

The General Council

Business news and reports

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Papers for consideration at the Half-Yearly Meeting of the General Council, 22nd June 2013:

1. Minutes of the Meeting of the General Council held on 19th January 2013 (see below).
2. Paper A. Report by the Principal on the work and activities of the University.

Word count: 2040

Minutes of the General Council Half-Yearly Meeting: 19th January 2013

Minutes of the Meeting of the General Council held on Saturday, 19th January 2013 in the Fraser Building of the University.

1 Introduction and Welcome

The Chancellor, Professor Sir Kenneth Calman, took the chair and welcomed those present to the meeting. He thanked the Director of Estates & Buildings for her excellent informal presentation about campus development proposals.

2 Resolutions to amend GC Standing Orders as proposed by the Business Committee

The Meeting approved the resolutions amending the Standing Orders as proposed by the Business Committee. The changes are described in Appendix A at: www.gla.ac.uk/services/orgdev/gc/20130119GCAgenda.pdf .

3 Election of Members to serve on the General Council Business Committee

The Meeting elected six nominees, duly proposed and seconded, to the General Council (GC) Business Committee. Their names are given in Appendix B at: www.gla.ac.uk/services/orgdev/gc/20130119GCAgenda.pdf .

4 Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd June 2013

The minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 23rd June 2012, printed in *Avenue* issue 53 (January 2013), were approved. There were no matters arising.

5 Report of the Convener of the Business Committee, Mr George Tait

The Convener reported that since the last GC meeting in June 2012 the Business Committee (BC) had continued to focus on implementing the modernisation of role and purpose mentioned in previous reports. The Convener reported:

5.1 Court and Assessors

The BC innovations of a) Assessor reports of Court matters and b) information from University management are proving very informative. There is opportunity for University management to use the BC as a sounding board on contemporary issues.

5.2 Development and Alumni Office

Following discussions with the DAO, the BC a) is considering regular contact with GC Members via the GU World e-news email b) has increased coverage of the GC in *Avenue Magazine* c) now has a representative on the *Avenue Magazine* Editorial Board.

5.3 Increased Participation by General Council Members

To encourage increased participation at GC meetings by GC Members, an opinion survey was held at the June 2012 GC Meeting. Support emerged for keynote University speakers and holding the Meeting at various campus locations. The June meeting will be held in an MVLS location, with a presentation on the undergraduate medicine degree.

The profile of the GC with University academic staff is to be raised.

5.4 Business Committee Matters

Standing Orders: as well as recommendations on immediate changes, a sub-committee has recommended an overhaul of the Standing Orders, to be ready for the June 2013 General Council Meeting.

Ancient Universities Meeting: a meeting of BC Convenors of the universities of Aberdeen; Edinburgh; Glasgow and St Andrews discussed: relationships with GC Assessors; effectiveness reviews; increased Rectorial representation; and on-line voting technology and procedures. The four Convenors made a joint submission to the Scottish Parliament expressing concerns about the Post -16 Education (Scotland) Bill.

BC Meetings: there were BC Meetings in July and October 2012 and January 2013; there are fuller reports from Court and the Principal. In July, the University Librarian Ms Helen Durndell showed Members the transformation to the building, where printed material is digitised and released shelf space used for new learning and social activities.

In October, Mr Ian Black (Director of HR) presented the findings of the recent University Staff Engagement Survey. The BC was assured that areas for improvement requested by staff were being addressed through a variety of channels including the management development programme.

In January, Prof Ann Anderson (Head of Social Sciences College) briefed the BC on the five Schools in the College (Business, Education, Law, Social and Political Sciences; and Interdisciplinary Studies in Dumfries). She highlighted the College's range of popular undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

The BC is very grateful to the speakers for giving the time to update it on important current issues in the University.

The Convenor thanked the Clerk to the General Council for his help.

5.5 Q&A

During comments and questions, attendees wondered whether there could be a greater emphasis on promoting the GC. The Convenor reiterated that a BC Member will join the *Avenue* Board and will press for emphasis of GC affairs.

The University web portal is to be improved to allow easier access to the GC pages. The University has established a web strategy group to improve landing pages and one-click navigation. The Principal noted that web site management takes place through Corporate Communications; he agreed that the web system needed modernised.

In response to discussions about whether GC meetings could be held overseas, Chancellor summarised that it would be difficult to translate overseas the formal biannual decision-making processes of the GC but that it would straightforward to use DAO overseas meetings with alumni to promote the GC and the University in general.

The University was congratulated on its appointment of the Regius Professor of Law. Principal pointed out that the University has the largest number of Regius Chairs in the UK

In concluding, the Chancellor thanked the Convenor for his report and looked forward to hearing about progress on profile-raising at the next meeting.

6 Principal's Report, given by the Principal & Vice-Chancellor, Professor Anton Muscatelli

The Chancellor invited the Principal to address the meeting.

6.1 Update on student numbers

a. Home and EU undergraduate applications

Home and EU applications are very strong, over 30,000 in 2012-13. At GU, there has been a 100 reduction in the number of RUK (Rest of UK) students, following marketisation of Higher Education in England, where there is no cap on fee-paying student numbers. Student numbers at some English universities have grown very strongly; others have seen a marked reduction.

Maintaining the RUK numbers is important to the University, as it adds to the diversity.

b. International recruitment (non-EU)

Non-EU postgraduate taught students are valuable to the University in a) increasing diversity, reputation and other aspects of internationalisation and b) increasing income, as their numbers are not capped. At 3,900 students (2012-13), GU has pulled ahead of the Scottish universities average; although it is doing much better than before, GU is still below the average for the Russell Group comparator universities.

6.2 Widening access

Widening access is a very important area for GU: the University is unique in its combination of research-intensive performance and access improvement for disadvantaged students. GU has various offers, including top-up programmes and talent scholarships. GU has the biggest share among Scottish universities of MD40 students (40% Most Deprived).

6.3 Investment in infrastructure and facilities

GU has invested a large amount in facilities: £80m in new buildings and equipment; £55m on refurbishing facilities.

Projects include: new facilities at Garscube; a postgraduate club in Gilmorehill; increased social space in the Library.

Careers guidance and opportunities are being improved: Club 21 (prestigious internship programme) has 200 employer participants.

6.4 Research

The AHRC (Arts & Humanities Research Council) has funded a major "People of Mediaeval Scotland" database. The Institute of Glasgow Polyomics has opened.

6.5 Benefits of restructuring

There has been a beneficial impact of GU restructuring on research. New institutes and complex interdisciplinary bids have been created, including: the Institute of Health and Wellbeing; the CREATE bid (Creativity, Regulation, Enterprise and Technology) will address challenges associated with digitisation, intellectual property issues and how to support relationships between the arts and technology; and the GU-led innovation centres of: Stratified Medicine; Sensors & Imaging systems.

Major external stakeholders have been very positive about the changes; the Medical Research Council described the changes in Glasgow's biomedical research as “truly transformational”.

6.6 Investing in people

GU has invested £14m on new staff, in advance of the 2013-14 Research Excellence Framework assessment, on which institutional funding depends. 19 international professorial appointments have been made.

6.7 A Global University: transnational education

Transnational Education (TNE) is an increasingly important component of internationalisation; Glasgow degrees are provided overseas in partnership with other universities. The University is collaborating with 200 institutions, including exchange collaboration that allows our students to study abroad (currently around 20% of our students study abroad). Prestigious collaborations (such as Columbia NY) already exist. In two years, there will be 600 TNE students at the University.

In concluding, the Principal stated that there are many positive things happening in the areas of research, investment and teaching. Restructuring has led to excellent developments in collaborative research and teaching.

Challenges include the post-16 Education Bill; public spending budgets in the face of continuing austerity measures; and ever more active competition in the sector.

As always, the University is very grateful for the support received from its alumni.

6.8 Questions and Comments

Chancellor felt the talk was very positive and was pleased in particular with the University's performance in widening student access.

Those present were pleased to hear about 19 international level professorial appointments but wondered what was being done to encourage early-career researchers. Principal replied that staff investment (directed towards RAE) had been made at both ends of the scale. The University advertised for a) the Lord Kelvin/ Adam Smith fellowships, where Schools and Research Institutes put up interesting cross-disciplinary ideas to attract staff working at the interface and b) leadership fellowships, for specialist discipline areas.

Principal thought it was a good idea for GC Members to be involved more with the Club 21 mentor scheme and suggested that the Directors of the Career Service explain the scheme to the BC.

IN answer to a question about recent negative media stories about the University, Principal explained that University management received comprehensive media reports from its press office: the University enjoys massive coverage, where positive coverage greatly outweighs negative; and that negative stories arise predominantly from local media. He thought it was very important that all University constituents (students, SRC, senior management group etc.) work together so that a common University view could be expressed to the outside world. The local press had covered widening access very well, using phrases such as the University being a “shining light”.

The Principal explained that the University had a Facebook site and that students made great use of social media.

In response to questions about the post-16 Education Bill, the Principal felt confident that the offending sections would be altered. The greatest anxiety was created by the **governance** proposal to link funding to educational matters, e.g. suggesting that university X should teach subject Y; or that (say) Engineering is taught in only one University in a major city. The Principal felt that other parts of the bill (such as the fee

cap proposals) were sensible. He also noted that current relationships between the University and the Scottish Government were very good; the issue would lie with future relationships.

The Chairman of Court (Mr David Ross) endorsed the Principal's view and explained that the powers in Section 2 of the Bill are draconian; applying not only to governance and management but also allowing Scottish ministers to determine what is "good". He understood that in contrast Finnish universities are currently in the process of being released from government control because independence is seen as being better. Principal added that elsewhere in the world, the UK/US model of autonomy is increasingly recognised as producing the best results.

The Chancellor suggested that the submissions and responses to the Bill should be published somewhere on the University web site.

The Chancellor thanked the Principal for a very important talk which would be published in the next edition of *Avenue*. He concluded the discussion by noting that the post-16 Bill was an active topic, reiterating that information would be transmitted to the General Council in the new future.

7 AOCB

There were no matters of AOCB.

8 Closure of the Meeting

Finally, the Chancellor thanked the Convenor and the Clerk for their work; and all those present for their attendance. He informed the meeting that the next meeting would be held on Saturday, 22nd June 2013 at 11 am in the University.