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**Court**

**Minute of Meeting held on Wednesday 14 February 2024 held in the Main Building**

**Present:**

Ms Elizabeth Passey Co-opted Member (Convener of Court), Professor Sarah Armstrong (Elected Academic Staff Member), Professor Tara Brendle (Elected Academic Staff Member), Kerry Christie (Co-opted Member), Professor Nicola Dandridge (Co-opted Member), Mr David Finlayson (Co-opted Member), Stuart Hoggan (General Council Assessor), Dr Bo Hu (Chancellor’s Assessor), Mr Christopher Kennedy (Elected Professional Services Representative), Professor Simon Kennedy (Elected Academic Staff Member), Mr Laic Khalique (Co-opted Member), Jonathan Loukes (Co-opted Member), Paula McKerrow (Trade Union Nominee), Dr Christine Middlemiss (General Council Assessor),Pablo Moran-Ruiz (SRC Assessor), Professor Sir Anton Muscatelli (Principal), Ms Elspeth Orcharton (Co-opted Member), Lady Rita Rae (Rector), Professor Richard Reeve (Trade Union Nominee), Shan Saba (Co-opted Member, Mr Gavin Stewart (Co-opted Member),Hailie Pentleton-Owens (SRC President).

**Attending:**

Gregor Caldow (Executive Director of Finance), Professor Frank Coton (Senior Vice Principal and Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)), Dr David Duncan (Chief Operating Officer [COO] & University Secretary), Professor Martin Hendry (Clerk of Senate), Amber Higgins (Executive Officer and Clerk to Court), Mark Johnston, Director of IT, and Alun McGlinchey, Chief Information Security Officer for Item *CRT/2023/27* only and Christine Barr (Executive Director of People and Organisational Development) for Item *CRT/2023/30.3* only.

**Apologies:**

Cllr Susan Aitken (Glasgow City Council Assessor), Professor Bethan Wood (Elected Academic Staff Member).

**CRT/2023/24. Announcements and declaration of Interests**

The Convener welcomed Professor Tara Brendle (Elected Academic Staff Member), as a new member of Court, to the meeting.

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 and Dr David Duncan as a member of the UCEA - National Negotiating Team.

A pre-Court briefing took place on the Innovation Strategy by Uzma Khan Vice-Principal for Economic Development, Declan Weldon, Executive Director of Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Engagement and Mike King, Director of Economic Development. Court’s thanks for the briefing were recorded.

Court was reminded that papers and business were confidential.

**CRT/2023/25. Minutes of the meetings held on Wednesday 22 November 2023**

The minutes were approved.

**CRT/2023/26. Matters Arising**

No substantive items were raised.

**CRT/2023/27.** **Technology Strategy – progress and next steps**

Court received a presentation by Mark Johnston (Director of IT Services) and Alun McGlinchey, (Chief Information Security Officer) on the Information Services Strategic Plan. The presentation provided an update on progress in relation to the University Technology Strategy and highlighted the next phase in the evolution of the strategy.

Court noted that the context of the strategy development had included a legacy of underinvestment in IT; operational structures that were not fit for purpose; the fact that the University was entering a new strategic cycle, extending its physical infrastructure and engaging in transformation; and the declaration of a climate emergency.

Since the last update to Court in February 2023, significant progress had been made in progressing the two major foundational projects – Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) and the Network Infrastructure Programme (NIP).

It was noted that there were still significant challenges to overcome, such as: out-of-date business systems and end-of-life infrastructure; complex future IT landscape requiring greater flexibility; and staffing capabilities and capacity. Court also noted that the University Telephony system was in the process of being migrated to Teams.

Court noted that a number of Business Systems were either due to be migrated to the Cloud or the functionality was being reviewed. The presentation also highlighted the strategies for supporting Learning & Teaching, Research and the Student Experience. Court noted that cyber and information security had moved forward since the last update to Court and welcomed the progress that had been made.

During the discussion it was noted that the IT function was moving to a more centralised model and that the balance between college vs central was still being mapped out. It was also noted that support for staff was a key area to focus on as this would ensure that staff and students could make full use of the business systems.

A query was raised about assessment and feedback and online exams and it was noted that Senate was discussing these areas in detail as there were a number of challenges that needed to be addressed, including staff time allocation for marking assessments.

Court thanked Mark Johnston, Alun McGlinchey and all IT staff for all their hard work on the strategy and their support for staff and students over the last year.

**CRT/2023/28. Keystone Workshop Update**

Court received a brief outline by Professor Frank Coton (Senior Vice Principal and Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)) on the Keystone Workshop. Keystone had now concluded RIBA Stage 3 – Spatial Coordination, this stage served to ensure the design would meet the spatial requirements. In order to be on schedule for completion by 2027/28 Stage 4 design fees and advanced works for the Keystone plot had been approved by the Finance and Estates Committee. Court noted that following approval of the Stage 4 fees the total commitment of Keystone was £31m.

Court agreed that thefollowing would be progressed:-

* All actions arising from the workshop discussions would be taken forward
* Updates on the student recruitment position would be given on a regular basis to Finance Committee and Court throughout the cycle.
* The executive team would develop budgets for Scenarios 1&2 to be brought forward to Finance Committee and Court towards the end of 2023/24 session, on the assumption that the Scenario 2 budget would be the initial operational budget for the coming year until growth above the baseline was confirmed.

Court noted that in all but a downturn scenario, the full business case for Keystone would be brought forward for consideration by Court and its Committees in September 2024.

**CRT/2023/29. Report from the Principal**

*CRT/2023/29.1* *Admissions – UCAS Applications and PGT Update*

The Principal updated Court on the current admission cycle. It was noted that Undergraduate numbers were slightly down on previous years but no concerns were raised.

In relation to PGT, it was noted that the University was not alone in seeing reduced numbers in 2023-24 and a number of actions had been adopted for the 2024-25 recruitment cycle to seek to return to budget numbers, including speeding up offer-making within the round-based recruitment approach followed last year, implementing universal deposits, boosting our scholarships offer, and providing accommodation guarantees to all PGT international students.

During the discussion it was noted that all of these actions were considered critical to regain student numbers as it was likely that the University would see increased competition across this cycle from both other UK institutions and other markets (e.g. Australia). It was also unclear what the conversion ratio would be from acceptance to registration, partly due to the change in approach but also because of the increased competition and market factors impacting the attractiveness of the UK. There was therefore a high level of uncertainty around the recruitment position in September 2024 – although data to date did not suggest that the University is in a downturn scenario.

Court noted that the recruitment cycle was still in the early stages and that an update, including more detailed scenario tables, would be provided at the next Court meeting.

*CRT/2023/29.2 Principal’s Report*

Court also received the report from the Principal – Paper 6. The following areas were noted:

* Scottish Government Budget 2024-25 – Court noted the Scottish Government had present the draft budget on 19 December and it was unclear at this stage how £28.5m reduction in resource funding would be implemented;
* REF 2029 – Court noted that the next REF submission had been delayed by a year to 2029. It was also noted that the REF Steering Group had announced an update on the development of approaches to the assessment of People, Culture and Environment (PCE), in response to feedback received from the sector on this component of REF;
* SMG Appointments – Court noted that Professor Dame Muffy Calder, Vice Principal and Head of the College of Science and Engineering, had been reappointed for a second five-year term from 1 January 2020. Her term of office was therefore due to end on 31 December 2024, and the University had initiated a global search for her successor with the help of recruitment consultants. The Principal noted that he was consulting on some further reappointments to SMG which were due, and an update would be provided to Court members between meetings.

The Convener thanked the Principal for the update.

**CRT/2023/30. Report from the University Secretary**

Court noted the report from the University Secretary – Paper 7. The following areas were discussed in further detail.

*CRT/2023/30.1 University Gardens – Sit In*

Court noted that on the 22 January 2024 a group of students from Glasgow Against Arms and Fossil Fuels (GAAFF) had started a sit in at 11 University Gardens. Classes and meetings scheduled for that building had been diverted during the sit-in. Court noted that the students had now vacated the building following discussions with the University Secretary. It was reported that the University had received a petition from the group which outlined a number of demands. As noted in Paper 9.1 – Finance Committee Report – the petition had been discussed and it was agreed that a working group would be established to review the petition with a final report and recommendations due to be put to Court in June 2024.

Court had been sent the demands emailed recently by GAAFF – these were read out by the Secretary. It was also noted that JCCN would also meet with the GAAFF to discuss the issues raised.

*CRT/2023/30.2 Court Effectiveness Review – Autumn 2023*

Court noted the Court Effectiveness Review final report. As noted in the report it was evident that the Court of the University of Glasgow was well run and that the University as a whole was well governed. The Court continually reviewed and reflected on its activities and had implemented numerous improvements over the years; these had enhanced the working of Court and had served to ensure that Court members could input meaningfully into the governance and oversight of the University. Current governance arrangements exhibit many strengths which represent best practice across the sector. Even so, there were always opportunities to enhance provision still further – the report suggested that this would be achieved through a leaner, more agile committee structure.

Following discussion it was agreed that the Working Group would draft action plans for each of the recommendations with a view to seeking Court’s agreement at the next meeting for implementation.

*CRT/2023/30.3 Search Committee*

SMG members left the meeting for this item.

Court noted the Search Committee proposal and agreed that a staff member would be included in the long listing panel.

Court approved the Search Committee paper following minor amendment.

SMG members returned to the meeting.

*CRT/2023/30.4 Rector’s Election*

The Rector left the meeting for this item.

Court noted that 4 nominations had been received for the Rectorial Election – Dr Ghassan S. Abu-Sittah, Susan McCabe, The Hon Lady Rita Rae and Paul Sweeney MSP. It was also noted that complaints had been received about two candidates. Following the complaints the candidates had been written to and formal responses had been received. It was noted that one of the responses would be made public.

It was noted that legal advice had been sought and that for future Rectorial Elections the rules and regulations would be reviewed in line with Ordinances and legislation relating to Charity Trustees.

The Rector returned to the meeting.

*CRT/2023/30.5 Organisational Change*

Court noted a proposal that had been put forward to change the name of the Health, Safety & Wellbeing team to University Safety & Resilience. The change in name better reflected the inclusion of Business Continuity within the service’s area of activity and the fact that wellbeing was now dealt with by Occupational Health.

Court approved the rebranding of Health, Safety & Wellbeing to University Safety & Resilience.

*CRT/2023/30.6 Court and Committee Membership*

Court noted that Professor Tara Brendle had begun her term on Court on 1 January 2024 as Elected Academic Member of Staff for four years.

Court also noted that following approval by Court Stephen Good and Jim McIntyre had recently join the Estates Committee as External Lay members for four years from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2027.

*CRT/2023/30.7 Honorary Fellowship*

Court approved an Honorary Fellowship for Alan Seabourne.

*CRT/2023/30.8 The Stevenson Trust*

Court noted the proposal to seek permission to make changes both to the conditions under which the Fund revenue may be spent, and to the governance arrangements, to ensure that the original purposes of the Fund would be better achieved. This required firstly the consent of the University Court (as trustees of the Fund) and, secondly, a successful application for change of use of a restricted fund to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). It was noted that the College of Social Sciences and School Social & Political Sciences were supportive of the proposed changes and were involved in the discussions.

Court approved the application for change of use of a restricted fund to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).

**CRT/2023/31. Student Matters, including: SEC Report; SRC President update**

*CRT/2023/31.1. Rector update*

Court noted Paper 8a – Rector’s report which provided an update on the issues that the Rector had been dealing with since the last Court meeting.

*CRT/2023/31.2. SRC update*

The SRC President reported that the Advice Centre continued to see a rise in the number of students seeking support for appeals or conduct issues, particularly from international students. This had led to an increase in the resource required to support this activity. It was also noted that elections were due to take place in March.

*CRT/2023/31.3. Student Experience Committee*

Court was informed that the Student Experience Committee had met recently and noted that there had been discussions in relation to annual PGR update, Cost of living and the Student Experience strategy.

The Convener thanked the Rector and the SRC President for their reports.

**CRT/2023/32. Reports of Court Committees**

*CRT/2023/32.1 Finance Committee*

Gavin Stewart, chair of the Committee, outlined the report from the meeting of the Committee which included an update on the Keystone Workshop, a petition from Glasgow Against Arms and Fossil Fuels (GAAFF). Court noted that some of these matters raised by GAAFF had previously been considered by a sub group set up by the University Court in 2019/20. The Committee had agreed that a Working Group would be established to review the petition, with a final report and recommendations being put to Court in June 2024.

Court also noted that work continued to finalise the Revolving Credit Facility (RCF) with contracts drafted and agreed with the banks. Court had previously agreed to the RCF (November 2020 & June 2023) and it was noted that RBS extended the RCF to 7 years and that pricing remained competitive. Gregor Caldow provided an update to the Court in relation to the proposed revolving credit facility agreements. Court approved the RCF agreements as outlined in the papers.

The report was noted.

*CRT/2023/32.2 Estates Committee*

Stuart Hoggan, chair of the Committee, outlined the report from the Committee which provided an update on the continued issues with the implementation of the reactive and planned maintenance contract, a further report on progress on the Keystone development and an update presentation on the Spatial Masterplan.

The report was noted.

*CRT/2023/32.3 Audit & Risk Committee*

Elspeth Orcharton, chair of the Committee, outlined the report from the Committee. The Committee had received the USGAAP financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2023 – these had been approved by the Finance Committee on Wednesday 24 January 2024. Court noted that the Committee approved the USGAAP financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2023.

The report was noted.

*CRT/2023/32.4 IPSC*

Frank Coton, chair of the Committee reported that that the Committee had covered several topics including cyber security, an update on the Investment Plan, a presentation on strategic alignment, and a review of the programme/project reports. IPSC had also noted that a simulation of the University’s incident response plan took place on 5th December 2023. The simulation included members of the Cyber Security Working Group and other subject experts/interested partings including senior leadership. Cyber Security colleagues will collaborate with the business continuity team on an upcoming exercise planned for March 2024.

It was also noted that IPSC had discussed changes to the Investment Plan. The November IP position was £670m (to 35/36) and the January IP forecast was £691m (to 37/38), an increase of £21m. The increase was mainly due to three factors: Agresso support/migration costs, support for the timetabling system, cost of portfolio tool.

The report was noted.

*CRT/2023/32.5 Nominations Committee*

Nicola Dandridge, chair of the Committee, outlined the report from the Committee, highlighting that the Committee was responsible for the appointment of the Convener of Court, Co-opted Members of Court and Committee members. Court also noted the detailed the process for the recruitment and appointment process for External Committee members and Co-opted members of Court.

Court noted that the Committee had reviewed the Terms of Reference (ToR) and Court approved the amended ToR for the Nominations Committee.

The report was noted.

*CRT/2023/32.6 Health Safety and Wellbeing Committee*

Court noted the report and no substantive items were raised.

**CRT/2023/33. Senate Matters**

Court noted the report from the Senate meeting held on the 12 December 2023 and 1 February 2024. The Clerk of Senate outlined the key areas which included an update on REF 2028, University Sustainability Strategy, Student Experience Strategy, Library Report 2022-23, Senate Effectiveness Review, Estates Strategy, Research Strategy and Colleague Engagement Survey.

The Convener of Court thanked the Clerk of Senate for the update.

**CRT/2023/34. Complaints Handling Procedure Annual Report 2022-23**

Court noted the Paper 11 – Complaints Handling Procedure Annual Report 2022-23 which covers dissatisfaction about service delivery. It was noted that 2022-23 was impacted by the accommodation crisis and related admissions decisions, continuation of Industrial action and the addition of a Marking and Assessment boycott (MAB) to previous strike activity (which resulted in class cancellations).

A continuing theme which had also been apparent in previous years was cases regarding the PGR student experience. The issues tend to relate to supervisory arrangements and range from academic suitability to supervise the project, to accusations of bullying and harassment. Overall, communication continues to be a key issue raised by complainant; this includes lack of, unclear or incorrect communication as well as communication mode or tone.

Court noted the report and suggested that the report should be shared more widely with Committees of Court to see if any wider lessons could be learned from the data.

**CRT/2023/35. Any Other Business**

*CRT/2023/35.1 Court members*

Court noted that Lady Rita Rae’s current term of office as Rector was due to end on 31 March 2024. Lady Rae had been on Court since April 2021 as the Rector and during that time had been on the Student Experience Committee.

Court recorded its thanks to Lady Rita Rae for her contribution and dedication to the University as the Rector over the last 3 years.

**CRT/2023/36. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of Court will be held on Wednesday 17 April 2024 at 2pm. A Pre-Court briefing will take place at 12pm.