

Dear Sir or Madam,

We, the undersigned academics from the University of Glasgow, wish to make a submission to the Consultation Process on the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance. These are our comments:

1. At the present time, Scottish universities are run by small, unelected groups of managers who are sometimes in conflict with the academic communities at their universities. A board of managers of a private business is accountable to its shareholders. The small groups of managers of Scottish universities are currently accountable to no one and their views often differ considerably from the views of university staff.

In preserving the independence of universities, the Scottish government should make sure that the genuine voice of academic staff is heard and is not stifled by the views of the unelected managers. This can be done by re-introducing democratic accountability, as in many European countries.

We feel that some key officeholders such as Faculty and College Deans should be elected by academic staff, as was done in the past, and decision-making powers should be restored to plenary meetings of academic members of staff in Departments and Schools. As suggested in von Prondzynski's report, elections could be beneficial at even higher levels: Senior Management Groups in universities, including Vice-Chancellors and Principals, could be made accountable to the academic staff.

2. It seems obvious that the commercial interests of a university do not necessarily coincide with the strategic interests of a country.

It would be very beneficial if Parliament or the Scottish Funding Council made sure that a general procedure is introduced in Scotland which would prevent university managements from arbitrarily closing down strategically important, unique subjects for narrowly commercial reasons. A procedure should exist to prevent this.

#### EVIDENCE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW:

1. Over the past few years, the declining standard of decision-making by university management at Glasgow University has led to several costly mistakes. The 'streamlined' decisions to abolish various degree courses have almost all been reversed at a cost of enormous time, effort and unquantifiable expense. Some of the head-hunted managerial academics, whose appointments by-passed usual procedures, have ended up leaving under a cloud. The management has recently commissioned a new student registration software 'My Campus', at the cost of £14m. Grave inadequacies of this system have led to major problems for academics and students alike and wasted large amounts of time and resources.

The costs of implementing My Campus were underestimated because they failed to consider the large amount of time required from staff to implement the new system. Warnings from computing science experts within the university were ignored. Failure of the system resulted in considerable adverse press coverage. To date no one in the Senior

Management Group has taken responsibility for either the major budget overrun or damage to the university's reputation.

There is little transparency within the higher structures of the university and decisions of strategic importance are often taken with little or no consultation with academic staff or students. For instance, in February 2011, Principal Anton Muscatelli announced in a memo to all staff that if no action was taken, the university would face a £35 million budget shortfall by 2014-15. It was then announced that in a bid to save £3 million, the following courses would be cut: Nursing, Social Work, the Centre for Drug Misuse research, Anthropology, the Department for Adult and Continuing Education, and several modern languages including German, Portuguese, Russian, Czech, Polish and Italian.

Little strategy was apparent in the selection of departments to cut, or consideration of the impacts on the wider community - the Department for Adult and Continuing Education for example provided access to education for 5,000 adults across Glasgow. Just four months later in June 2011 - Principal Anton Muscatelli announced that the university had 'turned around' its finances, was in a 'good position' and would no longer face a budget deficit in 2014-15 as predicted. This raises serious questions as to whether the proposed cuts were in fact financial or ideological, and to what extent this U-turn could be attributed to the high-profile media campaign surrounding the cuts. For a full timeline of the media coverage, please see:

<http://savesmlc.wordpress.com/news/>

Poor decision making led to police action against the student sit-in at the Hetherington Postgraduate Club in 2011. This was both unnecessary and heavy-handed, resulting in further bad publicity for the University. No one took responsibility for this failure.

As it was reported in The Herald, 25 June 2012, 'A survey for the university found a sharp decline in levels of satisfaction experienced by lecturers since 2009'

<http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/education/university-life-worse-claim-glasgow-staff.17951300>

The Principal and Senior Management were rewarded with a pay rise considerably in excess of all other staff rises. This can be seen as a sign of fiscal irresponsibility and unaccountability.

2. The position of the decision-making Senior Management Group at the University of Glasgow is highly anomalous. Unlike University Court and Senate, it is not mentioned in legislation at all. According to the GU website,

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/about/facts/whoswho/seniormanagementgroup/>

'The Senior Management Group advises the Principal as chief executive officer of the University on matters of policy. It also advises Court and Senate on matters of strategic policy (academic and resource), and acts on a day-to-day basis to implement the policies of Court and Senate.'

How can Senior Management Group advise Senate and implement its policies when it is not responsible to it and Senate has no say in its composition?

3. Glasgow University website also says:

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/about/facts/whoswho/universitycourt/>

'The Court is the governing body of the University, and is sometimes compared to the Board of Directors of a company.'

This is spurious. The board of directors of a company are responsible to shareholders at the AGM. A university court is traditionally responsible to the 'universitas' of staff and students. But the Court at the University of Glasgow doesn't seem to be responsible to anyone.

On the basis of evidence from at least one Scottish university, it would appear that management has evolved outside any recognisable structure prescribed by statute and the lack of any real structure of accountability has led to a waste of resources and expertise.

(Signed)

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*Further signatures received by email:*

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