

## University Court

### Minutes of the meeting of the University Court held on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2016

#### (Minutes 15.136– 15.179)

**Present:** Mrs Hazel Brooke (Chair)  
Mr John Chapman, Dr Morag Ferguson, Professor Pamela Gillies, Ms Laura Gordon, Mr Gordon Jack, Ms Neena Mahal, Dr Neil Partlett, Professor Ann Priest, Ms Lauren Ramage, Mr Paul Reynolds, Mr David Wallace, Mr Alistair Webster, Dr Bob Winter, Professor Stephanie Young (Vice-Chair), Mr Austin Lafferty

**Apologies:** Dr Douglas Chalmers, Mr Ian Gracie, Mr Tom Halpin, Mr Ian Kerr, Miss Davena Rankin

**In attendance:** Mr Kevin Campbell, Student Vice-President School of Health & Life Sciences  
Ms Jan Hulme, University Secretary & Vice Principal (Governance)  
Mrs Claire Hulsen, Director of Strategy & Planning for item 15.149  
Mr Alex Killick, Director of People  
Professor Mike Mannion, Vice Principal & Pro Vice Chancellor Research  
Professor James Miller, Deputy Vice Chancellor  
Mr Gerry Milne, Chief Financial Officer & Vice-Principal Infrastructure  
Professor Valerie Webster, Vice Principal & Pro Vice-Chancellor Learning & Student Experience  
Mr Adrian Lui, Equality and Diversity Adviser for item 15.177

Ms Janice Bruce, Secretary

#### Chair's Opening Remarks

1. The Chair congratulated the Principal and Vice-Chancellor on being awarded an honorary Doctor of Science from the University of Aberdeen. The Chair was also pleased to report that two of GCU's Honorary Graduates, Tessa Hartmann and Anna Dominiczuk had received honours in the Queen's Birthday Honours.
2. The Chair welcomed Lauren Ramage to her first Court meeting in her role as Student President and Kevin Campbell, Vice-President SHLS, who was succeeding Jodie Waite as the student in attendance at Court pending changes to the University's statutory instrument to implement the prior Court decision to have two student governors.
3. Discussion on the Staff Resourcing and Recruitment Policy would be deferred until the September Court meeting to allow further work to be undertaken on the associated guidance.
4. The Equality and Diversity Annual Report would be starred as this was submitted to Court for approval.
5. The Chair advised that, on this occasion, Court was working to a timed agenda as it was bound by the Court Open Event which was due to start at 4.30pm.

### Minutes of the meeting of the University Court held on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2016

15.136 Agreed Document UC15/64, the unconfirmed draft minutes of the Court meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2016 were an accurate record.

## **Matters Arising Briefing Note**

15.137 Noted Document UC15/65, an update on the matters arising from the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2016.

## **Chair's Report**

15.138 Noted Document UC15/66, a report from the Chair of Court on the activities she had undertaken and meetings she had attended, on behalf of Court.

15.139 Reported The Chair reported that she and the Vice Chair of Court had met the newly elected Students' Association sabbatical officers and would continue to have meetings with them throughout the year.

## **Principal's and Executive Board Report**

15.140 Noted Document UC15/67, the Principal's and Executive Board Report to Court.

15.141 Reported i. The Principal advised Court that Professor Mannion had decided to step down from the role of PVC Research with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2016 to return to a Professorial role in SEBE to pursue his research interests in Computing. Professor Mannion had held three EB portfolios during his time as a Vice-Principal, and his considerable experience would remain available to the University as he would continue to lead corporate projects from time to time as Assistant Vice-Principal. Professor Cam Donaldson would assume the role of Acting PVC Research until a permanent appointment was made whilst still continuing as Co-Director of the Yunus Centre. A recruitment exercise would be undertaken in the coming session with a view to announcing a substantive appointment early in 2017.

ii. Meetings between the Director for Work Based Education and Dr Brian Molefe, a GCU Honorary Graduate and CEO of Eskom Holdings in South Africa, had been held about the University's potential role in upskilling Eksom staff on the Transnet model. The University had now been invited to become an academic partner in the Eskom PowerPlant Engineering Institute (EPPEI) for Phase 2 of the Institute's Development which would run from 2017-2021 and which would focus on research and development. GCU would be the first international university partner.

The Principal advised that GCU had been invited to the launch of EPPEI Phase 2 in Johannesburg on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2016. The Principal further advised that the launch itself with the University's membership did not bring commitments and that full business cases covering proposed activity would be prepared as the relationship developed.

## **University Secretary's Report**

15.142 Considered Document UC15/68, the University Secretary's Report.

15.143 Noted The University Secretary reminded Court that feedback from the previous year's Away Day indicated that some governors favoured an earlier start on the first day and an earlier finish on day two. The dates for the 2016 Away Day had already been agreed as the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> October. However, consideration was being given



the Advanced Higher Hub with funding of £150k for each of the next 2 years and that it was hoped that the SFC would match fund particularly if the University offered its expertise to roll out the model. In addition initiatives to secure philanthropic funding were being explored.

- iv. Court expressed its support and commended the Principal and the Executive for presenting a prudent and achievable budget.

15.148 Agreed To approve the University budget for 2016-2017

#### **League Table Update 2016**

- 15.149 Noted
- i. Document UC15/70 an update on the University's performance in the Guardian and Complete University Guide league tables published in 2016.
  - ii. The Director of Strategy and Planning tabled additional data in relation to issues arising from the National Student Survey and actions being taken to improve key metrics which would impact positively on the University's league table positioning.
  - iii. In her introduction to the paper the Director of Strategy and Planning stated that there had been a reduction from the previous year's position. She reminded Court that although league tables measured similar categories, different methodologies and weightings were used which meant an institution's positioning could vary across the league tables. Furthermore, as there was a time lag between the data on which the league tables were based and their publication, they did not necessarily reflect the current position or the impact of actions which had been taken.
- 15.150 Discussion
- i. Reference was made to the discussion on league tables at the Court Away Day in October 2015 which had highlighted key areas of focus to improve the University's positioning. In light of the current outcomes, Court sought and received assurance about the work undertaken on the areas identified for action. The Principal advised that the Director of Strategy and Planning had undertaken close analysis of the league table positioning and was well placed to build on earlier work. The Student President highlighted the student focus on assessment as a continuing unresolved issue. A review of the measures which had been taken since the 2015 Away Day and actions planned for 2016-2017 would be presented at the Away Day in October 2016.
  - ii. It was suggested that the Students' Association had an important role in the discussions on measures to address areas for improvement so that it could reinforce the improvements being made with their members.

#### **Scottish Funding Council Strategic Dialogue Meeting Report**

15.151 Noted Document UC15/70a, a report from the SFC on the Strategic Dialogue meeting held at GCU on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2016. Court welcomed the positive report and congratulated the Executive and all who had contributed to the successful outcome.

#### **GCU New York Update**

15.152 Noted i. Document UC15/71 a progress report on recent activity at GCUNY including areas

of revenue and income generation, sponsorship and philanthropy

- ii. The Principal provided an update on discussions with the new adviser in relation to the licence application.

### Digital Strategy

15.153 Considered Document UC15/72 the draft Digital Strategy.

15.154 Reported The PVC and VP Learning and Student Experience presented the final draft strategy and stated that it had been developed to assist with the delivery of the key enabling strategies of the University's 2020 Strategy.

The PVC and VP Learning and Student Experience reported that, following consultation, feedback on the draft Digital Strategy had been received from staff and students as well as the Executive Board, Finance & General Purposes Committee, Senate and Court. The final strategy incorporated comments received and included key performance indicators and milestones. A separate detailed project and operational plan would be developed to support the strategy and senior project management would be identified to take each strand forward. Work would also be done to ensure that all systems and processes that underpin the strategy were aligned to the new strategy.

It was noted that the detailed business cases and operational plans associated with the digital strategy would be submitted to the F&GP Committee in due course.

15.155 Discussion Main point's emerging from the discussion included:

- i. With reference to the work being undertaken on the technology infrastructure to upgrade or replace supporting systems and processes, there was discussion of the importance of eliminating the need for customisation, the role of the Cloud and the need for rigorous benchmarking to inform the business case. One member referred to the place of microservices architecture which was a highly technical area requiring specialist skills. More generally, it would be essential that the University had the necessary digital capability, professional skills and technical expertise for the successful delivery of the Strategy including at executive level. Strong project governance would also be critical. The VP and PVC Learning and Student Experience advised that a project manager would be appointed and an overarching Programme Board established to oversee implementation. This would report to Court through the Executive Board and it would include Court members within the membership.
- ii. It was agreed that the successful implementation of the digital strategy would involve major cultural as well as technological change. It would be essential that staff and students had the necessary skills to participate effectively in flexible learning opportunities and working practices.
- iii. In response to a query, Court was advised that the Digital Strategy, as presented, was a high level document which set out the aims, principles, goals and key measures of success. More detailed information would be included in the business cases and operational plans where measures and implementation approach would be spelled out.

15.156 Agreed To approve the Digital Strategy with a more detailed picture to come to the Court's September meeting. That the Programme Board would include two or three lay court members.

### **External Relations Strategy**

15.157 Considered Document UC15/73 the External Relations Strategy.

15.158 Reported i. The Deputy Vice Chancellor presented the External Relations Strategy highlighting the extensive staff and student consultation process, the key goals and the high level objectives linking to the five-year planning cycle and the operational plans. This was a further enabling document to underpin the University's 2020 strategy and its success would ultimately be measured by those strategic indicators.

ii. Responding to a question about the necessary skills to deliver the strategy, the DVC stated that there would be a step change in the creative use of all media platforms available to the University which would enable GCU's story to be promulgated in a broader and more co-ordinated way.

iii. The process for appointing a Director of Marketing and Communications was underway. In addition, a tender process was being undertaken to appoint a PR company to assist in identifying and prioritising the publication of communications which would increase recognition of GCU's profile, impact and value both nationally and internationally.

15.159 Agreed To approve the External Relations Strategy.

### **Transnational Education Opportunity in Tanzania: Preliminary Pathfinder Paper**

15.160 Considered Document UC15/74, which was a pathfinder overview of a potential new opportunity for GCU to establish a centre for nursing education in Tanzania in partnership with a philanthropic organisation.

15.161 Reported The Vice Principal & Pro Vice-Chancellor Learning & Student Experience stated that the project could provide an opportunity for GCU to expand its transnational education portfolio. Initial due diligence on the potential partner had been undertaken and further scoping work would require to be undertaken in relation to accreditation and regulatory bodies similar to the setting up of the Grameen College of Nursing in Bangladesh.

15.162 Agreed Court agreed that the Executive should continue exploratory discussions.

### **Students' Association Trimester 2 Report 2015/2016**

15.163 Noted i. Document UC15/75, a report on the activities in which the Students' Association had been engaged during Trimester 2 in the academic year 2015/16.

ii. The President of the Students' Association introduced the report and drew Court's attention to the main highlights of a productive year.

iii. The Chair thanked the President of the Students' Association and the student executive team for a comprehensive and informative report.

### **Senate Report: 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2016**

15.164 Noted Document UC15/76, a report on substantive items which Senate had considered at its meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2016.

### **ELIR 2015 – Year-On Report**

15.165 Considered Document UC15/77 a report on the University's year-on response to the Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) Outcome Report which was published in June 2016 following the ELIR undertaken by the Quality Assurance Agency (Scotland) in March 2015.

15.166 Noted The report provided evidence that the University had reflected on the outcomes of the ELIR and indicated the actions taken or in progress to address these outcomes. Following endorsement by the Court, the report would be published on the QAA (Scotland) website.

15.167 Agreed To endorse the ELIR 2015 year-on report.

### **Remuneration Committee Report: 16<sup>th</sup> May 2016**

15.168 Considered Document UC15/78, a report on the substantive issues of business discussed at the Remuneration Committee meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2016.

15.169 Agreed To approve the University's Remuneration Philosophy for 2016/2017.

### **Finance & General Purposes Committee Report: 1<sup>st</sup> June 2016**

15.170 Noted Document UC15/79, a report on the substantive issues of business discussed at the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2016.

### **Court Membership Committee**

15.171 Considered Document UC15/80, a recommendation from the Court Membership Committee regarding the terms of office of lay governors which concluded on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2016.

15.172 Noted i. Dr Winter had would be stepping down from Court at the end of his current term of office.

ii. Mr Wallace concluded his final term of office on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2016.

15.173 Agreed To reappoint the following as lay governors for the period 1<sup>st</sup> August 2016 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2019:  
Ms Laura Gordon  
Mr Austin Lafferty

### **Audit Committee Report: 7<sup>th</sup> June 2016**

15.174 Noted Document UC15/81, a report on the substantive issues of business discussed at the Audit Committee meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

### **Staff Policy Committee Report: 8<sup>th</sup> June 2016**

15.175 Noted Document UC15/82, a report on the substantive issues of business discussed at the Staff Policy Committee meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

### **Equality & Diversity Annual Report 2015-2016**

15.176 Considered Document UC15/83, the Equality and Diversity Annual Report for the period April 2015 to April 2016.

15.177 Noted During the period covered by the report significant progress had been made in implementing the actions set out in the University's Equality Outcomes Framework and mainstreaming equality and diversity. The University Secretary stated that a particular focus was on embedding equality impact assessments in GCU policies, strategies and decisions to encourage staff engagement in a variety of ways other than solely in relation to legislative compliance. There followed a discussion with the Equality and Diversity Adviser who had joined the meeting for consideration of the annual report. It was confirmed that there was clarity about lead responsibility for equality and diversity at Executive level and similarly among governors with two lay governors and one staff governor being members of the Equality and Diversity Committee.

15.178 Agreed To approve the Equality & Diversity Annual Report 2015-2016.

### **Date of next meeting**

15.179 Noted The next meeting of Court would be held on Thursday 23rd September 2016 at 2.00pm.

### **Chair's Closing Remarks**

The Chair, noting that this was Mr Wallace's and Dr Winter's last Court meeting, wished to thank both for their contribution to the work of Court and the committees on which they had served.

The Chair paid tribute to the dedication and commitment with which Mr Wallace had undertaken his role as governor and his role as Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee. In particular Mr Wallace had contributed greatly to the quality of Court's debates. The Chair warmly thanked Mr Wallace for the work he had undertaken during his nine years on Court.

The Chair thanked Dr Winter warmly for the time and commitment he had given to his role as governor during his term of office. Dr Winter's wealth of experience in the public sector, his insightful comments and wise counsel had been greatly appreciated.

Both Mr Wallace and Dr Winter stated that it had been a privilege to be part of a vibrant and innovative university and wished Court and the University every success for the future.