

## UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE

### UNIVERSITY COURT

A meeting of the University Court was held at 2pm on 23 June 2025 in the Dalhousie Building 1F01, City Campus and *via* Microsoft Teams.

Present: Dr Ian Mair (Acting Chair);  
Alan Bainbridge (online);  
Manaswi Budhathoki;  
Carolina Castro;  
Greg Colgan (online);  
Regius Professor Sir Mike Ferguson (online);  
Marcus Flucker (online);  
Claire Martin;  
Professor Linda Martindale;  
Ron Mobed (online);  
Dr Andrea Mohan;  
Professor Nigel Seaton (Interim Principal & Vice-Chancellor);  
Amina Shah; and  
Karthik Subramanya (online);  
Jay Surti (online);  
Sharon Sweeney (online)

In Attendance: Dr Paul Bennett (Director of Strategic Planning & Insight)(items 199-201);  
Elise Gallagher (Director of People)(items 193-203);  
Roddy Isles (Head of Corporate Communication)(items 193-203);  
Richard Maconachie (SFC)(*qua* observer)(items 193-203);  
Jason Norris (Director of Globalisation)(items 199-201);  
Dr Alison Ramsay (Senior Policy Officer (Corporate Governance));  
Chris Reilly (Interim Chief Finance Officer)(items 193-203);  
Umran Sarwar (Director of Legal)(items 193-203);  
Helen Simpson (Interim Director of Finance)(items 193-203);  
Louise Soutar (Head of Principal's Office and V-C's Chief of Staff)(items 193-203);  
Veronica Strachan (Seconded University Secretary); and  
Susan Young (Head of Financial Accounting)(items 199-202)

Apologies: Dr Neale Laker, Andrew Lothian and Dr Anna Notaro.

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

The Acting Chair welcomed members to the meeting and, in particular, welcomed Chris Reilly, Interim Chief Finance Officer, to his first meeting of the Court.

194. **PRELIMINARY MATTERS**

Members noted the swift transition of both Dr Mair and Professor Seaton into their current roles and requested that the processes for both appointments be clarified. The Seconded University Secretary apprised the Court that, in view of Ms Bey's intention to step down as at 31 July 2025, a process to appoint a Deputy Chair had been conducted under Ordinance 63 of the University Ordinances. On 10 June 2025 the Clerk to Court had, in accordance with the Ordinance, invited all members of the Court eligible for the role in terms of Statute 9(4)(a) to intimate their candidacy for the role. One such intimation had been received and the Governance & Nominations Committee (G&NC), with the exception of Dr Mair, had been requested to indicate their support, or otherwise, for the appointment of Dr Mair as Deputy Chairperson. G&NC had agreed unanimously to recommend the appointment to the Court. Court members had thereafter been requested to endorse, or otherwise, the recommendation of G&NC that Dr Mair be appointed to the role of Deputy Chair. Nineteen members of the Court having expressed their support, Dr Mair had duly been appointed the Deputy Chairperson on Monday 16 June 2025. Members were reminded that the formal process to recruit the next Chairperson of Court was underway.

In relation to the appointment of Professor Seaton as Interim Principal & Vice-Chancellor, Dr Mair apprised the Court that the University's Resilience Plan empowered the Chair of Court to appoint temporarily an interim Principal in the event of an unexpected vacancy in the Office of the Principal. Following the resignation of Professor O'Neill on 19 June 2025 and after close consultation with the Scottish Funding Council as the sector regulator, Dr Mair had appointed Professor Seaton as Interim Principal with immediate effect on 20 June 2025. The terms and conditions of Professor Seaton's appointment had been approved by the Remuneration Committee on 20 June 2025 in accordance with the Remit of that Committee. The Court welcomed Professor Seaton's appointment at this time of uncertainty and noted that the formal process to appoint the next permanent Principal & Vice-Chancellor would be conducted in accordance with University Statutes.

Court requested greater clarity on the Resilience Plan as several members had hitherto been unaware of this document. The Seconded University Secretary advised the Court that all Scottish HEIs had developed such a plan in response to the SFC report on the departure of the Principal of Robert Gordon University in 2018 and that the Plan was available as an appendix to the Court Member Handbook. Members expressed concern that the Plan had not been widely disseminated to the Court and requested that the Plan be made available on the University Web pages.

The Interim Principal & Vice-Chancellor acknowledged that significantly greater clarity and transparency of information would be required in order to begin rebuilding trust with staff, students and the wider community as well as Court members. Professor Seaton and Dr Mair assured the Court that they intended to foster a culture of openness in the University.

195. **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

The Acting 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. Thereafter, no new conflicts were declared.

196. **DUNDEE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION (DUSA) ANNUAL REPORT**

The DUSA President introduced the above Annual Report, intended to apprise the Court of activities and work undertaken by the Students' Association in academic year 2024/25. The Court was advised that 2024/25 had been a year of meaningful progress and ongoing challenges against the background of the University's financial pressures and structural changes.

Ms Budhathoki noted that DUSA Executive had focused on four key themes in 2024/25: Diverse and Dynamic Campus Culture; Visible Representation, Visible Results; Excellence and Equity in Educations; and, Thrive Together. Activities and events intended to bring students to campus had been organized throughout the session, from Freshers' Fair to Raising and Giving (RAG) Week as well as Jazz and Quiz nights and live-screening of sporting events.

Students had been encouraged to become involved in their representative structures, with the structure of the SRC changed to allow the formation of a Wellbeing Sub-Committee. SRC Elections in 2024/25 had seen an increase in votes of more than 55%, a significant increase in engagement with student representation. The Election of the Rector, Maggie Chapman MSP, in March 2025 had also demonstrated a positive shift in democratic participation from students with an increase of 582% in both individual and total votes cast.

Academic Skills Week had brought together teams across the University to deliver five days of sessions for students to enhance different aspects of their skillset with engagement in Semester 1 particularly high. The Student-Led Teaching Awards had again celebrated the excellent education experience provided by staff, with over 100 individual nominations made across the ten categories.

The Thrive Together campaign was noted as being intended to foster community through connecting students from different backgrounds with the aim of bringing them together in the pursuit of similar goals. Wellbeing and advocacy activities had created strong networks with particular success in providing high-quality student support.

Court commended the DUSA President for a successful year which had demonstrated the strength of partnership working and congratulated Ms Budhathoki on her successes as well as the seriousness and commitment she had brought to her role as a member of the governing body. Members particularly noted the constructive criticism she had brought to debates and the contribution of the SRC to the University's work on Race Equality. Court reflected on the impact of the University's financial position on the future of the Students' Association and noted the intention to create a formal committee with robust governance to report into the Finance & Policy Committee on matters of DUSA financial governance.

Thereafter, Court thanked Ms Budhathoki and wished her every future success.

**Resolved:** to note the report

197. **SPORTS UNION ANNUAL REPORT**

Noting that the President of the Sports Union was not in attendance, the Acting Chair of Court drew members' attention to the activities and achievements of the Sports Union (SU) and its members over the last 12 months. The Court noted that the objectives of the SU included increasing participation, promoting and facilitating competition and creating a strong and

consistent identity across the student population.

The sporting community at the University of Dundee had had record levels of engagement. The Welcome Week Sports Fair had resulted in over 2,500 students attending the Fair to see the facilities and browse the sports on offer. This in turn had brought about an increase in the percentage of the on-campus student population joining sports clubs.

**Resolved:** to note the report.

198. **RESERVED BUSINESS: FINANCIAL RECOVERY PLAN PROCUREMENT**

*The University claims the exemptions in 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.*

*[Secretary's note: at this point, the Director of Globalisation, the Director of Strategic Planning & Insight and the Head of Financial Accounting joined the meeting at this point]*

199. **RESERVED BUSINESS: STUDENT NUMBERS UPDATE**

*The University claims the exemptions in 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.*

200. **RESERVED BUSINESS: BLUEPRINTS UPDATE**

*The University claims the exemptions in 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.*

201. **RESERVED BUSINESS: SFC INDICATIVE FUNDING**

*The University claims the exemptions in 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.*

*[Secretary's note: the Director of Globalisation and the Director of Strategic Planning & Insight left the meeting at this point]*

202. **RESERVED BUSINESS: UPDATE ON CASH POSITION**

*The University claims the exemptions in 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.*

*[Secretary's note: the Head of Financial Accounting left the meeting at this point]*

203. **RESERVED BUSINESS: UPDATE ON FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

*The University claims the exemptions in 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.*

*[Secretary's note: Richard Maconachie (SFC) left the meeting at this point. The Director of People, the Interim Director of Finance, the Interim Chief Financial Officer, the Director Legal and the Head of Corporate Communication also left the meeting at this point]*

204. **GILLIES REPORT AND NEXT STEPS**

The Acting Chair of Court invited members to share their reflections on the events of the recent weeks and months and, in particular, their feelings on the contents and findings of the Gillies Report. Dr Mair opened the discussion by noting that the Court and the UEG faced an extraordinary challenge in attempting to regain the trust of staff, students and the wider community.

In the course of a broad and wide-ranging dialogue, members noted the need for Court to regain control of members' ability to access open and transparent management information in a timely manner to enable full and candid debate. Members welcomed the opportunity to reset relationships with staff, students and UEG as part of a collective effort to win back confidence through action and the creation of a credible recovery plan. Court would require to base its decisions on clear and reliable data and to enforce accountability measures for Senior Officers without straying into operational management. This in turn would raise the visibility of decision-making processes and allow the Court to demonstrate its transparency. Court discussed the politicisation of the current situation in the media and the level of press exposure aimed at members. The need for more proactive public-facing communications was noted and more in-depth inductions for trustees required.

Looking forward, Court emphasized the importance of working in partnership with staff and students and, in particular with the Senate as the University began the recruitment and selection process for the next permanent Principal & Vice-Chancellor. Members noted that more difficult discussions were to come as the Court and UEG addressed the findings of the Gillies Report.

205. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

No other business was declared.

206. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next scheduled meeting would be confirmed in due course.

Dr Ian Mair  
Acting Chair of Court  
University of Dundee