

UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE

UNIVERSITY COURT

A meeting of the University Court was held at 2pm on 27 January 2026 in the Leverhulme Research Institute for Forensic Science, Ewing Building, and *via* Microsoft Teams.

Present: Esther Roberton (Chair);
Alain Bainbridge (online);
Nicholas Buckworth (online);
Greg Colgan;
Tánaiste Custance;
Marcus Flucker (online);
Dr Nicola Gray (online);
Dr Annie Ingram;
Professor Susan Kinnear;
Noel Lawlor;
Dr Ian Mair;
Claire Martin;
Dr Andrea Mohan (items 303-306);
Dr Carlo Morelli (items 306-310);
Emma Preston;
Professor Nigel Seaton;
Jay Surti (online);
Bishop Andrew Swift (online);
Dr Martine van Ittersum;
Margo Williamson; and
Irene Wilson

In Attendance: Dr Martin Glover (Senior Policy Officer (Academic Governance)) (Items 303-305);
Lee Hamill (Interim Director of Finance);
Philip Henry (Interim University Secretary);
Richard Maconachie (SFC)(*qua* observer)(online);
Dr Alison Ramsay (Senior Policy Officer (Corporate Governance)); and
Jane Stark (Interim Director of People)

Apologies: Maggie Chapman, Ron Mobed and Amina Shah.

303. WELCOME AND UPDATE FROM THE CHAIR OF COURT

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting and, in particular, welcomed Dr Nicola Gray to her first meeting of the Court having been elected to the membership by the University Senatus. Ms Roberton also welcomed Dr Martin Glover, Senior Policy Officer (Academic Governance), who was in attendance to speak to Paper B; Ordinance 58: The Faculties.

304. **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 or previously declared. No new conflicts were declared.

305. **ORDINANCE 58: THE FACULTIES**

The Senior Policy Officer (Academic Governance) introduced the above paper, which delineated for Court the need for a new Ordinance (Ordinance 58: The Faculties) to establish the Faculties and, consequentially, the need to revoke an existing Ordinance (Ordinance 57: The Schools of Study) to disestablish the Schools of Study. Dr Glover advised Court that the organization and management of the academic disciplines of the University, and all matters pertaining thereto, were prescribed in the Statutes or Ordinances. Members noted that Ordinances were defined as 'Acts of the University Court' and were made by the Court with the approval of, or after consultation with the Senatus.

Dr Glover noted that, as the governing body of the University, the Court had ultimate responsibility for approving changes to the academic structure of the University. As the supreme academic body of the University, the Senate had the power to make recommendations to Court on changes to the academic structure of the University. Court was advised that Senate had received a draft of Ordinance 58 for initial consultation at its meeting on 26 November 2025. If approved by Court, Ordinance 58 would be submitted to the meeting of Senate on 18 March 2026 meeting for final consultation and/or approval. It would then return to Court for its final reading and approval.

One member intimated their understanding that a significant number of salaried posts, possibly as many as 20, had been announced at a recent Arts & Social Sciences Faculty Board as part of the transition to the Faculties structure. The member expressed concerns that these posts would create further financial pressure on the University and requested that these roles be clarified. The Principal advised the Court that the new structure had reduced the number of such salaried senior roles by 18, which had in turn reduced the cost of academic leadership positions. The member reiterated their concerns, requiring that they be informed to whom these roles would be accountable. The Chair noted that all senior leaders were ultimately accountable to the Principal and that operational management was a matter for the Executive. Members were advised that the University had Policies and Procedures in place for complaints and whistleblowing, with reports presented to the People & Organisational Development Committee (PODCo) and the Audit & Risk Committee (ARC).

In discussion, Court noted the Primacy of the University Charter in relation to the Statutes, Ordinances and other University governing instruments. Members were reminded that amendments to Charter and Statutes required the approval of the Privy Council and that these would be included in a programme of review to include the Schedule of Delegation and the Standing orders of Court.

Thereafter, Court agreed to revoke Ordinance 57: The Schools of Study and to approve Ordinance 58: The Faculties.

Resolved: (i) to revoke Ordinance 57: The Schools of Study; and
(ii) to approve Ordinance 58: The Faculties

306. **VOLUNTARY SEVERANCE SCHEME**

The Interim Principal introduced the above report, intended to seek Court's approval of a second Voluntary Severance (VS) Scheme, using the same terms and process as that which had launched in June 2025. Professor Seaton advised members that, although the People & Organisational Development Committee (PODCo) had not endorsed the Scheme as presented to its meeting on 14 January 2026, the Committee had been content that proposal be considered following revisions and areas of clarification identified in discussions addressed. Management had therefore reviewed the report in line with the Committee's recommendations and the resulting terms presented to Court for consideration and, if so minded, approval.

The Interim Director of People apprised the Court of a number of salient areas for members' attention, including the rationale and funding methodology for a second VS scheme, its proposed terms and how the institution intended to demonstrate lessons learned from the Scheme offered in 2025. Ms Stark noted the estimated cost of the Scheme as [REDACTED], with savings of [REDACTED] recurring per annum and advised members that, while the Section 5 (S25) conditions of funding did not permit the University to undertake a redundancy process, a VS Scheme was permissible, provided SFC had been given advance notice. In order to avoid a further deterioration in the University's financial position, it was therefore proposed that the Scheme be launched with a view to being concluded by the end of Q1 and SFC apprised accordingly.

Members were advised that the terms proposed were intended to stimulate applications sufficient to permit the University to reduce its running costs and had therefore been set at 1.75 x weekly salary. It was anticipated that this would be the last time the University would offer VS to its staff for some significant time and that the terms were as generous as the University's circumstances would allow.

In the course of a lengthy and involved discussion, Court sought assurances that the University would not be faced with requests for clawback from its funders and were advised that, whilst the risk could not be completely eliminated, it was believed to be low. Staff members expressed concerns that a further reduction in headcount would have a detrimental effect on remaining staff who were already under pressure to maintain previous levels of service provision. The Interim Director of People acknowledged these concerns and advised the Court that the integration of Professional Services would identify areas of duplication of effort which could be eliminated to free available staff time.

Court members expressed serious concerns that the Scheme was intended to conclude by the end of Q1 when the restructuring of the University's staff profile would likely take significantly longer and were advised that any delay in the reduction of staff costs would imperil the ability of the institution to survive financially. Members acknowledged the severity of the financial situation but opined that staff would be asked to take decisions regarding their future whilst not in possession of the fullest possible information.

Court sought further assurances that the Scheme was both warranted and affordable and were

advised that Deloitte had been engaged by the Scottish Government to conduct due diligence on the University's proposals. One member expressed his belief that the figures provided by management were not accurate and contended that the Court had not been presented with Management Accounts in some time. The Convener of the Finance & Policy Committee (FPC) advised the Court that FPC had received, considered and discussed the accounts and proposals for income generation in detail at its most recent meeting and that members could take assurance from this level of scrutiny. The Interim Director of Finance further noted that, at its meeting on 2 December 2025, Court had been presented with the Period 3 Management Accounts and the Q1 Full Year Forecast.

Taking cognisance of the precarious nature of the University's finances and the imperative for action, the Court proceeded to vote on the proposals for a second VS Scheme. Several members acknowledged that, whilst generally supportive of the proposals, they remained concerned regarding the potentially deleterious effect on staff. In a show of hands, Dr Carlo Morelli and the DUSA President voted against the proposals. Emma Preston abstained from voting.

Resolved: to approve by a majority vote the proposals to launch a second Voluntary Severance Scheme under the terms proposed in the report submitted as Paper C.

307. **DRAFT COVERSHEET FOR COURT AND ITS COMMITTEES**

Members received and considered the above report, intended to present to the Court a revised cover sheet for the presentation of business to Court and its Committees. The Chair advised the Court that the Governance & Nominations Committee (GNC) had discussed and recommended the proposed template with one amendment identified and members were invited to intimate any further minor amendments or suggestions to the Senior Policy Officer (Corporate Governance). Thereafter, the Court approved the proposed new cover sheet.

Resolved: to approve the proposed new cover sheet for immediate introduction.

308. **UNIVERSITY CONSULTANCY POLICY**

Court received and considered the above Policy, which had been endorsed for approval by PODCo. The Convener of PODCo advised members that the Policy as presented to Court had been updated following its meeting and those areas where additional information had been requested were highlighted for Courts attention. One member sought clarification regarding the potential for disciplinary action to be taken against staff found to be in contravention of the Policy in relation to the use of University time or equipment. It was noted that managers would be expected to be pragmatic in their interpretation of the Policy and it was agreed that references would be included to the University's Acceptable Use Policy.

Resolved: to approve the above policy, subject to the inclusion of the additional information requested.

309. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

No other business was declared.

310. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next scheduled meeting was noted as Tuesday 24 February 2026 at 2pm.

Esther Robertson
Chair of Court
University of Dundee