

Draft subject to approval by the University Court at the meeting of 4 April 2025

## **UNIVERSITY COURT OF ST ANDREWS**

AT St Andrews on the 17<sup>th</sup> DAY OF JANUARY 2025 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, Ronnie Bowie, Alison Johns, Ros King, Professor Ewan McKendrick, Eve McCurrich, Lord Mark Sedwill and Jenny Stewart, Non-executive Members.

### **In regular attendance:**

Ester Ruskuc, Vice-Principal Strategy and Chief Operating Officer; 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); 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:**

Romi Arman, Frank MacInnis, Non-executive Members, Hitanshi Badani, Director of Education, Students' Association; Professor Clare Peddie, Vice-Principal Education (Proctor);

**In attendance in part:**

**Professor Ian Miguel, Head of the School of Computer Science (Item 12 only).**

**PRELIMINARIES****Welcome**

Court noted that Ester Ruskuc was now in attendance at Court in her capacity as Vice-Principal Strategy and Chief Operating Officer (VPSCOO).

**Update on Rector's Appeal****The Secretary to Court provided an update.**

The outcome of the Rector's appeal to the Chancellor was still awaited. The Chancellor had determined that he was competent to hear the appeal of the decision to dismiss the Rector as a Charity Trustee as well as the decision to remove the Rector as a Member of Court. The Senior Lay Member had provided submissions on this point as requested by the Chancellor, and a response was awaited from the Rector's lawyers. Once these had been received it was hoped that the Chancellor would be in a position to adjudicate.

**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 December 2024; Item 5 – (i) Summary Financial Report to 31 October 2024 (ii) Update Financial Summary to 30 November 2024; Item 6 – Recast of Financial Plan 2024-2027; Item 7 – Digital Education Update; Item 8 - Projects for Approval; Item 9 – Residential Capacity and Annual Rent Charge Uplift; and Item 10 – Institutional Indicators Update.

Discussion item

Item 12 –Digital Nexus Building

## Reports

Item 13 – Student Members' Report

Item 14 – Report from the Audit and Risk Committee

Item 15 – Report from the Governance and Nominations Committee

Item 16 – Report from the Remuneration Committee

## Court and Senate Office Business

Item 17(iii) Annual Sustainability Report had been additionally starred at the request of a member in advance of the meeting. No further additional items were starred.

## **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

Iain Anderson requested that his appointment by the Secretary of State as a Non-Executive Board Member of the UK Government Department for Business and Trade be noted. He will sit on the Departmental Board. Mr Anderson indicated that he would recuse himself from Court meeting discussion of any item which might present a conflict of interest.

## **I OPENING BUSINESS**

### **1. Meeting minutes**

- (i) Minute 2023-2024 No.9 and 2024-25 No.1

The draft minutes of the Special meeting of Court held on 29 July 2024 and the meeting of Court on 18 October 2024 (on file, Minutes 2023-2024 No.9, and 2024-2025 No.1) were agreed, without amendment, as correct records of the respective meetings.

### **2. Matters Arising**

- i) Noting of approval of Financial Statement by correspondence

Court noted the approval of the Financial Statements for the record (on file, Court/24/23).

- ii) Accommodation Review

iii) Recast Financial Plan

Items (ii) and (iii) would be dealt with in the course of the PARC business on the Agenda

## II PRINCIPAL'S BUSINESS

### 3. Principal's Report to Court

The Principal requested that the Minutes record the announcement by Alison Johns to retire as Chief Executive of Advance HE in June 2025. Also to be noted was the real outpouring of emotion in the HE sector in response to this news. Court joined with the Principal to wish Alison well at this significant moment, which was only the latest chapter in an important story. Alison would continue with her Court roles.

#### (i) Written

Court received the Principal's written report (on file, Court/24/24) 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.

##### Preliminary comments

**Scottish Council of Global Affairs** - The Principal highlighted the upcoming event, involving the First Minister and Mr Leo Varadkar, being held on Thursday 6 February to mark the transition to the Scottish Council of Global Affairs from the University of Glasgow to St Andrews. All Court members were invited to attend.

**University of Dundee** – The difficulties being experienced by the University of Dundee continued to be monitored, with the University engaged on this locally via Universities Scotland and nationally via UUK.

It was understood that the University of Dundee was putting together a recovery plan. At an appropriate time, there would be discussion of what could and should be learned from the Dundee situation.

**Freedom of Speech legislation** – Although not applicable to Scotland, the University would have to be cognisant of the impact of the UK Government 's decision to bring key provisions of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 into force.

Recent press

Employment Tribunal Outcome – Court members may be aware of the recent publicity surrounding claims of discrimination, racial harassment and constructive dismissal made against the University by a former employee. Following an Employment Tribunal in November 2024, all complaints brought against the University by a former employee had been dismissed.

Court members might also have seen national press coverage of the distressing allegations against the author Neil Gaiman. The University was providing support to a student, who was on a year's exchange at the University, and who was directly involved in the case (the substance of the allegations did not in any way relate to the University to the student's time here).

Neil Gaiman had been awarded an Honorary degree by the University in 2016. The Principal's Office had received 2 requests that the University remove the Honorary degree in the light of the allegations made, and there had been some enquiries from the press. The University would continue to monitor developments in the case, but Court should be aware that the bestowal of an Honorary degree (and withdrawal) was a matter for Senate.

#### Appointments

Professor Deborah Williamson, currently Head of Public Health and Microbiology for Scotland had been appointed as Dean of Medicine to succeed Professor David Crossman. This was an extremely important appointment. The Principal extended thanks to the Remuneration Committee for their input in relation to this appointment.

#### Development and Alumni

**Paragraph 119: Making Waves** - Due to an influx of donations before Christmas the campaign total now stood at £132.5m. This figure included a record number of large donations.

The University was keeping a close eye on the situation in LA following the recent severe ongoing wildfires, and was in close touch with students, alumni and donors in the area.

Questions from members related to the creation of the Agile Creative Team (ACT) (co-chaired by the Vice-Principal (Digital Education, Research and Environment) and Vice-Principal (Communications), and purposed to create an end-to-end service in which marketing, communications, content and digital experts in the University community come together to raise the profile of the University, and ultimately

contribute towards revenue growth). This was seen by Members to be a positive move. Members commented that the ACT could utilise the experience of those Court Members who had expertise in communication and marketing, and could provide a valuable source of information and advice. The suggestion of an update to Court on the work of ACT at a later meeting was also welcomed.

Other comments related to AI and how to harness its potential for the University; including in the field of research and development; and ongoing contact and discussions with the Scottish Government about its approach to the sector.

## **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 December 2024**

Members received the minute of the meeting (on file, Court/24/25).

### **5. (i) Summary Financial Report to 31 October 2024**

Court received the paper (on file, Court/24/26(a)) received by PARC which provided a summary of the University's Financial position to 31 October 2024.

Court noted the report.

The Vice-Principal Strategy and Chief Operating Officer (VPSCOO) presented the paper along with

(ii) Update Financial Summary to 30 November 2024 (on file, Court/24/2(b))

The Paper provided a Period 4 financial update which followed on from (item 5(i) above) the recast financial plan presented to PARC in December (Item 6 below) and the associated Period 3 update. The update indicated that the plans which had been put in place to manage the £4.4m financial deficit, and had been reported to Court in October, were on track. The position to date remained slightly ahead of the financial plan forecast and started to build the evidence behind confidence that the current year will achieve a modest surplus.

The update contained a table with a RAG rating – Green, achieved or confirmed will be achieved; Amber, discussions ongoing with relevant parties; Red not yet actioned. The actions to manage the financial deficit already reported were in line with the original plan, were covered in more detail on the report, and were showing progress. There was confidence that the remaining red rated actions (total £0.5m) would be covered by the spring. The amber rating included items like the targeted vacancy freeze and targeted non-recurring savings in operations which could be avoided in-year.

Following helpful comments from Court members, Capital donations had been separated from revenue to provide additional clarity. Reporting would continue evolve to improve the provision of information that equipped Court to carry out its oversight role.

Members welcomed the update, noting that it addressed a number of issues. The request was made that the “other” category of income spend be further broken down. Further details were requested on some of the figures contained in the report including the overspend on casual staff; staff core costs; shortfall in tuition fees; scholarships; and the impact of lower than anticipated insurance premiums.

## **6. Recast of Financial Plan**

The VPSCOO presented the plan to Court (on file Court/24/27) which provided Court with a summary of the University’s financial position as at 31 July 2024. Court at its meeting in October had requested to see a reforecast of the Financial Plan through 2024/2025 following the indicated shortfall on income projected for that period and subsequent action being taken by the PO in response, including the impact of change in recruitment planning on tuition income for subsequent years. The recast Financial Plan had been presented to, and noted by, PARC, and was now forwarded to Court.

The recast reflected:

- An updated tuition fee model, with a modest shift in mix of undergraduates towards overseas and a reduction in expected income from overseas PGT students;
- Projections for the Digital programmes and the Business School at the pessimistic end with work ongoing with the Agile Creative Team now in place to support better visibility and market curation to achieve improvement;
- The Employers’ NIC increase, announced following the October budget.

A table of the other general inflation assumptions underlying the recast had also been provided.

In the current year the financial outturn would be managed through targeted mostly non-recurring measures across a number of areas, resulting in a modest expected surplus of c £0.6m. The University community had been engaged and responsive to the challenges of the financial situation. While intending to move away from non-recurring measures, until embedded savings crystallised, the targeted vacancy freeze would be maintained.

For planning purposes, however, these current year savings had been unwound in 2025/ 2026 to show the potential gap that had to be addressed on a planned and sustainable basis. This, coupled with the NIC increase, resulted in a projected deficit of £2.7m, broadly equivalent to the increase in NIC.

Work had begun to develop sustainable plans to deal with this, with an initial target of £5m to get a head of the plan. This was intended to enable a forecast surplus in 2025/ 2026 and also raise expectations for subsequent years.

In 2026/27, interest cost for initial stages of borrowing, assumed to be £50m at a rate of 5% had been built in for illustration purposes.

The financial operating environment in HE remained hugely challenging. The University was better positioned than many although not immune, and had responded to the challenge identified earlier in the year. There was however more to do, and this would be done. The need to keep Court regularly updated on our progress, was also recognised with Members referencing the helpful discussions at the Pre-Court meeting the previous evening which had included proposals to produce a more regular dashboard of key information, and holding regular briefing sessions outwith as well as within Court.

Members noted the update. Requests were made for more information to be provided to Court on recurring savings; capital budget and the and the Capital Plan; and PGR numbers.

The VPSCOO noted the request for more information on recurring savings. The Deputy Principal provided additional information in relation to the Capital Plan and PGR numbers with confirmation that there was laser focus on actions which would support the Capital Plan and its long - term ambitions. More information could be provided to Court members to keep Court apprised of developments, and it would be helpful to understand what information it would find useful. The Deputy Principal would be happy to have dialogue with Court Members offline to discuss further. In

addition, the expertise of individual Court Members would continue to be used in consideration of the progress of the Capital Plan. A Member expressed the view that there was a need to be a move towards strategic modelling/review and the establishment of a sustainable financial business model and suggested that that the assistance of Court Members could also be sought in relation to this.

Questions from members covered PGR numbers and factors impacting these; the relevance of the changing political dynamic in the United States; exploration of global markets; the targeted vacancy freeze, including communication with staff around this; and the aspiration to obtain a surplus by 2026; which, it was suggested by a Member, provided an opportunity for Court and the Executive to work together to co -create a plan to achieve.

## **7. Digital Education Update**

The VPSCOO introduced the paper (on file, Court/24/28). The paper provided an update on the progress and learnings across the developing portfolio of digital education programmes provided by the University; associated income projection scenarios; and business case.

Digital programmes as well as development capability remained strategically important. The portfolio was still young with only one programme having entered its second year in September. The assumptions at the start were made on a best guess basis. Now that that there were several programmes and over 100 students and associated experience, there was an opportunity take stock as well as identify necessary actions.

Income and student numbers had been slower to materialise than expected in some programmes and markets and the credit load that these digital learners take at any one time was also less than initially expected. As a result, completions would take longer and income would be delayed.

To reflect this income expectations had been revised down significantly for the next three years, and this reflected in the recast financial plan. At the same time, early indications showed good results for retention, progression and feedback.

The indications were that, with appropriate market placement and identification of demand, new and diverse income streams would be realised and the additional benefits outlined in the paper derived.

The Vice-Principal (Digital Education, Research, and Environment) provided further comment, expanding on the points made and highlighting actions being taken which included the formation of the Agile Creative Team; the developments in communications and advertising; the appointment of a new Head of Marketing; work to balance the portfolio of offerings to respond to identified supply and demand; and the need to be strategic and develop further contact with external agencies and potential markets.

Members commended the comprehensive paper which reflected the process of review undertaken to understand what has happened thus far and what needed to be done; including the recognition of a need to think globally, and also to look externally to assess what was being done successfully elsewhere. The critical importance of marketing was also underlined. Members also sought reassurance that the actions set out in the paper would make progress toward a more optimistic return from investment in the Digital programme, which was now significantly below initial assumptions, and observed that it would be important for Court to receive regular updates on the development of Digital: Whilst it had been good to receive the update which had focused on recent learning, and steps being taken, there was a need to consider the opportunity and risks around Digital more broadly, and Court would want regularly to return to this topic.

Court noted the update.

#### **8. Projects for Approval**

The VPSCOO presented the paper (on file, Court/24/29 ) which had presented the project to provide additional lab space for the School of Earth and Environmental Science to PARC for approval. These facilities were required to facilitate the research of a young scientist who had secured a prestigious and very competitive grant.

Court noted the paper and PARC's discussion and approval of the project as detailed in the PARC minutes.

#### **9. Residential Capacity and Annual Rent Charge Uplift**

The VPSCOO introduced the suite of papers.

- **Paper 24/30(a)** - The report on residential capacity, which constituted the Accommodation Review item listed under matters arising – and was the report on residential capacity expected by Court.
- **Paper 24/30(b)** – The paper set out the proposed increase for rents for academic Session 2025 - 2026. At the meeting of PARC, it had been confirmed that the compromise proposal set out in paragraph 7 of the paper had been approved. PARC also confirmed its support of the recommendations set out in the paper including endorsing the compromise proposals for an uplift in rental fees for 2025/26 of 2.7% tied to a review of arrangements and the initiation of a more fundamental review of the residential system and service, this to be led by the Chief Operating Officer and conducted over the coming 12 months, allowing that review group to discuss and agree its actual remit and terms of reference with subsequent reporting to PARC. The review terms of reference and membership would be shared with PARC in March.

The VPSCOO provided the following additional comment.

The papers and associated discussions under this heading were focused on navigating a significantly changed environment.

The accommodation capacity review had shown that the student accommodation market had changed. There was more complexity with more choice for students – more providers, more variety and broader geographic area with free and much reduced bus travel – with additional regulatory constraints and increased gap between cost inflation and income growth which was sitting at £3.2m for the last three years.

As described in the paper from the Student President, keeping rent rises to a minimum had been an overriding student objective since the Covid pandemic. The request not to increase rents no longer fitted with the agreement made in 2003-2004 which was at the heart of the current system and its sustained running and maintenance. This would have required a 5.6% uplift. To ensure that progress could be made this year and to meet contractual obligations towards CLV, a compromise had been reached for the coming academic year in rent increases, setting this at 2.7%.

This agreement also contained a reduction in minor improvements and a request to exclude the funding of the student accommodation bursary from student rents

in a phased way; as well as conduct a longer-term strategic review of the Residential System. While this may not be the source of accommodation bursaries, the support for students who need this is clearly important and work has begun with Development and others to avoid unintended consequences.

Questions and comments from members emphasised the continuing importance of this issue and recognised the importance of the University addressing this complex issue in a strategic way.

A Member sought further clarification of the point made in relation to accommodation bursaries; it was important to ensure that support continued to be offered to those who needed such support to be here.

Responding to this, the Principal commented that it had been necessary to achieve a compromise for this year, and commended the mature compromise reached. This had been in the interest of both the University and the student body.

This was however an important moment. The historic arrangements which had required that accommodation provision broadly paid for itself had to be weighed against a changing market (both supply and demand) and the message from the student body that there was a demand for a wider range of and more affordable accommodation. Numerous factors would have to be taken into consideration in the proposed wider review. Crucially however, if there was going to be a change in the structure of bursaries, then it would have to be ensured that this would not diminish provision to disadvantaged students. Other sources of funding for this would have to be identified. This would have to be further discussed with Development.

Other comments in the discussion included the suggestion there was a need for the University to provide sufficient student accommodation to balance the impact of private student accommodation on the local community. This utilised accommodation which otherwise would be available to those who worked in the town and would like to live here; the impact of private providers; the implications on changes to accommodation provision for inclusivity, including the danger of creating a two-tier system; and timing of the further review.

Court noted the papers, the further updates, and the decisions made in relation to rent levels.

## **10. Institutional Indicators Update**

Court received the regular update (on file, Court/24/31) on Indicators of Progress aligned to the University Strategy 2022-27. 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.

The VPSCOO presented the paper highlighting the following.

- Thresholds were adjusted annually at this time to maintain visible pressure on progress. This was part of the reason why more of the underlying indicators were presenting as amber at this stage of the cycle.
- The summary paper brought together the key points for Court and assigned an overall rating which was amber throughout.
- Financial indicators were under pressure across the board and were constraining the speed of progress.
- Being outside the QS top 100 for the first time was a concern and work was underway to strengthen areas of research as well as data/information provision to maximise results, and to step up activities in Asian markets where this impact was felt the most.
- While progress with Scope 1 and 2 carbon reduction was on plan, science-based targets associated with scope 3 emissions were not being met. This required changes to procurement, construction and travel policies identified in the action plans and was not helped by the instability of reporting requirements and approaches. On the positive side the latest reports showed that at least Scope 3 was no longer increasing.
- Diverse St Andrews now boasted two Athena Swan gold awards at school level (School of Biology and School of Psychology and Neuroscience)

Court noted the update.

## **11. University Collections and Museums Annual report**

Court noted the paper (on file, Court/24/32 which presented the Annual Report on University Collections and Museums covering the academic year 2023-2024. The Senior Lay Member recommended the comprehensive report to Court as rewarding reading.

### **III DISCUSSION ITEM**

#### **12. Digital Nexus Building**

Professor Ian Miguel, Head of the School of Computer Science joined the meeting for this item.

The Principal introduced the item providing some context. The item afforded the opportunity for Court to be provided with more information about the Digital Nexus project. Court had been interested to hear further about the project which stood alongside New College as a key element of the Making Waves campaign.

Court would hear both from the Master as Project Sponsor, and from the Head of the School of Computer Science who would provide some insight into the development of the building which would provide a location for highly interdisciplinary work and would be of importance to the next generation of the University's entrepreneurial and academic success.

A joint presentation by the Master and the HoS Comp Science followed. The presentation provided information on the University Strategy and the key ambition to support the Strategy by the transformation of the North Haugh Campus in a way that supported the pillars of the Strategy with the specific objectives to:-

- Provide a coherent and dynamic campus that will create and sustain a state-of-the-art place to research/innovate, learn and live.
- Vastly improve the efficiencies and user experience of the existing science buildings through redevelopment, refurbishment and potential change of use.
- Overhaul the landscape and urban realm to provide People Centred connective and vibrant environment for students, staff and community.
- Improve accessibility, connectivity, and active travel across the North Haugh campus.
- Address Climate Adaptation issues and introduce Biodiversity to the site. and integrate University net zero targets, primary energy and carbon reduction trajectories.

The Digital Nexus Building was central to this overall transformation, both to provide an updated and fit for purpose building to house the School of Computer Science which has surpassed the point where the existing available buildings can accommodate the growing School, and to release decant space to facilitate other essential moves.

The slides for the presentation provided an overview of the current North Haugh buildings and environment with detail of how the Digital Nexus Building would integrate; development phasing; a brief history of the School of Computer Science; the need for digital nexus; and the plans for the Digital Nexus Building which was a strategic opportunity to integrate a remarkable group of talented researchers at all stages of their careers; drive collaboration; foster engagement across the University; and provide the centerpiece of a revitalised Science and Medicine Campus.

Members thanked the presenters for the presentation which had brought the project to life, conveyed a clear understanding of the purpose of the project and its importance, and provided information which Court members could use to encourage support and interest in the Making Waves campaign.

Questions and comments from Members related to the extent to which the current facilities available were impacting the School of Computer Science's recruitment rate both of students (UG/PGT/PGR) and staff, and any available hard data on this; futureproofing to accommodate growing ambition; the importance of these infrastructure changes having a beneficial impact on REF performance (the current REF ranking is =38 which places St Andrews alongside the University of Hertfordshire and the University of Lincoln), and the need this to be clearly articulated; the potential for co-location of researchers from other disciplines; the importance of connectivity and AI; and the importance of the project to enable the redevelopment of the North Haugh to enable growth in research and innovation alongside enhanced teaching space.

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 commenting on:-

- The Change Programme - which had now transitioned from consultation to implementation, marking a pivotal and historic moment in the transformation of the Students' Association.
- The Democracy Review - part of the Change Programme, aimed to reform governance structures to make them more inclusive, accessible, and responsive to the needs of the student body. A key outcome from the review would be the revision of Sabbatical roles better to align with student needs, and the renaming of roles from Director to President to reflect clear responsibilities and the lack of hierarchy, in what was a flat structure. Following the next election cycle, there would no longer be a President of the Students' Association but rather a President of Union Affairs, President of Education, President of Wellbeing and Community; and President of Student Opportunities.
- Finance - The Students' Association continued to navigate a challenging financial landscape, exacerbated by rising operational costs and pressures from the wider economic environment. The Association's initial request for £300k in additional recurrent block grant funding had been met in part (£150K) for 2024/25, as had the continued rent waiver of £100k. Whilst this had been accepted there were active discussions about extending these additions. Ongoing financial challenges within the Association meant that further formal funding requests had been submitted to ensure long term sustainability. Failure to meet these funding requests could result in reduced capacity to continue to deliver critical services to the student community, and a heightened reliance on commercial revenues, already under strain due to rising costs and market challenges.

The Students' Association acknowledged the University's support and partnership but emphasised the need for sustained and strategic funding to safeguard the student experience at St Andrews.

- Student Representation on Court - Discussions were ongoing as to student representation on Court following the removal of the Rector and the pausing of the appointment of a Rector's Assessor. The President of the Students' Association was

working with G and N on proposals to address concerns raised by students as to a gap in representation. The President of the Students' Association would continue to lobby for changes to student representation on Court.

- The Director of Education had sent apologies for the meeting, but key developments in their area related to improving the experience of Postgraduate students, and for Undergraduates, addressing concerns relating to the balance between workload and credit weightage.

The Senior Lay Member thanked the President for his verbal report but requested that, in future, a written report be prepared for inclusion with the Court papers. This would be particularly helpful where detailed figures were being presented or where there was a large amount of information to digest.

Some members congratulated the Students' Association on the implementation of the change programme and Court noted the update.

## **V COMMITTEE AND ASSURANCE GROUP REPORTS**

### **14. Audit and Risk Committee**

#### **(i) Update from Convenor**

The Convenor thanked Court for accommodating the revised timescale for the finalisation of the Financial Statements. Consideration and approval of these had formed the bulk of business for the November ARC meeting. The Committee had also spent time discussing the Risk Report and its key themes and Court's attention was drawn to the refreshed format of that report, and in particular to the Bubble Chart which showed the interrelationship of risks.

The Committee had received the Annual Reports from HSAG, commending Frank MacInnis for his able convenorship of the Group, and on Complaints which evidenced that this difficult and complicated area continued to be well managed. The new Internal Auditors continued to impress, and their first Internal Audit report had been a thorough and useful piece of work, which included outward sector insights, comments on good practice, and a chart mapping value for money (VFM) considerations.

The papers below were forwarded to Court by ARC.

**(ii) Minutes of the Meetings held on 3 October and 21 November 2024**

Members noted the reports of the meeting (on file, Court/24/33a,b).

**(iii) Update on Risk Register**

Court noted the update (on file, Court/24/34) was presented for information. The paper provided (i) the quarterly risk report for Q4, 2024 (risk dashboard and narratives); and (ii) detailed escalated risk narratives as at 5/11/24.

**(iv) Annual Reports**

- HSAG Annual Report, 2023-24 - Court received the report (on file, Court/24/35a) which provided an update on the activities of the Health and Safety Assurance Group for the Academic year 23/24.
- Complaints Handling 2023-2024 – Court received the report (on file, 24/25b). The review provided an assessment of the University's operation of the Complaints Handling Procedure during the period 01 August 2023 through 31 July 2024.

**(v) Internal Audit year Plan**

Court noted the plan (on file, Court/24/36).

**(vi) Internal Audit Progress Reports, October and November**

Court noted the progress reports (on file, Court/24/37a, b)

**15. Governance and Nominations**

**(i) Update from the Convenor**

The Committee had preliminary discussion about potential changes to Ordinances. This would be discussed further and in more detail at the March meeting.

The Committee had also considered student concerns about representation at Court. This was a live issue and the Committee had requested that further work be done before reaching any decision or making any recommendations to Court. The President of the Students' Association had been invited to work with Vice-Principal (Governance) on proposals to be presented to the March meeting.

Court received and noted the Minutes of the meeting of G and N held on 5 December 2024 (on file, Court/24/39)

## **16. Remuneration Committee**

Court received and noted the Annual Report of the Remuneration Committee (on file, Court/24/40). The report to Court covered the main activity of the Remuneration Committee in the academic year 2023/24.

## **VI COURT OFFICE BUSINESS**

### **(i) Minutes of the meeting of Senate 11 December 2024**

Court received the minute of the meeting of Senate on 11 December (on file, Court/24/41), presented for information.

### **(ii) Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review**

Court received the paper (on file Court/24/42) which presented the Strategic Impact Analysis relevant to the TQER, approved by Senate at its December. Court endorsed the Strategic Impact Analysis.

### **(iii) Annual Sustainability Report**

Court received the report (on file, Court/24/43). The University Sustainability Report highlighted University activities, especially research, that had been carried out over the period 2023-24 which illustrated the University's engagement with, and impact on, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), and demonstrated the University's carbon emissions reporting across Scopes 1, 2, and 3.

The report was presented to Court for information and noting prior to publication. In the normal course of business, the report would have been presented to PARC for information and submitted via PARC papers to Court. Presentation of the report was included on the schedule of business for the meeting of PARC in March 2025. However, presentation of the report in March would mean that it would not be published until after the completion of annual rankings cycles.

Given this, it had been agreed with the Senior Lay Member and Principal that the report be presented directly to Court. This to allow the report to be shared publically on relevant channels and in advance of the annual rankings cycle; both the QS and THE rankings now engage with sustainability.

Court noted the report and that, in future, the schedule of business for PARC would be adjusted to share the Sustainability Report with PARC at its December meeting. This would enable a full launch of the report at the start of Semester 2.

There was brief discussion of the report with positive comment on its breadth and range of examples. It was suggested that more information about sustainability could be presented on the University website. The information about scope 3 emissions was also noted.

**(iv) Draft Resolution of the University Court – 2024 No.1 – Advanced Artist Diploma) (Art Dip) (ADV)**

Court approved the promulgation of the draft Resolution (on file, Court/24/41) which will give the University power to award a new Advanced Artist Diploma, to be awarded at level 12 on the SCQF Framework (level 8 on the FHEQ). The Advanced Artist Diploma would be delivered by the Royal Conservatoire Scotland in collaboration with Scotland's national professional companies and validated by the University.

**AOCB**

- A Member requested that the business plan for the Business School be shared with Court (if it was available in a format that could be shared).
- The Senior Lay Member intimated that an additional meeting of Court members would be arranged during February. Court Office would liaise to organise the meeting by TEAMS.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next scheduled meeting of Court will take place on Friday 4 April 2025 at 10 am in Upper College Hall.

Ray Perman, Senior Lay Member (Presiding)

Margaret Sinclair,

Executive Officer to the University Court and Senate, Clerk to the University Court,  
Court Office

Draft January 2025

DRAFT