

**Report from the meeting of Senate held on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2018**

**1. Principal & Vice Chancellor and Executive Board Report**

Senate received a report from the Principal and Vice Chancellor and Executive Board to update members on substantive items considered by the Executive Board since the last meeting of Senate. Executive Board updates are available to GCU staff on Caledonian Connected.

Additionally, Senate noted that

- The Principal and new Chair of Court had written jointly to the Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science, with a view to meeting her to put forward a proposal for the University to offer teacher training. The Minister had been reminded of the University's excellent HESA data, and the ground breaking work undertaken by the Caledonian Club and the Advanced Higher Hub. These demonstrated that the University was committed to looking at the whole education system and therefore was ideally placed to be a provider of teacher education.
- The University was not involved in the strike action against changes to the USS pension that was taking place across a large number of Universities across the UK. The Principal informed Senate that she had made it clear to UUK that she was very supportive of continued discussions to find an acceptable resolution to this difficult and contentious issue.

**2. Schools Refresh**

The DVC (Academic) informed Senate that Court and Executive Board had recently endorsed moving to wider consultation with staff on the set of proposals that had emerged as a result of the initial consultation in Schools about the refresh. It was restated that the aim of the refresh was to re-energise and grow in order to be able to deliver the best possible student and staff experience. To facilitate the wider consultation, all relevant documents were available to staff on SharePoint. The proposals focussed on the academic coherence and future of each academic discipline, and the substructures within Schools. There were proposals to remove a layer of management to promote greater leadership amongst staff. Additionally, each School had identified areas for growth and these would be discussed further before going to Executive Board. There were all staff meetings planned for the following week and thereafter there would be a 4 week consultation period including a number of workshops. It was stressed that the focus of the refresh was growth and developing new ways of working to underpin this. The focus should be on what the University does best, and how to position our offering to offer the best to students and the wider society that the University served.

**4. Apprenticeship Update**

Senate received an update on the background and progress made in the development of Graduate and Degree Apprenticeships. The report outlined how the Graduate Apprenticeships (GA) operated in Scotland the Degree Apprenticeships (DA) in England. Graduate and Degree Apprenticeships were a collaboration between the academic Schools and the School for Work Based Education, with the School for Engineering and the Built Environment being the primary academic School so far. GAs were already being offered in Glasgow, and work was underway to prepare for the delivery of DAs in London.

## 5. African Leadership College Partnership – Progress Update

The African Leadership College Academic Lead informed Senate that overall the partnership was working well and this was supported by recent student results which showed a good level of performance. The first cohort had started in January 2017, with a further cohort in January 2018 and a third cohort was due in September 2018. More than 40 GCU staff had been involved in the delivery of programmes and had visited ALC, with very encouraging feedback being given. A new Chief Academic Officer based in ALC had started in August and she had implemented a number of positive changes.

Working with ALC had brought benefits to GCU by enhancing the delivery of distance learning, and developing capacity and capability in challenging circumstances. It also enabled the University to consider how technology could be used to reach the poorest communities and how learning may evolve in the future. Whilst it was acknowledged that ALC had placed additional burdens on academic staff, the overall experience of those involved was positive, and staff were encouraged by the good marks and progression figures. Benefits also extended to GCU students, and a small group of Glasgow based students had recently spent time at the ALC and on their return had described the experiences as life changing. Additionally, a group of ALC students were currently visiting the Glasgow campus.

## 6. HESA Performance Indicators 2018

Senate welcomed the 2018 HESA Performance Indicators, in which the University had performed well in the context of the sector in Scotland and against our Strategy 2020 KPIs.

Key points were:-

Participation of under-represented groups

- The proportion of entrants from state school or college had been maintained at 97%, remaining well ahead of the Scottish sector average of 86.5%.

Degree completion:

- Projected degree completion at GCU had increased by 1.8% from 79.1% to 80.9%, the highest rate ever achieved by GCU, ahead of the Scottish sector average of 80.6%.
- GCU was second top modern for degree completion following an increase of 0.9% in its completion rate to 81.7%.

Drop-out:

- The University's drop-out rate improved by 1.5%, from 10.1% in 2017 to 8.6%, ahead of the Scottish sector average (9.7%).

Non-continuation after one year of study:

- GCU's non-continuation rate for all full-time first degree entrants was 6.8%, an improvement of 2.1% compared to last year. This was the best rate achieved by GCU, ahead of the Scottish Sector average (7.5%) and the top Scottish modern university.
- Non-continuation of young entrants at GCU improved by 2% to 5.9%, ahead of the sector average of 6.2%. There were improvements in the performance of mature entrants by 2.8% to 8.1%, ahead of the sector average of 11.5%.
- GCU was the top performing modern University for non-continuation for both young and mature entrants, the latter signalling success in retention of articulating students.

## 7. Complaints Handling Procedure

Senate received an overview of complaints received by the University for the period 1st August 2016 to 31st July 2017. Overall there had been a slight increase in the number of stage 1, frontline complaints from 108 in 2015/16 to 127 in 2016/17. Stage 2 complaints had decreased from 17 in 2015/16 to 11 in 2016/17.

## **8. Senate Disciplinary Committee: Session 2016/17 Overview**

Senate received an overview of disciplinary offences considered under the Code of Student Conduct during the period 1st August 2016 to 31st July 2017. There had been an increase in the number of alleged disciplinary offences from 34 in 2015/16 to 52 in 2016/17. Procedures had been reviewed and streamlined, which meant that cases relating to minor technical examination infringements were now dealt with via a letter of guidance, and this allowed the Senate Disciplinary Committee (SDC) to focus on more serious cases.

33 cases had been referred to the SDC for consideration. Some cases were complex and involved significant engagement with the referring department, the student and external organisations. In relation to allegations involving criminal investigations, the University followed guidance issued by UUK and Pinsent Mason to ensure that all parties involved were supported as appropriate.

## **9. Assessment Regulations Working Group**

Senate considered a number of recommendations from the Assessment Regulation Working Group (ARWG):-

### Threshold Minimum Marks

An incremental approach to the implementation of threshold minimum marks for all elements of assessment was agreed by Senate. This would commence in September 2018 for SCQF Level 7 and SQCF Level 11 modules. In subsequent years, the roll out would cover SCQF Levels 8 – 10, incrementally (1 level per year) until steady state is achieved. This approach allows the majority of currently registered students to complete their programme of study using the set of Assessment Regulations in force at the commencement of their programme of study. There would be some exceptions and these were identified in the report. The Academic Registrar will undertake a process review to avoid the need for full workflow submission for these modules.

### Generic Award Titles

School Boards had been asked to consider the on-going relevance of titles, to ensure that they remained fit for purpose and meaningful for students and prospective employers. Senate noted that feedback was being collated from Schools and any proposed amendments would be submitted for consideration and endorsement at a future meeting of APPC prior to submission to Senate for approval.

### Extra Time for International Students

The ARWG reviewed the decision made by APC in June 2014, to remove additional examination time for international students for whom English was a second language. A sector review highlighted that only 1 of 27 HE Institutions currently provided additional time and therefore GCU was currently in line with sector norms. It was noted that APPC had therefore agreed that there be no change to the current position.

### Amendment to Operation of Assessment Boards

Senate was informed that at present, the normal convention, with few exceptions, was that every student was verbally presented at the Assessment Board. This, however, was not a compulsory requirement of current regulations/policies. There were concerns that presenting every student did not leave sufficient time for a full academic discussion around complex cases. It was therefore proposed that all students who have a recommended pass/proceed decision code be presented to an Assessment Board as given and without discussion. Full discussion would still take place at pre-board, and there would remain the opportunity for any student to be discussed at Assessment Board if required or if they had not been presented at pre-board. It was noted that this highlighted the importance of the pre-board and the need for that to be quorate.

Senate resolve, for implementation in academic session 2018/19, that the Terms of Reference and Operations of Assessment Boards be updated to explicitly allow for:

- a) All students who had a recommended pass/proceed decision code (C class FRP) to be presented to an Assessment Board as given, without the need to go through each individual student.
- b) All other cases, including Awards (A), Resits/Deferrals (R) and withdrawals (L) must be presented student by student, where their recommended outcome is confirmed on an individual basis.

Senate also agreed requirements for the bulk presentation of C-coded recommendations:

- c) All students, irrespective of their recommended decision, must have been considered on an individual basis at a Pre-Board. The Programme Leader must confirm to the Assessment Board that this has taken place. Where a student has not been considered in this manner at a pre-board then they must be presented in an individual manner at the main board meeting.
- d) All profiles being presented at an Assessment Board must be physically presented at the meeting. Any member of the Assessment Board may request that a student, whose decision is due to be presented as tabled, to be considered on an individual basis, where they believe there are valid reasons
- e) The chair, external examiner and Registry Representative to be provided with a full set of printed profiles for ALL students at the main assessment board.

The ARWG will undertake a review of the operation of pre-boards in its next programme of work.

#### Applicability of Assessment Regulations for Non-Standard Entrants

Following a review of the applicability of the Assessment Regulations on students studying on non-standard start times, Senate noted that the ARWG had recommended Registry review the assessment cycle calendar and impact on non-standard start dates. This would include a review of the re-sit assessment cycle expectations for non-standard start students. Appendix 4 of the report discussed a more flexible approach to relation to re-sits and the resubmission of failed coursework. The outcome of the review would be submitted to APPC and Senate as appropriate.

#### Current Honours Classification and Profiling Regulations

Due to concerns about potential inconsistencies and lack of clarity around Honours Degree Classifications, a review of current honours classification and profiling regulations was undertaken. The review confirmed that the Assessment Regulations were clear and fit for purpose on this matter, it was acknowledged, however, that profiling examples which used to be included in older versions of the regulations provided a suitable point of reference. Senate agreed therefore that these be reinstated in the regulations. Additionally, it was agreed that confirmation around exceptions to the standard regulations was required and that a further review be held to consider reducing the boundary limit from 3% to 1%.

### **10. Other Matters Approved**

- Following recommendations from the Higher Degree Committee, Senate confirmed the award of 7PhDs and 1 Prof D.
- Honorary and Visiting appointments.
- The appointment of Mrs Frances MacInnes and Professor Agnieszka Klemm as members of the Senate Disciplinary Committee.
- The proposed calendar of meetings for Senate and Standing Committees for Session 2018/19

## **11. Other Matters Noted**

- Recent academic staff appointments.
- The confirmed minutes of the Academic Policy and Practice Committee held on 15th November 2017.
- The confirmed minutes of the Research Committee held on 22nd November 2017.
- The confirmed minute of the meetings of the International Committee held on 29th November 2017.
- The confirmed minutes of the Glasgow School for Business and Society School Board of 25th January 2017, 3rd May 2017, and 21st June 2017.
- The confirmed minutes of the School of Engineering and the Built Environment School Board 10th October 2017.
- The confirmed minutes of the School of Health and Life Sciences School Board of 6th December 2017.
- The confirmed minutes of GCU London School Board of 22nd November 2017.

**Date of the next scheduled meeting of Senate is Friday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2018**