

As approved by the University Court at the meeting of 19 January 2024

UNIVERSITY COURT OF ST ANDREWS

AT St Andrews on the 20th DAY OF OCTOBER 2023 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; Adrian Greer, Deputy Chair of Court and Chancellor's Assessor; Iain Anderson, General Council Assessor, Jonathan Hewitt, General Council Assessor; Cllr Robin Lawson, Provost of Fife's Assessor; Professor Sharon Ashbrook, Dr Stephen Tyre; and Dr Morven Shearer, Senate Assessors; Dr Lorna Dargan, Non-Academic Staff Assessor; Dr Malcolm Petrie, Trade Union Nominee, Alex Duncan, Trade Union Nominee; Barry Will, President of the Students' Association, Cam Brown, Director of Education Students' Association; Tim Allan, Alison Johns, Frank MacInnis, Eve McCurrich, Professor Ewan MacKendrick, 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); Andy Goor, Chief Financial Officer.

Apologies:

Dr Leyla Hussein, *Rector*; Professor Catherine O'Leary, *Senate Assessor*; Ros King, *Non-executive member*.

Attendance in part

Dr Akira O'Connor, *Chair of the Race Equality Charter* (Item 14 only - Presentation of the discussion item on the Race Equality Charter).

PRELIMINARIES

The Senior Lay Member formally opened the meeting, and noted the new microphone (Televic) set up in the room which would improve acoustics and audibility.

Due to the inclement and dangerous weather condition, as a result of storm Babet, a number of attendees would (exceptionally) attend remotely on this occasion.

WELCOME

The Senior Lay Member welcomed all attendees and observers and noted apologies. Court noted that this would be the first formal Court meeting of the Academic Year (the Court Away Day not being a formal meeting of Court.).

New members were welcomed informally at the Court Away Day but, for recording in the minutes, Court noted that the following members of Court had demitted office: On graduation Stella Maris, Rector's Assessor (but see below); on 31 June 2023 - Juan Rodriguez, and Noah Schott (Students' Association Sabbatical Officers).

The new Sabbatical officers of the Students' Association (Barry Will and Cam Brown) were welcomed to their first Court meeting as members, having taken up office on 1 July 2023.

FAREWELL TO THE RECTOR

The current Rector Dr Leyla Hussein demits office at the end of October, and sent apologies for the meeting.

Court expressed its formal thanks to Leyla for her service as Rector.

RECTORIAL ELECTION

Court noted the result of the recent Rectorial Election. Stella Maris had been elected as Rector on a turnout of 22.4%, securing 1,394 votes after 2 rounds of voting. She will take up the role on 1 November 2023, and all necessary administrative arrangements surrounding the appointment will be undertaken by the Secretary to Court and Court Office.

The Vice-Principal Governance and the Senior Lay Member had already met with the Rector Elect, to discuss the protocol for the conduct of Court meetings at which the Rector presides, but the Senior Lay Member chairs specific items. Stella has indicated her intention to be a working Rector and will be situated locally to facilitate her regular presence in St Andrews.

STARRING OF ITEMS

Members noted those items currently starred on the Agenda.

No additional items were starred.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None intimated.

I OPENING BUSINESS

1. Meeting minutes

(i) Minute of the Court Meeting held on 9 June 2023

The minute of the Court meeting held on 9 June 2023 (on file, Minutes 2022-2023 No.5, pp 49-11) was agreed as a correct record.

2. Matters Arising

(i) Pay, Pensions, and Industrial Action Update

The Vice-Principal Governance provided an update.

Pay:

UCU's mandate for industrial action ended on 30 September. The Marking and Assessment boycott was called off on 7 September, and both the local days of strike action at the beginning of that month and the national days at the end of the month were also called off. Almost all the outstanding marking had now been completed. All the indications were that the prediction was correct that the no detriment guarantee would have negligible impact on quality standards.

UCU were currently balloting for a mandate for further strike action in relation to last year's pay round; the ballot will close on 3 November.

Pensions:

The University submitted its response to the UUK consultation on the technical provisions for the 2023 USS valuation in line with the recommendations set out in the paper to PARC (PARC 23/02a). These had the overwhelming support of those local members who responded to the invitation to comment.

UUK had issued a further joint statement with UCU, proposing the return of benefits to pre-April 2022 levels for service from 1 April 2024, together with a reduction rate in contributions to 20.6% from 1 January 2024, and a one-off augmentation of defined benefit in recognition both of the significant improvement in the scheme's reported funding position, and the lower scheme benefits from April 2022.

Employers were currently being consulted on this by UUK, and UCU were also consulting their members. It was hoped that here may be a period of welcome stability in USS for at least the next valuation cycle.

The joint Stability Working Group with UUK, UCU and the Trustee intends to use this time to review the approaches to future valuations, and progress is also being made on the ToR for the review of scheme governance.

(ii) Non-Executive Recruitment

Following consultation with the Senior Lay Member and the Convenor of G and N, the decision had been taken to combine the exercise to recruit a Non-executive member to fill the vacancy occasioned by the demission of Professor Anu Ojha, with the scheduled Court vacancies due to arise at the end of this year. Minerva Executive Consultancy had been appointed to support the recruitment exercise, and the exercise had been scheduled for the Spring of 2024.

A proposal together with timeline would be put to G and N at its next meeting, looking in particular at the different skills sets required, with the aim of making recommendations for appointment to Court at its spring meeting.

(iii) Pre-Court Dinner

The disruption caused by storm Babet had necessitated the cancellation of the Pre-Court dinner. Updates which would have been discussed at the dinner would be covered, as relevant, in the Principal's verbal report.

II PRINCIPAL'S BUSINESS

3. Report from the Principal

(i) Written

Court received the Principal's written report (on file, Court/23/01) 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.

Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC):

Court members were aware that RAAC had been identified in the roof of the lecture theatres A, B and C in the Purdie Building. These areas had been closed and extensive work undertaken to reassign lecture provision for 30 modules over 9 Schools. Teaching had also moved online for a period of 2 weeks to allow for a further assessment of the situation.

Solutions were being devised for the continued provision of teaching for the second half of the semester including the utilisation of the Willie Russell labs, the adjustment of timetables to facilitate relocation to other venues, and the continued use of an element of online provision.

In the short term, the areas impacted by RAAC in the roof space had been boarded, and consideration was being given of an appropriate medium-term solution, in the context both of the North Haugh Development Framework, and the need to prioritise teaching provision.

The Quaestor provided some additional details. Everything possible was being done to try to get lecture Theatre A up and running to accommodate all in-person teaching for Semester 2. The Quaestor however emphasised that it was not possible to give any indication as to the costs of remedial work in Purdie yet, as there were too many intangibles at this stage, and careful thought had to be given to identifying the best solution not only in the short, but also in the medium and longer term.

The Principal briefed the Court on the intention to undertake scenario modelling beyond the current three-year financial plan. An informal working group comprising the Quaestor, Deputy Principal and Chief Financial Officer, the Senior Lay Member, the Chair of ARC, and the Chancellor's Assessor has been set up to oversee the modelling exercise (analogous to the modelling undertaken to consider the potential scenarios arising from the pandemic). The Senior Lay Member added that Alison Johns and Jenny Stewart had also agreed to join the group. Any conclusions from

the exercise would inform future decisions which would be made through the existing planning process.

Professor Ashbrook teaches in the Purdie space and was able to confirm to Court that the prompt response to the finding of RAAC, and the arrangements put in place, had been effective. Colleagues from Estates and Planning had worked together with academic staff and students in devising and implementing a workable, and well received, short term solution to the closure of the space. The goodwill demonstrated by all involved had been appreciated. Professor Ashbrook emphasised, however, the particular importance of continuing to provide information, including information about teaching arrangements for Semester 2.

Israel/Gaza:

Court members had been sent the joint message from the Principal and the President of the Students' Association on the highly volatile and distressing situation. The Principal's Office and the Students' Association were engaging with the University community to offer support to those affected, and to emphasise the priority to maintain a safe and supportive environment for all students and staff. Court would be updated on further developments.

III PARC BUSINESS

4. Minute of the Meeting held on 15 September 2023

Members received the minute of the meeting (on file, Court/23/02).

Court noted the reference in the minutes to the lower-than-expected uptake on residential accommodation which had resulted in 400 beds remaining unfilled.

Court received confirmation that work was underway to understand the reasons for this change in pattern of behaviour (which was in particular contrast to the position the University had found itself in last year); and information on the steps being taken to address the consequences of the under capacity. Court also received clarification of the rationale underpinning the decision to increase capacity in Dundee, and of the terms of the arrangement with Mears Housing.

5. Indicative Entrant Numbers

The Deputy Principal introduced the paper (on file, Court/23/03) which provided a summary of indicative entrant student numbers for the forthcoming academic session 2023-2024.

The detailed paper provided an overview of targets and a summary of indicative entrant student numbers as at 4 September 2023, to enable comparison for the forthcoming academic session 2023-2024.

The Deputy Principal provided a verbal update on entrant numbers following the 5-week snapshot taken in October.

The University UG targets had largely been met with entrants at 1966 on the UG target of 2,046 (730 Home funded entrants on a target of 771, 503 RUK entrants on a target of 480 and 733 Overseas entrants on a target of 795); PGT level was 97 under target (853 indicative entrants on a PGT Target of 950 of which Home

PGT had 325 indicative entrants on a target of 340, and PGT overseas indicative entrants of 528 on a target of 610). Despite an increase in offers and acceptance compared to last year the PGT deposit rate was lower. Admissions had taken additional steps to increase numbers including in offer making, social media campaigns and an extended application deadline, but PGT numbers remained the most volatile category. PGR recruitment achieved 246 entrants on a target of 250. Recruitment to the ScotGEM programme exceeded target with 88 entrants on a target of 70. Scottish government funding had been secured for up to an additional 20 ScotGEM places.

The Scottish Government's target of 13% CoWA from Home SIMD20 students had not been met, with 85.7 SIMD20 Quintile entrants (12.3%).

Court was reminded to view the figures in the context of the University's strategic plan and the Student Number Model which aimed to maintain the student population in St Andrews at 10,000 students. In line with this, a key objective of the Admissions process last year had been not to overrecruit. This was a necessary part of the ongoing process to reduce overall student numbers, which had, as a result of the pandemic, exceeded the strategic maximum. This had led to a slightly different approach by the admission team to the admissions cycle, which was enormously complex in any event requiring judgments around target setting; benchmarking; conversion rates; the impact of government action; and market competition, both domestically and internationally. Court was also reminded that small movements in numbers tended to be amplified in the percentage figures.

Questions from Members related to:

(i) PGT numbers

It was observed that the sector has seen a downturn generally in PGT numbers which suggested that the UK was less attractive than, for example, Australia, Canada and the US for this cohort of student. Work was underway to try to understand the reasons for this, which included visa restrictions and the NHS health charge, and to identify what scope existed to make adjustments to the offering to increase the University's competitiveness in this market. The University already guaranteed accommodation for international PGT students and other options to make the package more attractive were being considered. Dr Shearer, as Head of the Graduate School for Interdisciplinary Studies, confirmed that as much as possible was being done, working with the admissions team and planning, to analyse information and understand behaviour in the PGT market, and to try to establish why places were not taken up.

(ii) The SIMD20 figure

This was below target, albeit only by a small margin. In response it was confirmed that achieving the 13% (currently institutional rather than sector target) remained challenging. In spite of the efforts of the admissions team, and an extensive outreach programme, there was a limited pool of candidates which could be recruited by universities in this category, and all universities were therefore in

competition for this cohort. Location and cost of living factors specifically associated with the University, and the impact of the pandemic were thought to be factors influencing the choice of university for this cohort, many of whom sought to stay close to home.

(iii) Home students

Court received confirmation that the shortfall in home students was close to tolerance over a four year cohort.

(iv) Student numbers generally

Members received confirmation that the University had no difficulty attracting students, and that the attractiveness of the University would likely be increased in some markets by the impact of the “Double First” and of the Crown due to be broadcast later in the year. The issue lay in the relationship between the numbers of offers made and the proportion of acceptances. Many factors potentially influenced these conversion decisions, many of which were outwith the University’s control; including the perception of the UK and its offering in comparison to other countries and markets.

6. Projects for Approval

Court noted the paper (on file, Court/23/04) which detailed i) the Students’ Association RAAC roof replacement project, and (ii) the High-Performance Computing (HPC) replacement proposal.

Court noted that the HPC paper contained outline proposals only, and that PARC would receive a Full Business Case in December. This would be forwarded to January Court.

7. Projects for Information

Court received the Projects for Information paper (on file, Court/23/05) which provided a summary of in-train and planned capital projects. The Appendices to the summary included updates on the following projects:

Post Completion

BMS; Younger Hall; Main Library.

Under Construction

Eden Campus; St Andrews West; Grange Road.

Working to FBC

Student Residences – Gap Site 3; Albany Park; Corroul; Abbey Walk.

Working to OBC

Kenly Wind Farm; Mathematics and Statistics; New College; North Haugh Campus Development; Eden Campus Enterprise Centre; Drochaid.

8. Annual Report from the Investment and Treasury Group

The Chief Financial Officer presented the paper (on file, Court/23/06) which provided an overview of the work of the Investment and Treasury Assurance Group over the last twelve months. The report was presented for information.

Court noted that the work on implementing the Sustainable Investment Policy, approved by Court and PARC in 2022, had been paused until after the new finance system, Oracle Fusion is in place.

Members asked questions on asset allocation; investment strategy; and fund managers.

9. Annual Development Update

Court received the paper (on file, Court/23/07) presented for information, that outlined the Annual Development Update relating to philanthropic fundraising to 31 July 2023.

10. Summary Financial Report to 31 July 2023

Court received the summary of the University's financial position as at 31 July 2023. This paper was provided as part of Court/23/18 below.

11. Institutional Indicators Update

Members noted the report (on file, Court/23/08) which provided the routine summary of institutional performance against agreed KPIs.

In response to a question, the Vice-Principal (Digital Education, Research, and Environment) provided clarification that the reoffer figures expressed in point 3.1 (page 149) of the pack were additive and did not replace places on the full-time Computer Science courses.

Secretary's note: This was followed up by a detailed answer to the Member's written question, post meeting, which has been placed on the Court Sharepoint site for information.

The overall decrease in the Gender Pay Gap figure was commended, accompanied by an inquiry as to how the University compared to Russell Group Universities. The Vice-Principal (People and Diversity) agreed to send any available comparative information to the inquiring member.

12. Enabling Strategies Biannual Update

Court received the paper (on file, Court/23/09) presented for information. The paper provided the biannual update on the three enabling strategies: People, IT and Estate.

13. SFC Outcome Agreement

Following publication of the SFC Outcome Agreement Guidance for 2023-24, the paper provided an overview of the associated requirements and a draft of the Outcome Agreement 2023-24 for review and approval.

Court noted the requirements of the year, and approved the Outcome Agreement for 2023-2024.

IV DISCUSSION ITEM

14. RACE, EQUALITY CHARTER (REC)

Dr Akira O'Connor joined the meeting for this item.

The Principal introduced the presentation. The discussion item was an opportunity for Court to appreciate the follow up on the work undertaken in 2021/22 on Race and Ethnicity. Those on Court at the time would remember the involvement of Court in the University's response to the issues raised at this time, sparked by Black Lives Matter and the Testimonial report from the Staff BAME network; the series of discussions, not all of which had been particularly comfortable; and the presentation of the Review of Race and Ethnicity undertaken on the University's behalf by SUMS Consultancy (on file, Court 21/92).

Obtaining the Race Equality Charter was something to which the PO and the whole University were committed, and a chosen strategic initiative under the Diverse St Andrews theme. It was important Court shared ownership of this. The initiative was being led by the Vice-Principal (People and Diversity), assisted by Dr Akira O'Connor, Senior Lecturer in the School of Psychology and Neuroscience, as REC Chair. The Principal commended Dr Akira for the quality of his work thus far, and for the leadership he had shown this particular area.

Following the introduction, the Vice-Principal (People and Diversity) and Dr O'Connor presented a briefing entitled "*EDI: Chart(er)ing a Route Forward*", and presented an update on the steps being taken to achieve the vision articulated in Diverse St Andrews "*to make St Andrews a beacon of inclusivity, placing diversity and equality at the centre of everything we do and creating an environment in which all can flourish and realise their potential.*"

The presentation gave an overview under the following headings why charters; current charters; the Race Equality Charter; progress; and Athena Swan. The overview relating to the Race Equality Charter provided detail as to context, the work undertaken relating to the submission; timeline; preliminary findings in relation to i) equality of experience; ii) racism and belonging; iii) trust in leadership; and (iv) BAME under-representation. Detail was also provided of the actions identified to address these findings, including those already underway under the umbrella of the People Strategy action plan.

In relation to Athena Swan, the University had been awarded a bronze institutional award in May 2013. This was successfully renewed on 7 May 2018. The University was currently developing an application for a silver award. The VPPD provided an update on the work being undertaken on the University's submission for the Athena Swan Silver Award: To secure a silver award the University would have to be able to demonstrate progress since the 2018 award, and the delivery of the related action plan. This represented a significant programme of work. The presentation provided detail of progress, priorities and the strategic approach being adopted to link this work with other initiatives including the linking of the People Strategy and the Diverse action plan.

In discussion the University's already significant progress was noted with 19 of 19 Schools having obtained some form of an Athena Swan award (15 bronze, 3 silver, and 1 gold). The difficulty of obtaining a silver award was also remarked upon.

Members asked questions on representation in the context of recruitment; culture and culture change; data gathering; action plans; timing; benchmarking; communication; and access to information.

V REPORTS

15. Student Members' Report

The President of the Students' Association and Director of Education, Students' Association presented a verbal report on the activities of the Students' Association.

Report from the President

Israel/Gaza:

The joint communication from the Principal and the Students' Association had been well received by the University community. Steps were being taken to support and assist students and colleagues personally impacted and to work across the university to ensure a safe environment. The Students' Association had passed a motion in support of a cease fire and would continue to lobby local MPS.

RAAC:

The University was to be thanked for its response to the discovery of RAAC in the events space of the Student Union building, and for its support for the redevelopment of the affected space. The closure of the events space was having a significant financial impact, and ways to mitigate this were being explored. The Students' Association was grateful for the understanding and support of the University, and specifically for the revised budget and financial plan implemented by the finance team.

Accommodation:

Although the severity of the housing crisis had abated, the accommodation issue continued to be challenging. The Students' Association was working to provide better information about accommodation, and the availability of support and advice

from external sources about e.g. tenants' rights. The Residential Capacity Group had been reconvened and was looking at the pricing model for halls of residence and the affordability of the accommodation available.

The Students' Association continued to lobby for increased funding for the Higher Education sector.

Court was invited to note the imminent launch of the **Campus Larder**; this joint initiative with the University was another way in which to assist students to navigate the cost-of-living crisis.

Rectorial Election:

The Students' Association had hosted the hustings and debates and the live stream of the result. The turnout for the election had been lower than in past years and suggested that students were questioning what role the Rector had in a 21st century institution, but the Students' Association looked forward to working closely with Stella Maris the new Rector.

Report from the DoEd

The handover from one Sabbatical team to another had been completed. Thanks were expressed to Dr Chris Lusk who had been an immense help. The Partnership Agreement, devised in conjunction with the Proctor's Office, would come to Court in January.

Student representation on Senate had been increased with the replacement of a single Postgraduate member with the elected PGT and PGR Presidents.

A significant piece of work was underway with the Students' Association Board to define a new strategic direction. Court would be kept updated on developments.

The Students' Association continued to seek to build and foster an atmosphere of clarity, mutual support and transparency, and to work in partnership with the University to address challenges as they arose.

Court noted the report.

VI COMMITTEE AND ASSURANCE GROUP REPORTS

16. People and Diversity Assurance Group

The Convenor of PDAG presented the Minute of the Meeting held on 20 September 2023 (Court/23/12), highlighting briefly the sections of the minute relating to remit (the addition of the responsibility to monitor progress on the Diverse action plan), Athena Swan, and the People Strategy; including the discussion as to employee offering and communications.

17. Audit and Risk Committee

The Convenor of ARC and summarised the main items of business forwarded to Court by ARC.

(i) Minutes of the Meetings held on 7 September and 5 October 2023

Members noted the reports of the meetings (on file, Court/23/13a and b).

(ii) Annual Report of the Academic Assurance Group

Court noted the report of the Academic Assurance Group (on file, Court/23/14) which had been received by ARC at its meeting of 7 September 2023. As required by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), the report provided an annual report on institution-led review and enhancement activities, to be signed off by the institution's governing body. The report also acted as the Academic Assurance Group's annual report to ARC, and provided evidence and assurance that the institution has effective arrangements to maintain standards and to assure and enhance the quality of its provision.

Court endorsed ARC's approval of the report and noted that the Senior Lay Member would sign the Quality statement which will accompany the report to confirm Court's approval of it.

(iii) Risk Management Update

The risk management update (on file, Court/23/15) was presented for information. The Convenor noted that the Committee were keeping a watchful eye on the costs of remediation work for RAAC; the estate change agenda; the risks associated with AI; and increased costs due to wage, energy, and general inflation. In relation to this, the Convenor noted that Committee had been comforted by the actions taken by the University in relation to forward planning.

(iv) The Annual report of ARC

Court received the Annual report of ARC (on file Court/23/16) which had been approved by the Committee for submission to Court and thence to the Scottish Funding Council.

(v) Internal Audit Annual Report

Court received the Annual report of the Internal Auditors (on file, Court/23/17). The Convenor confirmed that there had been a number of robust and challenging conversations at ARC in relation to individual reports. The Auditors' overall opinion was significant assurance with room for minor improvement opportunities (Green/amber) which was a good place to be. The internal audit process had worked well and demonstrated the diligence and focus the University directs to process.

(vi) Financial Statements

The Financial Statements (on file, Court/23/218) were presented by the Chief Financial Officer.

The Convenor of ARC invited Court to note that:

ARC had a detailed discussion of the content of the Statements in private session separately with the Finance Team, the External Auditors, as well as reviewing them during its plenary meeting.

ARC had commented on the positive financial outcome reported in the annual accounts and also on the quality of the entire document, both the accounts and also the narrative accompanying these. This was particularly impressive given the extra demands placed upon the Finance team by the Financial Improvement Project.

The External Auditors had indicated their intention to give an unqualified opinion on the accounts.

There were three minor unadjusted amounts noted in the External Auditor's report. Whilst it was right that the auditors flagged these, both ARC and the auditors were content that these remained unadjusted.

The Financial Statements had undergone rigorous scrutiny from both the Internal and External auditors and the Committee. The recommendation from ARC was that they be adopted and approved by Court.

Court adopted and approved the Financial Statements as presented. The Financial Statements would be published as normal on 31 December 2023. Members were asked to note that the statements remained confidential until published.

VII COURT OFFICE BUSINESS

(i) Minute of the meeting of Senate held on 24 May 2023

(ii) Minute of the meeting of Senate held on 20 September 2023

Court noted the minutes of the meetings of Senate (on file, Court/23/19 and Court/23/20).

(iii) Draft Resolution –[No.1]2023 – Doctor of Divinity (D.D.)

Court promulgated Draft Court Resolution 2023 No1 (on file, Court/23/21) which will give the University to confer the Degree of Doctor of Divinity DD by supplication.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Court will take place on Friday 19 January 2024 at 10 am.

Ray Perman, Senior Lay Member (Presiding)

Margaret Sinclair,

Executive Office to the University Court and Senate,

Clerk to the University Court, Court Office