

COURT BULLETIN: 22 JUNE 2017

Dear Colleagues

This University Court Bulletin provides a high-level summary of the main issues discussed by Court and will be available on the University website after each meeting. The bulletins are not a formal record of the Court meeting. Minutes of the Court meetings are also published on the University website.

University Budget 2017/2018

Court considered the draft budget 2017/2018 and noted that it had been set following extensive planning and budgeting activities across the University over the past seven months. The planning and budgeting exercise for 2017/2018 and the draft budget position had been designed to ensure the University's focus was on income growth over the next two years. The key areas of focus for consideration which were: sustaining existing and generating new income streams through Transnational education, international tuition fee income, GCU London, GCU New York and strategic investment. Court was advised that the projected income growth had been discussed thoroughly by the Executive Board and the Finance & General Purposes Committee and reflected a prudent and achievable budget position.

Court tested the draft budget thoroughly and sought and received further information or clarification on a range of topics before approving the budget for 2017/2018.

GCU New York

Court received an update on activities at GCU New York and in particular noted that the application for degree granting status had been approved by the Board of Regents at their meeting on 13th June 2017.

League Table Update 2017

Court received an update on the University's performance in the UK league tables and noted the University's improved performance in the league tables published to date.

Court noted that the University was ranked within the top 150 of the best young universities in the world for the first time with a ranking of 101-150 in the 2017 Times Higher Education (THE) Young University Rankings.

Court was advised that a key priority was enhancing the student experience which should contribute to an improved ranking in the league tables in future years.

GCU Community: Working Together in Partnership

Court approved a new Partnership Agreement developed between the University and the Students' Association which replaced the GCU Commitment (which was developed as part of the Student Experience Framework 2013-2017). The new Agreement was underpinned by the concept of a 'GCU Community', based on the premise that all members of the GCU community – students, staff and the Students' Association – were responsible for partnership working in practice.

Court was advised that the Partnership Agreement was structured around a set of four Principles which informed and underpinned the University's approach to partnership working in practice. The Principles were based on the GCU Values (*Responsibility; Creativity; Integrity; Confidence*) and Students' Association strategic priority areas (*Partnership; Belonging; Empowerment; Innovation*).

Mid-Point Review of Strategy 2020

Court received a high level mid-point review of progress in delivering the Strategy 2020. This drew on the Strategic and Financial Planning process and key discussions with all Executive member, the Deans Group, and the Students' Association, as well as a review of competitor strategies and performance indicators.

The mid-point review suggested that the University's 2020 vision and goals remained relevant, ambitious and in line with our institutional mission For the Common Good. The review process also provided an opportunity to assess the targets set for the institutional 2020 Strategic Indicators.

Court approved a proposal to revise the 2020 Strategic Indicators.

Gender Action Plan

Court was reminded that every Scottish college and university had been asked by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) to prepare an institutional Gender Action Plan. The SFC issued guidance on the development of institutional plans in April 2017, with a requirement that Gender Action Plans be published on individual university and college websites and submitted to SFC by 31 July 2017.

It was intended that the Gender Action Plan would be published alongside the suite of Equality and Diversity materials, resources and plans within the Equality and Diversity section of the GCU website.

Court endorsed the University's Gender Action Plan.

Digital Strategy

Court received and discussed an update from the DVC Strategy on the implementation of the Digital Strategy approved by Court in June 2016. This included progress with providing a new student information management system.

Students' Association Trimester 2 Report 2016/2017

Court received with interest an update on the Students' Association activities for Trimester 2 in the academic year 2016/17 and congratulated the Students' Association on its achievements.

Complaints Handling Procedure – Session 2015/2016 Overview

Court received the annual report on the operation of Complaints Handling Procedure 2015/2016. Court was reminded that under the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act institutions were required to monitor, report and publish complaints data with annual reporting to Court, Senate and the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). Court noted that the report would be submitted to the June meeting of Senate for consideration before being forwarded to the SPSO and published on the University's website.

Regular Updates

The following regular reports are submitted to each Court meeting.

- **Chair of Court's Report**

The report provided a summary of activities the Chair of Court had undertaken and meetings she had attended on behalf of Court.

- **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 April 2017, issues arising in the external environment which impact on GCU and University activities including; a summary of the key highlights from a ministerial statement on progress with widening access to higher education; Universities UK Conference where the Principal chaired a session entitled "Improving student retention in a changing higher education landscape"; the special event held in the Saltire Centre to mark the 10th year of the Magnus Magnusson Awards; a GCU graduate had been named the best young journalist in Scotland; the People Services team success in winning the Exceptional HR category at the Universities Human Resources Awards.

- **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 request to grant authority to the Chair of Court to exercise summer vacation powers on Court's behalf;
- the University's draft response to the consultation on the revised Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance 2017;
- the proposal to hold the annual meeting between Court and staff in the autumn;
- the proposal to reintroduce the Court bulletin as an information resource for staff;

- **Senate Report**

Court noted a highlights report on the substantive items discussed at the meeting of Senate on 2nd June 2017.

- **Reports from Court Standing Committees**

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

The Court noted the work of the Nominations Committee in connection with the agreeing a shortlist of candidates to interview for the new Chair to succeed Mrs Hazel Brooke in February 2018.

Court approved the Court Membership Committee's recommendations regarding the appointment of four new lay governors onto Court with effect from 1 August 2017.

Court was advised that the Court Membership Committee had considered a proposal from the Chair of the Combined Union Committee for two trade union observers to attend Court pending changes to the University's Statutory Instrument in relation to the composition of Court. The Court Membership Committee had recommended that the proposal be submitted to Court for approval. Court duly approved the process.