

Court

Minute of Meeting held on Wednesday 25 November 2020 via Zoom

Present:

Ms Elizabeth Passey Co-opted Member (Convener of Court), Mr Graeme Bissett (Co-opted Member), Mr Liam Brady (SRC President), Dr Chris Cassells (Trade Union Nominee) Ms Heather Cousins (Co-opted Member), Dr Craig Daly (Trade Union Nominee), Mr David Finlayson (Co-opted Member), Professor Carl Goodyear (Elected Academic Staff Member), Ms Julia Hegele (SRC Assessor) Professor Nick Hill (Elected Academic Staff Member), Mr Christopher Kennedy (Elected Professional Services Representative), Professor Kirsteen McCue (Elected Academic Staff Member), Dr Morag Macdonald Simpson (General Council Assessor), Mr Ronnie Mercer (Co-opted Member), Dr June Milligan (Co-opted Member), Mr David Milloy (Co-opted Member), Professor Sir Anton Muscatelli (Principal), Ms Elspeth Orcharton (Co-opted Member), Mr Gavin Stewart (Co-opted Member), Ms Lesley Sutherland (General Council Assessor), Dr Bethan Wood (Elected Academic Staff Member)

Attending:

Mr Gregor Caldwell (Executive Director of Finance), Professor Frank Coton (Vice Principal Academic Planning and Technological Innovation – Item only), Dr David Duncan (Chief Operating Officer [COO] & University Secretary), (Ms Amber Higgins (Executive Officer and Clerk to Court), Professor Neal Juster (Senior Vice-Principal and Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Professor Jill Morrison (Vice-Principal & Clerk of Senate).

Apologies:

Cllr Susan Aitken (Glasgow City Council Assessor), Dr Simon Kennedy (Elected Academic Staff Member), Dr Ken Sutherland (Co-opted Member).

CRT/2020/12. Announcements

Ms Julia Hegele was welcomed to her first meeting of Court, as SRC Assessor.

There was the following declaration of interest in relation to business to be conducted at the meeting: Professor Sir Anton Muscatelli as a Trustee of USS, as an ongoing declaration, given the updates on the scheme.

It was recorded that Rachel Sandison, Vice Principal – External Relations, had briefed Court at the pre-lunch session, covering Student Recruitment and future trends. Court's thanks for the briefing were recorded.

Court was reminded that papers and business were confidential.

CRT/2020/13. Minutes of the meetings held on Wednesday 30 September 2020

The minutes were approved.

CRT/2020/14. Matters Arising

Court noted that under previous item *CRT 2019.55.3 Committee Remit and Appointments* a meeting had now been set up for the Nominations Committee in January 2021 to look at ways to increase diversity on Court Committees.

CRT/2020/15. Covid-19 Update and Planning

Court received an update from the Principal, Dr David Duncan and Mr Gregor Caldwell on the current planning and progress made following the reopening of the campus. Particular attention was drawn to the following:

- A limited number of cases of Covid-19 was now being seen in student residences and across the campus. The Scottish Government had announced plans for student travel ahead of the festive period. Part of this was the setting up of asymptomatic testing for all students at the University. Plans were also being put in place for student support during the Christmas period for any students unable to return home;
- The Scottish Government was currently in discussion with HE institutions to discuss the safe return of students in January 2021 and further details would be available once the arrangements had been confirmed;
- Health and Safety was the central consideration to all decisions made, with regular meetings of key staff taking place. Long term planning was also an important key focus with Professor Neal Juster taking the lead on this;
- Student numbers continued to look positive. Risks remained in relation to income from residences, sport and catering. It was noted that budget was now being released back to colleges.

Court thanked staff and students for their continued efforts and recognised all the hard work that had been undertaken during the pandemic to keep the University running.

CRT/2020/16. Finance Committee

FOI Exempt/Commercially confidential

CRT/2020/17. University Strategy 2020-2025

Court received a presentation by Professor Neal Juster, Senior Vice Principal on the University Strategy – World Changers Together: World Changing Glasgow 2020-2025. The strategy was the result of extensive consultation amongst the University community, starting in the winter of 2018-19. Much had changed in a year, and much would continue to change in ways that the University could not fully predict over the period of the plan. The domestic stage would have to adapt – not only to the impact of the pandemic, but also to the consequences of the country's changing relationship with the rest of Europe. Globally, the University would have to use the collective strengths of its disciplines to build collaborations and partnerships to tackle the major societal challenges brought by increasing inequality, future threats to human health, the rise of technology and automation, and the existential threat of climate change.

Over the next five years, the University will build on its strengths and draw on the power of collaboration to take the first steps of a generational journey to make the University

synonymous with discoveries, innovations, and leadership of global importance, building:

- An outstanding student experience that reflects our diverse and internationalised community;
- A world-class learning environment infused with interdisciplinary learning opportunities;
- A world-leading research culture in which people and careers will thrive;
- A resolutely international, innovative and partnership-led approach to changing our world for the better.

During the discussion a number of suggestions to wording were noted and it was agreed that these would be looked at. Court was pleased to see sustainability and climate change were a key part of the strategy. Comments were also received in relation to the KPIs and the indicators that would be used to measure the success of the strategy as this was seen as a key part of the implementation, and it was noted that there would need to be a balance between strategic KPIs and top level RAG ratings.

Court noted that the draft text was nearly complete at this stage, with the exception of its Key Performance Indicators; these were being developed separately and would be incorporated once agreed. It was agreed that the confirmed KPIs would be reported back to Court in February 2021.

Court approved the University Strategy 2020-2025.

Court thanked Professor Juster and Jamie Wightwick for all their hard work on the University Strategy.

CRT/2020/18. Report from the Principal

CRT/2020/18.1 SMG Priorities

Court noted that the formal Performance Development Review (PDR) process had been suspended earlier this year as a result of the pandemic – instead a ‘PDR-light’ process was put in place and it was agreed with SMG that the following priority areas would be the focus for 2020-21:

1. Financial sustainability: Staying as close as possible to financial sustainability through student recruitment and retention.
2. Health and wellbeing: Protecting the health and safety of our staff and students, including as much as possible mental health and wellbeing.
3. Student experience: Maintaining and enhancing the student experience of hybrid/mainly online learning during the crisis to ensure our reputation is enhanced.
4. Research and innovation: Restore non-Covid-19 research and innovation activity as soon as possible to protect our research base and academic careers.
5. Seek out opportunities: Look to the opportunities post-Covid so that we can align and optimise our activities against our strategic plan objectives for 2020-25.

These would be the major objectives for the coming year as the University recovered from the pandemic.

CRT/2020/18.2 Higher education developments

During discussion the following were noted:

- The Scottish Funding Council – Review of coherent provision and Sustainability phase one report had been published on 20 October. The format and timescale for the next two phases was still to be confirmed;
- The University would not be able to take advantage of Government support packages because the forecast data as at 30 October 2020 did not show a significant decrease in tuition fee income relative to 2018-19;
- Brexit preparedness – The University continued to prepare for all Brexit eventualities ahead of the transition period ending at the turn of the year. This included stepping up the University’s preparedness for a no-deal Brexit;
- University Rankings – The University of Glasgow had been placed 110th in the World Reputation Rankings, an improvement of 33 places from 2019;
- The University had been shortlisted for Times Higher Education University of the Year, with the winner due to be announced on 26 November 2020.

CRT/2020/18.3 EHRC Report on Racial Harassment – The University’s Response

The Principal said that following the publication of the EHRC Report, the University’s Equality and Diversity Strategy Committee (EDSC) had agreed to set up a working group to investigate the student and staff experience of racial harassment at the University of Glasgow. The committee agreed that it was important to understand to what extent the findings of the EHRC investigation were echoed here and to agree a set of appropriate actions. Analysis was conducted around racial harassment reporting and employment patterns of ethnic minority staff; 500 students were surveyed and 20 in-depth interviews were held with staff. Drawing on this research, the working group drafted a report and associated action plan to support University priorities and address racial harassment, whilst moving towards a more inclusive campus culture.

It was noted that all Universities were grappling with this challenge and that the draft report, as anticipated, made uncomfortable reading. However, the University was absolutely committed to addressing this important issue and to being open in the approach it took. EDSC had an opportunity to view and comment on the draft report at its last meeting, and the Action plan suggested by the working group was fully endorsed by EDSC. The Action plan would now go to SMG to implement and agree the (internal) publication of the report and its findings.

Court thanked the Principal for his report.

CRT/2020/19. Report from the University Secretary

Court noted the report from the University Secretary - Paper 8. The following areas were discussed in further detail by Court.

CRT 2020.19.1 Glasgow Green- The University of Glasgow’s Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan

At the last meeting, Court approved *Glasgow Green – The University of Glasgow’s Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan* and agreed that Court Sub Committees would have an opportunity to review and comment on the strategy. A revised version of the document incorporating points made by Court members was circulated to members of Court sub-committees. The updated climate change strategy and action plan for the University had received support at the sub committees, with a number of comments sent to and actioned by the University Secretary.

Court noted that the action plan would remain flexible with individual business cases being forward to the sub committees as required for each project.

Court agreed that strategy and action plan would be reviewed annually, with the next report due in November 2021.

CRT 2020.19.2 New and continuing Court Members

Court noted that Julia Hegele, Gender Equality Officer, Students Representative Council, had been elected as SRC Assessor on Court, for one year from October 2020.

CRT 2020.19.3 Organisational Change

At the last meeting, Court was informed that School of Psychology and the Institute of Neuroscience and Psychology were being consulted on the possible consolidation of the School and Institute. Court noted that these discussions were still ongoing.

CRT 2020.19.4 Directors of Research Institutes and Heads of School Appointments

Court noted the following change:

Institute of Infection, Immunity and Inflammation

Professor Gerry Graham had been appointed as Acting Director of the Institute of Infection, Immunity and Inflammation from mid-November 2020 to March 2021 pending the recruitment of a new Director.

CRT/2020/20. Annual Report for the Scottish Funding Council – Institution Review of Quality Academic Year 2019-20

Court had received a copy of the University's draft annual report to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) on institution-led review of quality for 2019-20. The contents were specified by the SFC. The statement summarised activity undertaken by the University in reviewing its provision for students, including: Periodic Subject Review; annual monitoring, course evaluation and Graduate School review; professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) activity; the University's strategic review of student-related services; and reflective overview, including the University's use of contextual information such as performance data and data from student surveys, both external and internal.

Having noted details of how the University assured the effectiveness of arrangements for maintaining academic standards and quality, Court agreed that the Convener of Court could sign off the required statement of assurance.

Court approved the Annual report to the Scottish Funding Council.

CRT/2020/21. Student Matters, including: SEC Report; SRC President update

The SRC President reported that rectorial elections would be run in March 2021 following the SRC elections. A new campaign was running to provide students with more support during the examination period – Destress at a Distance. It was noted that mental health assessment remained an issue due to an increase in the number of students coming forward for assessment.

Julia Hegele, SRC Assessor also noted that mental health was a concern. Julia Hegele reported that students felt like they were in it together with staff which was creating constructive feedback both at College and School level. Court noted that overall students were feeling well supported and that support channels had been easy to find. The information

relating to departure at Christmas and the setting up of the asymptomatic testing had been really appreciated.

David Duncan, University Secretary, noted that the relationship with the SRC remained strong and that the SRC President and Permanent Secretary were involved with the early morning briefings. It was reported that assessment for mental health issues had been reduced to 12 days and a further 15 days for treatment but this would be monitored.

During the discussion a concern was raised by the Convener of Court in relation to drugs on campus. The Convener noted that during a presentation to Scottish Committee of University Chairs on mental health in Scottish Universities, Professor Pamela Gillies, Principal Glasgow Caledonian University, had indicated there was concern that drug use by students could increase on campus due to stress of the pandemic. It was confirmed that at present the University had not seen an increase in hospitalisations due to drug or alcohol. The SRC President reported that steps were being taken to educate students about the dangers of alcohol and drug use.

A query was also raised with regards to student disability assessment, as there was believed to be a backlog. David Duncan reported that a new manager had recently been appointed and it was noted that a review was being undertaken by the Clerk of Senate which would make recommendations to improve the service. The Clerk of Senate also reported that at the winter examination diet all exams would have double time and plans were being put in place to ensure that the University's accessible and inclusive learning policy was mainstreamed; this would help to ensure that all activities were as accessible as possible for everyone.

The Convener thanked SRC President and SRC Assessor for their report.

CRT/2020/22. Reports of Court Committees

CRT/2020/22.1 Estates Committee

Ronnie Mercer, chair of the Committee, reported that the James McCune Smith Building would be handed over shortly to the University and that the full business case for the ASBS/PGT would come forward to the next Court meeting.

The report was noted.

CRT/2020/22.2 Audit & Risk Committee

Heather Cousins, chair of the Committee, presented the annual report, which included the Committee's assessment of the adequacy of the University's systems of internal control. Particular points of note were: refinements to KPIs provided in relation to both internal and external audit work; a series of briefings having been provided to the Committee on particular areas of interest, including IT; the annual report from the internal auditors, which had concluded that for 2019/20, governance, risk management and control and value for money arrangements in relation to business-critical areas were generally satisfactory; and the Committee's review of the 2019/20 financial statements.

On the basis of the internal audit work undertaken in the course of the year, and of the comments of the external auditors on the University's financial statements, the Audit & Risk Committee believed that the University generally had an adequate framework of internal control.

Court noted the Committee's annual report.

CRT/2020/22.3 HR Committee

June Milligan, chair of the Committee, outlined the key items which included: PDR Review 2019-20; an update on the current status of 2020-21 Pay Negotiations; and Organisational Development progress and Diversity & Inclusion. Court noted that the papers also included the draft minutes of the JCCN from the 7th October 2020 where topics were inclusive of those listed above, along with the draft minute of EDSC where topics included Refugee & Asylum Seekers, EHRD Tackling Racial Harassment, Student Equality Data, Protected Characteristics & Covid-19 Support, Digital Accessibility Regulations & Updates from the Equality Champions.

Court noted the Committee's report.

CRT/2020/22.4 Remuneration Committee

SMG members and the Convener of Court left the meeting for this item.

June Milligan, chair of the Committee, summarised the report. The Committee had met in November to discuss senior staff remuneration. Business at the meeting had also covered the Committee's annual report, which had included: a summary of the current strategic context and institutional performance; the Principal's report on SMG performance and reward; the review of the Principal's performance, which had been undertaken by the Convener of Court and the Chair of the Remuneration Committee, following consultation with Court members; Grade 10 Professorial and Professional Staff performance and reward; and Voluntary Severance and salary augmentation approvals since the last meeting.

Court noted that the University's annual PDR process had been suspended this year in the light of COVID. P&DR discussions with the Principal & members of SMG had taken place at the request of each reviewee rather than the reviewer/ line manager utilising a 'lighter touch' approach to the process in a similar fashion to that adopted across the wider workforce. Discussions had largely focussed on development and feedback rather than evaluation. The Convener of Court and the Principal would not make a recommendation with regards to a pay uplift for the Principal, SMG and Convener of Court for AY 2019-20 given the constrained funding environment, consistent with the pay freeze across the HE sector.

During the discussion it was noted that the HR committee would be looking closely at the impact of Covid-19 on all staff.

Court noted the report.

CRT/2020/22.5 IPSC

The Committee had welcomed two external members, Mr Kenny Robertson and Mr Andrew Wykes. Frank Coton, Vice Principal reported that two technology projects had completed governance approval during summer 2020: the Azure Windows Virtual Desktop (£1.7M) providing modern cloud high-quality student computing from anywhere; and the LinkedInLearning online training platform. It was also noted that Capex Committee had approved the Infrastructure as a Service Programme Phase1 (£4.1M) for onward submission to the Finance Committee subject to a report on main data centre physical building risks and phase 1 cost/service breakdown clarification.

Court noted that business continuity issues affecting the University's online teaching at peak times during the first week of semester 1 were swiftly resolved. Recent Higher Education sector cyber security trends and further mitigations by the University were also noted.

The report was noted.

CRT/2020/22.5 Health Safety and Wellbeing Committee

Court noted the report and no substantial items were raised.

CRT/2020/23. Senate Matters

The Clerk of Senate outlined the communication from Senate and highlighted that it had been agreed that online assessment, including online exams, would continue during the 2020-21 academic year. There had also been agreement that a move away from high-stakes assessment and end of course exams should be encouraged. Materials had been developed to provide staff with guidance on reducing high-stakes assessments and delivering online assessments, and it was hoped that further developments in this field would support the ambition for online assessment to become part of the standard approach for most courses over the long-term.

The Clerk of Senate also reported that the No Detriment Policy had been further developed over the summer to include some clarification and examples of how the Policy could be applied to Postgraduate Taught (PGT) Masters degrees, along with confirmation of arrangements following the August 2020 resit examination diet and further assessment opportunities beyond this point. It was also confirmed that the No Detriment Policy applied to all assessments taking place between 16 March and 11 September 2020. As a result, the Policy would continue to be applied during the coming academic session and beyond for student cohorts where assessments that contributed to the final degree outcome, such as junior honours assessments, had been held during the No Detriment period.

Court also noted that the emergency arrangements that had been put in place for academic governance during the initial phases of the pandemic had now been withdrawn, and that academic policy would hence forth be developed through the normal committee structure.

Court thanked the Clerk of Senate for the update.

CRT/2020/24. Any Other Business

The Convener thanked Court members for their contributions, flexibility and commitment during a difficult year. Court's thanks were also recorded to all members of the University community and its civic neighbours, including Glasgow City Council, NHS partners and other HEIs for all their resilience and hard work during a challenging period.

No substantive items were noted.

CRT/2020/25. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of Court will be held on Wednesday 10 February 2021 at 2pm via Zoom. A Pre-Court briefing will take place at 12pm via Zoom on the ASBS/PGT Business Case.