

UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE

UNIVERSITY COURT

A meeting of the University Court was held at 10.30am on 25 March 2025 in the Executive Meeting Room, Level 5, Tower Building and *via* Microsoft Teams.

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

In Attendance: Elise Gallagher (Director of People)
Roddy Isles (Head of Corporate Communication)(online);
Rose Jenkins (Director of Estates & Campus Services)(item 89);
Dr Neale Laker (Acting University Secretary);
Ursula Lodge (Deputy Director, SFC)(qua observer);
Dr Alison Ramsay (Senior Policy Officer (Corporate Governance)); and
Helen Simpson (Interim Director of Finance)

Apologies: Glenn Allison and Carolina Castro

82. 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 Deputy Director (Institutional Sustainability & Capital) of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), Ursula Lodge, who was in attendance as an observer, substituting for Richard Maconachie.

Reflecting on recent events and, most recently, their attendance at the Scottish Parliament’s Education, Children and Young People Committee, the Acting Chair reminded the Court of the spirit of the One Dundee ethos. Members noted their collective responsibility to the University’s commitment to transforming lives, locally and globally.

83. **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.

84. **GOVERNANCE & NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE: CHAIR OF COURT & MEMBERSHIP OF PEOPLE & ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

The Acting Chair advised the Court that the Governance & Nominations Committee had met and had agreed to recommend to the Court that Manaswi Budhathoki, Greg Colgan, Professor Linda Martindale, Dr Anna Notaro, Carla Rossini and Professor Garry Taylor join the Appointing Committee, with Sharon Sweeney acting in an advisory capacity. Members noted that the Committee would be led by Ms Bey as Deputy Chair of Court.

The Court was therefore invited to approve the composition of the Appointing Committee.

The Acting Chair further advise Court that the Governance & Nominations Committee had agreed to recommend to the Court that Claire Martin join the membership of the People & Organisational Development Committee. Following the resignation of Claire Cunningham from the Court, the Committee had had no staff member and had been inquorate at its recent meeting.

Resolved: (i) to approve the composition of the Appointing Committee; and
(ii) to approve the recommendation that Claire Martin join the membership of the People and Organisational Development Committee.

85. **MINUTES**

The Court decided: to approve the minutes of the meeting on 10 March 2025, subject to identifying those in attendance from SFC as observers.

86. **MATTERS ARISING**

Action Log

The Committee received and considered the action log summarising progress in relation to outstanding actions from previous meetings. Members agreed that 23 September 2023 Minute 6 in relation to the University Strategy could be removed and a new action proposed, based on the reframed University Strategy.

Thereafter, Court 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

87. FEEDBACK ON THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

The Committee discussed developments since the previous meeting of Court, in particular, the appearance at the at the Scottish Parliament Education, Children and Young People Committee (ECYPC) of the Interim Principal & Vice-Chancellor, the Interim Director of Finance, the Acting Chair of Court and the Vice-Principal (Education). The Acting Chair of Court reflected on the approach taken by members of the Committee.

It had been agreed that SFC would take ownership of the Independent Investigation and the Deputy Director confirmed that the tender process for the appointment of investigators was underway. SFC anticipated that the Investigation would take two months to complete, including submission of the report, from the appointment of the investigative team. The Court and UEG welcomed the opportunity to learn from the University's recent experience.

Court noted that the Terms of Reference for the Investigation had now been published by the SFC. Members also sought clarification on the nature of the Investigation and were assured that it was not being carried out as a Public Inquiry.

In discussion, members noted that the request from MSPs for the University to review its Financial Recovery Plan (FRP) would have the effect of delaying the FRP, thereby making its delivery more challenging. The press coverage of the session was noted as having a potentially deleterious effect on the University's ability to secure external funding and could also delay the delivery of the External Audit opinion, thus impeding the submission of the 2023/24 Financial Statements to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). The Interim Director of Finance advised the Court that this would in turn have a negative effect on the University's credit rating and the Convener of the Audit & Risk Committee (A&RC) apprised members that A&RC had charged EY with the delivery of the Financial Statements within the prescribed timescale. Court considered the financial implications for the University of delaying the implementation of the FRP and agreed that the UEG should maintain pressure on identifying all possible areas for savings with the assistance of PWC. Finally, Court requested that the Acting University Secretary give thought to the development of a mechanism whereby all members would receive the latest information on developments at the same time, given the speed with which the political situation was evolving.

Resolved: to note the update.

88. LETTER FROM SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL

The Acting Chair introduced the above letter from the SFC, confirming its approval of a £22m liquidity support package for the University. Members noted the composition of the package, as well as the key conditions attached to the funding. The Interim Principal & Vice-Chancellor and the Interim Director of Finance expressed their gratitude to SFC for its support and advised the Court that the Financial Recovery Board would be established imminently.

Resolved: to note the letter and to note that the final conditions associated with the funding would be advised in due course.

*[Secretary's note: the letter was published as part of SFCs reporting to ECYPC
[Letter from the Scottish Funding Council to the Convener of 20 March 2025](#)]*

89. **RESERVED BUSINESS: ESTATE RATIONALISATION**

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.

90. **DISCUSSION OF RECOVERY PLAN**

The Court was invited to reflect on what it had heard during the meeting as it related to the delivery of the Financial Recovery Plan. Members noted that the situation remained time-critical and that UEG should begin consultation with the wider group of stakeholders as soon as possible. A lively debate had taken place regarding the proposed Faculty structure at the most recent meeting of the Senate and discussions were underway with Directors on the size and shape of Professional Services.

Relations with the University's banking providers were pivotal, and the intervention of the Scottish Government had had the effect of delaying the institution's ability to begin the transformation process required. Notwithstanding the high level of external uncertainty, UEG was urged to advance those aspects of the FRP within its control and to focus on sources of income generation with a view to longer-term sustainability. It was agreed that the next meeting of the Court would focus on income generation activities.

Resolved: to note the current position.

91. **RESERVED BUSINESS: MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS – PERIOD 7**

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.

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

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.

93. **UPDATE ON FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

The Court noted that it had received an oral report on progress made with the finalization of the 2023/24 Financial Statements under paragraph 87, above.

Resolved: to note the update.

94. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

No other business was declared.

95. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was noted as Tuesday 1 April, online, at 9am.

Tricia Bey
Acting Chair of Court
University of Dundee