



Court

Minute of Meeting held on Wednesday 20 April 2022

Present:

Elizabeth Passey (Co-opted Member (Convener of Court)), Dr Craig Daly (Trade Union Nominee), David Finlayson (Co-opted Member), Professor Carl Goodyear (Elected Academic Staff Member), Duncan Henderson (SRC Assessor), Professor Simon Kennedy (Elected Academic Staff Member), Jonathan Loukes (Co-opted Member), Ella McCabe (SRC President), Paula McKerrow (Trade Union Nominee), Lady Rae (Rector), Dr Morag Macdonald Simpson (General Council Assessor), Ronnie Mercer (Chancellors Assessor), June Milligan (Co-opted Member), Professor Sir Anton Muscatelli (Principal), Elspeth Orcharton (Co-opted Member), Mr Gavin Stewart (Co-opted Member), Lesley Sutherland (General Council Assessor),

Attending:

Gregor Caldwell (Executive Director of Finance), Professor Frank Coton (Senior Vice Principal and Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)), Dr David Duncan (Chief Operating Officer [COO] & University Secretary), Professor Jill Morrison (Vice-Principal & Clerk of Senate), Amber Higgins (Executive Officer and Clerk to Court). Item 4 - Professor Chris Pearce (Vice Principal (Research and Knowledge Exchange))

Apologies:

Cllr Susan Aitken (Glasgow City Council Assessor), Professor Nick Hill (Elected Academic Staff Member), Christopher Kennedy (Elected Professional Services Representative), Laic Khalique (Co-opted Member), Professor Kirsteen McCue (Elected Academic Staff Member), Shan Saba (Co-opted Member), Dr Bethan Wood (Elected Academic Staff Member).

CRT/2021/38. Announcements

The Convener noted that Shan Saba (absent) had been appointed as a new Co-opted Member of Court. The Convener also welcomed Professor Chris Pearce Vice Principal (Research and Knowledge Exchange) to the meeting.

The Convener reported that Heather Cousins, Co-opted Member of Court, had stepped down. Heather had been a member of Court for 8 years, and a member of Audit and Risk Committee - for 6 years as the Chair. Over that time, she had made a huge contribution to the University and was leaving the University in a significantly stronger position. Court recorded its thanks to Heather for her huge contribution and dedication to the University and wished her well for the future.

The Convener reported that following the departure of Graeme Bissett, there was a vacancy for a new Vice-Convener. Following the meeting of Nominations Committee a recommendation that Elspeth Orcharton be appointed as the Vice-Convener of Court for the duration of her appointment on Court.

Court approved the appointment of Elspeth Orcharton as the Vice-Convener of Court until September 2024.

There was the following declaration of interest in relation to business to be conducted at the meeting: Professor Sir Anton Muscatelli as a member of the USS Trustee Company, as an ongoing declaration, given the updates on the scheme.

It was recorded that Court had received a tour of the new Advanced Research Centre (ARC). Court's thanks for the tour were recorded.

Court was reminded that papers and business were confidential.

CRT/2021/039. Minutes of the meetings held on Wednesday 16 February 2022

The minutes were approved.

CRT/2021/40. Matters Arising

No matters were raised.

CRT/2021/41. Annual Report on Research & KPIs

Court received a presentation from Professor Chris Pearce, Vice Principal (Research & Knowledge Exchange) on the Annual Report on Research and KPI's. The Vice Principal drew Court's attention to the following:

- Research KPIs and progress, along with the introduction of 3 new KPIs – Doctoral Degrees awarded, Large grant capture and Collaborative and contract research income;
- The impact of the Covid pandemic and the mitigations which had been put in place, such as furlough, PGR stipend extensions and enhanced comms and Q&A sessions;
- Workstreams established to look at the delivery of the strategy;
- The Research Strategy 2020-2025 was acting as a north star to guide plans, projects, decisions and investments;
- Good progress was being made on the workstreams – talent, collaboration, creativity and investing in strengths.

Professor Pearce reported that the focus was now on Research futures which were institutional-level; cross-disciplinary; and challenge-oriented research areas that signalled a commitment to addressing major challenges. These areas would be grounded in the University's strengths and would help develop cross-disciplinary collaboration; two key areas would be addressing health inequalities and sustainable solutions to the climate emergency. Professor Pearce also indicated that the results for the Research Excellence were due in May 2022.

During the discussion it was noted that staff and students were exhausted due to the challenges that they had faced over the last two years and that discussions were ongoing about the best way to support staff and students. It was also noted that fixed-term contracts for research staff were being looked into, particularly 3-6 month contracts.

It was also noted that the mental health of PGR students had been impacted by Covid and that the way in which this cohort could be supported was being considered. It was noted that at present the number of students requesting extensions had not been looked into in depth but once the annual review process had been completed, a broader analysis would be undertaken.

Court thanked Professor Pearce for his presentation and recorded its thanks to the staff involved with all aspect of research over the last 12 months.

CRT/2021/42. Report from the Principal

CRT/2021/42.1 Geopolitical update

CRT/2021/42.1.1 Ukraine

Court members received a summary of some of the main issues in the external landscape which the Principal and senior colleagues were factoring into the decision-making at present. The University's current actions and considerations relating to Ukraine were outlined and Court members were asked to note that the situation was expected to evolve quickly as the University adapted to changing requirements.

The Principal reported that the University had signed public statements with their networks, the Guild for European Research-Intensive Universities, and CIVIS, the European Civic University Alliance, and communication platforms had been established. The University had made clear it stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and denounces in the strongest terms the actions of the Government of the Russian Federation.

It was noted that the University had reinforced the importance of always treating everyone in the community – regardless of their nationality or their views – with respect and dignity, and that they had reached out directly to all students and colleagues with links to Ukraine, the Russian Federation and Belarus.

Court welcomed the ongoing work at the University to support the humanitarian effort for Ukraine and thanked all those involved with this.

CRT/2021/42.1.2 Inflation and Energy Prices

Court noted the Principal's update in relation to increasing inflation and energy prices which were having an impact on the cost of living for students and staff. They were also impacting on the University through increased costs. It was noted that the University was continuing to explore the opportunities available to support students, including extending the use of student hardship funds.

The Principal reported that the Scottish Government Higher and Further Education Minister had written to all university Principals in February, asking them to encourage students most in need to apply for support and to prioritise the allocation of funding. So far, more than £5m had been distributed to help Higher Education students in Scotland facing financial hardship with basics like heating and other household costs. The support provided by the Scottish Government for students included:

- a £350 loan uplift for 2022-23 in higher education. The most disadvantaged students could now access £8,100 per year through a combination of bursary and loan;
- the introduction of a new 12 monthly payment scheme in 2022-23 for higher education students receiving the Care Experienced Bursary, so support was also available over the summer months.

Students adversely affected by the energy crisis had also been added to the Scottish Government's list of priority groups in the Discretionary Fund guidance, distributed by the University. Following discussions with the local trade unions the University was also making representations through UCEA that the pay negotiations for 2022-23 should see HE employers offering a significant uplift to pay to help address the cost of living pressures faced

by colleagues.

During the discussion the SRC President raised concerns about the impact of inflation and higher energy prices on students and stated that students were facing the biggest increase in the costs of living for decades. It was noted that this would negatively impact students as they would be required to find additional sources of funding. The cost of accommodation was also increasing alongside this. The Principal acknowledged that currently inflation and energy prices were having the biggest impact on the standard of living and that he was working with the Scottish Government, SMG and key staff to look for ways to support students. The University would be mindful of external pressures on students in determining tuition and accommodation fees.

CRT/2021/42.1.3 Covid -19

The Principal also reported that the situation with regard to the pandemic remained volatile in a number of countries, including China, and this might have an impact on the ability of some international students to return to China at the end of their studies in summer, or to join the University in person in the autumn. It was noted that the Chinese authorities had extended a lockdown of Shanghai to cover all its 25 million people after a fresh surge in Covid cases. Various other large Chinese cities and towns had also entered into full lockdown, and flights out of the country continued to be cancelled. Court noted that this could impact on accommodation due to the travel disruption; SMG would continue to monitor this closely.

CRT/2021/41.2 Higher Education Developments & Scottish Government Budget

Court also noted the Principals report - Paper 5 and the following areas were noted:

- SFC Indicative Funding allocations for 2022/23 had been announced, but statements on research funding had been delayed until after the publication of the REF results. The main Teaching Grant had increased by 1.14%; the 'Strategically Important Subject' top-up funding the university received for RUK students in Clinical and Lab-based subjects had gone up by £166k (4%) but this was offset somewhat by a reduction in the allocation of funded places (-164.7 places, -1.11%).
- The University had also received 80 Graduate Apprenticeship places, in line with what was needed to cover the current SFC funded GA student numbers.
- Final interviews for Professor Roibeard Ó Maolalaigh's successor as Vice-Principal and Head of College (Arts) had taken place and a decision had been taken to appoint Professor Jo Gill. Professor Gill would join the University in the summer from the University of Exeter where she currently holds the role of Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean of the College of Humanities.

Court also noted that following the retiral of Vice-Principal Corporate Engagement and Innovation, Bonnie Dean, Uzma Khan had taken on the role of Vice-Principal Economic Development and Innovation, and Professor Chris Pearce would be the Vice-Principal Research and Knowledge Exchange. It was noted that this arrangement would be reviewed in 3-4 months.

The Convener thanked the Principal for the update.

CRT/2021/43. Report from the University Secretary

Court noted the report from the University Secretary - Paper 6. The following areas were discussed in further detail.

CRT 2021.43.1 Gender Representation Objective

Court noted the report made in compliance with Section 8 of the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018. At present non-excluded lay Court members are 37.5% female against a target of 50%. An appointment to the current vacancy following the resignation of Linda Hann would be made shortly.

Court approved the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018 report.

CRT 2021.43.2 Lighthouse Lab

Court received an update on the Lighthouse Laboratory which had been providing state-of-the-art mass testing capability and related services as part of the nationwide effort against Covid-19 since 2020.

It was noted that the UK Health and Security Agency (the body responsible for public health protection and infectious disease capability across the UK) had now asked the University to reduce testing capacity over the next three months, and to exit from the current contract by 30 June. As the employer, the University was in formal consultation with the workforce and campus trade unions. There was considerable disquiet as the University had previously been advised that the contract would continue until 30 September. There was also media interest around the potential loss of jobs.

The University was in discussions with UKHSA to retain a small volume of resilience/surge capacity, which, if secured, would be consolidated on the top floor of the Teaching and Learning Centre at the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital. This would enable the University to return the teaching labs at QUEH to support the ongoing teaching commitments at postgraduate taught level.

In addition, the University was looking into legacy opportunities from the Lighthouse Laboratory, which included the commissioning of consultants to provide an assessment on this, particularly around the potential for wider diagnostics, with the outcome available shortly.

Court thanked the University Secretary for the update.

CRT 2021.43.3 Gender Based Violence & Sexual Harassment

Court noted that Morag Ross QC had now met almost all the people who asked to see her as part of her investigations. There would also be a number of follow-up meetings. At this stage the intention was to complete the investigation before the start of the next academic year. In the meantime, the University was implementing a number of interim actions developed by the Executive Director of People and Organisational Development and approved by the Senior Management Group.

It was agreed that Court would receive a further update at its next meeting in June.

CRT 2021.43.4 Convener appraisal and Annual Court Self-Assessment

The Convener left the meeting for this item, with the Vice-Convener Elspeth Orcharton 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. The report on the Convener's performance was very positive with some helpful suggestions in relation to the operational running of Court meetings. It was noted that the appraisal would continue to be undertaken annually.

CRT 2021.43.5 USS and Strike Action update

Court noted an update on the USS national discussions and the UCU announcement of further industrial action.

CRT 2021.43.6 Organisational Change

Court noted that following approval at the Court meeting in November for the organisational change within the College of MVLS a further update was provided which proposed the names for Schools within the College.

Court approved the School names within the College of MVLS.

CRT 2021.43.7 Directors of Research Institutes and Heads of School Appointments

Court noted the following changes:

College of Arts

School of Critical Studies

Professor Simon Kövesi had been appointed as Head of the School for four years until 31 July 2026.

School of Culture and Creative Arts

Professor Karen Lury had been appointed as Head of the School for four years until 31 July 2026.

College of Science and Engineering

James Watt School of Engineering

Professor Manuel Salmeron-Sanchez had been appointed as Head of the School for four years until 31 July 2026.

CRT 2021.43.8 GUU Constitution

Court noted that the updated Glasgow University Union Constitution had been approved on behalf of Court by the University Secretary.

The Convener thanked the University Secretary for the update.

CRT/2021/44. Student Matters, including: SEC Report; SRC President update

The Rector highlighted that she continued to work with individual students to provide support and help find resolutions were possible.

The SRC President highlighted that an SEC Strategy had been drafted. The strategy outlined the underpinning principles of the student experience and grouped activities under the three pillars of opportunity, wellbeing and inclusion. Enablers of partnerships, safe flexible space and sustainability were identified.

Court noted that students continued to be impacted by the increase in the cost of living.

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

CRT/2021/45. Reports of Court Committees

CRT/2021/45.1 Finance Committee

Gavin Stewart, chair of the Committee outlined the report from the Committee. Court noted that the Committee had received a presentation from the Executive Director of Finance on the main financial risks and opportunities. The Committee had also noted the paper outlining inflation and pricing where the strategy of increasing international fees to offset the impact of inflation was explored and noted that further discussions would take place at the next meeting. It was noted that the Committee had endorsed the proposal and process for budgets and investment for 2022/23 with the final budgets coming to the meeting in June 2022.

Court noted that the Committee had approved the TRAC Return for 2020/21 and three Capex projects – Hillhead St/ Great George Street £5m; ASBS & PGT Hub/Southern Gateway £10m; and Skabara Lab £2.8m.

Court noted that an additional paper had been circulated to members which outlined the future governance arrangements for the Strategic Property Joint Venture from April 2022 till incorporation and beyond. This proposal was an update to previous papers presented to Court and approved in June 2021 and included an update on progress to date and current status of the project. It was noted that a hotel on the campus would be a valuable addition.

Court approved the proposed governance arrangements for the Strategic Property Joint Venture as outlined in the paper.

The SRC President raised a query about the surplus being generated as outlined in the management accounts. Court noted that it was important that surplus generated by the University should be used to enhance and develop the student experience where possible.

The report was noted.

CRT/2021/45.2 Estates Committee

Ronnie Mercer, chair of the Committee, outlined the report from the Committee and reported that the Clarice Pears Building would be delayed until January 2022 due to the facade being removed to replace materials which had been recalled by the manufacturer.

The report was noted.

CRT/2021/45.3 Information Policy and Strategy Committee

Frank Coton, chair of the Committee, outlined the report from the Committee. Court noted that the Technology strategy financial investment plan had been updated to reflect: provisions for corporate systems replacement (students/staff/finance); research computing and staff computing direction. Court also noted that Information and cyber security was a key priority and a joint meeting of lay members of Audit & Risk and IPSC Committees and the Security Programme Board, supported by external independent cyber consultants, had taken place recently.

The report was noted.

CRT/2021/45.4 Audit and Risk Committee

Elsbeth Orcharton, chair of the Committee, outlined the report from the Committee. Court noted that the Committee had received internal audit reports on reviews of: Conflict of Interest and Strategic Risk Register.

Court also noted that the Committee had discussed the process for the replacement of

External Auditors. Court noted the lack of tenders for the role of external auditors and queried the timeframe between PWC's term of office as Internal Auditors and their appointment as External Auditors. It was reported that within PWC there were separate teams for internal and external auditors, which would help to prevent a conflict of interest by ensuring that the auditors were not reviewing their own work. Court requested that PWC should provide a written statement to confirm that their appointment as external auditors did not breach any regulations and that there were no Conflicts of Interest.

Court also recommended that the appointment of the external auditors is added to the risk register.

Court approved the appointment of PWC as the External Auditors.

The report was noted.

CRT/2021/45.5 People and Organisational Development Committee

June Milligan, chair of the Committee, outlined the report from the Committee. Court noted that the Committee had received an update from the Director of Strategic Recruitment & Talent Acquisition and the Head of P&OD (US) on strategic recruitment, workforce and succession planning activity, including developing the internal talent, increasing our diversity, and enhancing our employer brand. It was noted that the Committee also received an update on strategic activity including the latest position on the USS pension and industrial action, colleague engagement diversity and inclusion, and a presentation on the development of a new Colleague Wellbeing Strategy.

The report was noted

CRT/2021/45.6 Health Safety and Wellbeing Committee

Court noted the report.

CRT/2021/45.7 Nominations Committee

Lesley Sutherland, chair of the Committee, outlined the report from the Committee. Court noted that the Committee had received an update on the current recruitment process for the Co-opted member of Court and discussed the recommendations of the Selection Panel. Court also noted that Linda Hanna had been appointed as the Chair in SRUC and would therefore be stepping down as a Court Co-Opted member. It was noted that Linda would continue as a member of the Estates Committee.

Court noted the appointment of Shan Saba as a Co-Opted member of Court from 1 April 2022 for four years initially.

The report was noted.

CRT/2021/46. Senate Matters

Court noted the report from the Senate meetings held on the 7 April 2022. The Clerk of Senate reported that Senate had approved the College of MVLS school titles following the restructuring and had received a presentation from the World-Changing Glasgow Transformation Team.

The Clerk of Senate also reported that Senate had been informed that an Exam Sustainability Project had been established to support decision making about which exams should be held on campus and which exams should remain online for the forthcoming examination diets. The

Project was also considering how to create a sustainable examination diet for December 2022 and beyond, and a questionnaire would be circulated to staff shortly to gather their views on approaches to examining students.

Court noted that a University of Glasgow-Glasgow School of Art (UoG/GSA) Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) Joint Liaison Group had been established in response to the 2020 ELIR of GSA. Given that Glasgow University was the degree awarding body for GSA, it retained ultimate responsibility for the academic standards and quality of awards that were made in its name.

Court also noted the forthcoming ceremonial events which included catch-up graduation ceremonies for students whose ceremonies had been cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Convener thanked the Clerk of Senate for the report.

CRT/2021/47. Other Business

No substantive items were raised.

CRT/2021/48. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of Court will be held on Tuesday 21 June 2022 at 2pm. A Pre-Court briefing will take place at 12pm.

Further details on the venue and location of the meeting would be circulated to members shortly.