

UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE

UNIVERSITY COURT

An additional meeting of the University Court was held at 12 noon on 4 February 2025 in the Ustinov Room, Bonar Hall and *via* Microsoft Teams.

Present: Amanda Millar (Chair);
Alan Bainbridge (online);
Tricia Bey;
Manaswi Budhathoki;
Carolina Castro;
Greg Colgan;
Professor Kim Dale (items 42-44);
Regius Professor Sir Mike Ferguson;
Marcus Flucker;
Andrew Lothian;
Dr Ian Mair (items 42-44);
Claire Martin;
Professor Linda Martindale;
Ron Mobed (online);
Dr Anna Notaro;
Professor Shane O'Neill (Interim Vice-Chancellor);
Amina Shah (online);
Karthik Subramanya (online);
Jay Surti (online);
Sharon Sweeney; and
Professor Garry Taylor

In Attendance: Roddy Isles (Head of Corporate Communication);
Dr Neale Laker (Acting University Secretary); and
Dr Alison Ramsay (Senior Policy Officer (Corporate Governance))

Apologies: Glenn Allison and Carla Rossini

42. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR OF COURT

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and thanked them for attending and advised that the meeting had been called to apprise members of activities and developments since the last formal meeting of the Court. Ms Millar noted she had hoped, given the ongoing media coverage, that the Court could meet earlier and ideally before the publication of the Interim Principal & Vice-Chancellor's interview with The Courier. She apologized that this had not been possible.

The Chair advised those present that the meeting presented an opportunity for a clear, candid and open discussion of the University's current position between members and the University Executive Group (UEG) and requested that the confidential nature of discussions be preserved. Cognisance of the additional pressures on staff and student colleagues on the Court was taken and those members were advised that they should feel able to remove themselves from the meeting if they became uncomfortable or conflicted.

The Chair reminded members that at its meeting in December 2024, the Court had approved the establishment of a Resilience Committee under Clause 13 of the University's Resilience Plan. Court was advised that the Committee had met once, on 18 December 2024, to discuss how the Committee would communicate during the Christmas closure, if required. Following a request from the campus unions that they be represented on the Committee, Sharon Sweeney had been added to the membership. The Chair apprised members of her expectation that the full Court would be the locus for decision-making, going forward.

Members were advised that the Court Advisory Group met with UEG officers on a weekly basis, acting in an advisory capacity. The Deputy Chair noted that the Group also provided the opportunity for members to share their skills in an engaged and constructive manner.

The Chair noted that a programme of engagement and communication with the staff and students of the University and the wider community was being developed to complement the Interim Principal & Vice-Chancellor's recent interview with The Courier. Professor O'Neill's vision for the future sustainability for the institution would require to be tested against the figures emerging from the analysis of the current position, given that the projected deficit position had increased from £36.9m the previous week to £40.4m. External expertise was being considered in order to bring focused and independent challenge to the developing recovery plan. Communications with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and the Scottish Government were ongoing and PWC had been appointed to provide third-party assurance of the University's figures.

43. **RESERVED BUSINESS: UNIVERSITY VISION AND STRATEGY TO DRIVE FINANCIAL RECOVERY**

The University claims exemptions under Sections 30 and 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.

44. **RESERVED BUSINESS: TRIBAL BLUEPRINTS UPDATE**

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[Secretary's note: Professor Kim Dale and Dr Ian Mair left the meeting at this point]

45. **INTERIM APPOINTMENTS**

The Chair invited the Court to consider a proposal under paragraph 6.2 of the University Charter to appoint Professor Kim Dale to the role of Interim Vice-Principal (International) for a period of six months. The Interim Principal & Vice-Chancellor advised members that there was an urgent need for the University to deliver positive international student intakes and that Professor Dale was well qualified to fill this role, having already taken on many of the duties held by the outgoing Vice-Principal (International).

The Court noted that there was no additional cost associated with the appointment and that the current Assistant Vice-Principal (International) post would not be backfilled. Members were advised that Professor Dale would step away from her membership of the Court during her period on the University Executive Group. The Interim Principal & Vice-Chancellor would review all UEG leadership roles imminently, at which time the longer-term future of any leadership role in relation to international engagement would be proposed to Court.

The Court was further apprised of the UEG's intention to appoint an Interim Director of Transformation. Members noted that the post was not a Court appointment and that the information was being shared with Court for the purposes of transparency. A targeted search had been undertaken, which had identified three individuals with the skillset required, of whom one had been selected for appointment.

In discussion, members sought assurances that the role was essential to drive internal change and that due diligence had been undertaken. Noting that the proposed appointment would be subject to scrutiny, members requested that the UEG give careful consideration to public perception at a time of financial difficulty.

The Court decided:

- (i) to approve in principle the appointment of Professor Kim Dale as Interim Vice-Principal (International) under paragraph 6.2 of the University Charter for a period of six months, subject to the receipt of additional information; and
- (ii) to note the UEG's proposal in relation to an Interim Director of Transformation and to receive further information on the appointment in due course.

[Secretary's note: following receipt of the information requested, the Court subsequently re-affirmed its approval of Professor Dale's appointment]

46. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

No other business was declared.

47. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next scheduled meeting was noted as 25 February 2025.

Amanda Millar
Chair of Court
University of Dundee