

University of Glasgow

General Council

Half-yearly Meeting

By Zoom

21 June 2021

1. Introduction and Welcome

The Principal welcomed all to the meeting and took the opportunity to introduce the University's new Chancellor, Dame Katherine Grainger who had been elected to the position last year. Dame Katherine was Britain's most decorated female Olympian and also the first woman Chancellor of the University. The Principal was delighted that Dame Katherine would convene today's meeting and invited her to assume the Chair.

Thanking the Principal for his words of introduction, Dame Katherine responded by saying she was delighted to be invited to assume the role of Chancellor at such a prestigious institution as the University of Glasgow – it also being one of her alma maters having graduated here with an MPhil degree. She paid tribute to the tremendous commitment and achievements of her predecessor, Professor Sir Kenneth Calman and hoped to be able to bring to the role the same dedication and enthusiasm which he had displayed.

2. Principal's Address

The University's Response to Covid-19

The Principal advised members that events over the previous year had been dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the numerous challenges that had come with it. However, he was hopeful that the various developments in vaccinations and other medical responses to the pandemic suggested brighter times ahead.

He noted that his report, without seeking to minimise the many on-going challenges that existed, would constitute a fairly upbeat assessment of the way forward. He would report on University activity in the following areas: the response to Covid-19; the financial position; progress with the campus development programme; and plans for the period ahead.

He stressed that the University was in a relatively strong position, but this was only possible due to the outstanding commitment of colleagues and the contingency measures that had been put in place by the University in the face of the unprecedented challenges of the last year. He underlined the University's determination to exit the pandemic in as strong a position as it had entered it.

He acknowledged that the possibility of further waves of the pandemic still existed but hoped that the measures which the University had put in place would continue to hold it in good stead as it took forward wider strategic goals and development plans.

Safeguarding Students and Staff

The Principal noted that the University's response to the pandemic had matured with the experience obtained over the last twelve months but its underlying priority to ensure the safety of students and staff remained the same. Measures taken in this regard included the distribution of over £3million via the University Hardship Fund, a laptop loan scheme and targeted support for the most vulnerable students. In addition, a rent rebate scheme for students in residences unable to stay in their accommodation was put in place along with an increase in wellbeing and mental health provision.

The University welcomed recent news that the Scottish Government was issuing further funds to support students over the summer. This support would be incorporated in the University's Hardship Fund.

The provision of online lectures had worked well and the flexibility of learning methods had been well received. This notwithstanding, it was acknowledged that students were very keen to return to small group face-to-face teaching. The University's planning for the next academic year was being coordinated by Project Aurora – an item which the Principal indicated he would return to later on in his report.

Supporting the Fight Against Covid-19

The Principal drew attention to some of the achievements of the University in supporting the fight against Covid-19. This included:

- The MRC-University of Glasgow Centre for Virus Research (CVR), along with colleagues from across the UK, was working on various activities including identifying, tracking and sequencing new variants;
- The CVR's key role in leading the establishment of CRUSH, a Covid-19 drug screening and resistance hub in Scotland. The Centre's Director, Professor Massimo Palmarini had recently received an Honorary OBE for services to Public Health;
- The University's Lighthouse Lab, now the largest diagnostic facility in Scotland, had processed over 12 million tests. The Lighthouse Lab drew on support from a range of public and private partners and worked in collaboration with several other bodies. Over 800 volunteers had come forward to support the work of the Lab which was carried out on a 24/7 basis. Professor Mike Barrett who had been leading work at the Lab also received an OBE for services to the NHS; and
- Many other Glasgow researchers had been involved in a range of studies regarding Covid-19, including significant involvement with the Oxford vaccine trial.

Financial and Operational Planning

The Principal recalled that the University had introduced various cost controls at the onset of the Covid crisis – e.g. all but business critical recruitment was paused, and delays introduced to the capital plan. Allied to this, three budget overlay scenarios were developed in addition to the base budget.

This strategic financial planning allowed the University flexibility as wider events unfolded. It also prompted the decision to expand the scope of the January student intake. This decision brought about a very healthy demand and the University exceeded its main PGT forecast across the cycle. It had been very gratifying that student recruitment had remained buoyant, albeit the University was very conscious that challenges remained in welcoming international students in person in the coming session.

The University had benefitted from additional funding from the Scottish Funding Council, and more widely, the sector had received additional funding from the Scottish Government to help support students and offset other additional costs linked to the pandemic.

The Principal was pleased to report that the University's careful planning and flexible approach to student recruitment challenges had led to a healthy surplus approaching the end of the financial year. He observed that flexibility would be key, particularly at a time when several medical research charities that the University collaborates with had experienced considerable cuts to their funding. Uncertainty also surrounded UK-wide cuts to Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) at a time when the pandemic had served to highlight the importance of working across national boundaries to address global challenges. The Principal noted that Professor Chris Pearce (Vice-Principal for Research and Knowledge Exchange) was developing a plan to further energise the University's research activity.

Project Aurora

The Principal informed General Council that Professor Frank Coton (Vice-Principal, Academic Planning and Technological Innovation) was leading a working group (Project Aurora) to coordinate planning activities in advance of September 2021. The working group would be looking at:

- The range of activities on campus and in labs;
- The approach to timetabling; and
- The approach regarding PGT intakes across the cycle.

It was evident that students would be influenced by the amount of face-to-face teaching that was available, and Schools had been informed that small group sessions on campus would be considered a priority, subject to public health restrictions. Project Aurora would be providing regular updates to staff and students as their work progressed.

Campus Development Programme

The Principal was delighted to inform Council that considerable progress had been made with the campus development programme in recent months and he shared slides illustrating the progress made. He highlighted some key developments in the building programme, including the following:

- The James McCune Smith Learning Hub was now open for use and was the first building to be delivered through the Campus Development Programme - the Advanced Research Centre (ARC) being due to open next year. Initial use of the McCune Smith Building would be as a student study space but once fully operational would provide hi-tech learning facilities for over 2,500 students.
- Considerable development had also been made in respect of other buildings. Work on the Clarice Pears/Institute of Health and Wellbeing building had recommenced in September and it was scheduled to open in late summer 2022. The Clarice Pears Building would enable the Institute of Health and Wellbeing to bring staff from 10 different sites together in one multidisciplinary centre.
- After being paused due to the pandemic, approval for the construction of the Adam Smith Business School and Postgraduate Taught Hub had been approved by Court, and work would commence shortly. It was expected to be completed in 2022 and would be located on the southern boundary of the former Western Infirmary site. This building would accommodate

taught postgraduate students and also house the Adam Smith Business School. The surrounding area would be landscaped considerably to provide a gateway on to the enlarged campus. On Church Street the demolition of the Gardiner Institute was complete and the deconstruction of the Pontecorvo Building was due to start shortly. Work on restoring University Avenue was also continuing.

- The ARC was scheduled to be handed over towards the end of 2021 and launched in June 2022. It would bring world leading researchers together around the five main themes of: Creative Economies and Cultural Transformation; Digital Chemistry; International Development; Quantum and Nanotechnology; and Technologies Touching Life. It was also planned that the ARC would house one of the largest Virtual Reality/Augmented Reality suites in the UK.

COP 26/Sustainability Strategy

The Principal informed Council that the University was developing a portfolio of activity around COP 26 – including hosting events and providing dedicated exhibition space. A key focus for the University would be to sustain and take forward the momentum that COP would generate at city and national level.

The University had a clear goal to be carbon neutral by 2030 and had developed a sustainability strategy to support this ambition. The University had launched Glasgow Green - The University of Glasgow's response to the climate emergency last year alongside the new Centre for Sustainable Solutions. This facility brought together research, teaching, services, students and external partners to develop solutions to the climate crisis. The University had also recently become a signatory to the Sustainable Glasgow Charter launched by the City Government.

A Civically-minded University

The Principal advised Council that the University continued to commit to its role as a civically-minded University, with the aim of working for the benefit of the city of Glasgow and its people. This activity included working in partnership with Scottish Enterprise and Glasgow City Council on the Glasgow Riverside Innovation District (GRID). GRID was part of the University's work in Govan and along the River Clyde to create an inclusive innovation district which would build on the industrial legacy of the city to promote Glasgow's leadership in hi-tech industries of the future.

GRID would incorporate the University's new Living Lab and Precision Medicine campus, integrated with the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital. The Living Lab would bring together local business, academics, the NHS, the City Council, Scottish Enterprise and Glasgow Science Centre to work in partnership to support the economic regeneration of Govan. The University was also launching a new learning centre in Govan with the charity IntoUniversity. This initiative, between the University, the University of Edinburgh and IntoUniversity, would provide educational support to 7-18 year olds and also support the University's on-going support for Widening Access.

A World Changing Community

The Principal drew members' attention to several other developments that had taken place since the last Half Yearly meeting:

- In recognition of its work addressing historical links to slavery, the University was named University of the Year by the Times Higher Education. This work had revealed the ways in which, during the 18th and 19th centuries, the University had benefitted from gifts and bequests derived from the slave trade. In response, the University had developed a programme of reparative justice in accordance with colleagues at the University of the West Indies to promote public awareness about the history of slavery and its impact across the world;
- The University had recently been named The Herald's HE institution of the Year in the annual Herald Awards;
- The University rose 4 places to 73rd in the QS World University Rankings and gained 3 places in the Complete University Guide, to 16th in the UK;
- The University had also launched a new Strategy 'World Changers Together' for the next five years. This built on the University's previous strategy, Inspiring People Changing the World and outlined a vision which would bring people together through shared common purpose. The strategy was based around three themes: **Community**: a vision to support people, communities and the global network of partners to work together for the good of global society; **Connectivity**: a vision to redesign spaces and digital platforms to stimulate collaboration, innovation and creativity; and **Challenges**: a vision to embrace the challenges of the future to inform the University's approach to research, teaching and engagement, as the University emerged from the pandemic; and
- Post-Brexit, the University had restated its commitment to its international partners and networks. It continued to prioritise student mobility and engage with partner institutions to emphasise its commitment to remaining a welcoming destination for EU learners. The University had recently joined the CIVIS Civic University Alliance as an associate member.

Future Challenges:

The Principal highlighted the main challenges that he envisaged would arise during the coming period. This included:

- The on-going pandemic would remain a major challenge for the foreseeable future and the University would contingency plan for various eventualities - both in terms of on-campus activity and recruitment activity;
- In terms of the wider policy environment, the Scottish Funding Council would soon complete its review into the provision of the HE and FE sectors. The review would look at the Higher and Further Education sectors as a whole and would likely have a considerable impact on the way the new government engaged with universities in future.

The Principal concluded his remarks by noting that the University had experienced many unprecedented challenges over the previous year, but like all institutions it had learnt a great deal during this time. He stressed that the University would have to continue to adapt how it operated for the foreseeable future, but he was confident, that through a combination of staff commitment and the processes that the University had put in place to

address the pandemic, it would emerge from the pandemic well placed to move forward with its broader, long-standing ambitions.

The Chancellor thanked the Principal for his very thorough and upbeat report. She advised Council that she had particularly enjoyed hearing about campus developments and looked forward to the time when she could visit the newly completed James McCune Smith Learning Hub in person. She congratulated the Principal and all staff for the outstanding sense of community and collegiality which had been displayed during the exceptional circumstances of the last year.

3. Convener of Court Address

University of Glasgow Court

Ms Elizabeth Passey, Convener of Court introduced her report by advising that she would outline for the General Council the main responsibilities and functions of the University Court.

Court had been created by the Universities (Scotland) Act 1858, a development which gave Court the power to control/review activities of Senate regarding property and revenues – Senate having been developed through the 17th and 18th centuries through the expansion of teaching. Further revisions to Court took place via the passing of Universities (Scotland) Acts, in 1889 and 1966.

A Modern Court

Ms Passey advised Council that, over time, Court had evolved into a modern body with oversight in areas such as:

- People and Organisational Development
- Financial Resources
- The Estate
- Strategic Direction and Strategic Plan
- Reputation and Values
- The Student Experience (and Senate/SRC)
- Performance Monitoring; and
- Compliance with Statutory Responsibilities

Court Committees

Court Committees included those in relation to: Finance; People and Organisational Development; Audit and Risk; Health Safety and Wellbeing; Nominations; Remuneration; Student Experience (jointly with Senate); Estates; and Information Policy and Strategy.

Governance and Management

Ms Passey noted that Court played a key role in governance and management ensuring that the University was run effectively. Court's membership in 2021 consisted of 25 members (as below), the majority of whom were lay (non-staff, non-student) members:

- 9 Co-opted members (including the Convener of Court)
- Rector
- Chancellor's Assessor
- Glasgow City Council Assessor
- 2 General Council Assessors
- Principal
- 5 Elected Academic Staff members
- 2 Trade Union Representatives
- Elected Professional Services Representative
- President of Students' Representative Council (SRC)
- SRC Assessor

Court's Links with Communities

Ms Passey drew Council's attention to the ways in which Court linked into the various University communities. This included engagement with the following stakeholders/events:

- Students and Staff: via liaison with Committees e.g. Student Experience, Student Finance, P&OD, Joint Union Liaison, Equality and Diversity; and Estates (e.g. in relation to specification for new buildings)
- Students' Representative Council (SRC) – (including its annual briefing to Court) and the Rector
- Updates to Court on relevant matters e.g. international students, mental health action plan
- Senate (teaching and research) via communications to/from Court
- This event (General Council meeting)
- University open events – including estates development

Court Business This Session

Ms Passey noted that the pandemic had brought about many unprecedented challenges for all students and staff and drew Council's attention to several key areas of Court business that had been progressed over this time, including:

- Court's key role in driving the University's response in terms of pandemic planning, around impact and recovery;
- Campus Development and review of the capital plan – Covid planning and the pausing of the Adam Smith/PGT Building – now subsequently approved;
- Approvals of annual budget and financial statements; monitoring the impact of Covid on finances;
- New Strategic Plan and Key Performance Indicators;
- Briefings on Information and Technology Policy and Strategy; Learning and Teaching Strategy; and Research Strategy
- Work regarding staff and student-related matters e.g. Health and Safety; Brexit; mental health; working from home; online learning;

- Approval of annual report to Scottish Funding Council, on academic standards and quality; and
- Approval of Outcome Agreement, indicating what the University delivers for Government funding

Conduct of Court Business

Ms Passey advised Council that the business of Court required to be conducted in line with certain requirements. This included:

- The Scottish Code of Good HE Governance – this set out the high-level principles of good governance along with more detailed provisions
- The Statement of Primary Responsibilities, which required that appropriate mechanisms were in place for a wide range of matters for which Court was ultimately responsible, including – revenue/finances and property; people; responsiveness to stakeholders (students, staff, alumni, community, funders); reputation; and compliance
- Standing Orders – with regard to conduct of meetings and ethical standards in public life; and
- Recruitment of members

Court Meetings

Ms Passey informed Council that meetings of Court had moved online following Covid restrictions. Current and future business would include:

- Briefings on areas of strategic importance e.g. finances, student recruitment, capital project, heritage of the University and buildings.

Main meeting agenda items would include:

- Report and KPIs in key strategic areas e.g. research
- Report from the Principal e.g. in relation to the Covid impact & recovery, HE developments, and Senior Management Group (SMG) business
- Report from Chief Operating Officer and University Secretary e.g. in relation to governance, high level operational matters, Scottish Government briefings on Covid
- Court Committee reports including strategic matters for Court decisions e.g. estates, finance, P&OD, student experience, audit and risk, remuneration, health, safety and wellbeing
- Communications from Council of Senate
- Annual reports e.g. from Audit & Risk Committee, SRC; Outcome Agreement with Scottish Funding Council and
- Annual strategy day; induction and training.

The Chancellor thanked Ms Passey for her very informative and comprehensive report.

4. Minutes of the Meeting of the General Council Half Yearly Held on 2 June 2020

The minutes of the meeting of the General Council Half Yearly held on 2 June 2020 were **approved**.

5. Report of the Convener of the General Council Business Committee

Rev Stuart MacQuarrie, Convener of the General Council Business Committee (GCBC) introduced his report by acknowledging the major disruption that the Covid-19 pandemic had had on the business and activity of the University - and also the schedule of meetings of the GCBC. Nonetheless, the University had continued to engage very positively with the business of the GCBC, updating it regularly on the response to the pandemic. The committee had welcomed several senior members of University staff to talk on a range of matters, including: the Learning and Teaching Strategy; Equality and Diversity; and Student Support. He drew Council's attention to several of the important matters which had come before GCBC meetings in the preceding year:

GCBC Meeting of 25 November 2020

At the above meeting, the Principal had provided the Senior Management Report outlining some of the main challenges that the University had faced in the course of the pandemic and the measures taken to address these. The University was, at that point, operating on an emergency footing and facing a range of unprecedented challenges as the pandemic developed. These included:

- The challenges faced by the transition to blended learning and online assessment. Online assessment, including online exams was set to continue during the 2020-21 academic year;
- The University's aim to keep all activities under review with a view to minimising on-campus attendance other than for those engaged in delivering essential work and services;
- With regard to financial planning, steps had been taken to mitigate against the potential decline in international student numbers by adding a Covid overlay to the budget process involving 3 scenarios for potential income loss;
- Student support services had been strengthened, particularly with regard to students affected by the Covid-19 outbreak in residences in September 2020; and
- The University's Hardship Fund was re-launched with relaxed eligibility criteria and a simplified assessment process.

GCBC Meeting of 8 March 2021

Miss Rachel Sandison (Vice-Principal, External Relations) presented the Senior Management Report to the above meeting.

Her report described a very successful preceding year despite the many challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. She reported how the range of measures taken by SMG to navigate the University through the ongoing restrictions had proved to be very successful, including:

- The decision to stagger start dates for PGT programmes in session 2020-21. This had produced a favourable outcome compared with other comparable peer institutions;
- The introduction of a No Detriment policy which applied to assessments taking place between 16 March 2020 and 11 September 2020; and
- Work on scenario planning to support short and mid-term planning.

Miss Sandison also reported on the new University Strategy: World Changers Together: World Changing Glasgow 2025, due to be launched in April 2021 and based around the three themes of **community, connectivity and challenges**. Senate had also recently approved the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy, 2021-25 – centered on the three pillars of **an evolving approach to student-centered active learning; transforming curricula and assessment; and students' professional and skills development**.

The meeting also heard regarding several other important developments that had, or were about to, take place.

This included:

COP26 Climate Conference

The University had submitted bids for space in the Green Zone at the conference - the Green Zone being a space managed by the UK government to provide a platform for the general public to promote exhibitions and workshops on various matters. The University would also be involved in outreach activities in feeder schools on themes linked to the conference.

International Developments

The University had become an Associate Member of CIVIS – an alliance of eight leading research higher education institutions across Europe. CIVIS aimed to create a European inter-university forum for innovative and responsible teaching, research, cultural exchange and citizen action across Europe and Africa.

The University had also become a member of GUILD – a network of European research-led universities. Amongst other things, GUILD would engage with policy-makers, enhance public debate and collaborate with private and public institutions to help solve global problems. The Principal stressed that initiatives such as CIVIS and GUILD had become particularly important in the post-Brexit higher education landscape.

Times Higher Education (THE), University of the Year (2020) Award

The University had received the Times Higher Education (THE) University of the Year (2020) award. The award had been conferred in recognition of the way the University had addressed the legacy of its ties to the slave trade.

Memorial Gates Sub-Group of the GCBC

The Group had been asked by GCBC to bring forward criteria to be used when considering names to be added to the University's Memorial Gates on University Avenue. The Group had met several times recently and it was hoped it would be in a position to report on its findings shortly.

New Draft Ordinance

A new draft Ordinance had been produced to replace the existing 2 Ordinances regarding the General Council - this was with a view to updating the aspects of the original Ordinances which were now out of date. The intention of the new Ordinance was to:

- Simplify arrangements so that General Council membership related only to holders of degrees and joint degrees, and not to holders of any other awards, eg certificates and diplomas;
- Remove reference to some administrative matters that were now obsolete and replacing these with shorter and simpler text; and
- Introduce more modernised language.

Arrangements were being put in place for the necessary consultation with GCBC regarding the approval of the Ordinance.

Alumni Relations

The Convenor advised the General Council that GCBC meetings received regular reports from senior members of the Development and Alumni Office (DAO) team. He expressed his thanks for all the work DAO staff undertook on behalf of the GCBC.

New and Retiring Members of the GCBC

The Convener advised Council that the term of office of several members of the GCBC had come to an end, and also that several new members had therefore joined the committee. He thanked the retiring members for their contribution to the work of the committee and warmly welcomed the new members to the group.

6. Close of Meeting

In closing the meeting, the Chancellor thanked all for participating and in particular those who had presented very informative and thorough reports. She paid tribute to all sections of the University community for the outstanding example of collegiality and oneness which had been demonstrated throughout the pandemic. She was confident these attributes would see the University emerge from the pandemic in an even stronger position than that which it had entered it.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next Half Yearly meeting will take place on Monday, 27 June 2022, at 6pm, via Zoom.