

General Council Half Yearly Meeting 19th July 2014

Minute of General Council Half Yearly Meeting held 19th July 2014, Sir Charles Wilson Lecture
Theatre, University of Glasgow

Item

1 Introduction and Welcome

The Chancellor, Sir Kenneth Calman, welcomed and thanked those present. He noted the positive past year for the University, with the end of the Academic Year approaching, before introducing the panel – Amber Higgins, Clerk to the General Council (GC), Professor Anton Muscatelli, Principal, and George Tait, Convenor of the General Council Business Committee (GCBC).

2 Election of Members to serve as General Council Assessors on University Court

The Chancellor discussed the background to the elections. The meeting elected two nominees as the General Council Assessor to Court who will take up post on 1st August 2014, for a four year period.

Lesley Sutherland Retired Director, Scottish Funding Council MA 1973

Morag Macdonald Simpson Barrister and Company Secretary (Retired) LLB 1968

The Chancellor thanked outgoing General Council Assessors Alan McFarlane and Kevin Sweeney for their work, and congratulated Morag and Lesley on their appointments. He also extended thanks to all 15 candidates for taking part, to Amber Higgins and colleagues for their assistance, and to voters for their participation.

3 Minutes of meeting of 1st February 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 1st February 2014 were approved, subject to small amendments from George Tait, which will be put into updated version online early w/b 21/07/2014.

4 Report of Convenor of the General Council Business Committee

Convenor, George Tait, advised that this would be his 7th report as convenor.

The Convenor noted that the Ancient Universities' meeting provided an invaluable opportunity to share information/experience which was held here in Glasgow in March 2014, considering the following topics:

Future of role and status of St Andrews Business Committee

Impact of Independence

Post Referendum

A summary of this year's GCBC meetings in February, April and July was also provided, focussing on GCA elections.

The Convenor outlined the discussion that had taken place on Draft Ordinance 206, noting the proposed changes to Court membership suggested in February 2014. Court, as required by statute, sought the input of the Business Committee, with the specific reference to the General Council Assessor role. The Business Committee considered that a reduction in the number of General Council Assessors from 5 to 2 would not be appropriate, as suitably skilled candidates could be identified from within

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the pool of graduates without having to appoint co-opted members.

It was reported that Court had requested that the elections for the General Council Assessors to be postponed, as vacancies may not exist depending on the outcome of the Ordinance submitted to Privy Council. This suggestion was rejected at the GCBC February meeting, where GCBC members also voted 11:8 not to support the Ordinance and a presentation noting reasons for opposition was submitted to Court. Relief was expressed that the threat to Assessor numbers had been lifted following Court's withdrawal of Ordinance on 16 July 2014, and concern noted over the intransigence of Court. Comparisons between Glasgow and Aberdeen were noted, with Aberdeen following their GCBC advice and not opting to reduce the number of General Council Assessor on Court. The newly appointed General Council Assessors were wished well, with a note that in future, GCBC hope due and proper regard is paid to stakeholders' views.

The Convenor thanked the outgoing Assessors for their work, and also thanked the Clerk for her assistance in the process.

The Chancellor thanked George Tait for his report; and the GCBC for all they do for the University, before inviting comments.

A GC member present noted that they felt further consultation would have been expected following the February meeting and that they should have been told about the proposal from Court to the Privy Council. It was felt that the result of consultation should be made public, to give stakeholders the opportunity to comment, or object if they wished. It was strongly suggested that proposals should be published and that it is insufficient to discuss with GCBC only – GC have the right to object or support if they desire.

The Chancellor asked for further comments, noting that the University is anxious to move forward. He presumed the Ordinance would be revisited at some point, and again asked for comment. No further comments were raised at this point and the Chancellor thanked the Convenor for his report. The Convenor left the meeting at this point, due to personal commitments.

The Principal provided information regarding the background and process around the Ordinance submitted to the Privy Council. A GC member requested advice on accessing The Scottish Governance Code referred to in the Principal's report on the matter in Avenue issue 56. The Principal advised this could be easily found online, and provided background, explaining that the Scottish Government had set up a review, and that some recommendations were communally applied whilst others required legislative change. The code was consulted on across the Higher Education sector, and agreed by the Scottish Secretary. He also confirmed that the Code does not change our Governance mechanisms. (weblink to Governance code <http://www.scottishuniversitygovernance.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Scottish-Code-of-Good-HE-Governance.pdf>)

The Principal noted that Court were now to decide on how to proceed with Court Membership and Ordinance 206. The Principal was asked to explain why the Ordinance was withdrawn; he asked the Secretary of Court to respond. The Secretary advised that the Privy Council met on 16th July to consider Ordinances submitted to them, and indicated that Glasgow's could not be supported, due to a technical issue, and concerns around the wording.

The Principal was asked to confirm whether the Ordinance was rejected or withdrawn; he reaffirmed the Ordinance was withdrawn as an objection around language used had been highlighted.

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A GCBC member noted that the Chancellor stated the Ordinance had been withdrawn because it would be rejected, and wondered if it would be 'tinkered with' and resubmitted. The Chancellor ensured all present were aware that he had not made any such comment. AGCBC member advised GC Members that the Committee would monitor any further developments on this on behalf of GC and that they hope there will not be a further submission. She noted that if Court propose another submission then the GCBC would reject it again.

The Principal noted two issues – that any code of governance stresses the role of the individual and that it is important to acknowledge that Court respects the division between governance and management.

The importance of GC Assessors was noted by members present, highlighting their independent position, representing the interests of the General Council and the University. The commitment of co-opted members was questioned, with a suggestion that Assessors from outwith the General Council could not be expected to undertake the various responsibilities of the role.

The Principal noted that all lay members on General Council put in a huge effort. This was done on a Pro Bono basis, and the University is very grateful for their work and continued support.

A member asked why the Ordinance issue had not been put to the General Council, and the Principal advised that the Ordinance was published, and was consulted on with General Council Business Committee, who represented and act on behalf of the General Council as a whole.

This raised the issue of communication with members and some GC members noting that consulting with GCBC was not sufficient. A GCBC member confirmed that this was an issue in consideration at present, and that without access to the graduate database, they were unable to inform graduates. A GC member drew attention to the website as an effective communication tool.

The Chancellor drew this section to a close, noting that it is an important discussion, with communication at its heart – it should be ensured that messages are delivered.

5 Principal's Address and Questions

The Principal thanked all present for their attendance, and explained that his report would outline progress over the last year, focussing on:

- Progress on the University Strategic Plan, *Glasgow 2020: A Global Vision*
- Quality of Learning and Teaching and Student Experience
- Quality of Research and Knowledge Exchange
- University Investments 2014-15 and beyond
- Progress on our Estates and Campus Development Strategy

Strategic Plan – The University was currently 4 years into a 5 year Strategic Cycle. Glasgow 2020 sets out the University's ambition with 20 targets, utilised as Key Performance Indicators. The Principal noted the ambitious target with the majority now met and others making good progress. Looking at targets still to be met, the Principal noted that good progress was being made in terms of research income; that steps are being taken to reduce the Home/EU undergraduate population – risks for exceeding target include financial penalties, and high student:staff ratios; that the University is close to target on Survey results; and that although ISB is rising, this is not a major concern.

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QLT and Student Experience – The Principal noted the positive results from the Enhancement – Led Institutional Review (ELIR), with the University attaining the highest possible rating (of ‘effective’). The Report identified 10 areas of particular positive practice, and 5 areas for development. International Student Support and Widening Participation were praised, as was strong Student Engagement and Delivery of Strategic Objectives. The University was also seen as being good at self-evaluation.

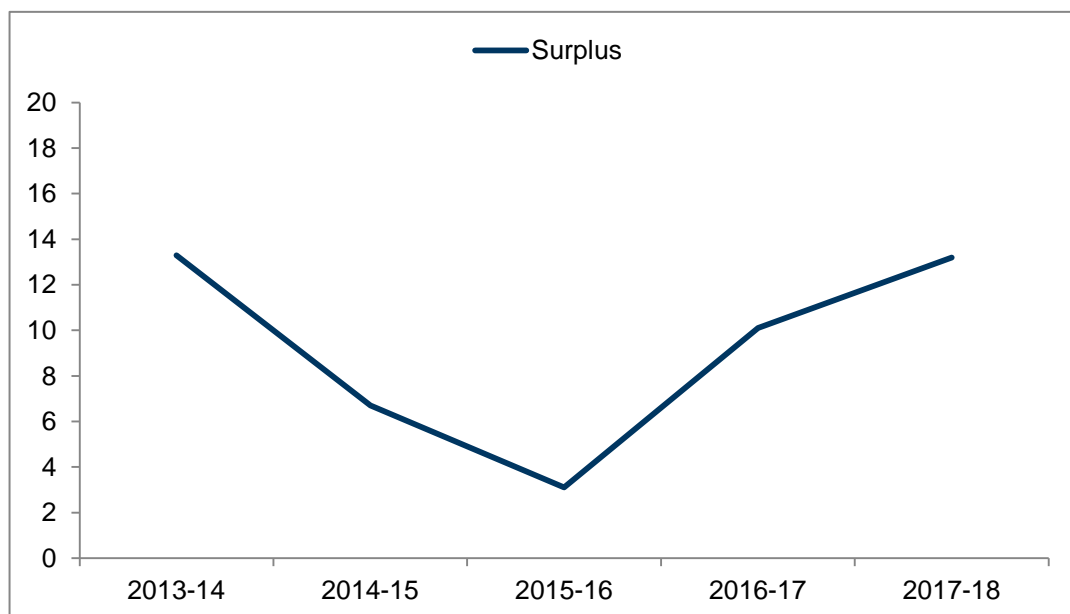
Areas for development were: Support for technology-enhanced learning – currently being addressed with £2.5m investment in E-learning; Career Progression; School oversight of Postgraduate Student Experience; and to Continue to monitor the impact of the University’s guidelines.

It was reported that Student surveys showed 89/90% score over last 10 years. Glasgow was now 8th in Russell Group league table, with continued improvement, but there was still room for improvement in certain areas. PGR was still showing as an area for concern in terms of KPIs, but was well above Russell Group average.

Quality of Research and Knowledge Exchange – Tremendous progress had been made in last 5 years in the University, with a PhD population increasing seen as good indicator. It was also reported that the University had received record levels of Research Income - £210m last year. The rise in research networks since 2010/11 has seen a good return on investment. These networks were bringing people together and allowing Knowledge exchange which is seen as a key driving force in research and industry links industry.

Investments – The Principal discussed the background to investment plans, highlighting priority areas. Continued investment in research to increase activity; student:staff ratios as an area concern, particularly in the Business School; Investment in Distance Learning would also help to improve the on-Campus experience; Investment in Widening Participation, particularly in MD40 backgrounds. The University was currently running at a surplus of 2%.

Financial Forecast – Central Scenario:



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Campus Development – The Principal noted that a large surplus was required for borrowing so that the ambitious Estate plan could be undertaken.

Estates Strategy would follow from the Strategic Plan, with the next Strategic Plan due to be approved by Court in June 2015. The new Estates Strategy would be considered in the autumn for 2014. The University aimed to be one of the world's greatest research-led universities.

The University would work closely with Glasgow City Council to ensure that the Campus Development Framework fitted in with the Council's plans for the City. £40-£50m Capital investment annually will have impact on economy, so this was seen as a benefit to city as a whole. The University aimed for campus to be inclusive, and embedded in the City.

The Chancellor thanked the Principal for his positive report, noting agreement that adaptability is important for the future, and invited comments from those present.

A GC member asked for detail on the design process for Campus Redevelopment plans and whether a shortlist of architects had been identified, or if a National competition would be held. The Principal advised that each individual building would be subject to tender, but that consistency would be taken into consideration.

Another member mentioned the SRC's open letter regarding the under-provision of facilities for the number of students and suggested that future development should address this issue, but wondered what could be done now to ease this pressure. The Principal agreed that SRC were doing the right thing and had also shared their concerns with him directly. He also shared their concern, noting that he and SMG are pushing for Learning and Teaching development to ensure that the student experience was a positive one. In the short term the University was converting existing spaces – Hunter and Bute halls to relieve pressure. Other measures include the reduction of home/EU student numbers, and the development of Sports and Recreation facilities – work was currently ongoing, with £18m invested.

A third comment referred to initial discussions around the Western site, which included ideas for residential accommodation, for PG students for example. The member felt this would be useful, to avoid an empty campus particularly in the evening, and wondered whether this remained on the agenda. The Principal emphasised that these ideas should be treated as a possibility, rather than a decision, as discussions are ongoing. Options are being considered at present, including the use, or return to the public sector, of existing terraced accommodation. The University was keen to ensure the campus was lively. Commercial activity was also being considered, to bring people in from the local community, and further afield, as the University is becoming widely seen as a tourist venue. The Principal again advised that there are no definite plans as yet and that the Campus plan was still under discussion.

The Chancellor noted that General Council would be interested in the Estate Plan as it develops, and invited further comment.

Present members agreed that it would be good to see plans as they develop, and noted that it was important to utilise available expertise, and be aware of the need to consider the people and involve those that live locally. The Principal noted that he was keen to ensure the involvement of the alumni and local community.

The next comment related to Distance learning, and the need to reduce the number of home/EU students. The GC member wondered if courses would be full or part time, and whether this would be likely to increase rather than reduce home students. The

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Principal noted that this would be aimed at a different market, and that Edinburgh were a good example of successful Distance Learning programmes. The University was currently working on bids to develop a range of F/T and P/T courses, both Professional and Research based and that Distance learning may also benefit some courses which have low uptake for on-campus study. The impact on home/EU student numbers is not expected to be significant. The Principal noted that this is not a move away from on campus study as it targets a different audience.

6 AOCB

No other business had been suggested, but the Chancellor asked to raise the subject of meeting dates. GC meetings are usually held in January and July; the Chancellor wondered if combining the July meeting with Commemoration would be practical, and would perhaps be used to encourage a greater attendance in members who would be at the University that day anyway. Members felt this would be too long a day, so this was rejected.

A GC member suggested that the acoustics in the Sir Charles Wilson Lecture Theatre were not very good for this sort of meeting, and that an alternative venue should be sought for future meetings.

Further dates and venues to be advised.

The Chancellor closed the meeting by thanking all present for their attendance.