

Report from the meeting of Senate held on 21st February 2024

1. Chair's Opening Remarks

Senate welcomed Professor Louise Dixon, PVC Education and Caroline Bysh, PVC Engagement who were attending their first meeting as members of the University Executive.

2 Minutes and Matters Arising

Senate received the previously approved minutes of the meeting on 13th December. It noted the Matters Arising report and the relevant actions taken since those meetings.

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.

It was noted that further work was being undertaken to update the Fit to Sit Policy. 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

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

4. Student Recruitment

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.

5. Strategy Refresh

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 and included a draft refreshed strategy document for Senate's consideration and feedback. In discussion, concern was expressed about the potential narrowing of the University's focus on research, and the challenges in certain academic areas of recruiting staff with research backgrounds. 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 research. 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. This reinforced the need for a rebalancing of the workforce to ensure it met the future needs of the University.

6. Research Report for 2023/2024 Quarter 2

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. 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

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. In discussion, it was noted that here were both challenges and opportunities associated with the proposal. A Joint Institute provided opportunity for partnership working and income diversification, and would allow for more strategic engagement, noting that in the past, smaller partnerships that the University had been involved in had been rejected by the Chinese Ministry of Education as they were not the preferred approach. 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.

8. Research Degrees Committee

Senate approved the award of 11 PhDs.

9. Fitness to Practise Policy

Senate approved revisions to 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. 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. Student Survey Policy annual review

Senate approved revisions to the Student Survey Policy. In addition to editorial changes, the proposed revisions included:-

- Changing the name of the policy to the Student Survey & Module Evaluation 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. Review of the Academic Calendar

Senate considered 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.

Senate was advised 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. Following discussion, and noting that an Implementation Oversight Group, including representatives from the Schools, GCU London, relevant professional services areas and the Students' Association would be established to coordinate the planning and preparations for implementation, Senate approved the changes to the Academic Calendar for implementation from AY 2025/2026. Feedback will be sought following the first full year of implementation.

12. REF 2029 Code of Practice

Following a light touch review of the REF2021 Code of Practice, 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. Senate approved the REF2029 Code of Practice, noting that as additional REF2029 information became available, further updates to the Code of Practice may be submitted to Senate for approval.

13. Research Integrity Annual Statement and Report 2022-23

Senate considered 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.

Senate endorsed the Research Integrity Annual Statement and Report 2022-23 and it is attached at Appendix 1 of this report for Court's approval.

Once approved the statement will be published on the University's Research Integrity webpage.

14. Programme Withdrawal

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.

15. University Senate Composition Membership 2023/2024

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.

16. 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 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.

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

- Honorary academic appointments.
- Recent academic staff appointments.
- Summary reports of the meeting of the University Court held on 8th February

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.

Thanks were extended to Professor Bonnie Steves Director of the Graduate School, for her services to the University and Senate in advance of her retirement at the end of February, after 32 years at the University.