

Draft subject to approval by the University Court at the meeting of 17 January 2025

UNIVERSITY COURT OF ST ANDREWS

AT St Andrews on the 18th DAY OF OCTOBER 2024 AT A MEETING OF THE COURT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

Present:

Ray Perman, Senior Lay Member (presiding); Professor Dame Sally Mapstone, Principal; Professor Brad MacKay, Deputy Principal; Iain Anderson, Jonathan Hewitt, General Council Assessors, Cllr Robin Lawson, Provost of Fife's Assessor; Professor Margaret Connolly, Professor Allan Watson, Dr Morven Shearer, Dr Stephen Tyre, Senate Assessors; Dr Lorna Dargan, Non-Academic Staff Assessor; Dr Malcolm Petrie, Trade Union Nominee, Alex Duncan, Trade Union Nominee; Cam Brown, President of the Students' Association, Hitanshi Badani, Director of Education, Students' Association; Romi Arman, Ronnie Bowie, Alison Johns, Ros King, Frank MacInnis, Professor Ewan McKendrick, Eve McCurrich and Jenny Stewart, Non-executive Members.

In regular attendance:

Derek Watson, Quaestor and Factor; Alastair Merrill; Vice-Principal (Governance); Professor Clare Peddie, Vice-Principal Education (Proctor); Professor Tom Brown, Vice-Principal (Research, Collections, and Innovation); Professor Monique MacKenzie, Vice-Principal (Digital Education, Research, and Environment); Dr Rebekah Widdowfield, Vice-Principal (People and Diversity); Ester Ruskuc, Vice-Principal (Strategy, Policy, and Planning); Niall Scott, Vice-Principal (Communications); Professor Ineke de Moortel (Master); Andy Goor, Chief Financial Officer; Margaret Sinclair, Executive Officer to the University Court and Senate (as Clerk).

Apologies:

Lord Mark Sedwill, Non-executive Member.

In attendance in part

Catherine Burns, Executive Director of Research Services (Item 13 only).

PRELIMINARIES

FAREWELLS AND WELCOME

The Senior Lay Member opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees to the first formal meeting of Court for the new academic year. For the record, Court noted the demission from office of Barry Will, Professor Catherine O'Leary, Professor

Sharon Ashbrook, Tim Allan and Adrian Greer. Cam Brown remained on Court following his election as President of the Students' Association. New members welcomed were Hitanshi Badani, Professor Margaret Connolly, Professor Allan Watson, Lord Mark Sedwill, Ronnie Bowie and Romi Arman.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Result of election for Deputy Chair of Court

Court noted that Alison Johns had been elected to the position in the recent election. Court members were informed of the outcome of the election on 2 October 2024. The appointment will commence on 21 October 2024.

Update on Rector's Appeal

The Secretary to Court provided an update.

As Court was aware, the Rector had lodged an appeal against the decision to dismiss her as a member of Court. The appeal was being heard by the Chancellor who has appointed lawyers to advise him. The indicative timeframe of 30 days for a decision to be reached by the Chancellor had been exceeded, but all parties had been informed of the delay by the Chancellor's representatives. The University and the Rector (via her representatives) were being updated as appropriate by the Chancellor's legal representatives as to progress. Court would be notified when further information became available, but, at present, there was no indication of when a decision might be made by the Chancellor.

It was noted that the deadline for the Rector to lodge a request for Judicial review in relation to the Charity Trustee decision would expire at the end of October.

[Clerk's note – At the date of the meeting no request for Judicial Review had been lodged, but the Rector commenced proceeding for Judicial Review on 29 October 2024.]

Committee of Scottish Chairs

The Senior Lay member provided a brief update on the recent meeting attended by him.

STARRING OF ITEMS

Members noted those items currently starred on the Agenda.

Item 1 and 2 - Meeting minutes and Matters Arising

Item 3 – Principal’s Report to Court

PARC Business

Items 4 – Minute of the meeting held on 13 September 2024; Item 5 – Indicative Student Numbers; Item 6 - Summary Financial report to 31 July 2024; Item 7 - Projects for Approval; and Item 8 – Institutional Indicators Update.

Discussion item

Item 13 – Research Support - Advancing Research Strategy and Services

Reports

Item 14 – Student Members’ Report

Item 15 – Report from the People and Diversity Assurance Group

Item 16 – Report from the Audit and Risk Committee

No additional items were starred.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no new declarations of interest.

I OPENING BUSINESS

1. Meeting minutes

(i) Minute of the Court Meeting held on 7 June 2024

The minute of the Court meeting held on 7 June 19 2024 (on file, Minutes 2023-2024 No.7) was agreed as a correct record.

2. Matters Arising

Update on Accommodation Review

The Quaestor indicated that occupancy rates were 97.6%.

Court had expected to receive the accommodation review report at this meeting. The Quaestor confirmed that the accommodation review had not yet been completed, or reported to PARC. The review could only be concluded once the final figures for this year had become available. The availability and uptake of private accommodation, including the accommodation at Kilrymont, was also a factor to be taken into consideration in the review and the results of the student accommodation survey were also of relevance. The report would be provided when it was complete and could be of optimal utility. The intention was to bring the report to PARC in December and then

to Court in January.

II PRINCIPAL'S BUSINESS

3. Principal's Report to Court

(i) Written

Court received the Principal's written report (on file, Court/24/01) which provided an update to Court on recent events, activities, and general University news.

(ii) Verbal report and update

The Principal provided a verbal report to Court on a number of matters as detailed below.

Paragraph 2: The University's new Development campaign, *Making Waves*, was launched over a weekend of celebrations in St Andrews between 24 and 29 September. These showcased the world-leading capabilities of St Andrews and the ambition to shape the future. The campaign launch had been a great success, but it would be important to build and maintain momentum.

Paragraph 3: On 1 October it was confirmed that the University of St Andrews had achieved its first Race Equality Charter (REC) institutional Bronze award. This was a huge milestone in the journey to advance race equality, and the culmination of a huge amount of work. The Principal paid particular tribute to Dr Akira O'Connor for his superb leadership as REC chair, as well as the chairs of the four REC working Groups and to the leadership of the Vice-Principal (People and Diversity) as project sponsor .

World-leading

Paragraph 13: The Principal highlighted the Industrial Strategy Green paper launched by the UK Government which identified a clear role for research and development as well as skills education for Scottish Universities and for the sector to ensure that it fully participate in the consultation.

Policy Horizons

Paragraph 81: The Scottish Government response to the Independent Review of

Qualifications and Assessment - the Hayward Review, published in June 2023 and commissioned to design a school qualifications system 'fit for the future' was released on 19 September. and takes on board some, but not all of the Review's recommendations. It takes forward the Review's recommendation to replace the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) with a new body, Qualifications Scotland (QS), and legislation - the Education (Scotland) Bill - is already in process to deliver this. The response concurs with the Review's emphasis on a balanced approach to assessment with a reduced reliance on external examinations, instead forwarding an increased role for continuous, internal assessments. Additionally, there are commitments to: rationalising the qualifications offered in the Senior Phase; enhancing interdisciplinary learning; developing a national digital profile to recognise broader student achievements; and incorporating AI into learning. The Government's approach is incremental, and the University will continue to engage. QS will not accredit degrees, for which robust quality arrangements are already in place

Questions from members related to the UK Government Industrial Strategy (Para 13 of the Report) and the importance of leaning into this and taking the opportunity to lobby, be part of the conversation, and ensure a Scottish Voice was represented on the UK strategy; Rankings (Paragraph 9) with specific questions asked and answered on the QS World rankings and mitigating actions, and on the Times Higher Education Impact rankings.

Members who had attended the Making waves launched congratulated the University and all staff involved in what had been a memorable weekend. It was confirmed that the targeted campaign content which had been promised at the Court Away Day was being prepared by Development and would be rolled out to Court members to allow dissemination to their networks. The Principal reminded Court members of the positive impact that a message of complete institutional support of the campaign from Court members would have on fundraising.

Members also noted that there would be a presentation on the Digital nexus Building at the January Court meeting. This would provide further detail of and insight into this important development which formed a key part of the campaign.

II PARC BUSINESS

The Senior Lay Member, as Convenor of PARC, introduced the PARC business forwarded to Court.

4. Minute of the Meeting held on 13 September 2024

Members received the minute of the meeting (on file, Court/24/02).

5. Indicative Student Numbers

Court received the paper (on file, Court/24/03) which provided the snapshot of student numbers for Academic Year 2024-25.

The snapshot comprised

- **Court/24/03(i) 2024-25 Entrants to Target Reconciliation: Semester 1 Student Snapshot** . The paper presented entrant turnout compared with targets. In addition, a preliminary comparison of tuition fee entrant income relative to budget was provided.
- **Court24/03(ii) Fees shortfall October 2024**. The paper indicated the shortfall of income against budget for entrant students.

The Deputy Principal presented the paper highlighting the key points:

- The overall undergraduate target had been exceeded, with significant recruitment above target in UG Overseas students (additional 90 FTE)
- SIMD20 entrants made up 11.4% (92 FTE) of the Scottish domiciled UG entrant population.
- AT PGT level, the Home fee target had been exceeded (additional 45 FTE) however there had been a significant under-recruitment of Overseas students (129 FTE)
- The overall financial outturn in respect of the core intake was £840K under what was budgeted

The Deputy -Principal provided some commentary on and explanation for each of the figures, including the impact of the figure budgeted for returners. The Chief Financial Officer provided further detail on the fees shortfall with reference to the analysis provided to Court in the paper Court/24/03(ii). The paper identified the shortfalls and their cumulative financial impact; detailed challenges; current actions being taken; and plans under consideration for a longer-term strategy.

Members noted the update. Questions asked and answered as appropriate by the Deputy Principal and Chief Financial Officer covered questions on specific targets including SIMD20, including the date available in relation to calculating the SIMD20 percentage; the relevance of block grants; the figures for digital and distance learning;

the rationale behind the mitigation measures being taken and proposed, including the proposed use of Capital receipts; financial forecasts; the need for updated figures and for the financial plan to be recast; ScotGEM figures; PG recruitment including demographics; admission figures and returners; and the progress of Digital - specifically pace, projections and anticipated break even date (in relation to which Court additionally received a brief update from the Vice-Principal (Digital Education, Research, and Environment)).

In relation to Court/24/03(ii) Court noted the cumulative financial impact of the fees shortfall; noted the current action being taken; and endorsed the steps being considered to provide longer term financial stability. It was also agreed that it would be of benefit for PARC, and then Court, to receive a detailed update on the progress of Digital which would provide an indication of how the programme was developing by reference to initial plans, current progress, and future projections. Such an update could also encompass the wider issues of course selection; targeted provision; and marketing.

Members also emphasised more generally the need for Court to have confidence in the financial information presented, and to be confident that it represented an accurate reflection of circumstances. The financial summary (see 6 below) detailed a substantial increase in the forecast deficit reported to PARC in March. Additionally, the fees shortfall paper indicated a shortfall of income against budget and identified a number of fee shortfalls. This was a potentially problematic, as it undermined confidence in the financial plan. Whilst it was helpful for the Chief Financial Officer to provide a retrospective explanation of why there had been a change in figures or projections (such explanations had been received and were detailed in the papers), recent experience served to demonstrate an ability to work out why changes had occurred after the event, rather than to reinforce confidence in the reliability of financial information provided, the financial planning being undertaken, and the capacity to anticipate or predict problems in advance.

Court had to be able to rely upon the financial information presented to it, if it was to fulfil its duty to make decisions and assessments including of risk. Such information had to be clear, consistent, of high quality; accurate; realistic (e.g. in relation to contingencies); be able to identify potential gaps and fluctuations; and to identify and build in the predicted impacts of interrelated factors. The potential for change in circumstances and the need to respond to challenges had to be built into financial planning.

In essence what was required was a recast of the 3-5 year Financial Plan, and a clear understanding of the risks associated with the financial figures including the extent to which this would impact action and projected plans.

Court acknowledged the excellence of the Executive team, and that the University was in better shape than many other institutions in the Sector, but the recent challenges with financial information risked this confidence being undermined and had provided an opportunity to have a conversation about the information Court needed about finances in order to be able to fulfil its function with a degree of assurance.

6. Summary Financial Report to 31 July 2024

The Chief Financial Officer presented the report to Court (on file Court/24/04) which provided Court with a summary of the University's financial position as at 31 July 2024.

A number of points relating to the Financial summary had been discussed in the context of item 5 above. Court noted the report and update and the intention to recast the financial plan as requested. The revised plan would come initially to PARC.

7. Projects for Approval

The Quaestor presented the paper (on file, Court/24/05) which provided an overview of the following projects presented for PARC's approval at its September meeting (PARC Minutes Refer).

New College OBC; New Digital Nexus Building OBC; Rooftop solar OBC; Macro-scale Solar Fees.

Court noted the paper.

8. Institutional Indicators Update

The Vice-Principal (Strategy, Policy, and Planning) presented the paper which provided the regular update on Indicators of Progress aligned to the University Strategy 20022-27. The paper, provided for information, presented an overview of

performance across the five strategic themes as well as indicators relating to resources and financial resilience.

Court noted the update.

It was noted that three of the four Digital indicators remained marked as in development, and reassurance provided that the work was underway in conjunction with Schools and relevant disciplines to define these.

9. Projects for Information

Court received the Projects for Information paper (on file, Court/24/07) which provided a summary of in-train and planned capital projects. The Appendices to the summary included updates on the following projects:

Post Completion

Younger Hall

Under Construction

St Andrews West; Grange; Students' Association Roof; Power to X

Working to FBC

Drochaid; Bat Lab; Rooftop Solar.

Working to OBC

Digital Nexus Building; New College; Large Scale Solar.

Court noted the update.

10. Annual Report from the Investment and Treasury Group

Members noted the report (on file, Court/24/08) which provided an overview of the work of the Investment and Treasury Group over the last twelve months.

The Convenor of the Group outlined the investment philosophy, and the balance between fiduciary duty and the role of the fund manager.

11. Annual Development Update

Court noted the paper (on file, Court/24/09 (updated since PARC)) which provided

the Annual Development Update relating to philanthropic fundraising to 31 July 2024.

12. Strategic Themes Update

Court received the paper (on file, Court/24/10) presented for information. The paper detailed the annual update on the actions delivered under the themes of the University Strategy 2022-27 over AY 2023-24. It also noted key delivery priorities for AY 2024-25, and shared information on underpinning initiatives to amplify delivery

III DISCUSSION ITEM

13. Research Support - Advancing Research Strategy and Services

The Vice-Principal (Research, Collections, and Innovation) along with Catherine Burns, Executive Director of Research services, delivered a presentation on Research Support. In addition, Court received the paper (on file Court/24/11) which detailed the ambition to develop a Research and Innovation Strategy that is enabled by an effective research service that together empowers academics to develop transformative research impact and innovation in a highly competitive landscape and briefly outlined the institutional context in relation to research alongside highlighting key actions that will be taken over the course of the next year to enhance support for and demonstrate commitment to research at St Andrews.

The slides for the presentation covered the changing research environment and its opportunities and challenges; the external influences on the research environment from 2016-2023; how research is funded; strengths and weaknesses; connecting strategy with purpose; REF 2029; connecting Research Services provision with strategy; a transformative portfolio of projects; and priority activity for 2024/25.

The slides for the presentation have been placed on the Court SharePoint site.

Questions and comments from members related to the potential for and the timescale for change; the shape of REF 2029 and the potential to influence it; the importance of output and impact; strategy in relation to research (including priorities and focus); culture and the need for cultural change; funding; funding strategy re diversification; the role and importance of research support services in research facilitation; and strategy for grant applications.

IV REPORTS

14. Student Members' Report

The President of the Students' Association presented a verbal report on the activities of the Students' Association commenting on:-

- the progress of the Change Programme, which had resulted so far in the adoption of the plan for change, the establishment of a student voice office, and the provision of 2 posts to support advice to students on housing and academic appeals.
- Successful elections had taken place for PGR and PGT presidents and electoral turnout remained strong for the sector.
- Negotiations were underway on the block grant and the Students' Association continued to work to balance the books.
- The General Manager had retired and been replaced by Antony Blackshaw, formerly Change Director, as interim CEO.
- The democracy review was soon to be published and encompassed a raft of reforms around representation.
- The Students' Association had provided the Rector with practical support in her continuing role following her dismissal as a Court member. This had taken the form of dedicated office space, an assistant, and a small budget all of which would facilitate greater access to the student body and to the student representatives.
- The SA continued to advocate in the Save Scottish Universities Campaign.
- The Campus larder remained in place and had experienced an uptick following the return of students after the summer.

The Director of Education's update covered

- Plans for increased student engagement at PG level;
- Work on the student partnership agreement which will lay down some fundamental principles on how the University and the Students' Association can work together.
- The work underway on a midsemester survey as part of the QESR, and in conjunction with the Proctor's office towards module evaluations and Semester checks.
- Court was also invited to note that the Students' Association was being placed under pressure both externally and internally from the boycott and

divestment sanction movement, but that there had been a positive response to the affirmative steps taken by the STEPS programme.

V COMMITTEE AND ASSURANCE GROUP REPORTS

15. People and Diversity Assurance Group

The Convenor of PDAG briefed Court on the recent meeting of PDAG highlighting four key areas:

- Court was invited to join with him to applaud the achievement of the Bronze REC award which was a stellar outcome and demonstrated the considerable progress made by the University on this issue in a comparatively short time. There was a clear implementation plan, and progress would continue with momentum maintained. All involved were to be highly commended for an excellent achievement.
- Progress continued to be made on Athena Swan, with a clear action plan to guide progress. PDAG would continue to monitor developments in relation to the implementation plans for both REC and Athena Swan.
- Work continued on the Diversity Calendar. This was a tool which would encourage visibility and belonging. Staff networks were also to be relaunched, another step in building community and encouraging inclusivity and engagement.
- The HR system would soon move to a Cloud based system and PDAG had received assurance that all was in hand for a successful transition.

The Vice-Principal (People and Diversity) was invited to comment and added her thanks to Dr Akira O'Connor for the way in which he had guided the REC process . The action plan was an ambitious but realistic programme of work over a 5 year period which, when delivered, would evidence a massive change journey.

(i) Minutes of the meeting of 26 September 2024

These minutes (on file, Court/24/12) were presented for information.

16. Audit and Risk Committee

(i) Update from Convenor

The Convenor highlighted the Risk Management Update and commended Brian Kennedy and his team for the great work they had done on the refresh of the risk management framework: the report was visually much clearer, could be better understood, and detailed themes and trends. The management commentary continued to be particularly useful.

PWC had been appointed as Internal Auditors and initial interactions had shown them to be proactive and impressive. They had given a presentation on HE Insights at the recent ARC Information and Education Session, and the slides had been placed on the Court SharePoint site for information. Members would find the material informative and there was interesting information on benchmarking.

PWC had been encouraged to continue to offer an external perspective on issues including Sector wide issues.

Members were reminded that the Financial Statements would be presented to the November meeting of ARC, following which Court would be invited to approve them by correspondence before signing in December.

In addition, the papers below were forwarded to Court by ARC.

(ii) Minutes of the Meetings held on 5 September 2024

Members noted the reports of the meeting (on file, Court/24/13).

(iii) Risk Management Update

The risk management update (on file, Court/24/14) was presented for information. The paper provided (i) the quarterly risk report for Q3, 2024 (risk dashboard and narratives); (ii) detailed escalated risk narratives as at 26/08/24; and (iii) the annual report to ARC 2023/24.

(iv) Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report , 2023-24

Court received the report (on file, Court/24/15). The Annual Report summarised the activities of ARC over the previous financial year and will be submitted to the Scottish Funding Council along with the University's financial statements.

(v) Annual Internal Audit Report 2023-2024

Court noted the report (on file, Court/24/16)

(vi) Internal Audit year Plan

Court noted the plan (on file, Court/24/17).

(vii) Internal Audit Progress Report

Court noted the progress report (on file, Court/24/18)

VI COURT OFFICE BUSINESS

i) Minutes of the meeting of Senate 22 May and 18 September 2024

Court received the minute of the meeting of Senate on 22 May and 18 September 2024 (on file, Court/ 24/19(a),(b)), presented for information.

ii) Appointments

Court noted the appointments made by correspondence by G and N, detailed in paper (on file, Court/24/20) being the re-appointment of Jenny Stewart as a Non-executive member of Court for a second term with effect from 1 August 2024; and the appointment of Arthur Drysdale as a Co-opted member of the Audit and Risk Committee with effect from 16 September.

Court further approved the recommendation of the Principal that Professor Timothy Greenwood of the School of History be inducted as a Bishop Wardlaw Professor at the Winter graduation ceremonies.

(iii) QESR Action Plan

Court noted the Quality Enhancement and Standards Review Action plan, provided for information. The action plan was submitted to the Quality Assurance Agency Scotland (QAA) in response to the one formal recommendation received from the University's Quality Enhancement Standards Review (QESR).

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next scheduled meeting of Court will take place on Friday 17 January 2025 at 10 am in Upper College Hall.

Ray Perman, Senior Lay Member (Presiding)

Margaret Sinclair,
Executive Office to the University Court and Senate,
Clerk to the University Court, Court Office
October 2024