

UNIVERSITY SENATE

Minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2024

- Present:** Professor Steve Decent (Chair), Dr Bipasha Ahmed, Professor Babakalli Alkali, Dawn Anderson, Professor Tuleen Boutaleb, Caroline Bysh, Professor Iain Cameron, Fiona Campbell, Professor Louise Dixon, Dr Diane Dickson, Dr Karen Fryer, Dr Lyle Gray, Jan Hulme, Claire Hulsen, Naveed Kayani, Afia Kazmi, Dr Rob Kivits, Professor John Lennon, Samantha MacLean, Tom McAlear Professor Simon McKerrell, Wendy Mazzucco, Professor Ehsan Mesbahi, Susan Mitchell, Professor Andrea Nelson, Dr Val Ness, Chidozie Nwaigwe, Dr James Paterson, Dr Adrian Pierotti, Dr Shirley Rate, Dr Emmanuel Silva, Professor Anita Simmers, Brian Smith, Professor Bonnie Steves, Dr Laura Sweeney, Dr Karen Thomson, Aiebee-Iberedem Tim, Dr Omair Uthmani and Anita Volkert.
- Apologies:** Daniel Byron, Sofia Congradyova, Professor Mohamed Emad Farrag, Dr Sharon Jackson, Steven Latta, Professor Gunter Loffler, Professor Angela O'Hagan, Uchenna Ohanaka, Professor Ole Pahl, Dr James Paterson, and Robert Ruthven.
- In Attendance:** Professor John Connolly, Chair Senate Disciplinary Committee
Stephen Lopez, Academic Registrar
Avril Williams, Deputy Director of Student Life
Deborah Donnet, Clerk to Senate, Head of Governance and Legal Services
- Non-Voting Advisor** Professor Mark Anderson, Professor Peter Jones, Jackie Main,
Apologies
Observers: Louise Clark (Governance and Legal Services), Mary Daly (Strategy and Planning), Caitlin McCulloch (Library Services), Dr Lizzie Reather (People Services), Fiona Rieley (Executive Support) and Gary Steele (Library Services).

Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone to the fourth meeting of Senate in academic session 2023/24, and in particular to Professor Louise Dixon, PVC Education and Caroline Bysh, PVC Engagement who were attending their first meeting as members of the University Executive.

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

- 1.1 The Chair informed Senate that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13th December 2023 had been approved by prior circulation.

2. Matters Arising

- 2.1 Senate **noted** a report on the matters arising from the Senate meeting on 13th December 2023 and the actions taken since that meeting to address them.
- 2.2 Following concerns raised at the last meeting about the increasing numbers of ghostwriting cases, and the unscrupulous tactics used by some essay writing services Senate received a verbal update from the PVC International. She reported that discussions that had been held with a view to taking action to ensure students were aware of the required standards of academic integrity and to encourage students who were experiencing difficulties to seek support. It was highlighted that there was sufficient flexibility within the Code of Student Conduct to allow discretion when dealing with academic misconduct, and the Senate Disciplinary Committee considered each case on its own merits, and took account of any extenuating circumstance that students may be experiencing when considering disposals. Comms would be issued to students highlighting the range of support available and encouraging students experiencing issues to come forward. Senate welcomed the update and endorsed the proposed approach.
- 2.3 In response to a question about revisions to the Fit to Sit Policy, Senate was informed that further work on this was being undertaken, prior to the revised policy being considered by Education Committee and then Senate. Should the updated policy not be available for approval by the 6th June Senate meeting, then an additional online meeting of Senate would be arranged so that the revised policy was in place for the start of the new academic year.

3. Principal's Report to Senate

- 3.1 Senate **noted** a report from the Principal and Vice-Chancellor that provided an update on substantive items considered by the University Executive Group since the last meeting of Senate.
- 3.2 In advance of the Senate briefing on resourcing that was scheduled for 28th February, the Principal highlighted key details of the summary of PwC's Financial Sustainability Report for the UK University Sector that was contained within his report. Whilst the overall picture for the sector was challenging, because the University was the leading recruiter of home undergraduate students within the Scottish sector, it was considered that the University was in a stronger position than others. Further discussion on this would take place at the briefing.
- 3.3 Concern was raised at the 6% reduction in funding to the SFC and news was awaited on what this would mean for the University's funding allocation. The Principal advised that the University met regularly with SFC officials. It was noted that the unit of resource for undergraduate students had reduced by 20% over the last 10 years and as such, income from international students and was important. Whilst there were sector wide challenges in international recruitment, strong international recruitment continued in GCU London.

4. Student Recruitment

- 4.1 Senate **noted** a report that provided an update on the intake to Trimester B in academic year 2023-24, as at 9 February 2024. It also included a high-level overview of taught postgraduate full-time student recruitment to show a combined Trimester A and B view to date at the time of submission.
- 4.2 The VP Strategy and Planning gave a verbal update on registrations for Trimester B and advised that these remained provisional as due to visa issues at UK level, some registrations were still being processed. External factors had impacted international recruitment and whilst there had been a

decrease in Glasgow, GCU London was expected to experience an increase in international recruitment this Trimester.

- 4.3 In relation to the success in undergraduate recruitment, it was commented that this put pressure on staff student ratios. In response, the Principal explained that there was broad variation in the staff student ratio between programmes, and some rebalancing of the workforce was needed, but this was challenging to achieve.
- 4.4 Senate was informed that it was important that the University diversified to increase income sources, and work was ongoing in this area and would contribute to future discussion at Senate.

5. Strategy Refresh

- 5.1 Senate received a report from the VP Strategy and Planning that provided an update on work to date on the refresh of the current University Strategy, including the outcomes of the engagement sessions held with staff and students, and the successful Senate Strategy event that had been held on 18th January. The paper also outlined, for Senate's information, the next steps in the refresh process.
- 5.2 As a result of the feedback, a draft refreshed strategy document had been prepared and this was submitted for Senate's consideration and feedback. The VP Strategy and Planning reported that the draft Strategy had been shared with Court, which had endorsed the direction of travel, and had provided feedback, the details of which were contained in the report.
- 5.3 In discussion, concern was raised that good research could be stifled because of a narrowing of the University's focus on research or because it was in areas that didn't attract large research grants. Furthermore, in certain academic areas, it was challenging to recruit staff with research backgrounds, and this was a potential issue from a succession planning perspective. The Principal reassured Senate that it was intended that the University would continue to be a dual intensive university with an equal focus on research and teaching. To do that, there would have to be an increase in research income, and therefore there would have to be a strategic approach to that. Cognisance needed to be taken of the importance of research to each discipline and recruit staff accordingly, as well as developing existing staff in order to support research growth. The need to give staff who had recently completed a PhD space to develop their research prior to taking on roles such as programme leaders was raised, and this was acknowledged, however it was challenging to do with the current workload issues. This reinforced the need for a rebalancing of the workforce to ensure it met the future needs of the University.
- 5.4 Senate **noted** the background paper informing of the ongoing and planned work on the strategy refresh, and it was requested that any additional feedback be submitted to the VP Strategy and Planning.

6. Research Report for 2023/2024 Quarter 2

- 6.1 Senate **noted** a report that outlined the key research policy changes affecting the University and a summary of Quarter 2 2023/24 research grant submissions, awards and 'success' rates by volume and value to the University.
- 6.2 In relation to the policy changes, the report provided information on an update on the development of approaches to the assessment of People, Culture and Environment (PCE) in the next Research Excellence Framework (REF) exercise; updates relating to the REF; and details of the findings of the HEPI report on "Regional research capacity what role in levelling up".

7. Joint Institute proposal with University of Jinan, China

- 7.1 Senate considered a report from the PVC International that informed that the University had been approached by the University of Jinan (UJN), with a proposal to reshape the University's ongoing partnership arrangement through development of a Joint Institute. The Joint Institute was a preferred partnership model by the Chinese Ministry of Education and required commitment from both institutions to jointly develop, deliver and award multiple programmes in China using a single platform. The paper also summarised the University's current activities in China.
- 7.2 The PVC International explained that the proposal was at the early stages of development. The Joint Institute approach worked well in other institutions, and this was confirmed by the Principal who had experience of the approach in a previous institution. There were both challenges and opportunities associated with the proposal and Senate's view was sought on whether further developmental work should be done.
- 7.3 In discussion, it was noted that whilst there were potential ethical implications that would need to be considered, a Joint Institute provided opportunity for partnership working and income diversification. It was also noted that the approach would allow for more strategic engagement, and in the past the Chinese government had rejected smaller partnership proposals that the University had been involved in, as they were not the preferred approach.
- 7.4 Overall it was considered that the proposal was worthy of further exploration, with appropriate due diligence and risk assessment, and it was agreed that a full business proposal be brought back for further consideration at a future meeting of Senate.

Action: The PVC International to prepare a full business proposal for a future meeting of Senate.

8. Standing Committee and School Board Summary Reports

- 8.1 Senate **noted** reports from the following Standing Committees and School Boards: -
- Education Committee held on 24th January 2024.
 - University Research Committee held on 31st January 2024.
 - The Glasgow School for Business and Society held on 17th January 2024 and Extraordinary Board held on 22nd November 2023.
 - The School of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment held on 8th November 2023 and 6th December 2023.
 - The School of Health and Life Sciences held on 6th December 2023 and Extraordinary Board held on 17th November 2023.

9. Research Degrees Committee

- 9.1 Senate **approved** the award of 11 PhDs.

10. Fitness to Practise Policy

- 10.1 The Dean of the School of Health and Life Sciences introduced a report that informed that following a review of the Fitness to Practise Policy to ensure it remained fit for purpose, and aligned with other University policies relating to the management of student conduct, it had been updated to include two substantive changes to the policy. The revised policy included guidance on unsafe practise and how this aligned with the policy, and provided clearer guidance around the investigation stage of the existing procedure. Additionally, a number of editorial changes had been made and the terms "unsafe practice" and "capability" had been integrated into appropriate sections of the Policy.

10.2 Senate **approved** the revisions to the policy.

ACTION: The Dean of the School of Health and Life Sciences to ensure that the updated policy is available on the website and that relevant staff and students are aware.

11. Student Survey Policy annual review

11.1 Senate considered a report that outlined proposed changes to the Student Survey & Module Evaluation Policy. In addition to editorial changes, the proposed revisions included

- Changing the name of the policy to the Student Survey Policy
- Amended wording to reflect the new Student Partnership Agreement and Student Partnership Forums
- Amended wording to reflect the re-branding of the Module Evaluations to 'Student Module Surveys'
- Updates to the survey approval process
- Updated appendix tables to reflect the current suite of surveys

11.2 In discussion the VP Strategy and Planning clarified that it was recognised that there was a need to be responsive to local survey needs, and as such the policy need only be followed where the target population exceeded 200 students, and this new approach was welcomed.

11.3 Senate **approved** the revisions to the Student Survey Policy.

ACTION: Strategy, Planning and Business Intelligence to ensure that the policy revisions are finalised and made available on the website.

12. Review of the Academic Calendar

12.1 Senate received a report that proposed changes to the Academic Calendar following a series of consultations with staff and students. As a result of the review and consultation, it was recommended to Senate that the following changes be made to the Academic Calendar:-

- Commence the Academic Year 1 week earlier than present
- TriA and TriB are reconfigured to 11 weeks teaching + 1 week revision
- TriA Assessment period takes place prior to the Xmas Break

The changes to be in place from academic year 2025/26 to allow time to plan and implement the changes.

12.2 In considering the proposed changes, it was noted that the Equality Impact Assessment indicated that there were no negative impacts for equality or people with protected characteristics. However, it was considered that there may be an impact on students with caring commitments, from SMD20 backgrounds or others who may need additional support. In response, it was highlighted that there were pros and cons of all approaches, including the current one, and to assess and address the impact of the proposed changes, an Implementation Oversight Group would be established to coordinate the planning and preparations for 2025/26. This group will include representatives from Schools, GCU London, relevant professional services areas and a Students' Association representative. In addition, feedback will be sought following the first full year of implementation.

- 12.3 It was further noted that there was no common approach across the sector, but it was recognised that the University's current later start in comparison to others caused issues for students in securing accommodation, and the earlier start date was welcomed by the Student President. The earlier start date would have a knock on impact on, and there would be revisions to the timings of, other processes, such as the issuing of CAS letters.
- 12.4 In response to a question about whether staff would be expected to compress 12 weeks of teaching into 11 weeks, it was noted that this would be considered by the Implementation Oversight Group, but overall it was unusual within the sector to have a 12 week teaching term. Given professional body requirements, it was requested that the Implementation Oversight Group have representation from an area with PSRB requirements.
- 12.3 Senate **approved** the changes to the Academic Calendar for implementation from AY 2025/2026 and it was noted that Senate would receive updates as appropriate.

ACTION: DVC and COO to take forward for implementation in AY 2025/26. Consideration be given to including PSRB programme input to the Implementation Oversight Group.

13. REF 2029 Code of Practice

- 13.1 The PVC Research presented a paper that outlined that there had been a light touch review of the REF2021 Code of Practice, and a draft REF2029 Code of Practice had been prepared. The updated Code reflected changes in REF2029 that meant that individual staff would not be submitted, but outputs will be, and the body of staff contributing to the REF will be presented as a Volume Measure. This change also removed the minimum number of outputs required and hence the 'exceptional circumstances' processes to request a reduction in outputs per person.
- 13.2 Senate **approved** the REF2029 Code of Practice, noting that that as additional REF2029 information became available, the Code of Practice may require updating and would be revised under the auspices of the University Research Committee, with reports to UEG and Senate.

14. Research Integrity Annual Statement and Report 2022-23

- 14.1 The PVC Research presented the Research Integrity Annual Statement and Report 2022-23 that
- summarised actions and activities that had been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues;
 - provided assurance that the processes in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct were transparent, robust and fair, and that they continue to be appropriate to the needs of the University; and
 - advised that no cases of research misconduct were reported during session 2022-23.
- 14.2 Senate **endorsed** the Research Integrity Annual Statement and Report 2022-23 for submission to the University Court on 18 April 2024.
- 14.3 It was noted that the final version of the statement will be published on the University's Research Integrity webpage.

Action: PVC Research to submit the Research Integrity Annual Statement and Report 2022-23 to Court, and once approved ensure that the final version of the statement will be published on the University's Research Integrity webpage.

15. Programme Withdrawal - BA (Hons) Security Operations.

15.1 Senate considered and **approved** the withdrawal of the BA (Hons) Security Operations. It was highlighted that the programme had never recruited students, and there was no anticipated future demand. Relevant staff were deployed on other programmes.

Action: IU2BE to remove programme from portfolio

16. University Senate Composition Membership 2023/2024

16.1 Senate approved amendments to the Senate Composition to

- remove, with effect from 1st March 2024, the role of Director of the Graduate School as an ex officio member of Senate; and
- add, with immediate effect, the new role of Dean of Enterprise and Innovation as a non-voting advisor.

ACTION: Clerk to Senate to update composition and membership

17. Education Committee Composition

17.1 Senate **approved** the addition of the GCU London Head of Learning Teaching and Quality to the composition of Education Committee as an ex officio member.

ACTION: Clerk to Education Committee to update composition and membership

18. Honorary Appointment

18.1 Senate was informed that the following honorary appointment had been awarded by the University Executive Group.

Post	Name	Dept/School
Emeritus Professor	Professor JiaQian Jiang	SCEBE
Honorary Professor	Dr Claire McGuinness	SHLS

19. Academic Appointments

19.1 Senate received a paper on academic appointments made since the last meeting of Senate.

20. Summary Report of Court

20.1 Senate received the summary reports of University Court held on 8th February 2024.

21. Date of the Next Meeting

21.1 Senate noted that the date of the next scheduled meeting was Wednesday 5th June 2024, with an online Senate resourcing briefing to be held at 12 Noon on Wednesday 28th February and a Senate Strategy Session on AI on Monday 22nd April 2024.

22. Chair's Closing Remarks

22.1 The Principal thanked Professor Bonnie Steves, Director of the Graduate School, for her services to the University and Senate as she was retiring at the end of the month after 32 years at the University. Senate wished her well for her retirement via a round of applause.