

UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE

UNIVERSITY COURT

A meeting of the University Court was held at 9.00am on 27 May 2025 in the Leverhulme Research Centre for Forensic Science, Ewing Building and *via* Microsoft Teams.

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

In Attendance: Sian Aitken (CMS)(items172-173)(online);
Claire Cunningham (Unison)(item 150);
Elise Gallagher (Director of People);
Jason Higgs (PWC)(items 172-173)(online);
Roddy Isles (Head of Corporate Communication);
Richard Maconachie (SFC)(*qua* observer)(online);
Dr Carlo Morelli (DUCU)(item 150);
Emma Preston (Unite)(item 150);
Dr Alison Ramsay (Senior Policy Officer (Corporate Governance));
Professor Nigel Seaton (Interim Provost);
Helen Simpson (Interim Director of Finance); and
Louise Soutar (Head of Principal's Office and V-C's Chief of Staff)

Apologies: Carolina Castro, Dr Neale Laker, Andrew Lothian and Sharon Sweeney

163. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION FROM THE ACTING CHAIR OF COURT

The Acting Chair welcomed members to the meeting and thanked them for attending. Ms Bey noted that a future discussion would be held on the frequency of meetings over the summer months and requested members to maintain the confidentiality of their discussions.

164. **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. Thereafter, no new conflicts were declared.

[Secretary's note: Claire Cunningham, Dr Carlo Morelli and Emma Preston joined the meeting at this point]

165. **PRE-COURT BRIEFING**

The Acting Chair welcomed representatives of Unite, Unison and DUCU, who had requested to speak to the Court ahead of its deliberations on the University Executive Group's proposal regarding a Voluntary Severance (VS) scheme. The Court was apprised of concerns that the proposed terms would not provide staff members with a dignified exit after an extended period of uncertainty and that the offer was not sufficiently attractive to generate the desired number of applications for VS.

Members were advised that the union representatives felt the approval of the proposed scheme could have a further deleterious effect on employee relations. Whilst the open and positive discussions which had characterised the previous few months were welcomed, it had not proven possible to arrive at a joint recommendation and members were requested to increase the terms of the offer.

The Court was advised that DUCU members had chosen to take a further period of industrial action as a result of UEG's refusal to rule out compulsory redundancies and their belief that UEG's approach to the process had been flawed. Members were advised that, if more information were cascaded from management, staff would engage in meaningful dialogue.

The Acting Chair thanked Ms Cunningham, Ms Preston and Dr Morelli for attending and for sharing the views of their members.

[Secretary's note: Claire Cunningham, Dr Carlo Morelli and Emma Preston left the meeting at this point]

166. **MINUTES**

The Court decided: to approve the minutes of the meeting on 13 May 2025, subject to minor amendments.

167. **MATTERS ARISING**

Action Log

Court received and considered the action log summarising progress in relation to outstanding actions from previous meetings. Members were advised 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

168. **ACTING CHAIR'S REPORT TO COURT**

The Acting Chair apprised the Court of her activities at a University and sectoral level since the previous meeting. Ms Bey advised members that she continued to engage regularly with multiple stakeholders including SFC, CUC and the Permanent Secretary.

Members were advised that the Court Appointing Committee tasked with the election of the next Chairperson of Court had agreed to approach an individual external to the University to join the membership of that Committee and that Sir Drummond Bone had agreed to join the process. The Acting Chair advised the Court of Sir Bone's extensive sector expertise, having been the Principal of Royal Holloway (University of London), the Vice-Chancellor at the University of Liverpool, the Master of Balliol College at the University of Oxford and President of Universities UK.

Resolved: to note the report

169. **INTERIM PRINCIPAL & VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT TO COURT**

The Interim Principal & Vice-Chancellor apprised the Court of their activities at a University and sectoral level since the previous meeting. Professor O'Neale advised the Court of progress made to date in the recruitment of portfolio Vice-Principals and noted that he had had held meetings with the DUSA President Elect, who would be invited to attend the meeting of Court on 3 June as an observer. Court was apprised of Senate's recent debate on the proposed academic restructure and noted that a special meeting of the Senate would be convened for further discussion.

Court welcomed the report from Professor O'Neill and sought clarification as to the number of staff members who had left the institution since August 2024. The Director of People noted that 273 vacancies had been disestablished in January 2025 and that approximately 60 members of staff had exited since January, in line with normal turnover rates, although this was expected to slow following the introduction of a Voluntary Severance (VS) scheme.

Members were reminded that the DJCAD Degree Show and the Graduation Ceremonies in June would provide opportunities to celebrate the successes of the University's students and future alumnae. The Acting Chair and the Interim Principal & Vice-Chancellor encouraged Court members to attend if possible.

Resolved: to note the report.

170. **INTERIM DIRECTOR OF FINANCE REPORT TO COURT**

The Interim Director of Finance apprised the Court of developments since the previous meeting and reported that the University continued to work closely with SFC, although a formal plan had yet to be agreed. Members were advised that the University continued to push forward with efficiency savings and that the cost of payment runs were decreasing steadily. With exception of urgent actions required for Health & Safety purposes, capital expenditure had all but ceased.

Ms Simpson noted that an agreement had been reached in principle with NHS Tayside regarding a longstanding dispute and that this would be brought to Court as soon as the final agreement had been concluded. Requests for information and assistance from BDO, EY and SFC continued to place an additional burden on Finance staff and members were advised that the UEG had been invited to approve additional resource for the Finance Directorate.

Resolved: to note the report.

[Secretary's note: The Court agreed to vary the order of business at this time]

171. RESERVED BUSINESS: VOLUNTARY SEVERANCE PROPOSALS

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. Sian Aitken (CMS) and Jason Higgs (PWC) joined the meeting at this point]

172. RESERVED BUSINESS: PROPOSAL ON SFC SUPPORT FOR IMMEDIATE CHALLENGES

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.

173. RESERVED BUSINESS: FINANCIAL REQUEST TO SFC

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: Sian Aitken (CMS) and Jason Higgs (PWC) left the meeting at this point]

174. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was declared. Members agreed that the remaining agenda items would be deferred until the next meeting of the Court.

175. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next scheduled meeting was noted as Tuesday 3 June at 2pm.

Tricia Bey
Acting Chair of Court
University of Dundee