



## University Court

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### Minutes

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20 September 2023 from 14:00 held in the Boardroom, Kydd Building

\*attended via MS Teams

### Members

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#### Chair

Mr David Brew

#### Vice Chair

Ms Heather Dunk

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Ms Nazhat Ahmed

Ms Lynne Hamilton\*

Professor Liz Bacon

Ms Pam Herries

Mr Andrew Bailey

Ms Veronica Lynch

Ms Liz Blackburn

Mr Antony Marks\*

Dr Scott Cameron

Dr Hadi Mehrpouya\*

Ms Robyn Donoghue

Ms Liv Morgan

Ms Alison Duffy

Ms Livi Robertson

Professor Ruth Falconer

Professor Edith Sim

Professor Alastair Irons

Mr Steven Traynor

### In Attendance

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Ms Eilidh Fraser\*

Mr James Nicholson (item 9)

Ms Jackie McKenzie

Mr Gordon Weir

Mr Ian McDonald

### Apologies

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Ms John Barnett

Mr Jim MacGregor

Mr Fraser Keir

### Secretariat

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Ms Caroline Summers (Secretary)

Dr Dianne Peden (Minute Secretary)

## Open Business

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### Preliminary Matters

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#### 1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence Oral Report

The Chair welcomed Court to its first meeting of the new academic year. The Chair, on behalf of Court, extended a special welcome to Ms L. Hamilton, who had returned from her leave of absence and to members attending their first meeting; Ms L. Blackburn, Ms P. Herries and Mr S. Traynor (newly appointed independent members of Court); Dr S. Cameron (the newly nominated Senate member of Court) and Ms L. Morgan, (the Abertay Students' Association Vice-President, who attended the June meeting as an observer).

Apologies were received as noted above.

#### 2. Declaration of Potential Conflicts of Interest Oral Report

The Chair reminded members of their responsibility to indicate if they had, or could be perceived to have, a conflict of interest in relation to the items for discussion under Open Business. None were declared.

#### 3. Feedback on Pre-Court Session Oral Report

Court welcomed the session on Risk Management (led by the Vice-Principal (Strategy and Governance) and University Secretary, Ms C. Summers and the Director of Finance, Infrastructure and Corporate Services, Mr G. Weir) prior to the formal meeting and the opportunity for Court to discuss the University's approach to Risk Management. Court was advised that the presentation would be uploaded to Admincontrol after today's meeting.

Court discussed the importance of linking the review of the current risk framework to the refresh of the Strategic Plan

Court requested further opportunities to discuss Risk Management and the Vice-Principal and University Secretary undertook to discuss the appropriate timing for further input with the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee.

<p><b>Action: Risk Management - Vice-Principal (Strategy &amp; Governance) and University Secretary with the Director of Finance, Infrastructure and Corporate Services to consider timing of further input from Court</b></p>
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### Court & Governance Matters

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#### 4. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2023 – Non-Reserved CT/0923/01

The Chair drew Court's attention to the fact that the approved minutes would be published on the University website. Court received and considered the minutes, submitted as enclosure 1 and approved them as an accurate record.

**5. Matters Arising from these minutes****Oral Report**

The Chair confirmed that the action resulting from these minutes had been completed.

**6. Minutes of the meeting of the Chair's Committee (Open) held on 11 September 2023 (unapproved - for information)****CT/0923/02**

Court noted the unapproved minutes (agreed with the Chair) of the Open Business of the meeting of the Chair's Committee held on 11 September 2023, submitted as enclosure 2.

**7. Court Annual Workplan****CT/0923/03**

Ms C. Summers introduced the Court Annual Workplan, submitted as enclosure 3 and thanked the Head of Governance and Deputy Secretary, Dr D. Peden, and the wider Governance Office team for its production. Court received an overview of the workplan and was advised that it would be a live document and updated accordingly throughout the year. Ms Summers highlighted matters of interest and advised Court that the Risk Framework and the Mapping against Code of Good HE Governance 2023 and implementation plan may become substantive items for the November meeting following discussion at the relevant committees.

Ms C. Summers noted that the programme of pre-Court sessions had still to be finalised and advised Court that the November session would be a briefing on Quality Assurance and Academic Governance. Court was advised that the arrangements for the annual Court Conference are to be finalised and would be confirmed as soon as possible.

Court approved the annual workplan for 2023-24.

**Matters for Discussion**

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**8. Future of AI in Higher Education****Presentation**

Court received a presentation from the Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Professor L. Bacon, on the Future of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Higher Education. The presentation covered five main areas:

- Disruption in the world
- What is Generative AI/AI?
- Impact on the World of Work
- Impact on Education
- Key Issues for Students and beyond

Court discussed various aspects of the presentation, in particular how AI is used in an educational environment and the impact on students. Court reflected on the University's current use, noting that further investment would be required. Court was advised that the use of AI in assessment is an ongoing discussion within the sector, noting that the design of assessments is critical (focusing on critical thinking) and

that some Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies may still require in person examinations. Court reflected on the challenges that the use of AI brings, in particular due to the current lack of legislation and governance around this. Court discussed the importance of working with industry to better understand how it is used in the private sector to ensure that graduates are equipped with the skills needed to succeed. Court was advised that the presentation would be uploaded to Admincontrol after today's meeting.

Court thanked the Principal for her interesting and thought-provoking presentation.

## **Matters for Approval**

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### **9. Annual Report to the Scottish Funding Council on Quality 2022-23**

**CT/0923/04**

*Mr J. Nicholson joined the meeting.*

The Director of Student and Academic Services, Mr J. Nicholson, provided a brief overview of the Annual Report to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) on Quality 2022-23, submitted as enclosure 4. Court was advised that the draft report had been reviewed by Senate at its meeting on 6 June 2023 (prior to which it was reviewed by the Teaching and Learning Committee on 24 May 2023). Court noted that Senate had the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed final version prior to its submission to Court. Court was reminded that the report is also submitted to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Scotland.

Court was advised that recommendations from the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) are followed up by the Teaching and Learning Committee with the commendations being taken forward by the AbLE (Abertay Learning Enhancement) Academy to promote best practice across the institution.

Court discussed the report in detail, including the recommendation relating to student retention and progression, noting that a pilot programme-level feedback process is currently underway. Mr Nicholson highlighted that the University outperforms the sector with regards to Student Voice in the National Student Survey (NSS). Court noted that a report on the NSS results 2023 would be submitted for consideration at its November meeting.

Court was advised that the format is currently under review by SFC and is likely to differ for 2023-24 onwards. Court thanked Mr J Nicholson and colleagues for a comprehensive report.

The Chair highlighted that he was required to sign the report on behalf of the governing body and asked Court to confirm that it was content for him to do so. Court confirmed that it was satisfied that effective arrangements are in place to maintain standards and to assure and enhance the quality of its provision.

Court approved the Annual Report to the Scottish Funding Council on Quality 2022-23 for submission.

*Mr J. Nicholson left the meeting.*

## **10. Committee Membership: Recommendation from the Governance and Nominations Committee** **CT/0923/05**

Court was invited to consider the recommendations from the Governance and Nominations Committee on Committee Membership, submitted as enclosure 5.

Court approved the following recommendations for the appointment of Court members to Court Committees:

- Vice-Chair of Court, Ms H. Dunk to join the Governance and Nominations Committee.
- Ms L. Blackburn to join the Audit & Risk Committee
- Ms P. Herries to join the People, Health and Equality Committee
- Mr S. Traynor and Professor R. Falconer to join the Finance and Corporate Performance Committee
- Dr S. Cameron to join the Remuneration Committee.

Court noted that the Student Members of Court, Abertay Students' Association President, Ms L. Robertson, would join the Finance and Corporate Performance Committee and remain on the People, Health and Equality Committee and the Vice-President, Ms L Morgan, would join the Governance and Nominations Committee and the Remuneration Committee.

Ms C. Summers provided an update on the recruitment of external members for the Audit and Risk Committee and appointment of a new Chair for the Remuneration Committee, as outlined in enclosure 5.

Court formally noted the update on the Court and Committee Membership.

## **Senate Matters**

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### **11. Academic Matters Report** **CT/0923/06**

The Deputy Principal and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor A. Irons, introduced the report and provided a brief snapshot overview of the wide range of activities across the University. He highlighted activities showing the staff and student community working together. Court expressed its congratulations on the breadth of industry and partnership engagement highlighted in the report.

Court formally noted the academic matters report.

## **Matters for Information**

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### **12. Students' Association Report to Court** **CT/0923/07**

Ms L. Robertson introduced the report, which provided a brief overview of the Students' Association's recent and upcoming activities, and highlighted matters of interest, including the events supporting students during the summer break and the range of well-attended activities held during Fresher's Week. Court was apprised of upcoming events including Hallweek, 16 Days of Activism, and Wellbeing Week.

Ms L. Morgan drew Court's attention to issues currently impacting the student community with regards to accommodation and ongoing issues with regards to room

availability for Students' Association activities. Professor L. Bacon undertook to discuss these issues further with the Students' Association, and an update would be provided in the Executive Group Report to Court at its November meeting.

Court thanked the Students' Association and thereafter formally noted the report.

*Mr A. Bailey left the meeting.*

### **13. Executive Group Report to Court**

**CT/0923/08**

Court was apprised of the latest developments with regards to an ongoing Court case, noting that the matter had now been concluded.

Court received an update on the latest student numbers, noting that registration was still ongoing. In discussion, Court queried whether the position was consistent across all subject areas and what the impact on staffing might be. It was noted that further updates would be provided, through Finance and Corporate Performance Committee, once registration was completed and at the end of Quarter one, and that the Executive Group was continually reviewing priorities to ensure resources were focused appropriately.

Court welcomed the NSS 2023 results.

The Director of People and Organisational Development, Ms E. Fraser, advised Court that she had been informed that the Abertay University branch of the University and Colleges Union (UCU) intended to opt out of the national industrial action which had been planned for 25-29 September. She asked Court to treat this as confidential until formal notification had been received.

Court thanked the Executive Group and thereafter formally noted the report.

## **Concluding Matters**

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### **14. Any Other Competent Business**

**Oral Report**

Dr D. Peden noted thanks to Court members who had completed the recent annual review of information (including Court member web profiles and register of interests) and asked that any further submissions were made in a timely manner.

The Chair advised Court that the tenure on Court of the staff member appointed from and by support staff of the University, Ms N. Ahmed, would come to an end on 31 October 2023. Court was apprised of the timeline for the nomination and election process for a new staff member appointed from and by the support staff of the University. Court noted its thanks to Ms N. Ahmed for her contribution to Court over the last three years.

*Professor L. Bacon, Ms E. Fraser, Professor A. Irons, Ms J. McKenzie, and Mr G. Weir left the meeting.*

**Next meeting: 29 November 2023**

**Chair: Mr David Brew**