

## University Court

### Minutes of the meeting of the University Court held on 23 February 2017

#### (Minutes 16.70 – 16.102)

**Present:** Mrs Hazel Brooke (Chair)  
Dr Douglas Chalmers, Dr Morag Ferguson, Professor Pamela Gillies, Mr Tom Halpin, Mr Gordon Jack, Mr Ian Kerr, Mr Austin Lafferty, Ms Neena Mahal, Dr Neil Partlett, Professor Ann Priest, Ms Lauren Ramage, Miss Davena Rankin, Mr Paul Reynolds, Ms Caroline Stuart, Mr Alistair Webster, Professor Stephanie Young (Vice-Chair)

**Apologies:** Mr John Chapman, Ms Laura Gordon, Mr Alex Killick

**In attendance:** Mr Kevin Campbell, Student Vice-President School of Health & Life Sciences  
Professor Cam Donaldson, Acting Pro Vice Chancellor Research  
Ms Jan Hulme, University Secretary & Vice Principal Governance  
Drs Jeanine Gregersen-Hermans, Pro Vice-Chancellor International  
Professor James Miller, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Strategy)  
Ms Seonag MacKinnon, Director of Communications and Public Affairs  
Mr Gerry Milne, Chief Financial Officer & Vice-Principal Infrastructure  
Ms Cara Smyth, Vice-President GCU New York  
Professor Valerie Webster, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)  
Mr Adrian Lui (for item 13 only)

Mr Riley Power, Head of Governance (Secretary)

#### Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted the apologies as above. The Chair invited members to welcome Cara Smyth from GCUNY.

### Minutes of the meeting of the University Court held on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2016

16.70 Agreed Document UC16/41, the unconfirmed draft minutes of the Court meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2016. It was considered that the minutes of the Court meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2016 were an accurate record subject to amending minute 16.34(iii) to note that concern had been expressed by a staff governor in relation to the level of senior staff remuneration and his suggestion of a top rate of £75k.

#### Matters Arising Briefing Note

16.71 Noted Court considered the extent to which the diversity of arguments raised in relation to specific agenda items ought to be captured in the minutes as opposed to agreed final positions. The Court agreed that where there were evidently different views the flavour of these should be captured.

## Chair's Report

- 16.72 Noted
- i. Document UC16/42, a report from the Chair of Court on the activities she had undertaken and meetings she had attended on behalf of Court.
  - ii. The Chair noted that at the previous meeting of Court on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2016 she had emphasised the importance of maintaining confidentiality around Court discussion, including discussion of GCU New York. One staff governor had subsequently expressed the view to her that this reminder, and other remarks made by Court members, could have been interpreted as implying that staff governors were not observing confidentiality. The Chair told Court that she had received assurances that there had been no breach of Court confidentiality and that she had accepted these assurances.

## Principal's and Executive Board Report

- 16.73 Noted
- i. Document UC16/43, the Principal's and Executive Board Report to Court.
  - ii. In addition to the matters highlighted in the report, the Principal also advised Court that the University and College Union had published its annual report on the remuneration and expenses of Principals and Vice-Chancellors at UK HEIs.

## University Secretary's Report

- 16.74 Considered
- i. Document UC16/44, the University Secretary's Report.
  - ii. Court considered the proposed methodologies for the Court and Senate effectiveness reviews. In relation to the Court effectiveness review, members considered the suggestion from a member of Court that the university community widely be invited to provide feedback on Court's effectiveness. He went on to suggest that this would be consonant with the recent legislative changes to HE governance in Scotland. The Court agreed that the effectiveness review was a standard governance tool based on a governing body's self-reflection and that accordingly it would not be logical to circulate the proposed questionnaire devised for this purpose more widely.
- 16.75 Agreed
- i. Court approved the proposed methodology for the Court Effectiveness Review.
  - ii. Court members agreed to review and complete the new equality and diversity online training module developed by the University. The University Secretary advised that access instructions would be sent to members following the meeting.
- 16.76 Noted
- Court noted the final calendar of Court and Committee dates for 2017-18.

## Sustainability: Going for Growth

- 16.77 Considered
- i. The Principal referred to the need for the University's long-term sustainability to be based not only on efficiency in the use of resources but also on growth. The major opportunity for this was growth in the international activity, a key strand of which was the recruitment of international students to the University's Glasgow and London campuses. She gave an overview of how international student income and TNE income had developed since 2005/06, the GCU programmes that had attracted the most international taught postgraduate students in 2016/17 and how

this had changed since 2010/11. The Court also noted the changes in international taught postgraduate student numbers across the sector in 2015/16.

- ii. The VP & PVC International delivered a presentation on international student recruitment and TNE activity. She described how increased international student recruitment would be driven by an increase in the number of leads, more applications and faster conversion of applications to offers. The PVC International provided details of current recruitment trends in applications and conversions.
- iii. Court members observed that a step change was needed in the University's international recruitment and queried what that might be. Court also queried the extent to which the drop in international student numbers at GCU might mirror wider market trends and be driven by external factors. It was explained that globally there was growth in the international student market although competition was increasing. Within the UK numbers were stable or growing but the issue was one of distribution. The Court encouraged close analysis of the factors that might be undermining the University's growth in this market such as degree titles, portfolio, the nature of its key markets (which seemed not to reflect some of the most vibrant markets pursued by other universities) and, importantly, the quality and extent of market intelligence and the processes in place for such intelligence gathering. There should also be careful competitor analysis. The Court was advised that the University was taking a variety of steps including reviewing its portfolio to determine how this mapped to international student demand while forming a coherent portfolio around the University's academic pillars.
- iv. Court members noted with disappointment the impact that recent undermining media coverage in relation to GCUNY may have had on international recruitment efforts and the effectiveness of GCUNY as a North American recruitment hub

16.78 Agreed

Court agreed that better market intelligence was essential and that a revised implementation strategy for international recruitment would be brought to Court in the coming months. The Court sought an update on 17/18 international recruitment numbers at its meeting in April.

### **University Research Strategy**

16.79 Considered

- i. Document UC16/45 being a refresh of the University's Research Strategy for 2020 which updated the strategy approved by Court in September 2014 to take account of developments that had occurred within the internal and external environments and the need to plan beyond 2020 and for the REF 2021 exercise.
- ii. The VP & PVC Research reminded Court of the University's strategic research goals and advised that these goals would be met through a framework that featured:
  - (a) Three societal challenges (Inclusive Societies, Health Lives, Sustainable Environments);
  - (b) Six associated themes intended to reflect strengths within the Schools, the societal challenges and to encourage greater cross-working and interdisciplinary;
  - (c) A new research centre approval and renewal process to endorse four existing or new research centres in order to foster further cross-cutting research activity.

- iii. The VP & PVC Research also highlighted for Court the key performance indicators to be used in measuring research excellence.
- iv. Court noted that further work was underway to reorganise the Research Directorate, enhance the relationships between the directorate and Schools and professional services departments and apply the research centre approval and renewal process to the existing research institutes and to prepare for REF 2021.
- v. A Court member queried how the University intended to address the recommendation in the Stern Review that all research active staff be entered into the REF and expressed concern that this would drive any change to staff contracts which meant differentiating between research and teaching activity. Professor Donaldson indicated that the issue would be addressed once the period of consultation on the Stern review was complete and firm decisions had been taken about REF inclusion criteria.
- vi. Court members queried the impact of the UK leaving the EU on European research grant funding and the planned increase in financial contribution from research activity under the strategy. Members also queried the impact of the referendum outcome on staff from EU countries. The VP & PVC Research advised Court that there was no certainty on how EU research funding would be impacted and it was important that the research strategy had global reach, not least to mitigate the risks. Court noted that the University had continued to provide what assurances it could to EU staff on the impact of the referendum outcome.
- vii. Court members queried the appeal of GCU compared with competitor institutions in terms of research careers. The VP & PVC Research advised that the University placed research excellence at the heart of its recruitment of staff.
- viii. It was suggested that there should be more explicit emphasis on the role of forging partnerships in taking forward the strategy. This was an important factor which featured within other strategies and notably the International Strategy: consideration would be given to making this integration clearer.

16.80 Agreed

Court approved the Research Strategy subject to the amendments in minute 16.79 (viii) being made to the strategy.

#### **GCUNY Update**

16.81 Noted

- i. Document UC16/46, which updated Court on progress on activities at GCUNY and progress that had been made since October 2016. The Vice-President indicated that income was on track for forecast areas. Members noted in particular significant grant funding committed in relation to the Fair Fashion Centre and the NOCO<sub>2</sub> initiative in addition to the Fair Fashion Centre CEO Convening scheduled for May 2017. Court also noted that GCUNY had been working closely with the VP & PVC Research to establish a research working group in Glasgow to build upon the research funding success secured by GCUNY.
- ii. In relation to the licence application, Court noted that GCU NY had met with NYSED in February 2017 and had clarified a number of matters in relation to the Petition for a Provisional Charter submitted to the Board of Regents and that the license had now been scheduled into the Board of Regents calendar for consideration in April 2017. NYSED had requested that certain changes be made to

the petition. Following these discussions, NYSED had requested that GCU amend its petition such that it used a college appellation for its NY enterprise in conformity with US higher education naming conventions. NYSED had also required the names of US-based trustees to be added to the petition as initial trustees.

16.82 Agreed Court approved the following changes sought by NYSED to the Petition for a Provisional Charter:

(a) the addition to the petition of US-based trustees to be identified by the Vice President of GCUNY in consultation with the Principal, the Chair of Court and the Chair of the GCU-NYC, Inc. Board;

(b) a change of name on the petition from Glasgow Caledonian University New York to Glasgow Caledonian New York College.

#### **GCU-NYC, Inc. Minutes from the Board meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2016**

16.83 Noted Document UC16/47, the minutes from the GCU-NYC, Inc. Board meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2016. Court noted in particular the reappointment of the officers for GCU-NYC, Inc. for a further one-year term.

#### **GCU Corporate Risk Register**

16.84 Considered i. Document UC16/48 being the GCU Corporate Risk Register as at February 2017. Court noted that the Risk Register had been updated in line with discussions at the Risk Management Forum, Executive Board, Audit Committee and Finance & General Purposes Committee.

ii. Court noted that the following two risks, which had amber residual risk ratings, had been added to the Corporate Risk Register:

(a) GCU London – Risk that planned growth was not achieved and combined with rising infrastructure costs would have a negative impact on its financial sustainability;

(b) EU Referendum result and terms of the UK exit from Europe – Risk that uncertainty would affect financial results through forex impact, student recruitment and strategic investment decisions.

iii. Court asked that future versions of the Corporate Risk Register include an introductory narrative which outlined the rationale for any additions, deletions or changes made to risk ratings. The document should further be developed to make clear changes to risk ratings; the timing of those changes; and which actions had been implemented and which were outstanding. Members also noted that additional detail concerning future actions planned in relation to Risk 11 – GCUNY should be included in the Register.

16.85 Agreed Court approved the Corporate Risk Register subject to the amendment noted in minute 16.84(iii)

## **Widening Access Sector Statistics Overview**

- 16.86 Noted i. Document UC16/49, a report which provided an overview of GCU's performance in key metrics relating to widening access which drew on data published by HESA and the SFC in February 2017. Court noted the University's strong performance in widening access metrics against the backdrop of sector trends and challenging future targets for all universities set through the Scottish Governments Commission on Widening Access.

## **Draft Outcome Agreement 2017/18**

- 16.87 Considered Document UC16/50 being the first draft of the SFC Outcome Agreement 2017-18 to 2019-20 which was presented as a work in progress document. The DVC Strategy advised Court that the SFC had indicated that it was content with the outline Outcome Agreement submitted in December 2016 and that the University was now engaged in further dialogue with the SFC on outstanding issues including the tolerances for enrolment against funded student places, funding implications of the implementation of the postgraduate student loans scheme and intended future approach to funding of EU students following the outcome of the referendum on the UK leaving the EU. The DVC Strategy advised Court that consultation with the trade unions and Student's Association was ongoing as the final draft was developed.
- 16.88 Agreed Court endorsed the approach adopted in the draft Outcome Agreement and noted that a final draft of the agreement would be circulated to member before submission to the SFC on 31 March 2017.

## **Media Monitoring and Parliamentary Activity**

- 16.89 Noted Document UC16/51 being a report from the DVC strategy which outlined the regular monitoring and evaluation of media coverage put in place by the Communications and Public Affairs Team, which included the first four months reporting and a summary of parliamentary activity relating to GCU over the previous five years. Court members welcomed the report and requested that this be provided on a more regular basis.

## **University's Prevent Duties under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015**

- 16.90 Noted Court received a briefing/training session from the University's Equality and Diversity Adviser in relation to the University's obligations under the Prevent duty contained in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015. The briefing was one of a number of briefing/training sessions which covered a range of stakeholders within the University as part of the University's action plan for ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Act.

## **Students' Association Trimester 1 Report**

- 16.91 Noted Document UC16/52 being an update on the Students' Association's activities in Trimester 1 2016/17. The report aligned to and included a copy of the Students' Association's strategic plan. The report updated Court on the range of activities undertaken by the Students' Association and its clubs and societies in promoting the Association, the interests of students and the Common Good. The Court noted in particular the Students' Association had been awarded Investing in Volunteers

Accreditation, the UK quality standard for organisations which involved volunteers in their work. Court congratulated the Students' Association on being shortlisted for the Officer Team of the Year Award in the NUS Scotland Awards 2017.

### **Review of Students' Association Governance Documentation**

- 16.92      Considered      Document UC16/53 being a report on the five-yearly review of the Students' Association governance documentation which had been undertaken in accordance with section 22 of the Education Act 1994 and article 29 of the University's Statutory Instrument. Court members were advised that there were no fundamental changes required to the way in which the Students' Association operated or to its associated governance documents and that the majority of the changes proposed reflected updated operational practice. Court noted that the main change to the documentation related to the Licence Agreement with the Students' Association for the use of the University's premises.
- 16.93      Agreed      Court agreed an amendment to the licence agreement between the University and the Students' Association to include a 6 months' notice requirement in order to terminate the licence on the current premises. The Court also agreed that the revised Licence Agreement could be signed on behalf of Court by the Principal or the Principal's nominee acting under the scheme of delegated signing authority.

### **Enhancing the Student Experience at GCU**

- 16.94      Noted      i.      Document UC16/54 which updated Court about the approach being taken across the University to enhance the student experience and to realise an incremental and sustained improvement in the University's student experience metrics over the following four years. The DVC Academic advised Court that a key change in the University's approach had been to create a single overarching strategic plan delivered through a mix of cross university and local action plans coordinated to deliver an excellent student experience with the activity under these plans mapped to four overarching themes.
- ii.      Court noted the following, in particular:
- (a) The University had been working in partnership with the Students' Association in obtaining feedback from students in relation to the student experience at GCU;
  - (b) Module evaluations would be rolled out across the University as a further source of feedback to shape the student experience;
  - (c) Students views on the student experience would be surveyed at levels 1 to 3 and this feedback would be the background against which students ultimately engaged with the national student survey at Level 4.
  - (d) Assessment submission and grading would be moved online and staff would be upskilled in the use of these systems to ensure more timely assessment feedback in response to the previous NSS results.

### **Facility Letter Amendment and Resolution – Bank of Scotland**

- 16.95      Considered      Document UC16/55 which contained a resolution to amend the bank facility letter with the Bank of Scotland. The CFO and VP Infrastructure advised that the terms and provision of facilities detailed in the Bank Facility Letter required to be amended from those approved by Court in September 2016 to include the provision of a £1.5m Bank of Scotland Corporate Card Facility to facilitate the use

