

**Draft subject to approval by the University Court at the meeting of 7
June 2024**

UNIVERSITY COURT OF ST ANDREWS

AT St Andrews on the 5th DAY OF APRIL 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, Cllr Robin Lawson, Provost of Fife's Assessor, 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, Tim Allan, Alison Johns, Ros King, Frank MacInnis, 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); Professor Ineke de Moortel (Master); Andy Goor, Chief Financial Officer; Margaret Sinclair, Executive Officer to the University Court and Senate (as Clerk).

Apologies:

Stella Maris, Rector; Jonathan Hewitt, General Council Assessor; Professor Sharon Ashbrook, Senate Assessor; Cam Brown, Director of Education, Students' Association; Professor Ewan MacKendrick Eve McCurrich Non-executive members; Niall Scott, Vice-Principal (Communications).

PRELIMINARIES

The Senior Lay Member 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
PARC Business

Items 4 – Minute of the meeting held on 8 March 2024; Item 5 – Summary Financial report to 31 January 2024; Item 6 Capital Plan; Item 7 – Projects for Approval; and Item 9 – Institutional KPIs.

Item 12 – Advancing Digital St Andrews

Item 13 – Student Members' Report

Item 14 – Report from the Governance and Nominations Committee

Item 15 – Report from the Audit and Risk Committee

Item 16 – Report from the People and Diversity Assurance

Group

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 19 January 2024

The minute of the Court meeting held on 19 January 2024 (on file, Minutes 2023-2024 No.3) was agreed as a correct record.

2. Matters Arising

Independent Investigation – Update

The report of the KC's independent investigation into the actions and activities of the Rector had not yet been finalised but was imminent.

A Special Meeting of Court had been scheduled to discuss the report; the meeting would be on Teams on 26 April, and it was hoped that as many Court members as possible would be able to attend. Court had agreed unanimously to commission the report, and it was essential that time was set aside time for a full discussion of its findings and implications. It should be remembered that the issue was one of governance. The investigation was not about freedom of speech, or the veracity of particular statements but about the compatibility of the Rector's actions and activities, both in making her statement and subsequently, with her responsibilities as a charity trustee and with her pastoral role and responsibilities for the whole student community.

Members noted the update and received confirmation that a communication strategy was being developed around the delivery and presentation of the report, and that this

strategy would take due account of the need to recognise the potential reputational risk to the University; to provide clarity about the scope and purpose of the report and the point at issue; and to consider appropriate management of these risks.

II PRINCIPAL'S BUSINESS

3. Principal's Report to Court

(i) Written

Court received the Principal's written report (on file, Court/23/44) 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 18: The excellent report following the recent review of by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) panel via its Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) method had been placed on the Court Sharepoint site for information. Further thought was being given as to how Court could be provided with assurance as to academic standards and quality of academic excellence in the University, and this would be taken forward by the Principal and Proctor.

Paragraph 1 and 51: The University's application for an institutional Silver Athena Swan award had been successful. Delivering on objectives set in the University Strategy, this was a highly significant achievement for St Andrews. It reflected progress made to advance gender equality through structural and cultural changes. Court joined with the Principal to thank the many colleagues from across St Andrews who supported the Athena Swan work, and all those who contributed to this application process. Particular thanks were expressed to the Vice-Principal People and Diversity who had superbly led the application process. Advance HE had been highly complimentary on the quality of the application and on the aesthetic excellence of the drafting of the report.

The award was made for five years, and work would now be taken forward to

establish an AS Implementation Group and deliver the action plan.

Court was also invited to note that the School of Mathematics and Statistics received a Silver Athena Swan award in March.

The Convenor of PDAG underscored and echoed the comments made by the Principal. The Silver award was to be celebrated and the quality of the work of the VPPD and her team deserved to be acknowledged and warmly applauded.

The VPPD thanked Court noting that the award was testament to, and a culmination of, the change which had been wrought under the Principal's leadership over the past 5 years.

Paragraph 20-21: On 7 March the General Medical Council (GMC) confirmed that the University could begin promoting its new medical programme, ScotCOM. The School of Medicine had led the development of this innovative five-year community-orientated MBChB Medicine programme, which will take entrants from 2025/26. It followed a key decision by the Scottish Parliament in 2021 to remove a historic prohibition that had prevented St Andrews from awarding its own medical qualifications. In support of this and further activities, a major new partnership between the University and NHS Fife had been announced which will benefit patient care and medical research in the region, while boosting training provision for new doctors.

Paragraph 69: A major milestone had been marked in the partnership between the University and bus operator Stagecoach which is purposed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from commuting and address the cost of living. 13 months after the University launched its 75 per cent off bus fare subsidy, the discount scheme had recorded savings of over £1 million for staff and students.

Paragraph 89: The University still awaited indicative funding allocations from the SFC for 2024/25, including confirmation of the impact of the budget cuts which were announced by the Scottish Government in December. The SFC was required to accommodate a £28.5m cut, while minimising the visibility of its impact during this election year which made the protection of the unit of resource of funding per student and the funding for research and innovation a complex exercise for the SFC. This protection was key for the sector and has been stressed by Principals across

Scotland as part of the three recent meetings scheduled to discuss options. The announcement on the indicative funding allocations was now not expected before 15 April, by which time offers will have been made to Scottish students so the impact on recruitment of any changes to allocated places will be relatively small. The expectations were that in addition to the cut in the number of places allocated during the pandemic across the sector, there will be other areas of distinct funding reduced or withdrawn, which will have a variegated impact across the sector.

Paragraph 95: The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) had launched a rapid review of the Graduate Route visa.

Questions from members related to admission numbers and Postgraduate applications; online programmes and the take-up of these; the monitoring of academic quality, with Court being reminded of the role of the Academic Assurance Group; and PGR funding and PGR numbers.

Court noted that the Finance Improvement Project had gone live. The project was transformational, and thanks were to be expressed to the Chief Financial Officer and the entire Finance team.

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 8 December 2023

Members received the minute of the meeting (on file, Court/23/44).

5. Summary Financial Report to 31 January 2024

The Chief Financial Officer presented the report to Court (on file Court/23/45) which provided Court with a summary of the University's financial position for the 4 months to 31 January 2024.

Topics explored in the discussion included steps necessary to manage the deficit; funding, including access to debt and interest rates; inflation and costs; financial pressures; income generation; student numbers; and the current factors impacting staff recruitment and retention.

6. Capital Plan

The Deputy Principal presented the paper (on file, Court/23/46) which set out a summary of the current Capital Investment Plan as discussed at the last Space and Asset management Committee (SAMC). The paper was presented for information. The Deputy Principal highlighted that Capital investment decisions were managed by SAMC through a rigorous business case led process and that the plan was a live document, constantly evolving to respond to changing circumstances, pressures and opportunities.

Philanthropy was key to the university's Capital ambitions and the latest campaign which included New College was exiting its quiet phase and would be launched at the end of September.

In discussion, some members expressed an interest in Court seeing the Business Plans for the Business School or Digital.

7. Projects for Approval

Court noted the paper (on file, Court/23/47) which detailed i) the approval of the investment in the High-Performance Computing replacement (ii) presented the project Power to X 2024 – Eden Campus and attached a Full Business Case; and (iii) provided detail on the Impact Investing being considered by the Investment and Treasury Assurance Group.

8. Projects for Information

Court received the Projects for Information paper (on file, Court/23/48) 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

St Andrews West; Grange; Students' Association Roof.

Working to FBC

Student Residences – Gap Site 3; Albany Park; SOI Fence; Droachaid.

Working to OBC

Kenly; Digital Nexus Building; New College; Eden Campus Enterprise Centre; Bat Lab.

The Quaestor provided a further update on Albany Park. The project had now been closed out with CLV. A review had been commissioned to assess what residential accommodation was needed in the light of current market factors including i) the entry of another private provider into the local market, and ii) the need to consider issues relating to pricing and provision in the light of financial pressures both on students and the institution.

The considerable pressure on housing generally in St Andrews was commented upon. Cllr Lawson emphasised the necessity for the Fife Council to provide affordable housing in the area and suggested that the Albany Park site might be used to assist with this. In response the Quaestor indicated that there were no current plans to make University land available for the provision of affordable housing by Fife Council. The Grange Project had been designed to relieve some of the housing pressures in St Andrews and there was affordable housing to be built in St Andrews West. The Albany Park site and Gap site 3 would remain in the University's land bank to allow for future development.

Court noted the update.

9. Institutional Indicators Update

Members noted the report (on file, Court/23/49) which provided the regular update on Indicators of Progress aligned to the University Strategy and was presented for information.

10. Review of Infrastructure

Court received the report (on file, Court/23/50) which contained the reviews of i) Performance of the University's ICT Infrastructure; and ii) University Estate Infrastructure and was presented for information.

11. Sustainable St Andrews Annual Update

Court received The Annual Sustainability report (on file, Court/23/51) which highlighted the University's activities, especially research, that had been carried out over the period 2022-2023, and illustrated the University's engagement with and impact on the UN SDGs.

III DISCUSSION ITEM

12. Advancing Digital St Andrews

Professor Monique Mackenzie Vice-Principal (Digital Education, Research, and Environment) delivered an informative update on progress to realise the vision of Digital St Andrews to *“create a digital identity , culture and capacity that enable us to seize the opportunities which digital transformation can bring to our activities ad ways of thinking , extending our ambition for our future as a leading global Universityand to accelerate a digital way of thinking and working in education, research, and how we operate communicate and connect”*.

The presentation gave an overview under the following headings. Digital education in the modern word; Digital education is significant change - Progress, challenges and next steps; Digital research in the AI era – Progress, challenges, next steps; Towards a cohesive Digital environment – Progress, challenges and next steps; How we operate and communicate (Responsible Automation ,Forecasting and Artificial Intelligence Group (RAFAI); RAFAI as an enabler – Progress, challenges and next steps; and Shaping international practice.

Members commended the presentation, noting the volume of work already completed and underway. Questions focused on diversification; the potential for generation of income; whether there was anything to be learned from more mature service providers of short courses and digital programmes; rationale and strategy for programme development including layering, stacking and portfolio building; business planning; the importance of market research; opportunities for collaboration and partnership; differentiation of the offering; the importance of culture change and how to effect this; pricing and factors influencing this including benchmarking; marketing; and the allocation (including prioritisation) of resources.

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

IV REPORTS

13. Student Members' Report

The President of the Students' Association presented a verbal report on the activities of the Students' Association.

Court was invited note: -

- That the current Director of Education, Cam Brown, had been elected to be next year's President of the Students' Association. The recent successful student elections had seen a 32% turnout which was sector leading.
- The numbers of teaching awards had doubled.
- Work was progressing apace on the Change Programme under the aegis of the Change Director. Findings thus far indicated that there would be a need for the University to recognise that, following years of significant under resourcing, there would be a need to increase the resources made available to the Students' Association particularly to support advocacy, representation and commercial activity. Increased resourcing was essential if the Association was to be enabled to be capable of providing a world -leading experience and service to the student body.
- Accommodation remained a key and critical issue in the context of a national housing emergency and an unstable and volatile private rental market. There was a need for the University to have its own strategy on this most challenging issue.
- The Association was participating in the Save our Scottish Universities Campaign to lobby at national level against funding cuts.

Court noted the report.

V COMMITTEE AND ASSURANCE GROUP REPORTS

14. Governance and Nominations Committee

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

- i) Court noted the Progress update- **Court Effectiveness Review** (on file, Court/23/52) presented for information.
- ii) **Non - Executive Recruitment Update**

The Convenor of G and N presented the paper (on file, Court/23/53) which provided an update on the outcome of the recent Non-Executive recruitment round. Court endorsed the recommendations for appointment made by G and N; appointing Lord Mark Sedwill, and Ronnie Bowie as Non -executive members of Court for an initial term of Office from 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2028. Court also noted the arrangements for the process to fill the remaining vacancy, detailed in the paper and agreed by G and N at its meeting of 1 April.

Court also noted that G and N has agreed that the process to review and amend Ordinance 132 which governed the composition of Court be initiated. The need for the revision of the Ordinance was briefly discussed, with Court receiving confirmation that the revision of the Ordinance would not prevent graduates of the University being appointed as Non- executive members if they were the best candidates in the relevant recruitment process and had the requisite skills and experience. The Ordinance as drafted, however, provided significant challenges in relation to diversity and inclusion.

Court noted that there would be a need for a new Chancellor's Assessor to be appointed as Adrian Greer was due to demit office. The Chancellor's Assessor is a nominee of the Chancellor, and preliminary discussions were underway as to a replacement. Expressions of interest to the Secretary of Court were invited from any existing Court member.

15. Audit and Risk Committee

In the absence of the Convenor, Ros King summarised the main items of business forwarded to Court by ARC.

(i) Minutes of the Meetings held on 15 February 2024

Members noted the reports of the meeting (on file, Court/23/54).

(ii) Annual Report of the Research Integrity, Ethics and Governance Assurance Group

Court noted the report (on file, Court/23/55) which had been received by ARC at its meeting of 15 February 2024. Court specifically noted the annual public statement on research integrity, approved by ARC, that will be placed online and be made

publicly available as required for compliance with the Concordat to support Research Integrity. was invited in particular to note the Executive Summary which accompanied the report.

(iii) Risk Management Update

The risk management update (on file, Court/23/56) was presented for information. The paper provided (i) the quarterly risk report for Q1, 2024 (risk dashboard and narratives); and (ii) escalated risk narratives as at 05/02/24. The Committee was also updated on the work being undertaken on the presentation of the Risk Register. This review included the consideration of how the presentation of risks could be more holistic, and how the potential impact of cumulative risks could be assessed and presented. The Committee's request for more narrative to be provided and, specifically, that information as to actions being taken to mitigate risks be included in the report were also being factored in. The ARC minute contained detail of the discussion at the Committee of these issues.

Comments from Members related to the confidence levels which could be attached to the admissions figures being reported

(iv) USS GAAP Financial Statements (2022/23)

Court noted the USS GAAP Financial Statements (on file, Court /23/57) which were submitted on 31 January 2024 as required by the US Department of Education issued regulations to all foreign schools governing participation in the Federal Direct Loan Program for US Students).

15 People and Diversity Assurance Group

The Convenor of PDAG briefed Court on the recent meeting of PDAG.

(i) Minutes of the meeting of 21 February 2024

These minutes (on file, Court/23/58) were presented for information.

In response to the observation that the PDAG report tends to appear at the end of the agenda, it was agreed that it would be placed earlier in the agenda for the June meeting; when the annual report of PDAG to Court would be presented. It was important not to create the inaccurate impression that Diversity issues were not given sufficient priority in Court business.

The Convenor commended the Athena Swan application to Court. A copy had been placed for reference on Sharepoint and it repaid reading, not least because of its structure and clarity but also as an aid to understanding the journey the University had undertaken in recent years.

Other key points under review by PDAG included the implementation of the People Strategy and the current focus on the development of the HR system; and conversations around the development of an employer brand and communications. Court was also invited to note the refreshed approach to the JNCC and the creation of short-term working groups to focus on the resolution of specific issues.

VI COURT OFFICE BUSINESS

Notice of Election -Senate Assessors to Court, Professorial Constituencies.

Court noted the intimation of the elections which are scheduled to take place in May 2024 with Nominations opening in April 2024 (on file, Court/23/59).

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Court will take place on Friday 7 June 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
Draft April 2024