

UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE

UNIVERSITY COURT

A meeting of the University Court was held on 23 April in the Leverhulme Research Centre, Ewing Building, City Campus, University of Dundee.

Present: Amanda Millar (Chair);
Janice Aitken;
Alan Bainbridge (online);
Tricia Bey;
Ian Buerger;
Greg Colgan;
Claire Cunningham;
Professor Iain Gillespie (Principal & Vice-Chancellor);
Andrew Lothian;
Ron Mobed (online);
Dr Anna Notaro (online);
Carla Rossini;
Jay Surti (online);
Professor Garry Taylor;
Karen Thomson (online);
Susan Walker; and
Keith Winter

In Attendance: Professor Kim Dale (Assistant Vice-Principal (International))(items 46-52)
Peter Fotheringham (Director of Finance);
Elise Gallagher (Director of People);
Professor Lisanne Gibson (Vice-Principal (Research))(Items 46-52)
Professor Blair Grubb (Vice-Principal (Education))(items 46-52)
Dr Neale Laker (Deputy University Secretary);
Dr Jim McGeorge (University Secretary & Chief Operating Officer);
Dr Christine Milburn (Director of University Executive and Strategy Office)(items 46-52);
Professor Shane O'Neill (Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost); and
Dr Alison Ramsay (Senior Policy Officer (Corporate Governance))

Apologies: Glenn Allison, Professor Sir Mike Ferguson, Professor Linda Martindale, Nyasha Mutembwa, Amina Shah, Karthik Subramanya, Sharon Sweeney.

46. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR OF COURT

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting of the Court.

47. MINUTES

The Court decided: to approve the minutes of the meeting on 27 February 2024.

48. **MATTERS ARISING**

Action Log

The Court received the action log of Court business.

The Court decided: to note the update.

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

The Court received a report from the Chair on activities undertaken on behalf of the Court and the University at a University and sectoral level. Members were advised that the Chair continued to hold regular discussions with the Vice-Chancellor, Secretariat officers and UEG colleagues, which had served to keep her up to date with matters both within and outwith the University.

The Chair noted that, since the meeting of the Court in February 2024, she had attended a Committee of University Chairs (CUC) event on financial fragility in the sector and a meeting of the Committee of Scottish Chairs (CSC). At the latter, attendees had heard from Graeme Dey, MSP for Higher and Further Education and both meetings had provided valuable insights into the challenges facing the sector.

Ms Millar advised members that she had attended the 50th Anniversary Service of the dedication of the University Chaplaincy. Additionally, she had spoken at a University event to mark International Women's Day.

The Chair apprised the Court of the outcomes of the recent DUSA elections. The incoming President, Manaswi Budhatholi, and the Independent Student Member, Marcus Flucker, would be invited to the meeting of the Court in June 2024.

Ms Millar extended her congratulations to colleagues including Professor Sir Michael Ferguson, who had been recognised as the Knowledge Exchange Champion at the Scottish Knowledge Exchange Awards and Professor Linda Martindale, who had been made Principal Fellow of AdvanceHE. Finally, the Court was invited to join the Chair in congratulating Mrs Muriel Duncan, the receptionist of the Tower Building, on the occasion of her 90th birthday.

The Court decided: to note the report.

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

The Principal & Vice-Chancellor introduced the University Executive Group report to Court, which provided an update on emerging sectoral issues, strategic matters, and recent events. The Principal advised the Court that, since the last meeting of the Court, he had visited China and met several of the University's in-country colleagues in its Beijing Office, at Northeastern University and at the Dundee International Institute of Central South University.

Members were advised that the political environment ahead of a general election continued to present a significant degree of uncertainty to the sector and, whilst the debate would likely focus on the future of the economy, tensions would remain around immigration and international education. The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) review of the Graduate Visa was expected to release its findings on 14 May, shortly after the local elections.

Professor Gillespie apprised members that the SFC indicative funding allocations had been released on 18 April. Whilst overall funding for universities would decrease by 1.3%, the University had fared slightly better than the sector average with a reduction of 0.9%.

The Court noted that a formal approach had been made to the campus trade unions to make changes to terms and conditions, including an increase in annual leave and the adoption of a standard 35-hour week. An agreement in principle had been reached and more detailed discussions were moving forward.

The Principal provided an update on the appointment of the Director of the Binks Institute. Members were advised that conversations were ongoing and it was hoped that an announcement would be made shortly.

The Court was advised of a number of awards and accolades achieved by staff. In addition to the awards made to Professor Sir Mike Ferguson and Professor Linda Martindale, noted above in [paragraph 49](#), Professor Sarah Coulthurst and Professor Kirsty Gunn had been made Fellows of the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE), while Professor Doreen Cantrell had been the first woman to receive the RSE's James Black medal.

The Court decided: to note the report.

51. **BUDGET AND FINANCIAL ENVIRONMENT UPDATE**

The Director of Finance introduced the above report, intended to update the Court on progress related to the budget for 2024/25 and the plan for 2025/26 and 2026/27, aligned with updates provided to Finance & Policy Committee at its March meeting. As in previous years, the University's planning work extended to a five-year horizon and included an update on the status of key budget assumptions, the scenario-planning work being undertaken and their potential impact on the overall University budget targets and financial position based on these assumptions and scenarios.

Mr Fotheringham advised the Court that, since the 2023/24 budget had been set, two significant changes had occurred to the assumptions upon which the plan had been based. Firstly, the University had become aware of issues with Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in two of its core buildings, the repair of which would have an impact on future capital investment and prioritisation. In addition, improvements in the valuations for both the USS and UoDSS pensions schemes had materially reduced liabilities and ongoing service costs.

The downturn in international student recruitment being experienced across the UK HE sector was noted as creating a less predictable environment for budget-setting than in recent years. As a result, more detailed elements of the budgeting work for 2024/25 had been delayed to

allow for the development of a broader range of scenarios. Members were advised that every effort was being made to maximise tuition fee income from international student recruitment but that all scenarios currently being modelled were significantly behind previously planned levels for 2024/25.

The Court noted that increased financial resilience would support opportunities to reduce planned costs in order to mitigate against the expected impact of lower income from tuition fees. It would remain important, however, to retain a degree of flexibility which would enable the University to invest in its strategy.

Members were advised that the overall budget was expected to demonstrate flatter growth than in previous plans with slower progress towards targets but that a broadly resilient financial position remained possible. The proposed budget and five-year plan would be considered at the meeting of the Finance & Policy Committee in May prior to submission to the Court in June.

In discussion, members noted that the political and economic climate would likely remain uncertain for some time and that the University would continue to take available opportunities to minimise costs where possible without detriment to the student experience. A small year-on-year decline in the total funding from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) was expected, with no change to the number of Home student funded places.

The Court noted that prudent planning and sound financial management would be required to maintain a resilient position and was advised that specific overall budget targets would be finalised in due course. Work was ongoing in response to potential future developments in immigration and recruitment in order to prepare for the medium term and the University intended to develop stronger relationships with overseas partners in the longer term.

The Court welcomed the update and noted that the report to its meeting in June would present the proposed budget, along with more developed scenario planning.

The Court decided: to note the report.

52. **UNIVERSITY STRATEGY 2022-27: GROWTH AND GLOBALISATION**

The Principal introduced the above presentation on the delivery of a key element of the University Strategy 2022-27: Growth and Globalisation. Professor Gillespie noted that members had received a report intended to provide the Court with an overview of considerations relating to the Grow and Globalise pillar. In particular, the report was intended to outline where the most significant opportunities might arise and the approach the University Executive Group (UEG) intended to take in order to evaluate and prioritise actions which would enhance the institution's long-term resilience and sustainability.

Court noted that the UEG had been analysing options for growth since the previous Retreat. Members were advised that the most obvious approach would be to increase international student recruitment and that this had brought about a shift in focus from internationalisation to globalisation. Over the past year, the UEG had been leading a change in the University's international operations in order to place globalisation at the heart of all activities.

Professor Gillespie articulated the core philosophy of this shift as the University, whether overseas or in Scotland, operating its activities on the same principles of the triple intensive University (education, research and engagement) focused on social purpose. The successful delivery of Transnational Education (TNE) overseas would become increasingly important, not only in the University's existing partnerships, but also in encouraging and developing other routes for students to benefit from a University of Dundee experience. A new Globalisation Directorate had been launched, initially bringing together Global Partnerships and the Future Students teams, to support the University's global ambitions and a Globalisation Strategy was being developed to run alongside the University Strategy to 2027.

Court was advised that the University had more than 300 partnerships globally with institutions of different sizes and with different strengths, some vital and active, some less so. A more effective means of classifying, monitoring, managing and reviewing all partnerships would be developed to ensure that they remained strategic assets. Existing productive partnerships would be strengthened and new markets identified and developed. Partners would require to be carefully selected to ensure alignment with the University's mission and strategy and a focus on reputation and social purpose, as well as growth and income.

The challenges of recruiting international students to the UK were noted as having led to a renewed focus on the expansion of TNE, where students study for UK degrees in country and members were advised that, currently, as many students pursued a UK programme of study offshore as in the UK. Whilst TNE represented opportunities for growth, it would require careful consideration, and initial findings on the establishment of TNE regional hubs in one or more locations would be received by the UEG during summer 2024. This work, currently being tendered by external consultants, would focus on three global regions, with six countries chosen for in-depth analysis. The University would also commission an external review of where franchise arrangements for Dundee modules or degrees might be considered.

The Principal apprised the Court of opportunities for growth in other areas, including distance learning, as well as threats and opportunities in the current political climate. Modelling and planning of research income growth was underway and appropriate targets for knowledge exchange, consultancy and Continuing Professional Development were being developed. As the future financial environment remained challenging, the University would consider options for its future business model, including more effective use of technology to deliver a vibrant, smart campus which would be both more efficient in terms of running costs whilst also driving outstanding teaching and learning outcomes.

In the course of a lengthy discussion the Court considered, *inter alia*, the management of risk in overseas partnerships and those countries currently under consideration. Members sought clarification of the resource base required to deliver the University's ambitions and were advised that this would vary and would be dependent on cost recovery and the ability of a TNE hub to attract other markets. The University would require to be cognizant of cultural differences in seeking partners who shared its values and purpose and would seek to maximise its distinctiveness to different markets in different ways. Consideration was being given to the development of particular courses and offerings, making use of digital delivery and innovative teaching models.

The Court was advised that sustainability would be an important consideration in the identification of partners, financially as well as environmentally, and that social responsibility and purpose would be fundamental in the development of collaborations, both existing and

evolving. The need for brand management and targeted marketing was noted as key in maintaining the University's international reputation and attractiveness and would require vigilance in the identification of emergent risks across all partners.

Members commended the ambition articulated and requested that management keep them apprised of developments in Growth & Globalisation.

The Court decided: to note the reports.

53. **REPORT FROM THE SENATUS ACADEMICUS**

The Court received and considered the above report of the meeting of the Senate held on 20 March 2024, prepared for the Court's information. Members noted that any actions detailed within the report would be taken forward as indicated in the minutes for the meeting of the Senate.

The Court decided: (i) to approve the academic semester dates to 2029/30;
(ii) to approve the academic calendar 2024/25; and
(iii) to note the report.

54. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

(1) Audit & Risk Committee

The Convener of the Audit & Risk Committee introduced the report from the most recent meeting, and drew members' attention to the Committee's consideration of an executive summary Internal Audit Report on the Academic Appraisal Process. The Committee had also received an update report on progress made on low-risk actions.

The Committee had discussed the importance of attracting and retaining talent and commended the dynamic nature of the updated Institutional Risk Register. Finally, Mr Glenn Allison had attended the meeting in preparation for his becoming Convener of the Committee from 1 August 2024.

Minutes of the Committee's meeting on 12 March 2024

The Court received the minutes of the meeting.

The Court decided: (i) to note that the Committee approved the Institutional Risk Register; and
(ii) otherwise, to approve the minutes.

(2) Finance & Policy Committee

The Convener of the Finance & Policy Committee introduced the report from the most recent meeting and apprised members of the Committee's focus on forward thinking and planning for a sustainable future.

Minutes of the Committee's meeting on 26 March 2024

The Court received the minutes of the meeting.

- The Court decided:**
- (i) to note that the Committee approved a proposal in respect of the University's contract with TechnologyOne; and
 - (ii) otherwise, to approve the minutes.

(3) Governance & Nominations Committee

The Convener of the Governance & Nominations Committee introduced the report from the most recent meeting and, in so doing, drew members' attention to the Committee's discussions in relation to the forthcoming Quinquennial Review of the Effectiveness of the Court. Members were also advised a recruitment and selection agency had been appointed and a recruitment panel established for the appointment of new lay members of the Court.

The Convener informed the Court that the Committee had received a proposal from the Chair of Court that the Court should meet once annually without University Officers present. This would require University Officers other than the Principal & Vice-Chancellor and the University Secretary & Chief Operating Officer to withdraw. The Committee had approved the proposal and members were advised that an item would be added to the agenda of the Court's first meeting in session 2024/25.

Minutes of the Committee's meeting on 26 March 2024

The Court received the minutes of the meeting.

- The Court decided:** to approve the minutes.

(4) Remuneration Committee

The Convener of the Remuneration Committee introduced the report from the most recent meetings of the Committee and, in doing so drew members' attention to the Committee's consideration of the report on the 2023/24 remuneration round. Members were also apprised of the Committee's deliberations in relation to the remuneration of members of the University Executive Group, including the Principal & Vice-Chancellor. Finally, the Court was also invited to endorse the Committee's approval of the Remuneration Committee Annual Report.

(i) Minutes of the Committee's meeting on 16 January 2024

The Court received the minutes of the meeting.

- The Court decided:**
- (i) to note that the Committee was satisfied that the relevant policies and procedures had been appropriately followed, homologate the

decisions within the report, and note the expenditure of £94k relative to a budget of £168,795; and

(ii) otherwise, to approve the minutes.

(ii) Minutes of the Committee's meeting on 22 February 2024

The Court received the minutes of the meeting.

The Court decided:

- (i) to note pay awards for four members of the University Executive Group ;
- (ii) to note the agreed uplift in salary for the Principal & Vice-Chancellor; and
- (iii) otherwise, to approve the minutes.

(iii) Remuneration Committee Annual Report

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

The Court decided: (i) to endorse the Annual Report.

55. **STAFF COUNCIL MINUTES**

The Court reviewed the minutes from the meeting on 26 February 2024.

The Court decided: to approve the minutes.

56. **NARRATIVE FOR THE SENATUS ACADEMICUS**

The Chair of Court recommended, and the Court agreed, to highlight to Senate the Court's discussions on Growth & Globalisation and the SFC indicative funding announcement. It was further agreed that the congratulations of the Court be communicated to those staff recently recognised for their achievements.

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

57. **COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE COURT**

The Court agreed that the post-Court communication to staff and students would focus on the Court's commendation of those staff who had received public recognition for their achievements and the warm wishes of members to Muriel Duncan on the occasion of her 90th birthday. In addition, the Court had discussed in some depth the University Executive Group's intentions in relation to Growth & Globalisation and considered the impact of the recent SFC

indicative funding allocation announcement.

The Court decided: to note the areas for inclusion in the communication to staff and students.

58. **DUSA PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

The Court received and considered the above report, which provided the Court with an update on DUSA matters.

The Court decided: to note the report.

59. **SENIOR STAFF APPOINTMENTS**

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

Name	Title	New appointment	Internal promotion
Zheng Wand	Chair of International Economics	Yes	No
Christine Milburn	Director of University Executive & Strategy Office	Yes	Yes
Jason Norris	Director of Globalisation	Yes	Yes?
Anna Grey	Director of Research and Innovation Services	Yes	Yes
Mhairi Taylor	Deputy Director (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion)	Yes	No
Hannah Whaley	Director of LLCI & University Librarian	Yes	Yes
Paul Bennet	Director of Strategic Change & Delivery	Yes	Yes

The Court decided: to note the appointments.

60. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chair noted that the next meeting of the Court would precede the annual Court Retreat and encouraged as many members as possible to attend.

Amanda Millar
Chair of Court
University of Dundee