

## **Report from the meeting of Senate held on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

### **1. Chair's Opening Remarks**

Professor Louise Dixon, PVC Education Designate, who was visiting the University prior to taking up her post in February and was attending Senate as an observer, was introduced.

### **2. Minutes and Matters Arising**

Senate received the previously approved minutes of the meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> October. It noted the Matters Arising report and the relevant actions taken since those meetings, and additionally the Academic Registrar gave a verbal update on the ongoing review of the Fit to Sit Policy.

### **3. Principal's Report to Senate**

Senate noted a report from the Principal and Vice Chancellor on matters and priorities relating to academic functions, teaching & learning and research. The Principal gave a verbal report on the following additional matters:

- The UK Government's recent announcement on immigration and the potential impact this could have on international student numbers;
- The NHS' concern about being able to recruit sufficient staff in light of changes to visas for health and social care workers, meaning there was a need for increased internal capacity for healthcare graduates, and the University was in a strong position to meet any gap in demand.
- The recent announcement by the Minister for Higher and Further Education about the start of the anticipated review of HE and FE funding and regulatory organisations. The University would engage in the review as appropriate.
- The SFC would receive its funding letter from the Scottish Government on 19th December and significant cuts were expected. The University would engage in with the SFC in the usual way, and Senate will be kept informed.
- It had been announced that the REF will be delayed by one year. The decision was made in order to give universities more time to deal with the complexities associated with the REF. This additional time will give the University more time to look at a number of internal issues and as such, the delay was welcomed. REF results will now be published in December 2029.

### **4. Complaints Annual Report 2022/2023**

Senate noted a report that provided an overview of the recorded complaints received by the University in the period 1st August 2022 and 31st July 2023. It was highlighted that whilst there had been an increase of reported stage 1 complaints, the number of stage 2 complaints was well within the normal range for the University, and the vast majority complaints were appropriately responded to at stage 1. Data on complaints will be available on the website in line with SPSO requirements, and it was intended to enhance processes for the internal recording of complaints, and it was likely that that would result in an increase in the number of complaints being formally recorded and reported on. In discussion, was noted that a number of stage 2 complaints related to support for students with a disability. Whilst these complaints had not been upheld, they highlighted the increasing challenges in this area. The PVC People and Student Wellbeing, advised that there had been an increase in the number of students with multiple disclosures, and she reported that a review of how the University delivered disability support was underway. It was intended to streamline procedures for routine interventions, to create capacity to deal with more complex cases.

### **5. Senate Disciplinary Committee Annual Report 2022/2023**

Senate received the Senate Disciplinary Committee Annual Report 2022/2023 that provided an overview on student misconduct offences considered under the terms of the Code of Student Conduct during Session 2022/23. In common with the rest of the sector, the report outlined that the numbers of academic misconduct cases had risen significantly in recent years, and this trend had continued into 2022/23, with the University recording for the first time, misconduct relating to the inappropriate use of AI. Guidance for both staff and students on the inappropriate use of AI had been developed and further work on this was progressing.

Concern was raised about the increase in ghostwriting, and especially the worrying, and in some cases criminal, methods used by some ghost-writers when engaging with students. The potential wellbeing impact on students was discussed, and whilst the University had a responsibility to address academic misconduct, it was also vital to encourage students to come forward and to ensure that students were supported. It was noted that where appropriate, students would be supported to report criminal behaviour to the police. It was important that students, and especially international students who had different educational experiences, were aware of what was required of them in relation to academic integrity, and also that they know where to seek wellbeing and academic support within the University. Senate agreed that the PVC International and the Student President lead consideration of how best to address these concerns.

In noting the increased membership of the Senate Disciplinary Committee, it was agreed that it would be helpful to have increased diversity across the range of protected characteristics within the membership and it was agreed to consider how to increase the diversity of staff members on SDC.

**6. Research Report for 2023/2024 Quarter 1**

Senate noted a report that outlined the key research policy changes affecting the University and a summary of quarter 1 2023/24 research submission, awards and 'success' rates by volume and value to GCU, by School.

**7. External Review of Research**

The PVC Research introduced a report that set out the recommendations received following an external, independent review of research that had been undertaken over summer and autumn 2023. The report outlined the engagement to date with the research leadership community in discussing the recommendations, and provided an initial University response. The external panel had offered eleven recommendations, and these related to investment and focus, preparations for next REF, the University's research strategy, and the ecosystem for research at Glasgow Caledonian. Senators were invited to consider the recommendations and provide any feedback to the PVC Research, and an update report would be submitted to Senate in due course.

**8. Student Recruitment Update – Tri A 2023-24**

Senate noted a report that provided a high-level overview of student recruitment for Trimester A 2023-24, at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, as at 30 November 2023, and gave an early view of Trimester B 2023-24 figures. The VP Strategy and Planning informed that the University was finalising data as at 1st December to be submitted to the SFC that would form the basis for funded places in 2024/25 and it was hoped that this year's very successful undergraduate recruitment would put the University in a good position. It was reported that international recruitment for Tri A had been challenging, and whilst the position for Tri B looked more positive, deposit conversion was key.

**9. NSS Outcomes 2023 – Areas for University-wide enhancement**

Senate noted a report summarising the systemic priority areas for enhancement following an analysis of the NSS Outcomes 2023. There were three common areas for enhancement across

the Schools:- Assessment and Feedback, Student Voice and Organisation and Management. For each of these themes, there was significant work in progress, at both a local level, as evidenced by School action plans which were appended to the report, and at University level. Senate was reassured that the actions would be closely monitored and student feedback responded to.

#### **10. Student Recruitment**

Senate noted a report that provided an early overview of student recruitment for Trimester A 2023-24, at undergraduate and postgraduate taught levels, at early October 2023. It was highlighted that home undergraduate student recruitment had been a priority focus for the University in recent months. As a result of this focussed approach, the SFC full-time non-controlled intake was above target. Further, the VP Strategy and Planning reported that there had been very strong results in recruiting to SFC controlled nursing places, Graduate Apprenticeships and from SMID 20 areas. There remained challenges in RUK and home taught postgraduate numbers, although numbers were up on the previous year. Data relating to international students remained subject to confirmation, however challenges relating to payments from a key market and changes in UK student immigration rules had impacted on overall international student numbers.

#### **11. Digital Assessment Policy - Anonymous Marking for Digital Assessment**

Following a review undertaken by Academic Development and Student Learning of the affordances of current digital learning platforms, it was proposed to amend the Digital Assessment policy. The review found that current digital assessment tools and workarounds did not support online anonymous marking by more than one assessor, and as such, anonymous marking cannot be used for online exams marked by more than one assessor. It was therefore proposed that the following clause in the policy be removed:

*7.2 For formal online exams wherever possible all markers are expected to observe the principles and practice of anonymous marking.*

Senate approved the amendment and noted, that the Assessment Regulations Sub-Committee would undertake a review of the University's holistic approach to digital assessment over the coming academic session with recommendations presented to Education Committee in May 2024.

#### **12. Proposed Assessment Regulations Change – Taught Postgraduate Students**

Senate was informed that the review of the Fit to Sit Policy had highlighted that a significant number of students were submitting Extreme and Exceptional Extenuating Circumstances (EEEC) and appeals, with particular concern and focus on students who had failed to achieve their final award due to having exhausted attempts at a single module. It was therefore proposed to amend the Assessment Regulations relating to taught postgraduate programmes to allow students who were 15 credits short of the 180 credits required for a masters degree, and met other specific criteria, an extra-ordinary additional attempt for a single failure. As such, an addition to the Assessment Regulations relating to "Maximum Attempts at a Module" was proposed for approval by Senate, and immediate use by Progression and Award Boards, for taught Masters students who had exhausted attempts at just one 15 credit module, where the module cannot be compensated and where the student cannot achieve their final award (i.e. MSc). Following discussion, the new section within the Assessment Regulations was approved, subject to amendments discussed and agreed at the meeting. It was noted that there would be guidance issued to Progression and Award Boards on the implementation of the new regulation and communications to students to make them aware of it.

#### **13. Standing Committee and School Board Summary Reports**

The following reports from the following standing committees and School Boards were noted:-

- Education Committee held on 1st November 2023
- University Research Committee held on 15th November 2023
- International Committee held on 2nd November 2023
- The Glasgow School for Business and Society held on 18th October 2023
- The School of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment held on 11th October 2023
- The School of Health and Life Sciences held on 4th October 2023

**14. Research Degrees Committee**

Senate approved the award of 7 PhDs.

**15. Senate Chair's Action**

Senate homologated a Chair's Action to approve the following changes to the SDC membership 2023/24:

- The appointment of Frances MacInnes as the second SDC Vice Chair; and
- a number of new SDC members from Schools, GCU London and the Students' Association.

As mentioned at 5 above, consideration would be given to increasing the diversity of staff members on SDC.

**16. Programme Withdrawals – GCU London**

Senate approved the following programme withdrawals.

- MSc International Diplomacy and the Digital State
- MSc International Security and Diplomacy
- MSc International Business, Trade and Diplomacy
- MBA Applied Professional Practice (Security Operations)

**17. Regulations for the Award of Research Degrees**

Senate approved a proposed amendment to the current Regulations for the Award of Research Degrees, that required the final revised version of the candidate's thesis/portfolio to be received by Academic Registry before the candidate can receive the award letter from Academic Registry

**18. Other Matters Approved/Noted/Received for Information.**

- Honorary academic appointments.
- Recent academic staff appointments.
- Summary reports of the meetings of the University Court held on 16<sup>th</sup> November
- Senate and Standing Committee Calendar of Meetings 2024/25.
- Academic Appeals Committee Membership 2023-26

**The next scheduled meeting of Senate will be held on Wednesday 21st February 2024, and there would be a Strategy Session for Senate members on the morning of Thursday 18th January 2024.**