

UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE

UNIVERSITY COURT

A meeting of the University Court was held on 15 February 2022 in the Ustinov Room, Bonar Hall, City Campus, University of Dundee.

Present: Ronnie Bowie (in the Chair);
Tricia Bey;
Megan-Rose Birdsall;
Richard Bint;
Professor Sir Mike Ferguson;
Professor Iain Gillespie (Principal & Vice-Chancellor);
Rebecca Leiper;
Andrew Lothian;
Jane Marshall;
Dr David Martin;
Ron Mobed (online);
Dr Anna Notaro;
Marianne Reilly;
Professor Mairi Scott;
Karthik Subramanya;
Jay Surti;
Karen Thomson;
Dimitris Vidakis (DUSA President); and
Keith Winter.

In Attendance: Professor Wendy Alexander (Vice-Principal (International));
Professor Blair Grubb (Vice-Principal (Education));
Dr Neale Laker (Director of Academic & Corporate Governance);
Patricia Matheson (Interim Director of Human Resources & Organisational Development);
Dr Jim McGeorge (University Secretary & Chief Operating Officer);
Dr Christine Milburn (Head of Principal's Office);
Professor Shane O'Neill (Senior Vice-Principal);
Carol Prokopyszyn (Director of Finance);
Dr Alison Ramsay (Senior Policy Officer (Corporate Governance));
Wesley Rennison (Director of Strategic Planning);
Professor John Rowan (Vice-Principal (Research, Knowledge Exchange & Wider Impact)); and
Rebecca Trengove (Director of External Relations).

Apologies: Alan Bainbridge; and
Sharon Sweeney.

PRE-COURT BRIEFING

Prior to the meeting, the Court welcomed representatives of Unite and Unison, who had been invited to speak to members ahead of the Court's deliberations on the University Executive Group's proposal regarding the University of Dundee Superannuation Scheme (UoDSS). The Court was apprised of concerns that the proposed changes to benefits would disproportionately affect women and young people, as well as suggestions that the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) had not been

prepared or circulated according to procedure or in a timely manner. Members were advised that the union representatives felt the approval of the proposed changes to benefits could have a 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. It was noted that proposed changes to benefits would be discussed as a substantive agenda item for the Court.

35. **MINUTES**

The Court decided: to approve the minutes of the meeting on 16 November 2021.

36. **MATTERS ARISING**

(1) Action Log

The Court received the action log of Court business and requested an update on progress made in identifying the student member to join PODCo. The President of the Dundee University Students' Association (DUSA) advised members that he would fill the position for the remainder of the academic session. Thereafter, the Court noted that all other actions were complete.

The Court decided: to note the update.

37. **CHAIR'S REPORT TO COURT**

The Court received a report from the Chair outlining activities he had undertaken on behalf of the Court and the University since its last meeting. The report noted the Chair's participation in a number of external events, including an advisory panel sponsored by Minerva Search, University Superannuation Scheme (USS) sessions and the Committee of University Chairs (CUC). The annual Public Stakeholder meeting of Court had been held online as part of Discovery Days 2022 and had included the Principal's address on the emergence of the new strategy and sub-strategies. The process for the election of the University Rector had concluded and Mr Bowie welcomed the successful candidate, Keith Harris, to his first meeting of the Court.

The Court decided: to note the report.

38. **UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE GROUP REPORT TO COURT**

The Principal & Vice-Chancellor introduced the University Executive Group (UEG) report which provided an update on emerging sectoral issues, internal operational and strategic matters, and recent events. Members were advised that significant progress had been made on the development of the University Strategy 2022-2027, which would be considered as a substantive agenda item (**paper E**) and that the Court would have a key role in progressing and monitoring the delivery of the Strategy. The Court noted that the Director of Strategic Planning would be moving to the University of Strathclyde and that a Strategic Change & Delivery Unit was to be established to drive the delivery of strategic change projects.

The Principal then informed the Court of progress on the three strategic institutional priorities agreed by Court at its meeting in April 2021, noting that recruitment of international students had increased significantly, driven in large measure by demand from South Asia and Africa. A number of early projects aligned to the new Digital Strategy, including the development of Hybrid Teaching technology, had progressed with 25 of the 50 teaching spaces converted to dual mode capability. Investment in cyber defence was planned, as was a virtual desktop for staff and students.

The University's financial performance in the previous year had been generally positive, although the Scottish Government Budget for 2022/2023 would likely result in a real-terms reduction to allocations and it remained unclear to what extent the discontinuation of funding for graduate apprenticeships would impact upon the University's ability to continue to deliver its Graduate Apprenticeship Programme. In relation to pensions matters, members were advised that Universities UK was consulting with employers on the proposed increase to USS contributions and that recent developments in the proposed changes to the University of Dundee Superannuation Scheme would be considered as a substantive item under **Paper H**.

The Court was advised that the University had been awarded the Bronze Race Equality Charter and that further work was planned across the institution and the wider community to ensure greater equity, inclusion and representation for all those from minority ethnic backgrounds. Preparations were underway for the Athena Swan Bronze renewal award, due by summer 2022.

In regional development matters, members were apprised of the University's partnership working with the Eden Project Dundee and with Dundee City Council in the development of a Life Sciences Innovation District. Further information on the former would be brought to the April meeting of the Court while the development of the Innovation District would be considered by the Finance & Policy Committee.

Plans to launch the Dundee International Institute at Central South University in China were in train and a number of potential opportunities to increase institutional reach in Africa had been identified. The next Pre-Court briefing would provide an update to the Court on the development of these international projects and partnerships.

In discussion, members welcomed the expansion of digital teaching spaces, noting that students now expected both online and hybrid delivery. Staff had observed a culture change in the ways in which students interacted with their learning experience and a new pedagogy would likely emerge as the technology developed.

Turning to international student recruitment, the Court sought assurances that the significant increase in numbers could be accommodated without adversely affecting the student experience. The University Secretary advised that the University had contingency arrangements in place with local hotels and that it was also in discussions with local landlords. The Court was advised that the Finance & Policy Committee would receive a paper on the provision of student accommodation at its next meeting.

In terms of the student experience, the Vice-Principal (International) apprised members of initiatives organised by the University to welcome new international students and to aid in their orientation, including the provision of online pre-session English, taxis from arrival airports and the ability to commence their programme of study online for students unable

to arrive at the start of the semester. Other activities included in-session specialist English classes, daily drop-in sessions at the Global Room and weekly ethnic food events.

The Court decided: to note the report.

39. UNIVERSITY STRATEGY 2022-2027

The Principal & Vice-Chancellor presented the proposed new University Strategy, which the Court had received and considered, first at the annual retreat in September 2021 and then at its meeting in November 2021. Members were reminded that the document before them had been produced following a comprehensive consultation process, both with the Court and with the broader University community and were advised that the University Senate had unanimously agreed at its meeting on 2 February 2022 to commend the new University Strategy to Court for approval.

Professor Gillespie noted that the Strategy was rooted in an ingrained sense of social purpose, through which academic themes would be developed to provide impact in areas of demonstrable excellence. The Strategy, underpinned by a focus on financial sustainability, would shape the next stage of institutional development and be supported by five enabling sub-strategies, which had also been submitted for the Court's consideration. If approved, it was intended that a plan for the execution and roll-out of the Strategy would be brought to the meeting of the Court in April 2022. Implementation of the Strategy would be factored into all future budget-setting and the Senior Vice-Principal would have overall responsibility for developing and delivering implementation plans and for incorporating the Strategy into a robust and integrated planning process across the whole University.

The Court welcomed the Strategy and the enabling sub-strategies, noting that it expected to receive detailed implementation plans, including milestones and associated financial implications at its meetings in April and June. In discussion, the Court noted the need for the Strategy to be articulated to the different constituencies and audiences impacted, including how communications would be tailored to achieve maximum engagement. Members were advised that a multi-phase, multi-channel approach was planned.

The Court decided:

- (i) to approve the Strategy;
- (ii) to request that the University Executive Group submit detailed implementation plans to meetings of the Court in April and June 2022; and
- (iii) to request that the proposed budget for future years reflect the impact of implementation of the Strategy.

40. **ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY**

(1) New School of Humanities, Social Sciences and Law: Strategic Plan

The University Court reviewed a paper (**Paper F**), intended to provide members with an update on the strategic project to establish the new School of Humanities, Social Sciences and Law. Members were reminded that the creation of the new School constituted the first of the change initiatives planned as part of the Academic Excellence and Sustainability (AES) programme. An extensive consultation process had been undertaken, with positive and constructive contributions from both staff and students. In particular, the work of the Dundee University Students' Association (DUSA) in the process was commended.

The Senior Vice-Principal noted that the School, which would be formally established on 1 August 2022, was intended to be dynamic and forward-looking and therefore required a compelling vision and strategy to deliver these aims. The Court was advised that each of the five divisions identified within the new School was developing operational plans intended to deliver triple intensity and which would become fully integrated with the overarching vision and strategy of the School. Of the five divisions, three would be subject to further review, each led by a Vice-Principal. Broad areas of research focus were being identified to enhance the School's capacity, reputation and impact and the Vice-Principal (Research) would host workshops in due course to ensure alignment between the School research strategy and the overall University Research Strategy. The University was working in partnership with Minerva Executive Search in the selection and recruitment of a Dean to lead the new School.

Next steps in the ongoing transition included the continued delivery of an excellent student experience, the development of a narrative to shape the new School's identity and to produce evidence-based plans for the academic provision and educational offer in future. Management would seek to support colleagues through the change process and the Court was apprised of productive conversations held with the unions on the potential focussed use of a Voluntary Severance Scheme.

The Court decided: to note the update

(2) Forward Approach

The Court received and considered a report from the Senior Vice-Principal on the forward approach for the management and oversight of the Academic Excellence and Sustainability (AES) programme (**Paper G**). Members were advised that the overall aim of the programme was to deliver operational improvements as part of the implementation of the new University Strategy, approved by Court under **Paper E**.

The Court was apprised of progress made on the individual workstreams forming the AES programme and advised of the next steps in ensuring their delivery. Members noted that cost-reduction activities, combined with targeted areas for growth were anticipated to result in financial betterment amounting to £8.5m.

The Senior Vice-Principal apprised the Court of the University's expectations for income generation and savings under the seven elements of the AES programme, which would be phased over the period for 2020/2021 to 2024/2025. The teaching excellence project

had identified savings to be realised by the removal of low-recruiting modules and programmes and the subsequent capacity for Schools to absorb academic (and potentially professional service) staff reductions. Each School had been asked to produce plans for academic provision designed to be high-quality, market-attuned and educationally enterprising.

A Research Excellence and Efficiency Group had been created to plan how research efficiencies could be achieved through a review of the allocated research time across Schools and the quality of impact and output produced as a result. Schools would be expected to demonstrate details of how research efficiencies would realise savings in line with budgetary expectations. Work on staff search, recruitment and induction was noted as ongoing and would be informed by the People & Talent Strategy, approved by Court under **Paper E8**. Significant progress was expected in relation to the academic appraisal process through the introduction of a new procedure for 2022/2023.

The process for the removal of animal research facilities from Ninewells to the main campus was underway and a project delivery group would be established to provide assurance that the relocation would be completed by the end of 2022. The significant, one-off costs associated with the project were expected to be mitigated by the removal of rental costs and efficiencies in staffing and equipment.

In discussion, members welcomed the granularity of the report and the institutional ambitions reflected.

- The Court decided:**
- (i) to note the paper and, in particular, the direction of travel in managing the delivery of the programme; and
 - (ii) to approve the arrangements delineated under **paragraph 30** for the ongoing reporting and oversight of the programme and noting the continued involvement of the Deputy Chairperson.

41. UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE SUPERANNUATION SCHEME

The Chair reminded members of the dual role of the Court as both employer with a duty of care to staff and also as stewards of the institution, responsible for its continued sustainability. He advised the Court that, as had been evident in the pre-Court session, the issues involved in the consultation on the reform of the University of Dundee Superannuation Scheme (UDSS) were both complex and sensitive.

The Court was provided with a review of the context in which the proposal contained in the paper had been developed. Members noted that, following Court's approval in February 2021 of a proposal to close the UoDSS Defined Benefit (DB) scheme and replace it with a Defined Contribution (DC) Scheme, a statutory consultation period had commenced on 15 March 2021.

In the course of a lengthy and involved discussion, members considered *inter alia* the increase in cost in maintaining the DB scheme for new members and the potential mitigations the University could put in place to negate the disproportionate effect the implementation of the proposals would have on women and young people. The financial imperative on the University to better its financial position, coupled with the ambitions

contained within the University Strategy were considered and the risks associated with borrowing to invest were noted.

The positive engagement of the unions in discussions with management were welcomed but the Court was advised that it remained uncertain whether the unions involved would recommend the proposals to their members and whether their members would accept the changes. Industrial action remained a possibility and the University had obtained legal opinion in relation to the Equality Impact Assessment, from which Court took assurance. Members commended the work of the University Secretary and the Director of Finance in maintaining an open dialogue with the unions and for have reached the proposals under consideration.

The Court decided: following a vote, to agree by a majority of 14 to 3:

- (i) to approve the University Executive Group recommendation, as agreed by the Finance & Policy Committee and the People & Organisational Development Committee, not to enrol in the Local Government Pension Scheme;
- (ii) to mandate the University Executive Group to begin formal consultation with the unions on changes to pensions benefits, to include the proposed changes to the UODSS Defined Benefit scheme as well as its closure to new members, and offering the Defined Contribution scheme to new members and as an option to existing members of the Defined Benefit scheme. In so doing, Court noted the consequential requirement for an additional £600k of funding per annum; and
- (iii) to approve a mandate for the University Executive Group to conclude the consultation process as expeditiously as possible and by the end of the next academic year at the latest.

42. **REPORT TO COURT FROM THE DUSA PRESIDENT**

The Court received the regular report from the President of the Dundee University Students' Association (DUSA) which summarised current and emerging student issues. The President highlighted the national housing crisis, which had already been discussed by the Court under **Paper D**, and advised members of planned activities to address the issue.

The Court was advised of the relaunch of more financially-sustainable night-time activities and of the events associated with the election of the Rector. The annual elections of the DUSA executive, school presidents, the Student Representative Council (SRC) and the Independent Member of Court would take place in March and the SRC was engaged in organising an environmental sustainability conference to be held at the end of March.

The President also informed the Court of the SRC's efforts in promoting a safeguarding campaign focusing on stalking, cyber-bullying, revenge porn, image-based abuse and other behaviours which had seen an increase during lockdown across the sector.

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

43. **CONVENER REPORTS**

The Conveners introduced their reports, highlighting matters of interest. Approvals are formally noted against the relevant Committee Report (minute 46).

The Convener of the Audit & Risk Committee provided an overview of the meeting on 17 December 2021 where the Committee had carried out a 'deep dive' on cybersecurity. He advised members that the Committee had received a presentation on the University's current cybersecurity position and had noted the risks faced by the University, as well as the readiness of systems and protocols to respond.

In introducing the report from the Finance & Policy Committee on 18 January 2022, the Convener informed the Court that the Committee had endorsed the assumptions underlying the 2022/2023 budget and five-year plan. The Court noted that the Committee had also recommended that the University give consideration to growing its research income and to expanding its PhD student base.

The Convener of the Governance & Nominations Committee apprised the Court of the Committee's discussions on the Annual Public Stakeholder Meeting and its decision to review the format and structure of the event ahead of the next such meeting. The Convener informed members that the Committee had considered the effects that forthcoming changes to lay Court membership would have on the skills composition of the governing body. On Court membership, the Committee had agreed to the appointment of Rebecca Leiper to the People & Organisational Development Committee and the appointment of Professor Sir Mike Ferguson to the Finance & Policy Committee.

The Convener of the People & Organisational Development Committee advised the Court of the Committee's endorsement of a revised People & Talent Sub-Strategy. The Convener also noted that the Committee had welcomed the news that the University had been successful in its application for the Race Equality Charter Bronze Award.

The Convener of the Remuneration Committee advised the Court that the Committee had considered the annual remuneration process for Grade 10 staff and had approved a budget of £153k for the round. The Committee had also considered a report from the Principal and the University Secretary detailing an assessment of the individual performance of members of the University Executive Group.

The Court decided: to note the reports.

44. **REPORT FROM THE CHAIR OF SENATE TO THE UNIVERSITY COURT**

The Court reviewed the report from the Chair of Senate to the University Court and noted that Senate had discussed the University Strategy and had unanimously decided to commend it to Court for approval. The Senate had also considered the impact of the pandemic on researchers and noted concerns across the sector regarding the integrity of online assessments and the rise in academic misconduct during the pandemic. The Senate had welcomed the significant increase in international students joining the University in Semester 2 but had noted the challenges caused by a shortage of suitable student accommodation.

The Court decided: to note the report.

45. **NARRATIVE FOR THE SENATUS ACADEMICUS**

The Chair of Court agreed to highlight to the Senate Court's approval of the University Strategy and the enabling sub-strategies; discussions on oversight and monitoring of the Academic Excellence & Sustainability Programme, and the strategic plan for the new School of Humanities, Social Sciences and Law; and the Court's approval for the commencement of a consultation process in relation to the University of Dundee Superannuation Scheme (UoDSS).

The Court decided: to note the areas for inclusion in the report to the Senate.

46. **REPORT FROM MEETING OF THE SENATUS ACADEMICUS**

The Court received a report from the meeting of the Senatus Academicus on 2 February 2022 and noted the areas highlighted to the Court.

The Court decided:

- (i) to approve the recommendations concerning the conferment of the title of Professor Emeritus upon Professor Cameron Ross; and
- (ii) otherwise, to note the report

47. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

(1) Audit & Risk Committee Report

The Court received the report of the meeting of the Committee on 17 December 2021. Matters for discussion with the Court are highlighted in minute 43 (above).

The Court decided: to note the report.

(2) Finance & Policy Committee

The Court received the minutes from the Meeting of the Committee of 18 January 2022. The Court's discussion of matters raised by the Committee is detailed in the Conveners' Report (Minute 43).

- The Court decided:**
- (i) to note the Committee's approval of the annual procurement report;
 - (ii) to note the Committee's endorsement of plans to carry out a feasibility study for a major fundraising campaign; and
 - (iii) otherwise, to approve the minutes.

(3) Governance & Nominations Committee

The Court received the minutes of the Committee's meeting on 18 January 2022. The Court's discussion of matters raised by the Committee is detailed in the Conveners' Report (Minute 43).

- The Court decided:**
- (i) to note the contingency arrangements proposed in relation to the Convenerships of the Finance & Policy Committee and the Audit & Risk Committee;
 - (ii) to note progress made in electing the next Chair of Court;
 - (iii) to note the Committee's decision to review the format of the next Public Stakeholder Meeting;
 - (iv) to approve the appointment of Professor Sir Mike Ferguson to the membership of the Finance & Policy Committee and the appointment of Rebecca Leiper to the membership of the People & Organisational Development Committee; and
 - (iv) otherwise, to approve the minutes.

(4) People & Organisational Development Committee

The Court received the minutes of the Committee's meeting on 20 January 2022. The Court's discussion of matters raised by the Committee is detailed in the Conveners' Report (Minute 43).

- The Court decided:**
- (i) to note the University's successful application for the Race Equality Charter Bronze award;
 - (ii) to note that the Committee received an update on UoDSS scheme options under consideration; and
 - (v) Otherwise, to approve the minutes.

(5) Remuneration Committee

(i) Minute of the meeting on 7 December 2021

The Court received the minutes of the additional meeting of the Committee on 7 December 2021. The Court's discussion of matters raised by the Committee are detailed in the Conveners' Report (Minute 43).

- The Court decided:**
- (i) to note that the Remit & Terms of Reference for the Committee had not required amendment for 2021/2022;
 - (ii) to approve the proposed amendments to the Reward Policy for Professorial & Grade 10 staff;
 - (iii) to approve the Remuneration Committee Annual Report;
 - (iv) to note that a further review of the Severance Policy would take place following the completion of the Voluntary Severance consultation process;
 - (vi) to note four pay awards to members of the University Executive Group
 - (vii) to note that the Committee reaffirmed the University's policy not to compensate individuals opting out of the Universities Superannuation Scheme for Lifetime Tax Allowance reasons; and
 - (vii) otherwise, to approve the minutes.

(ii) Minute of the meeting on 7 December 2021 (Principal's remuneration)

The Court received the minute of the meeting of the Committee on 7 December 2021 held in relation to the remuneration of the Principal & Vice-Chancellor.

- The Court decided:**
- (i) to note that the Committee agreed that the Principal & Vice-Chancellor had met the 1-year probationary terms of his contract and that he be confirmed in post;
 - (ii) to note that the review of the performance of the Principal & Vice-Chancellor had taken place and had recommended that objectives over a 3-year horizon be

developed, linked to the University Strategy

(iii) to note that the Committee had received and considered the data provided in reviewing the remuneration of the Principal & Vice-Chancellor; and

(iv) otherwise, to approve the minutes.

(iii) Remuneration Committee Annual Report

The Court received the Remuneration Committee Annual Report, which had been approved by the Convener.

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

(6) Welfare & Ethical Use of Animals Committee

The Court reviewed the minutes from the meeting on 13 January 2022.

The Court decided: to approve the minutes.

(7) Staff Council

The Court reviewed the minutes from the meeting on 23 November 2021.

The Court decided: to approve the minutes.

48. **RESEARCH GOVERNANCE ANNUAL REPORT**

The Court received an annual report from the Research Governance & Policy Sub-Committee of the Senatus Academicus, submitted to provide the Court with reassurance regarding the undertaking of research within the University. Members were reminded that an interim report covering the academic year 2019/2022 had been presented to the Court in February 2021 but that the report under consideration (**paper T**) provided a fuller account of the activities of the Sub-Committee and associated research integrity initiatives during academic years 2019/2020 and 2020/2021.

The Court decided: to note the report (**appendix**)

49. **SENIOR STAFF APPOINTMENTS**

The Court noted the appointment of the following members of staff:

Name	Title	Date
Professor Divya Jindal-Snape	Interim Dean of School of Education & Social Work	1 January 2022
Andrew Kenneth Munns	Executive Dean – Dundee International Institute at Central South University	1 January 2022

The Court decided: to note the appointments.

Mr Ronald Bowie
Chair of Court
University of Dundee