



**MINUTES OF UNIVERSITY COURT**

**3 October 2023**

**Court-Senate Room, Collins Building, Richmond Street, Glasgow**

**Present:** Dame Sue Bruce (Convener), Paula Galloway (Vice-Convener), Professor Sir Jim McDonald (Principal), Professor Scott MacGregor (Vice-Principal), Neelam Bakshi, Charles Berry, Virginia Beckett, Elaine Blaxter, Melfort Campbell, Professor Jonathan Delafield-Butt, Mary Jo Jacobi, Justyna Kardasz, Clyde Marwick, Belinda Oldfield, Catriona Schmolke, Professor Jan Sefcik, Michael Timar, Dr David Pritchard, Chris Jones.

**Attending by videolink:** Fiona Salzen, Mary Jo Jacobi, Peter Young.

**Other Attendees:** Beth Lawton, Professor Douglas Brodie, Gillian Docherty, Dr Stuart Fancey, Professor Duncan Graham, Professor David Hillier, Louise McKean, Lucy Noble, Wesley Rennison, Professor Ian Rivers, Gordon Scott, Sarah Parry and Chrissie Finnigan. Meryl Levington and Fiona Ireland (item 6 only).

**Apologies:** Eva Curran, Cllr Richard Bell, Stephen Ingledew, Professor Yvonne Perrie, Professor Tim Bedford

### **Welcome and apologies**

The Convener noted apologies as above and welcomed Court members and attendees to the meeting, extending a particular welcome to the new members of Court for 2023/24: Charles Berry, Clyde Marwick, Belinda Oldfield, Catriona Schmolke, Michael Timar, Chris Jones and Dr David Pritchard. It was also noted that new members Eva Curran and Professor Yvonne Perrie had sent apologies.

The Convener noted that Dr Dan Wedgwood had left the university, and that Dr Sarah Parry and Chrissie Finnigan would be supporting Court meetings. The Convener thanked Dan for his dedicated support to the Court during his time at Strathclyde.

### **Declaration of interest**

None.

#### **1. Minutes**

Court **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2023.

#### **2. Matters arising**

There were no matters arising, other than those covered in the main agenda.

#### **3. Principal's Report**

The Principal updated Court on recent developments, including the following:

- The University was three weeks into the 2023/24 academic session. The planned induction events had been a huge success, particularly the welcome events in the Barony Halls, and the Principal thanked Court members for their participation in some of these events.
- Industrial action was continuing, and the recent cancellation of UCU strike days was welcomed. Dialogue with UCU was ongoing, and a ballot for further industrial action was expected to close in early November. Court members were reminded that pay and pension negotiations were led at national level. Unison members were also expected to take industrial action later in the week – staff

and students had been updated on the mitigations in place to minimise disruption. The University continued to engage constructively with the unions..

- The Principal updated members on the positive news that the UK's participation in the Horizon Europe research programme had been secured. The Principal had been involved in discussions as President of the Royal Academy of Engineering (RAEng). It was noted that as part of the settlement, funds had been dedicated to organisations including the RAEng, which would be used to fund world-leading fellowships.
- The Annual University dinner had taken place that week, and the Principal extended his thanks to the Convener and Court members for their attendance. The Principal reflected on discussions at the dinner and noted key attendees including the University Chancellor, Lord Smith of Kelvin hosting.
- There had been much success in university league tables in recent weeks.
  - Strathclyde was ranked 8<sup>th</sup> in the UK in the first Daily Mail league table. Strathclyde was commended for its strengths in areas which were less represented in traditional rankings, such as student support for mental health. Strathclyde had been named Scottish University of the Year, and runner up to Imperial College London in the UK University of the Year award. To celebrate this achievement, staff had been given two additional days of annual leave to extend the Christmas break.
  - Strathclyde remained in the top 20 in the Times and Sunday Times Ranking, and in the Guardian Good University Guide remained in 16<sup>th</sup> place. The Principal reflected that although league table success was not actively pursued by the University, there had been significant improvement in our ranking positions over the past decade and this reflected the growth trajectory of the past decade.
  - In the international rankings, Strathclyde had recently jumped up two bandings to be ranked in the 301-350<sup>th</sup> banding in the Times Higher Education World University Ranking.
- Updating on global engagement, the Principal notified Court members that he would be taking up honorary appointments at two Chinese universities during a visit in the coming weeks. Strathclyde was working with a number of partners in China on matters which were compliant with the Trusted Research parameters set out by the UK Government. Within these parameters, relations with Chinese partners remained strong.
- The University had recently been awarded an Athena SWAN Silver award at University level. The award recognised the work undertaken at the university to support and transform gender equality within higher education and research. Thanks were expressed to Professor Douglas Brodie as Chair of the Athena SWAN steering group, and the members of staff who had supported the submission including teams in HR and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- Strathclyde had been named the European Entrepreneurial University of the Year at the Triple E awards in Barcelona. The University was awarded the accolade due to the 'Entrepreneurship for All' approach to offering all students, staff and alumni the opportunity to develop an entrepreneurial mindset through 1-2-1 support and a diverse range of training, funding and workshops. To mark the occasion, staff were awarded an additional day of annual leave in 2023/24.
- The University and Strath Union achieved Responsible Futures accreditation from Students Organising for Sustainability UK (SOS-UK) following a student-led auditing process. This accreditation mark, recognised by the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings, is an acknowledgement of the Strathclyde community's outstanding commitment to embedding sustainability in everything we do.
- NSS results were published during the summer. There had been changes made to the methodology and Strathclyde did well to maintain a strong performance.
- There had been many notable external appointments amongst Strathclyde people since the last Court meeting. This included Professor Stephen McArthur being appointed to the Board of Scottish Enterprise, Professor Malcolm McDonald being elected to the RAEng, and Professor Mairi Spowage of the Fraser of Allander Institute being appointed to two new advisory roles on an Economic Advisory Board of the British Chamber of Commerce, and the Scottish Government's New Deal for Business Group. Professors Duncan Graham and Karen Faulds had appeared in the Analytical Scientist Magazine's Power List 2023.

#### **4. Strathclyde's historical connections to slavery**

The University Secretary presented an overview of a report commissioned by the Principal into connections that might exist between the University's predecessor, Anderson's Institution, and the practice of enslavement, in particular in relation to the transatlantic slave trade. The report had been completed and

recently delivered by Professor Richard Finlay and had been independently reviewed by an external expert reviewer. The University had, at the point of commissioning the report, committed to publishing it. The final report was shared with Court ahead of wider publication during the month of October, as part of Black History Month.

The report had found that at least four trustees of Anderson's Institution had actively participated in enslavement and others had been apologists for slavery. Some of the Institution's income was associated with the profits of activity that involved human enslavement. While it was difficult to establish the precise sums involved, it was believed that this did not constitute a significant proportion of the Institution's total income.

The University Secretary discussed the plan for publication of the report, and shared examples of the tone of communication that would accompany its release. The communications would be frank, setting out the findings of the report clearly, with an emphasis on the effects of slavery in the present day. The University would work with its own stakeholders, as well as with the city of Glasgow in its long-term response to the findings.

Court members welcomed the report, and noted the history revealed in the report, as well as the proposed public response by the University. Key points of discussion included:

- Ensuring that key points were emphasised in communications, such as the impacts of slavery in Scotland in the present day, and in using factually correct language which may feel uncomfortable.
- It was noted that Strathclyde's report focused on its predecessor institution rather than current physical infrastructure and monuments. The latter was being explored in similar work undertaken for the city of Glasgow, and monuments within the university were part of the scope of this investigation. Discussions about these would be taken forward with the city following publication of its separate report.
- Members agreed that it was important to maintain the evidence used to compile the report, in order to secure the information for the future.
- The University Secretary was particularly grateful to Neelam Bakshi for her contribution to the discussion in the meeting and welcomed her offer of further engagement with the ongoing discussion and activity on campus.
- The Principal noted his thanks to the report's researcher and author Professor Richard Findlay, and to the University Secretary in ensuring that the work and report were undertaken independently of the university Executive Team.

## **5. Student Recruitment 2023/24**

The Director of Strategic Planning gave a summary of student recruitment to date. It was noted that:

- Scottish Undergraduate recruitment had been mostly on track. It was expected that the proportion of SIMD0-20 students would be higher than the Scottish Government's 2030 target of 20%, following a drop down to 18% in the previous year. SIMD21-40 was slightly lower than target, reflecting a lower application rate.
- Rest of UK (RUK) UG recruitment had deliberately received less focus this year, and the university had decided not to enter Clearing due to the risk of accommodation issues. Registrations were slightly lower than target.
- PGT Home and RUK markets had continued to be extremely challenging this year, and both areas were expected to be lower than targeted. The PGDE market was also challenging, and although Strathclyde was below its (externally set) target, the University had performed better than other Scottish universities.
- There had been significant increases in applications from Overseas applicants at both UG and PGT level, although the offer rate had dropped. It was noted that there were many low-quality and incomplete applications, creating greater operational burden. It had not resulted in a corresponding proportion of growth in registrations and registrations were below target for both UG and PGT overseas. Overseas recruitment would continue throughout October.
- The number of PGR students registered by this point in the year was at a three-year high. Although PGR numbers were not yet at targeted levels, recruitment continued throughout the year and as such were expected to continue to grow.

Court welcomed the presentation and reflected on the current UK Government approach to Overseas students.

Court **noted** the update.

## **6. Strathclyde Inspire and the Entrepreneurial Campus**

The Chief Commercial Officer (CCO), the Head of Entrepreneurship Strategy, and the Director of Innovation and Industry Engagement delivered a presentation on the University's programme for entrepreneurship, Strathclyde Inspire.

The recognition of Strathclyde as the European Entrepreneurial University of the Year at the Triple E awards marked an appropriate point to update Court on the University's entrepreneurial activity and links with the Scottish Government's Entrepreneurial campus report. Strathclyde's track record in supporting entrepreneurship was clear and long-standing – it was the first University to have a dedicated entrepreneurship strategy, and is located within the first Scottish innovation district.

It was noted that much of Strathclyde's strategy around entrepreneurship mapped directly onto the blueprint for the Scottish Government's Entrepreneurial Campus. Strathclyde's comprehensive support included desk space, funding for different levels of the journey into entrepreneurship, and the offering was continually evolving. The success of the approach was also evident in the successes of Strathclyde spin outs in raising additional funding outwith the University. Strathclyde Inspire and its entrepreneurial activity was closely aligned with Scottish Government policy and there had been interest from the Scottish Government in the Strathclyde approach.

Court members welcomed the presentation and discussed the ways in which they could actively support the promotion of the University's entrepreneurial activity.

Court **noted** the presentation.

## **7. Strathclyde 2030: strategic plan progress**

The University Secretary provided an update on progress for the 2030 strategy. It was noted that the near-final version of the strategy would be presented to Court for approval in principle at the November meeting, and the strategy session would invite refinements to the strategy ahead of its finalisation in December 2023. Although Strathclyde 2030 was due to be published at the end of the year, Court was reassured that the University remained committed to Vision 2025 and its targets.

The Strathclyde 2030 strategy had been through an extensive process of consultation, with around 3,000 members of staff attending engagement sessions, and a number of student responses to the consultation questionnaire. The feedback provided, building on the initial Court feedback from December 2022, is being incorporated into the final draft. The strategy would build on previous success and maintain the University's identity as a leading international technological university that is socially progressive whilst evolving its systems and processes for 2030.

Court **noted** the presentation.

## **8. Outcome Agreement 2022/23 self-evaluation report and update on guidance for 2023/24**

The Director of Strategic Planning presented the University's Outcome Agreement for 2023-24 and Self-evaluation Report for 2022-23.

It was noted that SFC had provided some feedback on the draft document and it would be updated accordingly. The National Measures data table would also be updated ahead of submission in late October 2023 to reflect current numbers. The Convener commended the Outcome Agreement to members, noting that it provided an engaging and comprehensive guide to the University.

Court **approved** both the draft Outcome Agreement and the Self-evaluation Report for submission to the SFC, **delegating authority** to the Principal to approve any appropriate final amendments ahead of the SFC submission deadline.

### **9. Court strategy session, November/December 2023: initial planning**

The Convener outlined initial plans for the December meeting of Court and strategy session. The latter would include a review of the near-final draft of Strathclyde 2030, with breakout rooms to allow refinement of the strategy ahead of its publication in December 2023.

Court **noted** the initial plans.

### **Items for formal approval**

#### **10. Corporate Risk Register**

Court **approved** the University's top risks and mitigating actions. Court noted that updates would be made to the next version to acknowledge the developments around Horizon Europe. Court were also updated on the University's assessment of the presence of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) on campus. The University believed that there was no presence of RAAC on campus. For completeness and to provide reassurance, investigations of more than 30 buildings had been instigated.

#### **11. Annual Statement on Institution-Led Review of Quality for the Scottish Funding Council**

Court **endorsed** the Annual Statement on Institution-Led Review of Quality

#### **12. Reappointment of Senior Staff**

The Principal temporarily left the meeting.

The Convener gave a summary of Professor Sir Jim McDonald's qualities and achievements in the role of Principal and strongly commended his re-appointment to Court, echoing the recommendation of the panel that had considered the proposal.

Court **approved** the renewal of Professor Sir Jim McDonald's appointment as Principal for a period of slightly more than two years, from 1 August 2024 to 30 September 2026.

The Vice-Principal left the room

The Convener invited the Principal to comment on Paper G after he had re-entered the room. The Principal gave a summary of Professor MacGregor's qualities and achievements in the role of Vice-Principal and strongly recommended his re-appointment to Court, echoing the recommendation of the panel that had considered the Principal's proposal.

Court **approved** the renewal of Professor Scott MacGregor's appointment as the Vice-Principal for a period of two years from 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2026.

The Vice-principal returned to the meeting.

#### **13. Treasury Management Policy**

Court **approved** the updated Treasury Management Policy.

#### **14. Annual Review of key Court documentation 2023/24:**

Subject to minor amendments, Court **approved** updates to the following documents:

- Handbook for Members of the University Court, incorporating
  - a. Court's Statement of Primary Responsibilities
  - b. Court Standing Orders
  - c. Schedule of Delegated Authority

### **Items for information**

Court **noted** the following reports:

#### **15. Complaints Handling Annual Report 2022/23**

#### **16. Annual Safety, Health and Wellbeing Report**

The University Compliance Officer agreed to amend the report to reflect that the availability of some training had been impacted by the pandemic.

#### **17. Annual Survey of Court Members**

### **Committee Report**

Court **noted** the following committee reports and considered recommendations as noted below:

#### **18. Executive Team**

#### **19. Senate**

#### **20. Court Business Group**

#### **21. Court Membership Group**

- Court **approved** the appointment of Elaine Blaxter to Court Membership Group.

#### **22. Audit & Risk Committee**

#### **23. Enterprise & Investment Committee**

#### **24. Staff Committee**

#### **25. Remuneration Committee**

Court **approved** updates to the following:

- Contribution Pay Policy
- Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference and Composition
- Voluntary Severance Approval arrangements

#### **26. AOCB**

A new member of Court reflected positively on the experience of Court induction and welcomed Strathclyde's continuing successes.

No further business was raised.

### **Date of next meeting**

- 30 November and 1 December 2023

*SP, 10 October 2023*