

University of Glasgow

General Council Business Committee

Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday, 09 January 2024

Attending in person: Dr Cameron Marshall (Convener), Gerry Friell, Mary Galbraith, Alan Mackintosh, Prof Peter Holmes, Ian Henderson.

Attending online: Jack Aitken, David Armstrong, John Corrie, Patricia Cunningham, Douglas Cusine, Stuart Hoggan, Sheriff Seith Ireland, Christine Middlemiss, Professor Christine Watson.

Apologies: Professor Sir Anton Muscatelli, Professor Jonathan Cavanagh, Emily Howie and Daniel Traynor.

By invitation: Dr David Duncan (Chief Operating Officer and University Secretary), Professor Martin Hendry (Clerk of Senate and Vice-Principal), Matt Inglesant (Alumni Manager, Adam Smith Business School).

In Attendance: Jenna Wright.

1. Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 10 October 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2023 were approved.

MG noted that the minutes were a comprehensive record of the previous meeting and of particular value to those who were unable to attend.

2. The Reverend Stuart Dougall MacQuarrie

The Convener opened the meeting by paying tribute to the Reverend Stuart Dougall MacQuarrie who died on 27 November after a short illness. Stuart was widely known and regarded by the University community and touched the lives of many as the former chaplain of the University of Glasgow. The Convener reported that as an Alumnus of the University, Reverend MacQuarrie, had an affinity to the University and had previously acted as Convener of the General Council. It was noted that he has left a mark on the University, and on many individuals throughout the University community and beyond, in gentle and subtle ways.

It was reported that the University is motivated to mark the life and untimely death of Stuart MacQuarrie. The family has been approached to check if they are comfortable with the University hosting a memorial service.

Members of the General Council Business Committee took a pause of respectful silence to remember the life of Reverend Stuart Dougall MacQuarrie.

3. University Court Report and Business Update

Dr Duncan provided an update to the Business Committee from the University Court.

At the previous Business Committee, it was reported that there had been under-recruitment of international postgraduate taught (PGT) students. The shortfall in international PGT entrants in 2023 follows successive years where the University has exceeded international student intake expectations. The University has conducted analysis on the reasons for the shortfall. The main contributing factors were cited as changes introduced to the PGT Admissions process for the 2023 admissions cycle to mitigate against the risks associated with over-recruitment, changes in the Far-Eastern market towards the end of the recruitment cycle and unusual applicant behaviour. Following the international PGT student shortfall, the University is taking actions to support the September 2024 intake. A universal deposit for international PGT applicants will be introduced to support improved forecasting and allow conversion activity to be more targeted and a fast-track rounds approach will be enacted where all qualified applicants will be made an offer. DD reported that irrespective of the shortfall of international PGT students in 2023, the University is still expected to make the financial target for the year.

Following the publication of the Scottish Government's budget for financial year 24/25, there will be a reduction in resources allocated to the Higher Education (HE) and Further Education (FE) sectors. The Scottish Government fund undergraduate tuition fees for Scottish domiciled students. Whilst a backdrop of financial constraint is of concern, the University is not over-reliant on home undergraduate markets so this is less of a concern for the University of Glasgow than it may be for other Scottish HE and FE institutions.

It was reported that no immediate industrial action is expected by any of the campus Trade Unions. However, the underlying areas of discontent remain relating to pay, workload and pay equity. Local resolution through direct negotiation with campus Trade Unions is not possible as pay is negotiated nationally by the Universities & Colleges Employers Association (UCEA). Therefore, further industrial action in 2024 is likely due to financial issues across the sector impacting on collective future pay negotiations.

The University Court is considering further building investments on campus. The Keystone Building has been proposed on the opposite side of St. Mungo Square and a decision is expected on the construction of the building in 2024. The expectation is that the building would house general and specialised teaching space for lab-based disciplines and research space specifically for Engineering and Computing Science. If construction is approved, this would be a significant investment and the largest building project that the University had engaged in since the construction of the Gilbert Scott Building. Additionally, a new biomedical research facility is being considered. Again, a decision is expected on construction of the facility in 2024.

The University is continuing to respond to the ongoing international conflicts in Ukraine, Palestine and Israel and is ensuring tailored and targeted support is available for those members of the University community who are directly affected by the war. The ongoing conflicts have led to some demands from the Academic Trade Union, and also from a group of students around the investment in the defence sector. This led to some disruption at the last meeting of the University Court. It was reported that the Finance Committee is going to reflect on this.

The First Minister, Humza Yousaf, delivered a political speech about government policy on 8th January 2024 which was held in the University of Glasgow. This follows previous political speeches hosted by the University of Glasgow from politicians from other political parties.

It was reported that two members of the University community were awarded an OBE in the New Years Honours List 2024. Professor William Cushley was awarded an OBE for services to the regulation of Plant Protection Products and Professor Mark Logan, was awarded an OBE for services to the economy. Furthermore, the University was awarded a Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher Education in recognition of the range and impact of the projects undertaken at the Centre for Robert Burns Studies, chiefly Editing and Curating Burns for the 21st Century.

The committee heard that the term of the current rector, Lady Rita Rae, is coming to an end. Nominations for the 2024 Rectorial Elections are now open. An electronic vote will take place which will open at 9am on 25 March and close at 4pm on 26 March 2024.

It was noted that Rachel Sandison, Deputy Vice Chancellor and External Engagement and Vice Principal – External Relations, will attend the next General Council Business Committee meeting to present on the admissions policy of the University with particular reference to contextual admissions.

There was discussion around recent UK Visa and Immigration policy changes which stipulated that from January 2024, UG and PGT international students in the UK will no longer be able to bring dependents on their student visa, and if this is likely to have an effect on future international recruitment. DD advised that this is not expected to have a significant effect on future University of Glasgow recruitment. It was noted that Rachel Sandison may be able to expand further on this at the next meeting.

There was a query around the current financial landscape of the University. DD reiterated that the University is expected to meet the financial targets for the year and noted that this was particularly due to a very good year-end in 22/23 and careful husbandry of the University resources by Gregor Caldwell (Executive Director of Finance) and the Finance Committee. However, DD reported that the University is looking at different scenarios going forward, including more challenging scenarios in the event of a significant shortfall in years to come. If the challenges and problems continue into future recruitment cycles then corrective action may need to be taken. It was noted that intelligence suggests that the University will recover some of the shortfall in 2024.

Progress on the enhanced sports facilities at the Garscube Sports Complex was queried. DD noted that one all-weather pitch has been replaced and the University is planning to install a second all-weather pitch. However, the installation of the second pitch was delayed as the engineers flagged an issue with the surface due to historic coal mines underfoot. The University is awaiting a surface report which is expected imminently. DD agreed to follow up on this and report back to the committee.

(Action – DD)

The convenor thanked DD for his report.

4. Clerk of Senate Update

Prof Hendry provided an update to the Business Committee on academic affairs.

Two name changes were reported. The College of Arts has been renamed to the College of Arts & Humanities which brings it into line with other colleges and cognate universities around the country. Further, the School of Interdisciplinary Studies has been renamed as the School of Social and Environmental Sustainability to better reflect the business of the school.

It was reported that following the conclusion of the recent industrial action, the backlog of marking from the marking and assessment boycott has been cleared and degree classifications have now been confirmed for all summer 2023 graduates. Marking of PGT assessed work was completed in good time ahead of the Winter 2023 graduations.

The committee heard that the Winter Graduations were a great success and a total of 23 ceremonies were held. It was noted that an impressive array of honorary graduates have been confirmed for Commemoration Day and summer 2024 graduations which is likely to attract significant media attention.

The Education Policy and Strategy Committee are considering the rather complicated landscape around the Scottish Government reform agenda. There are around 130 actions and recommendations contained across the below key policy documents published by the Scottish Government and the committee is in the process of determining how they fit together and what the implications are for the higher education sector.

- SG Post-school education, research and skills – Purpose and Principles
- Independent Review of the Skills Delivery Landscape (Withers review)
- Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment (Hayward review)
- National Innovation Strategy 2023-2033

The Research Policy and Strategy committee (RPSC) have approved the creation of a new research centre known as the Centre for Public Policy. This is intended to provide an enabling function across the University to strengthen relationships with the wider policy community and enhance the ability to achieve impact on research. Furthermore, the Research Policy and Strategy committee have also approved the creation of a Centre for Comparative Literature and Translation within the School of Modern Language and Cultures which is building on existing research activities within the school and will provide a stronger platform for attracting research funding.

The University has been selected as the new European hub of XPRIZE. XPRIZE is a non-profit organization that designs and hosts public competitions to drive innovation in the area of big societal challenges and the current prizes range from \$100-200 million. The hub is one of only 3 in Europe and it will be hosted in the Advanced Research Centre (ARC) building.

Prof Hendry reported that the RPSC has been reviewing the progress of the ARC since its formal opening by Nobel Laureate Professor David McMillan in June 2022. It was noted that the building is thriving and regularly provides a focus to bring together researchers from different disciplines across the university and from academic, industrial, public and civic sectors. The ARC has also had a very successful public engagement strategy, with the ARCadia festival last autumn attracting large audiences. Planning for future events is underway including events to celebrate the legacy of Lord Kelvin as 2024 is the bicentenary of the birth of Lord Kelvin

The impact of generative artificial intelligence (AI) on academia was discussed. Prof Hendry reported that in recent months allegations of academic misconduct associated with AI use have emerged. Over the last 9 months the university has developed guidance for staff and students on the University policy position in relation to responsible use of AI and learning and teaching, and guidance on what would be misuse in relation to assessment. The AI landscape is rapidly changing and the University is in regular

discussion with colleagues from other Russell Group Universities and beyond. The area of AI will be kept under review.

SI queried if there were any concerns about the sustainability of the Modern Languages provision at the University of Glasgow following a recent announcement from Aberdeen University regarding the sustainability of their Modern Language provision. MH advised that there are no concerns relating to the Modern Language provision at the University of Glasgow. It was noted that the creation of the Centre for Comparative Literature and Translation within the School of Modern Language and Cultures is in recognition of the strong student and staff recruitment in recent years, the latter of which has broadened the research expertise within the school.

There was discussion about the Student wellbeing review, particularly relating to accommodation. An implementation group is reviewing the recommendations from the recent Student wellbeing framework review and determining how best to progress the recommendations. DD reported that the framework strategy is a pyramid model for support which includes building resilience of students, non-specialist support, specialist support and onward referral to external bodies. In relation to accommodation, following the shortage of student accommodation in September 2022 entry, the University sourced 2000 additional nominated places via private accommodation providers for September 2023 entry. Due to the shortfall of international PGT students in September 2023, there was a surplus of approx. 700 of the additional nominated places. However, without sourcing the additional nominated places, it was noted that there would still have been a shortfall in accommodation. In summary, it was reported that the shortage of accommodation in the private rental sector is ongoing and the University will keep a close eye on this for September 2024 entry.

5. Development and Alumni Office Update

A written report was provided on recent Alumni-related activity and is available as an appendix to the minutes.

Matt Inglesant, Alumni Manager (Adam Smith Business School), drew attention to the below points.

The winner of the World Changing Alumni Award 2023 will be announced in the Winter issue of Avenue which be available on 18 January. The award recognises the achievements of outstanding alumni in their various fields. The announcement will be followed by a series of social media promotions.

The Development and Alumni team have been involved in supporting the efforts of the University in the QS World University ranking service. A number of targeted invitations to alumni working in academic research and recruitment have been distributed to invite participation in the survey.

The Adam Smith Business School has continued to be significantly involved in student engagement. Networking workshops have been offered as part of the Adam Smith Skills Award where students are invited to learn more about networking, but also to have the opportunity to network with some of recent alumni from a number of different industries to establish what it takes to actually be successful within their particular field. These sessions have been very popular and well attended. Further sessions are planned for semester 2. A digital graduation yearbook for the Class of 2023 is also being developed and a record number of 900 students made a submission to the yearbook.

The Adam Smith Business School achieved a ranking with the FT Masters in Finance and Management programmes this year for the first time in three years. To help maintain the ranking, the Adam Smith Business School hosted networking workshops in Beijing and Shanghai for cohorts from this programme. As these cohorts had an online learning experience, this was an opportunity for students to meet in-person and to build strong relationships with them and build willingness to participate in ranking surveys.

The Chancellor's Fund Board met on the 25th of October to review the current round of applications, they were able to award £70,906.12 to 21 projects, a summary of the projects will be provided following the application round in April.

Preparations are underway for the annual telephone campaign and the recruitment process has started for 55 student callers with the activity commencing on 3rd February.

There are a number of upcoming events planned across the University.

- 12 Jan - London Burns Supper, Caledonian Club, sold out 120 capacity.
- 17 Jan Holocaust Memorial Lecture, Sir Charles Wilson & Online, 300 in person expected, 100 online registrations ongoing.
- 24 Jan - Global Burns, Online, currently 210 signed up
- 27 Jan - Glasgow Burns Supper & Ceilidh, Bute Hall & Kelvin Gallery, sold out 180 capacity.
- 01 Feb - Washington DC Burns Reception, 50 expected registrations ongoing.
- 03 Feb - Boston Burns Supper, 60 expected registrations ongoing.

The [Alumni Spotlight Series](#) is performing well. This is a series of interviews with successful alumni. Three new episodes have been made available with Professor Richard Smith, Lyle McAdam and Tiffany Vonn. It was noted that a further two episodes have been recorded featuring Camilla Pia and Katy Scott and will shortly be edited by the BBC.

Following a call to fill the vacant posts on the General Council Business Committee, there have been 18 nominees from a range of graduating years. Nominations have now closed, and the nominees and proposers have been validated. The online election will take place at the General Council Half Yearly Meeting on 30th January at 6pm. The meeting will be held via Zoom, during which voting will be cast live and only votes cast during the meeting will be eligible. No late votes will be accepted. Members will be required to register via an Eventbrite which will be circulated on week beginning 8th January. The Zoom link to the meeting will be shared with registrants two days in advance of the meeting. SI noted that online and hybrid meetings are broadening the candidate pool of nominees. The consensus from members was that online or hybrid meetings are to be welcomed and support participation.

There was discussion around active alumni engagement in other areas of the university out with the Adam Smith Business School. MI reported that an alumni officer has recently been appointed in the College of Arts & Humanities, and there is a possibility of this role being created in other Colleges across the University in the future.

JC reported that his law firm is organising an event in Glasgow for other city law firms and they are in active dialogue with Scottish Universities, including the University of Glasgow, to try to encourage more Scottish applicants. SI proposed that a future agenda item could consider how the Business Committee support an alumni reach out.

(Action – Clerk)

6. Any Other Business

None.

7. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Business Committee would be held on:

- Tuesday, 9 April 2024 18:00 – 19:30

General Council Half-yearly meetings for the year would be held on:

- Tuesday, 30 January 2024 18:00 – 19:30
- Tuesday, 16 July 2024 18:00 – 19:30