

COURT REPORT: 15 MARCH 2018

Dear Colleagues

If many of us are already looking towards the end of Trimester B, the University Court had a definite air of the start of term when it met yesterday. The new Chair of Court, Rob Woodward, presided over his first meeting in the Court's new venue of the Lantern, where Court members had a bird's eye view of the campus and the University going about its business – while the university community could see for itself that the Court was hard at work. Court members gave a warm welcome to their new Chair, who opened the meeting by paying tribute to the dedication and wisdom of his predecessor, Hazel Brooke.

The Court had earlier in the day listened intently to a presentation on the University's widely praised Advanced Higher Hub by Head of GCU Outreach, Eleanor Wilson, who was joined by a current and a previous 'Hubber', Francis Ahanonu and Pauline Mushaka. This generated great interest, lots of questions and thoughts about how the University could grow such a successful venture further.

What follows is a high-level summary of the main issues addressed by Court yesterday, which will also go on the University website. For those who want more, minutes of the Court meeting will be published on the University website in due course.

Jan Hulme

1. Draft 2018-2019 Scottish Funding Council Outcome Agreement

The Scottish Government, through the SFC, requires each university and college to negotiate an Outcome Agreement and commit to aspirations aligned with a set of National Measures, as a means of demonstrating how institutions use the public funding they are awarded to contribute to Scottish Government priorities.

Court endorsed the draft Outcome Agreement for submission to the Scottish Funding Council by 30 April while recognising that work to refine the document would continue before final Court approval and submission.

2. 2018 Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Performance Indicators

Court received a report on the 2018 HESA performance indicators on participation of under-represented groups and student performance and noted that GCU performs very well in the context of the sector in Scotland, and against our Strategy 2020 KPIs.

3. International Student Recruitment Numbers 2017-2018

Court received a summary of 2017-18 international student headcount registrations to full-time undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes and research postgraduate students. These figures are based on registrations in the student record system on 21 February 2018, following the close of Trimester B registration. Court noted that the figures showed that the University was broadly in line with the expected headcount.

4. GCNYC

Court received a report on activities at GCNYC including progress with the Middle States Accreditation process which, once achieved, will allow GCNYC increased recruitment opportunities. Court approved an amendment to the loan agreement between GCU and its New York operations.

5. GCU London

Court received a brief update on progress against the strategic changes implemented in relation to GCU London that were outlined to Court in June 2017 and considered the position in respect of recruitment and finance.

6. Mutual Severance Scheme (MSS)

Court received summary statistics of MSS applications received and approved.

7. School Refresh

Court received a paper which set out the background and current stage of the School refresh activities which commenced in Trimester A of session 2017-2018 led by the DVC (Academic). Court noted that the refresh was now moving to stage 2 and further consultation with staff.

8. Research Excellence Framework (REF)

Court received a detailed report from the PVC (Research) on sector developments regarding the REF since the publication of the Stern Review in July 2016 and the work being undertaken within the University to ensure full preparedness for the next REF which is now scheduled for 2021.

9. GCU/NHS Lanarkshire Strategic Partnership

Court received a report on key developments in relation to the strategic partnership with NHS Lanarkshire which was established in March 2017 following endorsement by Court.

10. Complaints Handling Procedure – Session 2016-2017 Overview

Court received the annual report on the operation of Complaints Handling Procedure 2016-2017. Court was reminded that under the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act institutions are required to monitor, report and publish complaints data with annual reporting to Court, Senate and the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The report is being submitted to the March meeting of Senate for consideration before being forwarded to the SPSO and published on the University's website.

11. Senate Disciplinary Committee Annual Report

Court received an overview of matters considered under the Code of Student Conduct during 2016-2017.

12. Students' Association Trimester A Report 2017-2018

Court received with interest an update on the Students' Association activities for Trimester A in the academic year 2017-18.

13. Criminal Finances Act 2017 and Corporate Criminal Offences

Court approved the Criminal Facilitation of Tax Evasion Statement for publication on the University website as one of a series of measure to support legislative compliance.

14. Regular Updates

The following regular reports are submitted to each Court meeting.

Items Brought by the Chair of Court

Issues which the Chair of Court drew to Court's attention included: a synopsis of the discussions he had held with members including his observation of the shared pride in GCU values; changes to the timing and format of Court meetings; and a link programme to associate individual lay governors with specific Schools, professional services and other areas including the Students' Association.

Principal & Vice Chancellor & Executive Board Report

The report provided a summary of substantive items considered by the Executive Board since the previous Court meeting in on 23rd November 2017, issues arising in the external environment which impact on GCU and university activities.

Student President's Report

The Student President updated Court on recent issues and activities.

University Secretary's Report

The report provided a summary of work relating to areas of governance and legislative changes pertinent to the work of Court and the University including:

- a briefing about the University's responsibilities under the General Data Protection Regulations which come into force in May 2018
- a recent communication to all charities from the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator on safeguarding and notifiable events and the measures the University has in place to address these issues
- a summary of the changes required to the University's governance arrangements in light of the Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance 2017
- Court meeting attendance 2017-2018

Senate Report

Court noted a highlights report on the substantive items discussed at the meeting of Senate on 15th December 2017.

Reports from Court Standing Committees

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

Court approved the following recommendations from the Court Membership Committee:

- the reappointment of seven lay governors (Ian Kerr, Gordon Jack, Neena Mahal, Professor Ann Priest, Paul Reynolds , Alistair Webster and Professor Stephanie Young);
- that a criterion-based selection process be used by the Court Membership Committee to recommend the appointment of a staff member to the Finance and General Purposes Committee and Remuneration Committee;
- proposed amendments to the CMC Terms of Reference to make explicit and expand the Committee's responsibilities for prior scrutiny of governance matters before referral to Court;
- the Equality and Diversity Committee, the Health and Safety Committee and the Staff Policy Committee be combined into a single committee named the Equality, People and Health Committee;
- proposed regulations for the appointment of trade union nominated staff governors with a view to consultation with the trade unions and all staff members ;
- there was general support for the recommendation that the Student President be appointed as a member of the Remuneration Committee but it was agreed to gauge the Student President's and the Students Association's views on this before approving the recommendation.