
University Court

Minutes

18 September 2024 from 14:00 to 17:00 in the Boardroom, Kydd Building

*attended via MS Teams

Members

Mr David Brew (Chair)	Ms Heather Dunk (Vice-Chair)
Ms Dounia Allaiouti	Ms Lynne Hamilton*
Professor Liz Bacon	Professor Alastair Irons*
Mr Andrew Bailey	Mr Fraser Keir
Mr John Barnett	Ms Veronica Lynch
Ms Liz Blackburn	Mr Jim MacGregor
Dr Scott Cameron	Mr Antony Marks
Col. Iain Davidson	Mr Thomas Sloan
Professor Ruth Falconer	Mr Steven Traynor
Ms Kerith George-Briant	Mr Luke Webster

In Attendance

Dr Hannah Coutts (items 7 and 9)	Ms Jackie McKenzie
Ms Eilidh Fraser	Mr Cullen Warnock (Item 8)

Apologies

Ms Robyn Donoghue	Dr Hadi Mehrpouya
Ms Pam Herries	Professor Edith Sim

Secretariat

Ms Caroline Summers	Dr Dianne Peden
(Secretary)	Ms Vanessa Kind

Open Business

Preliminary Matters

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

The Chair welcomed Court to its first meeting of the academic year. The Chair, on behalf of Court, extended a special welcome to Ms D. Allaiouti, the President of the Students' Association, Mr L. Webster, the Vice-President, who were attending their first meeting as student members of Court, having observed the meeting of Court in June.

Court was advised that the Head of Planning and Insight, Dr H. Coutts would be in attendance for items 7 and 9, and the Chief Estates Officer, Mr C. Warnock for item 8.

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. Pre-Court Visit to Academic Facilities in the Faculty of Design, Informatics and Business and the Faculty of Social and Applied Sciences **Oral Report**

Court welcomed the opportunity to visit areas of the University, to hear about the work being undertaken and praised the inclusive approach to teaching. Court noted its thanks to those involved in the visit.

Court and Governance Matters

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2024 **CT/0924/001**

The Chair drew Court's attention to the fact that the approved minutes would be published on the University website and the meeting book (containing the agenda, approved minutes and enclosures (with any required redactions relating to confidential information)) would be published on the University intranet following the meeting.

Court received and considered the minutes, submitted as enclosure 1, and approved them as an accurate record.

5. Action List and Matters Arising from these Minutes**CT/0924/002**

The Chair confirmed that the action list, submitted as enclosure 2, contained two ongoing actions, neither of which were due at this meeting.

The Chair asked whether the funding discussions with the Students' Association had concluded as discussed under item 89.2 at the June meeting. The Vice-Principal (Strategy and Governance) and University Secretary, Ms C. Summers confirmed that this had been concluded for 2024-25 with discussions ongoing in relation to future funding. No other matters were raised.

6. Report from the Chair of Court**Oral Report**

The Chair noted that he had nothing to report at this time and that this would remain as standing item on the Court agenda.

Matters for Discussion

[Dr H. Coutts joined the meeting]

7. Strategic Plan Refresh**CT/0924/003**

Ms C. Summers introduced the Strategic Plan Refresh, submitted as enclosure 3, highlighting that it sets out the timelines and process for further consultation with staff, students and Court on the strategic plan refresh as well as the initial thinking on the framework for consultation, noting that this was still work in progress. Court was advised that it had originally been intended that much of the development and consultation would take place before summer 2024 but, due to the academic restructure and the consultation with staff during March and April, it had been agreed decided to postpone the main engagement with staff and students until the autumn as per the update to Court in June. Court noted that the Staff Engagement Survey would launch on 23 September 2024. Court was content with the proposed timeline.

Court discussed the strategic plan framework focussing on the broad assumptions set out in the paper. Court considered the assumptions, noting the impact of the external environment on future plans and the importance of considering a range of scenarios. It was agreed that an options appraisal would be provided to Court for discussion at the November Court Conference, and that this would consider the impact of different student funding models. Court also discussed the future shape of the University, given the planned growth in partnerships and transnational education and the critical importance of stabilising home student numbers, and it was agreed that Court would receive a briefing on the detailed student number modelling at the November meeting.

The Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Professor L. Bacon, thanked Court for the useful discussions and asked that if any member had any further thoughts/comments these should be sent to Ms C. Summers to be reflected in the briefing pack/programme for the Court Conference.

Court noted the update on the Strategic Plan Refresh.

Court was content that Dr H. Coutts remain in attendance for item 8.

Matters for Approval

[Professor R. Falconer and Mr C. Warnock joined the meeting]

8. Estates Update: Briefing on the Development of the Heat Network CT/0924/004

Mr C. Warnock introduced the Estates Update: Briefing on the Development of the Heat Network, submitted as enclosure 4, highlighting that the proposal, comprising the outline business case, the techno-economic model, the financial model and the formal application form for the Heat Network Fund, was expected to be ready for submission to the Scottish Government in the autumn. Court thanked Mr C. Warnock for the briefing paper, in particular welcoming the Frequently Asked Questions section.

Court discussed the reasons the Heat Network route was adopted. In discussion, Court explored the outline financial model and the relationship with the private sector partner, in relation to potentially higher costs for energy in the future. Court was advised that this would be set out in detail in the financial model submitted as part of the final application. Court noted that external consultants are in place for support with the preparation of the financial model.

Court discussed the timeline for approval, noting that it is understood the fund for Heat Network projects and grant funding must be spent by the end of Q2 2026. Court was advised that the proposal would be submitted for further consideration by the Executive Group prior to submission for final approval. Court noted that a procurement exercise would need to be undertaken to appoint the private sector partner.

Court discussed the options set out in relation to approval of the application, noting that due to the uncertainty of the timing of the final submission, it was proposed that Court agree to delegate authority to the Chair's Committee, with members of the Finance and Corporate Performance Committee in attendance, to approve the final application. Court received assurance that robust project governance arrangements would be put in place once the project was approved.

Court approved the delegation of authority to Chair's Committee (with members of the Finance and Corporate Performance Committee in attendance) to approve the final

submission to the Heat Network Fund, with a report to be submitted to Court in November.

9. Scottish Funding Council Outcomes Framework and Assurance Model

CT/0924/005

Ms C. Summers introduced the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Outcomes Framework and Assurance Model, submitted as enclosure 5, highlighting that the new framework includes additional reporting requirements relating to research and knowledge exchange for 2024-25 and a revised approach to reporting on quality matters. Court was advised that this replaces the previous Outcome Agreement and that SFC intended that it reduce the administrative burden on Universities and Colleges as it focuses on reporting already in place.

Court was advised that the guidance states that the returns should be signed off by the Principal on behalf of the governing body. Court was asked if it was content for the Principal to sign off all returns under the framework and assurance model where Court sign off was not explicitly required. Court was advised that the new Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund strategy would require Court approval with the proposal that subsequent annual reports be signed off by the Principal. It was highlighted that all returns would subsequently be reported to the next meeting of Court (and where appropriate the relevant committee) for information.

Court noted the new Scottish Funding Council Outcomes Framework and Assurance Model. Court was content for the Principal to sign off all returns where Court sign-off is not explicitly required.

[Dr H. Coutts left the meeting]

10. Appointment of New Independent Lay Members of Court

CT/0924/006

Ms C. Summers introduced the Appointment of New Independent Lay Members of Court, submitted as enclosure 6, highlighting that it provided a summary of the recruitment process for new independent lay members of Court to fill the two vacancies which will arise at the end of December 2024. Court was advised that the opportunity had been widely advertised during the summer although the response rate had been low. Court noted that interviews had taken place on 3 and 18 September 2024 with the appointment panel recommending one appointment at this time.

Court was advised that it had been agreed that the Governance and Nominations Committee would undertake further discussions at its meeting on 24 October 2024 in relation to the approach for appointing to the remaining vacancy with the likelihood of a more targeted approach being undertaken rather than an open recruitment round. Court

was asked to contact Ms C. Summers with the names of any potential members by 11 October 2024.

Court approved the appointment of Ms Fiona Drysdale as independent lay member of Court for a term of three years from 1 January 2025.

Senate Matters

11. Academic Matters Report

CT/0924/007

Professor A. Irons, introduced the report, submitted as enclosure 7, and provided an overview of the wide range of activities across the University. Court offered its congratulations to all those involved and acknowledged the external recognition of work being undertaken at Abertay.

Court noted the Academic Matters Report.

Matters for Information

12. Executive Group Report to Court

CT/0924/008

Court was advised that students were currently registering for the new academic year in advance of term starting on 16 September 2024, with registration remaining open until the end of week 2 (27 September) so that confirmed numbers for 2024-25 intake would not be available until after that point. Court discussed the ongoing portfolio review and the importance of ensuring the viability of programmes on offer.

Court noted the Executive Group Report to Court, submitted as enclosure 8.

13. Students' Association Report to Court

CT/0924/009

Ms D. Allaiouti introduced the Students' Association Report to Court, submitted as enclosure 9, highlighting that it provided an overview of Students' Association officers' first few weeks in their new roles. Court was advised that they had been finalising plans for activities for the year, including working closely with other groups in the University to come up with and deliver a programme of different events and festivities during October for Black History Month, collaborating with Sports, wellbeing events and helping societies create lasting collaborations. Court noted that over 1,500 students attended the Freshers fair and that students were engaging in representation roles such as class reps and that further information would be provided in the Students' Association report at the November meeting.

Court noted the Students' Association Report to Court.



14. Court Conference Outline Programme

CT/0924/010

Court was content with the outline programme for the Court Conference, taking place on Thursday 28 November 2024, submitted as enclosure 10.

Any Other Competent Business

15. Any Other Competent Business

Oral Report

Col. I. Davidson highlighted that he had attended a Highland Gold Network (holders of Gold Employer Recognition Scheme awards under the Armed Forces Covenant) event on Wednesday 18 September 2024, with the People and Organisational Development Partner, Ms Allyson Chernouski. The network meeting was organised by the Employer Engagement Admin Officer from the Highland Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association.

The Chair requested that Ms E. Fraser remain for items 16-19.

[Ms V. Kind and Ms J. McKenzie left the meeting.]

Chair: Mr David Brew

Date of Next Meeting: 28 November 2024