

Draft subject to approval by the University Court at the meeting of 5 April 2024**UNIVERSITY COURT OF ST ANDREWS**

AT St Andrews on the 19th DAY OF JANUARY 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; 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, Professor Catherine O'Leary, 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, Ros King, Eve McCurrich, Professor Ewan MacKendrick, Non-executive Members.

In regular attendance:

Derek Watson, Quaestor and Factor; Alastair Merrill, Vice-Principal (Governance); 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).

Apologies:

Stella Maris, Rector, Senate Assessor; Ros King, Frank MacInnis, Jenny Stewart Non-executive members; Professor Clare Peddie, Vice-Principal Education (Proctor); Andy Goor, Chief Financial Officer.

PRELIMINARIES

The Senior Lay Member formally opened the meeting.

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
- Items 4 – Minute of the meeting held on 15 December 2023
- Item 5 – Summary Financial report to 30 November 2023
- Item 6 – Projects for Approval

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- Item 8 – Accommodation Fees Update; and
- Item 9 – Institutional KPIs.
- Item 11 – Business School Update
- Item 12 – Student Members’ Report
- Item 13 – Report from the Governance and Nominations Committee
- Item 14 – Report from the Audit and Risk Committee
- Item 15 – Report from the Remuneration Committee

PARC Business Item 7 Projects for Information, Item (m) Kenly (on file, Court/23/28) was additionally starred by request at the start of the meeting.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no new declarations of interest.

I OPENING BUSINESS

1. Meeting minutes

(i) Minute of the Court Meeting held on 20 October 2023

The minute of the Court meeting held on 10 October 2023 (on file, Minutes 2023-2024 No.1, pp 1-13) was agreed as a correct record.

(ii) Minute of the Special Meeting of Court held on 15 December 2023

The minute of the Special meeting of Court held on 15 December 2023 (on file, Minutes 203-2024 No.1 pp 14-27) was agreed as a correct record.

2. Matters Arising

(i) Update from Convenor of G and N

The Convenor confirmed the appointment of Morag Ross KC to lead the independent investigation into the compatibility of the Rector’s actions and activities in issuing a statement in relation to the war in Israel and Gaza and subsequently with her obligations as Rector, as a member of Court, and as a charity Trustee. Court noted the terms of reference for the review, which had been approved by G and N under paper Court/23/23.

Court had noted the appointment by circulation of Court/23/34, which had also detailed the process undergone to select Ms Ross.

II PRINCIPAL'S BUSINESS

3. Principal's Report to Court

(i) Written

Court received the Principal's written report (on file, Court/23/24) 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 10: Court was invited to note the uptick in research applications, detailed in paragraph 10. Figures from the end of November showed research applications of £101m, a 40 % increase on the three-year average, and of Research awards of £15m, a 24% increase on the three-year average.

Paragraph 58: The approval by the Wolfson Foundation of a donation of £2m for the Green Hydrogen Accelerator at the Eden Campus.

Paragraph 76: The Scottish Government Budget for 2024-25, shared on 19 December, had confirmed a decrease of 2.8% in the aggregate of SFC resource and capital from 2023-24. This followed the announcement on 21 November of significant in-year savings to the Government's budget, including savings in the Lifelong Learning and Skills Directorate of £152.4m. In practical terms the 2024-25 budget sees a cash reduction in SFC's resource budget of £28.5m. This represented a £48.5m cut for the sector, and it looked likely that the budget available for teaching will be cut by 6%. This was not a good outcome for the sector and the University was waiting for further information to understand the nature and impact of this apparently significant reduction in funding.

Paragraph 89: The report Financial sustainability of UK universities, undertaken by PwC and commissioned by UUK has been published. The report is available on the [Universities UK](#) website.

Paragraph 103: The winter graduation ceremonies had taken place with over 1,000 Students from nearly 80 countries crossing the Younger Hall Stage. Honorary degrees were awarded to Dame Evelyn Glennie, percussionist; Margaret Atwood, novelist, poet and scriptwriter; and Rufus Norris, director of the National Theatre.

Questions from members related to the growth of the Digital offering at St Andrews and the development of thinking in this regard; including as to how courses would be chosen, and demand assessed, and to how the St Andrews brand was being considered. It was noted that Court had received a detailed update on Digital at the Court Away Day, and the intention was to provide a further detailed update to Court at an appropriate juncture. It was agreed that this would be presented as a future discussion item at Court, and that consideration would be given whether this was best presented at the April or June meetings.

III PARC BUSINESS

The Senior Lay Member, as Convenor of PARC introduced the PARC business forwarded to Court. Court noted the reordering of the PARC agenda to prioritise consideration of matters Financial, and the request by PARC that future iterations of the financial report to Court provide context for the figures and pertinent information about work being done by management in order to provide a more balanced view of the predicted outcome and to provide Court with context for financial decisions.

The Senior Lay Member emphasised the need, in what was a different era financially, even from a few years ago, to pay attention to financial matters.

4. Minute of the Meeting held on 15 December 2023

Members received the minute of the meeting (on file, Court/23/25).

5. Summary Financial Report to 30 November (Updated post PARC)

The Quaestor presented the report to Court (on file Court/23/26). The paper had been updated since PARC and provided Court with a summary of the University's financial position for the 4 months to 30 November 2023.

It was noted that the Finance Improvement Project (FIP) was overrunning and, prompted by a request from a Member, it was agreed that the Chief Financial Officer would produce an overall summary of the project including an update on progress.

Although the FIP had not been brought to Court as a single item, the progress of the project had been scrutinised in committee, significantly by ARC in increasing levels of detail over this academic year, and by PARC. Both committees understood the reasons for the increasing cost and project timing overrun.

6. Projects for Approval

The Quaestor reminded Court of his already declared interest as a member of the Drochaid Board.

Court noted the paper (on file, Court/23/27) which detailed i) Drochaid's Research Services proposed relocation to the Eden Campus (ii) provided an update on the development of the proposed investment in nature-based sequestration in partnership with the Corrou Estate (Nature Based Solutions – Corrou); and (iii) an update on progress on the High-Performance Computing replacement proposal.

In relation to Drochaid, it was confirmed that the refurbishment of the Purdie building to accommodate the Chair of Energy was not included in the project costs. It was not anticipated that this would be a significant amount.

The Corrou item sparked robust discussion. A member suggested that the decision to continue with the project should be reconsidered in the context of current financial constraints and the need to prioritise allocation of available financial resources and funding mechanisms.

Whilst recognising that the project supported the University's sustainability ambitions and its drive to net-zero, and aligned with its Strategic pillar, the member questioned the justification to pursue this project at this moment in time. The member asked how the altered financial situation which was reflected in the financial summary papers presented to Court and referenced elsewhere during the meeting, had been taken into account in the decision-making process, and whether PARC had given any reconsideration of the project or of its affordability in what was a changed financial environment.

Acknowledging that this was a fair question to be asked the Quaestor reiterated the importance of the project to the University's need to behave strategically to tackle climate change; the anticipated benefits of the project to Research; the importance of the project to students (who supported the green agenda and the need for social responsibility); and timing. Action now was necessary if this partnership was to be secured. The project was strategically significant and there was a need to adhere to the pillars of the University Strategy.

The Quaestor reminded Court that the project had been approved by PARC under its delegated authority from Court. PARC had given thorough and scrutiny of the project proposal before approving it. This had involved robust challenge of the assumptions underlying it.

Some detail was provided by members of PARC on the discussion in the committee. PARC had been persuaded by the efficacy of entering into the partnership on a pilot basis, but no commitment had been given to further future action beyond the pilot. Being in the vanguard of projects of this nature would also mean the University was well placed to take advantage of any fiscal incentives which would inevitably come in relation to carbon offsetting and sequestration.

The question of limited resources, however, did mean that the funding of this project would require savings to be made elsewhere, but this was an important investment and the University had to take the opportunity presented.

Clarification was sought as to the constitutional position of Court in relation to PARC decisions. The Vice-Principal (Governance) confirmed that Court could overrule a decision of PARC by a formal vote which would effectively remove PARC's delegated authority in relation to the project.

In conclusion the Chair, have taken account of the views expressed, gauged the consensus of Court to be to approve PARC's decision but noted what had been a useful and worthwhile conversation.

7. Projects for Information

Court received the Projects for Information paper (on file, Court/23/28) which provided a summary of in-train and planned capital projects. The Appendices to the summary included updates on the following projects:

North Haugh Development Framework

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Post Completion

BMS; Younger Hall; Main Library.

Under Construction

St Andrews West; Grange; Students' Association Roof.

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.

Court noted the update.

The Kenly item had been starred for discussion.

The utility of continuing to try to get movement on Kenly, in the light of what seemed to be insuperable obstacles, was challenged and raised a wider question as to when decisions should be taken to curtail or stop projects and to relocate resources elsewhere; with the suggestion being made that decisions of this nature were not made on the basis of a probability of success threshold and were not made quickly enough. It was suggested that Court could exercise its strategic oversight role as the supreme governing body of the University, and simply decide now to stop it formally.

The Principal pointed out that the direction of travel was towards closing the project, but this required careful management and sequencing given the range of stakeholder and contractual relationships involved, some of which were political and sensitive. Whilst recognizing Court's right to express its opinion, she suggested that the Executive be trusted to make the right decisions in relation to the detailed management of such matters.

Court was also provided with an update on the Albany Park Project and on the ongoing review of CLVs progress against the deliverables within the Heads of Terms. There was general discussion of the project and its history, and of the current factors influencing the accommodation landscape including supply and demand, strategic planning and the need for student consultation.

Court noted that PARC would receive an update on the project at its next meeting which would detail the outcome of negotiations and proposals for next steps in the light of this outcome. This would then come to Court for information.

8. Accommodation Fees Update

The Quaestor introduced the paper (on file, Court/23/29) which outlined the proposal for student rents in the 2024/25 academic year.

The President of the Students' Association expressed disappointment at the rent

raises. Whilst he had been involved in the process to review rents, he did not endorse it as a process. Rent levels were to be increased by 7.5% when students were facing the worst cost of living crisis in a generation and facing considerable hardship as a result of increased costs, inflationary pressures, and the reduction of funding from parental or other sources. Many students in halls could not afford to feed themselves and were utilising the Campus Larder set up in the Students' Association as a food bank. The entire residential accommodation model needed to be revisited and reviewed to address the issue of affordability and with consideration of the long-term future and resilience of the residential accommodation estate. It had been agreed at PARC that a working group would be set up by the Director of RBS to consider the accommodation issue, but that had not yet been done.

The Director of Education of the Students' Association reiterated that accommodation costs were becoming unaffordable for many students, even those who were working to supplement their income, and the further rise of 7.5% detailed in the paper would increase the number of students who would struggle to afford these accommodation costs.

The Quaestor indicated that he would bring pressure to bear to ensure the working group agreed at PARC was convened with a view to considering what reasonable adjustments could be made in the circumstances. However, he reiterated the point made at PARC that the University and RBS were subject to the same financial pressures and environment. The model had always been to ensure that RBS was a self-funded and if any adjustments were to be made to rent levels there would have to be consideration of more radical ways to cut costs, including a reduction of service provision.

Court noted the update.

9. Institutional Indicators Update

Members noted the report (on file, Court/23/30) which provided the regular update on Indicators of Progress aligned to the University Strategy and was presented for information.

10. University Collections and Museums Annual report

Court received the paper (on file, Court/23/31) presented for information. The Convenor of PARC commended the report to Court commenting that it had been received by PARC with great interest.

IV DISCUSSION ITEM

11. Business School Update

Professor Brad MacKay delivered a comprehensive and informative update on the Business School in his capacity as Interim Dean of the Business School.

The presentation gave an overview under the following headings.

Review; B School Rationale; Our continuing aspiration; What we hope to achieve;

progress to date; a Detailed Business School Development update including workstreams and main focus; Strategy Development; Mission, Vision and Values; People, Planet, Purpose, Prosperity, Politics; Place; Strategic Pillars; Strategic Goals; Capabilities; Budget; Investment; Executive Education Pilot; Next Steps; and Key milestones.

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

The Interim Dean emphasised the aspiration to create something truly world class, the need to integrate two existing Schools into the Business School and to harness the enthusiasm, commitment and expertise of colleagues to create the new entity; the crucial nature of the process of consultation, collaboration and planning and of consideration of student experience. This process had involved a tremendous amount of work which had to take place in the context of maintaining and delivering teaching in the existing department whilst effecting the transition to the new School.

In the course of the presentation the Interim Dean also highlighted some key themes including the need to differentiate the nascent Business School in a competitive market; to build on areas of existing expertise and excellence; to leverage St Andrews as a destination institution; to make strategic appointments and nurture existing capabilities and talents; to be well placed to harness the potential of partnerships; and to be sufficiently resourced both initially and with a view to development. Initial indications as to projected income were also provided.

The intention was to formally launch the Business School in September 2024. The case for the Business School was compelling and it represented a brilliant opportunity for the University.

The presentation was enthusiastically received with members commending the work already done and progress made. Questions and comments from members focused on key risks and challenges; the opportunities for partnership, collaboration and research; plans for further courses and development; the need to be aware of the impact of the Business School on university culture and community; funding; the sufficiency of resourcing; the importance of the key role of Dean; and marketing and communications.

V REPORTS

12. 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 DoEd

Court was invited note:

- the launch of a comprehensive Change Programme initiated by the Students' Association. The change programme will review, reflect and refresh current operational and strategic approaches to facilitate a positive long-term transformation of the Students' Association, ensuring that St Andrews continues to deliver the very best in student experience.

- The successful consultation process around the Academic Calendar which had been the most engaged survey ever conducted by the University with over 6000 interactions. This set a precedent for future consultations; and
- The Student Partnership Agreement which had this year been written by all the Sabbatical Officers in collaboration, and which had a term of 4 rather than 1 years. The partnership agreement would be presented to the forthcoming SRC for approval.

Report from the President

Israel/Gaza:

The Israel /Gaza conflict continued deeply to divide the student body. From feedback received, the majority of student groups continued to feel represented by the Students' Association on this issue, and the Students' Association continued to reach out to support all student groups and to encourage all to move forward as a community.

The SRC had filed a motion advocating for a ceasefire. There were those who disagreed with that stance, but the motion had been expressed in reasonable and respectful terms and the Students' Association was working with students who disagreed in principle, to ensure that they felt cared for, supported and able to raise their voice.

Club 601:

The venue was expected to be open for 2024/25 Freshers week.

Accommodation:

This was the most serious issue facing students at the moment with students facing challenges in the private market as well as with the cost of University accommodation (see also discussion above).

Campus Larder:

The recently launched Campus Larder has been very successful and provided food and essential items regardless of need. The University was to be thanked for funding the initiative.

NHS Out-of-Hours Service:

The service was once again under threat and the Students' Association continued to engage with Fife Health and Social care. The Principal confirmed that the University entirely appreciated the seriousness of this decision and was in regular contact with NHS Fife services to make this clear.

Court noted the reports.

VI COMMITTEE AND ASSURANCE GROUP REPORTS

13. Governance and Nominations Committee

The Convenor of G and N presented the main items of business forwarded to Court by G and N.

(i) Minute of the Meeting held on 1 December 2023

(on file, Court/23/32) presented for information.

(ii) Progress update – Court Effectiveness Review

(on file, Court/23/33) presented for information.

(iii) Non-Executive Recruitment pack – Briefing material

(on file, Court/23/34)

The Convenor of G and N confirmed that the selection process was progressing to recruit 3 new Non-executive members of Court but reminded Court that the process was constrained by the requirements of Ordinance to recruit Alumni to fill 2 of the vacancies.

The Chair acknowledged the considerable extra work which had been undertaken following the Special meeting of Court by the Convenor of G and N, the Vice-Principal (Governance), the Executive Officer to the University, and Court Office to progress the Independent investigation into the Rector's activities and actions.

14. Audit and Risk Committee

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

(i) Minutes of the Meetings held on 23 November 2023

Members noted the reports of the meeting (on file, Court/23/35).

(ii) Annual Report of the Health and Safety Assurance Group

Court noted the report of the Health and Safety Assurance Group (on file, Court/23/36) which had been received by ARC at its meeting of 23 November 2023. Court was invited in particular to note the Executive Summary which accompanied the report.

(iii) Risk Management Update

The risk management update (on file, Court/23/37) was presented for information. The paper provided (i) the quarterly risk report for Q4, 2023 (risk dashboard and narratives); and (ii) escalated risk narratives as at 10/11/23.

The Convenor highlighted the discussion at ARC of how the risk information was presented, and the suggestion made by the Committee that it was necessary to consider how risks interact and come together to potentially generate other risks.

The discussion and the suggestions made by ARC members had been captured in the minute of the meeting. The Convenor would meet with the Vice-Principal (Governance) to discuss the suggestions and comments made at ARC, and to consider what adjustments could be made to the format and presentation of the risk report.

(iv) Internal Audit Annual Report – IT Disaster Recovery Review

Court noted the report (on file, Court /23/37). The report detailed the results of the review which had assessed the design and implementation of the IT disaster recovery processes and controls for on-premise systems at the University. The conclusion of the report was “Significant assurance with minor improvement opportunities “.

The Convenor also requested that Court note that KPMG would end their term as Internal Auditors at the end of the academic year. The Committee was intent on ensuring that there were no actions left outstanding when their contract ended in order to facilitate a smooth transition to a new internal audit provider.

15. Remuneration Committee

The Convenor of the Remuneration Committee presented the Annual report of the Committee to Court (on file, Court/23/39).

Court noted that the Remuneration Committee was not seeking Court approval for any uplift to the Principal’s salary following the annual review process for 2022-2023, and the report generally.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that, although the issue of gender pay was not specifically included in the remit of Rem Com, it was considered by the University in a number of ways including by PDAG, and in the context of wider work being done in relation to the Athena Swan application and the People Strategy.

VII COURT AND SENATE OFFICE

16. Business

(i) Minute of the meeting of Senate held on 5 December 2023

Court noted the minutes of the meeting of Senate (on file, Court/23/40)

(ii) Resolution –No.1 2023 – Doctor of Divinity (D.D.)

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

(iii) Institutional Review Update

Court received the paper (on file, Court/23/42) provided for information and for Court to note the forthcoming institutional review and action plan.

VIII ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

The request was made to reconsider the presentation of the Court Agenda better to highlight which papers were being supplied for information and which for approval. This would aid Court members to navigate the meeting pack effectively and to identify items of priority.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Court will take place on Friday 5 April 2024 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

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