdown and facilitating continued work/study wherever possible; and secondly, planning for a future return to campus.
- 8.2 The Chief Operating Officer highlighted the excellent work that is being undertaken by the Foundation to secure support and funding for the University during the current crisis and Court noted in particular the donation received from Santander towards mental health training and the continued generous support of Sir Alex Ferguson.

9 University Secretary's Report

- 9.1 Court noted the report from the University Secretary and in particular the substantive changes to the Court Standing Orders necessitated by the approval of the final version of the GCU Amendment Order of Council 2020, which will amend the GCU Order of Council 2010 in line with the requirements of the HE Governance (Scotland) Act 2016. The final version of the Court Standing Orders will be submitted to Court in September for approval prior to the Amendment Order coming into force on 1st October 2020.
- 9.2 Court **approved** the request to grant delegated authority to the Chair of Court during the summer vacation and the Court forward work plan for 2020/21 and the Court's work plan for the year ahead.

10 Draft University Budget 2020/21

- 10.1 The Chief Operating Officer presented the Draft University Budget 2020/21 and confirmed to Court that the assumptions that underpinned the Budget 2020/21 would be reviewed regularly and that longer range forecasts would be developed as soon as there was sufficient clarity regarding the current financial environment to enable this to be done.
- 10.2 Court **approved** the draft University Budget 2020/21, which had been extensively debated and reviewed at the extraordinary Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 19th May, the formal Finance & General Purposes Committee on 1st June and at the additional Court briefing and

discussion of the draft budget on 15th June 2020. Court also advised on the wording of a subsequent communication to staff.

ACTION: Statement to be issued to staff to be amended as set out above. (COO)

11 GCNYC

- 11.1 DVC Strategy presented reports on GCNYC's response to the pandemic, the impact that Covid-19 is having on current operations, a financial evaluation and the plans under the new leadership impacting 2020/21.
- 11.2 Court discussed the importance of understanding whether there are any options open to GCNYC with regard to the lease that was currently in place for the College premises in New York and noted in addition to the previous scrutiny of the lease agreement by legal advisors, Court and appropriate sub-committee that specialist property advisers had been appointed to advise the University on whether any further options might be available.
- 11.3 Court agreed that milestones and timeline should be developed to accompany the GCNYC Business Plan in order to enable Court to monitor closely and assess the progress of GCNYC against the business plan.

ACTION: Milestones and timeline to enable the assessment of progress at GCNYC against the Strategic Plan to be developed. (DVC Strategy)

12 League Tables and Rankings 2019/20 Review and Analysis

- 12.1 The Court noted a report from DVC Strategy which provided a summary of the key University rankings and league tables released to date in academic year 2019/20. The Court noted rises and falls and in particular that The Sunday Times ranked four of the University's subjects in the top ten in the UK and The Complete University Guide ranked five of the University's subjects in the top ten in the UK, including Optometry, which was ranked 1st in the UK.

13. 2020/21 Trimester A Student Recruitment – Summary at June 2020

- 13.1 The DVC Strategy presented a report on the current recruitment position for Trimester A 2020/21, for undergraduate and taught postgraduate entry. Court noted that this remains an early point in the cycle, and particularly so in the context of the external environment, the change to the UCAS deadline for undergraduate admissions, and the uncertainties for all applicants.
- 13.2 Court noted a high level overview of student numbers in non-standard student provision, that are not ordinarily reported within the student recruitment report to the Finance and General Purposes Committee and Court, which provides information on students in transnational education contexts, INTO, work based education, distance learning and short courses, and pre-Higher Education outreach and engagement.

14. Student / Staff Ratios

- 14.1 The DVC Strategy presented a report on the Student Staff Ratios (SSRs) within the Scottish University sector based on 2018/19 HESA data released in May 2020. Court noted that the University had the second highest SSRs in the sector and discussions were ongoing with Trade Union as to how these might be improved.

- 14.2 Court noted the apparent inconsistency between the high student / staff ratio and the high staff investment / income ratio for the University and agreed that the Finance and General Purposes Committee would consider this issue in greater detail.

ACTION: The Finance and General Purposes Committee to consider the apparent inconsistency between the high student / staff ratio and the high staff investment / income ratio for the University. (COO/DVC Strategy)

15. Widening Access Update

- 15.1 Court noted the report from the DVC Strategy which provides an update on recently published sector level reports in the area of widening access. Court commended the University's continued strength in delivering widening access with quality and at scale.

16. Annual Statement on Research Integrity

- 16.1 Court **approved** the Annual Statement on Research Integrity presented by PVC Research which is prepared as part of the commitment of the University to meeting the commitments of the Universities UK Concordat to support Research Integrity.

17. University Senate

- 17.1 Court noted the report from the meeting of the University Senate held on 8th June 2020.
- 17.2 Court **approved** the revised Senate Standing Orders, agreed by Senate electronically on 22nd June 2020, amended to ensure compliance with the HE Governance (Scotland) Act 2016.

18. Standing Committee Business

- 18.1 Court noted a report from the Remuneration Committee which updated Court on the issues discussed and decisions taken by the Committee at its meeting on 26th May 2020 and **approved** the Remuneration Philosophy which had been endorsed by the Committee.
- 18.2 Court noted a report from the Finance and General Purposes Committee which updated Court on the issues discussed and decisions taken by the Committee at its meeting on 1st June 2020.
- 18.3 Court noted a report from the People Committee which updated Court on the issues discussed and decisions taken by the Committee at its meeting on 4th June 2020.
- 18.4 Court noted a report from the Audit Committee which updated Court on the issues discussed and decisions taken by the Committee at its meeting on 18th May 2020 and **approved** the Annual Procurement Strategy and Action Plan for 2020/21, subject to wording being added to reflect the fact that the procurement strategy will support the University to deliver within required timescales, and the amended Register of Interest Policy.

ACTION: Annual Procurement Strategy and Action Plan to be amended as set out above. (COO)

19. Media Coverage Analysis – May Update

- 19.1 Court noted the Media Coverage Analysis Update Report for May.

20. Date of Next Meeting

- 20.1 The date of the next meeting of Court is Wednesday 9th September 2020 at 9.00AM.

21. Report from the Court Governance and Nominations Committee

- 21.1 Court noted that the Committee recommended to Court the approval of Bill McDonald as Chair designate of the Audit Committee and Austin Sweeney as the new lay governor with legal expertise. Court **approved** the appointment of Bill McDonald and Austin Sweeney as new lay governors with effect from 1st August 2020.

- 21.2 The Vice-Chair of Court introduced the report from the Court Governance and Nominations Committee, sitting as the Chair of Court Nominations Committee, on 3rd June 2020. The Vice-Chair set out the Committee's considerations and reflections which led to the recommendation to re-appoint Rob Woodward as Chair of Court for a second term Court **approved** the re-appointment of the Chair of Court with effect from 5th February 2021.