

Court

Minute of Meeting held on Wednesday 15 April 2020 by Zoom

Present:

Ms Teresa Baños SRC Assessor on Court, Mr Graeme Bissett Co-opted Member, 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, Professor Nick Hill Elected Academic Staff Member, Mr Christopher Kennedy Elected Professional Services Representative, Dr Simon Kennedy Elected Academic Staff Member, Mr Scott Kirby SRC President, Professor Kirsteen McCue Elected Academic Staff Member, Dr Morag Macdonald Simpson General Council Assessor, Ms Margaret Anne McParland Trade Union Nominee, 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, Ms Elizabeth Passey Co-opted Member (Convener of Court), Mr Gavin Stewart Co-opted Member, Dr Ken Sutherland Co-opted Member, Ms Lesley Sutherland General Council Assessor, Dr Bethan Wood Elected Academic Staff Member

Attending:

Professor Frank Coton (VP Academic & Educational Innovation), Dr David Duncan (Chief Operating Officer [COO] & University Secretary), Mr Robert Fraser (Director of Finance), Ms Amber Higgins (Clerk to Court from May 2020; observing), Professor Neal Juster (Senior Vice-Principal and Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Ms Deborah Maddern (Administrative Officer and Clerk to Court), Professor Jill Morrison (Vice-Principal & Clerk of Senate)

Apologies:

Members: Cllr Susan Aitken Glasgow City Council Assessor

CRT/2019/36 Announcements

There were the following declarations 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 Elizabeth Passey in relation to arrangements for her annual appraisal.

Court was reminded that papers and business were confidential.

CRT/2019/37. Minutes of the meetings held on Wednesday 12 February 2020

The minutes were approved subject to Teresa Baños being included in the list of Court members present at the meeting.

CRT/2019/38. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

CRT/2019/39. Covid-19/Coronavirus Update and Planning

CRT/2019/39.1 Work-streams and medium-term planning

The Principal introduced the item by thanking the University community for all its efforts over

the past weeks, as colleagues took on the biggest challenge that the sector had faced for many years. Court had been briefed in mid-March about the early actions being taken at the University as the pandemic took hold; the present meeting would provide further detail about the transition from crisis management to a co-ordinated and strategic approach in the medium term, including the identification of potential opportunities for the future. Court heard that while the Scottish Government and SFC understood both the scale of the task and the financial test that the Covid-19 was presenting to HEIs, the sector was by no means the only one facing difficulties. It was noted that the details being provided to Court at the present meeting had assumed no extra financial support from the government.

The Principal explained that the overall approach to teaching in the coming months was a hybrid model, with material being put online and potentially flexible entry points in the year. All the steps were aimed at ensuring that the University emerged in the best possible shape for the future.

Court members received a paper outlining work-streams and the medium-term plan connected to the Covid-19 outbreak. Court noted from this paper: a summary of actions taken by the University to respond to the immediate challenges created by the pandemic; a series of principles that would help shape the University's approach going forward; work-streams covering the critical medium-term priorities; the key risks arising from the impact of the virus; and some of the opportunities which could help to make the University stronger in the medium-long term.

The University Secretary noted that staff had responded extremely well to a highly challenging situation. University management was very grateful for the immense contribution that individuals and teams had made across the University and for the positive, collaborative spirit they had shown. The University had worked closely with the SRC and was grateful for the vital role it had played.

Members of Court had been kept informed of the actions taken over recent weeks. During this period, the focus had been on: ensuring continuity of academic provision; overseeing an orderly shut-down of most campus facilities; transitioning to home working for most staff; and contributing to the wider government/NHS effort to combat Covid-19. The University had placed the highest premium on health and safety and had sought to maintain effective communications with all members of the University community, through a variety of media.

Court heard that the University was aware that this was a very uncertain period and that planning needed to be highly responsive and agile; it was also important to ensure that all parts of the University were mobilised so that the institution was in the strongest possible position once the world moved on from the present situation. Court noted the local management, workstream and communications arrangements that were in place to achieve this. The latter area included liaison with campus trade union representatives on a regular basis. Court members would continue to be involved through virtual meetings of Court and its committees, through sharing of general communications issued to staff and students and via occasional special updates. If major decisions of Court were required between scheduled meetings, members would meet remotely, with papers circulated in advance and appropriate notice given.

The University Secretary added that various scenarios were being considered for academic provision, including reliance on blended and online learning and assessment, delay to the start of term, some courses potentially starting in January 2021, partial lifting of social distancing in the future, and periodic recurrence of lockdown if this was necessary. Connected to academic provision were matters around student recruitment including travel, financial planning including the capital programme (where some areas would now be on hold) and the research agenda. Staff recruitment and organisational change was also being

considered given the needs that were being identified for the future; there were also staffing matters connected to the support being provided by the University to the NHS. Other matters that required to be addressed and were subject to ongoing planning included technological capacity and capability, logistics, fees issues, liaison with agents and partners such as GIC, entry qualifications, English language requirements, additional support needs post-enrolment, externally imposed regulations such as visas and those of the OFS, and communications both internal and external. The University's risk management process was being linked to these areas, in discussion with the Colleges; this exercise might also identify opportunities for the future.

Court's input would be welcome, with members invited to contact the University Secretary.

CRT/2019/39.2 Financial planning including cashflow

Court members had received a paper modelling the impact of Covid-19 on the University's cash position, outlining the impact of responses to reduce cash outflows and highlighting additional borrowing requirements, based on a number of different scenarios. The paper had also been presented to the Finance Committee at its meeting on 31 March.

Court received an update on the position from the Director of Finance, noting that the details incorporated changes made since the Finance Committee. These included: figures having been updated for the April budget submission; extended recovery time for international fees in the multi-year scenarios; revised staff investment and consumables levels; details being included about the impact on Commercial, Donations and Research funding; and further reductions in Estates and IT spend. With regard to the budget submissions, these had been revised to take out staff investments, but so as not to damage the operation of academic departments.

Court heard that the aim was to control costs in the medium term, with the potential to release strategic expenditure if revenue began to improve; as such, this would protect financial sustainability. The key elements of the process were to establish how significant the revenue loss would be, how much the University could afford to borrow, and how much the University needed to save.

There was an immediate focus on delivering savings through a freeze on recruitment, minimisation of consumables expenditure, and reduction in Estates and IT expenditure to the previous level (£39m).

Court noted contextual details about international income and the potential for Covid-19 to have a material multi-year impact on University revenue, with a number of scenarios provided by way of modelling, including the cash position over a range of years. Two scenarios would lead to cash low points requiring further borrowing and savings; Court noted the associated headline figures. These scenarios assumed that: only the committed capital projects would go ahead; there would be some increased IT and Estates expenditure as had been referred to at the January Finance Committee meeting/February Court meeting; international income recovered to budget submission in outer years; and USS contributions remained in line with current commitments (2018 valuation).

Court received an analysis of factors that needed to be considered around borrowing. There were some challenges associated with the University's existing covenants, which limited capital/interest repayments to being less than a certain percentage of revenue. Early discussions were being held with lenders about amending these. With regard to the Private Placement market, coupon rates were currently relatively high; and some companies were not writing any new business. It was noted that short-term finance had a very low interest rate and was an area for consideration, allowing the markets to settle.

The University would need to generate additional operating cash to meet interest payments on any new borrowing, and would still also need to make savings. Any gap in borrowing would need to be met through savings. Other ongoing considerations were: that the University required a certain level of operating cash; that it had significant funds locked up in liquid asset-backed funds but the current cost of liquidating these was high; and that USS contribution costs could increase.

With respect to savings, layers of cost savings were being developed to respond to the projected reduction in income; these ranged from immediate through to progressively more difficult actions, with key decision points to be overlaid on savings. Savings might be significant and require structural change if the impact on revenue was worse than forecast. Immediate savings had been outlined earlier, but additional potential savings included further reductions in maintenance/IT spend and pausing or cancelling major capital projects.

Court heard that at present there remained many uncertainties including the Government's approach to border control, student choice of destination and/or deferral of places when the lockdown eased, and the position of current lenders with regard to easing of the financial covenant. For the time being, the approach was to minimise expenditure, remove costs on the layered basis described, manage the decision-making points and work on further levels of granularity so that SMG and Court could make informed decisions in good time.

The Convenor of the Finance Committee, Graeme Bissett, provided observations, noting that the scenarios presented by the Director of Finance had been refined since the Finance Committee meeting, including the analysis of overseas fees, but the overall financial effect was similar. He noted that in the current situation, there were necessarily some judgements being applied. It was however key that focus be applied to the projected low points in the future, so that appropriate measures could be taken. Court's attention was drawn by Mr Bissett to: the need to monitor the revenue shortfall against the original budget and to plan ahead for the University's cost base; the USS position; the changes in planned expenditure for estates maintenance and IT which were now at the levels that existed prior to February's Court meeting; what might now need to occur with regard to major projects in the capital plan; and additional borrowing requirements to ensure adequate liquidity. In terms of timing, revenue would be closely monitored on an ongoing basis, the capital plan would require more discussion over the coming weeks, and while there was no immediate urgency, the possibilities for borrowing would be investigated further. With regard to liquidity, the investment subcommittee would continue to evaluate the position on realising investment assets.

- The Convenor of the Estates Committee advised that the Estates Committee was reviewing the capital plan, including major projects and supply chains. There were ongoing discussions with the main contractor. The Scottish Government's rules around essential building works also needed to be factored into the decision-making process.

In discussion, a question was raised about the proposed reduction in previously planned IT expenditure in the context of the University planning a greater online presence for teaching and assessment. Court noted that a move to providing all UG and PG courses online in the short term was not possible and that the intention was for a hybrid model, with current capacity including networks and infrastructure being scaled up as required. To maintain a quality educational experience, course offerings were being examined, with the possibility of smaller courses not going ahead in order to maintain the student experience for other courses, and of practical/lab aspects being carried forward into 2021. Schools were analysing what percentage of teaching could be provided online in the first semester. The Government's regulations about social distancing would also have to be factored in when the campus re-opened. This would potentially change the available methods used for

teaching.

In the context of a question about academic oversight and whether the cancelled June Senate meeting might be reinstated, Court noted that with regard to Senate input to the decision making process around courses, an agile process had been put in place during the crisis, to develop, communicate and implement policy rapidly while maintaining levels of expert input and scrutiny. The April and June Senate meetings had been cancelled in this context, to allow focus on this and given the short timescales required for action. Senate would however continue to be kept informed.

It was noted that while application numbers remained healthy at present, the actual uptake of places would not be known until later in the year and could be affected by travel and/or economic restrictions.

A point was raised seeking reassurance that staff were being supported and that there remained an acceptance about the possible need to expand academic and support staffing as necessary: there could be staffing issues around teaching as much as possible of the first semester online. Court noted that this was being kept under review, including rebalancing research activity to aid teaching needs.

In response to a comment about the possibility of making further cost savings, Court heard that there was a potential for reducing staff resource where face-to-face interaction (such as PG tutor support) could not currently take place, but that this needed to be carefully monitored to ensure that research students were still well supported. Court heard that the University was constrained in being able to offer severance, to reduce longer-term costs, given the up-front costs associated with this in the current challenging financial situation.

The financial challenge presented by the USS position, including the latest revaluation which would suffer given the current market conditions, was noted as an additional factor.

With regard to capital projects, discussions were ongoing with the main contractor. The cashflow position was being further analysed and potential borrowing investigated in relation to the capital plan, with different scenario planning being undertaken, as Court had heard. Court would be updated at the June meeting.

In the meantime, Court agreed that with respect to borrowing options, where interaction with the University's governance processes would be needed before the June meeting, the Finance Committee should agree a way forward with SMG; and with respect to discussion with the main contractor, SMG should discuss with the Finance and Estates Committee chairs, who would decide if interim committee meetings were required. The timescale for the borrowing options was likely to be 3-4 weeks, with a final decision likely to be needed in June or July; for the discussions around the capital plan, it was agreed that Court would be updated on the position in mid-May.

CRT/2019/40. Report from the Principal

CRT/2019/40.1 Covid-19 – Coronavirus and the University Strategic Plan

The safety and wellbeing of students, staff and University community had been at the forefront of the University's actions over the past month. Court had heard earlier in the meeting about the University's current and future planning around Covid-19. Court noted that the crisis represented the biggest risk facing the University and the whole HE sector. The University executive had recognised this at an early stage and following discussion at SMG, early analysis of the Covid-19 risk had been provided to the March Audit and Risk Committee as part of the risk-register, together with details of early mitigation action.

Court noted details about wider HE matters affected by the outbreak and about how the University's Strategic Plan 2020-25 would be taken forward in light of Covid-19 impact.

Court heard that there had been regular dialogue at the Main Committee of Universities Scotland, the Russell Group Board and with the UUK Executive. UUK/Universities Scotland and the Russell Group had quantified the potential financial shock to the sector and communicated this to government. The Government had been receptive, but any commitment was likely to be in the context of a package of agreed measures including restructuring and reshaping to be undertaken by HEIs. The Scottish Government had intimated that any additional grants to English universities, which carried Barnett formula consequentials, would be passed on to Scottish HEIs. Court would be kept informed of any developments emerging from the Scottish Government or the SFC, including any early indications of mirroring of Augur recommendations.

It had originally been intended to bring the Strategic Plan to the June Court meeting for approval. Before lockdown, work had been completed around the values underpinning the plan and the major themes in the strategy. Given recent events, it was now the executive's preference to aim to bring the new plan to Court in December 2020. This would allow for a modified plan, based on a better understanding of the likely shape of the HE sector post-crisis. Court received a paper from the Senior Vice-Principal, providing details on the proposed development of the Strategic Plan in the coming months and how this was linked to the medium-term workstreams outlined earlier in the meeting. Court was invited to provide input to the ongoing work on the Strategic Plan.

The Principal recorded his enormous gratitude to the University community, in the context of the most difficult circumstances that had been faced in the institution's recent history.

CRT/2019/40.2 Higher Education Developments

Brexit

At the February meeting, Court had been advised that the sector was focusing on the post-Brexit immigration regime, negotiations around research, and student mobility. The UK Government's announcement about an unlimited number of "Global Talent" visas, aimed at attracting top researchers, had appeared to be a positive step. Development of the visa regime, and international travel in general, was now on hold; and the long-term global impact of Covid-19 was unclear. It was likely to be many months before the University was able to assess the longer-term position.

Before the Coronavirus pandemic had taken full hold, the shape and timing of UK participation in the European Union's R&D programmes had been the subject of some discussion following the first round of talks on a UK-EU trade deal, with the position at times appearing unclear. The impact of Covid-19 on his area was uncertain, in particular given the suspension of face-to-face EU-UK Brexit negotiations.

In mid-February, new post-Brexit immigration rules had been set out by the UK Government. Higher points would be awarded to potential migrants with science PhDs and larger salaries. Some concerns had been raised over the emphasis on degree qualifications as a marker for skilled workers and the potential impact on recruitment of research assistants, in particular in the Social Sciences, and lab technician posts in STEM subjects. The Government had however acted on earlier advice to lower the current salary threshold from £30,000. UUK had welcomed the fact that HE staff were being recognised for their high skill level and contribution to the UK economy and society, and had also welcomed the recognition that the salary threshold of £30k had been too high. However, UUK had echoed concerns that it was still necessary to ensure that all levels of staff would be able to work in the UK.

REF 2021 and Research

Given the current Covid-19 restrictions, the REF was on hold until further notice. The national REF team was now working on adapted details for the framework. A new submission deadline would be announced, no later than eight months ahead of the deadline. REF had advised that full allowance would be made for the impact of Covid-19 across affected areas of submissions. The Russell Group had already warned that research activity was being delayed or postponed and that there was reduced capacity to support research grant processes because of support staff circumstances. Funders had moved to try to address problems arising from the pandemic's disruption, with charities and government funders deferring funding panels and funding calls, and extending deadlines.

The Russell Group's chief executive had urged UK Research and Innovation to create an emergency fund to cover the salaries of relevant staff and other research costs. UKRI had advised that they were working closely with government and other funders to understand what support measures were needed to protect research capacity in the long term.

The implementation of UK government research pledges in the 11 March budget, before the crisis had escalated, was now less clear. Despite the current crisis, it had been argued that the rationale for the budget remained the same in the longer term, but with the situation being so fluid, it was difficult to predict what would now happen.

Specific to the outbreak, a UK-wide consortium of clinicians and scientists had begun a genome-sequencing exercise to map how Covid-19 spread. Samples from patients who had tested positive were being sent to a network of sequencing centres across the country, including the University, which was pleased to be able to contribute to the understanding of and fight against the disease.

UCAS and 2020 Admissions

On 25 March, UCAS had announced that it was giving applicants more time to make a decision about university choices. This was to create stability for both universities and prospective students in light of the pandemic. Universities and colleges were also being given extra time to assess applications and adjust their processes. The widespread cancellation of summer exams in the UK would give all concerned some time to share information on calculated grades. UCAS had indicated that the admissions cycle should run in a broadly similar way to previous years, with flexibility for applicants to make choices throughout the rest of the year and a clearing process over the summer.

In discussion, Court heard that the publication of school exam results appeared to be on track for the start of Semester 1. With regard to future fees status for EU students, the position remained unclear. With regard to discussion nationally about possible fee waivers or fee repayments for students, Court heard that there was some discussion about flexibility around student loans.

CRT/2019/40.3 SFC Grants 2020-21

There had been no indicative grant letter for 2020-21, the SFC having intended to move directly to final allocations because of a condensed timeframe arising from the delayed announcement of the Scottish budget. This had been a knock-on effect of the General Election having taken place in December 2019.

The final grant letter had now also been delayed because of Covid-19. It was unclear what the funding letter would contain, since the SFC was giving consideration to the future landscape and how they would move forward with funding allocations for the sector. It was unclear whether there would be any further funding streams to assist the sector in Scotland in dealing with the consequences of Covid-19.

CRT/2019/40.4 Outcome Agreement

Due to Covid-19, the SFC had suspended the Outcome Agreement process for 2020-21 in the draft stages. As part of this, the SFC had requested that each University supply them with a draft Agreement, to meet the requirements for institutional accountability. The SFC had been informed that all forward-looking content/targets should be considered obsolete. The Council had confirmed that it would not recover Outcome Agreement-related funding due to Covid-19 related shortfalls.

While Outcome Agreements were normally submitted to the SFC following Court approval, the University had sent a near-final draft of the 2020-21 Outcome Agreement without final approval, because large sections of the document were functionally obsolete and would not represent a signed-off agreement from the University. This draft had been made available to Court for reference.

CRT/2019/40.5 USS

At the last meeting, Court had been updated on the publication of the Joint Expert Panel's (JEP) second report, which had established key principles for the future joint approach of UUK and UCU to the valuation of the USS fund; and on the tripartite group meeting in January, at which members (UCU, UUK and USS) had agreed to reach a better collective understanding and discuss the JEP recommendations.

The latest meeting (in March) between the parties had concluded with a statement that the group had discussed the work of the Valuation Methodology Discussion Forum, noting also that the Trustee planned to issue a discussion document on the methodology shortly. It had been stressed that the document and valuation process needed to be collaborative, although it was the Trustee's responsibility to set the assumptions. The group had continued its discussions about agreeing a common definition of sustainability.

In the meantime, the Trustee was carrying out the 2020 valuation of the Scheme's funding to establish what contribution rate would be required to allow the Scheme to be able to pay the pensions that members were expecting into the future. The valuation for 2020 would have as its basis a snapshot of the scheme on 31 March 2020, although the process itself would last many months, with a required completion date of 30 June 2021. Court noted that the valuation would be very seriously adversely affected because of the impact of Covid-19 on markets.

CRT/2019/40.6 Appointment of Chancellor

Dame Katherine Grainger, Britain's most decorated female Olympian, would be appointed as the next Chancellor of the University. Dame Katherine would succeed Professor Sir Kenneth Calman, who was stepping down after fourteen years in the post. Dame Katherine would take on the role in June, as the first woman Chancellor of the University. The University owed an enormous debt of gratitude to the current Chancellor and would be marking Sir Kenneth's retirement at an appropriate moment in the future.

CRT/2019/40.7 QS World University Rankings by Subject for 2020

Details had recently been released, Court already having been advised in February that the University had risen two places in the overall QS World University Rankings, to 67th. The rankings by subject had been equally positive.

CRT/2019/40.8 Campus Development

Construction work on campus development projects had been paused, with the University

considering carefully the implications of advice issued by the Scottish Government in early April.

The 'topping out' of the £113m Research Hub had recently occurred. This was a significant milestone and the half-way point in the construction of the second major capital project under the current capital programme. Professor Andrew Tobin had been appointed as the founding Director of the Hub.

CRT 2019/40.9 Key Activities

Court noted a summary of the main activities in which the Principal had been involved since the last meeting of Court, covering internal and external activities beyond daily operational management and strategy meetings. The activities were under the broad headings of: Academic Development and Strategy; Internationalisation activities; Lobbying/Policy Influencing and Promoting the University; and Internal activities and Communications and Alumni events.

CRT/2019/41. Report from the University Secretary

CRT 2019.41.1 Covid-19 - Coronavirus outbreak

The University community including Court continued to be updated regularly via the website, email and social media. As Court had heard earlier in the meeting, one of the immediate challenges had related to student assessment. Detailed planning had been undertaken for late spring/summer 2020, to enable exams and assessments for Honours level and Masters courses to take place, principally in the form of 24-hour 'take-home' exams. Guidance and support were being provided both to those launching the exams and assessments and to the students taking them. Students were being reassured that safety measures would be put in place – marks could only go up, not down, when compared to work already assessed. PGR students were now being examined via virtual *vivas*.

The University had aimed to ensure that all exams and assessments were compliant with the University's Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy, to accommodate the needs of all students, including those who would normally need additional adjustments through the Disability Service.

Court noted a report of summary details about University research connected to Covid.

CRT 2019.41.2 Sustainability/Climate Change

In February, a consultation had been launched on a paper "*A Dear, Green Place*": *Towards a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan for the University*. Over 1,300 responses had been received, with most supporting the broad lines of action proposed in the paper. The outcomes had been summarised, with details shared with the University community through workshops designed to provide staff with further opportunity to feedback, ask questions, and discuss with colleagues. Consideration of appropriate interim targets for 2025 and 2030, ahead of the University's aim of being carbon neutral by 2035, were ongoing.

The Sustainability Working Group had met in early April to consider an initial report on the consultation. New guidelines on business travel had also been considered and would be consulted on. There had been input from a coalition of students under the Green New Deal banner; the recommendations and demands in this were also being considered.

The COP26 event in Glasgow had been postponed. Dates for a rescheduled conference in 2021 would be agreed in due course following further discussion between parties. The Vice Principal for External Relations, Rachel Sandison, would continue to lead the University's

related activities and input to the global debate at the event.

CRT 2019.41.3 Brexit and University Preparation

Court had received regular updates over the past three years, hearing about the support provided to EU staff and students. The University would continue to lobby the UK Government for continued participation in EU programmes and explore creating national replacement schemes if required. In the current Covid-19 crisis, progress was stalled.

CRT 2019.41.4 Industrial Action

UCU had called industrial action about the 2019 cost of living increase and concerns over casualisation, equality and workloads; a separate ballot had been held over increases in the contribution that employees made towards their pensions. Progress had been made in national negotiations about non-pay issues and the future of the pension scheme, but the issues around pay remained unresolved. There had been eight days of strike action in November-December 2019 and a further 14 days over four weeks from 20 February to 13 March 2020. Support for the strike had diminished somewhat during the second period of action, although there had still been considerable disruption to teaching, especially in the Colleges of Arts and Social Sciences. Despite further talks involving the Universities and Colleges Employers' Association (on pay and non-pay issues) and Universities UK (on pensions issues), neither dispute had been resolved. Formal strike action had now ceased, but the dispute was formally still live. Talks on the 2020 cost-of-living increase were scheduled to begin shortly.

CRT 2019.41.5 Janitorial Staff Pay

At the last meeting, the Rector had raised a concern about janitorial staff waiting years for a decision about regrading. Dr Duncan had undertaken to ensure this matter was addressed by the end of March. Court heard that offers had been made to relevant members of staff before the end of March following the normal process of role assessment. The review was ongoing; some of the offers had been for temporary upgrading that did not pre-empt the outcome of the full review of the service.

CRT 2019.41.6 Disinvestment petition

Court noted an interim report from the working group chaired by Gavin Stewart, hearing also that representations made by the student action group had been carefully considered. To date, a compromise had not been found, but the group would continue to consider this. The group intended to meet again in late April/May before making recommendations to Court in June. Court's comments or guidance were invited.

CRT 2019.41.7 Security Audit

At the last meeting, in relation to personal safety matters following a series of attacks in the West End, there had been a reference to a related security audit being undertaken by the Police and to this being followed up by the University. Court noted that while the University was still in discussion with Police Scotland both about security on and around the campuses, and about the signing of a formal protocol, the discussions had been somewhat disrupted by Covid-19.

CRT 2019.41.8 Convener appraisal and Annual Court Self-Assessment

The Convener left the meeting for this item, with the Vice-Convener Graeme Bissett chairing instead. As part of the good practice set out in the Code of Good HE Governance, Ronnie Mercer had undertaken an appraisal of the Convener's performance. Court members had been provided with a report, which Mr Mercer now summarised. Suggestions made in the report were being considered by the Convener. The appraisal would continue to be

undertaken annually.

Given the current Covid-19 crisis and the focus on planning, the Court self-assessment/feedback on performance would be circulated later in the year. The Court Governance Working Group would then meet to consider the outcomes. There would be a report to Court identifying any themes and including recommendations for action.

CRT 2019.41.9 Committee Remit and Appointments

Information Policy and Strategy Committee IPSC

At the February meeting of Court, it had been agreed that the IPSC would report to Court. A refreshed remit has been drafted in this context. Court approved the remit.

It had also been agreed at the February Court meeting that the membership of IPSC might be augmented by the addition of external members. Court now approved the addition of one additional lay member of Court, and one external expert, to the IPSC; with the nomination of Gavin Stewart (co-opted member of Court) approved for the former position. Details relating to the proposed appointment for the external expert (non-Court) member of the IPSC would be provided as soon as possible.

It was agreed that the Committee Chair and the University Secretary would discuss the possibility of the membership being expanded to include a Professional Services staff member.

Estates Committee

Following Court discussion earlier in the year about at least one staff member on Court being on each Committee, Court approved a recommendation from the Nominations Committee that there be an addition of a staff member to the Estates Committee, and that Chris Kennedy be appointed to the position.

Investment Advisory Committee

Court approved David Ross continuing as chair of IAC on an interim basis from 1 August 2020 while a suitable replacement candidate was identified. Court's thanks to Mr Ross for his service as chair of IAC and for agreeing to continue in this capacity were recorded.

CRT 2019.41.10 Court Strategy Day 2020

The Strategy Day was scheduled for 17 September. The day would focus on planning following Covid-19. There would be opportunities for Court members to contribute to discussions via plenary and group discussion sessions.

CRT 2019.41.11 Organisational Change

Court noted a summary of the Organisational Change Governance Group's business over the last year. The document would be amended in future to refer to Elected Academic Staff members rather than Senate Assessors.

CRT 2019.41.12 Organisational Change Governance Group – Small Animal Hospital

In December, Court had approved development of the preferred option of setting up a wholly-owned subsidiary company to manage the Small Animal Hospital. The process was continuing; a report would be provided to Court at a later date.

Court noted a comment from Margaret Anne McParland that with other new enterprises such as catering being undertaken using a commercial model, with the associated staff on

different terms and conditions to University staff, this could ultimately affect University staff. Dr Duncan noted that this was not within the remit of OCGG but unions could make observations on these areas should they wish, and these would be addressed.

CRT 2019.41.13 Summary of Convener's Business

Court noted a summary of activities undertaken by the Convener since the last meeting.

CRT 2019.41.14 SRC Spring Elections

The following candidates had been successful in the Spring 2020 SRC elections and would take up sabbatical officer posts on 1st July 2020:

President: Liam Brady
VP Education: Gregory Kokkinidis
VP Student Support: Ella McCabe
VP Student Activities: Amy McKenzie Smith

CRT 2019.41.15 Rectorial Election 2020

The election had been due to take place in March, but with the escalation in the outbreak of Covid-19 and the distancing measures put in place around it, the event had been postponed until the autumn. There would be a vacancy on Court until a new Rector was elected.

CRT 2019.41.16 Directors of Research Institutes and Heads of School Appointments

College of MVLS

Institute of Biodiversity, Animal Health & Comparative Medicine

Professor Dan Haydon had been re-appointed as the Director of the Institute of Biodiversity, Animal Health & Comparative Medicine for two years from 1 August 2020.

Institute of Infection, Immunity & Inflammation

Professor Iain McInnes had been re-appointed as the Director of the Institute of Infection, Immunity & Inflammation for two years from 1 August 2020.

School of Medicine, Dentistry & Nursing

Professor Matthew Walters had been re-appointed as the Head of the School of Medicine, Dentistry & Nursing for four years from 1 August 2020.

CRT/2019/42. Student Matters, including: SEC Report; SRC President update

CRT/2019/42.1 Student Experience Committee Report

Court noted a report of the meeting of the Student Experience Committee held in March, with updates provided on Residential Services, student support and wellbeing, facilities for student clubs and societies, and proposed guidelines from the Content Advice Working Group.

CRT/2019/42.2 SRC President Update

Responding to a question about current activity in clubs and societies, Court noted from the SRC President that the level was low, although this was also quite normal for the time of year. Court noted also that the SRC President and SRC General Manager were meeting daily with the University Secretary about student matters in the context of the Covid-19

crisis, noting also that the Rector would have been concerned about the area of student welfare at the present time. Court heard that there were student hardship funds available, as well as IT equipment for those students who did not have access to adequate facilities at home.

CRT/2019/43. Reports of Court Committees

CRT/2019/43.1. Finance Committee

CRT/2019/43.1.1 Covid-19 Outbreak

The Committee had received and discussed in detail a paper relating to financial matters arising from the Covid-19 outbreak. A full summary of the matter had been provided in the minutes of the meeting. The paper in question had been provided to Court under item 4 of the present meeting. Court had also received details about, and discussed, the updated position.

CRT/2019/43.1.2 CapEx Applications

The Committee had received two capital expenditure requests. Given that the Covid-19 crisis had altered priorities, the first application, Gilmorehill/Science & Engineering James Watt North Office refurbishment (£3.34m), had been required to be resubmitted to the Committee by email if approval was needed, otherwise it was to be resubmitted to the Committee's June meeting. The second application, Gilmorehill/Various CTT Learning & Teaching Space 2019-20 (£0.995m) has been approved subject to the Convenor of the Finance Committee being re-contacted by email for final approval.

The report was noted.

CRT/2019/43.2 Estates Committee

CRT/2019/43.2.1 Capital Plan

The Committee had received an update on the capital plan review. At the date of the meeting, the impact of Covid-19 on production of items in China was still being assessed. It had been anticipated that there would be risks on later deliveries of certain items. The University's main contractor had been interrogating the supply chain to gain a better understanding. Since the meeting, the situation had worsened and work on managing the supply chain remained a key focus for the construction team.

CRT/2019/43.2.2 CapEx applications

The Committee had approved CapEx applications relating to: Gilmorehill/James Watt North Office refurbishment, £3.34million; Gilmorehill / Various / CTT Learning & Teaching Space 2019-20 in the sum of £0.495million. These had since been subject to further requirements following discussion at the Finance Committee meeting.

CRT/2019/43.2.3 Director of Estates

Farewell and thanks had been extended to Ann Allen for all her work as Director of Estates and Commercial Services over the past eight years.

CRT/2019/43.3 IPSC

The Committee had: discussed the Enterprise Integration CapEx Application, which would be revised ahead of being submitted to the CapEx Committee; and received updates on the Network Infrastructure Investment Program and the Unified Communications Review. For

the latter, a fully costed business case would be made in autumn 2020. The Committee had received details about the primary scope of the Infrastructure As A Service Program, agreeing that the options should address the broader computer needs across the University. Current documentation would be built out to define the full programme of work and projects required, business options/approaches and timelines. The Committee had noted a Windows 7 Exception Report, hearing that Windows 7 machines were at end-of-life and needed to be retired, or extended support license purchased and applied to each machine.

The report was noted, Court also noting from Dr Ken Sutherland that the report was somewhat out of date given recent events and that Court would receive an updated report at the next meeting; a re-evaluation of IT requirements was ongoing.

CRT/2019/43.4 Audit & Risk Committee

The Committee had received an update on University actions around Covid-19. The Committee had also received internal audit reports on Health and Safety, Staff Retention and Wellbeing and MyCampus Security; and received a briefing on risk management, hearing that the methodology and content of the risk register had been thoroughly reviewed since the autumn of 2019. The new policy and framework had been completed, with the Committee noting the associated documents and the updated University risk register, which Court had noted contained helpful details relating to the Covid-19 outbreak. The register would come to the June meeting of Court.

The report was noted.

CRT/2019/43.5 Health, Safety & Wellbeing Committee

At its meeting in March, the Committee had received: an update on meetings with onsite contractors; details of a pilot to centralise PAT testing; and demonstration of the SafeZone App. The Committee had covered its usual range of business in reviewing standard reports on Occupational Health activities, audit updates, accident reporting and employee counselling. The Committee had received and discussed matters relating to the HSW annual report. Court now received and noted a summary of the annual report.

The Committee had received a draft revision to the Fire Safety Policy. The Committee had discussed a proposed reasonable adjustments passport for disabled staff, agreeing that HR would look at how best to implement the initiative. The Committee had noted details about first-aid provision for lectures held in non-University managed premises on campus.

The Committee had heard that a Covid-19 task group had been created and that a communications group was also meeting on a daily basis, sending regular communications out to staff and students in line with guidance from the Public Health agencies. The Committee had noted that a group was looking at business continuity.

Dr Duncan acknowledged the work of colleagues in Health, Safety and Wellbeing in the current situation, in particular the liaison with the Health and Safety Executive and in ensuring that health and safety was at the forefront of the University's actions and plans.

The report was noted, Court noting also that the Mental Health Working Group would meet shortly.

CRT/2019/44. Senate Matters

The Clerk of Senate referred to the discussion earlier in the Court meeting, noting that in the context of the Covid-19 crisis and in particular for the need for academic staff to focus on student exams and assessment, the April and June meetings of Senate had been cancelled. The decision had been taken in discussion between the Principal (Convener of Senate), the Clerk of Senate and University Secretary. Papers had still been circulated to members.

Following a request from Professor Nick Hill, the Clerk of Senate agreed to consult the same group with a view to the June Senate meeting being reinstated.

Court heard that the main area of recent focus in Senate's areas of operation had been on the assessment policy and the no-detriment policy, which had involved intense work in a short period in order to move to online exams and assessment, to enable student cohorts to graduate, critical assessments to be undertaken (for example for professional courses and Honours students) and PGT courses to be delivered. A no-detriment policy would apply such that the University would do everything it could to ensure that students suffered no disadvantage in the current situation. A general assumption that all students were impacted by the crisis applied. Grade point averages that were higher before the exam results would be retained. There had been regular communications with external examiners, with exam papers being prepared and exam boards being arranged.

Court noted that the summer 2020 graduations had been cancelled early on in the crisis when social distancing measures had been put in place. An early decision had also been needed given travel arrangements that families made from around the world. Students would graduate *in absentia*, with parchments to be sent from the University, since these would be required for employment purposes. Graduation ceremonies would take place when this was possible.

Court's thanks were given to the Clerk of Senate and Vice-Principal Learning & Teaching, to their teams and to College and School learning and teaching staff, for their tremendous work over recent weeks, and for the excellent nature of the high-level communications with staff and with students. The Clerk of Senate recorded her thanks to all colleagues across the University.

CRT/2019/45. Any Other Business

The Convener of Court thanked University colleagues for their exemplary leadership during recent events. The Convener also thanked Court members for their commitment to continuing Court business in the current difficult circumstances. Court recorded its thanks to all members of the University and to SMG for leading in a particularly difficult period.

The Clerk to Court, Deborah Maddern, was attending her final meeting. Court thanked her for her work and wished her well.

CRT/2019/46. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of Court will be held on Wednesday 23 June, with further details to be confirmed. There is an open meeting/annual stakeholder meeting scheduled for 2 June, with details to be finalised and reconfirmed; and all Court members invited to attend.