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**Court**

**Minute of Meeting held on Wednesday 20 November 2024 held in the Senate Room**

**Present:**

Gavin Stewart Co-opted Member (Elected Convener of Court), Professor Sarah Armstrong (Elected Academic Staff Member), Professor Tara Brendle (Elected Academic Staff Member), Mary Jane Brouwers (Co-opted Member), Duncan Calvert (SRC Assessor), Professor Nicola Dandridge (Co-opted Member), Kerry Christie (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), Laic Khalique (Co-opted Member), Jonathan Loukes (Co-opted Member), Lorriane McMillan (Co-opted Member),Dr Christine Middlemiss (General Council Assessor), Pablo Moran Ruiz (SRC President), Professor Sir Anton Muscatelli (Principal), Professor Richard Reeve (Trade Union Nominee), Professor Bethan Wood (Elected Academic Staff Member).

**Attending:**

Gregor Caldow (Executive Director of Finance), Professor Frank Coton (Senior Vice Principal and Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)), Dr David Duncan (Chief Operating Officer & University Secretary), Amber Higgins (Head of Court Office and Clerk to Court), Martin Sinclair (Chair of Audit and risk Committee), Professor Moira Fischbacher-Smith (For item – CRT/2024/19 Only).

**Apologies:**

Dr Ghassan Abu-Sittah (Rector), Cllr Susan Aitken (Glasgow City Council Assessor), Paula McKerrow (Trade Union Nominee), Shan Saba (Co-opted Member).

**CRT/2024/15. Announcements and declaration of Interests**

The Convener welcomed Mary Jane Brouwers (Co-opted Member), Lorriane McMillan (Co-opted Member) and Duncan Calvert (SRC Assessor) to their first full meeting as new Court members.

There was the following declaration of interest in relation to business to be conducted at the meeting: Dr David Duncan as a member of the UCEA - National Negotiating Team.

A pre-Court briefing took place on the National Student Survey Results and Court’s thanks for the briefing were recorded.

Court was reminded that papers and business were confidential.

**CRT/2024/16. Minutes of the meetings held on Wednesday 25 September 2024**

The minutes were approved for the meeting of 25 September 2024 following minor amendments.

**CRT/2024/17. Matters Arising**

No substantive items were raised.

**CRT/2024/18. Socially Responsible Investment Policy**

Court received a presentation by Gregor Caldow, Executive Director of Finance and David Duncan, University Secretary on the proposed revised policy which strengthened the University’s commitment to socially responsible investment, placing additional requirements on the external fund managers who look after University’s investments. The proposed policy did not recommend automatic divestment from defence companies. Court was advised this was the unanimous position of SMG, based on the moral position of supporting the UK defence sector and secondly in recognition of the University’s ongoing research relationship with a range of firms active in this area. The policy also defined the process by which groups or individuals could make representations to the University about its policy. The results from the consultation exercise with staff and students were presented to Court with a clear majority of staff and students who responded to the consultation exercise supporting divestment. Court noted that the response rate for the consultation had been around 5% of staff and students.

Court was reminded that over the past year student groups and campus trade unions had made representations, arguing that the University’s endowment fund should disinvest completely in companies that earned more than 10% of their income from the defence sector. Court also noted that the SRC had been campaigning on divestment from the defence sector for a significant number of years, and that it had also been the position of UCU for a number of years. The SRC President restated the strong view of the SRC Council that the University should disinvest in the defence sector.

Concerns were raised about the short timelines for the consultation responses and also the extent to which it had been promoted to staff and students. In response, Court was informed that a number of meetings had taken place with the Heads of Schools, campus unions and student groups to highlight the consultation process along with it being included in the Internal Newsletter and posted as the top news item on the staff internal landing page. Even so, Court agreed that lessons would be learned from the consultation process, and these would be taken on board for any future consultation exercises.

During the discussion it was noted that a number of Court members felt conflicted – they were distressed about the ongoing conflict in the Middle East but supported Ukraine’s right to defend itself and also acknowledged the importance of the UK defence sector as well as the university’s ongoing research links with companies active in this sector. After lengthy discussion the majority of Court accepted the advice of senior managers that the University should not require fund managers to disinvest. Court voted 14-7 against the inclusion of the restriction, with 4 members not present at the meeting.

Court strongly endorsed the University’s humanitarian efforts to support those affected by conflict, particularly the ongoing wars in the Middle East and Ukraine.

Court agreed to endorse the SRI Policy subject to minor amendments to Section 6 -Representation. The Convener of Court confirmed that the proposed changes would be circulated to Court by email prior to the next meeting, either for proposed approval then or, if substantive changes were proposed, the policy would come back to the next Court meeting for discussion.

**CRT/2024/19. Learning and Teaching Strategy Update**

Court received a presentation by Professor Moira Fischbacher-Smith (Vice Principal - Learning and Teaching) on Learning and Teaching Strategy implementation. The presentation provided an update on: the enabling of Learning and Teaching Strategy; strategic benefits and outcomes; project groups and activity; and internal barriers and dependencies.

During discussion Court noted the establishment of the new L&T Strategy Unit which would support further development and implementation of the strategy. It was also reported that there were a number of internal barriers and dependencies which would require different areas to work together to progress the strategy and this meant there were risks to some projects being completed on time. Court noted that assessment and feedback continued to be an area of focus with changes to curriculum design and assessment methods often taking a number of years to complete due to the length of degree programmes. Employability skills were also becoming more prominent in the strategy and a new survey had been launched that would be completed on an annual basis.

Court welcomed the progress made to date. It was noted that the student experience was a key priority for the University and it was important that students were supported during their time at University and were not overloaded as they often had competing demands on their time.

Members of Court were keen to support the L&T Strategy and it was agreed the Professor Fischbacher-Smith would identify ways in which they could engage further and details would be circulated after the Court meeting.

Court thanked Professor Fischbacher-Smith for the update.

**CRT/2024/20. Finance Committee**

*CRT/2024/20.1 Financial Statements 2023/24*

Court having received the statements, the Executive Director of Finance, Gregor Caldow, gave a presentation on the University’s financial statements for the year to 31 July 2024. The presentation highlighted the strong financial performance and growth during the year, with a underlying surplus of £28.7m pre the movement in the USS Pension Scheme. The significant movement in the USS pension scheme this year had led to a surplus after tax reported as £323.6m.

Court noted the main year-on-year movements which included: decreased income in tuition fees of £15.6m; an increase in Investment Income of £17.2m mainly due to an increase in bank interest; an increase in other income of £8.3m mainly due to residences and hospitality; and an increase in staff costs of £32.7m with staff numbers rising by 5.7% and salary increases.

During the discussion it was noted that a number of changes had been suggested to the report by the Audit and Risk Committee and the Finance Committee in relation to giving greater prominence to staff and students along with teaching in the main activities section of the report; these had been incorporated. Court noted a number of minor modifications to be made to the final Accounts in relation to the text.

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee reported that the External Auditors, PWC were expected to issue an unqualified audit opinion and that the Audit and Risk Committee had recommended the Financial Accounts for approval. Court noted that there were no material points of disagreement with management but there were a number of areas of judgement. The Chair of Finance Committee reported that Finance Committee also recommended the Financial Accounts for approval.

During the discussion Court noted that improved governance arrangements would provide oversight to Court in relation to the 2030 Net Zero and a roadmap to reaching Net Zero would be included in future versions of the Financial Accounts. Court agreed that it was important to ensure that all campuses were reflected in the images used.

Court approved the Financial statements for 2023/24 of the University of Glasgow.

*CRT/2024/20.2 Finance Committee*

Court noted that the Committee had discussed the recent impact of the UK Government’s recent changes in National Insurance which would cost the University c£9m per annum. The Committee would review the implications to future budgets.

A query was raised about the free-cash position projections until 2035 and if they could be updated to include the potential changes to the pay spinal points. A further query was also raised about the optimal size of the University in relation to retaining 42 Bute Gardens and if any decision had been reached on the size and shape of the University. Court agreed that the Finance Committee would give further consideration to both points.

**CRT/2024/21. Report from the Principal**

*CRT/2024/21.1 Principal’s Report*

Court noted the report from the Principal with the key areas being:

* Changes to tuition fees in England – The UK Government had announced that, from 2025/26, the maximum tuition fee for full-time undergraduate courses in England would increase from £9,250 to £9,535 per year.
* UK Budget 2025/26 – the budget included a focus on revitalising key sectors, supporting public services and driving long-term economic stability, with real term increases in public R&D funding and pledges significant resources for infrastructure projects.
* University Rankings – The Times Higher Education (THE) had published the World University Rankings 2025 results on 9 October, with Glasgow placed 87th out of 2,092 institutions, with no movement in the University’s position from 2024.

**CRT/2024/22. Report from the University Secretary**

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

*CRT/2024/22.1 SFC* Self-Evaluation for 2023/24

Court received the University's proposed Self Evaluation report to SFC for the Self Evaluation for 2023/24. This was an overview of work undertaken across the academic year, as outlined in the University’s SFC Outcome Agreement.

Court approved the SFC Self-Evaluation for 2023/24.

*CRT/2024/22.2 SFC - Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP)*

Court noted that the University was due to submit its first Learning and Teaching Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP) to SFC as part of the new Outcomes Framework and Assurance Model (OF&AM) by 2 December 2024. Court noted that the report would be shared with Court members via email for approval prior to submission to the SFC.

*CRT/2024/22.3 Court Effectiveness Review – Autumn 2023*

Court noted that the Court Governance Working Review (CGWR) had agreed that the Committee changes for Estates and Sustainability Committee and People and Organisation Development Committee would come forward to Court meeting for formal approval following discussion by the Group.

Court approved the revised Terms of Reference for the People and Organisational Development Committee and the Estates and Sustainability Committee, noting that the CGWR would approve any further minor amendments on behalf of Court.

*CRT/2024/22.4 Senate Effectiveness Review*

Court noted the Senate Effectiveness Review Report. It was agreed that the CGWR would work with Academic Policy and Governance Office to take forward the relevant recommendations.

*CRT/2024/22.5 Organisational Change Governance Committee – SPHU Review*

Court noted that the Terms of Reference for the Review had been agreed and Professor Jill Morrison, previously Clerk of Senate, had been appointed to carry out the review with a report due in December 2024.

A query was raised about the number of statisticians involved as it was felt that there should be two independent statisticians contributing to the review. The University Secretary agreed to take this forward.

*CRT/2024/22.6 Resolution - Named Chair – Sir Alexander Stone Chair in Commercial Law*

Court approved Resolution 713 - Named Chair – Sir Alexander Stone Chair in Commercial Law.

*CRT/2024/22.7 Scottish Universities Press*

Court noted that the Scottish Universities Press (SUP) had been established by the Scottish Confederation of University and Research Libraries (SCURL). SUP was a fully open access publishing press, managed by SCURL libraries on a not-for-profit basis. Like SCURL itself, SUP was a collaborative initiative committed to advancing open access publishing and making high-quality scholarly research available to a global audience. Scottish Universities Press had now been established as a Community Interest Company (CIC).

Court approved that the University Library become a full member of Scottish Universities Press as referenced in the Articles of Association.

*CRT/2024/22.8 Honorary Fellowships*

Court noted that the Honorary Fellowships for the Gateway Review Team had been approved via email.

*CRT/2024/22.9 Head of School Appointments*

Court noted the following changes, and congratulated the individuals on their new roles:

College of Science and Engineering

*Head of the James Watt School of Engineering*

Professor Muhammad Imran had been appointed as the Head of the School from 1 January 2025 for 4 years.

*CRT/2024/22.10 UKVI*

Court noted the following a visit in June 2024 by UKVI, they were now requiring the University to implement an action plan to address “a series of minor breaches” in the data held on international students. This matter was being treated as a top priority by SMG given the fact that UKVI regulated the recruitment of international students. It was noted that Court would be kept informed as work on the action plan progressed.

**CRT/2024/23. Student Matters, including: SEC Report; SRC President update**

*CRT/2024/23.1 Rector update*

Court noted the Rector’s apologies, and no substantive matters were raised.

*CRT/2024/23.2 SRC update*

The SRC President reported that Clubs and Societies continued to grow and that the SRC has also seen a significant increase in student engagement particularly in voting and in visits to the SRC website. Concerns however were raised by the SRC President in relation to issues and difficulties faced by clubs and societies regarding the lack of space provided for student led activities and events on campus which was impacting on the student experience. It was also noted that SRC Advice Centre had seen a large increase in students requesting support which was leading to an increase in response times. The SRC President also reported that they were working with the University on improving the support provided for students with a disability.

*CRT/2024/23.3 Student Experience Committee*

Court noted the Student Experience Committee report from 27 September 2024 which included updates on: Student numbers 2024-25; Financial Support Fund; Student Bodies updates; Sports Strategy and Planning Gorup; and the Student Wellbeing Framework Review.

The Convener thanked the SRC President for his report.

**CRT/2024/24. Reports of Court Committees**

*CRT/2024/24.1 Estates Committee*

Court noted the report from the Estates Committee.

*CRT/2024/24.2 Audit & Risk Committee*

Martin Sinclair, chair of the Committee, reported that the Committee had received the University's financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2024. The Committee heard that on the basis of the work performed, the external auditors anticipated issuing unqualified audit opinions on the Group and University’s financial statements, and on the University’s subsidiary financial statements.

Court also noted the Annual Report to Court and the Annual Statement on Compliance with the Concordat to support Research Integrity 2024.

During discussion it was noted that a wider review of Cyber Security would take place for servers that were the responsibility of Schools and Colleges, rather than University Services, following the recent internal audit recommendations. Court also noted that the Audit and Risk Committee was undertaking a review of regulatory and statutory bodies involved with the University so that Court could be provided with further assurance.

*CRT/2024/24.3 Information Policy and Strategy Committee*

Court noted the report from the Information Policy and Strategy Committee.

*CRT/2024/24.4 People and Organisational Development Committee*

Court noted the report from the People and Organisational Development Committee.

It was noted that draft minutes from the Committee would be reviewed to ensure that they better reflected the discussion at the committee meeting in relation to talent management/succession planning.

*CRT/2024/24.5 Health Safety and Wellbeing Committee*

Court noted the report from the Health Safety and Wellbeing Committee. A query was raised in relation to the consultation that had been undertaken with the Unions and the restructuring of health and safety representation. It was noted that unions should be involved at the concept stage of proposed restructuring exercises. It was agreed that the University Secretary would take this forward.

**CRT/2024/25. Senate Matters**

Court noted the report from the Senate meeting held on the 3 October 2024.

**CRT/2024/26. Any Other Business**

No substantive matters were raised.

**CRT/2024/27. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of Court would be held on Wednesday 19 February 2025 at 1.45pm. A Pre-Court briefing would take place at 12pm.