

## **Report from the meeting of Senate held on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

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

Senate welcomed the new Student President, Wilfred Obi, and Professor Joanne Lumsden, Dean of the School of Computing, Engineering and Built Environment to their first meetings of Senate. A number of observers were welcomed including the three other new student Full Time Officers and representatives from PWC who were undertaking the Senate Effectiveness Review currently underway.

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

Senate received the previously approved minutes of the meeting on 21st February 2024, and noted that there had been a Senate Briefing on Resourcing on 28<sup>th</sup> February, a Senate Briefing on GCNYC on 9<sup>th</sup> May and a Senate Workshop on Leveraging AI for Common Good on 22nd April 2024.

The Matters Arising report and the relevant actions taken since those meetings was also noted.

### **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 an additional verbal report as follows:

- There had been a lot of lobbying in relation to the forthcoming general election and UUK and US were putting in a lot of effort to ensure coherent messaging from the sector. There were two key issues
  - How higher education was funded; and
  - Political parties' views on immigration and international students.
- There had been about 190 applications for the Mutual Severance Scheme, with more than half the applications being approved. This had already provided some financial headroom and some posts that had been on hold had been released for recruitment.

### **4. University Strategy**

Senate received the final draft of the refreshed Strategy in advance of its submission to Court for approval. The VP Strategy and Planning reminded Senate that it had been refreshed following extensive consultation with staff, students and stakeholders, including a Senate Strategy Workshop in January that had provided some helpful refinements. The Strategy built on the University's deep-rooted mission and values to set out a new vision for the University to transform lives through excellent education and research that is accessible and impactful for the people of Glasgow and our communities locally, nationally and internationally. It articulated an academic strategy based on our core purpose to deliver education and research, and a suite of enablers to ensure the University is a great place to work and a destination of choice for students as well as encompassing internationalisation; engagement; employability; equality, diversity and inclusion; sustainability; digital, estate and infrastructure; reputation; and finance, governance and compliance. It was explained that once approved, the Strategy would be developed as a visually compelling digital document and web presence for launch in autumn 2024.

Senate was supportive of the Strategy and the following points were raised in discussion:-

- Concern was raised that there was dissonance between the aspirations of the Strategy and the uncertain financial HE landscape, and that this may pose challenges in delivering the strategy. This was acknowledged, and the financial environment was a factor that had been considered in developing the Strategy. Nevertheless, it was considered important for the University to remain ambitious. Senate's views on implementing the Strategy in times of financial constraint and uncertainty would be welcomed, and it was agreed to hold a half day Senate Strategy workshop, around the same time as Court would be having a half day Strategy session in the autumn.
- In response to questions about the EIA, data relating to those with protected characteristics, and the need for data to guide the Strategy KPIs and to ensure there would be appropriate resources to support students, Senate was informed that there was a separate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan that sat below the Strategy and this had associated KPIs and an action plan. Comprehensive data sets had been developed on protected characteristics that showed the complexity and intersectionality of these issues. This information had been shared with Schools. Once approved, the Strategy would then drive decisions in the next planning round to priorities and allocated resources.

## **5. 2023-24 Student Recruitment**

The VP Strategy and Planning presented a report on student intake for academic year 2023-24, outlining a full-year view, and an early view of Trimester A 2024-25. Overall, the University had performed very well in SFC undergraduate recruitment, and had increased its overall home and RUK taught post graduate numbers. Despite high demand, challenges in the sector impacted international student recruitment, however GCU London continued to perform well, and a Tri C intake had been introduced for 4 programmes to accommodate those applicants whose visas had not been received in time for Tri A. Numbers for 2024/25 home undergraduate applications were looking positive and there would be further clarity on this over the coming weeks as the UCAS deadline for accepting officers was this week.

In response to a question about agents' costs, Senate was informed that agents played a key role in international student recruitment and costs were coming down in proportion to the number of international students. The University had signed the Agent Quality Framework, and relationships were monitored, reviewed, and terminated if there were issues that could not be resolved.

In relation to the limited Tri C recruitment, it was explained that this had been introduced to respond to a particular set of circumstances. Whilst it was important that the University looked at ways to diversify income as part of discussions on the size and shape of the University, Tri C teaching was not currently being considered on a wider basis. Work was continuing on realigning the workforce to meet teaching demand, and this would take time.

Senate otherwise noted the update.

## **6. Student Module Surveys summary – Trimesters A and B 2023-24**

Senate discussed a paper that provided an overview of key outcomes of the Trimesters A and B 2023-24 student module surveys, for the University overall, by School and GCU London, and by module level. The VP Strategy and Planning explained that overall results were positive but there was a lot of variance. More granular data was available to Schools and departments on Dash. The response rate was overall 35%, despite sustained attempts and engaging students, and informal feedback from the sector indicated that this was slightly above the sector norm of 20-30%. Due to the low response rate, concern was expressed that

the results reflected the views of only a minority of the student population. It was outlined however that module surveys were only one tool used to assess quality, performance and satisfaction, and other methods, including direct engagement with students and the NSS all played a part in programme and module evaluation. The PVC Education advised that improving student engagement with feedback would be looked at.

#### **7. Research Report for 2023/2024 Quarter 2**

Senate received a report that informed of on key research policy changes affecting the University, summarised research submission and awards for quarter 3 2023/24, provided information on the five largest research grant awards for quarter 3, 2023/24, and outlined the University investment in research. Contained within the report was the University's response to the REF Open Access Consultation, which was endorsed for submission by Senate.

#### **8. Researcher Development Concordat Action Plan 2022-25**

As a signatory to the Researcher Development Concordat since 2021, the University has developed a Researcher Development Concordat/HR Excellence in Research Award Action Plan (2022 - 2025). This Action Plan is reviewed and updated annually, and then approved by Court. Senate received the updated Action Plan and endorsed its submission to Court for approval.

**The Researcher Development Concordat Action Plan 2022-25 is attached at Appendix 1 for Court's Approval.**

#### **9. QAA Quality Enhancement and Standards Review: Draft Action Plan**

Senate received a report that advised that QAA Scotland published the GCU Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) report on the 14 February 2024, and as a result, a draft QESR action plan had been prepared, in line with QESR process. The aim of the QESR was to improve student experience. The PVC Education explained that the draft action plan would be shared with a QAA Review Officer for feedback and then the final action plan would be published on the University website on 17<sup>th</sup> July. Having been agreed by the Research Degrees Committee, University Research Committee and the Education Committee, Senate noted the draft action plan and that it would be submitted to the QAA in line with the require process.

#### **10. Research Degrees Committee**

Senate approved the award of 18 PhDs, 2 Prof.Ds and 1 DBA.

#### **11. Review of Fit to Sit policy**

The PVC Education introduce a report that provided the outcome of a comprehensive review of the Fit to Sit Policy following one year of implementation. The review consulted extensively and overall it was considered that the Policy was working well, however, there were issues relating to lack of awareness, inconsistency of approach in relation to extensions, and concerns around timescales and issues with placements that needed to be addressed. Accordingly, the review had made 6 recommendations and revised the Fit to Sit Policy to address these concerns.

In discussion, the Student President welcomed the outcome of the review. Senate agreed to support the recommendations of the Fit to Sit review and to approve the revised Fit to Sit

policy, noting that its implementation would be monitored and amendments considered as required.

#### **12. Revision of the Appeals process for Research Degree students Appeals**

Senate approved revisions to the University Appeals Process for Research Degrees. The revised process aligned more closely with the appeal process for taught degrees and introduced an appeals route as well as provision for student membership of the Research Degrees Appeal Panel.

#### **13. Revisions to the to the Criminal Convictions Policy for Applicants**

Following increasing expectations in relation to universities' duty of care to students, and after extensive consultation and agreement from all 19 Scottish Universities, Universities Scotland in November 2023 agree a sector wide approach for the collection of data on unspent convictions and now additionally, on relevant criminal charges for both applicants and students. Since UCAS stopped in 2018 requiring all applicants (with the exception of students on courses that required a PVG check) to provide data on convictions at initial application stage, it had been up to each university to decide on the approach to be taken. The new guidelines state that universities should gather and risk assess data on relevant criminal charges and unspent convictions from all applicants at firm acceptance, new students at initial registration and continuing students annually at re-registration. The current approach at Glasgow Caledonian is that applicants are asked to declare relevant convictions at firm acceptance and thereafter the onus is on all registered students to declare if they receive any charges or convictions, but they are not specifically asked this at registration each year. Declarations are then assessed in line with the Code of Student Conduct.

In light of the guidance, a revised Criminal Convictions Policy had been prepared and this was approved by Senate. In discussion, concern was raised that for students on non-PVG programmes, there was an over reliance on self-disclosure. In response, it was acknowledged that this was, and had always been, the case, but it was hoped that a more systematic approach to gathering the data would result in more declarations and therefore risk assessments being undertaken. It was agreed to explore the possibility of dipstick testing responses, however it was anticipated that there might be data protection issues.

#### **14. Revisions to Graduation and Awards Regulations**

Senate approved revisions to the Graduation and Awards Regulations. In addition to renaming the regulations to the Awards and Graduations Regulations, revisions to the format and editorial changes to reflect current terminology and contemporary and efficient procedural operations, the Regulations included a new section on the Revocation of an Award which outlined the process for revocation of award, earned or Honorary, should the need arise in future.

#### **15. Academic Quality Policy and Practice Updates**

Senate approved updates to the Academic Quality Policy and Practice Document in relation to enhanced processes for New Programme Approval and Annual Portfolio Review, as well as updates to guidance and templates, and minor editorial changes.

#### **16. GSBS - Programme Withdrawal**

Senate approved the withdrawal of three programmes:-

- BA (Hons) Economic Policy
- BA (Hons) International Supply Chain Management

- BA (Hons) International Business with Languages

In explaining the rationale, the Dean of the Glasgow School for Business and Society informed Senate that there were no concerns about the quality of the programmes being withdrawn, however these three programmes had attracted limited numbers of students. As such, it was considered appropriate to focus efforts on increasing reputation and recruitment on programmes that had a more distinct position in the international market.

**17. SCEBE - Programme Withdrawal**

The Dean of the School of Computing, Engineering and Built Environment outlined the rationale behind the withdrawal of the BEng Fire Risk Engineering. This programme had been developed for and with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. Whilst it had been delivered in Glasgow and London (in conjunction with London Fire Brigade), overall there was insufficient demand for the programme. Senate approved the withdrawal

**18. Standing Committee and School Board Summary Reports**

The following reports from the following standing committees and School Boards were noted:- Senate **noted** reports from the following Standing Committees and School Boards: -

- Education Committees held on 13<sup>th</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> May 2024
- University Research Committees held on 327<sup>th</sup> March and 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024
- The International Committee held on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2024.
- The Glasgow School for Business and Society held on 21<sup>st</sup> February and 17<sup>th</sup> April.
- The School of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment held on 14<sup>th</sup> February and 17<sup>th</sup> April 2024.
- The School of Health and Life Sciences held on 14<sup>th</sup> February and 17<sup>th</sup> April 2024.

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

- Updated Senate membership
- Recent academic staff appointments.
- Summary report of the meeting of the University Court held on 18<sup>th</sup> April

**20. Chair's Closing Remarks**

The Chair expressed thanks to all for their contribution to supporting the work of Senate. In particular, thanks were extended to the outgoing Head of Department members and elected academic staff members who had completed their terms of office, noting that there would be elections in some schools for the latter in the coming weeks. Thanks were also extended to all the student members on Senate who had served in 2023-24.

Congratulations were extended to Dr Lyle Gray who had been nominated for his second term as an elected academic member of Senate and as such, he would continue as Senate's member on Court for the third and final year of that term of office.