

Report from the meeting of Senate held on 22nd February 2023

1. Principal and Vice Chancellor's and Executive Board Report

Senate received a report from the Principal and Vice Chancellor on matters and priorities relating to academic functions, teaching & learning and research.

He provided a brief summary of his first impressions, key points of which were that the University was a leading Scottish modern university, with a strong reputation in widening access. He was keen to ensure it was a great place to work and study, providing excellent support for students. There would be a re-emphasis on core activities and investment in the campus. GCU London was thriving but faced different challenges to the Glasgow campus, and these would be explored. The University's inclusive approach to admissions would continue and there were opportunities to work with employers to maximise student employability. The University was on a strong research growth trajectory, as were other modern universities, and the sector landscape was shifting. A key opportunity was to become a civic university and better build, develop and curate partnerships. The University had recently experienced strong international growth in PGT courses, and this remained an important strategic growth area, however this needed to go hand in hand with internal investment. Priorities for action were the accommodation crisis facing students in Glasgow, the costs of living crisis and staff workloads.

2. Student Partnership Agreement: Refresh

The PVC Learning and Teaching introduced a paper that provided a draft update to the GCU Student Partnership Agreement that was first developed in 2016/17. The paper had been drafted following consultation with students and staff and considering the University's 2030 Strategy and the Students' Association 2025 Strategic Plan.

The Partnership Agreement is underpinned by the concept of community, based on the premise that all members of the Glasgow Caledonian University community – students, staff and the Students' Association – are responsible for partnership working in practice. The University and Students' Association are committed to the continuous enhancement of the student experience and the Partnership Agreement outlines how all involved will work together to achieve this.

The Partnership Agreement outlined the shared responsibility to -

- Ensure all members of our University's community feel a strong sense of belonging;
- Enhance our high quality learning, teaching and research;
- Enrich our wider GCU experience; and
- Enact positive change in our communities for the Common Good.

The Student President confirmed that the Student's Association, including in GCU London, had been heavily involved in the refresh of the agreement. In discussion, it was suggested opportunities for student civic engagement or engagement with employers, reference to Graduate Apprenticeships and linkages with the Dignity at Work and Study Policy should be included.

Senate endorsed the refreshed Student Partnership Agreement, noting that it would be reviewed in light of feedback given, before being submitted to University Executive Group, and then Court and the Students' Association Trustee Board for approval. This is on the agenda for this meeting of Court as a separate item.

3. Implementing Strategy for Learning 2030: Embedding the Sustainable Development Goals through inclusive curricula.

The PVC Learning and Teaching introduced a paper that proposed an enhancement-led programme of staff development to share existing good practice and support future curriculum development. The paper further proposed that evidence of pedagogic approaches that facilitate students' literacy of sustainability matters would be explicitly sought within the University's quality processes for provision. Approval was sought in AY23/24 and for all existing programmes from AY24/25 as part of the University's commitment to SDGs and EDI set within the broader strategy for enhancing student outcomes and graduates' employability. Senate was informed that the proposals would enhance student employability. It wasn't a "tick box" exercise and the developmental approach proposed, ensured that how it was implemented would be a matter of academic judgement within each discipline. Work of this nature was already underway within the University, although at differing stages.

In discussion, it was highlighted that there was no specific reference to gender, other than in relation to Athena Swan, and it was suggested that gender needed to be more prevalent in wellbeing and student experience as well as in the curriculum. The PVC Learning and Teaching welcomed this feedback and agreed to take this on board. In relation to wider EDI issues, he advised that an EDI self-evaluation toolkit would be piloted. He also reported that a Steering Group would be established, as would staff development resources and a means to share good practice.

Senate endorsed the proposed approach.

4. Research Integrity Annual Statement and Report 2021/22

The Interim Provost and DVC presented the Research Integrity Annual Statement and Report for 2021/22. The report, which was part of the commitment to the Universities UK Concordat to support research integrity, provided a summary of actions and activities that had been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and applications of research integrity issues; provided assurance that the processes for dealing with allegations of misconduct were transparent, robust, fair and appropriate; and informed that no cases of research misconduct were reported during session 2021-22.

The Senate endorsed the Research Integrity Annual Statement and Report 2021-22 for submission to the University Court and it is attached at Appendix 1.

Court is asked to approve the Research Integrity Annual Statement and Report 2021-22

5. Senate Disciplinary Committee Annual Report 2021/2022

Senate considered and noted the Senate Disciplinary Committee Report for 2021/2022, that provided an overview of the misconduct offences considered under the terms of the Code of Student Conduct for the academic session 2021/2022. Key points to note were

- a small increase in the number of GBV related cases, which whilst concerning, was not unexpected given the campaigns, internal and external, to highlight the unacceptability of Gender Based Violence and also the launch in November 2021, of Report and Support, the University's online reporting tool for all forms of inappropriate behaviour; and
- in line with the rest of the sector, a significant increase in academic misconduct including plagiarism, cheating in digital assessments and ghostwriting.

In discussion, the challenges in ensuring academic integrity, including the emerging challenges brought about by predatory ghostwriters and AI were discussed, including ensuring that students were aware of the range of support services within the University, including the

Learning Development Centres, and how to appropriately use them. A student Senator noted that additional support in academic writing would be welcomed by international students, many of whom had different educational backgrounds prior to studying in GCU. The need for students to engage in induction was also raised as an important way for students to gain an awareness of academic standards and integrity and support services. The impact of increasing academic misconduct on workloads was also highlighted and the need for staff to be better informed and supported.

The PVC Learning and Teaching acknowledged the issues raised, and advised that work was ongoing in relation to comms to students about the need for academic integrity and highlighting support. He advised that consideration would be given to looking at more support for academic writing and guidance for staff.

6. Complaints Annual Report 2021/2022

Senate received the Annual Complaints Report for 2021/22, that provided an overview of the complaints received by the University in the period 1st August 2021 to 31st July 2022. It was highlighted that there were 179 Stage 1 (frontline) complaints and 10 Stage 2 complaints (complaint investigations) received. One complaint was referred by the complainants to the SPSO on completion of the University's complaints handling procedure but it was not taken forward for investigation by the SPSO.

7. Standing Committee and School Board Summary Reports

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

- Academic Policy and Practice Committee held on 25th January 2023
- University Research Committee held on 1st February 2023
- School of Health and Life Sciences School Board held on 7th December 2022
- School of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment School Board held on 7th December 2022
- Glasgow School for Business and Society School Board held on 18th January 2023

8. Senate Composition and Membership

Senate noted a report that informed of the Senate composition that had been updated to take account of recent changes at Executive level in the University. The paper also informed that Prof Nelson, as Interim Provost and DVC, was the Vice Chair of Senate. The Chair advised that the composition of Senate would be considered as part of the Senate effectiveness review.

9. Research Degrees Committee

Senate approved the award of 10 PhDs.

10. Fitness To Study Policy

Senate approved the updated Fitness to Study Policy that was initially implemented in 2018

11. Other Matters Approved/Noted/Received for Information.

- Research Report for 2022/2023 Quarter 2
- Calendar of meetings for Senate and its Standing Committees for the academic year 2023/2024.
- Honorary Appointments.
- Recent academic staff appointments.

12. AOCB

Changes to Latest Date of Registration

The Chair informed Senate that he would be asking Senate to consider, before the next scheduled meeting, a proposal that would bring forward the latest date of student registration. This was considered necessary because of challenges in progression and academic workload arising due to the increasing number of students registering later in the term. This was a live issue and more work needed to be done before presenting Senate with a firm proposal. The proposal was welcomed by both staff and student members, however it was noted that many students' arrivals in the UK were delayed because of issues in receiving CAS letters in good time, so this was a matter that needed to be resolved. This was acknowledged and it was something that would be looked into. Having obtained agreement in principle for the proposal, the Chair advised that a detailed proposal, with dates driven by operational requirements, would be submitted electronically to Senate, in due course, for approval.

Fit to Sit

A student member raised that he was aware of some international students who had to submit Fit to Sit applications due to illness, but that this now meant that they would now finish their studies later than planned. Due to the timing of assessments, these students would not be eligible to apply for a post study work visa. The PVC Learning and Teaching advised that the University was aware of this issue and steps would be taken to address this, as had happened in the past. An academic member of Senate requested early notification of action to be taken in order to manage workload, and this was acknowledged.

The next scheduled meeting of Senate will be held on Wednesday 7th June 2023.