

Court Effectiveness Review 2017: Outcomes and Action Plan

1. Introduction

Following the Court Effectiveness Review workshop held on 22nd June 2017, David Fletcher the external consultant who supported the review, produced a report and a set of recommended actions. It is overall a positive report and is based to some extent on the questionnaire completed by members and more substantially the outcome of the workshop with members of Court and the Executive held subsequently.

The report focused on four main areas:

- Strategic challenge
- Connectivity and accessibility
- Collective responsibility
- Quality of the student experience

2. Response to Recommended Actions

The response to the recommended actions arising from the review is attached at appendix 1. In summary the proposed responses to the review outcomes focus on the following main areas:

- Reviewing the way in which the issues discussed and decisions taken at standing committees meetings are reported to Court to ensure Court receives a sufficient level of detail to facilitate strategic challenge.
- Enhancing accountability to Court around progress on key projects through capturing timelines and key measures of success for proposals approved by Court. This would be achieved primarily through the use of Executive summary papers to communicate more clearly timelines and KPIs for key items and progress against these measures as part of any update to Court.
- Maintaining and enhancing Court member awareness of their roles and responsibilities. This will be achieved primarily through improved signposting to the information and resources currently available to Court members around these roles and responsibilities of Court members and the support in place for Court members.
- Developing a plan for promoting greater engagement between Court and the wider University community including exploring increased use of social media.

The review report was considered by the University Court at its meeting on 23rd November 2017 at which meeting the Court also noted and approved the responses to the recommended actions.

**Court Effectiveness Review 2017
Action Plan**

Area of Focus	Action Proposed in Report	Response
Strategic Challenge	<u>Action 1</u> Review information flow from standing committees to highlight areas of substantive scrutiny and challenge and to allow Court to engage appropriately with these.	Agreed. Continue to promote use of high quality Executive summary papers to highlight the key issues discussed and decisions taken at committee meetings.
	<u>Action 2</u> Provide opportunities for Court members occasionally to attend standing committee meetings as observers.	Agreed. Reference will be included in the Governors' Handbook.
	<u>Action 3</u> Make use of time limited task and finish groups to examine and report on issues where more time and scrutiny might be required (Note: it will be necessary to consider their relationship with the responsibilities of the standing committees).	As the standing committees already fulfil the responsibility for scrutinising proposals which fall within their remits prior to these being submitted to Court, it is not considered necessary to introduce a further layer of governance. Executive Summary Sheets for all Court papers should include clear details of the proposals, supporting actions, timelines and key performance indicators or measures of success to enhance the Court's ability to effectively monitor key issues Update papers on previously approved items should report against the key performance indicators included in the original approval.

	<p><u>Action 4</u> Consider the establishment of an on-line forum as a way of dealing with detail and freeing up time for Court to focus more sharply on key issues (Note: more routine approvals could be dealt with in this way)</p>	<p>Considered that this would not constitute good governance. The Court meeting is considered to be the proper forum for debate. It is a corporate body and all members must be party to discussions.</p>
<p>Connectivity and Accessibility</p>	<p><u>Action 5</u> Explore the various ideas for greater engagement of Court members with the wider University community.</p>	<p>Implemented.</p> <p>A number of the activities and initiatives are already in place to facilitate engagement between Court members and the wider University community, for example Court bulletins published on the website, guest speakers from Schools/departments are invited to pre-Court lunches, visits to Schools and support departments are organised.</p>
<p>Collective Responsibility</p>	<p><u>Action 6</u> Review the guidance and protocols around the maintenance of collective responsibility for decisions taken by the Court and ensure that these are brought clearly to the attention of all members as part of the induction process.</p>	<p>Agreed.</p> <p>The guidelines and protocols around the maintenance of collective responsibility for decisions taken by Court are clearly set out in section 6.2 of Court's Standing Orders and reference to collective responsibility is made in section 3.3 of the Governors' Handbook. Both documents are published on the Court website.</p> <p>Article 17 (g) gives Court the power to remove any governor whose behaviour is inappropriate.</p> <p>The protocol for collective responsibility has been included as part of the standard induction programme.</p>

	<p><u>Action 7</u> Review the current mentoring scheme with a view to providing more detailed operating guidance</p>	<p>Implemented.</p> <p>The standing committee chairs reviewed the current mentoring arrangements and agreed that they provided sufficient guidance for mentor and mentee. However, it was agreed that not all newly appointed governors might feel the need to be paired with a mentor depending on the extent of previous experience serving on boards and committees. It was agreed that the system should remain in place with newly appointed governors being given the option of being paired with a mentor.</p> <p>Both mentors and mentees are given a copy of the protocol.</p> <p>It is proposed that feedback on the mentoring arrangements is sought from the mentor and mentee after the first six months.</p>
<p>Quality of the Student Experience</p>	<p><u>Action 8</u> Court should ensure that it has a clear understanding of the strategy for the student experience including clarity around objectives with appropriate monitoring of implementation and progress.</p>	<p>Implemented.</p> <p>The GCU Student experience is a frequent topic for consideration by the Court. For example, the quality of the student experience was discussed in detail at the Court Away Day in October 2017.</p> <p>Updates on the progress being made in implementing the strategic plan for Delivering an Excellent Student Experience are included in Court's workplan, the last being received by Court in February 2017. Updates include progress against KPIs, an overview of key actions to enhance the student experience and timelines for implementation.</p>

		<p>Further information relating to the student experience may be provided to Court members through a report on the outcomes from the Chair and Vice-Chair of Court's quarterly meetings with the Students' Association being included in the Chair's Report.</p>
	<p><u>Action 9</u> Consider a student experience survey as a joint project between the University and the Students' Association.</p>	<p>Implemented.</p> <p>All new surveys which have been introduced this year are joint activities between the University and the Students' Association.</p> <p>The views of the Students' Association are being sought</p>