

UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE

UNIVERSITY COURT

A meeting of the University Court was held at 12 noon on 13 October 2025 *via* Microsoft Teams.

Present: Dr Ian Mair (Acting Chair);
Alain Bainbridge;
Maggie Chapman;
Gregory Colgan;
Tánaiste Custance;
Professor Susan Kinnear;
Professor Rory McCrimmon;
Dr Andrea Mohan;
Dr Carlo Morelli;
Emma Preston;
Amina Shah;
Jay Surti; and
Dr Martine van Ittersum

In Attendance: Lee Hamill (Interim Director of Finance)(item 263);
Roddy Isles (Head of Corporate Communication);
Richard Maconachie (SFC)(*qua* observer);
Lizzi Nicoll (Interim Director of External Relations);
Jon Price (Interim University Secretary); and
Dr Alison Ramsay (Senior Policy Officer (Corporate Governance))

Apologies: Marcus Flucker, Claire Martin, Ron Mobed, Professor Nigel Seaton

260. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION FROM THE ACTING CHAIR OF COURT

The Acting Chair welcomed those present to the meeting and, in particular, welcomed Jon Price to his first meeting of the Court as Interim University Secretary.

261. 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 or previously declared. No new conflicts were declared. The Acting Chair requested that members maintain the confidentiality of the Court deliberations.

262. RESERVED BUSINESS: PROPOSED EXTENSION TO THE CONTRACT FOR THE INTERIM PRINCIPAL & VICE-CHANCELLOR

The Acting Chair of Court introduced the above report, intended to invite discussion from the

Court on a proposal to extend the contract for the Interim Principal & Vice-Chancellor, Professor Nigel Seaton. Members were reminded that Professor Seaton had been appointed Interim Principal & Vice-Chancellor on 20 June 2025 for a period of three months, an appointment which had been extended for one month on 30 September 2025.

Court was advised that a specially-arranged meeting of the Senate had been convened, chaired by the Vice-Principal (Global Engagement and Future Students), on 8 October 2025 to discuss proposals to extend the contract for Professor Seaton until 30 September 2026. The report of the Senate meeting had been supplied to Court members, along with the proposal and rationale for the extension. The Acting Chair of Court apprised members of Professor Seaton's experience, achievements and contribution both before and since joining the University of Dundee and invited comments from the Court.

Several members expressed unhappiness that the note of the Senate meeting had been circulated without the names of individual contributors having been redacted and that Professor Seaton would have received the note in his Court papers. Some of these members further questioned the veracity of the note of the meeting of Senate.

[Secretary's note: the approval of the minute of a Senate meeting is reserved to the Senate. It is not within the powers of the Court to make recommendations in relation to the report of the meeting of Senate held on 8 October. No further reference will therefore be made in this report to the document submitted as Paper A3 beyond noting the above concerns raised by members]

The Acting Chair invited Court to offer thoughts and observations on the proposal to extend Professor Seaton's contract. Members offered observations on Professor Seaton's management style and requested that both he and the University Executive Group be more forthcoming and consultative. Some members also noted ongoing concerns regarding the University's adherence to good governance in relation to the one-month extension offered by Dr Mair to Professor Seaton on 30 September.

The Acting Chair of Court then requested that members indicate their preference for one of the following:

- To extend Professor Seaton's contract by 12 months;
- To extend Professor Seaton's contract by six months, with the possibility of a further six months' extension, subject to formal review; and
- Not to extend Professor Seaton's appointment

Thereafter, the Court voted by a majority to approve the appointment of Professor Seaton until 14 April 2026 in the first instance. Subject to the satisfactory completion of a formal review after a period of five months, the Court agreed that Professor Seaton's contract could be extended to 14 October 2026.

Resolved: to approve the appointment of Professor Nigel Seaton as Interim Principal & Vice-Chancellor until 14 April 2026 in the first instance. Subject to the satisfactory completion of a formal review after a period of five months, the Court agreed that Professor Seaton's contract could be extended to 14 October 2026.

[Secretary's note: the following members requested that their dissent to the appointment

of Professor Seaton for a further six months in the first instance be noted: Tánaiste Custance, Maggie Chapman, Dr Carlo Morelli, Emma Preston and Dr Martine van Ittersum]

263. **UPDATE ON RECRUITMENT TO THE COURT**

The Court received and considered a report from the Interim University Secretary on governance matters related to the membership of the Court, submitted as **Paper B**. As noted in the report, the Court was invited to approve the recommendation of the Governance & Nominations Lay Member Appointing Panel that Nicholas Buckworth, Annie Ingram, Noel Lawlor, Andrew Swift, Margo Williamson, and Irene Wilson be appointed to the Court as lay members under Statute 9(1)(k) for a period of four years in the first instance beginning 1 August 2025. The following other appointments to the Court had been made following elections:

Tánaiste Custance	Elected as President of the Students' Association to serve for Academic Year 2025/26;
Marcus Flucker	Elected as Independent Student Member of Court to serve for Academic Year 2025/26;
Susan Kinnear	Elected by the Senate to serve on Court from 1 August 2025 for a period of four years in the first instance;
Rory McCrimmon	Elected by the Senate to serve on Court from 1 August 2025 for a period of four years in the first instance; and
Martine van Ittersum	Elected by the Staff Council to serve on Court from 1 August 2025 for a period of four years in the first instance.

The following appointments to the Court had been made by nominations:

Carlo Morelli	Nominated by the academic trade union under Statute 9(1)(j) to serve on Court from 1 August 2025; and
Emma Preston	Nominated by the support staff campus unions to serve on Court under Statute 9(1)(j) from 1 August 2025

The Court decided: to formally approve the appointment of Nicholas Buckworth, Annie Ingram, Noel Lawlor, Andrew Swift, Margo Williamson and Irene Wilson to the Court as lay members under Statute 9(1)(k) for a period of four years in the first instance beginning 1 August 2025.

264. **RESERVED BUSINESS: UPDATE ON FINANCIAL 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.

Resolved: to note the report.

265. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

No other business was declared.

266. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next scheduled meeting was noted as 11 November 2025.

Dr Ian Mair
Acting Chair of Court
University of Dundee