

UNIVERSITY SENATE

Minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 9th April 2020

Present: Dr T Boutaleb, Professor I Cameron, Dr D Chalmers, Dr S Dolan, Professor C Donaldson, Dr M Ferguson, Ms E Fulton, Professor P Gillies (Chair), Ms J Hulme, Dr C Khamisha, Professor J Lennon, Dr S Lodge, Professor G Loffler, Dr D Lukic Mr T McAlear, Prof J McCallum, Dr B McConville, Dr K McPherson Professor M Mannion, Mrs W Mazzucco, Dr C Miller, Professor J Miller, Professor A Morgan Ms K Mumme, Professor A Nelson, Dr A Pierotti, Mr B Smith, Professor S Smith, Professor B Steves, Dr K Thomson, Dr M Tong, Professor. V Webster and Professor B Wood.

Apologies: Prof A Britton and Mr N Clark

Ms Fiona Campbell

In Attendance: Mr M Anderson, Director of Research and Innovation
Ms F Campbell, Director of People
Mc C Hulsen, Director of Strategy and Planning,
Mr S Lopez, Academic Registrar
Ms J Main, Director of Student Life
Mrs S Mitchell, Chief Operating Office
Mr R Ruthven, Director Library Services

Mrs D Donnet, Clerk to Senate

By Invitation Professor Alastair Robertson

Observers: Rob Woodward (Chair of Court), Campbell Fitch (Lay Governor), Danny Gallagher (Lay Governor), Ian Kerr (Lay Governor), Alistair Webster (Lay Governor), Louise Clark (Governance), Lesley McGinley (Governance), Lisa Johnston (Executive Support), Elaine Anderson (Executive Support), Ella Fry, (Executive Support), Catriona Mowat (Student Wellbeing), Helen Gallagher, (SHLS); Fathiya Mohammed (SCEBE); Anita Simmers (SHLS), Titus Olaniyi (GCU London), Adrian Lui (People Services) and Lesleyanne Deans (Registry)

Chairs Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed Senators, attendees and observers to the 140th meeting of Senate and the first to be held virtually. This was an extraordinary meeting, convened to consider the University's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. A warm welcome was also extended to Professor Alastair Robertson, who was attending Senate by invitation, and would joining the University on 20th April 2020 as Director of Academic Development and Student Learning.

It was reported that careful consideration and risk assessment had been given to the most appropriate means by which to hold the meeting, and it had been concluded, for the time being, that Zoom was the most technologically accessible and facilitative option that would support the constructive and open discussions that characterise

Senate. Furthermore, it was not considered that any matters of a confidential or sensitive nature would be discussed at the meeting, and, Zoom had very recently enhanced its security measures.

Senate was informed that one of the University's Honorary Doctor of Laws, Richard Brodsky, had died the previous day, in New York, of Covid-19. Dr Brodsky had been awarded an Honorary Doctorate for his work in social justice. His career in public service included a 28 year tenure in the New York State Assembly. Senate extended its condolences to Dr Brodsky's family.

The Principal expressed her appreciation at the remarkable work that had been undertaken by all staff across the University, over the last three weeks, to move to online teaching and working. Staff had gone above and beyond their normal scope of working to put changes in place, and to work together to resolve issues where these had arisen. The Executive Board met every weekday, and the Student President and Student President Elect attended these meetings too. Fortnightly meetings with the Trade Unions were also scheduled.

It was acknowledged that this was a very stressful time for all staff, many of whom were trying to combine home working with looking after children and other caring responsibilities. The University was advocating and supporting managers and staff to be flexible in agreeing working arrangements to meet individual requirements. Wellbeing support was in place for staff and students should this be required.

In addition to the move to online teaching, there had been a number of other important achievements as part of the University's response to Covid-19, and a number of nursing students had now joined the NHS workforce. All students in Caledonian Court had been released from their lease, and for those students who chose to remain there, no rent would be levied.

There would be significant financial challenges ahead for all universities in the coming months and years, and the government was considering the best way to support universities through this period. The Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science, Richard Lohead MSP was due to have individual conversations with all university Vice-Chancellors in the coming week.

Statement from Chair of Court

The Chair of Court, Rob Woodward, expressed his appreciation at the exemplary way staff and students had worked together to respond to the current extraordinary circumstances. Whilst there would be further challenges ahead, the University had a strong foundation on which to build and to map out a way forward.

Power of Delegation

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| 19.098 | Noted | A report (Doc S19/54/1) that reminded Senate of the provision within Senate's Standing Orders (section 2.4), that supported the delegation of power to the Chair of Senate to deal with urgent business which required a formal decision before the next available meeting of Senate. This would include making urgent, necessary changes to assessment regulations and other relevant University policies within Senate's terms of reference, to enable the University to appropriately and swiftly respond to situations where decisions were required out with the normal schedule of Senate meetings, such as was currently being experienced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. |
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Feedback from Schools, Students' Association and Student Support and Student Life.

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| 19.099 | Received | i | Senate received a verbal update from each area as follows:- |
| | | ii | <u>School of Health and Life Sciences</u> |
| | | | The Dean of SHSL reported that |

- There had been a fantastic response from students engaging in online learning, and she acknowledged the significant amount of preparation that staff from across the University had undertaken to enable and support this;
- Five hundred student nurses were now working for the NHS and in the next few weeks they would be joined by other allied health professional students, and the School would be supporting all students to balance their working and study commitments; and
- Staff had engaged well and were maintaining regular contact via informal and informal virtual meetings.

There were a number of outstanding challenges facing SHSL academic staff in particular that had resulted in increased workload: -

- the move to online teaching and assessment;
- the acceleration of the process to get students into practice;
- lack of clarification of assessment requirements from professional bodies who were also working out how to respond to the situation;
- the collapse of practice placements for most students as placement providers move to pandemic response;
- significant increase in emails from students;
- significant pace of change; and
- reduced staffing capacity within the School as staff on secondment to GCU returned to practice;

It was highlighted that as the School operated over three trimesters, early information on programme and assessment boards would be welcomed.

The School senior management team were considering what central support would be required to respond to the issues the School was facing.

iii School of Computing and Engineering

Dean of SCEBE reiterated the comments that the Dean, SHLS had made in relation to the response and support from staff and students. There were some specific issues to be addressed in relation to technical areas, placements and professional bodies, similar to SHLS.

The need for the University's Quality Assurance processes to be agile to cope with any required changes in assessment or academic delivery was requested.

There were issues in relation to research students and extensions to funding and payments that needed to be addressed, and these would apply across all Schools.

The Deans' Group had been considering what additional support would be required to facilitate ongoing remote delivery.

iv Glasgow School of Business and Society

The Dean of GSBS echoed the sentiments of his colleagues in SHSL and SCEBE regarding the response from staff and students, and indicated that the issues faced in the other two schools regarding workload, assessment, placements, professional bodies and support for all students and staff, applied to GSBS also. Students were understandably anxious about the future, which was stressful for staff too as there was no precedent to follow. Also, whilst online teaching had

been positively received, this did not meet the needs of all students. A strategy was required for now and for the immediate future.

v GCU London

The Dean of GCU London advised that the issues previously raised applied to London, and it was important for there to be close integration between the London and Glasgow campuses. A quarter of international GCU London students had returned to their home countries, where they were continuing to engage with their studies remotely, but there were particular issues for international students who remained in the UK. Support was being provided to these students by GCU Wellbeing staff, as the Student Association Advisor was on furlough.

vi Students' Association

The Student President reiterated appreciation at how the University had responded to the situation. Whilst initially there had been a high level of queries or issues raised by students via email, social media and petitions, this had slowed significantly, and most issues raised by students had been resolved. The Students' Association was working remotely and providing regular opportunities for students to engage and keep in touch. The Students' Association had given staff the option to be furloughed, some staff had taken this option.

vii Student Support and Student Life

The Director of Student Life reported that a helpline had been set up that enabled the University to deal effectively with a very high level of enquires from students, and a number of FAQs had been published which had proved very successful. Calls to the helpline had reduced significantly in recent days and it was now operational Monday to Friday only.

Student Wellbeing support was still available, although being delivered in an alternative way, and support was also being given to disabled, care experienced and overseas students.

Around 150 students remained in Caledonian Court and a support framework was in place to ensure students who were self-isolating had access to food. Student nurses who were working for the NHS were to be offered free accommodation in Caledonian Court.

The hardship fund had provided 80 laptops and dongles for the most disadvantaged students without other access to IT equipment and/or internet.

More publicity on the Erase the Grey campaign was planned to refresh awareness of it and support that was available.

19.100 Discussed

There was also commonality in the issues that all staff were dealing with, including

- balancing working from home with parenting, home schooling and other caring responsibilities;
- workload;
- managing annual leave;
- working with new technologies;
- bureaucracy;
- information overload; and

- need to have clear and early information about any changes to the University calendar.

The need for flexibility to suit personal circumstances was reiterated, together with the importance of staff utilising the rest days that had been scheduled.

19.101 Noted The Chair expressed appreciation at the way the University community had responded to the situation and gave assurances that the issues raised in the feedback would be considered by the University.

Research and Support in Light of Covid-19

19.102 Received Senate endorsed a report (**Doc S19/55/1**) by the VP Research that outlined a number of activities that had been undertaken in relation to research and the REF in light of Covid-19. It was highlighted that a Research Continuity Group had been established to mirror the Executive's establishment of its Covid-19 Planning Group, and it had met three times to date. This Group had considered plans to support research within academic departments; support for postgraduate research students, including holding electronic vivas (noting that 6 PhD vivas had been held); and support for existing research projects.

In relation to the REF, it had been announced that the REF submission date of 27th November 2020 would be postponed indefinitely, with universities being informed 8 months before the new submission date. However, it had been decided not to alter the University's REF timetable of work in order to be able to respond promptly once a new submission date was announced.

Date of Next meeting

The next scheduled meeting of Senate will be held at 9.30am on Friday 5th June.

Chairs' Closing Remarks

The Chair expressed thanks to Eilidh Fulton, as this had been her last meeting as Student President. Ms Fulton had had an extraordinary year as Student President, and would remain involved in The Circle Foundation. Senate thanked Eilidh for the commitment and enthusiasm she had brought to the role of Student President and wished her well for her return to studies in the autumn to complete her degree.