

University of Glasgow

University Court – Wednesday 11 October 2017

Communications to Court from the meeting of Senate held on 05 October 2017

Dr Jack Aitken, Director, Senate Office

(All matters are for noting)

1. National Student Survey

Ms Kirsty Scanlon, Deputy Director Planning and Performance, presented the results of the National Student Survey (NSS) 2017. It was reported that the survey had been running for ten years and that there had been a review of the questions used leading to some significant changes, including new questions regarding learning opportunities. One of the sections where the University of Glasgow had previously performed well had – Personal development had become an optional question set, rather than part of the core questions.

In terms of overall satisfaction, 88.7% of respondents indicated that they were satisfied overall, which meant that the University of Glasgow had performed above the sector, but below its own KPI of 90% satisfaction. The Colleges of Arts and MVLS had performed well, with overall satisfaction of 91%.

The University continued to perform poorly in the questions related to assessment and feedback – whereas, in terms of overall satisfaction the University was 17th out of 119, in terms of assessment and feedback it was 102nd. It was recognised that difficulties in this area tended to be encountered across the sector.

Due to the inclusion of NSS results in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), which meant that institutions in England that performed well in the NSS and TEF would be permitted to increase their fees, the National Union of Students had encouraged a boycott of the NSS. This had been successful in twelve institutions, including eight from the Russell Group, where the completion rate was less than 50%, meaning that results were not publishable.

It was recognised that the NSS results were also instrumental in league tables, although it was not clear how the new data in the revised NSS questionnaire would be used, nor how the missing institutions would be dealt with.

Professor Coton, Vice Principal Academic & Educational Innovation, demonstrated Qlickview, which allowed interrogation of the data against comparators. Members were encouraged to explore the data at subject level.

Professor Coton highlighted that there were respondents who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, particularly in relation to assessment and feedback and suggested that this in part could be addressed by clarifying students' expectations and understanding of what constituted feedback.

2. Statement on the Use of Quantitative Indicators in the Assessment of Research Quality

Professor Miles Padgett, Vice Principal for Research, reported that there has been extensive

debate in the HEI sector about the appropriate use of quantitative indicators, specifically to assess and manage research. The discussions had led to recommendations for the responsible use of metrics as published in independent reports such as The Metric Tide (2015; commissioned by HEFCE), and in international statements such as the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (2012; DORA) and the Leiden Manifesto for Research Metrics (2015).

The University subscribed fully to applying the principles of responsible metrics and these principles were consciously adopted in the formulation of the Institutional KPI for Output Quality approved by SMG in May 2016.

Professor Padgett reported that assessment tools were key to monitoring progress towards the goals in the University's 2015–2020 strategy; however, it was essential that the tools were used in the appropriate manner, and that they were applied fairly and transparently. It was accepted that there was some anxiety amongst the academic community; however, the use of quantitative indicators was inevitable and metrics made a significant contribution to various international league tables. In order to present a clear and consistent policy around the use of quantitative indicators to the academic community — and to allay any concerns that the community had in this regard — a statement explaining how the University uses metrics to assess research activity in its different dimensions was proposed. This approach follows the recent example of other UK universities.

There was discussion about the potential for gender bias in the use of quantitative metrics. Professor Padgett reported that recruitment figures indicated that in terms of recruitment females were more likely to be successful with appointments at grades 7, 8 and 9. However, this was not the case for professorial appointments. However, the Convenor highlighted that it was difficult to draw causal links. Members of Council of Senate identified other areas of bias, including females being a third as likely to be invited as a keynote speaker as males and citation bias towards papers by men. It was acknowledged that careful monitoring of bias was required and the Convenor asked that any further information be passed on to the Equality and Diversity Unit, to ensure that monitoring was undertaken.

Council of Senate approved the proposed statement.

3. REF update

The information in the papers accompanying this item is confidential information of the University of Glasgow. The information must not be released in response to any request without first seeking advice from the DP/FoI Office.

4. Education and Policy Strategy Committee: Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy

Professor Coton reminded the Council of Senate that, at its last meeting, the Council had requested an opportunity to review and comment on the Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy that had been approved by EdPSC on 3 May 2017. The Policy had been circulated to Council of Senate for comment over the summer and had been amended in accordance with comments received. The Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy had been developed by a working group established by EdPSC in response to its consideration of changes in legislation, which included the expectation that higher levels of support would be provided as

a matter of routine. The matter had been referred to EdPSC by the Disability Equality Group. The working group had consulted widely across the academic community and student support services and had discussed earlier drafts with Learning and Teaching Committee. The main principle of the Policy was that the learning environment should be as inclusive as possible so that individual interventions would be the exception. The Policy was supported by links to a range of guidelines on the impacted areas of academic activity, such as course design. Council of Senate endorsed the policy.

5. Appointment of Clerk of Senate

Dr Jack Aitken, Director of Senate Office, reported that, as Professor Briggs was scheduled to demit office as Clerk of Senate on 31 July 2018, the selection procedure called for activity to commence in order to identify his successor.

Dr Aitken outlined the procedure, which would firstly involve the establishment of a finding committee to make recommendations on the appointment. The committee's first task was to review and update the role description, in this seeking advice as it wished. The role would then be advertised and nominations sought, with self-nomination permitted. The committee may consult as it wished on other potential appointees and may interview possible candidates. Having considered the nominations, the committee would submit its recommendations to the Council of Senate on who would be the best candidate or candidates for the position. In the event that more than one nominee is identified, a ballot would be held.

While any member of Senate may be nominated, the nature and seniority of the role meant the appointee was likely to be a senior member of staff with extensive experience of academic management and affairs.

Council of Senate was reminded that the period of office for the Clerk was four years; in exceptional circumstances, this may be extended by one or two years.

Membership of the Finding Committee was set out including two elected members of Senate and Council of Senate was content with the proposal that these should be drawn from the Professorial elected membership of the Council of Senate Business Committee.

The timetable for the process was set out with the appointment anticipated to have been made by the April meeting of Council of Senate to allow shadowing of the current Clerk of Senate during the ceremonial period.

6. Convenor's Business

6.1 Fee regime in England

The Principal reported that Parliament had frozen fees at £9250 and had changed the threshold for repayment. He highlighted that any change to the fee regime in England would impact on Scottish institutions. It was noted that there had been a proposal to reduce the cap and that, had that been introduced, it would have had a significant negative impact on income for a number of institutions. It was reported that a shift away from private funding would require the Government support to ensure the sustainability of the sector. The Principal also reported that consideration of value for money on the basis of teaching only was dangerous, particularly for the Russell Group.

6.2 TEF

There was discussion about the implications of the freezing of fees for the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). It was anticipated that TEF would continue, despite the decision to freeze fees. It was seen as a regulatory mechanism to measure quality; however, it was not yet known what final form it would take. To date, TEF had involved

assessment of institutions' performance at institutional level. There was concern within the sector that the proposal to replace this with subject level assessment would constitute a disproportionately resource-intensive exercise. Professor Coton reported that piloting of two possible models for subject-level assessment were due to commence shortly and that volunteer institutions and assessors were being sought.

6.3 Brexit

The Principal reported that he had been making representations and pressing for clarity on EU staff and student status and conditions post-Brexit. It was noted that open meetings had been held for staff, although not recently, as there was little new information to share. Seminars had also been held for those requiring legal advice and individual support. The Principal was keen to hear from members of the Council of Senate whether it was felt that more could be done to support staff at this stage.

7. Clerk of Senate's Business

7.1 Senate Guest Night Dinner

The next Senate Guest Night would be held on Thursday, 12 November 2017 at 7.00 for 7.30pm in the Senate Room. The guest speaker on this occasion would be John Beattie. BBC presenter and former Scotland and British Lions rugby international.

Members of Senate and Court were also encouraged to contact the Clerk of Senate with suggestions for speakers at subsequent Senate Guest Nights.

7.2 Remembrance Sunday

Remembrance Sunday falls on 12 November 2017. This year, the Service of Remembrance would be held in the Bute Hall at 10.45am.

Members of Senate who wish to join the academic procession are requested to assemble in the Hunterian Museum by 10.30am (dress: academic gown, hood and dark tie). Members wishing to attend are asked to advise Pete Murphy, ext 3292, e-mail: pete.murphy@glasgow.ac.uk by 12 noon on Monday 6 November.

7.3 Honorary Degrees 2018

Senate received the oral report from the Honorary Degrees Committee concerning recommendations for the conferment of honorary Degrees in 2018. The Clerk of Senate would provide a report to Court at its meeting on 11 October 2017.

8. Communication from Meeting of Court 21 June 2017.

8.1 Principal's Contract of Employment

Dr David Duncan, Chief Operating Officer and University Secretary, highlighted from the report of Court that Court had approved the recommendation of the Court group, convened to consider whether the Principal should be offered an extension to his current contract of

employment. The recommendation was a five-year extension to his contract of employment as Principal and Vice Chancellor of the University, to run until 30 September 2024.

Court had also approved the proposed salary increase on the terms recommended by the Remuneration Committee.