

University Court

Minutes

30 April 2025 from 14:00 to 17:00 in the Boardroom, Kydd Building

*attended via MS Teams

Members

Mr David Brew (Chair) [†]	Ms Heather Dunk (Vice-Chair) [‡]
Ms Dounia Allaiouti	Mr Fraser Keir
Professor Liz Bacon	Ms Veronica Lynch
Ms Liz Blackburn*	Mr Jim Macgregor*
Dr Scott Cameron	Mr Antony Marks
Col. Iain Davidson	Dr Hadi Mehrpouya
Ms Fiona Drysdale KC	Mr Thomas Sloan*
Professor Ruth Falconer	Professor Edith Sim
Ms Kerith George-Briant	Mr Steven Traynor
Ms Lynne Hamilton	Mr Luke Webster
Ms Pam Herries	

In Attendance

Dr Hannah Coutts (items 89 and 90)	Ms Eilidh Fraser
Ms Carla De Brito (Observer)	Mr Andrew Menzies

Apologies

Mr Andrew Bailey

Secretariat

Ms Caroline Summers	Dr Dianne Peden
(Secretary to Court)	Ms Vanessa Kind

Open Business

Preliminary Matters

82. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Oral Report

- (i). The Chair welcomed Court to the fifth meeting of the academic year. The Chair, on behalf of Court, extended a special welcome to Ms C. De Brito, the Students' Association President Elect, who was joining as an observer. Court extended its congratulations to Mr L. Webster who has been re-elected as the Students' Association Vice-President for a second term.
- (ii). The Chair noted that the Head of Planning & Insight, Dr H. Coutts, would join the meeting for items 89 and 90.
- (iii). Apologies were received as noted above.

83. Declaration of Potential Conflicts of Interest

Oral Report

- (i). The Chair reminded members of their responsibility to indicate if they had, or could be perceived to have, a conflict of interest in relation to the items for discussion. None were declared.

84. Feedback on Pre-Court Session

Oral Report

- (i). Court noted thanks to Dean of the Faculty of Design, Informatics and Business, Professor James Bown, Head of the Department of Games Technology and Mathematics, Professor Ruth Falconer, Programme Leader MSc Technical Art and Visual Effects, Dr Philip Vaughan, and Research Fellow, Mr Jamie Buttenshaw, for the tour of the CoSTAR Realtime Lab at Water's Edge and presentation of their work prior to the Court meeting.
- (ii). Court welcomed the opportunity to view the space, emphasising the investment that had been made by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the requirement to resolve the Intellectual Property issues discussed at the visit.

Court and Governance Matters

85. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2025

CT/0425/070

- (i). The Chair drew Court's attention to the fact that the approved minutes would be published on the University website and the meeting book (containing the agenda,

approved minutes and enclosures (with any required redactions relating to confidential information)) would be published on the University intranet following the meeting.

Outcome: Court received and considered the minutes of its meeting held on 19 February 2025, submitted as enclosure 70, and approved them as an accurate record.

86. Action List and Matters Arising from these Minutes **CT/0425/071**

- (i). The Chair confirmed that the action list, submitted as enclosure 71, contained one ongoing action, which was not due at the meeting. The Chair highlighted the importance of organising the Risk Management workshop as soon as possible.

Outcome: Court noted the Action List.

87. Report from the Chair of Court **CT/0425/072**

- (i). The Chair introduced his Report, submitted as enclosure 72, noting that the paper provided an update on recent discussions amongst Scottish University Chairs at their meeting on 27 March 2025.

Outcome: Court noted the Report from the Chair of Court.

Matters for Discussion

88. External Environment **CT/0425/073**

- (i). Vice-Principal and University Secretary, Ms C. Summers, introduced the paper relating to the External Environment, submitted as enclosure 73, highlighting that Court may wish to reflect on the current issues from a governance perspective.
- (ii). Court acknowledged the difficult situation at the University of Dundee (UoD) and noted that the report from the independent investigation announced by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), overseen by Professor Pamela Gillies, former Principal at Glasgow Caledonian University, and supported by BDO, would be published on 19 June 2025. Court emphasised the importance of considering any implications from the report for the University's management and governance structure. Court noted that the discussions at the Scottish Parliament Education, Children and Young People Committee which had provided an insight into the situation albeit the independent investigation report would provide the definitive report on the factors which contributed to their current difficulties. Court

emphasised the importance of members' understanding their collective responsibility to ensure the good governance of the University and to provide constructive challenge to the Executive Group accordingly.

- (iii). Court was advised that the Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Professor L. Bacon, had accepted the invitation to join the Strategic Advisory Taskforce established by the Scottish Government, led by Sir Alan Langlands, and that the task force had held its first meeting on 24 April 2025.
- (iv). Court discussed the potential impact from this and from sector-wide funding issues, acknowledging the ongoing work through Universities Scotland to lobby the Scottish Government for a sustainable funding model. Court was advised that the Royal Society of Edinburgh would host a Conference on 28-29 May 2025 on the Funding of Tertiary Education in Scotland, which aims to explore policy options for the future of funding models in Scotland, and which the Chair of Court, the Vice-Chair, and the Vice-Principal and University Secretary are attending.

Outcome: Court noted the paper on the External Environment.

Matters for Approval

[Dr H Coutts joined the meeting]

89. Strategy 2025-2030

CT/0425/075

- (i). Professor L. Bacon introduced the update on the Strategy 2025-2030, submitted as enclosure 75, highlighting the various opportunities for feedback and consultation from staff, students and other stakeholders as part of its review and refresh. Court was advised that a summary of points raised during the consultation and how these were addressed in the strategy would be published alongside the final strategy.
- (ii). Court was advised it was being asked to approve the strategy document in principle, acknowledging that the next stage would be to finalise the strategy implementation framework, which would set out the way in which each of the high-level aims will be delivered, what the expected outcomes (and if appropriate targets) would be, and how these would be monitored. The supporting strategies and their implementation plans would be one of the principal mechanisms for delivery of the strategy. Court noted the intention to bring this framework to the next meeting of Finance and Corporate Performance Committee and then to Court in June.

- (iii). Court welcomed the strategy and acknowledged the effort that had gone into its development. Court was advised that there was an emphasis on the University's Values (which had been reduced from eight to four: Inclusive; Caring; Innovative; and Collaborative). Court discussed the descriptor for Caring which referred to "treating all beings..." and it was agreed that this would be reviewed to recognise people, animals and the planet. Court discussed whether the University needs to consider its national brand within Scotland as well as its position in Dundee in the document. Court also discussed the Dundee Business School being named early on (in Our Context) and thought it was important to highlight the Business School as this was an area of potential growth.

Action: Vice-Principal and University Secretary to update the Strategy 2025-2030 to address the feedback from Court and to submit the implementation framework to the June meeting.

Outcome: Court approved the Strategy 2025-2030, subject to minor amendments as noted above.

90. Equality Mainstreaming Report 2025

CT/0425/076

- (i). The Chair of the People, Health and Equality Committee, Ms H. Dunk, introduced the Equality Mainstreaming Report, submitted as enclosure 76, highlighting that the report had been considered by the People, Health and Equality Committee at its meeting held on 11 March 2025 and that the requested changes had been incorporated prior to its submission to Court. Court was advised that if Court was content to approve it in its current format, the report would be published on the University website later that day in order to meet the statutory deadline. Court noted that it had been agreed after the meeting of the Committee not to publish an interim version, subject to Governing Body approval, as noted in the minutes submitted as enclosure 81.
- (ii). Court was advised that the report had been produced to meet the legal requirements under the Equality Act (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, and that it reported progress towards the university mainstreaming outcomes 2021-2025 as well as setting out the new equality outcomes for the period 2025-2029, which will align with the National Equality Outcomes set by the SFC.
- (iii). Court noted its thanks to the Director of Student and Academic Services, Mr James Nicholson, for authoring the report and to various colleagues who had contributed to its content.

- (iv). Court discussed the wording, “fit for purpose” in relation to Aim 21 – Faith and Belief and it was noted that it aligns with the National Equality Outcomes. Court was advised that the University aims to support staff and students with different faiths and beliefs equally and to provide suitable spaces which meet their needs. Court noted that the Staff Engagement Survey includes questions relating to Faith and Belief.
- (v). Court discussed the gender balance within the student population, noting that the report provided this by subject rather than programme. Court noted that the student population with declared disability had increased, impacting the support requirements and resource required to deliver this. Court emphasised the importance of appropriate support measures being in place to ensure the best student experience.
- (vi). Court highlighted the lack of diversity among its members, particularly regarding individuals from different racial or ethnic backgrounds. Court asked that the report be updated to replace use of “Arabic” with “Arab” prior to publication.

Action: Governance and Policy Officer to update the draft Equality Mainstreaming Report to replace the use of Arabic with Arab prior its publication.

Outcome: Court approved the Equality Mainstreaming Report 2025, subject to the minor amendment as noted above.

Secretary’s Note: The required amendment was made, and the Equality Mainstreaming Report 2025 was published on the University website on 30 April 2025, which met the statutory deadline.

[Dr H Coutts and Ms V. Kind left the meeting]

Committee Matters

91. Audit and Risk Committee

91.1. Minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2025

CT/0425/077

- (i). Court was advised that the Committee had reviewed the Financial Regulations (item 41), which were recommended to Court for approval by the Finance and Corporate Performance Committee.

Outcome: Court noted the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 25 March 2025.

92. Finance and Corporate Performance Committee**92.1. Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2025****CT/0425/078**

- (i). Court was advised that the Committee had approved the Financial Strategy Monitoring Annual Report (item 44) and had recommended two items to Court for approval: the revised Financial Regulations (item 40) and the Information Governance Framework (item 41).

Outcome: Court noted the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Corporate Performance Committee held on 18 March 2025.

92.2. Financial Regulations Review**CT/0425/079**

- (i). The Director of Finance, Infrastructure and Corporate Services, Mr A. Menzies introduced the revised Financial Regulations, submitted as enclosure 79. Court was advised that the regulations had been reviewed as part of their regular review cycle with some minor changes proposed. The revised Financial Regulations once approved would be effective from 1 August 2025 in line with the new financial year. Court noted that the regulations had been considered by SMT prior to their submission to the Committee and had also been discussed by the Audit and Risk Committee prior to their submission to Court.
- (ii). Court was advised that it was proposed that the current pattern of annual review be brought into line with other University Policies, to be triennial, albeit that any intervening changes required by legislation, regulation, best practice or organisational change would precipitate an earlier review.
- (iii). Court was advised that the Scheme of Delegation was under review, including ensuring that the required changes to reflect the revised regulations were made, with a view to submission to the June meeting of Court for approval.

Outcome: Court approved the revised Financial Regulations.

Outcome: Court agreed to a change to a three-year review cycle in line with the Policy Document Governance Framework

92.3. Information Governance Framework**CT/0425/080**

- (i). Mr A. Marks introduced the Information Governance Framework, submitted as enclosure 80, highlighting that it was part of the University-wide InfoSmart project. Court was advised that the framework had been developed in collaboration with the Information Governance Working Group, which includes members from

different University areas, and it had been considered by SMT prior to its submission to the Committee.

Outcome: Court approved the Information Governance Framework

93. Governance and Nominations Committee

Oral Report

- (i). Court was advised that the Committee had not met since the February meeting of Court. The Chair highlighted that a recent recruitment round for new lay members of Court had been undertaken with thirteen applications having been received by the closing date of 23 April 2025. Court was advised that interviews would take place on 8 or 16 May 2025, depending on the availability of the candidates, with the intention that any recommendations for appointments from 1 August 2025 would come forward to Court at its meeting in June.

94. People, Health and Equality Committee

94.1. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2025

CT/0425/081

- (i). Court was advised that the Committee had recommended two items to Court for approval: the Equality Mainstreaming Report (item 36), discussed earlier under item 90, and the revised Hybrid Working Policy (item 37).

Outcome: Court noted the minutes of the meeting of the People, Health and Equality Committee held on 11 March 2025.

94.2. Hybrid Working Policy

CT/0425/082

- (i). The Director of People and Organisational Development, Ms E. Fraser introduced the revised Hybrid Working Policy submitted as enclosure 82, highlighting that the policy had been reviewed as part of its regular review cycle and had been considered by SMT prior to its submission to the Committee. Court was advised that further guidance would be published alongside the policy.

Outcome: Court approved the revised Hybrid Working Policy

Senate Matters

95. Minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2025

CT/0425/083

- (i). Court noted that Senate had discussed the Strategic Plan Refresh (item 41) prior to the submission of the Strategy 2025-30.

Outcome: Court noted the minutes of the meeting of Senate held on 26 March 2025.

96. Academic Matters Report

CT/0425/084

- (i). Court offered its congratulations to all those involved and acknowledged the external recognition of work being undertaken at Abertay. Court welcomed the success of the Wellbeing Clinic and noted that additional funding was being sought to expand its service provision.
- (ii). Court discussed whether members could assist more with the promotion of activities at Abertay for example via LinkedIn. Ms C Summer indicated that she would discuss this further with the Head of Communications and Public Affairs, Mr Graeme Bletcher.

Action: Vice-Principal and University Secretary to discuss with the Head of Communications and Public Affairs opportunities for Court members to promote Abertay.

Outcome: Court noted the Academic Matters Report.

Matters for Information

97. Executive Group Report to Court

CT/0425/085

- (i). The Chair thanked the Executive Group for its report to Court, submitted as enclosure 85. Court welcomed the update on the SMT Structure following the retirement of the Deputy Principal and Deputy Vice-Chancellor. Court noted the interim arrangements with regards to chairing of internal committees, highlighting the importance of ensuring that these changes did not have a negative impact on staff's health and wellbeing and could be accommodated within their workload. Professor L. Bacon emphasised that this was always considered when such changes were made.
- (ii). Court welcomed the update on SFC funding, noting that this would form part of wider discussion at the June meeting of Court, where Operational and Financial Planning for 2025-26 to 2027-28 would be considered.

Outcome: Court noted the Executive Group Report to Court.

98. Students' Association Report to Court**CT/0425/086**

- (i). The Students' Association -President, Ms D. Allaiouti, introduced the Students' Association Report to Court, submitted as enclosure 86, highlighting that the report provided an insight into the work that had been undertaken since the last meeting of Court. Court offered its congratulations to all those involved and recognised the work being undertaken by the Students' Association.
- (ii). Court was advised of a number of activities undertaken including the Ethical Hacking Conference – SecuriTAY; SHAG (Sexual Health Awareness and Guidance) Week; Counsellor Fly In Session; Honorary Fellows Event; Library Ground Floor Opening Event and the Student Strategy Consultation.
- (iii). Court was advised that the Students' Association and the Counselling & Mental Health Team had collaborated with Think Positive to create a Student Mental Health Agreement, which had been signed off by the Students' Association President and the Principal and Vice-Chancellor on 13 March 2025 (University Mental Health Day).
- (iv). Court discussed the student trip to Holyrood, on 17 February 2025, where several students from the student council had had the opportunity to visit the Parliament Building, watch First Minister questions, sit in the committee environment and learn more about issues that affect them on a daily basis as well as networking with MSPs from around Scotland. Court was advised that the Students' Association were looking to make this an annual event. Professor L. Bacon offered to meet with the students prior to the visit to provide them with some additional context.
- (v). Court was advised that the Student Officer nominations and elections had taken place week commencing 16 March 2025 and offered their congratulations again to Ms C. De Brito and Mr L. Webster on their election.

Outcome: Court noted the Students' Association Report to Court.

Concluding Matters

99. Any Other Competent Business**Oral Report**

- (i). No other competent business was raised.

Date of Next Meeting: 18 June 2025**Chair: Mr David Brew**