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**Court**

**Minute of Meeting held on Wednesday 19 February 2025 held in the Senate Room**

**Present:**

Gavin Stewart Co-opted Member (Elected Convener of Court), Dr Ghassan Abu-Sittah (Rector (Zoom)), Professor Sarah Armstrong (Elected Academic Staff Member), Professor Tara Brendle (Elected Academic Staff Member), Mary Jane Brouwers (Co-opted Member), Duncan Calvert (SRC Assessor), Professor Nicola Dandridge (Co-opted Member), Kerry Christie (Co-opted Member), Mr David Finlayson (Co-opted Member), Stuart Hoggan (General Council Assessor), Dr Bo Hu (Chancellor’s Assessor (Zoom)), Mr Christopher Kennedy (Elected Professional Services Representative (Zoom)), Professor Simon Kennedy (Elected Academic Staff Member), Jonathan Loukes (Co-opted Member), Paula McKerrow (Trade Union Nominee), Lorriane McMillan (Co-opted Member), Dr Christine Middlemiss (General Council Assessor), Pablo Moran Ruiz (SRC President), Professor Sir Anton Muscatelli (Principal), Professor Richard Reeve (Trade Union Nominee), Shan Saba (Co-opted Member), Professor Bethan Wood (Elected Academic Staff Member).

**Attending:**

Gregor Caldow (Executive Director of Finance), Professor Frank Coton (Senior Vice Principal and Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) (Zoom)), Dr David Duncan (Chief Operating Officer & University Secretary), Amber Higgins (Head of Court Office and Clerk to Court), Martin Sinclair (Chair of Audit and risk Committee), Jonathan Jones (Change Director, International Student Experience ) (For item – CRT/2024/31 only)), Uzma Khan (Vice Principal Economic Development and Innovation & Deputy COO) (For items – CRT/2024/32 & CRT/2024/34.1 only)), Kate Powell (Executive Officer, Principal’s Office) - Observing.

**Apologies:**

Cllr Susan Aitken (Glasgow City Council Assessor), Laic Khalique (Co-opted Member).

**CRT/2024/28. Announcements and declaration of Interests**

The Convener welcomed Kate Powell, (Executive Officer, Principal’s Office) to the meeting as an observer.

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

Court received a presentation by Professor Iain McInnes (Vice Principal and Head of College of Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences) as part of the Pre-Court meeting. Court’s thanks for the briefing were recorded.

Court was reminded that papers and business were confidential.

**CRT/2024/29. Minutes of the meetings held on Wednesday 20 November 2024**

The minutes were approved for the meeting of 20 November 2024 following minor amendment to CRT/2024/20.2 Finance Committee.

**CRT/2024/30. Matters Arising**

*CRT/2024/30.1 Socially Responsible Investment Policy (CRT/2024/18)*

A member of Court raised a concern about the Court decision to endorse the decision not to disinvest in the defence sector as it was leading to some unrest on the campus as demonstrated by the ongoing protest. The Convener of Court acknowledged the ongoing protest and reminded Court that the decision on divest had been approved by Court and would not be revisited.

Court noted that the SRI policy was under discussion and was expected to return to Court in April following minor amendments to Section 6 - Representation.

*CRT/2024/30.2 Finance Committee (CRT/2024/20.2)*

A query was raised about the Court minute in relation to the free-cash position projections until 2035 and the inclusion of potential amendments to the pay spinal points. The Convener of Court noted that the Finance Committee would consider them in due course but it would require a change in finance policy for the University to include items that were not yet agreed in their projections and would need to be fully considered by the Committee before any changes to policy were made.

*CRT/2024/30.2 Court Effectiveness Review – Autumn 2023 (CRT/2024/22.3)*

Court noted that there was backlog in publishing Court papers but efforts were being made to resolve this by June 2025.The Convener of Court noted that the Court Office aimed to ensure that Court minutes were published promptly following the next meeting (when they were approved by Court).

**CRT/2024/31. Student Experience Strategy**

Court received an update on the Student Experience Strategy and Action Plan by the University Secretary and Jonathan Jones (Change Director, International Student Experience). The Strategy was intended to provide students with fulfilling, rewarding and enriching experiences that would shape how they saw their place in the world and help them to become world-changers.

Court noted that 14 projects were supported by £6.8 million in strategic investment. These projects aimed to increase student opportunity, improve well-being, enhance inclusion and belonging, and make light touch enhancements to the physical and digital estate. Examples included the Community Inclusion Project, which had significantly increased student engagement and support for clubs and societies. The project had allowed for expanded club and society support and resources, with a substantial increase in grant applications and student participation. Court noted that several projects were nearing the end of their pilot periods and would undergo evaluation to determine their impact and potential continuation. Court encouraged this to be as expeditious a process as possible.

A query was raised about the use of KPIs and how new projects were identified. It was reported that the Student Experience Strategy fed into a large number of areas which were often diverse so measuring specific impact was hard, but improvements in the student experience recorded in the NSS and graduation data were measured on an annual basis as part of institutional KPIs. Court also noted that each project had defined benefits which were regularly monitored. A query was also raised about sector benchmarking and it was reported that a lot of information was shared across the sector on best practice and innovations to improve the student experience.

Court noted that several of the projects would be included in the upcoming budget SPR requests, but some of the areas required significant capital investment such as sports facilities, enhanced space for faith groups and clubs & society spaces. These would require more discussion.

Court thanked the University Secretary and Mr Jones for the update.

**CRT/2024/32. Innovation Strategy**

Court received a presentation by Uzma Khan (Vice Principal Economic Development and Innovation) on Innovation Strategy implementation.

During the presentation Court noted the following areas:

* Innovation Ecosystem: programmes such as the MedTech Fund, Infinity G venture builder program, and Innovation Clusters Fund - aimed to support early-stage innovation and commercialization efforts. The MedTech Fund, for example, received high-quality applications and had led to valuable connections and mentorship opportunities for participants.
* Student Enterprise: the expansion of support for student enterprise activities, included embedding enterprise education in the curriculum and providing grants for student startups. Success stories such as Citrus Labs and Kingdom Technologies were highlighted, showcasing the potential for student-led ventures to achieve significant growth and impact.
* IP and Commercialisation: The IP and commercialisation office had been strengthened, with a focus on supporting spinouts and managing patents. Notable achievements included significant funding raised by spinouts and the launch of social enterprises.
* Civic and Economic Impact: engagement with local communities through initiatives such as the Civic Fund and skills development programs. Strategic infrastructure projects in the Glasgow Riverside Innovation District were also highlighted, demonstrating the University's commitment to contributing to the local economy and community development.

Court noted that steps were being made to embed enterprise support in the curriculum and that this would be a focus going forward. A query was raised about academic promotion criteria in relation to innovation and consultancy work and it was agreed that this would be reviewed. A member of Court also raised the issue of MPA and T&S staff having access to the consultancy service. Court noted that the initial focus was on the R&T job family, but it was acknowledged that this issue that had been raised previously and would be revisited once the initial service had been established and was up and running. A query was also raised about the ethical considerations related to new technologies and if these potentially should be considered earlier on in the projects.

Court thanked Ms Khan for the update.

**CRT/2024/33. Report from the Principal**

Court noted the report from the Principal – Paper 6. The following areas were discussed in further detail:

* Recruitment and admissions updates – Court noted that the international student recruitment landscape continued to be challenging for the UK higher education sector, with the vast majority of institutions, including Russell Group peers, signalling a downturn in applications against this point in the cycle last year. A number of mitigations were being deployed to increase the applicant funnel and improve the conversion rate. These included a review of entry requirements, offer optimisation, targeted scholarships, increased in-country resource and new activities.
* Scottish Budget 2025/26 – the Scottish Budget was announced on 4 December 2024 with the HE Resource budget line increased from £760.7m to £773.6 and the HE Capital budget line increased from £356.9m to £368.3m. At present, it was unclear how this would be allocated to individual institutions and if there would be any impact of the financial issues facing other institutions on grant allocations.
* Post-School Reform Legislation – Court noted that the Scottish Government had introduced the Tertiary Education and Training (Funding and Governance) (Scotland) Bill with the aim of simplifying funding for college and university students as well as apprentices.
* University Rankings – The Times Higher Education (THE) had released the University’s position in the World Reputation Rankings, but there were errors with the data and Court would be informed subsequently of the outcome. (Secretary’s note: data released to us by the THE after the Court meeting has placed us 107th (an uplift of seven places) from the 300 ranked institutions.

The Principal also reported that he had agreed to write an independent report for the Scottish Labour Party on regional economic development, and that he had sought permission to do this from the Convenor and Deputy Convenor of Court. It was noted that the work would be published once the Principal had stepped down from his role at the University.

**CRT/2024/34. Report from the University Secretary**

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

*CRT/2024/34.1 UKVI*

Court noted the following a visit in June 2024 by UKVI, they were now requiring the University to implement an action plan to address “a series of minor breaches” in the data held on international students.

Court noted that an action plan had been issued to deal with the matters raised by UKVI, covering record-keeping, reporting processes and attendance monitoring. Work was proceeding at pace and a mock audit was being conducted to assess progress and identify any remaining gaps. UKVI would undertake a re-audit in early April 2025. The University Secretary emphasised the importance of thorough preparation and continuous monitoring to ensure a successful outcome. For the future, improved governance arrangements and a centralised team would be put in place.

Court noted that the matter was being treated as a top priority by SMG with weekly reports provided on the work to address the action plan.

*CRT/2024/34.2 Court Effectiveness Review – Autumn 2023*

Court noted that the Court Governance Working Review (CGWR) had revised the process and regulations for Elected Academic Staff Members of Court. The election and appointment rules would bring the elections for academic staff members in line with those used for the SRC President, Rector and Convener of Court. Court noted a number of comments and it was agreed that the CGWR would review the comments and the regulations would be brought back to Court in April 2025.

Court approved the revision of the membership lists on Court Sub-Committees Terms of Reference to be changed from ‘Elected Academic Staff Members of Court’ to ‘Staff Representatives from Court’.

*CRT/2024/34.3 SFC* Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Strategy 2025-26 to 2029-30

Court noted that for Academic Year 2024-25, SFC had discontinued its University Innovation Fund (UIF) and replaced it with the Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund (KEIF). KEIF distributed more funding to HEIs than UIF in exchange for a commensurate increase in accountability around use of funding and demonstration of KE&I linked outcomes. Court received the 5-year strategy setting out the University’s ambitions and strategic approach for KE&I and suggested that in future years it could be strengthened to include more information about student enterprise.

Court approved the Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund (KEIF) Strategy.

Court also noted the Learning and Teaching Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP) which had been submitted to the SFC on 2 December 2024.

*CRT/2024/34.4 Organisational Change Governance Committee (OCGC) – SPHSU Review*

Court noted the Report by Professor Jill Morrison, which largely endorsed the approach taken by the College of MVLS in response to the withdrawal of external funding for the SPHSU but recommended the University take steps to reduce workload stress, ensure clearer communications, and review key policies to strengthen equality and diversity provisions. Further refinements to the Equality Impact Assessment process, incorporating external expert advice, were also suggested. It was reported that OCGC had recently meet to discuss the report and some members had expressed concerns over the conclusions and recommendations.

During the discussion concerns were raised about the independence of the statisticians consulted during the redundancy process, whether the equality impact assessment should have been conducted earlier in the process and the reputational impact of the decision to make the staff redundant. It was noted that initially, 92 individuals were at risk, but this number had been reduced to 68, comprising 35 professional support staff and 33 academic staff. It was reported to Court that local UCU representatives had raised a formal notice of "failure to agree" which meant a formal dispute resolution mechanism would now be implemented.

A query was raised about the staff who had been involved in the interview process and if more staff from SPHSU should have been spoken to. It was noted that a request had been made for the minutes from the individual meetings but it was unclear at this stage if these could be released due to confidentiality.

The Convener of Court noted that the following steps would take place concurrently:

* The formal dispute resolution process would be taken forward.
* The formal redundancy notification process would continue.
* Legal advice would also be sought on the Equality Impact Assessment which had taken place as part of the organisational change process.

A further update would be provided at the Court meeting in April 2025.

*CRT/2024/34.5 Death of a Student*

Court noted that tragically, a former student had died in December 2024. At the request of the University Secretary, the former Clerk of Senate, Professor Jill Morrison had conducted a review into the University’s interactions with the student. The report had highlighted a number of areas that the University would address as a matter of urgency.  Court noted that the University was doing everything it could to support the student's family.

Court’s sincere sympathies for the student’s family and friends were recorded.

**CRT/2024/35. Student Matters, including: SEC Report; SRC President update**

*CRT/2024/35.1 Rector update*

No substantive matters were raised.

*CRT/2024/35.2 SRC update*

The SRC President reported that the SRC was focusing on accessibility, community inclusion, and the upcoming spring elections. The Community Inclusion Project had been successful in supporting club and society events, with over 5,800 students engaging in the first semester supporting areas such as Black History Month, Halloween, Diwali and 16 days of activism on GBV. The SRC President also noted that work would continue with the University to make the campus more accessible and inclusive which included ensuring that there was suitable space for clubs and societies.

*CRT/2024/35.3 Student Experience Committee*

Court noted the Student Experience Committee report from 18 November 2024 which included updates on: student experience strategy, cost of living action group, new student accommodation, NSS results and updates form the student bodies.

The Convener thanked the SRC President for his report.

**CRT/2024/36. Reports of Court Committees**

*CRT/2024/36.1 Finance Committee*

Jonathan Loukes, chair of the Committee, reported that the Committee had received the USGAAP University's financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2024. The Committee had also discussed the budget setting process, costs savings and the impact of the NI increases and the decrease in international student fee income on the free-cash projections.

During the discussion Court noted the update on the university's financial position and the following areas were discussed in further detail:

* Cash Flow Forecasts –The University's operating cash flow and cash balances were currently ahead of budget. Court noted the importance of maintaining a strong financial position to support the University's strategic initiatives and adherence to the operating cash policy.
* Budget Considerations – the budgets were in the early stages of discussion with the final budgets due to come to Court in June 2025. Potential savings and cost-management measures were being discussed, which included a focus on professional services, vacant positions, and consumable spend. Further budget talks would be taking place and Finance Committee would be kept informed about the progress being made.
* Strategic Investments – Court noted that strategic investments in areas such as MVLS growth, commercial income, and student experience were being considered alongside capital spend on IT and building projects.

Court also noted the progress with the Strategic Property and Investment Development (SPID) as well as the development of the Church Street site for student residences and innovation spaces through a joint venture. A number of the key considerations for the SPID projects were highlighted which include the importance of retaining title to the sites and ensuring alignment with the University's strategic goals. The Executive Director of Finance reminded Court that the governance approval process for the SPID projects had been approved by Court in 2022.

*CRT/2024/36.2 Audit & Risk Committee*

Martin Sinclair, chair of the Committee, reported that the Committee had received the USGAAP University's financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2024; these had been formally approved by the Committee.

During discussion it was noted that there was a need for a robust approach to regulatory compliance, acknowledging the dynamic nature of regulatory frameworks and landscape. It was reported that the Committee would shortly be reviewing the approach to regulatory compliance and its oversight and would report back to the next meeting of Court.

*CRT/2024/36.3 Information Policy and Strategy Committee*

Professor Frank Coton, chair of the Committee, reported that the Committee had received progress reports on cyber security initiatives and the implementation of a new library management system.

*CRT/2024/36.4 Remuneration Committee*

SMG members left the meeting for this item.

*CRT/2024/36.4.1 SMG and Principal’s Remuneration*

Kerry Christie, chair of the Committee, reported that the Committee had met in December to discuss senior staff remuneration and a presentation on the current landscape and professorial pay. The presentation had also highlighted the Professorial Reward Strategy for the University and various mechanisms for movement within and across the University’s Professorial Zones.

Business at the meeting had also covered the Committee’s annual report, which included: a summary of the current strategic context and institutional performance; the Principal’s report on SMG performance and reward; the review of the Principal’s performance, which had been undertaken by the Convener of Court and the Chair of the Remuneration Committee, following consultation with Court members; Grade 10 Professorial and Professional Staff performance and reward; and Voluntary Severance cases.

Court noted that the Committee had agreed with the proposal outlined by the Principal at the meeting, that SMG would receive the 2.5% national pay uplift. It was also noted that the Committee had agreed with the proposal outlined by the Convener of Court at the meeting, that the Principal would receive 2.5% in line with the national pay uplift. Court noted that the Principal’s salary uplift had been in line with the contractual arrangements agreed by Court and had been subject to satisfactory performance, which had been confirmed.

SMG members returned to the meeting.

Court agreed that the communication in relation to the various mechanisms for movement within and across the University’s Professorial Zones would be strengthened. A query was also raised about the appointment of the Vice-Principals and Heads of College and it was noted that this was undertaken by the Principal following input from various colleagues, Heads of Schools, other SMG members and senior professional support staff. It was noted that this was not an automatic reappointment process and there had been occasions when appointments had not been renewed.

*CRT/2024/36.5 Nominations Committee*

Court approved the following appointments:

* Laic Khalique as a Co-opted Member of Court for a further 4 years from the 1 April 2025.
* Lorraine McMillan to the Estates and Sustainability Committee.

*CRT/2024/36.6 Health Safety and Wellbeing Committee*

The University Secretary, chair of the Committee provided an update on health and safety issues, including the restructuring of the health and safety team and ongoing improvements in safety practices. Court noted there was ongoing engagement with trade unions to address safety issues and improve overall the safety culture within the University. It was also noted that SMG also received regular updates on Health and Safety during this transition phase.

*CRT/2024/36.7 Estates and Sustainability Committee*

Stuart Hoggan, chair of the Committee, provided a verbal update on the Committee’s activity since the last Court meeting which included: changes in the committee structure to include sustainability in its remit; discussions on the development of the Church Street site for student residences and innovation spaces through a joint venture; progress on Keystone project and the Health Innovation Hub, both of which were on track and within budget; and the ongoing maintenance and improvement projects across the campus, including accessibility and fire safety upgrades.

**CRT/2024/37. Senate Matters**

Court noted the report from the Senate meeting held on the 12 December 2024 and 6 February 2025. Court noted the upcoming annual Cathedral Service due to be held on the 9 March 2025 which would celebrate Glasgow's 850th anniversary.

**CRT/2024/38. Complaints Handling Procedure Annual Report**

Court noted the annual report on complaints handling and Alistair Wilson (Deputy Secretary and Head of Legal) highlighted the efforts to improve frontline resolution and reduce the number of complaints escalating to stage 2.

Court noted a number of key points which included:

* Complaints Data: The new CRM had allowed more analysis of complaints data to identify trends and areas for improvement.
* Frontline Resolution: The Complaints Team had started to put more emphasis on resolving complaints at the frontline to prevent escalation.
* Training and Support: Court noted that Complaints and Conduct staff had also undertaken accredited mediator training to support local resolution efforts.

Court welcomed the University efforts to resolve complaints more efficiently and prevent them from escalating to formal stages and noted that the number of complaints had fallen. It was agreed that it would be beneficial to have an internal target for dealing with complaints as at present a number of complaints were taking over 60 days to resolve.

**CRT/2024/39. Any Other Business**

No substantive matters were raised.

**CRT/2024/40. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of Court would be held on Wednesday 23 April 2025 at 1.45pm. A Pre-Court briefing would take place at 12pm on AI.