

University of Glasgow

University Court – Wednesday 20 June 2018

Communications to Court from the meeting of Council of Senate held on 19 April 2018

(All matters are for noting)

1. Industrial Action: Implications for Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Professor John Briggs (Clerk of Senate and Vice-Principal) reported that four advice documents on academic issues regarding the recent industrial action had been circulated to all Schools and Research Institutes. It was noted that there were four basic principles underlying the advice:

- Ensure that all students are treated fairly.
- Ensure that no student is disadvantaged by any amended arrangements.
- Ensure that students are not assessed on any subject area for which they have not been adequately prepared.
- Ensure that academic standards are maintained.

In regard to academic standards, the Clerk of Senate reported that the majority of External Examiners who had initially resigned during the industrial action had now returned to their positions. The Clerk of Senate also reported that the vast majority of examination papers had been commented on by External Examiners and that under the University's regulations External Examiners were not required formally to approve papers.

In regard to incomplete assessment, the Clerk of Senate advised that any missing marks due to the industrial action may be discounted in the calculation of assessment, subject to the relevant Board of Examiners being advised on any assessments which have been set aside. If there are any missing marks, the Board of Examiners must be satisfied that there remains sufficient evidence of performance, based on the marks which are available, to make a decision on any candidate.

In relation to Boards of Examiners, the Clerk of Senate reported that the final decision on awards remained the responsibility of the appropriate Board of Examiners. All decisions made by the Board must be carefully minuted, particularly with regard to agreement on academic decisions. Council of Senate was reminded that the quorum for a Board of Examiners consisted of: Head of School/Research Institute (or their nominee); the Assessment Officer; an Internal Examiner; an External Examiner. It was further reported that, if no External Examiner was present, then written confirmation of the discharge of functions of the External Examiner may

be considered as equivalent to attendance. Council of Senate was advised that any queries regarding Boards of Examiners should be directed to the Senate Office.

In discussion, it was asked whether the advice issued would also apply to the cancellation of classes due to the inclement weather during February and March 2018. The Clerk of Senate agreed that this option could be considered. In relation to the quorum of Boards of Examiners, clarification was sought on the requirements for staff appointed to the role of Internal Examiner. The Clerk of Senate clarified that any member of teaching staff apart from the Head of School/Research Institute could be appointed to this role. It was also asked whether an Assessment Officer would be permitted to nominate a substitute. The Clerk of Senate Confirmed that this was permitted.

2. Presentations on Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PTES/PRES) (reserved)

2.1 PTES

Mrs Kirsty Scanlan (Planning and Business Intelligence) informed Council of Senate that the PTES is a sector-wide, non-compulsory survey of taught postgraduate students organised by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) (now 'Advance HE'). The University of Glasgow had taken part in the Survey since 2010 and last participated in PTES in 2017, but was no longer a member of the HEA and so would not participate in 2018. However, it was noted that the University had the option to take part in the Survey on an ad hoc basis in the future. Mrs Scanlan reported that results from the Survey were not made publicly available and that a proposal was currently being considered for a new 'NSS type' survey which would include more benchmarking data from different institutions.

In regard to the 2017 PTES results, Mrs Scanlan reported that it was now possible to analyse the percentage of 'agree' and 'strongly agree' responses and that this would allow for greater consistency in reporting, easier comparisons for relevant questions, and the identification of best practice and common themes. However, it was noted that this work was ongoing and that granular breakdowns had not yet been completed by Planning and Business Intelligence. Mrs Scanlan reported that analysis of the data should be finalised and distributed to previous recipients of PTES data within the next three to four weeks.

Mrs Scanlan provided a summary of the analysis undertaken by Planning and Business Intelligence focusing on the variance between the University's NSS and PTES results, and comparisons between Glasgow's PTES results and the results for other benchmark groups.

Following Mrs Scanlan's presentation, it was asked whether it was possible to prevent programmes with large numbers of students from skewing the University's overall PTES results. Mrs Scanlan noted that large programmes had a disproportionate effect on the University's PTES results and that it was not possible

to prevent this. Concerns were raised about student perceptions regarding the timeliness of feedback. It was agreed that this could be improved by setting realistic expectations for the timing of feedback. It was also noted that the PTES was usually sent to students before all teaching and assessment had been completed. As a result, it was suggested that student responses to questions such as 'the course was intellectually stimulating' were likely to be unrepresentative and incomplete, and that students should instead be surveyed at the end of their course. Council of Senate agreed that the University should consult with other universities to investigate alternative survey models.

2.2 PRES

Mrs Mary Beth Kneafsey (Research and Innovation Services) provided Council of Senate with a summary of the University's results in the 2017 PRES, which ran from 26 February until 18 May. Mrs Kneafsey reported that 47% of the University's postgraduate research students had completed the survey and that the results had been shared with Graduate Schools and discussed by the Deans of Graduate Studies Committee (DOGS) in detail. Graduate School and School-level actions plans were also developed in response to the results.

Mrs Kneafsey informed Council of Senate that the University's scores fell slightly (1-3%) in most areas when compared against the 2015 results, with the largest dip relating to provision of postgraduate social space. Negative text comments from students focused on issues relating to responsiveness and communication, research culture and community, and resources. Nearly half of the positive comments submitted related to the high quality of supervision that students received. Analysis of student responses provided by Advance HE breaks the results into a number of 'key areas' including:

- Supervision
- Resources
- Research culture
- Progression, Assessment and Understanding of Roles and Responsibilities
- Research Skills and Professional Development

In regard to supervision, the biggest concerns for students were the lack of supervisor's time, lack of encouragement, and timely feedback. 'Resources' was the 'key area' where the University received its lowest level of overall satisfaction, with the poorest responses originating from part-time and distance learning students. Student satisfaction relating to 'understanding progress requirements and processes' was high, and in line with other Russell Group universities. However, satisfaction with the University's response to feedback had fallen slightly since 2015, with Non-EU students and students who were part of a Doctoral Training Programme, Doctoral Training Centre, or Centre for Doctoral Training, generally more satisfied

than other students. The least satisfied students were those who declared themselves to have a disability. Student responses in the key area of 'research skills and professional development' had fallen slightly since 2015. Student satisfaction was highest for international students and students who were beyond the first year of their programme. Where courses were criticised, it was often due to students requiring a more in-depth or less general course in specific areas.

Mrs Kneafsey informed Council of Senate that the full survey results could be found in Qlikview under 'PRES Analytics' and on the University's PRES Webpage: <https://www.gla.ac.uk/research/ourresearchenvironment/prs/experience/pres2017/#/pres2017results>.

The Principal noted that the shortage of social spaces highlighted by students in the PTES would be alleviated by the current campus expansion. In particular, it was noted that the University's new Research Hub would contain large amounts of postgraduate study and social space. In discussion, it was asked whether there was any correlation between student satisfaction and the length of research programme that students were enrolled on. Mrs Kneafsey noted that Research and Innovation Services had undertaken some informal research on this and it was found that students' perceptions of their postgraduate programme usually improved as time went on.

3. Student Support and Development Committee: Report from the meeting held on 11 April 2018

Council of Senate received a report from the Student Support and Development Committee (SSDC) meeting held on 11 April 2018.

The Clerk of Senate reminded the Council of Senate that, at its meeting on 1 February 2018, it had approved a recommendation to dissolve SSDC in light of the establishment of the new Student Experience Committee, the remit of which would embrace the objectives of SSDC. The date for the dissolution of SSDC had been set as the end of the academic year. However, the Student Experience Committee had already been set up and had held its first meeting on 16 April. At its meeting on 11 April 2018, SSDC had agreed to propose to the Council of Senate that the Committee should be dissolved forthwith. The Clerk of Senate gave thanks to SSDC members, both past and present, for their contribution to the business of the Committee. Council of Senate approved the proposal to dissolve SSDC with immediate effect.

Council of Senate also noted the following items from the Committee's report:

- Personal Relationships Policy
- Report of CASC meeting held on 13 February 2018.

4. Research Planning and Strategy Committee: Report from the meeting held on 22 March 2018

Council of Senate received a report from the Research Planning and Strategy Committee (RPSC) meeting held on 22 March 2018 from Professor Jonathan Cooper (Vice-Principal, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange).

Council of Senate particularly noted the following items from the Committee's report:

- Collaborative Proposal with Kyoto University
- Proposal for Terms for a Doctor of Engineering Degree
- Open Access Visibility in the PDR Process
- Report on the RCUK Open Access Fund
- GCRF Strategy for SFC
- EU funding Statistics
- KTP Activity
- Business from the Deans of Graduate Studies Committee

In relation to the Global Challenge Research Fund (GCRF) strategy for the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), Professor Cooper informed Council of Senate that the University had recently submitted its strategy outlining the proposed use of GCRF funds to the SFC. It was also noted that the University had been successful in obtaining GCRF funding from the SFC in the past and had recently been awarded £3 million.

The Council of Senate approved the report from the 22 March 2018 meeting of RPSC.

5. Education Policy and Strategy Committee: Report from meeting held on 14 March 2018

Council of Senate received a report from the Education Policy and Strategy Committee (EdPSC) meeting held on 14 March 2018.

Council of Senate particularly noted the following items from the Committee's report:

- Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) consultation: Proposed Regulatory Changes – Session 2017-18
- Disability Equality Group: Discussion of Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy
- Proposal for Collaborative Provision – Dual Degree in the area of International Law and Politics of Global Security
- Proposals for Collaborative Provision (Erasmus Mundus Applications)
- Transformation Project on Assessment and Feedback

- Update on Good Honours
- Academic Standards Committee: Report of meeting held on 26 January 2018

The following item was included for information:

- Mapping Learning and Teaching Activity

The Council of Senate approved the report from the 14 March 2018 meeting of EdPSC.

6. Convener's Business

6.1 USS Pension Reform

The Principal reported that University and College Union (UCU) members had voted to accept a proposal from Universities UK (UUK) to set up a joint expert panel to review the Universities Superannuation Scheme deficit. He also reported that UCU and UUK were eager to appoint a jointly agreed chair and develop the panel's terms of reference and order of work as soon as possible to ensure that the panel's work was concluded in advance of 1 April 2019 – the end-date of the current pension benefits guarantee. Furthermore, it was reported that discussions were underway regarding the panel's composition and that support would be required from the Pensions Regulator to ensure that statutory responsibilities were met.

6.2 Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Letter of Guidance

The Principal reported that the Scottish Government's Letter of Guidance to the Scottish Funding Council for 2018-19 had recently been released. He noted that the Letter was a directive document and that the Scottish Government had highlighted skills alignment as a priority to ensure that investment better reflected the needs of employers and the economy. Within this section of the Letter, specific reference was made to the digital skills gap and the role of Colleges and Universities in supporting the expansion, enhancement and diversification of apprenticeships, including Graduate Apprenticeships. The Principal reported that widening access to further and higher education for people from the widest range of backgrounds, particularly those living in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation SIMD20 areas, was another priority highlighted in the Letter. A further strategic priority was effective knowledge exchange and innovation between universities and industry. The Letter emphasised the need for SFC to work in partnership with enterprise agencies and for SFC to support universities in collaborations with businesses and other partners.

7. Clerk of Senate's Business

7.1 Proposed revision of the Graduation Prayer

Council of Senate received a proposal to revise the University's Graduation Prayer. The Clerk of Senate reported that the current Graduation Prayer had been used by the University for at least a century and that the proposed revision was intended to

reflect the more secular and multi-faith times that we now lived in. If agreed, the prayer would be translated into Latin and incorporated into the graduation ceremony from this year onwards.

Council of Senate noted that the tone of the revised prayer represented a significant shift from that of the current Graduation Prayer and would benefit from being more optimistic and positive. There was also agreement that the current Graduation Prayer originated from a particular point in intellectual history and required a degree of modernisation to reflect current times. It was also queried whether the revised Graduation Prayer needed to be translated into Latin. Reverend Stuart MacQuarrie (the author of the revised Prayer) informed Council of Senate that the proposed revisions were intended to make the Prayer more inclusive and that the reading of the prayer in Latin was an acknowledgement of the University's intellectual origins. The Clerk of Senate noted that Council of Senate's comments would be considered and that he would liaise with Reverend MacQuarrie on the proposed revisions. To allow for more time to consult on the revised Prayer, it was agreed that the Graduation Prayer should remain unchanged for this summer's graduations.

7.2 Report of the Honorary Degrees Committee

The Clerk of Senate reported that the following acceptances had been received from nominees to receive Honorary Degrees in 2018:

DOCTOR OF LAWS (LLD)

Rt Hon James WOLFFE
Lord Advocate for Scotland

DOCTOR OF MUSIC (DMus)

John Maxwell GEDDES
Composer

DOCTOR OF SCIENCE (DSc)

Professor Gabriela GONZALEZ
Professor of Physics and Astronomy

DOCTOR OF ENGINEERING (DEng)

Prof Asit BISWAS
Engineer and founder of the Third World Centre for Water Management in Mexico

DOCTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY (DUniv)

Dr Lena WILSON
Former Chief Executive at Scottish Enterprise

Mr Setyono DARMONO
Entrepreneur

The names noted above of those who had accepted the offer of an Honorary Degree were now in the public domain.

Further replies were awaited and would be reported to the next meeting of Council of Senate.