

## UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE

### UNIVERSITY COURT

A meeting of the University Court was held at 10.00am on 15 April 2025 in the Leverhulme Research Centre for Forensic Science, Ewing Building, and *via* Microsoft Teams.

Present: Tricia Bey (Acting Chair);  
Manaswi Budhathoki;  
Carolina Castro;  
Greg Colgan;  
Regius Professor Sir Mike Ferguson;  
Marcus Flucker;  
Andrew Lothian;  
Dr Ian Mair;  
Claire Martin (online);  
Professor Linda Martindale (online)(items 116-125);  
Ron Mobed (online);  
Dr Anna Notaro;  
Professor Shane O’Neill (Interim Vice-Chancellor);  
Carla Rossini;  
Amina Shah (online);  
Jay Surti (online); and  
Professor Garry Taylor(online)

In Attendance: Professor Kim Dale (Interim Vice-Principal (International));  
Elise Gallagher (Director of People);  
Professor Blair Grubb (Vice-Principal (Education));  
Roddy Isles (Director of Corporate Communication);  
Dr Neale Laker (Acting University Secretary);  
Richard Maconachie (Director of Finance, SFC)(*qua* observer)(online);  
Dr David McBeth (Vice-Principal (Enterprise and Economic Transformation)(online);  
Dr Alison Ramsay (Senior Policy Officer (Corporate Governance)); and  
Helen Simpson (Interim Director of Finance)

Apologies: Alan Bainbridge, Professor Lisanne Gibson, Karthik Subramanya and Sharon Sweeney

#### 117. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION FROM THE ACTING CHAIR OF COURT

The Acting Chair welcomed members to the meeting and thanked them for attending. In particular, Ms Bey welcomed the Interim Vice-Principal (International) and the Vice-Principal (Education). Members noted the ongoing media interest in the University’s position and were requested to maintain the confidentiality of the papers and the discussions of the Court.

#### 118. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Chair invited members to declare if they had, or could be perceived to have, any conflicts of interest in relation to any items on the agenda, beyond those already declared. No new conflicts were declared.

119. **RESERVED BUSINESS: MINUTES**

**The Court decided:** to approve the minutes of the meeting on 1 April 2025, subject to amendments identified during discussion.

120. **MATTERS ARISING**

Action Log

Court received and considered the action log summarising progress in relation to outstanding actions from previous meetings. Members noted that there were no items on the action log not already on the agenda or which were not yet due.

**Resolved:** to note the Action Log

121. **ACTING CHAIR'S REPORT**

The Acting Chair apprised the Court of her activities since its previous meeting and noted that she had recently held a meeting with Professor Cara Aitchison and Lorna Jack, co-Chairs of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). Members were advised that their discussions had been positive and constructive as well as future-looking. Ms Bey further noted that she and the Acting University Secretary had attended a meeting with the campus trade unions regarding their dissatisfaction with the consultation process and to clarify the role of the Court under Statute.

Members noted that the Chair of Court Appointing Committee had met for the first time the previous week and that work was underway to define a clear set of criteria and qualities required in the next Chair of the Court. The Committee would be consulting the University community in order to gather the widest possible range of views and the Acting Chair would be joining meetings of the Deans' Group and the Directors of Professional Services to hear their input. It was envisaged that the University would not be engaging a recruitment and selection agency to conduct the search and would seek to maximise interest in the position.

The Court was advised of ongoing discussions with the external auditors in relation to the 2023/24 Financial Statements and noted that BDO had been appointed to conduct the Gillies Review into the University's financial position. The Acting Chair welcomed the appointment and reminded members of their responsibility to engage fully with the investigation.

**Resolved:** to note the report

122. **UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE GROUP REPORT TO COURT**

The Interim Principal & Vice-Chancellor provided members with a summary of key developments since the previous meeting of the Court. Professor O'Neill noted that high-level discussions with the SFC and Scottish Ministers continued, with a number of alternative variations to the University's initial Financial Recovery Plan (FRP) explored. One of these had been identified by SFC as most likely to receive the approbation of Ministers and would be further developed with a view to being made public in late April or early May. Members were

advised that much of the detail remained under discussion but that the overall intention was a reduction in the number of job losses in the first instance, with an emphasis on voluntary exits.

Professor O'Neill noted that transition costs would require to be secured if the University hoped to launch a Voluntary Severance (VS) scheme and that the terms of the VS scheme approved by the Court on 25 February 2025 would be revisited to determine whether a more attractive proposition for staff could be achieved. At this stage, the alternative proposal remained inchoate with few of the details established and members expressed frustration that management had been unable to make progress while the University remained in a precarious position. On behalf of the UEG, the Interim Principal & Vice-Chancellor thanked the SFC for its continued support and understanding as the situation evolved and noted the importance of working collaboratively to arrive at a proposal which would be acceptable to staff, Ministers and potential lenders.

In discussion, members emphasised the importance of retaining institutional autonomy, noting that the delays inherent in the involvement of Ministers and the SFC could have the effect of eroding further staff morale and productivity, in addition to further reducing the University's cash position. Court requested that management give greater clarity on the potential timescale for the introduction of a VS scheme and that the launch of such a scheme should be prioritised. Members were advised that, to ensure the continuity of programme delivery, VS would require to be carefully controlled within the academic staff population. Members reiterated the view that the University should act swiftly and decisively and were reminded that any FRP would be predicated on the University's ability to secure funding.

The Interim Principal & Vice-Chancellor then apprised Court of further details of the recovery taskforce appointed by the Scottish Parliament, which had been announced by the Education Secretary at a visit to the University earlier that day. Professor O'Neill assured members that the taskforce would not seek to replace the responsibilities of the Court or the UEG but was intended to bring together stakeholders and partners and to focus on the University's role as an economic driver for the region. Court was advised of progress made in identifying individuals for potential secondment to support the UEG and Professor O'Neill. The University Secretary from RGU was already working with the Acting Secretary and conversations were ongoing with Universities Scotland on other secondments.

The Interim Principal & Vice-Chancellor then invited the Interim Director of Finance to apprise the Court of recent developments in the matter of the liquidity support for the University announced by SFC. Members were advised that the detailed terms and conditions for the support had been received and would require to be scrutinised before the agreement could be finalized.

**Resolved:** to note the report

123. **RESERVED BUSINESS: BLUEPRINT UPDATE**

*The University claims exemption under Section 30 (b) and Section 33 (1)(b) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. Members are therefore required to treat the discussion and associated papers as strictly confidential and exempt from public disclosure. The status of this item will be reviewed at regular intervals and will be released when the exemptions are deemed to no longer apply, and following the approval of the Chair of Court.*

124. **RESERVED BUSINESS: INSTITUTIONAL RISK REGISTER**

*The University claims exemption under Section 30 (b) and Section 33 (1)(b) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. Members are therefore required to treat the discussion and associated papers as strictly confidential and exempt from public disclosure. The status of this item will be reviewed at regular intervals and will be released when the exemptions are deemed to no longer apply, and following the approval of the Chair of Court.*

125. **RECOVERY PLAN UPDATE**

Court received the high-level vision 'University of Dundee - Towards 2030', which had been discussed at UEG and circulated to SFC for comment. Members welcomed the document as an iterative statement of intent and noted that, although significant debate was underway regarding the future academic structure of the University, work towards the review of Professional Services was moving more slowly. It was agreed that the UEG would discuss the timing and format of an information session for Court on the future Faculty structure.

**Resolved:** to note the update.

126. **UPDATE ON FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

The Interim Convener of the Audit & Risk Committee apprised the Court of recent developments in relation to the University's Financial Statements 2023/24. Members were advised that increased levels of scrutiny and ongoing investigations would have the effect of delaying the finalisation of the Financial Statements. It would not therefore be possible to publish these before the statutory deadline of 30 April 2025.

Court noted that the situation remained complex with multiple interlinked and co-dependent elements which would require to be resolved before the University could move forward with any certainty. The Audit & Risk Committee had agreed to meet monthly in order to maintain oversight of the emerging position.

**Resolved:** to note the update.

127. **REPORTS FROM THE SENATUS ACADEMICUS**

(1) Report of the meeting of the Senate on 19 March 2025

The Court received and considered the above report of the meeting of the Senate held on 19 March 2025, prepared for the Court's information. Members noted that any actions detailed within the report would be taken forward as indicated in the minutes for the meeting of the Senate. Court noted that the meeting had been challenging, with vigorous debate around the future structure of the University.

**The Court decided:** to note the report.

(2) Amendment to Ordinance 39

The Court was advised that, at its meeting on 29 January 2025, the Senatus had recommended that **Ordinance 39 – Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates** be amended to include the degree Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA). The Court had approved the amendment at its meeting on 22 February 2025 and was now invited to ratify the amendment in accordance with Charter paragraph 16.2 .

**The Court decided:** to ratify the amendment.

128. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

(1) Audit & Risk Committee

The Convener of the Audit & Risk Committee introduced the draft report from the most recent meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee. Members were advised that the Committee had held a private meeting with the auditors without officers present, which had been helpful and constructive. A private meeting would be held at each of the monthly meetings of the Committee.

**The Court decided:**

- (i) to note that the Committee had endorsed the Institutional Risk Register to Court for approval;
- (ii) to note that that the Committee had approved the Gifts and Hospitality Policy;
- (iii) to note that the Committee had approved the Business Continuity Policy;
- (iv) to note that the Committee had approved the Risk Management Policy; and
- (v) otherwise, to approve the minutes.

(2) Finance & Policy Committee

The Convener of the Finance & Policy Committee introduced the draft report from the most recent meeting of the Finance & Policy Committee. Court was advised that the Committee had discussed the University’s financial position in detail and that members had held a robust exchange of views with officers on the possibility of launching a VS scheme.

**The Court decided:** to approve the minutes

(3) Governance & Nominations Committee

The Acting Chair of Court introduced the draft report from the most recent meeting and noted that the Committee had discussed the annual Public Stakeholder Engagement Event. The timing and format of the event remained under discussion.

**The Court decided:** to approve the minutes.

129. **STAFF COUNCIL MINUTES**

The Court reviewed the minutes from the meeting on 11 March 2025.

**The Court decided:** to approve the minutes.

130. **KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE INFRASTRUCTURE FRAMEWORK**

The Court received and considered the above Knowledge Exchange Infrastructure Framework (KEIF). Members were advised that governing body sign-off was required prior to the Report being shared publicly and that SFC required each institution to lodge a five-year KEIF Strategy as a condition of receipt for future grant allocations.

Members welcomed the reported and noted the need to optimise the impact of knowledge exchange activities, aligned with the mission, vision and values of the institution.

**The Court decided:** to approve the framework.

131. **NARRATIVE FOR THE SENATUS ACADEMICUS**

The Chair of Court recommended, and the Court agreed, to highlight to Senate that the Court had approved the Knowledge Exchange Infrastructure Framework (KEIF). It was also agreed that Senate would be apprised of the Court's discussions on the Financial Statements and the Gillies Review.

**The Court decided:** to note the areas for inclusion in the report to the Senate.

132. **COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE COURT**

The Court agreed that post-Court communications to staff and students would focus on the Court's approval of the Knowledge Exchange Infrastructure Framework (KEIF), its discussions on the Institutional Risk Register and on Dundee Toward 2030.

**The Court decided:** to note the areas for inclusion in communications to staff and students.

133. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

a) Cash...

The Interim Director of Finance introduced the weekly update on the University's cash position and advised Court that the Finance Directorate continued to monitor progress and to maximise opportunities for savings. Members were apprised of material cash transactions forecast prior to 31 July 2025 and noted that the University's financial and legal advisers were finalizing the documentation relating to the SFC liquidity support.

**Resolved:** to note the cashflow position.

b) Frequency of meetings...

The Acting Chair sought the views of the Court in relation to the frequency of meetings. Members noted that, whilst it remained crucial that the Court continued to meet regularly, weekly meetings were placing an additional burden on staff in the Secretariat and in Finance in terms of the production of papers and minutes.

- The Court decided:**
- (i) to move to fortnightly meetings;
  - (ii) to receive weekly cashflow updates; and
  - (iii) to receive daily media updates.

**134. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was noted as Tuesday 29 April, online, at 9am.

Tricia Bey  
Acting Chair of Court  
University of Dundee