

UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE

UNIVERSITY COURT

A meeting of the University Court was held at 2pm on 21 April 2026 in the Leverhulme Research Institute for Forensic Science, Ewing Building, and *via* Microsoft Teams.

Present: Esther Roberton (Chair);
Alain Bainbridge (online);
Nicholas Buckworth;
Maggie Chapman (online) (items 332-343);
Greg Colgan;
Tánaiste Custance;
Marcus Flucker;
Dr Annie Ingram;
Professor Susan Kinnear (online);
Noel Lawlor;
Dr Ian Mair;
Claire Martin;
Dr Andrea Mohan;
Dr Carlo Morelli;
Professor Nigel Seaton;
Jay Surti (online);
Amina Shah;
Bishop Andrew Swift;
Dr Martine van Ittersum;
Margo Williamson; and
Irene Wilson

In Attendance: Kirsteen Campbell (Chief Operating Officer)
Lee Hamill (Chief Finance Officer);
Roddy Isles (Head of Corporate Communication);
Dawnne Mahmoud (Chief People Officer);
Dr Alison Ramsay (Senior Policy Officer (Corporate Governance));
Louise Soutar (Head of Principal's Office & V-C's Chief of Staff);
Jane Stark (Interim Director of People);
Dr Hulda Sveinsdottir (University Secretary); and
Peter Ward (SFC) (*qua* observer);

Apologies: Dr Nicola Gray, Ron Mobed, Emma Preston.

332. WELCOME AND UPDATE FROM THE CHAIR OF COURT

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and thanked them for attending. In particular, Ms Roberton welcomed Dawnne Mahmoud to her first meeting as Chief People Officer and Lee Hamill to his first meeting having formally been appointed Chief Finance Officer.

Ms Roberton reminded those in attendance that, regardless of their route onto the

membership of the Court, they were bound by the principles of collective responsibility and that they had a duty as Trustees to act in the best interests of the University and to support decisions taken by the Court. Members were also advised that the matters for discussion were confidential in nature and should not be disclosed to any persons not members of the Court before, during and after the meeting of Court

Ms Robertson then drew members' attention to the Standing Orders of the Court and reminded the Court that papers and other matters for Court's attention were issued only by the Secretariat. Members who wished to communicate formally with the Court as a whole should address their request to the Chair or to the University Secretary and should not send communications directly to the Court.

The Chair thanked those members who had attended an earlier presentation from Deloitte on the information provided to their client, the Scottish Government, in order for the Accountable Officer Process to be concluded. Ms Robertson requested that the thanks of the Court for this open and informative session be formally recorded.

The Chair also expressed on behalf of the Court its formal thanks to Richard Maconachie of SFC for his attendance at and interest in the University over the previous twelve months, noting that Mr Maconachie was moving to a new role within SFC. Peter Ward was welcomed as in attendance as SFC observer.

Finally, Ms Robertson recorded the thanks of the Court to Dr Nicola Gray, member of Court elected by the Senate, who would be leaving the University at the end of April 2026. Members were advised that the Senior Policy Officer (Academic Governance) would issue the call for nominations the following day. Dr Gray had submitted her apologies for the meeting, as had Mr Ron Mobed and Ms Emma Preston.

333. **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.

334. **MINUTES**

The Court received and considered the minutes of the meetings of Court held on 24 February and 26 March 2026. Members requested a number of amendments, as follows:

Minutes of the Court meeting on 24 February 2026

One member raised a concern that the report of the People & Organisational Committee (PODCo) held on 18 November 2025 and considered by the Court at its meeting on 24 February 2026 was not accurate ([Paragraph 4\(i\) refers](#)).

Specifically, the member requested that the minute of the Court meeting be amended to reflect that PODCo had agreed Option 3e of the proposed terms, with consideration given to additional provisions for staff wellbeing.

The member also requested that the report of Court's consideration of the minute of PODCo held on 14 January 2026 ([Paragraph 4\(ii\) refers](#)) be amended to make explicit that the Committee had not requested an alternative proposal to the Voluntary Severance (VS) be

brought to a future meeting but to reflect that the Court had received and considered these terms at its meeting on 27 January 2026.

- (i) **The Court decided:** to approve the minutes of the meeting on 24 February 2026, subject to amendments identified above; and
- (ii) **The Court decided:** to approve the minutes of the meeting on 26 March 2026.

The Court received an update on a request made at the meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee on 18 November 2025 that the University pursue former members of the University Executive Group (UEG) for the additional External Audit fees incurred as a result of the financial crisis. Members were advised that, following discussion by the Chief People Officer and the Chief Finance Officer, this would not be taken forward as an action.

[Secretary's note: the associated minutes of PODCo and Court have been amended accordingly]

335. **MATTERS ARISING**

The Chair noted that, since the last meeting of Court on 26 March, the University had received the first tranche of funds made available under Section 25. In addition, the University had drawn down the £12m of SFC Financial Transactions Loan. On behalf of Court, Ms Robertson thanked the Scottish Government and the SFC for its continued support.

Resolved: to note that the University had received the first tranche of Section 25 funding and had drawn down the SFC Financial Transactions Loan.

336. **ACTION LOG**

The Chair of Court and the University Secretary introduced the above report, intended to apprise the Court of progress against actions arising from previous meetings. Members were advised that there were no matters which were not either already on the Agenda or otherwise in progress.

Resolved: to note the report.

337. **CHAIR'S REPORT**

The Chair introduced the above report, intended to apprise the Court of activities undertaken at a local and national level since the previous meeting of the Court. Ms Robertson advised the Court that she had discussed the challenges facing the Students' Association (DUSA) with the CEO of DUSA and had met with representatives of DUCU, of Unison and of Unite.

Court was advised that the process to recruit the next Principal & Vice-Chancellor of the University was underway and all those who participated in the preparation of the applicant pack through the staff survey or in-person meetings were thanked for their engagement. Discussions were ongoing to begin the process to recruit three new Lay Co-opted members of Court and members were invited to identify potential candidates.

The Chair then thanked Court for responding to the request for availability and noted that, following discussion at the last meeting of Court, the Strategy to Recovery would be the

subject of a facilitated workshop on 18 May 2026. Ms Robertson encouraged members to attend and participate if at all possible.

Resolved: To note the report

338. **PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

The Interim Principal & Vice-Chancellor introduced the above report, intended to apprise the Court of recent developments and positive highlights from across the University Community. Professor Seaton advised members that the UEG continued to move the University's recovery work forward and that the annual planning round was underway.

Work to progress organisational restructuring activity was noted as progressing and four facilitated workshops completed covering core workstreams. The appointment of Deputy Vice-Principals and Faculty Associate Vice-Principals had largely been completed which, with the appointment of the Heads of Division, currently in progress, would complete the leadership of the Faculties.

Court noted the forthcoming visit of the Permanent Secretary and was apprised of continued external recognition of the University's excellence in research. Professor Seaton pointed to multiple accolades at the Scottish Life Sciences Awards, reaccreditation for the Business School and the election of three University academics as Fellows of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Members requested that Court's congratulations be conveyed to Professor Lorraine van Blerk, Professor Isla Mackenzie and Professor Susan Wyllie on the recognition of their outstanding achievements.

Resolved: To note the report

339. **REPORT FROM THE SENATUS ACADEMICUS**

Report of the meetings of the Senate held on 18 March 2026 and 25 March 2026

The Court received and considered the above report of the meetings of the Senate held on 18 and 25 March 2026, prepared for the Court's information. Members noted that any actions detailed within the report would be taken forward as indicated in the minutes of the meetings.

The Court decided: to note the report.

340. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

The University claims the exemptions in Sections 30 and 33(1)(b) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. Members are expected to treat these items as strictly confidential at this time.

(1) Audit & Risk Committee

- (i) The Convener of the Audit & Risk Committee introduced the minutes from the meeting held on 19 January 2026. Members noted the Committee's

consideration of the Committee's Annual Report and a report on progress made in relation to the 2025/26 Internal Audit Plan.

The Court decided: to note the minutes.

- (ii) The Convener of the Audit & Risk Committee introduced the report of the meeting held on 10 March 2026. Court was advised that the Committee had expected to receive the opinion of the External Auditors, EY, on the 2023/24 Financial Statements at this meeting but it had been reported that further work was required before EY were in a position to issue its opinion. The Convener advised Court that the opinion of EY would be a 'qualified opinion' and more details would follow at the next meeting of Court. An additional meeting of the Committee would be scheduled for May 2026.

The Court decided: to note the report.

(2) Finance & Policy Committee

- (i) The Convener of the Finance & Policy Committee introduced the minutes from the meeting held on 20 January 2026. Court was apprised of the Committee's consideration of reports on the 2025/26 Student Intake and Research Grant activity.

The Court decided: to note the minutes.

- (ii) The Convener of the Finance & Policy Committee introduced the report of the meeting held on 24 March 2026. Court noted that the Committee had received a further update on student numbers and key Finance matters. Members noted that the Committee had received presentations from the Director of Digital & Technology Services and from the Interim Director of Estates & Campus Services. Court was advised that the Committee had been apprised of significant budgetary issues facing both Directorates.

The Court decided: to note the report.

(3) Governance & Nominations Committee

- (i) The Convener of the Governance & Nominations Committee introduced the minutes from the meeting held on 22 January 2026. Court noted that the Committee had received a presentation on the University Action Plan, prepared in response to the Gillies Report and that the Committee had endorsed to the Court a new Committee coversheet, which the Court had approved at its meeting on 24 February 2026.

The Court decided: (i) to note the minutes.

- (ii) The Convener of the Governance & Nominations Committee introduced the report of the meeting held on 26 March 2026. Court noted that the Committee had agreed to endorse to Court the recommendation that the current term of the Interim Principal & Vice-Chancellor be extended. Court had approved the recommendation at its meeting on 26 March 2026.

The Court decided: to note the report.

(4) People & Organisational Development Committee

- (i) The Convener of the People & Organisational Development Committee introduced the minute from the meeting held on 14 January 2026. The Court noted that the Committee had considered proposals for a second Voluntary Severance Scheme but had not agreed to endorse these to the Court.

The Court decided: to note the minutes.

- (ii) The Convener introduced the minute of the meeting held on 17 February 2026. Members were advised that the Committee had received and considered a number updates to University policies, including the Menopause Policy and the Safe Leave Policy.

The Court decided: to note the minutes.

- (iii) The Convener introduced the report of the meeting held on 17 March 2026. Court was advised that the Committee had noted the result of the DUCU vote of no confidence in the University Executive Group. Members noted that the Committee had also received and considered a number of revised University policies, including the Parental and Paternity Bereavement Leave Policy and the Sickness Absence Management Policy.

The Court decided: to note the report.

(5) Remuneration Committee

The Convener of the Remuneration Committee introduced the report from the meetings held on 4 December 2025 and 12 March 2026. Members were advised that, given the sensitivity of the matters under discussion by the Committee and issues relating to Data Protection, it would not be appropriate to provide full minutes of the meetings.

The Court decided: to note the report.

341. **ORDINANCE 58: THE FACULTIES**

The Court received and considered the above proposal to create a new Ordinance to establish the Faculties and consequently to revoke an existing Ordinance to disestablish the Schools of Study. Members were reminded that Court had approved this proposal at its meeting on 27 January 2026 and was required to consider and, if so minded, approve the proposal for a second time. Court was advised that the proposal had been submitted for initial consultation to Senate in November 2025 and had subsequently been approved by the Senate on 18 March 2026, subject to amendments regarding the composition of the Faculty Boards.

Resolved: To approve Ordinance 58, The Faculties, and to revoke Ordinance 57 to disestablish the Schools of Study.

342. **RESERVED BUSINESS: DIRECTOR OF FINANCE REPORT**

The University claims the exemptions in Sections 30 and 33(1)(b) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. Members are expected to treat this item as strictly confidential at this time.

The Chief Finance Officer introduced the above report, providing Court with an update on key Finance matters, the latest position on future public funding and the Period 6 Management Accounts. Also included in the report were the quarter two full year forecast and the longstanding NHS Tayside commercial settlement.

Members were apprised that, following completion of the Scottish Government's Accountable Officer process, the first £13m tranche of non-repayable grant funding had been received by the University with subsequent tranches scheduled. In addition, the University had received the full £12m of the SFC Financial Transactions Loan.

Court was reminded that the completion of the 2023/24 and 2024/25 Annual Report and Financial Statements had been significantly delayed from the usual publication dates due to the University's financial situation. However, significant progress had been made in recent months and an update report was expected from the External Auditor, EY, with a further Audit & Risk Committee meeting to be scheduled in May 2026 to consider the final audit findings. In recent discussions, EY had indicated that, while they were likely to assess the University as being a Going Concern, EY would also draw attention to a material concern around the Going Concern status beyond 31 July 2027 because further costs savings over and above the 2026 VS scheme of up to £20m are required.

The Chief Finance Officer drew Court's attention to the 2025/26 Period 6 Management Accounts and the Quarter 2 full-year forecast and advised members that the savings from the first VS Scheme had been lower than estimated. EBITDA was forecast at 1.1% of income as costs continued to be tightly controlled and the University had achieved a small unrestricted cash balance for the first time during the year.

Court was advised that the University and NHS Tayside had signed a settlement agreement regarding costs in relation to occupation of the NHS site up to the end of March 2025. The University would now work towards concluding an agreement to settle the associated sums from 1 April 2025 to the present date.

In discussion, Court asked to record their thanks to the Chief Financial Officer and his team for securing an agreement with NHS Tayside. Court requested that the University give further consideration to income-generating activities and were advised that identifying opportunities for revenue growth was a prevalent concern across the sector. Members welcomed the report and urged management to remain vigilant in cost-saving activities.

Resolved: to note the report

343. **RESERVED BUSINESS: BUDGET 2025/26**

The University claims the exemptions in Sections 30 and 33(1)(b) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. Members are expected to treat this item as strictly confidential at this time.

The Chief Finance Officer introduced the above updated budget for the 2025/26 Financial Year. Members were advised that, whilst a budget for the 2025/26 Financial Year had been presented to the Court in July 2025, the meeting had not been quorate and it had not therefore been possible to approve the budget. The Chief Finance Officer reminded members that approval of the budget as presented at that time would have been to approve a trajectory of the University towards insolvency.

Mr Hamill drew members' attention to significant progress in reducing the original 2025/26 operating deficit and noted that the impact of the 2026 VS Scheme would yield further improvement. The proposed budget was noted as assuming that recruitment restraint and non-staff cost control would continue for the remainder of the financial year. Management would continue to maximise opportunities for income generation.

Members noted that timing issues had made it impossible for the proposed budget to have been considered by the Finance & Policy Committee prior to scrutiny by the Court. It was therefore agreed that the budget would be presented to the next meeting of the Finance & Policy Committee for completeness.

Resolved: To approve the 2025/26 Budget, noting that FPC would also consider the budget at its next meeting.

[Secretary's note: Ms M Chapman left the meeting at this point and requested that her opposition to the Financial Sustainability Options Appraisal report, submitted as Paper N, be recorded]

344. **RESERVED BUSINESS: FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

The University claims the exemptions in Sections 30 and 33(1)(b) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. Members are expected to treat this item as strictly confidential at this time.

The Interim Principal & Vice-Chancellor introduced the above, intended to provide the Court with options for the commencement of consultations with the trade unions on actions required to move the University to a firm financial footing and removing material uncertainty in relation longer term financial sustainability.

Professor Seaton advised members that two successful VS Schemes had significantly reduced costs, as had the elimination of almost all capital expenditure and significant reductions in cash expenditure on operations. Work was nearing completion on the re-organisation of the University and the introduction of new business processes which would allow the institution to operate more efficiently. There remained, however, a further significant saving to be made to address the structural deficit and to allow the University to address the increasingly urgent physical and digital infrastructure needs.

Court was apprised of three options for the commencement of consultations with the trade unions. All three options were considered by management to be consistent with the SFC Conditions of Funding, although they differed in their timing. Members were advised that decisions on actions following the consultation period would not be made until the Strategy to Recovery and accompanying documents had been approved by Court and submitted to SFC, to remain within the Conditions of Funding, which require the submission of the Strategy to Recovery and accompanying documents before beginning action on any compulsory redundancies.

In the course of a lengthy and involved discussion Court considered, *inter alia*, the potential impact of each option on staff and the University's continued operations and financial position. Members were advised that any delay in commencing the consultation process would incur additional expenditure, and were reminded that the forecast by Deloitte, presented to Court at a separate meeting earlier that day and used by the Scottish Government as part of the Accountable Officer process, envisaged cost reduction in Q2 of this year. It was also emphasized that any delay would have the effect of moving consultation on workforce reduction, and any redundancies, into the summer holiday period, with an avoidable impact on the staff of the University. Members noted that formal confirmation was awaited from the SFC as to whether Option 1 was considered to be compliant with the S25 Conditions of Funding. Members noted that SFC had indicated that Option 1 might not be compliant with the S25 Conditions of Funding.

The Court then proceeded to vote by a show of hands with a majority of Court members voting to approve Option 1 as presented in the report, subject to further engagement with the Scottish Funding Council regarding the compatibility of this option with the Conditions of Funding. Professor Susan Kinnear and Mr G Colgan abstained from voting. Dr Morelli and Dr van Ittersum wished it reported that they had voted against the proposals.

Resolved: To approve by a majority vote the proposal that the University launch consultation with the trade unions as set out in Option 1 subject to further liaison with the SFC.

345. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

No other business was declared.

346. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

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

Esther Robertson
Chair of Court
University of Dundee