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**Court**

**Minute of Meeting held on Wednesday 23 April 2025 held in the Senate Room**

**Present:**

Gavin Stewart Co-opted Member (Elected Convener of Court), Dr Ghassan Abu-Sittah (Rector), Cllr Susan Aitken (Glasgow City Council Assessor), Professor Sarah Armstrong (Elected Academic Staff Member), Professor Tara Brendle (Elected Academic Staff Member), MaryJane Brouwers (Co-opted Member), Duncan Calvert (SRC Assessor), Kerry Christie (Co-opted Member), Mr David Finlayson (Co-opted Member), Stuart Hoggan (General Council Assessor), Dr Bo Hu (Chancellor’s Assessor), Mr Christopher Kennedy (Elected Professional Services Representative (Zoom)), Professor Simon Kennedy (Elected Academic Staff Member (Zoom)), Laic Khalique (Co-opted Member (Zoom)), Jonathan Loukes (Co-opted Member (Zoom)), 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)), 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), Professor Chris Pearce, Vice-Principal (Research and Knowledge Exchange (For item – CRT/2024/44 only)), Nadia Ness (Executive Director of Transformation (For item – CRT/2024/45 only)), Graham Stein (Director of Student Lifecyle (For item – CRT/2024/45 only)),Ciara Lightbody(Director of Business Change (For item – CRT/2024/45 only)), and Nicola Cameron (Director: Property Joint Ventures) (For item – CRT/2024/46 only)).

**Apologies:**

Professor Nicola Dandridge (Co-opted Member)

**CRT/2024/41. Announcements and declaration of Interests**

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; the Principal in his new role as President of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and also an independent report by the Principal on 'regional economic development' commissioned by the Scottish Labour Party; and Professor Richard Reeve reported that he would be standing in the forthcoming Academic Members of Court elections which related to item CRT/2024/50.2 *Court Effectiveness Review – Elected Academic Staff Regulations.*

Court received a presentation by Professor Ana Basiri (Professor of Geospatial Data Science) on AI 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/2024/42. Minutes of the meetings held on Wednesday 19 February 2025**

The minutes were approved for the meeting of 19 February 2025 following minor amendment to CRT/2024/32. Innovation Strategy.

**CRT/2024/43. Matters Arising**

No substantive matters were raised.

**CRT/2024/44. Research Strategy**

Court received a presentation by Professor Chris Pearce, (Vice-Principal for Research & Knowledge Exchange) on the University’s 2020-2025 Research Strategy. The paper provided a brief update on research performance and outcome and of the major and current issues in the sector related to research. Court noted the following key points:

* Research Strategy: The current research strategy (2020-2025) was discussed, with a focus on the development of the next strategy. Professor Pearce emphasised the importance of continuity and the opportunity to be more ambitious in the new strategy. The consultation process for the new strategy had been broad, involving various stakeholders across the institution.
* Research Performance: It was reported that there was a positive trend in research performance, with an increase in award values and large grant captures. It was noted that while year-on-year comparisons can be problematic due to the "lumpy" nature of awards, the overall trend was positive.
* Funding Environment: The external research policy and funding environment were described as challenging, with the UK Government's spending review impacting funding availability. However, opportunities exist, particularly in defence R&D funding and Horizon Europe.
* Organisational Updates: Key projects, such as the future-proofing of the James Watt Nanofabrication Centre, were highlighted. Court also noted the appointment of Dr. Sumi David as the new Executive Director of Research Services.
* Research Excellence Framework (REF)**:** The university's participation in the pilot for the future REF People, Culture and Environment component was discussed, with feedback from those involved indicating that the pilot may be too burdensome to scale fully.

During the discussion the role of the Advanced Research Centre (ARC) in facilitating collaboration and the need for a values-driven research strategy was noted. The discussion also touched on the challenges of balancing teaching and research responsibilities, particularly in the social sciences and arts and also the impact of geopolitical changes and the recall of funding. Court noted that due to the complexity and scale of the University there could be areas of microculture that did not reflect People and Culture Environment report but it was important to set out these expectations and challenge behaviour that fell short of this. A query was raised about the Hunterian Museum linkage with the research strategy and it was agreed that this would be looked at.

Court thanked Professor Chris Pearce for his update.

**CRT/2024/45. Transformation Update**

Court received an update from Nadia Ness (Executive Director of Transformation), Ciara Lightbody (Director of Business Change) and Graham Stein (Director of Student Lifecyle) on the Transformation and the cross-University programmes that directly enabled delivery of key themes within University Strategy. Court noted the following key points:

* Service Excellence: Aimed to simplify and improve professional services, reduce bureaucracy, and enhance clarity and efficiency. The programme had engaged with various stakeholders across the institution to gather feedback and identify areas for improvement.
* Routes to Enrolment: This programme focused on transforming the student enrolment process to improve efficiency and the student experience. The team had identified and implemented tactical changes to streamline the process.
* MyGrades: A new platform for managing student grades, MyGrades aimed to streamline processes and improve consistency. The platform had been piloted and was being rolled out across the institution.

During the discussion Court noted the progress being made on MyGrades and welcomed the improvements to the student assessment and feedback experience. A query was raised about the use of both Moodle and MyGrade templates as this created additional work and it was agreed that this would be taken back by the team. It was also noted that there was a core project plan that included all the system changes and risks across the University to ensure that there were no issues with systems competing for implementation or wider knock-on effects.

Court thanked Nadia Ness, Ciara Lightbody and Graham Stein for the update.

**CRT/2024/46. Strategic Property Investment and Development (SPID)**

Court received an update on the proposal to select a Commercial Funding Partner which detailed the background to the Strategic Property Investment and Development Board (SPID) from Gregor Caldow (Executive Director of Finance) and Nicola Cameron (Director of Joint Ventures). Court noted that previously the University had approved entering into a joint venture to redevelop Church Steet, with a deal to deliver this falling through in late 2022 due to economic uncertainty and high borrowing rates. Since then the SPID board had been progressing work to redevelop Church Street and was set to relaunch selection of a joint venture partner.

Court discussed the governance and financial aspects of a joint venture project for student residences and innovation spaces. The project involved developing university-owned land, including some listed buildings. It was noted that it was important to maintain the University's involvement in the project due to its strategic nature and the need for pastoral care in student residences. It was also reported that this would allow the University to develop on campus residences which would support students with access requirements. The development of the various plots would ensure the long-term fabric and safety of the buildings involved.

During the discussion a query was raised about the loss of Lilybank car park and the effect on disabled parking in the area. Court noted that this would be a decision for the Planning Office of Glasgow City Council, who would fully assess the implications and undertake an equality impact assessment in accordance with planning regulations. A member of Court raised concerns about the impact of student residences on the local community and businesses, and it was noted that it would be for the planning officers to determine the outcome and assess any wider implications for the local community. Court also discussed the membership of the SPID Board, and it was noted that any decisions requiring governance approval would be forthcoming through Court Committees and Court following the normal governance process and approvals.

Court approved the re-endorsement of the governance approach for the Strategic Property Investment and Development project (SPID). It was agreed that the staff members of Court would confirm if they wished to nominate a staff member to be part of the SPID Board.

Court agreed that it would be beneficial for new Court members to receive a summary of why the SPID project was the best approach for the University to deliver residences and innovation facilities.

Court thanked Gregor Caldow and Nicola Cameron for the update

**CRT/2024/47. SRI Policy**

Court noted Paper 7 SRI Policy which had been updated following the discussion at the Court meeting in November 2024. The Convener of Court reminded Court members of the discussion that had taken place at the November meeting, including highlighting the vote in favour of continuing to invest in the defence sector. It was reported that since the last Court meeting there had been a referendum of students held by the SRC and that a number of letters and emails had been received which had called for an extraordinary meeting of Court and a reversal of the Court vote.

The SRC President reported on the SRC Referendum on UofG Arms Divestment where students had demonstrated overwhelming support for the University to cease investments in companies that derive more than 10% of their revenue from the defence sector. The motion passed with 89.3% of votes in favour - 8,668 students voted Yes to divestment, with 9,706 students casting their votes. This turnout was significantly higher than any other student-motivated matter in recent memory. Court noted that the turnout was around 19.2% of the eligible student population.

During the discussion a query was raised about the University's legal liability if it continued to invest in companies involved in the defence sector. The Deputy Secretary clarified that the University, as a minority shareholder, was highly unlikely to be legally liable for the actions of these companies but no formal legal advice had been sought. A query was also raised about the previous communication issued following the last Court meeting as it was felt that this was confusing and that it would be helpful to ensure that any further University communications clearly outlined the reasons for staying invested. A member of Court raised concerns about repeating the discussion that had taken place in November, adding that the recent student vote and staff engagement with the previous survey showed that the majority of staff and students had not expressed support for these views. It was also suggested that staff and students who hold opposing views were unable to express their view without fear of being intimidated or targeted.

Following lengthy discussion, Court agreed to approve the SRI Policy as it stands. It was also noted that it would be beneficial for Court members to have sight of the mapping of the University's relationships with the defence sector and the value of these relationships.

**CRT/2024/48. Application of conduct rules to student protests**

Court noted that a number of student protests had taken place in relation to divestment and the SRI Policy which was had been discussed under item *CRT/2024/47 – SRI Policy*.

As the Senior Senate Assessor, Professor Simon Kennedy outlined the approach to handling disciplinary and conduct-related issues and clarified the distinction between academic and non-academic misconduct, noting that non-academic matters could be resolved at either level one or level two. The importance of proportional responses to misconduct and the need for clear guidelines were highlighted.

The University Secretary updated Court on the university's approach to handling protests and demonstrations, emphasising the need to balance freedom of expression with the safety and well-being of the University community. The importance of maintaining open communication with protestors and addressing their concerns respectfully was highlighted.

Court noted that the approach taken so far had been to facilitate peaceful demonstration but any action disrupting teaching or events or limiting access to buildings would lead to students who were identified being dealt with under the Student Code of Conduct. It was noted that minimal disciplinary action had taken place so far and that action had only been taken where criminal damage or harassment/intimidation had been carried out.

During the discussion concerns were raised about the potential criminalisation and securitisation of the campus, particularly regarding the wearing of masks during protests and the possible use of doxxing to identify protesters which could be used to cause harm to the individual in the future. Concerns were also raised about the gathering of data on individuals attending events and Court noted that this would be investigated further.

The University Secretary reported that police were only called on to campus when there was a public order concern or criminal damage had taken place. Concerns for frontline staff who were dealing with the protesters were highlighted. Court agreed that a balance should be maintained between allowing peaceful protests and keeping order, with some Court members expressing worry about the impact of intimidating behaviour on staff and prospective students and the need to support these individuals also. It was noted that this concern had also been raised at the Senate meeting.

It was noted that it was important that the University was open and transparent about when the police would be called to handle protests to ensure the right to protest was protected. Court also acknowledged that it was important that students were not treated as exceptional cases and unchallenged on their behaviour and that they should face equal treatment to those who undertake protests elsewhere in the city.

Court also discussed a possible change in student Code of Conduct to make the

wearing of masks (except for religious and health reasons) a disciplinary offence. Court noted that any policy changes relating to student behaviour and conduct was a matter for Senate and that legal and equality advice would be sought. The SRC President and some Court members expressed concerns about a possible ban in the wearing of facemasks as it would be difficult to enforce and could lead to potential human rights breaches. Court noted that it was important that staff dealing with protesters were able to identify students vs members of the public to ensure the wellbeing of all staff and students on campus.

The Rector noted that he felt that University had tried to deflate the situation where possible and had had a very fluid policy which had meant the protests had not escalated whilst noting that protests can escalate quickly.

Court agreed that it would be beneficial to ensure that all staff and students received guidance, especially those on the frontline, on what action to take if they were confronted by protests and whom they should contact.

Following the discussion Court acknowledging the complexity of the issues discussed and the need for ongoing dialogue. It was also noted that it may be beneficial for some Court members to meet with the student protesters, and it was agreed that the Convener of Court would discuss this with the University Secretary and Principal.

**CRT/2024/49. Report from the Principal**

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

* Recruitment and admissions updates – Court noted the impact of the uncertainty over student numbers on admissions and financial planning. It was reported that the University was monitoring the situation and exploring additional ways to attract international students.
* Sector Issues – Court noted Scottish universities were facing significant financial strain, with eight of 18 institutions reporting deficits totalling over £220 million. The crisis had been exacerbated by declining international student income, rising costs, and real-terms cuts in public funding.
* Immigration White Paper – The potential impact of the UK Government's upcoming immigration white paper was highlighted along with the efforts being made to influence government policy through the Russell Group.

The Principal reported that a video had been shared with the University which discussed some of the sectoral challenges and how the University was responding. The discussion touched on some of the current financial and geo-political issues impacting the UK higher education sector and the uncertainty they created. It also outlined how the University was navigating the current climate through its financial framework and remaining cost conscious.

**CRT/2024/50. Report from the University Secretary**

Court noted the report from the University Secretary – Paper 9. The following areas were discussed in further detail.

*CRT/2024/50.1 UKVI*

Court noted that following a UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI) audit in June 2024 the University received written notification that the audit had found “minor breaches” in the University’s compliance. An action plan was implemented in December and a re-audit took place between 8-9 April 2025. It was reported that the audit had gone as well as could be expected and that the legal adviser was confident of a positive outcome.  At some stage in the near future, a lessons learned paper and an outline of proposed management and governance arrangements going forward would be presented to SMG and the Audit and Risk Committee.

*CRT/2024/50.2 Court Effectiveness Review – Elected Academic Staff Regulations*

Court noted that the Court Governance Working Review (CGWR) had revised the process and regulations for Elected Academic Staff Members of Court following discussion at the last Court meeting. During the discussion concerns were raised about the ability to manage the use of email lists for campaigning purposes and official endorsements. Court however concluded that it was important to maintain fairness to all candidates and that use of official endorsements should not be permitted. The manifestos for each candidate would be circulated to the electorate and the Court Office would ensure that these were publicised as widely as possible.

Following discussion, Court agreed that there should be an elected academic member from each college.

Court approved the revised process and regulations for the election of academic staff members of Court and noted that the wording for 8.2b would be reviewed to ensure that it was not contradictory.

*CRT/2024/50.3 Training for Dismissal Appeal Panel Members*

Court approved the list of senior academic colleagues to be trained to sit on certain appeal panels (e.g. appeals against dismissal) as outlined in Annex 2. Court noted that it had been agreed that a number of UCU members would also undertake the training to ensure that they fully understood the process and could advise their members accordingly. Court also noted that the gender balance of the list would be reviewed when further changes were suggested.

*CRT/2024/50.4 Gender Representation Objective*

Court approved Annex 3, which is a report made in compliance with Section 8 of the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018 following minor amendment.

*CRT/2024/50.4 Public Sector Equality Duty – Equality Outcome 2025-2029*

Court noted the Equality Outcomes Report which had been considered by Equality and Diversity Strategy Committee (EDSC) in March 2025. The report outlined the progress on the 2021-2025 Equality Outcomes, the internal and external factors influencing the proposed set of Equality Outcomes, and the consultation process conducted to engage staff and students in setting the University’s new Equality Outcomes for 2025-2029.

*CRT/2024/50.5 Organisational Change Governance Committee (OCGC) – SPHSU Review*

Court noted that following discussion at its last meeting, Shepherd and Wedderburn (S&W) had provided the opinion that the University had indeed demonstrated that the EDI impact of the approach being taken to the SPHSU had been and was being appropriately considered in line with the University’s legal and statutory obligations.

Court also noted that the formal dispute lodged by UCU had been resolved. The convenor advised Court that a lessons learned exercise would be undertaken in the new session to reflect on the SPHSU process and issues.

*CRT/2024/50.6 Head of School Appointments*

Court noted the following appointments:

*College of Social Sciences - Adam Smith Business School*

Professor Graeme Roy had been appointed as the interim Head of the School, from 14 April 2025 to 31 December 2025.

*College of Arts and Humanities - School of Modern Languages & Cultures*

Professor Nina Parish had been appointed as the Head of the School for four years, from 1 August 2025 to 31 July 2029.

*CRT/2024/50.7 Death of a student in the School of Geographical and Earth Sciences (GES)*

Court noted that following the last meeting the case had been reviewed and reassurance given that there was no systemic issue within GES or the wider University. A review of Credit Refused code usage over the past two years confirmed that this was an isolated incident. Two training sessions had been held with GES exam board representatives:

* The first, prior to the February board, involved direct support from the Chair of the Academic Regulations Committee to ensure procedures were correctly followed.
* The second covered the roles and responsibilities of exam boards, regulatory compliance, handling exceptional cases, and compassionate communication.

A follow-up session was being planned for ahead of the May exam boards to support ongoing compliance. This training, which was initially developed for GES, would also be rolled out University-wide in advance of the May boards, targeting exam board chairs and assessment officers. Court also noted that the student’s family had requested further information, which the University would provide.

**CRT/2024/51. Student Matters, including: SEC Report; SRC President update**

*CRT/2024/51.1 Rector update*

No substantive matters were raised.

*CRT/2024/51.2 SRC update*

The SRC President reported the SRC had recently visited the campus in China which had allowed the SRC to visit the student services and learnt about the support provided. A number of inconsistencies had been identified – these would be discussed with University colleagues. It was also reported that the SRC was working closely with the University on the student voice within the quality framework.

The SRC President highlighted the recent elections which had seen the highest voter turnout since 2017 and second highest in the last 30 years, with 4,228 votes cast which showed the increasing level of engagement from the students.

*CRT/2024/51.3 Student Experience Committee*

Court noted the Student Experience Committee reports from the 22 January and 11 March 2025.

The Convener thanked the SRC President for his report.

**CRT/2024/52. Reports of Court Committees**

*CRT/2024/52.1 Finance Committee*

Court noted that a joint workshop on Project SIERRA had been held with the Finance Committee and Audit & Risk Committee which discussed the implementation of a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system and research management system, considering the risks and benefits of a "big bang" implementation versus a phased approach. Gregor Caldow (Executive Director of Finance) reported that Project SIERRA was on track to complete Phase 1, with a planned end date of April 25.  Phase II involved preparation for procurement of product and systems implementation partners and was due to be concluded later in the summer.

Court noted the Phase II Business Case, which sought £17.6m to fund a full project team had been approved by Investment Committee, Information Policy and Strategy Committee and Finance Committee.

Court approved the investment request for £17.6m and noted that this had been put forward to Court for formal approval as the total Project spend was due to be over £25m.

Court noted the remainder of the report from the Committee.

*CRT/2024/52.2 Estates and Sustainability Committee*

Court noted the report from the Committee and that the annual update on the Glasgow Green: The University of Glasgow Response to the Climate Emergency - Action Plan would be presented at the next Court meeting.

*CRT/2024/52.3 Information Policy and Strategy Committee*

Court noted the report from the Committee.

*CRT/2024/52.4 Audit & Risk Committee*

Court noted the report from the Committee.

*CRT/2024/52.5 Health Safety and Wellbeing Committee*

Court noted the report from the Committee and the Annual Report.

**CRT/2024/53. Senate Matters**

Court noted the report from the Senate meeting held on the 10 April 2025.

**CRT/2024/54. Any Other Business**

*CRT/2024/54.1 Congratulations*

Court passed on their congratulations to Rachel Sandison (Deputy Vice-Chancellor – External Engagement and Vice-Principal – External Relations) who was appointed as the Scottish Government's Trade and Investment Envoy for International Education and to Duncan Calvert (SRC Assessor) who was elected as the next SRC President from 1 July 2025.

*CRT/2024/54.2* Periodic Subject Reviews (PSRs)

The Convener of Court encouraged Court members to participate in Periodic Subject Reviews (PSRs) to gain deeper insights into the life of the University and the student and staff experience within individual subjects and Schools. Any member of Court interested should contact the Clerk of Court for further information.

**CRT/2024/55. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of Court would be held on Tuesday 24 June 2025 at 1.45pm. A Pre-Court briefing on the Information Technology Strategy would take place at 12pm.