

Glasgow Caledonian University Court

Minutes of the University Court held on 2nd October at 2pm in the Boardroom, Britannia Building

Present: Rob Woodward (Chair), Amit Bhargava, Professor Steve Decent, Alan Dickson, Sylvie Freund-Pickavance, Daniel Gallacher, David Halliday, Asif Haseeb, Meg Lustman, Bill McDonald, Dr Nick McKerrell, Professor Catriona Miller, Gavin Munn, Wilfred Obi, Austin Sweeney, Laiba Tareen and Jane Wilson.

Apologies Arlene Cairns, Ellen Gibson, Dr Lyle Gray, Scott Haldane and Sharon Lowrie.

In attendance: Jan Hulme, University Secretary & Vice Principal (Governance)
Professor Ehsan Mesbahi, Provost & Deputy Vice Chancellor
Susan Mitchell, Chief Operating Officer & Deputy Vice Chancellor
Professor Andrea Nelson, Pro Vice Chancellor (Research)
Professor Louise Dixon, Pro Vice Chancellor (Education)
Paul Queen, Chief Financial Officer
Fiona Campbell, Vice Principal (People & Student Wellbeing)
Claire Hulsen, Vice Principal (Strategy & Planning)
Caroline Bysh, Pro Vice Chancellor (Engagement)
Dawn Anderson, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International)
Paul Brown, Director of Governance & Legal Services

Chair's opening remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the 24/25 academic year. The Chair thanked everyone for their engagement in the Strategy session that took place prior to the meeting.

1. Minutes

1.1 Court **noted** that the minutes of the Court meeting held on 13th June 2024, had been approved by prior circulation.

2. Matters arising

2.1 The Court **noted** a report on the matters arising from the Court meeting on 13th June 2024. The only outstanding item is the GBV briefing for Court which will take place on 24th October 2024.

3. Declaration of interest

3.1 A summary of the register of interests was included with the court papers. Court members were reminded of the importance of this being kept up to date and invited to advise the University Secretary or the Director of Governance & Legal Services of any changes to their position or if any agenda items gave rise to a conflict of interest.

4. Items brought by the Chair of Court

4.1 The Chair of Court provided a brief summary of the Annual Court Effectiveness review which would be presented to the next CGNC meeting with recommendations being brought back to Court in due course. He explained that overall the feedback was very positive and that Court was

operating well and that governors were engaged in the work of Court. Governors had also reported that they appreciated the transparent approach of the Principal and his regular updates on issues affecting the University.

- 4.2 The Chair confirmed that new mandatory cyber security training was being rolled out to all of the University staff and asked governors to ensure that they had undertaken the training which had value in both professional and personal life.
- 4.3 The Chair reminded Court that GCNYC was no longer the responsibility of the University and its Sole Member was now IEU. He advised that it has now been renamed as IENYC. He advised that, as indicated at previous Court meetings, a review of lessons learned from the GCNYC project would be instructed. PwC as the University's auditors would be asked through the Chair of the Audit Committee to conduct this review. Following discussion, it was concluded that the key step was for Court to receive the completed PwC review and assess in light of that whether there were any shared wider concerns to consider.
- 4.4 The Chair advised that the new Chancellor would be attending the Court dinner in February and hoped that as many of the governors as possible would be able to attend.
- 4.5 The Chair reminded governors of the upcoming graduation in London on 5th November which will be taking place at Royal Festival Hall, which is a new and larger venue which will benefit graduates and recognise the growth of GCUL. He also reminded governors of the upcoming graduations in Glasgow on 26th & 27th November and encouraged governors to attend all or any of the graduations.

5. Principal and Executive Board Report

- 5.1 The Principal presented his report which provided a summary of items arising since the previous Court meeting, including the new Chancellor's Installation, student recruitment and progression updates and the NSS and league table successes.
- 5.2 The Principal described the outcome of the annual national negotiations on pay where the process had been exhausted without agreement having been reached between the unions and university employers. He explained that in line with the proposal from the employers' negotiating organisation, UCEA, the final UCEA offer would reach staff in 2 tranches, the first backdated to August and then a second tranche in March. He confirmed that, since no agreement on the award had been reached with the unions, some had already balloted their members and others were considering the move in respect of possible industrial action. A TU nominated governor expressed his disappointment at the application of the award in the absence of agreement and his concern that this undermined the concept of collective bargaining.
- 5.3 In response to questions about Scottish Government funding of tertiary education, the Principal explained that there is a considerable amount of work currently being undertaken and that there will inevitably be further changes in future but that at present it was too early to determine what would be done but that the University was in a relatively strong position compared to some other universities.
- 5.4 In response to question about progression rates following larger intakes to some courses, the Principal confirmed that progression rates have increased in the current year compared to the previous year but that this is being kept under review by the Executive Group and he thanked the staff of the University for their hard work in supporting students to progress. There was ongoing

work to support and assist relevant departments and their students.

6. Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Vice Chancellor (COO & DVC) report

- 6.1 The court **noted** the report from the COO & DVC which gave an overview of key developments in Finance; Estates; IT; Future Students, Marketing & Communications; Foundation, Alumni & Events; and Registry & School Professional Services
- 6.2 The COO & DVC provided Court with an update on UKVI student visa refusal rates, confirming that at the end of the compliance period the rate was still above the 10% target, but was significantly improved on the May position. Further, that the more recent Tri A only data had indicated a much-improved rate at the start of the new compliance period. She reminded Court of the actions taken to achieve this and to secure that CAS's were issued only to applicants with a high level of commitment to accepting an offered place. She pointed out that universities and colleges could be subject to an audit from the UKVI at any time and that the university was advanced in its preparations for an audit in the near future.
- 6.3 The COO & DVC provided Court with a report on an issue regarding a third party provider engaged by a company contracted by the University in 2023 to support its critical cybersecurity requirements. The issue had arisen in connection with the new Multi Factorial Authentication (MFA) security provision for the University and concerns that some campus unions had expressed. She explained there were continuing discussions with the unions with a view to better understanding the nature of the concerns. She also drew attention to the propriety of the contract and the rigorous adherence to the University's procurement policy in line with Government procurement guidelines in establishing it. Given the TUs' concerns she had sought the views of the Chair of the Audit Committee and a lay governor whose expertise was in IS. They had respectively endorsed the appropriateness of the handling of the procurement and of the service delivered. Some staff concern had related to a worry about transfer of their data outside the UK, and she could offer complete reassurance that there was no transfer of data outside the UK. She was not aware that use of the service provider had given rise to disquiet anywhere else, although their services were deployed in many universities and other organisations. There had been a suggestion that the University's procurement policy should be reviewed and she was happy to do so and invite contribution to that from the unions. Ultimately any changes to the procurement policy would be for Court to approve. A TU nominated governor referred to some concerns among staff. He supported the suggestion that there should be further consideration of the procurement policy and was keen to see even greater ethical focus. He said he recognised that the University could not break its contract but remained concerned because he felt that staff had been encouraged to download the app without all facts and that the issue was not one of procurement but of transparency and openness. In response to the challenge that the TU issue was one of transparency and openness, the DVC was clear that there was no secrecy whatsoever surrounding the matter and that the issue was one of misinformation of the type she had addressed in the course of the Court discussion. The Court endorsed and supported the management position, noted the concerns and recognised that discussions would continue towards a better understanding across campus and a potential review of procurement policy in due course.
- 6.4 In response to comments about the Financial KPIs and the improved financial position, the COO & DVC highlighted the factors leading to that including the impact of stronger than expected international recruitment given the legislative changes that had led to material changes to the pattern of student recruitment.
- 6.5 The COO & DVC noted the strong relationship between the University and its Alumni through the Foundation and referenced ongoing plans to encourage greater engagement and attendance at

events. A governor suggested that the format of the highly successful Chancellor's Dinner held in the summer should be used more for stakeholder events.

6.6 In response to a question about a possible salary sacrifice scheme to encourage staff to use electric vehicles in order to enhance the University's environmental sustainability status, the COO & DVC confirmed that this is something that she would explore. The COO & DVC reminded Court of the intention to produce an environmental enabling plan was under development in support of Strategy 2030.

6.7 **Action: COO & DVC to examine possible salary sacrifice scheme to promote use of electric cars**

7. Student President's report

7.1 The Student President reported on issues affecting students and on the activities of the Students' Association drawing particular attention to the Green Impact; National Student Survey 2024; UK General Election Voter Education Campaign; Full Time Officer Remit Areas/Objectives and Orientation; Student Leaders Programme; Student Life Podcast; Governor Sessions; SUB TV; and Freshers Week 2024.

7.2 He reported on the student representatives meeting with the Principal and thanked him for his support and engagement with the students' needs and priorities. In response, the Principal acknowledged the hard work of the student representative team and confirmed that Court and the Executive Group would work with the Students' Association to ensure that students understand and are aware of the new strategy and priorities for the University.

7.3 The Chair of Court and the Student Link Governor reminded Court of the schedule of meetings involving governors and students and encouraged as many governors as possible to attend these meetings, as well as getting involved in the Teacher Awards which helps encourage Court links with both staff and students.

8. Update on MSS

The VP People & Student Wellbeing, provided Court with an update on the MSS programme. She confirmed that the current programme is open until the 4th October and that the applications are currently being reviewed with leave dates scheduled until February 2025. She explained that the UEG recognised that investment in staff would be required in some areas but that this could be fully assessed only once the MSS process was complete.

9. University Secretary's Report

9.1 The Court **noted** a report from the University Secretary and addressed the Court's fulfilment of its Primary Responsibilities in 23/24 and **approved** the Statement of Primary Responsibilities for 2024/25.

9.2 The Modern Slavery Statement for the financial year ended 31st July 2024 was presented to and **approved** by Court.

9.3 **Action: Court approved the Statement of Primary Responsibilities and the Modern Slavery Statement.**

10. Student Recruitment Trimester A 2024-25

- 10.1 The Court noted a report from the VP (Strategy and Planning) detailing the indicative student recruitment for Trimester A 2024-25, at undergraduate and postgraduate taught levels.
- 10.2 In response to questions about student recruitment she explained that the figures in the report were an interim view as at the date of the report but that a better understanding of the numbers will be obtained when student registration has completed on 7th October and that an updated report will be provided to the F&GPC and Court at their next meetings.
- 10.3 She explained that the University had met its targets for both controlled and non-controlled student recruitment but that for international students, the numbers were still in flux but that there has been a strong growth in CAS numbers and that hopefully a good majority of these will convert to registered students.
- 10.4 She confirmed that on Graduate Apprenticeships, there was no specific target from the SG although the Minister was keen to grow numbers and the Principal was leading the sector group on GAs. There was a challenge in getting sector data on GA's and there was no sense of the prospect of changes to the funding arrangements which were currently absorbed into SFC places.
- 10.5 Court **noted** the report.

11. Research Update Trimester A

- 11.1 The Court **noted** a report presented by the PVC Research which summarised research and innovation applications and awards, REF preparations, and described in brief the University's research student population (PhD and Professional Doctorates).
- 11.2 In response to questions about the Post Graduate Research student population, she explained that there are 3 different groups for funding: **Self Funding** (still working and part time); **Investment in Research Scheme** (joint University and external funding) and **External Funding** (companies/ charities or other organisation supporting students).
- 11.3 In response to concerns about some existing units of assessment (UoA) being removed from the next REF, the Principal explained that units that did not do well in the last REF were not going to be included in the next REF although individuals within those units may well be included as part of a smaller number of broader UoA submissions elsewhere in the University. The Principal agreed that the REF strategy should be brought to a future Court meeting or briefing seminar.
- 11.4 **Action: REF review to be added to future Court briefings**

12. Standing Committee reports

- 12.1 CAOC Updates
Austin Sweeney left the meeting at this point

12.1.1 Meg Lustman, the Chair of the CAOC provided Court with an update on the progress of the recruitment of a new Chair of Court. There were strong shortlisted candidates and interviews would be taking place on 16th October with a view to identifying a minimum of 2 appointable candidates to go forward for the election process. She reminded members of the stakeholder meetings that were arranged with short-listed candidates and encouraged participation. She explained that those who progress will participate in a hustings to take place online on the 12th November. Communications will be issued to highlight the hustings and the election process to both staff and students. Court **noted** the update.

Austin Sweeney was readmitted to the meeting

12.2 People Committee – 26th September 2024.

12.2.1 Austin Sweeney, Chair of the Committee, provided an update to Court on the development of the EDI enabling plan on a “Great Place to Work”. He also referred to the Committee’s updated terms of reference and the need for these to be updated.

12.2.2 Court **approved** the People Committee Terms of Reference, Composition and Membership 2024/2025.

13. GCNYC Board of Trustees Report from Meeting on 20th June 2024.

13.1 The court **noted** the report from Sylvie Freund Pickavance, the Chair of the former Board of GCNYC, from the final meeting of Board of GCNYC under the University’s Sole Membership, which took place on 20th June 2024. She advised Court that GCNYC has since been renamed IENYC as was always intended and there is now a new Board structure with a new Chair. She warmly commended the team which had undertaken the work to effect the transfer of Sole membership.

14. Media Report

14.1 The Court noted the Media Coverage Analysis Update Report for the period of June and July 2024.

15. Date of next meeting

15.1 The next Court meeting will take place on **Thursday 14th November 2024.**

16. Chair’s Appraisal

16.1 The Chair of Court having left the meeting together with all who had been “in attendance”, other than the University Secretary, the Vice-Chair took the chair and led the discussion with governors on the Chair’s performance. The Vice-Chair undertook to feed back to the Chair of Court