

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

Wednesday, 19 June 2024

THE FOLLOWING PAPERS HAVE BEEN WITHHELD ON THE GROUNDS OF CONFIDENTIALITY:

- 7 REIMAGINING OUR CAMPUSES REPORT (*Note: The Court received a detailed report from the Reimagining our Campuses Project Board. Court endorsed the direction of travel of the report and requested a detailed implementation plan be brought back to a future meeting early in academic year 2024/25.*)
- 9 FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN PLAN
- 10 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR 2024/25 (*This was a document to enable a discussion within Court to help inform the development by management of a more formal document on priorities for 2024/25 to be considered by Court in September. No formal recommendations for approval were included.*)
- 11.3 AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE REPORT

THE FOLLOWING PAPERS ARE ENCLOSED BUT SOME SECTIONS HAVE BEEN REDACTED ON THE GROUNDS OF CONFIDENTIALITY/COMMERCIAL SENSITIVITY:

- 3 MINUTES OF MEETING held on 24 APRIL 2024 (*Confidential in part: 189, 231, 238, 240*)
- 4 MATTERS ARISING (*Confidential in part: 1.3-1.4 until the proposals within the reshaping of Professional Services have been considered further and discussed with relevant areas*)
- 8.1 BUDGETS FOR 2024/25 AND 2025/26 (*Appendices to the report are confidential pending final allocation discussions with Schools and Directorates*)
- 8.2 STRATEGIC PLAN FORECAST TO SFC (*Appendix to report is confidential*)
- 11.2 GOVERNANCE AND NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT (*Confidential in part: Annex 1 is closed until proposed appointments are approved and confirmed. CVs are closed and confidential to Court*)
- 11.6 COMMERCIALISATION COMMITTEE REPORT (*Confidential pending final approval of and publication Intellectual Property Policy: 6.3, 6.9-6.10, 6.25; Closed: 5.8, 6.11, 6.18, 6.24, 6.29*)
- 11.7 FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE REPORT (*Confidential in part: 4.4, 5.2-5.3, 5.7, 5.13-5.15, 5.24-5.26*)



There will be a meeting of the **UNIVERSITY COURT** on **Tuesday, 18 June 2024** at 5pm to 6.30pm and at 9am to 4pm on **Wednesday, 19 June 2024** in the Linklater Rooms, King's College.

**Tuesday, 18 June 2024**

**CLOSED BUSINESS SESSION**

5pm to 6.30pm

*(Court Members Only)*

**Wednesday, 19 June 2024**

**BUSINESS**

**All items of business are for discussion, providing information or context relevant for current or future decisions. Those items that require a decision today are annotated accordingly.**

- 1 WELCOME AND RECTOR'S REPORT (enclosed)
- 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REMINDER OF COURT AND MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES (enclosed)
- 3 MINUTES: For Approval (enclosed)
- 4 MATTERS ARISING AND ACTION LOG (Part Confidential) (enclosed)
- 5 REPORT FROM THE SENIOR GOVERNOR (enclosed)
- 6 REPORT FROM THE PRINCIPAL AND UPDATE ON THE SECTOR/ UNIVERSITY DEVELOPMENTS (enclosed)
- 7 REIMAGINING OUR CAMPUSES REPORT (Strictly Confidential) (enclosed)
- 8 FINANCE
- 8.1 Budgets for 2024/25 and 2025/26 (Strictly Confidential) (enclosed)
- 8.2 Strategic Financial Planning Forecast to SFC (Strictly Confidential) (enclosed)
- 9 FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN PLAN (Strictly Confidential): For Approval (enclosed)
- 10 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR 2024/25

11 REPORTS FROM SENATE AND COURT SUB-COMMITTEES

- 11.1 Senate: For Approval (enclosed)
- 11.2 Governance and Nominations Committee (Part Confidential): For Approval (enclosed)
- 11.3 Audit and Risk Committee (Strictly Confidential): For Approval (enclosed)
- 11.4 Partnership Negotiating & Consultative Committee: For Approval (enclosed)
- 11.5 Remuneration Committee (Strictly Confidential): For Approval (enclosed)
- 11.6 Commercialisation Committee (Part Confidential) (enclosed)
- 11.7 Finance and Resourcing Committee (Part Confidential): For Approval (enclosed)

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 24 & 25 September 2024

13 **Closed Session:** Court Members and Secretary to Court Only

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN  
UNIVERSITY COURT  
**REPORT FROM THE RECTOR**

**1 PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

1.1 **This paper provides Court with a report from the Rector.**

**2 RECOMMENDED ACTION**

2.1 The paper is **for information** and no action is required.

**3 REPORT ON ACTIVITIES SINCE LAST MEETING**

- I continue to hold regular Rector's Surgeries to listen to students concerns and work with University staff, Student Support and Students' Association (ASUA) teams to help resolve issues that students have raised with me. Most frequent concerns have centred around results, academic appeals and fitness to practice. Students' Association Chief Executive Officer and Sabbatical Officers are working tirelessly to provide support. University staff are also working to ensure there is a consistent approach across schools when dealing with matters around academic misconduct as well as support for international students to ensure adequate training and support is provided.
- Extensive support provided to staff in languages via series of meetings. Support also provided to staff members who have been affected directly or indirectly, including our professional services team, particularly in HR and students across the University, including attending the Student Council Meeting to provide support and reassurance.
- Met with Christiane Hullmann, General Consul of Germany to provide reassurance particularly for German students studying at the University of Aberdeen. We continue to have very positive exchanges on how the University and her Consulate can continue to work collaboratively.
- The challenging circumstances faced by Ghanian students has remained a big concern for the whole university community and we continue to work with staff and the AUSA team to provide support. Conversations held by the University and Ghana High Commissioner have been positive and we are looking forward to a quick resolution of this matter, requesting for support to be provided to Ghanian Students by their Government.

- Met with Government Ministers and Policy makers at the Scottish Parliament as well as stakeholders across the region, particularly those with a long history with the University.
- Attended AUSA Activities ball where it was brilliant to see our students celebrate various sporting successes.
- Gave a Keynote address at the “Start Her” Conference focusing on the theme “Count Her In: Create, Cultivate, and Celebrate”, during which I shared Insights into my journey as a female entrepreneur, strategies for success, and overcoming obstacles. The Conference was organised by our Dean of Enterprise and Innovation and her team, with great attendance.
- It was our pleasure to welcome the Head of Immigration, Ambassador Bukar and his colleague from the Nigerian High Commission to the University of Aberdeen of recently. As The Lord Rector of the University of Aberdeen, together with the Principal and Vice Chancellor Professor George Boyne our Head of People, Debbie Dyker and our Head of Student Recruitment Ashar Ehsan, we found this meeting hugely beneficial as we continue to build a significant relationship with the Nigerian High Commission, working together to improve outcomes for our current and prospective students from Nigeria. I had a further meeting with The Acting High Commissioner, the Head of Immigration and the Immigration Attache in London last week, where conversations were positive.
- It was an absolute pleasure to join in celebrating the Special Honorary Graduation Ceremony of The Most Reverend and Right Honourable The Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby.
- Met with other University Rectors and now looking at building on from these positive engagements.
- Asthma and Allergy Foundation provided free E-Learning Asthma Awareness Training to all staff and students at the University. The asthma training course which is ISO 9001 certified and CPD accredited, and developed by a team of Respiratory Consultants, who also support the development of the UK asthma guideline. The Asthma Training Course, which other UK universities pay an average of £10,000 was donated to the University of Aberdeen, courtesy of your Lord Rector, who is the CEO of Asthma and Allergy Foundation. Asthma and Allergy Foundation’s Health Promotion Team have been receiving several messages and positive feedback including this *“As someone who suffers from Chronic Asthma, the training provided was exceptionally helpful. The training was user friendly and gave very helpful tips and information particularly for individuals who may be working alongside colleagues who suffer from Asthma. The training provides useful tools on what to do should an individual suffer from an*

*asthma attack, is reassuring in tone, and may make the difference when faced with a potentially life-threatening situation”.*

- I joined the Acting Consul General of the Republic of Turkiye and their Education Attaché in Edinburgh to celebrate the Turkish-Scottish Collaboration in Academia. The University of Aberdeen has enjoyed an excellent relationship with the citizens of Turkiye spanning decades, including our esteemed students studying various degrees at the University. It was wonderful to attend the event yesterday to show our support as a University and to celebrate our collaboration.
- I continue to have regular meetings with the Principal, Professor George Boyne, Julie Ashworth, the Senior Governor and with Tracey Slaven, the Chief Operating Officer, the wider University Management, Students' Association Sabbatical Officers and Chief Executive Graeme Kirkpatrick, Head of Student Support Nick Edwards and other members of the University community to continue to provide vital support to our staff and students.

#### **4 FURTHER INFORMATION**

4.1 Further information is available from the Rector, [rector@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:rector@abdn.ac.uk).

**Confidentiality Status:** Open



## UNIVERSITY COURT

### **DECLARATION OF INTEREST, BUSINESS FOR DISCUSSION AND REMINDER OF COURT AND MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **DECLARATION OF INTEREST:**

Any member or individual in attendance (including officers) who has a clear interest in a matter on the agenda must declare that interest at the meeting. Further information and guidance on this is available in the Conflicts of Interest and Loyalty Policy available in [Decision Time Resources Area](#) (Court/General Information for Members) or via advice from the University Secretary.

#### **BUSINESS FOR DISCUSSION:**

All items of business are for discussion, providing information or context relevant for current or future decisions. Those items that require a decision today are annotated accordingly.

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES OF COURT AND COURT MEMBERS**

Enclosed is a reminder for Court, for information, of:

- (a) its remit and primary responsibilities and the schedule of decisions reserved to it;
- (b) the role and duties of members, in particular, as trustees in charity law.

#### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Further information is available from Bruce Purdon, Clerk to the Court, email [b.purdon@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:b.purdon@abdn.ac.uk).

**Confidentiality Status:** Open

## UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

## UNIVERSITY COURT

**RESPONSIBILITIES OF COURT AND DUTIES OF MEMBERS AS CHARITY TRUSTEES****1. REMIT AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 1.1 The constitutional basis, authority and responsibilities of the University Court are derived largely from the statutes contained in the Universities (Scotland) Acts from 1858 to 1966 and in the Ordinances and Resolutions made thereunder. Latterly this has been supplemented by the requirements of the Higher Education Governance Scotland (Act). The University is also a registered Scottish Charity and as such the Court as the governing body is the board of trustees, its members are charity trustees and subject to Scottish charities law, with accountability to the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR). The powers and functions of the Court are drawn from these requirements of statute and are set out in its Statement of Primary Responsibilities <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/governance/court-information.php#panel2452>
- 1.2 The Court has delegated many of its functions to its sub-committees: Audit and Risk, Commercialisation, Finance and Resourcing, Governance and Nominations, and Remuneration. These are set out in the respective remits of each Committee and under the Schedule of Delegations [UoA-Scheme-of-Delegation-Approved-by-Court-01032023.docx \(live.com\)](#)). It should be noted, however, that Court as the governing body remains ultimately responsible for any decisions made by sub-committees on its behalf.

**2. ROLE OF MEMBERS, CODE OF CONDUCT AND DUTIES OF CHARITY TRUSTEES**

- 2.1 Members are reminded of their role as a governor (detailed below), the Court's Code of Conduct for Members (provided in your letter of appointment a condition of appointment) and, in particular, your duties as charity trustees under the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005. You should also be aware of the requirements of the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance <http://www.scottishuniversitygovernance.ac.uk/2023code/> and the Financial Memorandum with the Scottish Funding Council: [http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Guidance\\_Governance/Financial\\_Memorandum\\_wit\\_h\\_higher\\_education\\_institutions - 1 December 2014.pdf](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Guidance_Governance/Financial_Memorandum_wit_h_higher_education_institutions_-_1_December_2014.pdf)

*Duties in Charities Law*

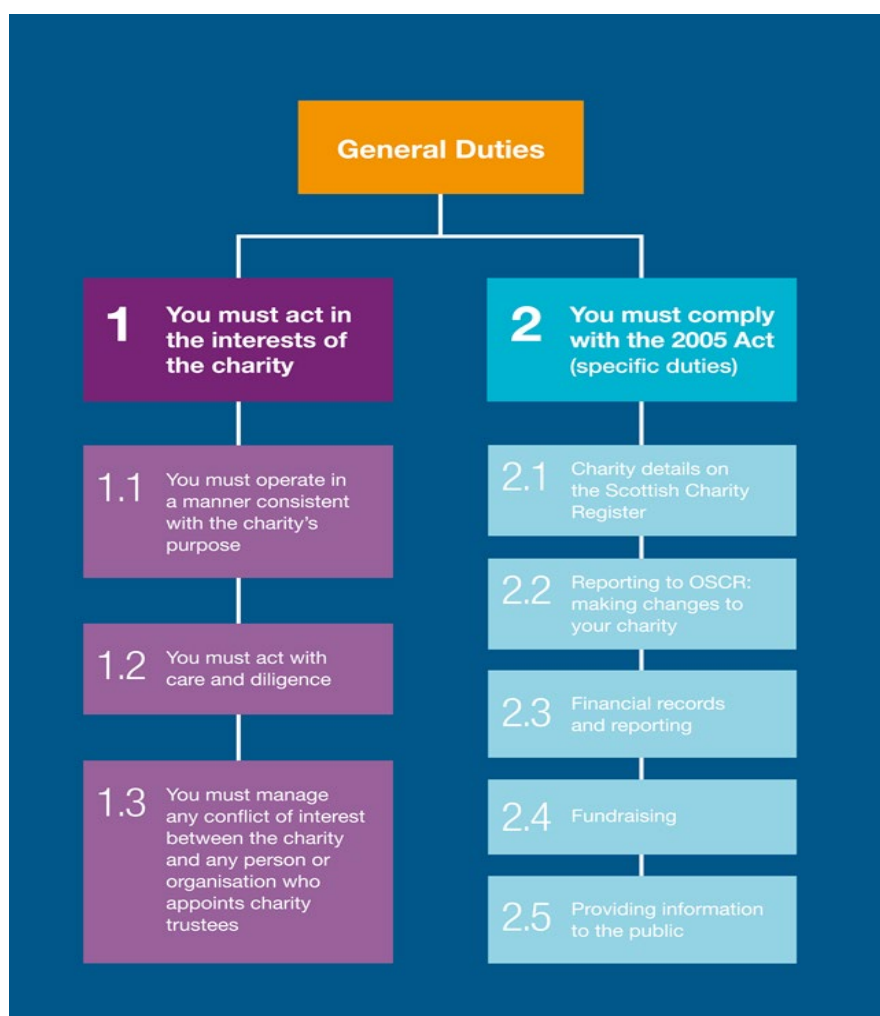
- 2.2 These are summarised below, but more detailed guidance on the duties of charity trustees OSCR is available here <https://www.oscr.org.uk/guidance-and-forms/guidance-and-good-practice-for-charity-trustees/> and in the Induction resources area in [Decision Time](#) All members are asked to regularly review their responsibilities as individual charity trustees in law.



2.3 All charity trustees have legal duties and responsibilities under the **2005 Act**. A duty is something that you must do, and all the duties must be met. These duties are separated out into **general duties**, that set out a broad framework that all charity trustees must work within, and **specific duties** detailed in the 2005 Act – OSCR note that you might delegate the practical details of the specific duties to your charity’s staff, volunteers or professional advisers, but that the charity trustees are ultimately responsible for making sure the specific duties are met. The general and specific duties apply equally to **all** charity trustees and to **all** charities. All of the charity’s trustees should work together to make sure that these duties are met. If you fail to comply with these duties then this is **misconduct** and OSCR have powers to take action against charity trustees, where appropriate. OSCR state that their response will be proportionate depending on the situation. Where a charity trustee has acted reasonably and honestly it is unlikely to be treated as misconduct.

2.4 As a charity trustee, the key duty is to look after the charity’s **assets** and for making sure that the charity fulfils its **charitable purpose(s) – the University’s purposes based on OSCR registration categorisations are:** the advancement of higher education, of health, of citizenship or community development, and the advancement of the arts, heritage, culture or science.

2.5 The general and specific duties under the 2005 Act are:



### **3. COURT'S AGREED ROLE DESCRIPTION FOR COURT MEMBERS**

3.1 In addition to the duties under law, the Court's agreed role description for governors, taking into account the requirements of the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance is:

Each governor is responsible, collectively with fellow governors, for the effective leadership of the University in all its aspects. That translates into more specific responsibilities of which the following are key:

- To play an appropriate part in furthering the values of higher education and the mission of the University of Aberdeen in particular;
- To ensure that the Court exercises efficient and effective use of the resources of the University, maintains its long-term financial viability, and safeguards its assets, and that proper mechanisms exist to ensure financial control and for the prevention of fraud;
- To exercise oversight in respect of the academic, corporate, financial, estate and human resource functions delegated to the authority of the Principal as chief executive;
- To ensure that Court conducts itself in accordance with accepted standards of behaviour in public life, embracing duty, selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability and stewardship, openness, honesty, leadership and respect. Members must at all times regulate their personal conduct as members of the Court in accordance with these standards;
- To establish constructive and supportive but challenging working relationships with the University employees with whom they come into contact, whilst recognising the proper separation between governance and executive management;
- To act fairly and impartially in the interests of the University as a whole using independent judgement and maintaining confidentiality as appropriate;

Ends

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 24 APRIL 2024**

**Present:** Julie Ashworth  
Martin Barker  
Eleanor Bentley  
Susan Bodie  
George Boyne  
Owen Cox  
Iain Grant  
Luke Halliday  
Vanessa Mabonso Nzolo  
Iain Mackay  
Gary McRae  
Helen Martin  
Lyndsay Menzies (via Teams for items 181-231 and 237-238)  
Caryn Miller  
Anne Minto  
Charlotte Pope-Williams (via Teams)  
Alison Rankin (via Teams from item 237)  
Joachim Schaper  
Diane Skåtun  
Otto Thoresen (via Teams to item 231)  
Robert Traynham  
Adaku Ufere  
Neil Vargesson  
Sai Shraddha S Viswanathan  
Ilia Xypolia

**In attendance:** Iain Torrance KCVO  
Seonag Mackinnon (via Teams)  
Louise Thomson (As Deputy for the University Secretary)

Senior Management Team members:

Karl Leydecker (for items 181-228 and 237-238)  
Alan Speight (for items 237-238)  
Mark White

Acting Clerk: Jan Whitfield

**Apologies:** Martina Chukwuma-Ezike (Rector)  
Tracey Slaven (University Secretary & Chief Operating Officer)

## WELCOME AND RECTOR'S REPORT

181 Court noted the Rector's apologies and it was confirmed that the Rector's update would be presented at the next scheduled meeting.

## DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REMINDER OF COURT AND MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

182 Court noted the standing reminder of the responsibilities of Court and members as charity trustees (CT20240424\_02).

183 Owen Cox declared an interest in items on the agenda as a Trustee of the University of Aberdeen Superannuation and Life Assurance Scheme.

184 Diane Skatun declared an interest in items on the agenda as a connected person to the Head of the University's Business School.

## MINUTES

185 The minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2024 were received (CT20240424\_03).

186 In discussion, it was agreed that the following amendments should be made:

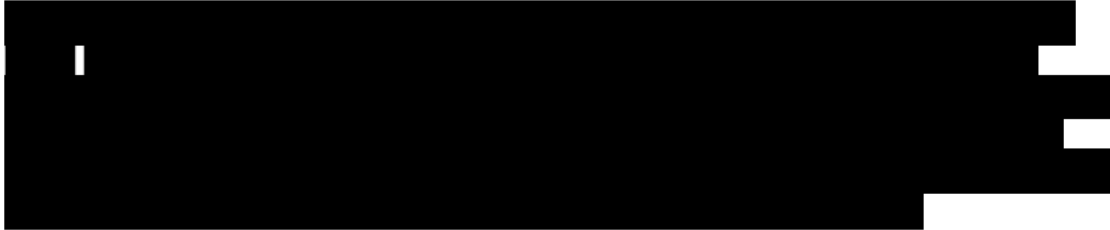
- Minute 153: to re-word admissions entry rates to admissions entry tariffs.
- Minute 157 point 4: It was queried whether Court had suggested that the Director of Research should be a member of the Implementation Group (Modern Languages). The Senior Vice-Principal confirmed that it had been agreed that a suitable representative for the University's central Research function would be invited to join the group.
- Minute 160: to amend the wording of this item to reflect that consideration had been given and confirmed as to the Principal's capacity to take on the role of Chair of the University and College Employees Association (UCEA), given their other key priorities.
- Minute 163: to include additional wording to reflect that concern had been expressed by a Court Member that the issue (to discuss the re-appointment of the Senior Governor) had not been brought forward to Court's 28 February 2024 meeting.

187 The following potential amendments were considered, but not agreed:

- Minute 147 point 7: A Court Member queried whether the minute should be extended to express concern regarding any potential impact on students of the inability to protect all widening access provisions. In discussion, the Court confirmed its satisfaction that the minute as presented was a fair reflection of the discussion.
- Minute 157 point 3: A Court Member requested an addition to the minute to the effect that Court had not received information regarding the debate in the Scottish Parliament on the future of Modern Languages at the University. In discussion, the Court confirmed its satisfaction that the debate in parliament was appropriately noted within the minutes.

188 General discussion took place regarding the purpose of the minutes, and it was highlighted that good practice indicated they should provide a summary of the business conducted at each meeting, rather than a verbatim transcript of the proceedings. It was noted that it was not usual practice to attribute comments in order to protect individual confidentiality and in support of Court's collective responsibility.

189



190 In respect of minute 179, it was requested that the date of circulation of the Report from the Remuneration Committee should be confirmed. The Head of Governance & Executive Support reported that this had been following the Committee's meeting on 13 February 2024.  
[Clerk's note: the date of circulation is confirmed as 29 February 2024.]

191 Subject to the changes above being made, the Court approved the minutes.

#### ACTION LOG AND MATTERS ARISING

192 Court received and noted a report on the Court Action Log (CT20240424\_04), with updates noted as follows:

- The policy governing the procedure for Collections Deaccessioning and Repatriation was still undergoing consideration and updating and would be provided to Court for approval in due course.
- A further report on the REF Action Plan was scheduled to come forward to Court following the completion of the Annual Report & Accounts process 2022-23. The Senior Governor had held discussions with the Vice-Principal Research regarding the timeline for presentation.
- It was drawn to Court's attention that the Audit and Risk Committee had requested a timeline and milestones for the implementation of phases and actions under the Financial Recovery Plan for presentation to both the Committee and Court during the June 2024 meetings cycle.
- The process for the review to identify any lessons learned from the recent consultation regarding the future provision of Modern Languages education at the University was pending input and comment from both the Joint Committee for the Avoidance of Redundancy (JCCRA) and Senate. The process had been co-designed by the Director of People and representatives from the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture (LLMVC). In response to a query from a Court Member, it was confirmed that the Director of People was leading the process for the establishment of the review, but that the review itself would be led by an individual with no direct involvement in the earlier consultation process. The process would be conducted under the oversight of JCCRA and therefore subject to the agreed procedures of this arrangement.

The Court indicated its satisfaction that an independent individual should

lead the process, but urged that input should be sought from a wide range of stakeholders with experience of the consultation process that was undertaken. It was requested that the recommendations resulting from the review should return to Court for noting once available.

**Action:** Head of Governance & Executive Support, Clerk.

- 193 Court requested that for future reporting, the action log should include indicative dates for the conclusion of outstanding elements, plus details of any follow-up actions required. **Action:** Head of Governance & Executive Support, Clerk.
- 194 The paper also provided a formal record of the appointment of a number of external members of Court Sub-Committees, that, following a recruitment exercise and interview process had been approved by the Governance and Nominations Committee.
- 195 Detailed discussion took place regarding the role of externally co-opted members of Court's Sub-Committees and the rationale for the recent appointments, particularly in respect of the joint appointment of one candidate to two Sub-Committees. It was confirmed that the appointment of external members was a long-standing and successful practice adopted by the Audit and Risk Committee, in order to ensure it had an appropriate balance of skills to fulfil its remit. It was felt that co-opted members brought a valuable external perspective which could be very helpful to discussions. The practice had now been extended to other Court Sub-Committees to provide additional breadth and depth of expertise, supporting Committees to fulfil their responsibilities to the necessary level and to offer additional scope for existing Court Members to reduce the burden of multiple memberships. It was noted that co-opted members had full voting rights in respect of the decision-making of their respective Committees, given their skills and experience to undertake the role, but not in respect of wider Court business.
- 196 Members of the shortlisting and interview panel for the appointments reported that all new appointees had been selected on the basis of their specific skills and expertise with direct relevance to the work of each Committee. The individual offered a dual appointment had highly relevant skills in respect of both Committees and had been the most suitable candidate for appointment in each case. The recruitment exercise had been informed by Court's most recent skills audit and effectiveness review processes, and it was noted that a very strong applicant field had been achieved, however the gender balance of candidates had been disappointing. A range of new measures and recruitment channels had been incorporated into the current recruitment exercise for independent members of Court to encourage additional diversity of applications wherever possible. Court also noted the intention to progress additional Court Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training in the new academic year 2024-25, following the appointment of new independent members.
- 197 It was agreed that the Terms of Reference for each Sub-Committee should be further reviewed to ensure a very clear understanding of the role of external members in the context of each Committee remit.  
**Action:** Head of Governance & Executive Support

- 198 Reporting was also provided by the Head of Governance & Executive Support to confirm that the Terms of Reference of the Remuneration Committee had been recently updated to provide further assurance regarding meeting quoracy and the attendance of members with appropriate stakeholder insight to inform decision-making. Additionally, Court was reminded that the recently appointed Senior Independent Member had the right to attend meetings of the Governance and Nominations Committee.
- 199 It was noted that the CVs of all new external appointees had been provided to the Governance and Nominations Committee via circulation, in support of their ratification of the recruitment decisions of the selection panel, and agreed that these should also be circulated to Court for information.  
[Clerk's note: The CVs were subsequently provided to Court Members within Decision Time on 1 May 2024.]

#### REPORT FROM THE SENIOR GOVERNOR

- 200 The Senior Governor provided a report to Court on meetings and activities they had undertaken since the last meeting (CT20240424\_05), with particular reference to discussions held with Government Ministers regarding the funding landscape for Higher Education in Scotland. The Court indicated their support for the work of the Senior Governor in respect of the continued lobbying of key decision-makers at national level. The Senior Governor informed Court that they had written a note of congratulations to the University's Excellence Award winners.

#### ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

- 201 The Chairs of the Audit and Risk and Finance and Resourcing Committees reported on the consideration and endorsement of all elements of the Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23 by both Committees at their additional meetings on 22 April 2024. It was confirmed that all elements were now recommended to Court for approval for signature and submission to the Scottish Funding Council by the revised deadline of 30 April 2024.

#### REPORT FROM THE COURT SUB-GROUP FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE REFINANCING AND COVENANT AGREEMENT WITH LENDERS

- 202 Court received and formally noted a report (CT20240424\_06.1) which provided an overview of the business conducted by the Sub-Group of Court, established under delegated authority for the consideration and approval of the University's refinancing agreement with its lenders and associated borrowing covenants.
- 203 The Chair of the Sub-Group reported on the Group's meetings on 18 and 28 March 2024 to consider and advise on the draft Revolving Credit Facility and Note Purchase Agreements. The main focus of members' consideration had been the four financial covenants included within the facility agreement, and assurance had been confirmed regarding the stress-testing of covenant compliance undertaken by the University. A number of covenant amendments had been requested and incorporated into the final draft agreement by the

University's lenders, which had been subsequently reviewed and approved by the Group via circulation on 17 April 2024.

- 204 Court noted that all legal documentation relating to the agreement had been signed and executed by the University and its lenders on 18 April 2024. Formal thanks were offered to the members of the Group for their work to support the successful conclusion of the borrowing renegotiations.
- 205 It was highlighted that the Sub-Group had asked that future reporting on the Financial Recovery Plan should include a timeline and milestones for delivery, alongside further details of the additional levers that could be employed should targeted cost savings not be met.
- Action:** SMT, Chief Financial Officer.

#### GOING CONCERN ANALYSIS

- 206 Court received and endorsed a paper (CT20240424\_06.2) which outlined the University's projected cash flows and short-term financing risks, and presented management's conclusion that the University could continue to operate on a going concern basis for the period to 31 July 2025.
- 207 Court noted that the Audit and Risk and Finance and Resourcing Committees had endorsed the finding and were recommending that the University could be considered as a going concern for at least 12 months after the date of the 2022-23 accounts to 31 July 2025, and that the accounts could be prepared on that basis. This finding was also endorsed by the External Auditor.
- 208 Members' attention was drawn to the material uncertainty disclosure within the Annual Report and Accounts, which had been included on the basis that if the additional financial risks identified by the University came to fruition, there remained a significant risk that covenant thresholds may be breached. The material uncertainty disclosures were therefore provided to ensure transparency, in line with the requirements of Court as Trustees of the institution with legal responsibility for going concern. It was clarified that the external auditor's opinion was unqualified or 'clean' with regard to the accounts and the University's demonstrated going concern status, but that the inclusion of the material uncertainty disclosure represented a modified opinion to highlight the degree of remaining risk in respect of income.
- 209 Court noted with concern the financial uncertainty in the sector as a whole, with significant further declines in International Postgraduate recruitment continuing to be seen. Members stressed the importance of achieving the targeted outcomes set out within the Financial Recovery Plan for the forward sustainability of the University.

#### COVENANT AND DEBT REPORT FOR YEAR END 31 JULY 2023

- 210 Court received and formally noted a paper (CT20240424\_06.3) which outlined the University's long-term financing and assessed compliance with both internal and external covenants. In particular, the paper confirmed that:



- The University had met both the internal and external debt service and gearing financial covenant tests for the financial year to 31 July 2023;
- Due to the financial covenants being met, no further action was required, however the 2023-24 and forward position was covered under the Financial Recovery Plan paper provided later under the current agenda (items 229-232 refer).

#### ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR YEAR END 31 JULY 2023

- 211 Court received the University's Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23 (CT20240424\_06.4), noting that following the confirmation of refinancing approval by the Court Sub-Group on 17 April 2024 and the subsequent signature and seal of the refinancing agreement, the documentation was not subject to any material changes from the External Auditor.
- 212 Court noted that the University Group reported a surplus of £12.1m for the year ended 31 July 2023 due to the £13m decrease to the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) and £3.7m to other pension liabilities. The underlying surplus from normal operating activities was £0.4m.
- 213 Members were reminded that it was Court's legal responsibility to ensure that the Annual Report and Accounts presented a fair, balanced and understandable view, and provided the necessary information for stakeholders to assess the University's strategy, performance and sustainability. It was the view of the Audit and Risk and Finance and Resourcing Committees that these elements were covered satisfactorily within the document presented for approval. In addition, all queries and amendments requested by the Committees had been appropriately addressed by the Finance team, and the Audit and Risk Committee had confirmed its satisfaction to recommend the Statement of Corporate Governance and Internal Control for Court's approval. In response to a Member's request for confirmation that all identified changes had been made, it was agreed that assurance would be provided on this point. **Action:** Chief Financial Officer
- 214 A Court member queried whether a specific Subsequent Events Note should be included within the financial statements in respect of the University's refinancing arrangements. It was agreed that the Chief Financial Officer would confirm any further technical requirement with the external auditor. [Clerk's note: It was subsequently confirmed to Court via circulation that as a specific reference to the refinancing had been included within the Creditors' Note, a separate entry was not required.]
- 215 Clarification was also requested to ensure that context was provided within the report to explain the University's connection to the Strathclyde Pension Scheme. [Clerk's note: The following additional wording was included prior to finalisation and submission of the Annual Report on 25 April 2024: "The University became an employing organisation within the Strathclyde Pension Fund (SPF) following a merger with the Northern College of Education in 2001. The scheme was closed to new entrants at the point of merger and as of 31 July 2023, there were 19 active members employed by the University."]

- 216 Court urged proactive communications and media engagement around the Annual Report and Accounts to ensure that the material uncertainty disclosure could be appropriately understood and interpreted. It was confirmed that the Senior Management Team had a full communications plan in place for implementation following the submission and publication of the documents, including an email release to the University staff and student community as part of the new programme of weekly updates on the work of the Financial Recovery Group.
- 217 Subject to the clarification requested above, Court was satisfied to approve the Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23 for signature and submission.

#### EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT AND REPRESENTATION LETTER

- 218 Court received and endorsed the audit results report 2022-23 from its External Auditor, together with the University's Management Letter of Representations (CT20240424\_06.5a/b).
- 219 In accordance with the discussions earlier in the meeting regarding going concern (minute 208 refers), Court noted that the external audit process was complete, with an unqualified opinion having been reported. However, whilst the External Auditor had concluded that it remained appropriate that the financial statements continued to be prepared on a going concern basis, and that the University had put in place appropriate actions to address the immediate financial challenges, they agreed with the University's and Court's conclusion that the outcomes were not yet assured to avoid a future breach in covenant. They had therefore returned a modified opinion to confirm the further material uncertainty in respect of the University's ability to continue to operate the current planned services to the period ending 31 July 2025 and had endorsed the going concern analysis and the inclusion of appropriate disclosures within the Annual Report and Accounts.
- 220 The agreement of final external audit fees for the additional work undertaken to conclude the 2022-23 external audit process was nearing completion, with final fee levels to be confirmed within the Annual Report and Accounts prior to submission.
- 221 It was confirmed that University management were aware of no further issues related to the representation letter which the Court should be notified of. The representation clauses contained within the letter were in line with usual practice and included appropriate confirmation of the external auditor's assessment of any risks around the presence of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) within the University estate. The Audit and Risk Committee were therefore satisfied to recommend that the Senior Governor could sign the letter on behalf of Court.

#### AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

- 222 Court received and approved the annual report from the Audit and Risk Committee (CT20240424\_06.6), which provided Court with the assurances recommended under the HE Audit Committees Code of Practice regarding all elements of the University's Annual Report and Accounts and the Accounts

Direction from the Scottish Funding Council in respect of the University's Corporate Governance Statement.

- 223 Court also noted the Committee's report on matters that it had scrutinised and approved during the reporting period under the authority delegated to it, and the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee confirmed their satisfaction that the report met the requirements of the Scottish Funding Council. It was noted that, during the Committee's consideration of the draft report, one member had queried whether the report sufficiently reflected the challenge and questioning offered by the Committee at each meeting in respect of its agenda items, but that the Committee had agreed that the minutes of meetings provided appropriate further detail and assurance on this point.
- 224 Court members queried the position with regard to the timely closure of internal audit actions. It was confirmed that regular detailed reporting was provided to the Committee in respect of the progress and pace of the completion of outstanding audit recommendations. Since the introduction of this reporting from 2022-23, excellent progress had been made in closing down a significant number of outstanding elements. It was agreed that a copy of the next tracking report would be provided to Court for information alongside the Audit and Risk Committee Report. **Action:** Clerk

#### INTERNAL AUDITOR'S ANNUAL REPORT

- 225 Court received and formally noted the Internal Auditor's Report 2022-23 (CT20240424\_06.7), noting that it was unchanged since its initial presentation in November 2023.

#### GENERAL POINTS – ALL ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS ELEMENTS

- 226 Following their scrutiny and approval of all individual elements of the Annual Report and Accounts, Court Members offered general comment and queries as follows:
- The Court noted the significant number of items requested for further action and follow-up by the Audit and Risk and Finance and Resourcing Committees, and the Court Sub-Group during their consideration of the Financial Recovery Plan, Going Concern analysis and refinancing arrangements. Clarification was sought that appropriate tracking was in place to ensure and report on their completion. It was confirmed that all groups had live action logs which were closely monitored and updated. It was agreed that a summary of the key action points relating to these processes would be provided to Court via circulation for assurance.  
**Action:** Head of Governance & Executive Support, Clerk
  - Members sought confirmation that the Scottish Funding Council had been satisfied to extend the deadline for the submission of the University's Annual Report and Accounts. It was confirmed that the SFC had granted a submission extension to 30 April 2024, which also aligned with the deadline for submission of the accounts to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).

- A query was raised regarding the presentation of the University Development Trust SCIO. It was confirmed that the external auditor, as part of their enhanced review during their first year of appointment, had reviewed the Trust's relationship with the University following the Trust's award of SCIO status and associated changes to its legal and operating structures. The external auditor had been satisfied that the Development Trust remained out with the control of the University and should therefore not be consolidated within the Group accounts.
- Court offered formal thanks to the Chief Financial officer and Finance team for their work to in support of the Annual Report and Accounts, external audit process and Financial Recovery Plan.

#### REPORT FROM THE PRINCIPAL AND UPDATE ON THE SECTOR/OPERATING CONTEXT

227 Court received a written report (CT20240424\_07) on developments within the University and in the wider higher education sector, which the Principal supplemented with an oral report.

228 In discussion, the following key points were noted:

- Following the previous postponement of the REF exercise from 2028 to 2029, and due to delays with the pilot exercise for the new REF component of People, Culture and Environment, it was now anticipated that the timing for the next exercise may be put back further to 2030. Although this would enable more time for the University to rebuild its research capacity, it would also mean a continued period of reduced research funding, and the Vice-Principal Research was in discussion with the SFC to seek reparation for this extended period of financial adjustment. It was noted that the University was actively pursuing individual and collaborative bids for Horizon Europe funding and that the Finance and Resourcing Committee had received an update on the Horizon Europe programme and additional research funding opportunities at its last meeting on 9 April 2024. The Committee had been encouraged by the level of activity being undertaken by the University to attract new funding streams, but had noted that there remained work to be done to recover funding income to pre-Brexit levels.

It was agreed that the presentation provided to the Committee would be shared with Court for information. [Clerk's note: The presentation was uploaded to Court's Decision Time resources area on 25 April 2024.]

- The financial situation within the Higher Education sector continued to be of significant concern due to declining international student numbers and further cuts in SFC funding income. The importance to the University of the identification of new and diverse revenue streams from Transnational Education (TNE) and philanthropy was highlighted.
- Court sought clarification of the current position of the UK Government's planned review of post-study work visas, expressing concern at any likely further detrimental impact on student recruitment and the experience of

international students. It was confirmed that the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) continued to review the current arrangements and it was anticipated that future immigration policy developments would be dependent on the outcomes of the forthcoming UK general election. [Clerk's note: It was subsequently confirmed by UK Government on 23 May 2024 that no immediate changes would be made to the student visa route.]

- Following the presentation to Court in February 2024 on recent activity by the Development and Alumni Relations Team, it was confirmed that a legacy gift of \$4m US had been granted to the University by the Bernard and Ruth Smith Legacy Fund. In addition, an anonymous donor had confirmed their commitment to the renewal of a previous philanthropic arrangement which had donated £1m of funding to the University. Relationship management continued in support of this fast-growing area of key income generation. In response to a Court member's query, it was agreed that an update on previously reported staffing challenges within the Development and Alumni Relations Team would be provided out with the meeting. **Action:** Principal
- Court noted with concern the findings of the London Economics and Nuffield Foundation report on HE fees and funding across the UK, with regard to the disparity between graduate income levels for University alumni identifying as male and female (item 10.1 of the paper refers).
- Work continued towards the delivery of the Financial Recovery Plan, and based on the savings achieved to date, the Senior Management Team was confident that the overall savings target of £19.7m could be met under the phased approach outlined within the Plan. It was reported that the approval of final applications under the Voluntary Severance/Enhanced Retirement (VS/ER) Scheme would take place in late May, which would enable confirmation of the total staffing cost savings achieved to date. As part of the ongoing restructuring of Professional Services required to achieve the University's academic and financial objectives, it was anticipated that some individuals may be placed at risk of compulsory redundancy, but this could not be confirmed until the VS/ER outcomes were known and fed into modelling.

An update on progress would be provided to Court at its June 2024 meeting, and any subsequent actions required would be considered in the Autumn 2024 once the student recruitment numbers for 2025-26 were confirmed.

- One member of Court queried why the notice of possible compulsory redundancy issued to LLMVC staff in late 2023 had been lifted in March 2024 if there remained a possibility that compulsory redundancies may yet be required. The Principal reported that the decision had been taken following careful consideration of initial evidence regarding the uptake of the VS/ER scheme and of the credible income generation plan that had been presented to the Senior Management Team by the School. The initiation of formal change processes to support the reshaping of Professional Services may result in individuals being at risk of compulsory

redundancy, as a result of restructuring within teams to address the impact of any gaps left following the VS/ER scheme and reshaping in support of key strategic objectives. Every effort would be made, in line with University Policy, to provide alternatives or access to a voluntary severance package.

## FINANCIAL RECOVERY PLAN

- 229 Court received a paper (CT20240424\_08) to provide an update on the current position with regard to the Financial Recovery Plan, which had last been considered by Court in February 2024.
- 230 The report also outlined updates to the assumptions underpinning the Plan, following further sector intelligence, horizon scanning and the output from the first round of the 2024-25 budgetary process with Schools and Directorates, including an assessment of forward financial risks and the range of options and additional actions for their mitigation.
- 231 During discussion and in response to members' queries, the following key points were noted:
- The total savings target for 2024-25 was £19.7m, which would be met through a reduction in operating costs of £7.7m and a reduction in staff costs of £12m. Staff cost savings would be achieved primarily via the VS/ER Scheme, the continuation of the recruitment freeze and the professional services restructuring exercise, with a combined total of £9.8m in savings having been achieved to date and further applications for VS/ER still to be confirmed. Operational savings of £5.2m had been seen to date, but had been challenging to achieve. It was therefore the belief of the Senior Management Team that the full cost savings target could be met via the additional actions and levers identified to close the remaining gap. Members sought assurance that the assumptions were subject to rigorous critical analysis, and it was reported that the numbers had been subject to significant challenge by the Senior Management Team. Revised figures had been included within the Plan on the basis of challenge and testing by the Audit and Risk and Finance and Resourcing Committees. Estimates had also been produced for the SFC and external auditor for their review and endorsement. However, it remained a time of low confidence for the sector and therefore a full range of contingencies would still be required to be built into forward budgets.
  - The Financial Recovery Plan outlined a deficit of £12m in 2023-24 against a deficit of £3.9m originally projected. Despite the increase, significant in-year cost savings had been made to offset an £18m reduction in tuition fee income, to ensure that the Court-approved £12m deficit could be achieved. For future reporting, Court asked that, alongside the delivery timeline already requested, original and re-forecast points and levels should be clearly identified to demonstrate movement over time. This should include an indication of any areas of the Plan that would need to be reprioritised in line with the current cost saving position. **Action:** Chief Financial Officer

- A further £2m in financial pressure was anticipated for 2024-25 as International PGT recruitment was now forecast to drop by 25% year on year rather than the 15% originally projected in the assumptions. Court sought assurance that the revised forecast was not expected to drop further, and it was reported that the planning process had factored in the detailed reconciliation of School and Student Recruitment Team projections, against the current picture of applications, offers and acceptances to achieve the best modelling possible with the evidence available. It was therefore felt to be a realistic assessment of the likely 'floor' for tuition fee income.
- The University's indicative funding allocation for 2024-25 had been received from the Scottish Funding Council week commencing 15 April 2024, with the final funding letter yet to be received. This confirmed a £1.6m reduction in the main Teaching Grant from 2023-24 to 2024-25, a cut of £620k via the complete removal of the Upskilling Fund for the provision of short courses, and a £700k reduction in funding from the Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund, representing a further reduction in income of approximately £1m against the projections factored into the Financial Recovery Plan.
- Court Members raised queries regarding the degree to which ongoing cost saving and restructuring activity posed potential risk in respect of fairness and equity across Schools, and the high numbers of Professional Services staff leaving under the VS/ER scheme. It was reported that the budget planning process had aimed to ensure equity across Schools for the preservation of their fundamental activities, taking into account what each School was able to achieve in the context of their specific markets and the support required by each School to achieve their academic objectives. All applications for VS/ER were being individually assessed prior to acceptance to ensure that a balanced risk management approach could be taken to preserve key projects and areas of activity, and in support of investment in areas essential to income generation and diversification. Court requested that future reporting should include an indication of any risks identified around the removal, postponement or rescoping of key projects, particularly those relating to student support services and IT/digital. **Action:** Senior Management Team
- Court urged the careful consideration of VS/ER applications to ensure that key staff could not be lost in areas of operation essential to the University's financial recovery, and that staff reductions could be balanced as far as possible across professional services and academic areas. Reductions in Student Recruitment staff numbers were discussed. It was confirmed that while some structural changes were facilitated through VS/ER, reductions had mainly been due to natural staff turnover and that the introduction of third party support for key admissions activity, which was now being conducted at greater pace and quality in support of essential recruitment income was enabling reshaping of the team. It was confirmed as a stated priority to further invest in the team once sufficient savings headroom had been achieved to commence recruitment.

- Confirmation was sought as to whether the delays in confirmations of UASLAS pension projections required by staff applying for VS/ER had now been resolved. It was also queried whether, in order to attract additional applications, the scheme could be extended to accept applications from staff with 2 years of continuous service rather than 5, as had been seen to be the approach adopted by other institutions recently. It was reported that all UASLAS quotes had now been issued in response to expressions of interest for the VS/ER scheme, and the current requirements of the scheme could be reviewed alongside any decision to extend the deadline if required later in May. [Clerk's note: Subsequent to the Court meeting on 24 April 2024, the Chair of UASLAS confirmed that 18 quotes were outstanding and requested an extension to the application deadline for those individuals. HR is supporting the individuals and appropriate extensions are being agreed on an individual basis.]
- Court noted there was a dedicated Risk Register for the Financial Recovery Plan, and that it included 13 red-rated risks. It was confirmed that the Audit and Risk Committee would scrutinise a redeveloped draft of the Register at its next meeting on 28 May 2024, for onward presentation to Court at its June meeting alongside the institutional Risk Register which was also scheduled for return at this point. The Senior Governor reported that risk awareness and management had been identified as an ongoing development priority for Court members, and it was planned to hold a further Court Risk Workshop later in 2024-25.
- It was noted that the forward budget to be presented to Court for approval in June 2024 would contain forecasting for only two outer years to 2025-26, and not three years as previously provided. This was in line with the SFC requirement to provide two years of forecasting within its Strategic Planning Forecast. The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee confirmed that two years was an appropriate timeframe for forecasting given the current volatility and uncertainty within the sector which made accurately predicting beyond this point extremely difficult.

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232 Following extended discussion on the above points, Court:

- Noted the actual and projected progress against the 2024/25 savings target of £19.7m and managements' belief the full target would be met.
- Approved the changes to the underpinning assumptions, the updated financial risks and the mitigating actions/phased approach provided within



the paper to ensure the savings target, covenants and targeted deficit could be met.

## REPORTS FROM THE SENATE AND COURT SUB-COMMITTEES

### AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

[Clerk's note: As the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee would require to leave the meeting prior to its close, it was agreed to bring forward this item.]

- 233 Court received a report on the main items of business considered by the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting on 25 March 2024 (CT20240424\_10.1), to provide an overview of the assurances obtained.
- 234 It was noted that the Committee had considered and approved the University's Whistleblowing and Fraud Annual Report, with nothing of concern to bring to Court's attention. In response to members' questions, it was confirmed that case numbers for the current reporting period were in line with those of previous years.
- 235 Following a presentation on current Health and Safety activity across the institution, the Committee had requested additional high-level assurance reporting to ensure compliance with all legislative requirements in this key area. Further reporting would proceed to Court in due course. In response to queries it was reported that the University's membership of the Safe Space Scheme had been renewed for a further year.
- 236 Members queried the new requirement for quarterly compliance certificates in respect of the University's borrowing covenants. It was confirmed that, under the new revolving credit facility agreement the University had a duty to provide quarterly confirmation of its compliance with the minimum cash covenant. This would be provided directly to the lenders by the Finance team and was out with the process for the reporting of annual covenant compliance to Court alongside the Annual Report and Accounts.

### REPORT ON TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

- 237 Court received and noted a paper (CT20240424\_09) which provided an update on current Transnational Education (TNE) and international partnerships, proposed TNE and international partnership activity in progress and further potential activity in this area as the University sought to diversify its portfolio with a view to revenue growth.
- 238 In discussion, the following key points were noted:
- The University's existing partnership with South China Normal University (SCNU) was approaching a steady state of operation, and possibilities were now being explored to extend Postgraduate provision. Court asked regarding the level of possible risk now associated with the Chinese market, given the UK Government's emerging view of the country as one which may present a risk to the safety or interests of the UK. Caution was

urged to ensure that the University would not carry financial liability if new partnership arrangements could not progress, noting that previous difficulties had been experienced by the University with regard to its extraction from a previous partnership arrangement in South Korea. In response to Members' requests for assurance, it was confirmed that lessons learned from previous activity had been reviewed to inform current proposals. It was noted that the scale of the Chinese market remained a significant opportunity. However, the University was diversifying risk by not associating primarily with one country and had exit strategies and detailed due diligence processes in place to ensure that the avoidance of downside costs for extraction were built into its approach.

- Contractual renewal was ongoing with regard to the University's partnership with AFG College, Qatar and planning approvals had been received by AFG for its proposed new campus. A feasibility study for the Phase 2 expansion of the partnership was nearing completion, alongside the development of a marketing and recruitment plan for July 2026 onwards. The final business case would be presented to Court for consideration at its June 2024 meeting.

The Partnership's Qatar Strategic Planning Board had recently authorised the commencement of a transition phase for the Qatar partnership, prior to the establishment of the new Qatar campus, to seek to grow market share in the region and to capitalise on developing student recruitment opportunities via a new student visa route announced by Qatari Ministry of the Interior.

- A full review of the University's partnership agreement with Study Group had been completed in 2023 and a revised contract had subsequently been agreed and signed by both parties. The new arrangements sought to strengthen performance targets and provide further articulation routes for students in respect of the existing International Study Centre (ISC), and advanced negotiations were now being undertaken to explore further engagement with Study Group under new student recruitment models, including further ISC hubs and active campuses in a number of regions. Business plans would return to Court for consideration and approval once available.

It was highlighted that the numbers of students successfully completing their studies with the ISC were very high, with over 93% of students completing their foundation programme with ISC going on to progress to their University of Aberdeen degree studies.

- The projected net income for TNE for 2023-24 was [REDACTED], with growth of [REDACTED] projected in 2024-25 reflecting the maturity of the SCNU partnership arrangement, and a further [REDACTED] in 2025-26 across all existing partnerships. Intensive work was ongoing to identify new TNE partnership development opportunities, with [REDACTED] new articulations in development and

proceeding to agreement in support of September 2024 and 2025 entry points. It was anticipated that an additional [REDACTED] could be achieved by the second year of operation, with revenue attributed across both the 2024-25 and 2025-26 financial years. The University was in discussion with a number of brokers for managed campuses for UK universities in key expanding markets such as [REDACTED], with the intention of developing a replicable model to ensure economies of scale and speed of establishment. [Redacted]

- Members sought assurance of the University's capacity to agree and operate new partnerships. It was reported that timeliness was key and the University needed to be able to progress multiple partnership opportunities simultaneously and at speed in order to meet its revenue growth targets. However, significant resource constraints existed in terms of both professional services and School capacity to support the considerable work that was required to underpin and embed routine arrangements. As a result, the University was currently ranking opportunities for progression according to risk-benefit analysis. An additional update would return to Court in June 2024 to provide assurance that capacity issues were being addressed.
- Court asked regarding the possibility of delivering more content online to international students. It was reported that current Home Office requirements around the ability of international students to study UK degrees were primarily based on in-person study. Consultation as ongoing regarding additional online study opportunities for international students, but a maximum level of 20-40% of online study would still be applied.

## REPORTS FROM THE SENATE AND COURT SUB-COMMITTEES

### SENATE

239 Court received a report on the main items of business considered by Senate at its meeting on 27 March 2024 (CT20240424\_10.2). The following key points were noted:

- Senate had voted in favour of a request for an additional meeting to discuss the Financial Recovery Plan and its implications for education and research. The additional meeting was to take place on 8 May 2024.
- Senate had received a presentation on progress to date with regard to the Reimaging our Campuses Project. Concern had been expressed by academic senators at the possibility of losing single occupancy offices and moving to open plan workspaces and hot desking arrangements.
- Senate had held an open debate on the conflict situation between Israel and Palestine, which had included discussion around freedom of speech and the extent to which parties felt able to express personal views across campus regarding the conflict. Senate considered and voted to pass four motions (detailed in section 3.4.1 of the paper). Court's particular attention was drawn to the second motion which called on the University to take action to support Palestinian academics and students workers via

scholarship arrangements and financial support, and to consider how such support could be extended to students and academics in Gaza. It was noted that the Senior Management Team would consider and review what may be possible in the first instance, with any recommendations that may require Court approval to be brought forward in due course.

- Court noted the third motion passed by Senate with regard to academic freedom and freedom of expression, seeking confirmation of whether any specific incidences of potential suppression of freedom of speech had been reported at the University. It was confirmed that some concerns had been raised during the Senate discussions, for which further detail and evidence had been requested. However, to date, no responses or submissions had been received. It was highlighted that, under the University's legal responsibility to uphold academic freedom of speech and expression, formal processes were in place for the confidential reporting of any incidences of racism, intimidation, or harassment, and that any complaints received were fully investigated, whilst maintaining personal confidentiality for complainants.
- On the recommendation of Senate, Court approval was sought and given for the draft Resolution *Changes to Regulations for Various Degrees*, for introduction from the academic year 2024-25. Court noted that the amendments were required to effect the change from Half-Session to Term previously approved by Senate to the academic year structure. Also included were updates to the guidelines for the award of compulsory credit and new regulations governing the introduction of the Master in Science (MSci) in Counselling Psychology.

#### FINANCE AND RESOURCING COMMITTEE

240 Court received a report on the main items of business considered by the Finance and Resourcing Committee at its meeting on 9 April 2024 (CT20240424\_10.3), to provide an overview of the assurances obtained. Key points were noted as follows:

- The Committee had formally endorsed the USS debt monitoring results and metric calculations for 2022-23, which were now recommended to Court for final approval. Court noted that although the University had exceeded two of the metrics in 2022-23, there was no requirement for it to enter into further engagement with the USS Trustee as all four of metrics A-D must be exceeded in any year, or any three of these metrics in consecutive years in order to trigger a requirement to notify. Court was therefore satisfied to approve the compliance report.
- The Committee had been monitoring the situation regarding the outsourcing of key admissions processes, and had received reporting to confirm the significant cost savings and service improvements made as a result of the adoption of third-party services in this area.
- An update had been provided by the Director of Student Recruitment, and whilst concern had been expressed at the significant downturn in International Postgraduate student recruitment levels, the Committee had

been satisfied that significant levels of diversification activity were ongoing under the developing institutional Recruitment Strategy.

- The Committee had received reporting on progress towards the completion of the refurbishment works to the Biomedical Physics Centre for Medical Imaging, including the construction of the University's new Fast Field Cycling MRI scanner. It had been agreed to hold the Committee's next scheduled meeting at the Foresterhill site, to include a visit to the facility. Court noted that individuals from the membership of both the Finance and Resourcing and Commercialisation Committees had met with the University's intellectual property advisors to discuss the patent strategy for the scanner technology, with a number of areas of focus having been identified for progression. Further reporting and developments would be progressed appropriately by the two Committees.
- Under its delegated authority from Court, the Committee had approved the annual disbursement to the Aberdeen Sports Village (ASV) and had requested further information regarding the level of staff uptake of the Village's reduced rate membership offer. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] It was reported that work continued in support of the partnership arrangement and continued investment in the facility, and that it remained a strategic priority for the University. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]
- The Committee had considered and endorsed reporting from the Investment Committee, indicating their satisfaction with the ongoing management and performance of the University's investment portfolio.

#### PENSIONS ADVISORY GROUP – 19 MARCH 2024

241 Court received a report on the main items of business considered by the Pensions Advisory Group at its meeting on 19 March 2024, (CT20240228\_10.4). In discussion, the following key points were noted:

- The Group had sought confirmation from UASLAS Trustees as to why the scheme remained in deficit, and it was noted that this was primarily due to a previous fund hedging strategy. A new investment strategy was currently under discussion, which would be developed in the context of new rules for defined benefit pensions shortly to be introduced by the pensions regulator, and the University would be fully consulted on forward investment proposals.
- Court noted that the UASLAS Scheme Trustees would have welcomed earlier engagement by the University regarding the VS/ER scheme, and that this had led to delays in responding to requests for applicant pension projections. Members urged the timely involvement of pension providers in all future activity relating to the scheme.

- The Group had also reviewed and endorsed the USS debt monitoring results and metric calculations for 2022-23, with a number of queries having been submitted to the USS Trustee Board to seek assurance of the fund's forward management strategy to ensure that the significant swing between deficit and surplus positions experienced over previous years would not recur in future.
- The Group had received reporting regarding potential alternative pension offerings to enhance the University's offering and seek to address the significant number of staff who were not enrolling in current pension schemes. As part of this work, consideration would be given to forward options for the treatment of the Strathclyde Pension Fund. Further reporting and proposals would be presented to Court in due course.

## ANNUAL REPORT ON PREVENT DUTY

242 Court received a paper (CT20240424\_11.1) to provide an update on the University's activities relating to the Prevent Duty for the academic year 2022-23, and the roll-out of revised Prevent training in the year since its launch. In discussion, the following key points were noted:

- The University had a legal duty to engage with the Prevent agenda and was required to undertake Prevent training.
- As a result of changes to the duties of key safeguarding officers across the University, 11 out of 20 individuals had completed training. Generally, there had been a good take up of training.
- There were very few incidences of reporting under Prevent recorded across the sector in Scotland.
- New laws under the Protect Duty (Martyn's Law) were anticipated to come into effect within the coming year, which would be of particular relevance to any University estate holding more than 800 people. Further updates would be provided in due course.

## RESOLUTION FOR FORMAL APPROVAL: SENATE ELECTIONS

- 243 Court received a report (CT20240424\_11.2) on the outcome of the statutory process of consultation regarding the Resolution to give effect to changes to the elected staff membership of the Senate.
- 244 Court noted that it had previously received the draft Resolution at its meeting in November 2023, and had approved the proposals subject to the further consultation required by the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966 being undertaken. That process had now been concluded, with General Council Business Committee providing its endorsement and no further comments having been received from the draft Resolution made available to the public.
- 245 The Resolution was therefore unchanged from the version provided to Court in November 2023, and as such Court was satisfied to give its formal approval for implementation.

## AOCB

- 246 Court noted that this was the last in-person attendance of Iain Mackay, whose term of office was coming to an end. All present thanked Mr Mackay for his significant contribution to the work of Court over a number of years and wished him well for the future.

### DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 247 Wednesday, 19 June 2024, 9am to 3.30pm.

[Note by Clerk: Members of Court, with the Head of Governance & Executive Support (as Acting Secretary) and Acting Clerk present, then held a closed session to approve the minutes of the closed meeting of 18 March 2024. A record of this session is provided as a separate confidential minute.]

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN  
UNIVERSITY COURT  
**ACTION LOG AND MATTERS ARISING**

**1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

- 1.1 This paper provides Court with a copy for information of the current Court Action Log (**Appendix 1**).
- 1.2 As a matter arising from the April meeting, Court requested an update for assurance on the University’s capacity to agree and operate new transnational education and international partnerships. That is detailed below, in confidence to Court at this stage until the proposals within the reshaping of Professional Services has been considered further and discussed with relevant areas.
- 1.3 [Redacted]
- 1.4 [Redacted]

**2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY / FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED**

	<b>Board/Committee</b>	<b>Date</b>
Previously considered or approved by	n/a	
Further consideration/approval required by	n/a	n/a

**3. RECOMMENDED ACTION**

- 3.1 The Court is invited to note the paper which is for information.



#### 4. FURTHER INFORMATION

4.1 Further information is available from Bruce Purdon, Clerk to the Court, email [b.purdon@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:b.purdon@abdn.ac.uk).

7 June 2024

**Confidentiality Status:** Cover Paper – Part Closed Section 1.3 and 1.4

## UNIVERSITY COURT: LOG OF FOLLOW UP ACTIONS FROM COURT MEETINGS

## Appendix 1

<b>Court Date</b>	<b>Minute Ref</b>	<b>Action Arising</b>	<b>Action By:-</b>	<b>Status</b>
Apr 2023	173	<p><b>GOVERNANCE AND NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT</b></p> <p>The Court was also advised that there was a vacancy for an independent member of Court on the Advisory Group on Collections Deaccessioning and Repatriation and that an update to the policy governing that procedure would be taken to a future Court or by circulation for approval.</p>	University Secretary	<b>Pending</b> – revised policy is in development. To be provided to Court by circulation in late June 2024.
Jun 2023	206	<p><b>BUDGETS 2023/24 TO 2025/26</b></p> <p>The Court agreed:</p> <p>(ii) That given the risks discussed above, the Court should receive regular updates on progress against the plan, particularly with regard to the ambitious student recruitment targets and that it should receive further detail on a contingency plan should those targets not be achieved.</p>	Chief Financial Officer	<b>Complete</b>
Nov 2023	054	<p><b>UPDATE ON RESEARCH STRATEGY AND RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK</b></p> <p>The Court agreed that once the revised rules for REF 2028 were confirmed, that it should receive a further report on the REF Action Plan which outlined how the University was deploying resource for investment in research strength and an assessment of whether the University was on track to achieve its objectives for improvement in research performance.</p>	VP Research	<b>Pending</b> – to be scheduled for a future meeting once the rules for REF 2028 are confirmed (sector awaiting that confirmation).

Nov 2023	096	<p><b>COMMERCIALISATION COMMITTEE</b></p> <p>The Committee Chair also reported that the Committee would welcome an opportunity to discuss with Court in greater depth the work of the Committee. This was noted for inclusion on a future Court agenda.</p>	Clerk	<b>Pending</b> - Time to be proposed in the Court's 2024/25 Schedule of Business due to be considered by Court in September.
Nov 2023	099	<p><b>ANNUAL REPORT ON HEALTH AND SAFETY</b></p> <p>The Court received the annual Health and Safety Report for 2022-23 (CT20231121-12.5). Following discussion, it was agreed that the Court should receive more frequent reports on health and safety to provide it with further assurance and monitoring given its legal responsibilities as the employer. It was also suggested that reports should provide further detail on reportable incidents to help identify any common trends and benchmarking where relevant against wider sector data.</p>	University Secretary	<b>Complete</b> – as reported to Court in February 2024 further reporting template and approach has recently been considered by Audit and Risk Committee who have requested further iteration of this. <b>Update June 2024</b> – ARC considered this further at their May meeting and a bi-annual approach to reporting to Court with more regular topic focused reports to ARC to be taken forward
Feb 2024	144	<p><b>FINANCIAL RECOVERY PLAN</b></p> <p>The paper referenced examples of further steps that, if required, could be taken to reduce staff costs should the steps already in progress not deliver the required savings. Court would be provided with an update on progress at its next meeting including if any further cost saving steps of this type were considered necessary.</p>	Chief Financial Officer	<b>Complete</b>
	145	<p>The Committee had, therefore, requested that Court should receive at its next meeting a timeline on the next steps in the Plan and trigger points that would require the Plan to be revisited.</p>		<b>Complete</b>
	147	<p>A commitment was given to update Court on what might be achievable in terms of 'stretch targets' around income</p>		<b>Pending</b>

		growth without removing the necessary prudent approach of the Plan that the University's financial position and covenant commitments required.		Decision to be taken around stretch targets late <b>summer 2024</b> , once a clearer picture of September recruitment is known. Currently, the targets within the Plan remain stretch without further investment which cannot be determined until an outline of 2024-25 recruitment is available.
Feb 2024	169	<b>GOVERNANCE AND NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE: RECRUITMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS</b> It was agreed that a session for Court members to discuss in greater depth issues of equality, diversity and inclusion would be helpful to arrange.	University Secretary	<b>Pending</b> – session to be arranged for Sep-Dec quarter
Apr 2024	192	<b>Action Log – Modern Languages Lessons Learned</b> It was requested that the recommendations resulting from the review should return to Court for noting once available.	<b>Head of Governance &amp; Executive Support, Clerk</b>	<b>Pending</b> – Target for report to be shared with Court in September subject to review process and engagement with necessary parties concluding on schedule by end of August.
Apr 2024	193	<b>Action Log</b> Court requested that for future reporting, the action log should include indicative dates for the conclusion of outstanding elements, plus details of any follow-up actions required.	<b>Head of Governance &amp; Executive Support, Clerk</b>	<b>Complete</b> – noted for action log reports

Apr 2024	197	<p><b>Action Log – Appointment of External Members to Court Committees</b></p> <p>It was agreed that the Terms of Reference for each Sub-Committee should be further reviewed to ensure a very clear understanding of the role of external members in the context of each Committee remit.</p>	<p><b>Head of Governance &amp; Executive Support,</b></p>	<p><b>Pending</b> – each Court committee to receive role description as part of annual reminder of terms of reference at first meeting of academic year in September/October</p>
Apr 2024	205	<p><b>Annual Report &amp; Accounts for Year End 31 July 2023</b></p> <p>It was highlighted that the Sub-Group had asked that future reporting on the Financial Recovery Plan should include a timeline and milestones for delivery, alongside further details of the additional levers that could be employed should targeted cost savings not be met.</p>	<p><b>SMT/Chief Financial Officer</b></p>	<p><b>Complete</b> – Noted for future reports</p>
Apr 2024	213	<p><b>Annual Report &amp; Accounts For Year End 31 July 2023</b></p> <p>Members were reminded that it was Court’s legal responsibility to ensure that the Annual Report and Accounts presented a fair, balanced and understandable view, and provided the necessary information for stakeholders to assess the University’s strategy, performance and sustainability. It was the view of the Audit and Risk and Finance and Resourcing Committees that these elements were covered satisfactorily within the document presented for approval. In addition, all queries and amendments requested by the Committees had been appropriately addressed by the Finance team, and the Audit and Risk Committee had confirmed its satisfaction to recommend the Statement of Corporate Governance and Internal Control for Court’s approval. In response to a Member’s request for confirmation that all identified changes had been made, it was agreed that assurance would be provided on this point.</p>	<p><b>Chief Financial Officer</b></p>	<p>All suggested changes were considered and the majority were processed.</p> <p>It remains the intention to reconcile all the requests to changes or provide the logic why it was not changed.</p> <p>However, resources have simply not permitted this.</p> <p>A target of 31 July 2024 has been set but this is subject to the caveat above.</p>

Apr 2024	224	<p><b>Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report</b></p> <p>Court members queried the position with regard to the timely closure of internal audit actions. It was confirmed that regular detailed reporting was provided to the Committee in respect of the progress and pace of the completion of outstanding audit recommendations. Since the introduction of this reporting from 2022-23, excellent progress had been made in closing down a significant number of outstanding elements. It was agreed that a copy of the next tracking report would be provided to Court for information alongside the Audit and Risk Committee Report.</p>	<b>Clerk</b>	<b>Complete</b> – included with Audit and Risk Committee Report on today’s agenda
Apr 2024	226	<p><b>Finance/Annual Report &amp; Accounts for Year End 31 July 2023</b></p> <p>The Court noted the significant number of items requested for further action and follow-up by the Audit and Risk and Finance and Resourcing Committees, and the Court Sub-Group during their consideration of the Financial Recovery Plan, Going Concern analysis and refinancing arrangements. Clarification was sought that appropriate tracking was in place to ensure and report on their completion. It was confirmed that all groups had live action logs which were closely monitored and updated. It was agreed that a summary of the key action points relating to these processes would be provided to Court via circulation for assurance.</p>	<b>Clerk</b>	<b>Complete</b> – this is available in the Resources area of Decision Time for the assurance of Court.
Apr 2024	228	<p><b>Report from the Principal</b></p> <p>In response to a Court member’s query, it was agreed that an update on previously reported staffing challenges within the Development and Alumni Relations Team would be provided out with the meeting.</p>	<b>Principal</b>	<b>Pending</b> – a verbal update will be provided at the June meeting of Court.

Apr 2024	231	<p><b>VS/ER and Restructuring Activity</b></p> <p>For future reporting, Court asked that, alongside the delivery timeline already requested, original and re-forecast points and levels should be clearly identified to demonstrate movement over time. This should include an indication of any areas of the Plan that would need to be reprioritised in line with the current cost saving position.</p> <p>Court requested that future reporting should include an indication of any risks identified around the removal, postponement or rescoping of key projects, particularly those relating to student support services and IT/digital.</p>	<p>Chief Financial Officer</p> <p>SMT</p>	<p><b>Pending</b> – A revised financial reporting mechanism is being designed for 2024/25. This will be a feature. To be included in relevant reports to Court from September 2024.</p> <p><b>Pending</b> – due June Court</p> <p>This will be quantified when the impact of the ER/VS scheme is fully understood in terms of resources.</p>
Apr 2024	238	<p><b>Report on Transnational Education and International Partnerships</b></p> <p>A feasibility study for the Phase 2 expansion of the partnership was nearing completion, alongside the development of a marketing and recruitment plan for July 2026 onwards. The final business case would be presented to Court for consideration at its June 2024 meeting.</p> <p>Members sought assurance of the University’s capacity to agree and operate new partnerships. An additional update would return to Court in June 2024 to provide assurance that capacity issues were being addressed.</p>	<p>VP Global Engagement</p> <p>University Secretary &amp; COO</p>	<p><b>Pending</b> – A verbal update on this will be provided by the Principal at today’s meeting (June 2024)</p> <p><b>Complete</b> – target date June Court – see Matters Arising Paper on today’s agenda</p>

Apr 2024	241	<p><b>Pensions Advisory Group</b></p> <p>The Group had received reporting regarding potential alternative pension offerings to enhance the University's offering and seek to address the significant number of staff who were not enrolling in current pension schemes. As part of this work, consideration would be given to forward options for the treatment of the Strathclyde Pension Fund. Further reporting and proposals would be presented to Court in due course.</p>	<p>Chief Financial Officer and Director of People</p>	<p><b>Ongoing</b> – we are currently in the process of engaging our Pensions Advisors to assess options from a legal and cost perspective.</p> <p>It is anticipated this work will be complete and a preferred option selected by September 2024.</p>
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## UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

## UNIVERSITY COURT

**REPORT FROM THE SENIOR GOVERNOR****1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

1.1 This paper provides Court with a report from the Senior Governor on activities undertaken since the last meeting of Court.

**2. RECOMMENDED ACTION**

2.1 The paper is for **information** and no action is required.

**3. REPORT FROM SENIOR GOVERNOR**

- 3.1 We are approaching the close of the academic year, with graduations of course and our final Court meeting of the session. In the run up to this Court, the sub-committees have been holding their last round of meetings and it has been good to see the new external members coming on board and bringing their skills and experience to the work of the respective groups.
- 3.2 The recruitment of new Independent members of Court is progressing with a strong field for the panel of members from the Governance and Nominations Committee to interview. The process should conclude with our final panel meeting on 11 June and we expect to make recommendations to this Court meeting for approval as soon as possible, although due to the timing of that final session this may be in a later circulation than this main paper set.
- 3.3 As usual, I've undertaken my regular round of catch ups with both Court members and the Principal, the University Secretary & Chief Operating Officer and other members of Senior Management including Professor Siladitya Bhattacharya ahead of his commencing the role of Vice-Principal (Global Engagement) later this summer, which I value very much in helping to ensure that the views of members help shape the business of the Court. As part of my engagement with the wider University community, I've observed the recent Senate and open staff meeting and I will also be meeting with the new Students' Association sabbatical officers and the new Head of the Business School ahead of this Court.
- 3.4 I'd like to thank members for their engagement with a number of processes that have been running around the effectiveness of Court and committees and the annual review processes for both myself and the Principal. As was previously agreed, these have broadly been running in parallel with each other, which I hope has been helpful and of course, these are on the agenda for this meeting of Court.

- 3.5 I attended the UK level Committee of University Chairs (CUC) Spring meeting which had as its theme “Meeting the Diverse Needs of Future Students”. Through the course of the day there were presentations and discussions, including a student led session, around the digital environment for neurodiverse students and the role of student services in creating an excellent student experience. I am delighted also to have been appointed as Chair of the Scottish equivalent to CUC, the Committee of Scottish Chairs, and I look forward to bringing the Aberdeen perspective even more to the fore in that arena.
- 3.6 As we are in a pre-election period a number of meetings with UK and Scottish Government have been cancelled. I continue to engage where possible on the topics of Innovation, Commercialisation and International Students.
- 3.7 I also had a very helpful meeting with Claire McPherson who is the recently appointed Director of Universities Scotland.
- 3.8 Finally, I will say more about this when we meet, but I’d like to put on record on behalf of Court and the wider University community, our considerable thanks to the members who will retire from Court after this meeting. I look forward to celebrating all of your contributions with you when we meet next week.

#### **4. FURTHER INFORMATION**

- 4.1 Further information is available from the Senior Governor, [julie.ashworth@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:julie.ashworth@abdn.ac.uk).

3 June 2024

**Confidentiality Status:** Open

## UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

## UNIVERSITY COURT

## UPDATE ON THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR AND UNIVERSITY DEVELOPMENTS

## 1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

1.1 This paper provides Court with a brief overview of policy developments relating to higher education since March 2024 which are of particular relevance for the University of Aberdeen.

## 2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	SMT	16 May 2024
	ARC	28 May 2024
	FRC	4 June 2024
	Senate	5 June 2024
Further consideration/ approval required by	Court	19 June 2024

## 3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

3.1 University Court is invited to note the update.

## 4. DISCUSSION

The following sections highlight key policy developments of relevance to the University and the higher education sector since March 2024.

## UK DEVELOPMENTS

## 5. 2024-25 JNCHES PAY ROUND

- 5.1 Pay negotiations between the five HE trade unions (UCU, UNISON, Unite, EIS and GMB) and UCEA as part of the JNCHES pay round for 2024-25 are ongoing. As reported previously, UCEA has set out the financial challenges in an [Employers' Statement](#), including increases to employer pension contributions, a decline in international student numbers, and frozen domestic tuition fees, and outlined progress made on a number of non-pay matters. The [Trade Unions' Heads of Claim](#) demands a pay increase of RPI + 2% (or a flat rate of £2,500, whichever is greater), a commitment to restore lost pay (the unions estimate that members have lost up to 30% of the value of their pay in the past decade), a new minimum pay rate of £15 per hour, for all institutions to become Foundation Living Wage employers, and that UCEA commit to a comprehensive reform of the pay spine. A number of other non-pay related requests have also been put forward. Four meetings have been held to date with further discussions schedule to take place.
- 5.2 In mid-May the University of Aberdeen campus trade union AUCU served notice on the University to commence a ballot for industrial action on Friday 24 May, despite assurances from management that the figures for the financial recovery plan were looking very positive. AUCU cancelled action on 23 May, following a staff Open Session which provided an update on the University's financial position.

## **6. IMMIGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RECRUITMENT**

- 6.1 In early March, the Home Secretary formally asked the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) to carry out a [review](#) of the Graduate Route with a deadline of 14 May, to investigate potential abuse of the route, whether the route was meeting its objectives, and whether it was undermining the integrity and quality of higher education in the UK. Given the extremely tight timescales, MAC did not have sufficient time to carry out a full written consultation and instead organised a series of roundtables with stakeholders from across the sector. UUK met weekly with the MAC secretariat to discuss the review and talked to policymakers and officials.
- 6.2 [New research](#) commissioned by HEPI (the Higher Education Policy Institute), Kaplan International Pathways and the National Union of Students (NUS) was published on 7 May. The research estimates that the benefits of hosting Graduate Route visa holders to the UK in higher tax revenues total £588M in 2022/23, excluding wider and longer-term benefits, while the cost to the Exchequer is estimated at £517m, i.e. a total net benefit of £70M, with substantial increases in financial value expected in subsequent years.
- 6.3 The Migration Advisory Committee published the [outcome of its review](#) on 14 May, concluding there was no evidence of widespread abuse of the UK's graduate visa route, and recommending that the entitlement, which allows international graduates to stay in the UK for two years after completing their studies (three years for graduates with doctoral qualification), remains in place as risks to the integrity of the HE system were low.
- 6.4 The Home Office issued their [quarterly immigration statistics](#) on 23 May showing that the ban on international PGT students bringing dependants with them has resulted in a 79% decrease in dependant applications in the first four months of 2024. Sponsored study visas granted to students had also decreased by 6% on last year.
- 6.5 In their [response to the MAC review](#) the same day, the Home Office and the Department of Education confirmed that no major changes will be made to the graduate visa route for the time being, with "options to go further remaining under consideration." The government reiterated concerns that the route is not attracting the highest earners, and announced new proposals to regulate the recruitment of international students. These include a requirement for universities to sign up to a "stringent framework" for agents, tougher compliance standards for institutions recruiting overseas students, an increase in financial maintenance requirements for overseas students, continued review of English language assessments, and restrictions on remote delivery. The confirmation that the Graduate Route will remain in place has been [met with relief by UUK and Universities Scotland](#) but the intention to keep it under review is a further negative signal to the international student market and it has been noted that it remains important to continue to lobby on this matter in the run up to the general election on 4 July.

## **7. OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS CLASSIFICATION OF UNIVERSITIES**

- 7.1 The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is currently undertaking a [review of the classification of universities](#) in the UK National Accounts. Since the early 2000s, universities have been classified together within the non-profit institutions serving households sector (NPISH) in the accounts. ONS has announced that, as there have been many changes in the higher education sector since then, a classification review of the sector will be undertaken to assess whether universities are "market" or "non-market" producers. The review will be completed in quarter 3 (July to September 2024) for Scotland, taking account of the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016. The review for Northern Ireland is due to be completed in the fourth quarter, and in 2025 for

England. A change in classification could potentially lead to a move of all/some universities to the public sector with both legal and financial implications for institutions.

## **8. REF 2029: PEOPLE, CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT**

8.1 The four HE funding bodies in the UK published an [update on the development of People, Culture and Environment \(PCE\)](#) element of REF 2029 in March. The PCE element seeks to evaluate how universities support excellent research through the provision of an inclusive and positive culture. This will include a set of indicators which are being developed as part of a structured questionnaire for REF submissions. Technopolis and CRAC-Vitae have been commissioned to work with the research community to develop these indicators and will host 13 workshops between May and October 2024.

8.2 In addition, REF 2029 will run a voluntary PCE Pilot Exercise (launched in March 2024) to evaluate and refine indicators. The University of Aberdeen has applied to be a part of the PCE Pilot Exercise, and we have indicated our desire to be at all Technopolis/Vitae workshops and have volunteered to facilitate at least one of these workshops. Engaging with these national exercises will provide early access to the ways in which PCE will be assessed in REF 2029 and provide an opportunity to contribute to the development of metrics. This has strong potential to enhance REF preparedness for all units of assessments in the University.

## **9. CONCORDAT FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY OF RESEARCH AND INNOVATION PRACTICE**

9.1 The UK research and innovation sector has co-developed a voluntary [environmental sustainability concordat](#) which was launched on 25 April, setting out the shared ambition to continue delivering cutting-edge research in an environmentally responsible and sustainable way.

9.2 Signatories recognise the need to change how research and innovation is conducted and agree to take shared action to reduce negative environmental impacts and emissions. Ten UK universities, including the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow are amongst the initial 23 signatories committing to report annually on environmental impact and performance and to prioritise sustainable research infrastructure and procurement. The University of Aberdeen is currently reviewing the concordat.

## **10. QAA QUALITY CODE CONSULTATION**

10.1 The QAA launched a [formal consultation](#) on 8 April on the proposed 2024 edition of the Quality Code which incorporates a new structural model and a revised approach to the sector-agreed Principles and Key Practices. The consultation closed on 17 May.

## **DEVELOPMENTS IN SCOTLAND**

### **11. SFC FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENT**

11.1 The SFC published the indicative funding allocations 2024-25 for the university sector on 18 April. The unit of teaching resource has been maintained but teaching funding is reduced by £28.5m through a reduction of 1289 student places, while research and innovation funding has increased by £12.6m and capital funding increased by £2.5m. Funding for widening access and disabled students has not changed but the £7m upskilling funding and the previous support for higher TPS pension contributions have both been removed. SFC intake targets for controlled subjects relevant to Aberdeen (Medicine, Dentistry and Teacher Training) remain unchanged.

11.2 Overall, the University's funding allocation has been cut by 3.9% (£2.6M). There has been an increase in the institutional Research Excellence Grant (+1.7%) and the PGR grant (+2.7%) along with a 28.6% increase in capital funding. However, the University's Main Teaching Grant has been cut by 3.4% (£1.6M) and the Knowledge Exchange &

Innovation Fund has seen a 32% reduction, reverting to 2022/23 levels (see also section 12 below).

- 11.3 [Universities Scotland noted](#) that this was by far the toughest funding settlement universities have faced, with all universities facing a cash term cut to their resources to support learning. Many universities have publicly raised concerns over the funding cuts, including the principals of the University of Aberdeen and Robert Gordon University who wrote a joint letter to MSPs, the SFC and Graeme Dey, Higher Education Minister, calling for a reversal of funding cuts to the sector.

## **12. NEW KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND INNOVATION FUND (KEIF)**

- 12.1 The SFC also [announced](#) on 19 April details for a new university Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund (KEIF) beginning from 1 August 2024, following recommendations set out in the SFC's 2021 Review of Coherence Provision and Sustainability. This fund replaces the University Innovation Fund (UIF) and seeks to support university knowledge exchange and innovation activities to drive national policy priorities while better recognising institutions' individual and collaborative strengths. Universities are required to match fund one element of the funding (Platform Grant of £250k per year) and will need to develop a five-year strategy by early 2025. The University of Aberdeen is due to receive £1.5M from the fund in 2024-25 which is a reduction of 32% on UIF funding received 2023/24.

## **13. EDUCATION AND SKILLS REFORM MINISTERIAL GROUP**

- 13.1 Following on from an [announcement made by the Scottish government](#) in November 2023 on the next steps for Education & Skills reform in Scotland, it has been confirmed that an Education and Skills Reform Ministerial Group has been set up, chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, which will start meeting in May 2024 to advise on the move towards a single education and skills system for Scotland.

## **14. SFC TERTIARY QUALITY ENHANCEMENT FRAMEWORK (TQEF)**

- 14.1 As set out in the SFC Review of the Tertiary Sector Review in 2020/21, the Scottish Funding Council published in April details of a new [Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework \(TQEF\)](#) which will expand the existing enhancement focus of quality assurance in higher education to further education (see also section 18.1).

## **15. NORTH-EAST PATH TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

- 15.1 A regional ICURe (Innovation to Commercialisation of University Research) DISCOVER programme co-sponsored by the University of Aberdeen commenced on 8 May. The programme is an eight-week online market discovery programme designed to support researchers and technicians in exploring their potential market and includes an in-person bootcamp at the ONE BioHub on the Foresterhill Health campus. A total of 36 University staff across three Schools and one external start-up team will be working in ten separate teams to enhance their market awareness and deepen their understanding of potential technology applications. The cost of delivery of this regional initiative is split between the University, ONE (Opportunity North East) Life Sciences, and Innovative UK.

## **16. UNIVERSITIES SCOTLAND CAMPAIGN ON WIDENING ACCESS: 40 FACES**

- 16.1 Universities Scotland launched a new campaign called [40 Faces](#) on 15 April, celebrating the sector's progress toward the 2040 access targets. The campaign includes interviews with a number of University of Aberdeen students who have joined through various widening access initiatives. As part of the campaign, US have [written](#) to the Convener of the Scottish Parliament's Education, Children and Young People's Committee to request that an inquiry into widening access is included in the committee's programme in 2024/25. The campaign, which has been very positively received on social media, runs alongside the UUK campaign, [100 Faces](#), which focuses on students who were first in their family to go to university.

## UNIVERSITY DEVELOPMENTS

### 17. RECENT STAFF AND UNIVERSITY GRANTS AND AWARDS

#### 17.1 Recent research grants to staff since March 2024 include:

- Professor Jane Reid, and her team in the School of Biological Sciences along with partners in the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH) and the Norwegian University for Science and Technology (NTNU), have been awarded a €2.5m European Research Council Advanced Grant for a five-year project entitled “Spatio-seasonal eco-evolutionary dynamics”, which looks at how seabird populations on the east coast of Scotland will respond to increasingly extreme seasonal weather conditions.
- Professor Claude Wischik and colleagues in the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition (MMSN) and in the School of Natural and Computing Sciences, have entered into a new two-year contract with TauRx, delivering a research programme relating the development of treatments and diagnosis of neurodegenerative diseases (in particular Alzheimer’s Diseases) with an award totalling £8.3M as part of a 20-year relationship with the company.
- Professors Dana Dawson, Graham Scotland and Graeme MacLennan in MMSN have been awarded £2.6M from NIHR for a project on “inhibition of the renin-angiotensin system in takotsubo cardiomyopathy.”
- Professor Peter Murchie, with colleagues in the Schools of MMSN and Geosciences, has been awarded £996k from the Scottish Government’s Chief Scientist Office for a project on ‘Building rural-urban healthcare equity for Scotland (BRUCES) – a multi-methods research programme in cancer, musculoskeletal health and frailty.’
- Dr Simon Sawhney and his colleagues in MMSN (Aberdeen Centre for Health Data Science and the Health Services Research Unit) in collaboration with the University of Manchester, have been awarded £299k from the Chief Scientist Office to support research seeking to address inequalities in kidney healthcare in Scotland.
- Professor Cosimo De Bari and colleagues in MMSN have been awarded £966k from *Versus Arthritis* for research into early detection of knee osteoarthritis.
- Dr Anshuman Bhardwaj and colleagues in the School of Geosciences and School of Social Science have been awarded £847K from NERC (Natural Environment Research Council) for the development of an interdisciplinary framework for landslides and cascading glacial hazards in high-mountain communities.
- Professor Pieter van West and Dr Debbie McLaggan in MMSN, have received £521k from the European Commission for a project entitled “PHABB: Pathogens of Algae for Biocontrol and Biosecurity.”
- Professor Ran Levi in the School of Natural and Computing Sciences (Mathematical Science) has been awarded £434k from EPSRC (Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council) for a project on ‘Mathematical foundations of intelligence: an “Erlangen Programme” for AI.’
- Dr Dominic Van der A with Professors Tom O’Donoghue and Dubravka Pokrajac have received £434k from NERC for a project on gravel barrier resilience in a changing climate.
- Dr Jenna Gregory in MMSN has been awarded £257k from the Chief Scientist Office for a project focusing on early theragnostic targets for motor neuron disease.

- Dr Yeshui Zhang and her colleagues in the School of Engineering have received a £234k grant from EPSRC for research into hydrogen production from waste.
- Dr Isabelle Gapp in the School of Divinity, History, Philosophy & Art History (DHPA), has received £188k from the British Academy for a project entitled 'From the Floe Edge'.
- Professors Shaun Treweek and Miriam Brazzelli in MMSN (Health Services Research Unit) have received £163k from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for a project focusing on scientific inefficiency.
- Dr Dominic Van der A and colleagues in Engineering have been awarded £138k from the Net Zero Technology Centre for a project entitled 'NDA – Behaviour and transport of industrial particles in sand beds mobilised by waves.'
- Dr Armand Leon Van Ommen in DPHA has received a £121k grant from the John Templeton Foundation for a project entitled 'God, language, and diversity: Spiritual flourishing in neurodiverse and multilingual communities.'
- Mrs Helena Cundill, also from the School of Divinity, Philosophy, History & Art History, has been awarded £53k from The Hope Trust for a project on how ADHD impacts Christian discipleship.
- Professor Lesley Anderson, MMSN, has been awarded £69.5k from local charity Friends of ANCHOR to fund a new digital dataset that will continue the drive to optimise AI in diagnosing breast cancer in NE-Scotland.
- Dr Fabien Naneix, Rowett Institute, has been awarded a £550k New Investigator grant from the BBSRC (Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council) to carry out research on the effects of "junk food" during teenage years on health throughout adulthood.

#### 17.2 Research-related awards, recognition and events:

- Professor Paul Meador, Professor of Composition, has been elected to the Royal Society of Edinburgh's (RSE) Fellowship.
- Professor Graham Hall FRSE has won the Axioms 2023 Outstanding Review Award. He is an editor of the Axioms journal and oversees papers on mathematical relativity theory and differential geometry.
- The University of Aberdeen and the University of Michigan launched a new trans-Atlantic publishing partnership in March that will amplify the reach of Aberdeen's boundary-breaking research.
- The University of Aberdeen awarded on 7 May an honorary degree to the Archbishop of Canterbury, The Most Reverend Justin Welby, in recognition of his contribution to faith and society.

#### 17.3 Legacy gifts:

- Up to the end of quarter 3 (30 April 2024), funds received totalled £4.985M, a 104% increase on the previous financial year. This includes the receipt of a transformational \$3.3 million USD/£2.6 million GBP legacy from Dr Bernard Smith and the late Mrs Ruth Smith, which is to be allocated towards neuroscience. Dr Smith graduated from the University of Aberdeen MBChB in 1940 and maintained a deep affection for his hometown and the University which had equipped him for a distinguished career. On his death in 1985, he left his estate to his wife Ruth with the request that, on her death, the estate would be left to the University of Aberdeen to establish the B H Smith Chair in Neurology. Ruth was a vivacious individual who maintained a deep commitment to the University, meeting regularly with fundraising and alumni engagement team members. Ruth lived for another 37 years, passing



away in 2022 at the age of 103 and, in keeping with Bernard's request, left the University this generous gift. Ruth's generosity is already supporting a neurology research PhD student and her legacy gift will allow the University to increase critical mass around Neuroscience. Other gift highlights include:

- *Unrestricted legacy of £500,000 received from the late Dr Ian Slessor for Interdisciplinary Research Fund,*
  - *£100,000 from Dr High Reinhoff (via the US Foundation) to support medical research (RUNX1 Research Programme)*
  - *£37,500 towards a Chair in Medical Education*
  - *£31,250 for the Elizabeth Russell Career Development Fellowship Fund*
  - *£15,860 for the Dr Catilin Cottrill Memorial Awards*
- Disbursements from the UADT SCIO in 2023/24 up to the end of Q3 totalled £4.595M. 45% of disbursements was allocated to MMSN and 32% (£1.490M) was allocated to support widening access, and UG, PGT and PGR scholarships.

## **18. EDUCATION-RELATED ACHIEVEMENTS**

### **18.1 Academic quality activities since March 2024:**

- The University welcomed almost 200 people to its 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Academic Symposium held on 25 April 2024. The event was funded by Enhancement Theme funds from QAA Scotland and focused on *Embracing Diversity: Supporting Inclusive Learning Communities*.
- One of the outcomes of the SFC Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability was the development of a single tertiary quality framework for Scotland's colleges and universities. The [Tertiary Quality Project](#) (TQP), which is now in Phase 4, will be delivered by QAAS as commissioned by the Scottish Funding Council in academic year 2024-25. The University of Aberdeen is actively feeding into this ongoing development and consultation process. Work is being taken forward through five key workstreams:
  - *Scottish Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF)*. To provide more information about the TQEF, SFC has updated its [Tertiary Quality Project](#) web page and, with input from QAA and sparqs (Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland), has developed [staff](#) and [student](#) briefings for wider circulation.
  - *External Enhancement-Led Peer Review*. A new external peer review methodology is being developed which will replace ELIR. The new review cycle, which will apply to both colleges and universities, will commence in academic year 2024-25 and will last five years, with each institution being reviewed within the first four years, leaving the last year to reflect on the review methodology. It is anticipated guidance will be made available in June this year.
  - *Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP)*. Universities will be required to submit an annual report (SEAP), replacing the annual Quality report. In addition, the SEAP will require preparation of an action plan, which will remain "live" throughout the year. Further guidance on the SEAP is expected in June with the first submission to the SFC being due in November 2024
  - *Student Learning Experience Model*. This model, developed by sparqs in close partnership with students, is designed to place strong emphasis on the matters of most importance to students and contains nine building blocks covering the learning experience underpinned by a set of reflective questions.

- *National Thematic Enhancement Activity.* Work is ongoing to design and deliver an approach to national enhancement across Scotland's tertiary sector, drawing on the expertise of all stakeholders. The potential theme, its duration and the funding model to support this is being widely discussed and developed, with the University being represented in these discussions.
- A number of new or updated education policies and procedures are currently going through internal approvals processes, including:
  - An updated policy on Marking and Moderation, to improve clarity and consistency and reduce workload.
  - Policy on Extensions and Late Submission of Work, rolling out the use of a common reporting tool for extension requests.
  - A revised Appeals Policy to reduce workload.

#### 18.2 New academic programmes approved since the last meeting of Court in April:

- New programme development continues apace, with 26 new programmes approved by the University since the beginning of 2024. Seven of those have been approved since April: MA Finance with SCNU, MSc Business Management and Data Science, MLitt European and Latin American Literatures and Cultures, MA Comparative Literature and Culture, PGCert Visual Media and Popular Culture, PGCert Heritage and Memory Studies, and MSc Digital Pedagogy and Educational Futures.

#### 18.3 Student and staff success stories:

- The University has been shortlisted in this year's Heist Awards in three categories: the team behind clearing 2023 have been nominated in the Best Prospective Student Journey/Experience category, the team running the Postgraduate Virtual Open Day is competing for the Best Event Experience 2024, and the Brand Marketing team has been nominated in the Best Brand/Reputation campaign category.
- Professor Kirsty Kiezebrink in MMSN and Dr Sarah Preston in the Centre for Academic Development have received £51k from the Carnegie Trust for research into GenAI in education work packages.
- Ms Ingrid Stanyer, Lecturer in the School of Education, has been welcomed to the Burgesses of Guild for the City of Aberdeen. The Burgesses number around 1100 people who have been admitted on the strength of their character, professional reputation and involvement in the civic life of Aberdeen.
- Karthik Singh Thakur, who graduated with an MSc in Renewable Energy Engineering in 2023 is a finalist in this year's Scottish Renewables Young Professional Green Energy Awards. He is one of four finalists in the Academic Award category for his dissertation which explored the climate change impacts of substations.
- Law Diploma students Ailsa Gardyne and Callum Leeson won the International Brown Mosten Client Consultation Competition in Poland in April, beating university teams from 22 countries. The competition offers and opportunity for law students to practice interviewing and counselling skills.
- The University has been awarded its first Race Equality Charter Bronze award in recognition of its commitment to advancing race equality, the third Scottish institutions to achieve the award.

#### 18.4 Employability related activities:

- **Interdisciplinary Projects in the Curriculum** – The Careers and Employability Service were involved in supporting a number of Employer-led Interdisciplinary Projects (Module ED3537) led by Dr Stuart Durkin from the School of Social Science. Five employer projects were implemented, ranging from developing a community engagement strategy, to marketing/social media recommendations, fundraising suggestions and best ways to podcast. A total of 22 students were involved, mainly from the School of Social Science, complemented by a number of Engineering students.
- **Medical Student Mentors** – 35 medical students have been matched with mentors. The role of a mentor leverages the professional knowledge and life experiences of a practicing doctor to support students in their decision-making about the development of their employability and what to do after they leave university.
- **30<sup>th</sup> Year for bp Student Tutoring Scheme** – The tutoring scheme places students from the University, RGU, and NESCol into school classrooms, to act as role models to pupils, help raise aspirations, and motivate them to continue in education after school. It also helps our students to develop problem-solving and communication skills and encourages them to consider a career in teaching. This year, 70 student tutors were placed in almost 30 schools across the region.
- **Careers Service Provision Planning** – The Careers Advisers and Employer Engagement Advisers of the Careers and Employability Service have been busy liaising with the Schools on planning for the next academic year to ensure the service can continue to provide an excellent level of service for our students.

## 19. FURTHER INFORMATION

19.1 Further information is available from George Boyne, Principal and Vice-Chancellor (boyne@abdn.ac.uk) and Hulda Sveinsdottir, Director of Strategic Planning, Project & Corporate Governance (hulda.sveinsdottir@abdn.ac.uk).

4 June 2024

**Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status:** *Open*

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN  
UNIVERSITY COURT  
**UNIVERSITY BUDGET 2024/25 TO 2025/26**

## 1 PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

- 1.1. This paper provides the financial projections for 2024/25 to 2025/26, outlines the underlying assumptions, assesses risks and provides an assessment of performance metrics and loan covenant compliance. The Budget is based on the Financial Recovery Plan as approved by Court in February 2024. The strategic aspirations of the Budget remain rooted in Aberdeen 2040, with a clear recognition of the need for financial sustainability to include diversification of the ways in which our education is open to all, building TNE and online education options, and the amplification of the academic and commercial impact of our research.
- 1.2. This Budget report also includes the 10-year cash flow projection anticipated to evolve from the two-year plan after incorporating projected capital expenditure and receipts over that period. We present a draft of an approach to a rolling investment plan for the digital and physical estate which has informed the 10-year scenario presented within this document.
- 1.3. The Plan incorporates a range of Appendices including detailed planning assumptions, School and Directorate budgets, the 10-year cash plan and covenant compliance. *[Note on Redaction: The allocation of savings for 2024/25 remain under discussion with relevant Schools/Directorates and these appendices cannot be made available at this time].*
- 1.4. Whilst progress against the savings targets set out in the Financial Recovery Plan (£19.7m) has been good, the School and Directorate budgets highlight a remaining allocation of savings for 2024/25 to achieve the specified deficits. This remains work in progress - the allocation of these targets in total between Schools and Directorates, and across each School and Directorate, remains to be finalised.

### PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	<b>Board/Committee</b>	<b>Date</b>
Previously considered/approved by:	Senior Management Team (SMT) Finance and Resourcing Committee	27 May 2024 4 June 2024
Further consideration/ approval required by:	Court	19 June 2024

## 2 RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- 2.1. **Finance and Resources Committee have discussed and recommend that Court:**
- Approve a two-year budget, based on the Financial Recovery Plan, with an underlying deficit of £6.7m in 2024/25 and £2.1m in 2025/26.

<b>Summary Income &amp; Expenditure</b>		<b>Forecast 2023/24</b>	<b>Budget 2024/25</b>	<b>Budget 2025/26</b>
		<b>£'m</b>	<b>£'m</b>	<b>£'m</b>
<b>Income</b>		<b>260.3</b>	<b>256.8</b>	<b>264.5</b>
	<b>Annual change</b>	<b>(2.8%)</b>	<b>(1.3%)</b>	<b>2.9%</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		<b>273.2</b>	<b>263.5</b>	<b>266.6</b>
	<b>Annual change</b>	<b>1.0%</b>	<b>(6.8%)</b>	<b>1.2%</b>
<b>Underlying (Deficit)/Surplus</b>		<b>(12.5)</b>	<b>(6.7)</b>	<b>(2.1)</b>
	<b>%age of turnover</b>	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>2.6%</b>	<b>0.8%</b>

- Approve the 10-year cash projection.
- Note that the Budget meets our new financial covenants (with a degree of headroom) and accommodates the risks, opportunities and sensitivities discussed in this paper.
- Note the position with the U.S Department of Education Federal Student Aid programme, the engagement of professional advisors, the intention to lodge a letter of credit and the professional advice on the approval process.

*Note by Clerk: As noted in the Finance & Resources Committee Report to Court (enclosed separately on the agenda), it has recommended the budget to Court for approval on the basis that Court should ensure its satisfaction with the budget's appendices due to these either not all being available to the Committee or received without sufficient time for it to scrutinise them fully.*

### 3 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 3.1. The Financial Recovery Plan outlined, and Court endorsed, deficits of around £12m in 2023/24, £6m in 2024/25, an aspiration to return to break-even in 2025/26 and in the worst-case scenario a deficit of £3m.
- 3.2. These outcomes will be achieved through:
  - Reduction in operating costs of £7.7m below the level that would occur in 2024/25 in the absence of deliberate intervention to restrain the level of spending.
  - Reduction in staff costs of £12m below the level that would otherwise occur in 2024/25 in the absence of intervention.
  - A return to revenue growth, largely beginning in 2025 through higher income from Transnational Education (TNE), online programmes, academic commercialisation and fundraising.
- 3.3. Swift and decisive action was taken to address the financial position and progress against savings has been good. This progress also included a restructure of debt and cash and successful renegotiation of the financial covenants.
- 3.4. The reduction in staff cost will be achieved through voluntary exits from the University and the continuation of the recruitment freeze. The enhanced Early Retirement and Voluntary Severance Programme closed at the end of April 2024 and together with the recruitment freeze has ensure that the required staff savings target for 2024/25 has been exceeded by £0.5m.

- 3.5. Although progress has been good, achieving the Operating Cost target was always going to be more challenging. Although £1.2m remains to be identified to meet that target, Management believe the £19.7m savings identified in the Financial Recovery Plan will be achieved in full.
- 3.6. Since the Financial Recovery Plan was drafted, and as part of the budgetary process, further financial pressures have been identified, predominantly a further reduction in International PGT fees and a larger reduction than anticipated in SFC funding.
- 3.7. In terms of International PGT fees, the original assumption of a 15% reduction in fees from 2023/24 actuals have been increased to 25% and added a further £2m pressure.
- 3.8. In terms of the SFC settlement, the Upskilling Fund has been removed (£0.6m), the Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund (KEIF) fund has reduced (£0.7m), offset by an increase of £0.2m in REG funding. This means that the settlement is £1.1m worse than previously assumed in the Financial Recovery Plan.
- 3.9. As such, the outcome of the Budget process is a remaining financial pressure of circa £5.3m to achieve the specified deficit.
- 3.10. The aim is to achieve this through the primary strategic objective of growing revenues, followed by continuing to address the remaining Operating Costs savings up to previously allocated targets, and then through natural turnover (gap savings) through 2024/25. The School and Directorate budgets highlight an allocation of savings for 2024/25 to achieve the specified deficits. This remains work in progress - the allocation of these targets in total between Schools and Directorates, and across each School and Directorate, remains to be finalised. This includes the overachievement by the Business School against their original target.
- 3.11. Whilst projecting the financial position, particularly income, beyond 12 months is challenging, on current projections there remains a further financial gap in 2025/26.
- 3.12. Assuming the savings made in 2024/25 are recurring, as things stand a further £13.8m of additional income and/or savings will be required to achieve the specified deficit. This has been allocated as a £9.7m staff saving and £4.1m operating cost saving, if no further revenue growth beyond that in the current budget is achieved. As specified by the lenders, and to ensure compliance with the revised covenants, £10m cash has been set aside in the 2024/25 cash plan to fund a further ER/VS scheme if required. This will be determined following the September 2024 intake.
- 3.13. In order to support the strategic objective of a return to growth, investment of £1.5m has been built into the 2025/26 budget. Whilst the details have yet to be finalised, it is intended to support the anticipated increase in revenues.
- 3.14. In terms of Professional Services, work continues to investigate further options for operating spend reductions across Digital, People and Estates Directorates. This will be undertaken carefully and strategically recognising the direct impact on the wider university of changes to IT, library provision, and other services. This second phase is now therefore not driven by cost reduction but rather by the need for effectiveness and strategic alignment.
- 3.15. A new over-arching Directorate structure is outlined for discussion across the University. This provides an imperative for changes which will cut across the Directorates; including bringing together student services and support, from “registration to graduation” into a single function.

- 3.16. One of the key objectives of this structure is to maximise the income from commercialisation opportunities by focusing on the services needed by those staff and students who are on campus, to support visitors to the area and to utilise facilities for increased numbers of events, through and direct cost reduction and new rental streams as we move to third-party operation of some of our services and increased retail partnering. The key areas under review are events, catering, accommodation (residential and investment) and retail/merchandising. The first step in this is to eradicate the current deficit (circa £0.8m) in 2024/25 and move to positive revenue generation in 2025/26.
- 3.17. The phased fundraising campaign (set for launch within the next 12 months) will focus on four well defined propositions, be aligned with Aberdeen2040 and the outcomes of the Reimagining our Campuses exercise and contain ambitious but realistic targets for funds received and new funds committed. The proposed targets for 2024/25 is £4m in funds received and £5m in new funds committed (which can feed through over a longer period). The budget forecasts that the value of disbursements will remain at a baseline level of £4m. An additional £1m has been estimated within the 2024/25 budget with £2m in the 2025/26 budget.
- 3.18. In terms of Schools, further savings will come predominantly from the recruitment freeze, with each School having a target for this as part of their budget (gap savings as outlined above). At this stage it is not envisaged that a change management process will be required in any School, but a reassessment of the budgetary position of all Schools in aggregate and each School in particular will be made once the outturn for student recruitment in September is clear. Following ER/VS, there is also a need to look at sharing professional services resources across Schools, both in terms of School office administration and also technical support. In addition, Schools will work together, and with colleagues in the Directorates to generate new programmes and grow research and commercialisation income.
- 3.19. As part of the Budget 2024-2026, the Capital Investment Programme for Estates and IT capital projects have been reassessed to conserve operating cash and cuts of £4m applied to Estates and £3m to Digital per annum (for the current year and future two years). It is likely that the cuts can be phased to accommodate increases and decreases in the pattern of projected spend, so long as these can be saved over the three-year period.
- 3.20. The budget is now £18.7million over the three years to July 2026 resulting in projects being prioritised with a focus on those necessary to allow the safe, effective and efficient management and operation of the University.
- 3.21. The Reimagining our Campuses project will report to Court in June 2024; its recommendations will inform development of the Estates Strategy and Masterplan and should be completed within 12-15 months. Until there is alignment of these key documents, the draft 10-year Capital Plan cannot be finalised.
- 3.22. The Finance Team worked extensively to produce comprehensive financial models, projections and supporting information around the revised financial covenants with the main focus on various scenarios on underachievement of projected savings to ensure sufficient headroom regards the proposed covenants.
- 3.23. The covenants have all been tested against the risk assessed position that assumes that 50% of the specified savings target of £19.7m would not have been achieved. Even at that level of achievement, all covenants will be met, with sufficient headroom.

3.24. The cash projection demonstrates that with the remaining £20m of private placement funding, operating cash and the RCF, that the £50m minimum holding will be comfortably exceeded up to 31 July 2026 i.e. the duration of this Budget Plan. The forecast also demonstrates that the operating cash balance will exceed the one month's working capital level specified by the Audit and Risk Committee (the figure is slightly below this for 2024/25 and 2025/26).

3.25.





## Report Structure

<b>Section 4</b>	<b>Introduction and Assumptions</b>
<b>Section 5</b>	<b>Reshaping While Expanding New Revenue Sources and Reducing Costs</b>
<b>Section 6</b>	<b>The Planning Process</b>
<b>Section 7</b>	<b>Summary Income and Expenditure Plans</b>
<b>Section 8</b>	<b>Funding Body Grants</b>
<b>Section 9</b>	<b>Tuition Fee Income</b>
<b>Section 10</b>	<b>Research Income Strategy</b>
<b>Section 11</b>	<b>Plan for REF2029</b>
<b>Section 12</b>	<b>Academic Commercialisation Strategy</b>
<b>Section 13</b>	<b>Philanthropic Income</b>
<b>Section 14</b>	<b>Professional Commercialisation Strategy</b>
<b>Section 15</b>	<b>Other Income</b>
<b>Section 16</b>	<b>Staffing</b>
<b>Section 17</b>	<b>Pensions</b>
<b>Section 18</b>	<b>Depreciation</b>
<b>Section 19</b>	<b>Professional Services Plan</b>
<b>Section 20</b>	<b>School Plans</b>
<b>Section 21</b>	<b>Capital Expenditure and Receipts</b>
<b>Section 22</b>	<b>Debt Restructuring and Covenant Compliance</b>
<b>Section 23</b>	<b>U.S Department of Education Federal Student Aid</b>
<b>Section 24</b>	<b>Further Information</b>
<b>Appendix 1</b>	<b>School Budget 2024/25</b>
<b>Appendix 2</b>	<b>School Contribution Graph</b>
<b>Appendix 3</b>	<b>Professional Services Directorates Budgets 2024/25</b>
<b>Appendix 4</b>	<b>Covenant Compliance</b>
<b>Appendix 5</b>	<b>10 Year Cash Projection</b>

## 4 INTRODUCTION AND ASSUMPTIONS

- 4.1. This report outlines the projected financial budget for the University for the two-year period 2024 to 2026 and is based on the Financial Recovery Plan approved by Court in February 2024, updated for the more traditional budgetary process through March, April and May 2024. Due to volatility, the budget excludes actuarial gains and losses on pension schemes and gains or losses on investments and fixed assets.
- 4.2. When drafting financial plans, the key consideration is always the achievement of our strategic goals and compliance with lenders' covenant requirements. Reflecting the downturn in the sector wide position regarding International Student Fees, the principles of our strategic goals remain broadly unchanged, although somewhat scaled back and delayed. In addition, the financial covenants were renegotiated in April 2024. It is fundamental we achieve the savings outlined in this Budget and record no worse than the envisaged deficits to ensure the University meets these covenant measures, albeit these deficits provide sufficient headroom for risk. Further detail on covenant compliance and headroom is provided at Section 22 of this report.
- 4.3. In approving the Financial Recovery Plan, Court-endorsed a deficit of around £12m in 2023/24, £6m in 2024/25, an aspiration to return to break-even in 2025/26 and in the worst-case scenario a deficit of £3m. That aspiration is delivered in this Budget.
- 4.4. The outcomes will be achieved through:
- A return to revenue growth, largely beginning in 2025 through higher income from Transnational Education (TNE), online programmes, academic commercialisation and fundraising.
  - Reduction in operating costs of £7.7m below the level that would occur in 2024/25 in the absence of deliberate intervention to restrain the level of spending.
  - Reduction in staff costs of £12m below the level that would otherwise occur in 2024/25 in the absence of the recruitment freeze or any other intervention.
- 4.5. There financial savings can be outlined as follows

**Table 1: Required Savings to Achieve Court Approved Deficits**

	Staffing Savings 2024/25	Required Operating Savings 2024/25	TOTAL 2024/25	Staffing Savings 2025/26	Required Operating Savings 2025/26	TOTAL 2025/26
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Schools	9,728	2,529	12,257	9,654	108	9,762*
Directorates	2,300	5,168	7,468	1,420	2,705	4,125*
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12,028</b>	<b>7,697</b>	<b>19,725</b>	<b>11,074</b>	<b>2,813</b>	<b>13,887</b>

\* Assumes all savings identified are achieved in 2024/25 and are recurring.

- 4.6. The reduction in staff cost in 2024/25 were planned for achievement through voluntary exits from the University and the continuation of the recruitment freeze. The enhanced Early Retirement and Voluntary Severance Programme closed on the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024. Progress against these targets can be summarised as follows:

**Table 2: Staffing Savings – Current Position**

	2024/25 FY Target	ER/VS	Freeze	TOTAL	REMAININ G TO TARGET
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Schools	9.7	4.2	3.0	7.2	2.5
Directorat es	2.3	3.8	1.5	5.3	(3.0)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>(0.5)</b>

- 4.7. Achieving the £7.7m of Operating Savings was always going to be a significant challenge. However, as with staff savings, progress has been good.

**Table 3: Operating Savings – Current Position**

	2024/25 FY Target	Identified	REMAININ G TO TARGET
	£m	£m	£m
Schools	2.5	3.0	(0.5)
Directorat es	5.2	3.0	2.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>1.7</b>

- 4.8. Overall progress has therefore been good against the £19.7m target. The latest position is outlined in Table 4 below.

**Table 4: Overall Savings – Current Position**

	Target £m	Identified for 2024/25 £m	Achieved %	Savings Required to £19.7m Target £m
VS/ER/Freeze	12.0	12.5	104	(0.5)
Operational	7.7	6.0	78	1.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>19.7</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>1.2</b>

- 4.9. Taking stock of the above progress, £18.5m has been identified against the £19.7m target. This equates to 94%. Management reported to Court their belief that the £19.7m savings target would be met. Notwithstanding, at the time of writing, the remaining £1.2m requires to be saved by the end of 2024/25.
- 4.10. Since the Financial Recovery Plan was drafted, and as part of the budgetary process, further financial pressures have been identified, predominantly a further reduction in International PGT fees and a larger reduction than anticipated in SFC funding.
- 4.11. In terms of International PGT fees, the original assumption of a 15% reduction in fees from 2023/24 actuals have been increased to 25% and added a further £2m pressure.

- 4.12. In terms of the SFC settlement, the Upskilling Fund has been removed (£0.6m), the Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund (KEIF) fund has reduced (£0.7m), offset by an increase of £0.2m in REG funding. This means that the settlement is £1.1m worse than previously assumed in the Financial Recovery Plan.
- 4.13. As such, the outcome of the Budget process is a remaining financial pressure of circa £5.3m to achieve the specified deficit.
- 4.14. The aim is to achieve this through the primary strategic objective of growing revenues, followed by continuing to address the remaining Operating Costs savings up to previously allocated targets, and then through natural turnover (gap savings) through 2024/25. The School and Directorate budgets highlight an allocation of savings for 2024/25 to achieve the specified deficits. This remains work in progress - the allocation of these targets in total between Schools and Directorates, and across each School and Directorate, remains to be finalised. This includes the overachievement by the Business School against their original target.
- 4.15. As outlined above, swift action was taken to address the financial position and progress against savings has been good. Whilst projecting the financial position, particularly income, beyond 12 months is challenging, on current projections there remains a further financial gap in 2025/26. Assuming the savings made in 2024/25 are recurring, as things stand a further £13.8m of additional income and/or savings will be required to achieve the specified deficit. Whilst the focus remains firmly on growing and replenishing income, this “gap” has been allocated as a £9.7m staff saving and £4.1m operating cost saving if no further revenue growth beyond that in the current budget is achieved.
- 4.16. As specified by the lenders, and to ensure compliance with the revised covenants, £10m cash has been set aside in the 2024/25 cash plan to fund a further ER/VS scheme if required. This will be determined following the September 2024 intake.
- 4.17. In order to support the strategic objective of a return to growth, investment of £1.5m has been built into the 2025/26 budget. Whilst the details have yet to be finalised, it is intended to support the anticipated increase in revenues.
- 4.18. As referred above, whilst progress against the savings targets has been good, management acknowledge the operational challenges this has created, particularly around workload, service continuity and risks around growing income and maintaining teaching quality. This is a major focus as the organisation moves into the 2024/25 financial year.

## **5 RE-SHAPING WHILE EXPANDING NEW REVENUE SOURCES AND REDUCING COSTS**

- 5.1. Financial sustainability is crucial to allow the University to thrive and remain teaching and research intensive, and it must be achieved in a way that reduces cost in 2024/25, generates extra revenue in 2025/26 and later years, protects our existing strengths, and enhances performance in strategic areas in need of significant improvement.
- 5.2 Strategic strengths that must be maintained include:
  - NSS Student satisfaction (UK top ten for the last three years)
  - UK league table rankings (UK top twenty in both the Times/Sunday Times and Guardian league tables for the last three years)
  - Global outlook (Times Higher ranking of 12<sup>th</sup> in the world, based on international staff, international students and internationally co-authored research)

- Recent growth in research income (average growth of 10% in the last two years)
- Contribution to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals - (70th in THE Impact Rankings, 37th in QS Sustainability – both rankings are global)

### 5.3 Strategic priorities that require improvement (and investment):

- Overall REF performance, Research Impact (rank of 88<sup>th</sup> in REF2021), Environment (rank of 57<sup>th</sup> in REF2021), and Outputs (rank of 54<sup>th</sup> in REF2021).
- Innovation and Commercialisation (internationally ranked in the 201-300 band for SDG9 – 'Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure' in the THE impact rankings 2023, and more than £1m per annum behind benchmark on industry funded research)
- Student Employability (47th for Graduate Prospects in Times/Sunday Times, 45th for Graduate Prospects in CUG, 33rd for Career Prospects in Guardian – all UK)
- Global Partnerships (both TNE and international research partnerships are low in number, breadth and depth)
- Reputation and Profile (e.g. 236th for QS global ranking)

### 5.4 The common theme that connects all these areas in need of improvement is insufficient external connections and partnerships. Appropriate teams will need to be in place to make the most of these opportunities – refer to relevant sections in the main body of the report regarding actions in each of these areas.

## 6 THE PLANNING PROCESS

6.1. The strategic and financial planning processes have been closely integrated this year, building on steps taken in previous years to ensure closer alignment; both between School and Directorate plans, and between plans and budgetary parameters. In terms of strategic planning, SMT met with four Schools and three Directorates from February to March 2024, as part of a rolling three-year arrangement where each School and Directorate will meet SMT at least once over the period. These sessions were used to discuss plans developed for the coming three-year window, covering key areas of strategic importance, and to discuss priorities and issues specific to each School or Directorate, with agendas tailored accordingly. These sessions were scheduled to precede the substantive budget setting meetings through March and April.

6.2. The 2024/25 Budgeting process has also been enhanced by modelling tuition fee income with greater granularity, and enhanced horizon scanning of sector projections. Clearly the budget, and our associated spending plans, will be updated as the year unfolds. We maintain an aspiration to return to investment for revenue and growth. The extent of the scope for investment will be assessed when the September 2024 student intake is known.

## 7 SUMMARY INCOME AND EXPENDITURE PLANS

7.1. The projected budgetary position is highlighted in the table below.

7.2. The table also includes £1.5m for investment to underpin the projected growth. Whilst some of this will commence in 2024/25, the full year effect will fall into 2025/26. However, as outlined in Table 1 above, a financial gap remains going into 2025/26 and additional income and/or savings will be required to achieve the specified deficit.

7.3. Table 5 highlights the projected increases in revenue streams and the continued control of costs/savings. Staff costs show a modest reduction, [REDACTED]

Operating costs will be continue to be constrained, with only a modest increase assumed to reflect rising costs and inflationary pressures.

TABLE 5 - FINANCIAL OUTLOOK				
	Full year budget 2023/24 £'000	MMR forecast 2023/24 £'000	Full budget 2024/25 £'000	Full budget 2025/26 £'000
<b>Income</b>				
Funding body grants	78,308	76,703	75,199	74,198
Tuition fees	110,431	92,222	86,109	89,663
Research Grants	57,586	55,658	61,992	67,500
Other Income	40,330	35,728	33,503	33,227
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>286,655</b>	<b>260,311</b>	<b>256,803</b>	<b>264,588</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>				
Staff costs	183,873	172,307	163,000	161,999
Operating costs	81,426	75,668	74,729	76,609
Depreciation	20,163	20,163	20,699	21,571
Financing costs	5,093	5,093	5,040	4,983
Investments for growth	-	-	-	1,500
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>290,555</b>	<b>273,231</b>	<b>263,468</b>	<b>266,662</b>
<b>Projected Underlying Out-turn</b>	<b>-3,900</b>	<b>-12,919</b>	<b>-6,665</b>	<b>-2,074</b>

7.4. The following sections examine these budget headings in more depth and consider the assumptions used in each category.

## 8 FUNDING BODY GRANTS

### TOTAL TEACHING FUNDING

8.1. Indicative funding allocations for the Scottish tertiary sector were published on 18 April 2024, based on the Scottish Government's Financial Year 2024/25 budget approved by the Scottish Parliament on the 27 February 2024. The final settlement letter was received on the 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024. The main headlines and implications for the University of Aberdeen are:

#### Teaching Grant

- The total teaching funding for the sector has been set at £715.2m, which represents a decrease of £26.7m (3.6%) from the published 2023/24 allocation. As a result, the total Teaching grants for the University of Aberdeen have decreased from £47.1m to £44.9m (a reduction of £2.1m or 4.7%).
- In terms of the components of the total Teaching grant, the sector-wide Upskilling Fund (£7m) has been removed, leading to a loss of £0.62m for the University although SFC still expect universities to continue to respond to employer needs through curriculum development.

- The main Teaching Grant for the sector has been set at £682.9m which is a reduction of £16.6m (2.4%) from the published 2023/24 grant. The University of Aberdeen has received £44.7m, a decrease of 3.4%. The reduction is partly as a result of an increase in assumed PGT Fees to £7,000 and as a result a lower Teaching grant, also a reduction in funded places and a change in the funding available for expensive subjects undertaken by rUK students.
- In terms of Funded student places the SFC has removed SQA places introduced in 2020/21 from the sector, a total of 1,289 FTEs. However, rather than remove these places using the same methodology as when they were originally distributed to institutions, funded places have been removed from those institutions that reported the highest levels of under-delivery in 2023/24 Early Statistics return (eight institutions). As a result, the University has had 178.6 FTE non-controlled funded places removed, or a loss of £0.77m to the Main Teaching Grant.
- The SFC have also announced changes to the compensation that they provide for universities delivering expensive, strategically important non-controlled subjects involving students from the rest of the UK (rUK). The SFC's current model assumed that Scottish universities needed to be compensated because, to remain competitive, they will charge rUK students an annual fee of £9,250 for three years of a four-year degree. However, as a recent review shows that some universities are now receiving four sets of fees, the SFC have updated their model.
- In an effort to reduce the impact of this reduction, SFC have used their available budget to implement a phased reduction of £6.2m in 2024/25 (sector wide). In line with this approach, the University has been allocated £1m, compared to £1.63m last year, and we must anticipate that this allocation will reduce further in 2025/26 (refer below for impact).

### **Research and Innovation**

- Overall the Research and Innovation funding for the sector has been set at £317.2m, an increase of £12.6m (4.2%) when compared to the previous year.
- For the University of Aberdeen, REG funding has been uplifted to £14.6m (an increase of 1.7%) and RPG funding has been uplifted to £2.7m (an increase of 2.7%). RPG is calculated on the number of postgraduate research students and suggests that outside of the sector uplift, our position within Scotland in terms of postgraduate research student numbers remains relatively stable.
- The University Innovation Fund (UIF) has been replaced by the Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund. In deriving the KEIF allocations for 2024/25, SFC have put in place a mitigation which ensures that no institution has fallen below their 2022/23 UIF allocation, given the one-off uplift in 2023/24. For the University of Aberdeen this represents a decrease of 32.0% from £2.2m in 2023/24, returning to the 2022/23 allocation of £1.5m.

### **Capital**

- Within the capital budget, the Capital Maintenance Grant has been increased slightly from £3.8m to £5.0m. The University has been allocated £0.33m, an increase of 28.6% (£73k) when compared with 2023/24.
- 8.2. The table below summarises the overall position as regards the SFC settlement. Whilst the total impact in 2024/25 is £2.6m, the figures within the Financial Recovery Plan assumed a reduction of £1.6m, therefore an additional £1m financial pressure will require to be included within the final Budgeted projections.
- 8.3. In terms of assumptions around SFC funding into 2025/26, the continued reduction in non-controlled places has been provided for with an assumed reduction of another 300 students equating to circa £1.5m. Once clarification is received of the claw-back calculation for 2023/24, this assumption will be refined. As outlined above, the only other reduction, assumed in the budgeted numbers as they stand, is a further £0.2m





- 9.4. The Table below outlines the projected final out-turn Fee Income position for 2023/24 and the 2024/25 and 2025/26 projected position. Note that “Other Fees” relates to rest of UK (RUK) fees (excluding online RUK fees which are aggregated within the online fee category).

**TABLE 7 – FEE SUMMARY 2024-2026**

2023/2024 Forecast £'000		2024/2025 Budget £'000	2025/ 2026 Budget £'000
30,650	International PGT	22,891	23,513
8,906	International PGR	11,066	12,782
20,997	International UG	20,858	21,807
4,868	Transnational	5,895	6,334
7,192	Online	7,911	8,702
3,802	Home PGT	3,048	2,648
2,100	Home PGR	2,199	2,265
13,974	Home UG	13,182	12,540
2,746	EU Fees (International EU only)	2,907	3,086
9,994	Other Fees	10,461	10,753
105,229	<b>Total Academic Fee Income</b>	100,418	104,429
(13,007)	Other fee movements including fee waivers	(14,309)	(14,796)
92,222	<b>Total Tuition Fee Income</b>	86,109	89,633

- 9.5. As noted above, the 2023/24 intake cycle has been challenging for the University, and for the UK sector as a whole. The UK University sector has been going through a paradigm shift caused by the UK government’s visa policy shift and commentary regarding international students as contributors to net migration, market reactions to changes to student dependants’ access to visas and the wider reputational damage caused by this shift in policy, across markets in West Africa and South Asia (affecting key application volume markets for nearly all UK universities). This has already affected September 2023 and January 2024 intakes across the UK.
- 9.6. The full effects of this paradigm change are still working through the international higher education system. Whilst the impact on the UK might be attenuated by immigration policy actions elsewhere (for example, as announced recently in Canada and Australia), international study demand, which had pivoted strongly towards the UK following the pandemic and more prolonged border restrictions elsewhere, has now swung back strongly towards Australia, Canada, and the United States.
- 9.7. However, there is reason for cautious optimism. The Migration Advisory Committee published its long-awaited review in May 2024. It included a range of recommendations, the most important was the retention of the Graduate route in its current form. The Government has subsequently accepted this, alongside a package of reforms on the Student route, with the primary focus on agents and compliance.
- 9.8. Notwithstanding, key source markets also continue to be affected by adverse economic conditions, exchange rate movements, and inflationary cost concerns, again affecting West Africa and South Asia most acutely. China has not yet returned to the volume and growth of the pre-pandemic period, and cost of study and preferences for study in the Asia region, and in the Australasian region, are affecting recruitment from China for many UK institutions, including Russell Group universities. These factors inform the scenario of a further 25% reduction in International PGT fee income for 2024/25.

- 9.9. In these circumstances of a growing overall international student recruitment market but a falling UK share of that market, compounded by demographic decline in key markets (including China), renewed and increased competition nationally and internationally, and an increasing diversity of provider delivery models and locations, it is imperative that the University seeks to grow its market share relative to its competitors, also grows its market share in its existing and established markets, and seizes growth opportunities in new markets. Whilst the headwinds in international student recruitment remain volatile as a result of further adverse policy intervention, current budgetary assumptions are for no further decline of PGT international fee income in 2025/26.
- 9.10. The University of Aberdeen's path to growing market share, maintaining, and recovering student numbers to achieve stabilisation in tuition fee income in 2025/26, has already begun in earnest, and includes:
- Focusing plans and efforts on conversion from offers made to student registration. Student recruitment and Conversion teams will engage in market-specific activity to progress students through the applicant funnel. This activity is underpinned by an increase in scholarship provision in the South Asian and African markets, the provision of additional financial support for visa service costs which will be continued into the 2024/25 cycle, and a new agent incentivisation policy for our top performing referral partners to be introduced later in 2024.
  - Partnering with third party providers, including QS (application management) and Enroly (onboarding management from the point of Confirmation of Acceptance to Studies (CAS) issuance) to significantly improve processing times, and through contracting arrangements with agent aggregator platforms which are in place (Adventus) and in negotiation (*Redacted*). Our QS relationship has already provided significant improvements in application processing times, to a matter of days instead of weeks and longer. Before establishing our relationship with QS, applicants had waited up to 90 days, or more, for a decision on their application. This negatively impacted conversion and strained relationships with agents. Now, the regular processing of international PGT applications within days of their receipt, we are seeing a higher rate of acceptances and more confidence in the Aberdeen service from our agent network.
  - To better manage our applicant pipeline for international markets the University has implemented a deposit scheme with effect from entrants for 2024/25 onwards. This will give greater protection with UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI) compliance related issues, and more reassurance in applicant progression through the recruitment pipeline and provide greater robustness to projections of final student intakes.
  - Launch of a new University-wide Student Recruitment Strategy, specifically focusing on raising the University profile in the more stable and less policy-sensitive recruitment markets in Southeast Asia, the Americas, North Asia, and Europe. This will see us protect markets where we have relative strength and where market share is at risk but will also add diversity to the range of markets where we are actively recruiting, and are currently underrepresented and under-recruiting, so adding markets with lower volume but higher conversion to our mix of source markets.
  - Review the University's international fee structure and review and relaunch the University scholarship offer to all key and new international markets being targeted in 2024/25 onwards. This will see us enhance our value proposition and realign our price point to be competitive in a challenging and more competitive recruitment environment. Critically, it will enable us to review our net price points with reference to a benchmark comparison with our market competitors, and to ensure both our net price point and our scholarship offer are attractive in markets which are both

price and discount sensitive, including the markets identified for prioritisation above.

- Plan for increasing student numbers in TNE with a commitment to launching a separate TNE strategy designed to both diversify the range of partners currently engaged with and to deepen existing relationships. This represents a pivot in our strategic approach, whereby we will seek to take our educational offer closer to students' countries of origin, so reducing the effective total cost of study and responding to shifting preferences for study locations and living environments, including their cultural and religious contexts. This is a substantive undertaking and will require substantial work to identify appropriate institutional and commercial partners, undertake effective due diligence, and to deliver TNE activity at scale internationally. It will require substantive investment, or the redirection of resource, to support international partnerships and TNE activity, beyond the very small team currently supporting this activity.
- Increasing Online student numbers through portfolio development and more aggressive and far-reaching marketing and promotion activities, including through third-party platforms (FutureLearn) and engagement with recruitment agents and agencies supporting online student recruitment, as well as emerging partnership opportunities for the delivery of Online programmes by partner institutions and services providing study and learner support services to students.

## 10 RESEARCH INCOME STRATEGY

10.1 As outlined above, growth in Research income is one of the key pillars of the University's financial recovery. The research income generation is predicated against a number of factors. Research income itself provides a key measure in REF2029 where average research income per FTE is a key sectoral positioning metric in what was known as the REF5a. An increase in research income above Scottish sector average growth would also increase the share of REG that is determined by grant funding, representing around 1/3 of overall REG.

10.3 The table below sets out our planned Research Income over the Plan period.

**TABLE 8 – Research Grant Income 2024-2026**

Research Grant Income	Forecast	Budget	Budget
	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Research Grants Income	55,658	61,992	67,500
Annual Growth	-	6,334	5,508
Value of Annual Increase		11%	9%

10.4 To increase our research income at a rate that maintains the level of growth seen annually since 20/21 we must increase our volume of applications and the value of those applications to match. To deliver upon this goal we have implemented revised target setting for Schools including volume of applications anticipated and gross value of those applications. While volume and value of applications are recognised as key elements in gaining increased awards these in themselves are insufficient to achieve this goal.

10.5 To support an increase in research income via increased awards we must also improve the overall competitiveness of the research funding applications we submit. The Grants Academy under the academic lead of the Research Dean for Knowledge and Understanding will provide support in doing so. It will prioritise early career researchers

and the schemes targeted against them, large sector spanning applications (£2m+), and Schools where extra support is required in meeting targets assigned to them. Overall, our University captures approximately 50% of the grants it applies for and 25% of applications by £millions. The focus on larger applications has potential to provide a more rapid gain than smaller applications.

- 10.6 The third arm to our strategy to increase research income is positioned against the funders we apply to. We are now strongly encouraging applications to be directed towards funders that provide overheads via Full Economic Costing models as first approach. This approach is designed to increase our overall Indirect Cost Contribution (ICC) recovery overall and in doing so create tangible organisational benefit.
- 10.7. Importantly in ensuring delivery against the strategy outlined above we must ensure that we boast a suitably skilled body of research active academics to achieve this. Research income generation and innovation/commercialisation income both require an appropriate academic headcount supported by a professional support (PS) framework. REF2029, and all previous assessment exercises, are predicated against quality as opposed to volume. We must ensure that a level of quality is maintained across the organisation that reflects, and can support, our ambitions.
- 10.8. To ensure this we enabled a dual-check system where academics and Professional Services requesting participation in either Early Retirement, Voluntary Severance or both had first to seek approval from their Head of School/Director – this was the first check. The second check was via inclusion of Vice-Principal (Research) on the Restructuring Committee to enable informed decision making in ensuring retention where advantageous to do so. This approach ensured that we were able to retain excellence across both our academic and Professional Services communities.

## 11 **PLAN FOR REF2029**

- 11.1. The Post REF Action Plan was presented to Court in November 2022. It proposed a comprehensive set of measures to improve the quality of research, the research environment and impact support for researchers at the University of Aberdeen. It was devised following a review of all available REF data, discussions with REF Panel members, and meetings held with Schools on what support would be required to help achieve top quartile outcomes in the next research assessment exercise, expected to take place in 2029.
- 11.2. The Plan is constantly under review to rebase to the available financial envelope.
- 11.3. The Institutional Research Leave Scheme element of the package was launched last year, and 25 awards were made against 30 applications in that first cycle. An elevated level of interest was seen for the 2024/25 round with 15 awards made from 54 applications.
- 11.4. Impact and output training has been delivered into Schools in 2023/24 and will continue through 24/25, delivered by external providers and/or internal REF panel members. Following on from an initial light touch REF stocktake exercise in March 2023 we have now launched an annual repeating exercise in May 2024. This is anticipated to report in October 2024 creating an increasingly comprehensive picture of our current position in terms of REF-able high-quality outputs and where additional support measures need to be applied to achieve the required high-quality outputs. The Impact Support Team has now been established with sufficient FTE support to deliver identification and triage. With over 150 long-listed Impact Case Studies the next stages including shortlisting, acceleration, and substantiation will require further support from 2025/2026 onwards.

- 11.5. A Research Culture strategy is being developed to align with adoption of sectoral standards i.e., Vitae, DORA, Royal Society. We are actively engaged with the REF2029 People, Culture, and Environment pilot seeking status as an a) participant and b) an active member, including as host, of the proposed workshops designed to develop the indicator sets that will form an element of this submission components evaluation.
- 11.6. We continue with the REF Strategy Group to oversee the institutional preparations for REF2029, and to explore strategies that will enable us to build a stronger submission.

## **12 ACADEMIC COMMERCIALISATION STRATEGY**

- 12.1 Growing enterprise and innovation activity is fundamental to the University's mission to be 'in the service of others' - supporting regional and wider economic development, and our drive for greater research impact. Activities around academic commercialisation comprise industry-funded contract and collaborative research<sup>1</sup>, consultancy, continuing professional development (CPD), facilities and services contracts, and spin-out company creation. There is also an opportunity to grow the number of awards from Innovate UK programmes for academic-business knowledge exchange.
- 12.2 While the University routinely takes an equity position in its spin-out companies, it is difficult to predict the likely future value of such investments, and as such no assumptions about future equity sales are made in the budget. However, a revised Intellectual Property, Equity & Revenue Sharing Policy has been designed to incentivise such activity, by changing the University's default equity position for spin-out companies to make these more generous to inventors/founders in line with wider sectoral best practice.
- 12.3 The revised Policy also enhances the terms for revenue sharing of commercialisation income to further incentivize University staff. Court Commercialisation Committee is expected to give final approval for the Policy later this month.
- 12.4 Previous reports to Senior Management Team (SMT), Court Commercialisation Committee and Enterprise & Innovation Committee provided information and data on metrics for innovation and enterprise, using historical data extracted from the UK Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Higher Education - Business Community Interaction Survey (HE-BCIS). This allowed comparative analysis to be undertaken with our UK and Scottish benchmarking groups and demonstrated that there were clear opportunities for improvement in all key areas.
- 12.5 Discussions with individual Schools late in 2023 led to the identification of specific opportunity areas and corresponding short and medium-term action plans from each School are now in place. To support Schools to grow their activity, several supporting initiatives are being progressed including: a staff development and training programme; a new strategic corporate partnership offer, a review of our Facilities & Services offering, and revised policies for Consultancy and CPD. Policy changes are driven by principles of simplicity and agility.
- 12.6 A new 'Costing & Pricing' policy will come into effect from August 2024, as part of a strategy to maximise cost recovery opportunities from academic commercialisation activities. In 2022/23, indirect cost charges comprised 22.6% of the income raised from

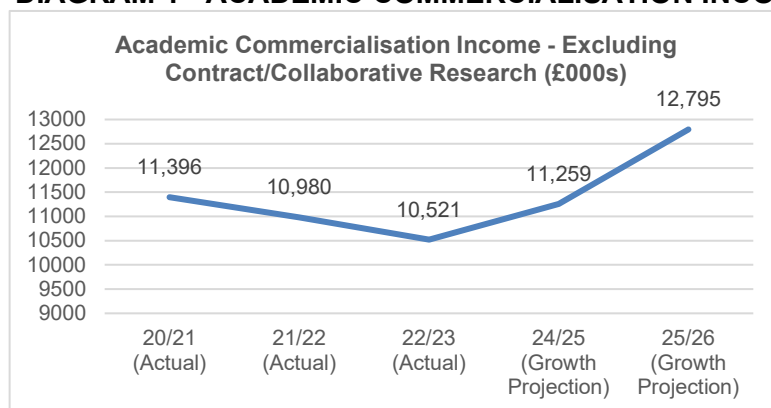
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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that this category of academic commercialisation income is also included within the overall Research income figures highlighted above; the Plan only considers this growth once.

industry contract research (£3.2m of £14.1m); increasing this to 30% would have contributed an additional c. £1m in 2022/23.

- 12.7 Within the Financial Recovery Plan we have assumed growth across all categories of academic commercialisation income of £1.4m and £2.7m in 2024/25 and 2025/26 respectively; £0.75m and £1.5m excluding contract/collaborative research. These growth projections have taken account of sector benchmarking and the likely impact of the interventions noted above. Income growth across these areas is, however, predicated on having an appropriate professional services team in place.

**DIAGRAM 1 - ACADEMIC COMMERCIALISATION INCOME**



### 13 PHILANTHROPIC INCOME

- 13.1 The Directorate has plans to launch a phased fundraising campaign within the next 12 months. The campaign plan will be taken to University Court in June for endorsement. The following are the high-level propositions:


- Our Students, including Scholarships, Bursaries, and access to University.
- Our Research including Interdisciplinary Institute, Green Energy Technologies, Medical Research and PGR College
- Our Innovation, including an Innovation Hub, Student and Academic Enterprise and Incubator and Accelerator programmes.

- 13.2 The University is aiming to put in place a two-year fundraising plan aligned with Aberdeen2040 and the outcomes of the Reimagining our Campuses exercise, and set ambitious but realistic targets for funds received and new funds committed. The proposed targets for 2024/25 is £4m in funds received and £5m in new funds committed (which can feed through a longer period). Funds received is cash received in year, either to the University directly or to the DTSCIO.

- 13.3 Total funds disbursed to the University from the DTSCIO in 2022/23 and 2024/25 (to April 30<sup>th</sup>) stands at £9.986m (22/23 £5.4m and 23/24 £4.6m).

- 13.4 We forecast that the value of disbursements will remain at a baseline level of £4m. An additional £1m has been estimated within the 2024/25 budget with £2m in the 2025/26 budget. These targets will be reviewed against budget and resource allocation at year-end. Any unrestricted income received will continue to be allocated to area(s) of greatest need at the discretion of the Development Trust SCIO and the University.

- 13.5 Philanthropic income-generating activity will focus on campaign priorities as set out in the Campaign proposal which is also before Court for approval at its June meeting. Our aim is also that as large a proportion as possible of New Funds Committed will contribute directly to budget displacement and budget relief in core strategic areas. ■

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- 13.6 In addition, we will make applications to maximise the levels of funds the Development Trust SCIO disburses to the University supporting their objective that funds are spent down and allocated appropriately in line with donor intentions.

#### **14 PROFESSIONAL SERVICES COMMERCIALISATION STRATEGY**

- 14.1 Our campus services (catering, student and staff accommodation and retail) face a significantly changed demand profile following the pandemic and because of reduced student recruitment in recent cycles. There are, however, significant opportunities to focus on the services needed by those staff and students who are on campus, to support visitors to the area and to utilise facilities for increased numbers of events. The recovery plan assumes a reversal of the recurrent deficit on these activities during 2024/25 through direct cost reduction and new rental streams as we move to third-party operation of some of our services and increased retail partnering.
- 14.2 This will be a challenging process, but engagement has already taken place with colleagues in Aberdeen University Students' Association (AUSA) to ensure that we continue to meet student needs, evolving tastes and support a vibrant campus experience. We will explore shared contracting with other institutions to ensure that proposals for retail and other activities are part of a collective endeavour to support visitors and the local community in Old Aberdeen. Visitors to the area from cruise ships are incredibly enthusiastic about the area but struggle in poor weather with limited amenities open on a Sunday.
- 14.3 We also aim to bring together the teams involved in venue management to provide a more coherent, commercial offering to academic and commercial event organisers; connecting that activity into the network of provision across the region. Wider use of our estate, for filming opportunities as well as to generate income from estate not needed for core teaching and research activities is also being developed.
- 14.4 We will review our accommodation offering, currently contributing net revenue across staff and student accommodation. There is a strong supply of accommodation in the student market in Aberdeen now and demand has shifted to en-suite provision which is only a limited part of our portfolio. This, together with the RAAC issues in the main communal building, will need to be considered as part of that strategy. Given the lead times associated, we have prudently not made a financial assumption in relation to events or accommodation within 2024/25 for either events or accommodation.
- 14.5 Additional commercial opportunities to be progressed include:
- Development of a commercial retail model – potentially in partnership to secure key skills in this area.
  - Asset disposals programme, including residential portfolio review (refer below)
  - Exploitation of the sustained commercial income potential from properties that can be removed from operational estate and creation of new commercial investment properties including Old Aberdeen High Street Commercial Strategy.

#### **15 OTHER INCOME**

- 15.1 Student accommodation income is normally budgeted at 96% of capacity as 4% is the normal

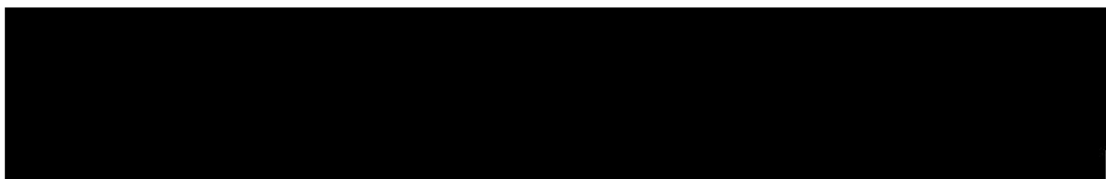
void rate. Due to the underoccupancy this financial year, and due to the cuts in funded places, this will require revision to 80%. In addition, many students are staying at home due to the cost of living and inflationary pressures resulting in a higher level of voids.

- 15.2 The Catering function has consistently returned direct losses. In the last financial year this amounted to circa £0.56m. Whilst management have been given a target to significantly reduce this budget, restructuring the function is a fundamental part of the Professional Services plan referred to elsewhere in this document. As the restructuring proposition is finalised, the assumptions in the budget will be aligned accordingly.
- 15.3 The University is intending to dispose of surplus assets (refer below), so the assumption is £1m of additional income from this stream. Minimal sales proceeds were included within the early years of the institutional 10-year cash plan approved by Court.

## **16 STAFFING**

- 16.1 The current assumption for Staff pay costs is 2% for 2024/25 and 2025/26. This will be amended if there are changes to the national pay award.
- 16.2 The pay award excludes incremental drift which covers staff moving up through grades, which add a further estimated £1.4m each year to the pay bill. The pay award also excludes promotions/regrading and any uplifts in relation to gender pay gap which may be built into the budget.

16.3



## **17 PENSIONS**

- 17.1 The reduction in the Employers' contribution for the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) has now been confirmed following the consultation, from 1 January 2024. This is a 7.1% saving (reduction in employer contributions from 21.6% to 14.5% which is estimated at a £3.7m saving from January 2024 to July 2024). The full year saving in 2024/25 and 2025/26 is currently estimated at £6m per annum and has been incorporated into payroll budgets.

## **18 DEPRECIATION**

- 18.1 Using the indicative capital expenditure profile, an estimate has been made of the depreciation charges that will apply during the budget period. We will continue to review the value and remaining lifespan of University buildings. Upon the introduction of FRS102, the University has chosen not to revalue its buildings and consequently as depreciation is charged, the value over time will fall. This does not reflect the reality that some buildings will continue to provide value to the University, even when in accounting terms, they are fully depreciated. This change in practice has been discussed and agreed with the University's former external auditor.

## **19 PROFESSIONAL SERVICES PLAN**

- 19.1 Phase one of the Financial Recovery Plan is almost complete in Professional Services directorates with significant contributions to cost reduction identified in all directorates through the vacancy freeze, and the enhanced retirement scheme with the possibility



of voluntary severance. Work continues to investigate further options for operating spend reductions across Digital, People and Estates Directorates. This will be undertaken carefully and strategically recognising the direct impact on the wider university of changes to IT, library provision, and other services. Changes to front-line services, such as cleaning, have required the resetting of service standards and the communication of those changes to the wider community.

- 19.2 In developing the Financial Recovery Plan, it was also evident that ensuring that Professional Services are fit to support the University on a sustainable basis, removing duplication and reducing workload pressures on individuals, would require reshaping of our teams, processes and structures. This second phase is now therefore not driven by cost reduction but rather by the need for effectiveness and strategic alignment.
- 19.3 A new over-arching Directorate structure is outlined for discussion across the University. This provides an imperative for changes which will cut across the Directorates; including bringing together student services and systems, from “registration to graduation” into a single function. Within that over-arching framing, individual Directors are developing change process plans which include business as usual change decisions, refocusing to improve efficiency and re-shaping to underpin income generation.
- 19.4 The change processes will require option appraisals in relation to our approach to student and staff housing, investment in retail and commercialisation of the estate to underpin income generation. Restructuring within Research & Innovation will be designed to ensure that the specialist support for academic commercialisation as well as focusing on research quality.
- 19.5 The table below summarises some of the immediate changes against the differentiated rationales for change. Exercises will be phased to reflect the immediacy of the need for change. As activities are aligned it is anticipated that further opportunities for reshaping services will be identified – for example, increased automation of transactional activities. The reshaping will need to facilitate not just realignment of activities but create the headroom for investment in new skills to support growth. The potential for joint procurements and shared or hosted services with RGU and other partners will also be explored on an ongoing basis.

**Diagram 2 - Rationale for Change**

Refocusing for Efficiency	Reshaping for income generation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete creation of specialist Student Recruitment directorate, building on system changes for PGT recruitment, providing support for TNE partnerships.</li> <li>• Integration of FM Services</li> <li>• Estates optimisation.</li> <li>• Restructuring of library services</li> <li>• Standardisation of transactional services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New model for Retail and Catering</li> <li>• Optimise Student Accommodation</li> <li>• Creation of a new Enterprise and Innovation Unit (Aberdeen Innovation?).</li> <li>• Creation of a focused research support office.</li> <li>• Creation of new co-ordination structure for events, with a single Venue Management service.</li> </ul>

**20 SCHOOL PLANS**

- 20.1 Schools have in aggregate made very good progress with regard to savings. The operating savings target for 2024/25 of £2.53m having been exceeded by over £0.5m. Good progress has also been made with staff savings: of the target of £9.73m for 2024/25, just under £7m has been achieved to date through a combination of ER/VS (ca. £4m) and the recruitment freeze (£2.9m). Taken together, at the time of writing 81% of the savings have been identified, with work ongoing to make further savings. As part of the budgeting process an assessment has also been made of each School's likely tuition fee income for 2024/25 using the latest applicant and acceptance data and detailed modelling to factor in recent recruitment and conversion performance and the markets from which the School recruits.
- 20.2 Further savings will be required in the course of 2024/25, which will come predominantly from the recruitment freeze, with each School having a target for this as part of their budget. At this stage it is not envisaged that a change management process will be required in any School, but a reassessment of the budgetary position of all Schools in aggregate and each School in particular will be made once the outturn for student recruitment in September is clear, together with an updated forecast of likely savings through the recruitment freeze, both in year (2024/25) and recurrent.
- 20.3 The scale of staffing and operating savings already achieved means that Schools are having to make significant adjustments to ensure that research, education and the student experience are protected. The Vice-Principals of Research and Education and their teams will continue to work closely with Schools to encourage and support the changes necessary to achieve this.

## 21 CAPITAL EXPENDITURE & RECEIPTS

- 21.1 Following the assessment of the September 2024 student intake and as part of drafting the Financial Recovery Plan, the Capital Investment Programme for Estates and IT capital projects have been reassessed to conserve operating cash and cuts of £4m applied to Estates and £3m to Digital per annum (for the current year and future two years). It is likely that the cuts can be phased to accommodate increases and decreases in the pattern of project spend, so long as these can be saved over the three-year period. This is highlighted in the table below:

**TABLE 9 – 3 Year Estates Capital Plan**

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	TOTAL
	£000's	£000's	£000's	
<b>Budget</b>				
Court Approved Budget	£7,500	£8,000	£8,500	£24,000
Roll Forward	£6,540			£6,540
Additions	£195			£195
Original Budget	£14,235	£8,000	£8,500	£30,735
Assumed Savings	(£7,103)	(£2,235)	(£2,662)	(£12,000)
<b>Total Revised Budget</b>	<b>£7,132</b>	<b>£5,765</b>	<b>£5,838</b>	<b>£18,735</b>

**TABLE 10 – 3 Year Digital Capital Plan**

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	TOTAL
	£000's	£000's	£000's	
<b>Budget</b>				
Court Approved Budget	£6,500	£7,000	£7,500	£21,000
Roll Forward	£3,843			£3,843
Digital Poverty	£106			£106
Original Budget	£10,449	£7,000	£7,500	£24,949
Assumed Savings	(£3,000)	(£3,000)	(£3,000)	(£9,000)
<b>Total Revised Budget</b>	<b>£7,449</b>	<b>£4,000</b>	<b>£4,500</b>	<b>£15,949</b>

- 21.2 Operational priorities are changing to accommodate essential projects such as RAAC, especially those affecting teaching areas. All live projects have been reviewed to identify which ones are contracted for, which are essential, and which can be postponed. The cash saving resulting from this review has been incorporated into the University 10-year cash plan.
- 21.3 This has resulted in a budget of £18.7million, as compared to the previous forecast of £30.7million. As a result of the reduced capital budget, projects have been prioritised with a focus on essential projects to allow the safe, effective and efficient management and operation of the University.
- 21.4 A major part of the three year Estates Capital Plan was spend of £7.2million for the Hillhead Heating and Electrical Infrastructure projects. Following the completion of an external assurance review of the project, it will not be progressing based on its original scope. Alternative options are being considered to extend the life of the heating and electrical infrastructure, provide net zero benefits, meet the terms and conditions of the Scottish Funding Council loan and to allow the redistribution of University capital funds, no longer being invested in the Hillhead projects.
- 21.5 Programmes are being developed for Lab Gas Safety and for the priority early outcomes from the Reimagining our Campuses project, including those supporting rationalisation of space. Any funds no longer attributed to Hillhead will be redistributed to these programmes and any other essential projects that arise. This will result in a more balanced distribution of capital spend across the two financial years, 2024/25 and 2025/26.
- 21.6 In terms of Digital, the previous work on the transformative ongoing programme of review, update, consolidation, and replacement of the Digital estate of over 150 core applications has been scaled back. The main projects planned over the next two years include commencing the New Student Management System; Technology Replacement Programme for Audio Visual Equipment across the campuses; Virtual Infrastructure (computer power and storage); Institutional SAN; AirGap backup refresh (protected backup solution in the event of catastrophic cyber attack).
- 21.7 The Reimagining our Campuses project is due to report to Court in June 2024; its recommendations will inform development of the Estates Strategy and Masterplan and should be completed within 12-15 months; until there is alignment of these key documents, the draft 10-year Capital Plan cannot be finalised.
- 21.8 One key aspect of the Financial Recovery Plan is the realisation of surplus assets. The current active sales with an assessment of potential receipts:

- Don Street site – under contract to [Redacted – commercially sensitive], conditional on planning (the anticipated [Redacted -commercially sensitive] receipt has been moved into 2024/25 financial numbers due to delays in the ACC Planning & Development Committee process).
- 3 vacant residential units at Rowett – agents being instructed to open market sale (potential Redacted - commercially sensitive)
- Newburgh, Culterty House – exploring selling at auction (potential Redacted - commercially sensitive).

21.9 Other sales which are progressing and should realise in late 2024/25 or 2025/26 are:

- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- Bettyhill Field Centre Facility (sold at auction - £100k).

## 22 DEBT RESTRUCTURING, COVENANT COMPLIANCE AND CASH PLANNING

### Debt Restructuring

22.1 Due to the projected breach of financial covenants and falling International Student fee projections, renegotiating the existing debt and a new suite of covenants was completed and signed off by Court in April 2024.

22.2 In terms of the renegotiation, due to the excess cash balances following the cessation of Johnston and King's, the favoured option was for the University to repay the £30m loan to Barclays and replace it with a £30m revolving credit facility (RCF) which the University could access as required.

22.3 The proposition passed Barclay's Credit Committee and a formal offer was received and accepted from Barclays, following specialist advice and approval by the Court Sub-Group under delegated authority. The following are the key elements of the arrangement:

- There is an in-year breakage gain of £1.75m. This will count as Other Income in the University's accounts.
- The interest rate for the RCF is Sterling Overnight Index Average (SONIA) plus a 0.7% per annum margin. This is marginally more than the rate paid for the £30m loan, but a fair rate according to our advisors.
- The term of the RCF is three years.
- There is also a commitment fee of 0.28% p.a. on the undrawn commitment of the RCF but no arrangement/utilisation fee.
- There are four (revised) covenants in relation to the RCF:
  - The debt service cover test will be suspended for two years, and the 31 July 2026 test will require operating cash levels to be 100% of debt service cover costs (as opposed to the previous 150% level).
  - EBITDA (earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation) for each relevant period shall be no less than: (i) £0.25m for the Relevant Period ended 31 July 2024: and (ii) (£1.1m) for the Relevant Period ended 31 July 2025.
  - Balance Sheet Gearing Covenant: Borrowings shall not at any time exceed 40% of Net Assets.
  - Minimum Cash Balance Covenant (to be tested quarterly): The aggregate of Cash and Cash Equivalents and Investments with a duration of 12 months or less and unencumbered shall at the end of each Relevant Period

be no less than £50m. The Minimum Cash Balance Covenant may include undrawn debt facilities (i.e the undrawn RCF) but only to the extent they are available/capable of being drawn (**Refer to Appendix 5**).

### **Covenant Compliance**

- 22.4 The University established a Court Sub Group (Refinancing and Covenants) to oversee the renegotiation process and recommend signing the RCF and revised covenants. To satisfy the Sub Group, the external lenders (Barclays and the two private placement lenders) and external audit (necessary for the going concern element of the audit opinion) the revised covenants would be met, the Finance Team worked extensively to produce comprehensive financial models, projections and supporting information.
- 22.5 Having already completed scenario planning around income as part of the Financial Recovery Plan, the main focus for this modelling was various scenarios on underachievement of projected savings to ensure sufficient headroom regards the proposed covenants.
- 22.5 The covenants were all tested against the risk assessed position that assumed that 50% of the specified savings target of £19.7m would not be achieved. The following paragraphs outline the results, with further detail outlined in **Appendix 4**.

- **Cash Holding**

The 10 year cash projection (**Refer to Appendix 5 and further detail below**) financial modelling demonstrated that with the remaining £20m of private placement funding, operating cash and the RCF, that the £50m minimum holding will be comfortably exceeded until 31 July 2026 i.e the duration of this Budget Plan.

As the updated test is a minimum cash holding requirement, for the occurrence of any plausible downside, management have the ability to take corrective action to ensure that the minimum cash balance is retained. For example, to further reduce levels of capital investment or consider disposal of any assets that are surplus to requirement.

- **EBITDA**

As above, the projections in the Financial Recovery Plan highlighted the EBITDA test being met in both relevant years with £6.6m headroom in 2023/24 and £10.2m headroom in 2024/25. These projections were critical in the Sub-Group approving the debt restructuring.

- **Gearing**

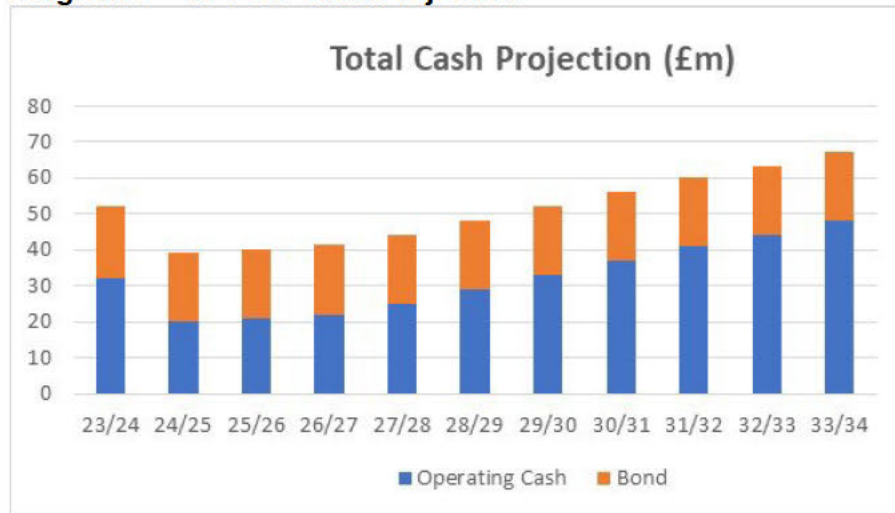
As outlined in previous reports, the gearing test was always forecast to be comfortably met, and with the repayment of £30m of debt and the reversal of the £85m USS pension provision in 2023/24, there will now be more headroom for ensuring that this is the case. The Balance Sheet gearing varies between 21% and 22% for 2023/24 to 2025/26.

### **Cash Planning**

- 22.7 An inherent part of the Budget is the 10 year cash plan (**refer to Appendix 5**). This is of increased importance in this Budget due to the Minimum Cash Holding covenant requirement outlined above.

- 22.8 The forecast demonstrates that with the remaining £20m of private placement funding, operating cash and the RCF, that the £50m minimum holding will be comfortably exceeded upto 31 July 2026 i.e the duration of this Budget Plan. The forecast also demonstrates that the operating cash balance will exceed the one months' working capital level specified by the Audit and Risk Committee (the figure is slightly below this for 2024/25 and 2025/26).
- 22.9 However, the forecast (diagram below) also highlights that in years 2026/27 to 2028/29 following the expiry of the RCF, the minimum cash level will not be reached. A decision on the position with the RCF will therefore be required towards the end of the 3 year agreement.

**Diagram 3 – 10 Year Cash Projection**



**23 U.S DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FEDERAL STUDENT AID**

23.1. [Redacted]

23.2. [Redacted]

23.3. [Redacted]

23.4. [Redacted]

23.5. [Redacted]

23.6. [Redacted]

23.7. [Redacted]

23.8. [Redacted]

- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]

23.9. [Redacted]

**24 FURTHER INFORMATION**

24.1 Further information is available from Mark White, Chief Finance Officer mark.white@abdn.ac.uk Karl Leydecker, Senior Vice-Principal, (karl.leydecker@abdn.ac.uk).

10th June 2024

**Confidentiality Status:** ~~Closed~~ Paper has been made open with redactions following Court. Appendices are confidential while allocation of savings for Schools and Directorates remain under discussion/to be agreed.

## UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

## UNIVERSITY COURT

**STRATEGIC PLAN FORECAST (SPF) FOR 2023/24 to 2025/26****1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

Each year, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) request higher education institutions to prepare a Strategic Plan Forecast (SPF). This paper presents the SPF for financial years 2023/24 to 2025/26.

This requires to be approved by the University Court on the 19<sup>th</sup> June 2024 and submitted to SFC by 30 June 2024. The SPF is based on the April 2024 Monthly Management Report and Budget Report 2024/25 to 2025/26, also presented for approval at this Court meeting.

**2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED**

	<b>Board/Committee</b>	<b>Date</b>
Previously considered/approved by	Senior Management Team	10 <sup>th</sup> June 2024
Further consideration/ approval required by	University Court	19th June 2024

**3. RECOMMENDED ACTION**

The Court is invited to approve:

- The Strategic Plan Forecast for the three financial years 2023/24 to 2025/26.

**4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1. The Strategic Plan Forecast (SPF) is an established part of SFC's financial health monitoring framework.
- 4.2. The return builds on financial information already provided by institutions, including the Financial Forecast Update, and will enable SFC to provide further



advice on the financial impact across the university sector to both the Scottish and UK Governments.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

- 5.1. The University is required to submit the attached completed Strategic Plan Forecast (SPF) with forecast figures for 2023/24 based on the April 2024 forecast from the University Monthly Management Report and forecast figures for 2024/25 and 2025/26 based on the Budget report presented to this Court.
- 5.2. However, it should be noted the SPF financial reporting template does capture some financial information differently and there may be minor differences to the Budget paper.
- 5.3. In addition, for the financial out-turn on the SOCIE, the projected deficit position for the three years is after adjustments for the movement on the pension provision and fundamental restructuring costs.
- 5.4. It should be noted that the SPF requires to be prepared for the University, its subsidiaries and joint ventures.
- 5.5. The submitted document will include the following declaration:

*“The attached worksheets represent the financial forecast for the institution. They reflect a financial statement of our academic and estates plans from 2023/24 to 2025/26. Adequate explanations have been provided for significant variances on the spreadsheet. The forecast and its underpinning assumptions have been reviewed and approved by the Board of Governors in accordance with their agreed practices.*

*In preparing this financial forecast the institution has fully considered the financial implications of all aspects of its strategy and has properly reflected these in the forecast. As part of its planning process the institution has included an appropriate level of scenario planning, for example anticipated best and worse case scenarios.”*

## **6. FURTHER INFORMATION**

- 6.1. Further information is available from Mark White, Chief Financial Officer ([mark.white@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:mark.white@abdn.ac.uk)).

**10<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

**Confidentiality Status: Closed**

## UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

## UNIVERSITY COURT

**REPORT FROM SENATUS ACADEMICUS****1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

- 1.1 This paper outlines the main items of business considered by the Senate at its meeting on 5 June 2024 and an additional meeting held on 8 May 2024.**
- 1.2 This paper is provided for approval and information and forms part of the mechanism for Court to assure itself that it has academic oversight of quality within the University.

**2. RECOMMENDED ACTION**

- 2.1 Court is asked to:
- (i) **approve** items 3.1 to 3.4 and 5; and
  - (ii) **note** the items discussed (items under 4 & 6).

**3. ITEMS FOR APPROVAL (5 JUNE 2024)****3.1 DEGREE REGULATION RESOLUTIONS  
CHANGES TO REGULATIONS FOR VARIOUS DEGREES**

- 3.1.1 The Court is asked **to approve, on the recommendation of the Senate, the draft Resolutions, 'Changes to Regulations for Various Degrees'** appended as Annexes A, B & C. These enact the changes in Degree Regulations recommended by the Quality Assurance Committee for introduction in academic year 2024/2025. **Annex A** pertains to students studying under the articulation agreement with Harbin Engineering University; **Annex B** Regulations for the Degrees of Medicine and Dentistry & Physicians Associate; and **Annex C** Regulations for Postgraduate Study.

**3.2 CODE OF PRACTICE ON STUDENT DISCIPLINE (ACADEMIC)**

- 3.2.1 The Court is asked **to approve, on the recommendation of the Senate, the draft Resolution 'Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic)** appended as **Annex D**. The changes implement a need to recognise that, in some instances, the requirements of Professional & Statutory Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) may require more stringent regulations/expectations on students. An Annex would be added to the Code detailing the instances in which such more stringent regulations apply.

3.3 **Senate further asks Court that, in accordance with the provisions of Section 6 (2) of the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966, the draft Resolutions be passed forthwith, so that the amended provisions may be applied with effect from date on which they are passed by the University Court.**

#### 3.4 **RECTOR ELECTION TIMELINE**

3.4.1 Senate asks Court's **approval** for the dates (as below) for the election for University Rector, to take up office on 1 January 2025 following the conclusion of the current Rector's term of office on 31 December 2024.

- Voting Opens 9am on Tue, 19 November 2024
- Voting Closes 5pm on Thu, 21 November 2024
- Results Declared 6pm on Thu, 21 November 2024
- New Rector in office 1 January 2025

#### 4.0 **DISCUSSION (5 JUNE 2024)**

##### 4.1 **POLICY AND PROCEDURES ON STUDENT ACADEMIC APPEALS**

Senate approved changes to the academic appeals procedures to ensure the Policy and Procedures remain fair and appropriate for the student body, while ensuring the workload for staff associated with them is both reasonable and manageable.

##### 4.2 **SUPPORT FOR STUDY POLICY**

Senate approved updates to the Support for Study Policy which is intended to provide a supportive framework for students whose engagement with their studies is impacted by significant health or personal issues. A working group had met to discuss and propose amendments and updates to the policy and these were approved by Senate.

##### 4.3 **POLICY AND PROCEDURES ON EXTENSIONS / LATE SUBMISSION**

Senate approved the introduction of an institutional procedure and policy on submission deadline extensions. It was agreed that this be incorporated to the existing Policy on penalties for late submission to create a single Policy and Procedures on Extensions and Penalties for Unauthorised Late Submission of Coursework. Senate agreed that having a single policy improved consistency of operation across the University and simplified processes for students and staff.

##### 4.4 **PGR VISION**

Senate received a presentation from the Dean of the Graduate School. He updated them on characteristics of the current research student population and factors impacting it. He also outlined plans for future arrangements for administration and support for postgraduate research students.

##### 4.5 **IP, EQUITY & REVENUE SHARING POLICY**

Senate considered and provided comments on a draft revised Policy on Intellectual Property, Equity and Revenue Sharing.

#### 4.6 ROUTINE BUSINESS

Senate noted: Senate Election Results, the routine reports from the Education, Research and Quality Assurance Committees.

#### 5.0 RESOLUTION FOR FORMAL APPROVAL: CHANGES TO REGULATIONS FOR VARIOUS DEGREES

5.1 The Court previously received and approved at its last meeting of 24 April, on the recommendation of the Senate (from its meeting of 24 March), another draft Resolution on changes to degree regulations. Court approved this subject to the further consultation required by the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966 being undertaken through the Business Committee of the General Council and making it publicly available for comment.

5.2 That process has now been concluded, with the Business Committee providing its endorsement, and no further comments having been received from the draft Resolution being made available to the public. The Resolution is, therefore, unchanged from the version provided to Court in April and is presented for formal approval at **Annex E**.

#### 6.0 DISCUSSION (ADDITIONAL MEETING OF 8 MAY)

6.1 Senate held an additional meeting on 8 May, at the request of elected members, to discuss the University's financial position and recovery plan. During the meeting Senate received an update from the Chief Financial Officer highlighting the key elements in the financial recovery plan approved by Court in December and February and updating them on the current financial position and projections. Senate passed a motion requesting that the membership of the Financial Recovery Group (FRG), responsible for oversight of the implementation and operationalisation of the plan be amended to include two elected members of Senate. Subsequent to the meeting, elected members, one from Foresterhill and one from Old Aberdeen, were identified to join the FRG. In addition, the meeting included presentations from the Vice Principals Research and Education outlining some of the ways they were working to minimise the impact of the financial pressures on both research and educational provision.

6.2 The meeting also included an update from the Director of People on the next steps in the 'Lessons Learnt Exercise' which would be undertaken as part of the Change Management Process managed by the Joint Committee on Redundancy Avoidance (JCCRA). Senate passed a motion that JCCRA be asked to consider including academic and student members of Senate on the review Group and at least one external member. Subsequent to the meeting of Senate, JCCRA agreed that a staff and a student member of Senate be identified to receive regular updates from the review Chair along with JCCRA, regarding progress being made with the review. It was further agreed by JCCRA that the investigating officer would identify an external assessor who, in accordance with JCCRA's recommendation, would be drawn from the Union-approved list and who might be used as a sounding board for the Chair as needed.

## **7 FURTHER INFORMATION**

7.1 Further information is available from Tracey Slaven (tracey.slaven@abdn.ac.uk) or Rachael Bernard (r.bernard@abdn.ac.uk)

6 June 2024 [v1]

**Confidentiality Status:** Open

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN  
QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

**DRAFT RESOLUTION NO x OF 2024 [CHANGES IN REGULATIONS FOR VARIOUS DEGREES]**

After consultation with the Senatus Academicus, the University Court, at its meeting on < > passed the following Resolution:

1. On the recommendation of the Senatus Academicus, the following changes to Degree Regulations are hereby approved.
2. This Resolution shall come into force on the fifteenth day of September, two thousand and twenty-four.

**1. GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR FIRST DEGREES**

Following the existing regulations, **insert** the following regulations, specific to 'Regulations for Degrees undertaken under the Articulation Agreement with Harbin Engineering University (HEU)'.

**Regulations for Degrees undertaken under the Agreement with Harbin Engineering University (HEU)**

The following Degree Regulations apply to the undergraduate degrees awarded by the University of Aberdeen and to students undertaking their studies under the Agreement with Harbin Engineering University (HEU).

1. Candidates for the award of a degree of the University, undertaken under the Agreement with Harbin Engineering University (HEU), must satisfy both the General Regulations for First Degrees and the Supplementary Regulations which govern their degree, unless superseded by the following.
2. The following awards are currently available: -

Degree of Bachelor of Engineering (BEng) in Civil Engineering

**ENTRY REQUIREMENTS**

- 3a. Studies for degrees awarded by the University of Aberdeen, under the Agreement with HEU, are arranged to extend over four programme years, the first three of which are undertaken at HEU. The final year, subject to the fulfilment of entry requirements, is undertaken at the University of Aberdeen.
- 3b. It is an expectation of candidates, during the first three programme years spent at HEU, that they will register for and achieve those University of Aberdeen courses prescribed in the appropriate programme prescription, appended to these regulations. Progression within a programme of study will be deemed to be 'not on track' where a candidate fails to achieve the University of Aberdeen courses prescribed within any programme year.

- 3c. For the purposes of the award of a University of Aberdeen Degree, except with the permission of the Senatus Academicus candidates may not enter programme year 4 of the University of Aberdeen honours degree programme, unless they have accumulated, by award or recognition, or been exempted from, at least 360 credits recognised for the degree, including those University of Aberdeen courses prescribed for programme years 1, 2 and 3 in the appropriate programme prescription, appended to these regulations and meeting English Language requirements as stipulated by the University of Aberdeen.
- 3d. Exceptionally, the Senatus Academicus, on the recommendation of the School of Engineering, may permit candidates entry to programme year 4, with less than the number of credit points stated, if it is satisfied (a) that they would have obtained the necessary credit points to progress save for medical or other good cause; (b) that they are capable of satisfying the requirements of the next programme year within two further half-sessions of full-time study.

#### **FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME STUDY**

4. Contrary to General Regulation 4.1, candidates will undertake their studies on a full-time basis only. Candidates are not permitted to undertake their studies part-time.

#### **REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION**

5. Candidates must adhere to General Regulation 3.1 and 3.2 regarding requirements for Graduation. Candidates undertaking their studies under the Agreement with HEU, however, are exempt from satisfying General Regulations 3.1(d) and 9.2 in respect of Enhanced Study.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN  
QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

**DRAFT RESOLUTION OF THE UNIVERSITY COURT NO x OF 2024 [SUPPLEMENTARY REGULATIONS FOR THE DEGREES OF MEDICINE, DENTISTRY AND PHYSICIAN ASSOCIATE STUDIES]**

After consultation with the Senatus Academicus, the University Court, at its meeting on < > passed the following Resolution:

1. On the recommendation of the Senatus Academicus, all prior Resolutions of the University Court concerning the Supplementary Regulations for the Degrees of Medicine and Dentistry, and any subsequent amendments thereto, are hereby revoked.
2. The Supplementary Regulations for the Degrees of Medicine and Dentistry set out below are hereby approved in place of those formerly in force. The University of Aberdeen may confer the awards specified in those Regulations.
3. Candidates for a first degree governed by the Regulations specified in Section 1 who, at the date on which this Resolution comes into force, have commenced their studies under the regulations previously in force may be permitted to complete the requirements for the degree under those previous Regulations, but if they have not done so within six years from that date, if a student by full-time study, shall be considered to have abandoned their candidature for the degree. Alternatively, such candidates may, after application to the Senatus, be permitted to complete the requirements under the Regulations contained in this Resolution.
4. This Resolution shall come into force on the fifteenth day of September, two thousand and twenty-four.



## 1. Degrees of Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBChB)

The degrees of Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBChB) are conferred in accordance with Resolution No 148 of 1991, which was approved by the University Court on 14 May 1991. Amendments to these regulations shall come into force on the day on which they are passed by the University Court.

*Candidates subject to UK immigration law may be subject to a regulatory framework implemented by the UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI). Where these regulations are more stringent than those stipulated within the University's own regulations, those of the UKVI will take priority.*

1. The degrees of Bachelor of Medicine (MB) and Bachelor of Surgery (ChB), hereinafter called 'the degrees', may be conferred by the University of Aberdeen. The degree of Bachelor of Medicine shall not be conferred otherwise than with the degree of Bachelor of Surgery, and *vice versa*.
2. Every candidate for the degrees is required to comply with the requirements of admission to the degree programme. Possession of these qualifications does not of itself guarantee admission. In addition to satisfying any academic and Occupational Health requirements for admission, all candidates must satisfactorily complete a Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) check and, if they are not UK residents, receive police clearance from their home country, and attend for interview, if required. In the rare circumstance that an applicant/candidate has a notifiable health condition, relevant Occupational Health Service advice will be followed.
3. The curriculum for the degrees can be undertaken by full-time study only.
4. The courses for the degrees shall cover five years. The curriculum to be followed and the degree assessments shall be as prescribed in the Programme Specifications listed in [the University Calendar](#).
5. A candidate for the award of the degrees shall complete, at a minimum, programme years 4 and 5 as prescribed in the programme specification listed in the [University Calendar](#). The preceding period of the curriculum may be spent in any other University or Medical School, as approved for this purpose by the University Court after consultation with the Senate.
6. (i) Candidates shall not normally be permitted to present themselves for an end of course assessment unless they have appropriately undertaken all required instruction and activities in that academic year, and subsequently obtained a class certificate. The validity of a class certificate shall be limited to the academic year in which it is awarded. Any candidate who has been subject to attendance monitoring and warned of being 'at risk' of losing their class certificate may lose their class certificate with no further warning if this behaviour is repeated for the course concerned.  
  
(ii) The Student Progress Committee (SPC), on behalf of the Senate, may exceptionally determine the conditions under which a candidate, who has previously achieved the attendance requirements for the award of a class certificate or successfully completed a course, may be exempted in whole or in part from instruction and/or assessment in any component for the degrees.

- (iii) The SPC, on behalf of the Senate, may terminate, at any time, the studies of a candidate who persistently fails to meet the minimum attendance requirements or perform the required work of the courses, for which they are registered.
7. (i) In any academic year a candidate shall not normally be afforded, in any course, more than two opportunities of summative assessment, including continuous assessment, clinical and/or written examinations, as appropriate. This applies except where there is an exempting examination, for which there is a specific standard operating procedure in place. Only results obtained at the first available opportunity of assessment in any academic year shall contribute towards Distinctions, Honours and Commendations, and/or class grading.
- (ii) Where a candidate successfully completes a course on more than one occasion, only the credit points obtained at first sitting may be counted toward the requirements necessary for progression and graduation.
  - (iii) Where a candidate is undertaking a repeat year, or undertaking assessment as an external candidate, a maximum of three opportunities of degree assessment for any course is permitted, including those taken in previous years.
8. (i) Candidates shall not be permitted to progress to the next programme year unless they have successfully achieved all summative assessments in one academic year. Unless regulation 6(ii) applies, any student required to resit a programme year must achieve all degree assessments within that academic year.
- (ii) Candidates who fail to achieve all summative assessments within one academic year, and/or have not met the level of performance required, shall normally be entitled to a maximum of one repeat year across the MBChB Programme. This applies to all programme years, with the exception of the final year where a candidate shall be entitled to an automatic repeat year, regardless of whether a repeat year has previously been undertaken.
  - (iii) Candidates must normally satisfy all requirements for the award of the degrees within a maximum of six calendar years of the date of their first registration for the degrees. This excludes any intercalating degree period, or instances where a candidate has been unable to complete a full academic year or has taken a full gap year, for health, personal or other reasons, and has had this absence approved by the University.
  - (iv) Candidates who are required to undertake a resit, must normally do so within the same academic year, unless otherwise approved by the University. Candidates who fail to achieve the requirements of a repeat year, or any subsequent year shall be required to discontinue their studies for the degrees and be excluded from further assessment.
  - (v) Where a candidate (due to medical reasons or other proven good cause) has taken the resit examinations as a first diet, and/or for these same reasons been unable to take the resit examinations at the prescribed time, the candidate will be eligible to sit at the next available sitting, which is normally in the following academic year.
  - (vi) Where candidates are withdrawn from the programme for a period covering more than one academic year, the SPC on behalf of the Senate may require the candidate to repeat

any previously achieved year of study, including the requirement to pass any assessments on conclusion of that repeat year.

9. (i) The University's [Policy and Procedures on Student Absence](#) provides a framework through which a candidate can report absence and/or establish that their academic performance has been adversely affected by medical circumstances or other good cause.
  - (ii) It is expected that a student who undertakes to sit an exam or submit an assignment, is fit to do so and there are no known extenuating/mitigating circumstances.
  - (iii) Acute illness and/or other personal circumstances which affect a candidate's performance at examination must be notified in writing, along with supporting documentary evidence, to the Extenuating Circumstances Committee for review. However, the decision to waive the regulation on discontinuation following failure of a repeat year shall lie with SPC on behalf of Senate.
10. The examiners for the degrees shall be the academic staff and health and social care professionals who are involved in the delivery of courses qualifying for the degrees, and such external examiners as may be appointed by the University Court.
11. The degrees shall not be conferred on candidates who have not passed all the degree assessments prescribed by Regulation 4, by the end of the period allowed.
12. Candidates for the degrees are required to undertake the Medical Licensing Assessment (MLA). Consisting of two elements (a) a clinical and professional skills assessment, undertaken as part of the final year OSCE and (b) an Applied Knowledge Test (AKT), the degrees will not be conferred on a candidate who fails to achieve a pass in both elements of the MLA. In regard to the AKT:
- (i) As an exception to Regulation 7 (iii), candidates will normally have a maximum of four opportunities, undertaken over the course of two academic years, to achieve a pass in the AKT.
  - (ii) In accordance with Regulation 8(i), candidates shall not be permitted to progress to programme year 5 without successful completion of the AKT.
  - (iii) Candidates must normally graduate with the degrees within two academic years of achieving a pass in the AKT. Failure to do so will result in a candidate being required to retake the AKT prior to graduation and a delay in conferral of the degrees.
13. The degrees may be awarded with Honours or with Commendation, according to candidates meeting the predetermined academic standards for these awards.
14. (i) Candidates for the degrees who *either*:
- a. have failed to complete the requirements for those degrees within six calendar years of the date of their first matriculation, or any extended time allowed by the SPC on behalf of Senate *or*:
  - b. can no longer complete the requirements for the degrees, *or*:
  - c. have indicated in writing to the SPC on behalf of Senate that they no longer wish to pursue the degrees;

But who (in each case) have obtained, while registered at the University of Aberdeen, not fewer than 480 credit points, including at least 180 at level 3 and 4 including at least 90 at level 4, may be awarded the degree of Bachelor of Medical Science (B Med Sci) (Hon) Unclassified.

Candidates who are not qualified for the award of the Honours degree but who have obtained, while registered at the University of Aberdeen, not fewer than 360 credit points towards the degrees including at least 60 credit points at level 3 maybe awarded the degree of Bachelor of Medical Science (B Med Sci). Candidates not qualified for the B Med Sci but who have obtained, while registered at the University of Aberdeen, not fewer than 240 credit points towards the degrees, including at least 90 credit points at level 2 and who elect not to proceed to further study in the University may be awarded the Undergraduate Diploma in Higher Education (UG Dip HE) in Medical Science. Candidates who are not qualified for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Medical Science, but who have obtained, while registered at the University of Aberdeen, not fewer than 120 credit points towards the degree, and who elect not to proceed to further study in the University may be awarded the Undergraduate Certificate in Higher Education (UG Cert HE) in Medical Science.

- (ii) Where a candidate has articulated from another institution part way through the programme, the required University of Aberdeen credit points and levels will be individually assessed by SPC on behalf of Senate.
  - (iii) Where a candidate has attained an intercalated degree it should be noted that credit points from that degree cannot be counted towards awards listed in 14(i).
  - (iv) A candidate who receives the awards described in 14 (i) may not subsequently be a candidate for either of the degrees of MBChB.
  - (v) The Degree of Bachelor of Medical Science (Hon) Unclassified or the Degree of Bachelor of Medical Science shall not be recognised as a qualification which entitles the holder to be registered with the General Medical Council of the United Kingdom.
- 15.(i) Any health, conduct, behaviour or other issue that could give rise to the question of whether or not a candidate's fitness to practise is impaired will be considered and determined through the School of Medicine, Medical Science and Nutrition's Fitness to Practise Processes. Senate, on the recommendation of the Fitness to Practise Committee (Medicine & Dentistry), may suspend or terminate the studies of candidates for the degrees who, following Fitness to Practise Processes, are judged to have fitness to practise impairment. In exceptional circumstances only, the Head of the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition or the Director of the Institute of Education in Healthcare and Medical Sciences may suspend the matriculation of, or exclude from specified programme activities, any candidate in respect of whom there is a question of whether or not their fitness to practise is impaired, pending further process. The Fitness to Practise Committee (Medicine & Dentistry) also has the power to consider the cases of graduates of the University with the degrees who may be referred to it by the Foundation Programme Director during their pre-registration period of training. In this Regulation, any reference to impaired fitness to practise is to be taken as a reference to that concept as defined in s. 35C (2) of the Medical Act 1983, and as explained in the General Medical Council's current published guidance.

- (ii) The above will apply during any time away from the MBChB programme if it is the candidate's intention to return to programme and ultimately seek graduation.

## 2. Supplementary Regulations for the Degree of Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS)

The degree of Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) is conferred in accordance with Resolution No 258 of 2008, which was approved by the University Court on 24 June 2008. Amendments to these regulations shall come into force on the day on which they are passed by the University Court.

*Candidates subject to UK immigration law may be subject to a regulatory framework implemented by the UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI). Where these regulations are more stringent than those stipulated within the University's own regulations, those of the UKVI will take priority.*

1. The degree of Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) may be conferred by the University of Aberdeen.
2. (i) Every candidate for the degree is required to comply with the requirements of admission to the graduate degree programme. Possession of these qualifications does not of itself guarantee admission. In addition to satisfying any academic and Occupational Health requirements for admission, all candidates must satisfactorily complete a Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) check and, if they are not UK residents, receive police clearance from their home country, and attend for interview if required. In the rare circumstance that an applicant has a notifiable health condition, relevant Occupational Health Service advice will be followed.  
  
(ii) Applicants must also meet the requirements of the General Dental Council for fitness to practise including screening for hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV infection. Admission to the School will not be possible for those who may pose a risk of blood borne virus infection to patients.
3. The curriculum for the degree can be undertaken by full-time study only.
4. The courses for the degree shall cover four years. The curriculum to be followed and the degree assessments shall be as prescribed in the Programme Specifications listed in [the University Calendar](#).
5. (i) Candidates shall not normally be permitted to present themselves for an end of course assessment unless they have appropriately undertaken all required instruction and activities in that academic year, and subsequently obtained a class certificate. The validity of a class certificate shall be limited to the academic year in which it is awarded. Any candidate who has been subject to attendance monitoring and warned of being 'at risk' of losing their class certificate may lose their class certificate with no further warning if this behaviour is repeated for the course concerned.  
  
(ii) The Student Progress Committee (SPC), on behalf of the Senate, may exceptionally determine the conditions under which a candidate, who has previously achieved the attendance requirements for the award of a class certificate or successfully completed a course, may be exempted in whole or in part from instruction and/or assessment in any component for the degree.  
  
(iii) The SPC, on behalf of the Senate, may terminate, at any time, the studies of a candidate who persistently fails to meet the minimum attendance requirements or perform the required work of the courses, for which they are registered.

6. (i) In any academic year a candidate shall not normally be afforded, in any course, more than two opportunities of summative assessment, including continuous assessment, clinical and/or written examinations, as appropriate. This applies except where there is an exempting examination, for which there is a specific standard operating procedure in place. Only results obtained at the first available opportunity of assessment in any academic year shall contribute towards Distinctions, Honours and Commendations, and/or class grading.
  - (ii) Notwithstanding the provisions of University regulations which permit candidates to present themselves for assessment in the same subject at two diets of assessment in any one session, candidates may be required to undertake an additional period of clinical study or a repeat period of study, specified by the Examiners, before being permitted to present themselves at a second diet of assessment in that subject. Further notwithstanding the provisions of University regulations which permit candidates to present themselves for assessment in the same subject in total three times, candidates may be required to undertake an additional period of clinical study or a repeat period of study, specified by the Examiners, before being permitted to present themselves at a third diet of assessment in that subject. This would be subject to 7 (ii).
  - (iii) Where a candidate successfully completes a course on more than one occasion, only the credit points obtained at first sitting may be counted toward the requirements necessary for progression and graduation.
  - (iv) Where a candidate is undertaking a repeat year, or undertaking assessment as an external candidate, a maximum of three opportunities of degree assessment for any course is permitted, including those taken in previous years.
7. (i) Candidates shall not be permitted to progress to the next programme year unless they have successfully achieved all summative assessments in one academic year. Any student required to resit a programme year must achieve all degree assessments within that academic year, unless 5 (ii) applies.
  - (ii) Candidates who fail to achieve all summative assessments within one academic year, and/or have not met the level of performance required, shall normally be entitled to a maximum of one repeat year across the BDS Programme. The applies to all programme years, with the exception of the final year where a candidate shall be entitled to an automatic repeat year, regardless of whether a repeat year has previously been undertaken.
  - (iii) Candidates must normally satisfy all requirements for the award of the degree within a maximum of five calendar years of the date of their first registration. This excludes where a candidate has been unable to complete a full academic year or has taken a full gap year, for health, personal or other reasons and has had this absence approved by the University.
  - (iv) Unless regulation 6(ii) applies, candidates who are required to undertake a resit, must do so within the same academic year. Candidates who fail to achieve the requirements of a repeat year, or any subsequent year shall be required to discontinue their studies for the degrees and be excluded from further assessment.

- (v) Where a candidate (due to medical reasons or other proven good cause) has taken the resit examinations as a first diet, and/or for these same reasons been unable to take the resit examinations at the prescribed time, the candidate will be eligible to sit at the next available sitting, which is normally in the following academic year.
  - (vi) Where candidates are withdrawn from the programme for a period covering more than one academic year, the SPC on behalf of Senate may require the candidate to repeat any previously achieved year of study, including the requirement to pass any assessments on conclusion of that repeat year.
  - (vii) If a student has approval for a period of withdrawal from the programme then the student will be required to rejoin the programme year from which they suspended at the start of the next academic year. The student will be required to complete agreed points of contact during the period of time that they are off from their studies. In exceptional circumstances a second withdrawal year could be allowed however in this circumstance it may be recommended / necessary that the student will be required to go back a year to allow for missed practical time with patients and for patient safety concerns. If the student requires more than two years suspension from studies, they will be required to re-start the BDS programme.
8. (i) The University's [Policy and Procedures on Student Absence](#) provides a framework through which a candidate can report absence and/or establish that their academic performance has been adversely affected by medical circumstances or other good cause.
- (ii) It is expected that a student who undertakes to sit an exam or submit an assignment, is fit to do so and there are no known extenuating/mitigating circumstances.
- (iii) Acute illness and/or other personal circumstances which affect a candidate's performance at examination must be notified in writing, along with supporting documentary evidence, to the Extenuating Circumstances for review. However, the decision to waive the regulation on discontinuation following failure of a repeat year shall lie with SPC on behalf of Senate.
9. The examiners for the degrees shall be the academic staff and health and social care professionals who are involved in the delivery of courses qualifying for the degrees, and such external examiners as may be appointed by the University Court.
10. The degrees shall not be conferred on candidates who have not passed all the degree assessments prescribed by Regulation 4, by the end of the period allowed.
11. The degree may be awarded with Honours or with Commendation, according to candidates meeting the predetermined **academic** standards for these awards.
12. (i) Candidates for the degree who *either*:
- a. have failed to complete the requirements for those degree within five calendar years of the date of their first matriculation, or any extended time allowed by SPC on behalf of the Senate *or*:
  - b. can no longer complete the requirements for the degree, *or*:
  - c. have indicated in writing to the SPC on behalf of the Senate that they no longer wish to pursue the degree.



But who (in each case) have obtained, while registered at the University of Aberdeen, not fewer than 120 credits at SCQF level 7 or above, 240 credits including 90 at SCQF level 8, or 360 credits including 60 at SCQF level 9, shall be eligible for the award of an Undergraduate Certificate in Higher Education (Dentistry), an Undergraduate Diploma in Higher Education (Dentistry), or the Degree of Bachelor of Dental Science (B Dent Sci), respectively.

- (ii) A candidate who receives the awards described in 12(i) may not subsequently be a candidate for the degree of BDS.
  - (iii) The awards listed in 12 (i) do not entitle the candidate to register with the General Dental Council of the United Kingdom.
13. (i) Any health, conduct, behaviour or other issue that could give rise to the question of whether or not a candidate's fitness to practise is impaired will be considered and determined through the School of Medicine, Medical Science and Nutrition's Fitness to Practise Processes. Senate, on the recommendation of the Fitness to Practise Committee (Medicine & Dentistry), may suspend or terminate the studies of candidates for the degree who, following Fitness to Practise Processes, are judged to have fitness to practise impairment. In exceptional circumstances only, the Head of the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition or the Director of the Institute of Education in Healthcare and Medical Sciences may suspend the matriculation of, or exclude from specified programme activities, any candidate in respect of whom there is a question of whether or not their fitness to practise is impaired, pending further process. If candidates are pre-registered with GDC the University is obliged to inform it of any such process since it may impact on registration. In this Regulation, any reference to impaired fitness to practise is to be taken as a reference to that concept as defined in s.27 of the Dentists Act 1984, and as explained in the General Dental Council's current published guidance.
- (ii) The above will apply during any time away from the BDS programme if it is the candidate's intention to return to programme and ultimately seek graduation.

### **3. Supplementary Regulations for the Degree of Master of Science (MSc) in Physician Associate Studies**

*Candidates subject to UK immigration law may be subject to a regulatory framework implemented by the UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI). Where these regulations are more stringent than those stipulated within the University's own regulations, those of the UKVI will take priority.*

1. Every candidate for the degree of Master of Science (MSc) in Physician Associate Studies are required to comply with the requirements of admission to the degree programme. Possession of these qualifications does not of itself guarantee admission. In addition to satisfying any academic and Occupational Health requirements for admission, all candidates must satisfactorily complete a Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) check and, if they are not UK residents, receive police clearance from their home country, and attend for interview if required. In the rare circumstance that an applicant/candidate has a notifiable health condition, relevant Occupational Health Service advice will be followed.
2. The curriculum for the degree can be undertaken by full-time study only.
3. The courses for the degree shall cover 2 years. The curriculum to be followed and the degree assessments shall be prescribed in the Programme Specification listed in [the University Calendar](#)
4.
  - (i) Candidates shall not normally be permitted to present themselves for an end of course assessment unless they have appropriately undertaken all required instruction and activities in that academic year, and subsequently obtained a class certificate. The validity of a class certificate shall be limited to the academic year in which it is awarded. Any candidate who has been subject to attendance monitoring and warned of being 'at risk' of losing their class certificate may lose their class certificate with no further warning if this behaviour is repeated for the course concerned.
  - (ii) The Student Progress Committee (SPC), on behalf of the Senate, may exceptionally determine the conditions under which a candidate, who has previously achieved the attendance requirements for the award of a class certificate or successfully completed a course, may be exempted in whole or in part from instruction and/or assessment in any component for the degrees.
  - (iii) The SPC, on behalf of the Senate, may terminate, at any time, the studies of a candidate who persistently fails to meet the minimum attendance requirements or perform the required work of the courses, for which they are registered.
5. The assessment for each course within the MSc in Physician Associate Studies shall be determined by the Senate. In terms of Regulation 9 of the General Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Awards, the examiners for the degree shall be the academic staff and health and social care professionals who are involved in the delivery of courses qualifying for the degree, and such external examiners as may be appointed by the University Court.
6.
  - (i) In each academic year candidates shall not normally be afforded in any course more than two opportunities of summative assessment, including continuous assessment, clinical and/or written examinations as appropriate. Only results obtained at first sitting shall contribute towards Distinctions and Commendations.

- (ii) Where a candidate successfully completes a course on more than one occasion, only the credit points obtained on the first occasion may be counted toward the requirements necessary for progression and graduation.
  - (iii) Candidates shall not be permitted to progress to the next programme year until they have successfully passed all summative assessments in one academic year. Candidates who fail to pass completely the summative assessments shall be required to discontinue their studies for the degree and be excluded from further assessment.
  - (iv) Where a candidate (due to medical reasons or other proven good cause) has taken the resit examinations as a first diet, and/or for these same reasons been unable to take the resit examinations at the prescribed time, the candidate will be eligible to sit at the next available sitting, which is normally in the following academic year.
7. (i) The University's [Policy and Procedures on Student Absence](#) provides a framework through which a candidate can report absence and/or establish that their academic performance has been adversely affected by medical circumstances or other good cause.
- (ii) It is expected that a student who undertakes to sit an exam or submit an assignment, is fit to do so and there are no known extenuating/mitigating circumstances.
- (iii) Acute illness and/or other personal circumstances which affect a candidate's performance at examination must be notified in writing, along with supporting documentary evidence, to the Extenuating Circumstances for review. However, the decision to waive the regulation on discontinuation following failure of a repeat year shall lie with SPC on behalf of Senate.
8. (i) The degree shall not be conferred on candidates who have not passed all the degree assessments prescribed by Regulation 4, by the end of the period allowed.
- (ii) The degree may be awarded with Commendation or Distinction, according to candidates meeting the predetermined academic standards for these awards.
- (iii) Students who are unsuccessful in completing the MSc in Physician Associate Studies will have their completed courses and credits evaluated to determine if an exit award can be granted.
9. (i) Any health, conduct, behaviour or other issue that could give rise to the question of whether or not a candidate's fitness to practise is impaired will be considered and determined through the School of Medicine, Medical Science and Nutrition's Fitness to Practise Processes. Senate, on the recommendation of the Fitness to Practise Committee (Medicine & Dentistry), may suspend or terminate the studies of candidates for the degree who, following Fitness to Practise Processes, are judged to have fitness to practise impairment. In exceptional circumstances only, the Head of the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition or the Director of the Institute of Education in Healthcare and Medical Sciences may suspend the matriculation of, or exclude from specified programme activities, any candidate in respect of whom there is a question of whether or not their fitness to practise is impaired, pending further process. In this Regulation, any reference to impaired fitness to practise is to be taken as a reference to that concept as defined in s. 35C (2) of the Medical Act 1983, and as explained in the General Medical Council's current published guidance.

- (ii) The above will apply during any time away from the MSc Physician Associate programme if it is the candidate's intention to return to programme and ultimately seek graduation.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN  
QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

**DRAFT RESOLUTION NO x OF 2024 [CHANGES IN REGULATIONS FOR VARIOUS DEGREES]**

After consultation with the Senatus Academicus, the University Court, at its meeting on < > passed the following Resolution:

1. On the recommendation of the Senatus Academicus, the following changes to Degree Regulations are hereby approved.
2. This Resolution shall come into force on the fifteenth day of September, two thousand and twenty-four.

**REGULATIONS FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDY**

**1. REGULATIONS FOR THE PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF POSTGRADUATE THESES FOR RESEARCH DEGREES**

**Regulation 2 (iii)**

In the existing regulation, for 'him or herself' substitute 'themselves'.

In the existing regulation, for 'provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998' substitute 'UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018'.

In the existing regulation, for 'workers, assistants or students' substitute 'others'.

**Regulation 2(iv)**

In the existing regulation, for 'limitation upon the inter library loan or the reprographic copying of' substitute 'restrictions to printed or electronic access of'.

2. A thesis or other work submitted for higher degree must:

- (i) contain either at the beginning or at the end a summary of its salient points;
- (ii) be accompanied by a separate abstract not exceeding 300 words in length. The abstract should show the author and title of the thesis in the form of a heading (the University reserves the right to publish this abstract and the title of the thesis and to authorise others to do so as it sees fit);
- (iii) be accompanied by a declaration signed by the candidate that the thesis has been composed by ~~him or herself~~themselves, that it has not been accepted in any previous application for a degree, that the work of which it is a record has been done by themselves, that any personal data have been processed in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018~~provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998~~, and that all quotations have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged. If any results were obtained partly in association with ~~others~~s-workers, assistants or students, the nature and extent of this help, if substantial, must be specifically acknowledged in the declaration;
- (iv) be accompanied by the relevant forms, available from the Registry, stating any ~~limitation upon restrictions to printed or electronic access of the inter library loan or the reprographic copying of~~restrictions to printed or electronic access of the inter library loan or the reprographic copying of the thesis which the candidate wishes to impose, should the thesis be sustained. (No limitation shall be for a period greater than five years from the date the thesis is submitted to the University Library.)

**Regulation 5**

In the existing regulation, following 'statistical and computational compilations,' delete 'analogous'.

In the existing regulation, following 'illustrative material' insert 'necessary to an argument (diagrams'.

In the existing regulation, for 'facsimile documents' substitute 'tables'.

5. Research students should note that, in the case of candidates examined by thesis only, unless the specific permission of the Senatus Academicus is obtained (such permission being granted only on the grounds of the exceptional nature of the subject matter or, in the case of candidates registered for a degree in Law, on grounds of exceptional circumstances) the normal maximum length of a PhD, EngD, MD or ChM is 100,000 words; the normal maximum length of an EdD thesis is 50,000, the normal maximum length of an MPhil thesis is 70,000 words; and the normal maximum length of a Master's degree thesis is 40,000 words.

For theses submitted in Gaelic language, the following normal maximum lengths apply: 120,000 words for a PhD, 84,000 words for an MPhil, and 48,000 words for a Masters by research.

In each case this includes appendices and footnotes but excludes bibliographies, statistical and computational compilations, ~~analogous~~-illustrative material necessary to an argument (diagrams, maps, tables, ~~facsimile documents~~, etc.), and, where appropriate, other materials such as field notes and transcriptions of interviews. If in doubt, the student and supervisory team should consult, at the earliest opportunity, with the Senatus Academicus .

Any data compilation, or material such as field notes or transcriptions of interviews should not be included in a separate file to the final pdf thesis. This material must be anonymised, as appropriate, and then securely attached to the thesis prior to submission.

### **Regulation 6(a)**

In the existing regulation, for 'Regulation 2(v)' substitute 'Regulation (2(iv))'.

In the existing regulation, delete 'regarding inter-library loan and reprographic copying'.

### **Regulation 6 (b) (ii)**

In the existing regulation, following 'a limited period only,' insert 'in accordance with supplementary regulation 2(iv)'.

### **Regulation 6**

In the regulation, following 'In the case of (i)' delete 'above'.

6. Every thesis sustained shall be deposited electronically, in non-editable pdf format, in the University Library and shall be the property of the University, but the copyright shall belong to the candidate.

- (a) The general conditions under which a thesis may be consulted, borrowed or copied shall be determined by the Librarian under authority of the Library Committee, but shall comply with any instructions given by the candidate under Regulation 2(iv) ~~regarding inter-library loan and reprographic copying~~.
- (b) Theses are normally made available for consultation. The Librarian will however withhold a thesis from consultation if requested to do so by the Senatus Academicus, provided that
- (i) The Senatus Academicus, upon the recommendation of the Head of School of the candidate, is satisfied (1) that the thesis contains material that is or could be the subject of a patent application, and (2) that before the thesis is deposited active steps have been or are being taken to secure a patent; or
- (ii) in the most exceptional circumstances, and for a limited period only, in accordance with supplementary regulation 2(iv) the Senatus Academicus is satisfied that the thesis contains material that is confidential for reasons other than of a patent application.

In the case of (i) ~~above~~, the period for which the thesis may be withheld from consultation will end when a provisional patent has been granted, and will not normally exceed twelve months. In the case of (ii), a written justification must be presented by the Head of School concerned to the Senatus Academicus, before the thesis is deposited in the University Library. A thesis will be withheld from consultation under this regulation only in the most exceptional circumstances.

## **2. DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF LETTERS (DLITT)**

### **Regulation 6**

In the existing regulation, for 'such sum as may' substitute 'determined'.

In the existing regulation, following 'time to time' delete 'to be determined'.

6. The fee to be paid for examination for the degree shall be such sum as may determined from time to time be determined by the University Courts of the four Universities.

### 3. GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR POSTGRADUATE QUALIFICATIONS

In the existing regulation, for 'Borders Agency (UKBA).' Substitute 'Visas and Immigration (UKVI)'.

In the existing regulation, for 'UKBA' substitute 'UKVI'.

Qualifications at postgraduate level (other than those degrees referred to above) are conferred in accordance with Resolution No. 210 of 1998, which was approved by the University Court, and came into force on 24 March 1998. This Resolution provides that candidates for a higher degree or other postgraduate award who, at the date when this Resolution came into force, had commenced their studies under the regulations previously in force shall be permitted to complete the requirements for that award under those previous regulations, but if they have not done so within six years from that date shall be considered to have abandoned their candidature. Alternatively, such candidates may, after application to Senatus Academicus, be permitted to complete the requirements under the Regulations contained in this Resolution.

Candidates subject to UK immigration law may be subject to a regulatory framework implemented by the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) Borders Agency (UKBA). Where these regulations are more stringent than those stipulated within the University's own regulations, those of the UKVIBA will take priority.

### 4. SCHEDULE A: GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR RESEARCH DEGREES

#### Regulation 1

In the existing regulation, delete 'The degree of Master of Research (MRes)'.

In the existing regulation, following 'The degree of Master of Letters (MLitt)' insert '(Research)'.

In the existing regulation, following 'The degree of Master of Science (MSc)' insert '(Research)'.

In the existing regulation, following 'The degree of Master of Science (MSc)' insert '(Research)'.

In the existing regulation, following 'The degree of Master of Theology (MTh)' insert '(Research)'.

In the existing regulation, following 'The degree of Master of Laws (LLM)' insert '(Research)'.

In the existing regulation, following 'The degree of Master of Science (MSc)' insert 'Research Master of Surgery (ChM)'

1. Programmes of research study may lead, as appropriate, to the award of one of the following degrees, appropriately designated: -

In all Subject Areas

The degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)  
The degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil)  
~~The degree of Master of Research (MRes)~~

In Arts & Social Sciences

The degree of Master of Letters (MLitt) (Research)  
The degree of Master of Science (MSc) (Research)

In Education

The degree of Doctor of Education (EdD) In Science and in Engineering  
The degree of Doctor of Engineering (EngD) The degree of Master of Science (MSc) (Research)

In Divinity

The degree of Master of Theology (MTh) (Research)

In Law

The degree of Master of Laws (LLM) (Research)

In Medicine

The degree of Doctor of Medicine (MD) The degree of Master of Science (MSc) Research  
Master of Surgery (ChM)

#### **Regulation 4**

In the existing regulation, following 'members of academic' insert 'or honorary'.

In the existing regulation for 'named' substitute ', corresponding or senior'.

In the existing regulation, following 'a major contribution to' insert 'the conception, execution and writing of'.

In the existing regulation, following 'recommendation to the Senatus Academicus' insert 'via the Dean for PGR'.

4. Current members of academic or honorary staff of at least 5 years standing may apply to submit a thesis of published work for the degree of PhD. In order to be accepted for admission, candidates must submit a Curriculum Vitae, copies of the publications it intended will be assessed (a minimum of 5), and a 1500 word synopsis outlining the extent, range, quality and coherence of the proposed submission. Candidates will normally be expected to be the first, corresponding or senior -named author on any publication they wish to be included in the submission for the degree, or to have made a major contribution to the conception, execution and writing of each paper. In cases of joint authorship, candidates must indicate the extent of their contribution. Only papers published in the 5 years immediately preceding registration may be included in the thesis for assessment. The published work must all be in the public domain.

Applications must be submitted to the Head of the relevant School who will make a recommendation to the Senatus Academicus via the Dean for PGR as to whether the application should be accepted or not. Final approval must be given by the Senatus Academicus.

Candidates will be required to register for a period of 12 months supervised study and will pay the appropriate tuition fee.

The intellectual standing and quality of a PhD by publication is equal to that of a standard PhD. The requirements for assessment and award, and the normal maximum word limit, of a PhD by publication are the same as a standard PhD. Candidates will be subject to normal monitoring requirements.

#### **Regulation 6**

In the existing regulation, following 'Regulation 8(ii)' insert 'A programme of research may be in any field of study, provided that the programme: is capable of leading to scholarly research, which may include appropriate creative work, and can be assessed by the presentation of a dissertation and an oral examination.'

In the existing regulation, for 'He or she' substitute 'They'



6. Every candidate admitted shall undertake a programme of supervised research and training for a period to be specified in accordance with Regulation 8(ii). A programme of research may be in any field of study, provided that the programme: is capable of leading to scholarly research, which may include appropriate creative work, and can be assessed by the presentation of a dissertation and an oral examination. Every candidate will have a minimum of one main supervisor, appointed under Regulation 8(iii) for the purpose. ~~He or she~~ They will be part of a supervisory team. There must always be one clearly identified point of contact for the student. All research students must complete the required programme of mandatory training and undertake regular skills and training audits throughout their prescribed period of study to determine research, transferable and generic skills requirements. Students in receipt of funding from any of the UK Research and Innovation funding bodies must, in addition, undertake a skills audit at the beginning of their programme of study which is to be completed by month six of study. Candidates admitted to European doctoral programmes must comply with additional requirements regarding overseas study, non-UK external examiners, an oral and submission of a thesis summary in a second language prescribed for the relevant doctoral degree, and on completion of their degree will be awarded the *European Doctorate* certificate in addition to their PhD of the University of Aberdeen. The Senatus Academicus will ensure that the requirements of both Aberdeen and European research degree regulations, as regards admission, supervision, progress and examination, are met.

### **Regulation 8**

In the existing regulation, following '(iii) to appoint a supervisory team to supervise the research.' insert '(iv) To specify the location the research is being undertaken in accordance with regulations 21 and 22'.

8. It is the duty of the Senatus Academicus, if it decides that an application be accepted:
- (i) to approve the subject of research to be pursued by the candidate, if admitted;
  - (ii) to specify the period of research (including study) required in each case;
  - (iii) to appoint a supervisory team to supervise the research.
  - (iii)(iv) To specify the location the research is being undertaken in accordance with regulations 21 and 22

### **Regulation 13**

In the existing regulation, for 'Normally the' substitute 'the'.

In the existing regulation, for 'require' substitute 'permit'.

In the existing regulation, following 'a full-time' insert 'or part-time'.

In the existing regulation, following 'course of research' delete 'but it will permit part- time research'.

13. ~~Normally the~~ the Senatus Academicus shall ~~permit~~ require a candidate to pursue a full-time or part-time course of research, ~~but it will permit part- time research~~ if it is satisfied that a candidate will have sufficient opportunities for research and that adequate supervision can be provided.

### **Regulation 14**

In the existing regulation, delete the following 'The Senatus Academicus may permit persons admitted as full-time candidates to complete the requirements as part-time candidates for a specified period, or persons admitted as part-time candidates to complete the requirements as full-time candidates for a specified period.'

14. ~~The Senatus Academicus may permit persons admitted as full-time candidates to complete the requirements as part-time candidates for a specified period, or persons admitted as part-time candidates to complete the requirements as full-time candidates for a specified period.~~ If candidates' duties and responsibilities change while they are working for the degree, they must report the new situation to the Senatus Academicus, which may decide to alter the period specified under Regulation 8(ii) or may recommend to the Senatus Academicus that their candidature for the degree be terminated.

### **Regulation 15 (ii)**

In the existing regulation, following 'for current' insert 'and honorary'.

#### **NORMAL MINIMUM PERIODS OF STUDY**

15. The period specified under Regulation 8(ii) shall be as follows:

- (i) For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy – not less than 36 months full-time or 72 months part-time
- (ii) For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (by publication) – for current and honorary members of academic staff) – not less than 12 months part-time
- (iii) For the degree of Doctor of Education – not less than 72 months part-time
- (iv) For the degree of Doctor of Engineering – not less than 48 months full-time or 96 months part-time [36 months full-time or 72 months part-time for students admitted directly to the Project stage of the programme]
- (v) For the degree of Master of Philosophy – not less than 24 months full-time or 48 months part-time
- (vi) For the degrees of Doctor of Medicine and Master of Surgery – not less than 24 months full-time or 48 months part-time
- (vii) For any other Master's degree – not less than 12 months full-time or 24 months part-time.

The Senatus Academicus shall have power to recognise as counting towards this period study undertaken elsewhere, provided that in no case shall the period of registration in the University of Aberdeen for any degree be less than 12 months (full-time) or 24 months (part-time).

#### **Regulation 21**

In the existing Regulation, for 'Marine Laboratory of the Scottish Office Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries Department' substitute 'Marine Directorate'.

In the existing regulation, for 'The Scottish Agricultural College' substitute 'Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)'.

#### **LOCATION OF FULL-TIME RESEARCH STUDENTS**

21. The research required by Regulation 8 shall, for full-time candidates, be conducted in the University of Aberdeen or in one of the following local institutions:

A Unit within the University whose director is a member of the University  
~~Marine Laboratory of the Scottish Office Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries~~  
~~Department Marine Directorate~~  
~~The Scottish Agricultural College~~ Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), Aberdeen  
NERC Centre for Ecology and Hydrology  
Hospitals of the Grampian Health Board  
Hospitals of the Highland Health Board in Inverness  
Regional Centres of the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service  
Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh  
James Hutton Institute  
Trinity College Bristol with Bristol Baptist College

The project for the degree of Doctor of Engineering shall be undertaken in an approved industrial location.

#### **Regulation 24**

In the existing regulation, following 'Reader' insert 'Senior Lecturer'.

In the existing regulation, following 'of that institution' insert 'Of the persons appointed to supervise, normally, one will be appointed as lead supervisor. The lead supervisor will, normally, be an employee of the University. For candidates undertaking their studies within the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition (MMSN), the lead supervisor appointed must be an employee of the University.'

#### **SUPERVISORS**

24. Of the persons appointed to supervise the candidate's research at least one shall be a Professor, Reader, Senior Lecturer or Lecturer currently employed by the University, and if the candidate's research is conducted

in one of the local institutions named in Regulation 21, at least one shall be a member of the staff of that institution. Of the persons appointed to supervise, normally, one will be appointed as lead supervisor. The lead supervisor will, normally, be an employee of the University. For candidates undertaking their studies within the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition (MMSN), the lead supervisor appointed must be an employee of the University. The supervisors for the degree of Doctor of Engineering shall include an industrial supervisor engaged in Engineering practice.

### **Regulation 30**

In the existing regulation, for '8' substitute '11'.

In the existing regulation, following 'Regulation 8' insert new paragraph as follows:

'A person's candidature for the degree of Doctor of Education shall be terminated if they do not reach a pass standard in the courses prescribed under Regulation 10'.

#### **TERMINATION**

30. The Senatus Academicus shall have the power to terminate at any time a person's candidature, provided it is satisfied that there is sufficient reason for doing so. A person's candidature for the degree of Doctor of Engineering shall be terminated if they do not reach a pass standard in the courses prescribed under Regulation 11.

A person's candidature for the degree of Doctor of Education shall be terminated if they do not reach a pass standard in the courses prescribed under Regulation 10.

### **Regulation 32**

Insert new regulation as follows:

'32. Research students should note that, in the case of candidates examined by thesis only, unless the specific permission of the Senatus Academicus is obtained (such permission being granted only on the grounds of the exceptional nature of the subject matter or, in the case of candidates registered for a degree in Law, on grounds of exceptional circumstances) the normal maximum length of a PhD, EngD, MD or ChM is 100,000 words; the normal maximum length of an EdD thesis is 50,000, the normal maximum length of an Mphil thesis is 70,000 words; and the normal maximum length of a Master's degree thesis is 40,000 words.

For theses submitted in Gaelic language, the following normal maximum lengths apply: 120,000 words for a PhD, 84,000 words for an Mphil, and 48,000 words for a Masters by research.

In each case this includes figure legends, appendices and footnotes but excludes table of contents, bibliographies, statistical and computational compilations, illustrative material necessary to an argument (diagrams, maps, tables etc.), and, where appropriate, other materials such as field notes and transcriptions of interviews. If in doubt, the student and supervisory team should consult, at the earliest opportunity, with the Senatus Academicus .

Any data compilation, or material such as field notes or transcriptions of interviews should not be included in a separate file to the final pdf thesis. This material must be anonymized, as appropriate, and then securely attached to the thesis prior to submission.

Notes: The above prescriptions do not apply to editions.'

Research students should note that, in the case of candidates examined by thesis only, unless the specific permission of the Senatus Academicus is obtained (such permission being granted only on the grounds of the exceptional nature of the subject matter or, in the case of candidates registered for a degree in Law, on grounds of exceptional circumstances) the normal maximum length of a PhD, EngD, MD or ChM is 100,000 words; the normal maximum

length of an EdD thesis is 50,000, the normal maximum length of an Mphil thesis is 70,000 words; and the normal maximum length of a Master's degree thesis is 40,000 words.

For theses submitted in Gaelic language, the following normal maximum lengths apply: 120,000 words for a PhD, 84,000 words for an Mphil, and 48,000 words for a Masters by research.

In each case this includes figure legends, appendices and footnotes but excludes table of contents, bibliographies, statistical and computational compilations, illustrative material necessary to an argument (diagrams, maps, tables etc.), and, where appropriate, other materials such as field notes and transcriptions of interviews. If in doubt, the student and supervisory team should consult, at the earliest opportunity, with the Senatus Academicus.

Any data compilation, or material such as field notes or transcriptions of interviews should not be included in a separate file to the final pdf thesis. This material must be anonymized, as appropriate, and then securely attached to the thesis prior to submission.

Notes: The above prescriptions do not apply to editions.

Re-number the following regulations.

### **Regulation 31**

In the existing regulation, for 'Mphil' substitute 'MPhil'.

34. The thesis of a candidate for the ~~Mphil~~MPhil/PhD in Film and Visual Culture may take the form of a written dissertation (of approximately 50,000-70,000 words in length) accompanied by a practice-based film or other visual culture element.

### **Regulation 33**

In the existing regulation, for 'oral' substitute '*viva voce*'.

36. All candidates shall be required to submit to ~~viva voce~~oral examination unless there are exceptional reasons why the oral examination should be dispensed with. In such cases, the exceptional reasons for dispensing with the oral examination must be given in detail on the examiners' reports and be approved by the Senatus Academicus. The oral examination will normally take place only when a thesis is first submitted. Where a thesis has been re-submitted, a second oral examination will be held only if the Senatus Academicus approves a proposal to that effect, normally on the recommendation of the examiners.

### **Regulation 34**

In the existing regulation, following 'appointment of an' insert 'internal'.

In the existing regulation, following 'may be dispensed with' insert 'however a moderator will be appointed to oversee the examination'.

#### **EXAMINERS FOR RESEARCH DEGREES**

~~34-37~~ The Senatus Academicus shall appoint on the recommendation of the Head of School one or more persons, being Professors, Readers, Lecturers or academic staff of an equivalent employment grade in the University, to examine each thesis and report upon its merits, and, if the candidate's research has been conducted in one of the institutions named in Regulation 21, may in addition appoint as internal examiners one or more members of the staff of that institution. The University Court shall appoint at least one external examiner in accordance with the provisions of University Court Ordinance No. 404 (Aberdeen No. 80) to examine each thesis, provided (i) that if the candidate is a Lecturer in the University of Aberdeen or an academic member of staff undertaking a PhD by Publication two external examiners shall be appointed, and (ii) that if two external examiners are appointed the appointment of an internal examiner by the Senatus Academicus may be dispensed with however a moderator will be appointed to oversee the examination. The supervisor(s) of a candidate shall not be eligible to serve as an internal examiner of that candidate. Where the candidate is a Lecturer in the University of Aberdeen and it has therefore been necessary to appoint two external examiners, the Senatus Academicus shall appoint a Professor, Reader, Lecturer or academic staff of an equivalent employment grade who is currently employed by the University, and is not the candidate's supervisor, to oversee the examination arrangements.

### **Regulation 37**

In the existing regulation, for '38' substitute '39'.

In the existing regulation, for '38' substitute '39'.

**POSSIBLE OUTCOMES OF THESIS EXAMINATION**

~~3740~~. The Senatus Academicus, having considered the reports of all the Examiners appointed, may on first examination: (i) decide that the thesis be sustained, if appropriate, subject to minor corrections which should be submitted within a stated period, normally 3 months, but no more than 6 months; (ii) decide that, though they are unable to recommend that the thesis be sustained, a candidate may re-submit the thesis in a revised form, for the same degree, within a stated period, which shall not exceed twelve months; (iii) decide that a candidate, whose thesis does not meet the standards for the degree as specified in Regulation ~~3839~~ but which does meet the standards specified for a lower degree appropriate to the discipline in which the candidate is registered, be awarded the latter degree without further examination; (iv) decide that they are unable to recommend that the thesis be sustained and that the candidate may re-submit the thesis in a revised form for a lower degree, within a stated period which shall not exceed twelve months; or (v) decide that the thesis be not sustained.

When the thesis is re-submitted (see (ii) and (iv) above), the Examiners, who shall normally be those appointed to examine the original submission, may: (vi) decide that the thesis be sustained, if appropriate subject to minor corrections (which should normally be completed within 3 months, but can be permitted up to 6 months on recommendation of the Examiners); (vii) decide that a candidate, whose thesis does not meet the standards for the degree as specified in Regulation ~~3938~~ but which does meet the standards specified in Regulation ~~3938~~ for a lower degree appropriate to the discipline in which the candidate is registered, be awarded the latter degree without further examination; or (viii) decide that the thesis be not sustained.

Only one re-submission of a thesis will be permitted, irrespective of the degree being considered.

Where a candidate has failed to meet the standards required for award of any degree but has produced work that, in the opinion of the Examiners, is of sufficient merit to warrant formal recognition, it shall be in the power of the Examiners to recommend the award of a Certificate of Postgraduate Research Studies in the discipline concerned.

Where the Examiners decide that, though they are unable to recommend that the thesis be sustained, a candidate may re-submit the thesis in a revised form, for the same degree, within a stated period which shall not exceed twelve months (see (ii) above), but where the candidate indicates that they do not wish to re-submit, the Examiners may decide that a candidate, whose thesis does not meet the standards for the degree as specified in Regulation ~~3938~~ but which does meet the standards specified for another degree appropriate to the discipline in which the candidate is registered, be awarded the latter degree without further examination (see (iii) above).

## UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

## UNIVERSITY COURT

**CODE OF PRACTICE ON STUDENT DISCIPLINE (ACADEMIC)****1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to seek the **approval** of University Court for an amendment to the Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic).

**2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED**

	<b>Board/Committee</b>	<b>Date</b>
Previously considered/ approved by:	Academic Policy and Regulations Group (APRG)	2 May 2024
	Quality Assurance Committee (QAC)	9 May 2024
	Senate	5 June 2024
Further consideration/ approval required by:	University Court	19 June 2024

**3. RECOMMENDED ACTION**

3.1 Members of Court are asked to **approve** the amendment to the Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic) as outlined in section 4.4.

**4. DISCUSSION**

- 4.1 The [Code of Practice on Student Discipline \(Academic\)](#) sets out the University's approach to the handling of Academic Misconduct by students. The Code, approved by the University's Senate and Court, provides information on the types of offences which may occur (e.g., plagiarism or contract cheating), the processes for handling alleged instances of Academic Misconduct (within Schools and, where appropriate, centrally) and the penalties to be imposed where an allegation is proven. The Code applies to all students undertaking their studies with the University.
- 4.2 On occasion, however, a Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Body (PSRB) may regulate a course, programme or element of assessment and, in so doing, impose more stringent regulations in regard to Academic Misconduct and / or provide more detailed information in regard to what may constitute Academic Misconduct.
- 4.3 One such example is the UK Medical Licensing Assessment regulated by the General Medical Council (GMC). In this scenario the requirements are evidenced by a Policy Framework, the final version of which is expected to be published shortly, drafted by the General Medical Council (GMC) in respect of the Applied Knowledge Test (AKT), an element of assessment comprising part of the Medical Licensing Assessment (MLA), required to be undertaken by students registered for the Degree of MBChB. The draft framework provides guidance in respect of Academic Misconduct as outlined in *Appendix 1*. While this document is predominantly aligned with the University's own definitions in regard to misconduct, it sets out specific expectations of students

undertaking the AKT, the detail of which would not be appropriately reflected the Code of Practice governing all students.

- 4.4 On this basis, therefore, members of Court, on the recommendation of Senate are asked to consider and, if appropriate, **approve** an amendment to the University's Code of Practice on Student Discipline as detailed below, to reflect the fact that, in some instances, there may be more stringent regulations / expectations placed on students, as a consequence of PSRB requirements. In addition, an Annex will be appended to the Code, detailing the instances in which such more stringent regulations apply.

*Within Section 1, 'Purpose of Code' insert:*

*Students undertaking courses, programmes and / or elements of assessment subject to the requirements of a Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Body (PSRB), may be subject to an additional regulatory framework in respect of Academic Misconduct. Where these regulations are more stringent than those stipulated within the University's own regulations, those of the PSRB will take priority. Frameworks which exist in this regard are listed in Appendix C, and will be widely publicised to the students concerned.*

## **5. FURTHER INFORMATION**

- 5.1 Further information is available from Steve Tucker, Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement ([s.tucker@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:s.tucker@abdn.ac.uk)) or Emma Tough, Assistant Registrar ([e.tough@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:e.tough@abdn.ac.uk)).

11 June 2024

**Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open**

## Examination misconduct

### Purpose

In relation to the AKT, this policy sets out:

- Universities' expectations of candidates' professional behaviour
- what universities mean by examination misconduct
- how concerns about suspected examination misconduct by UK medical students will be dealt with
- penalties for examination misconduct.
- How information about exam misconduct will be shared with MSC and GMC

### Universities' and the GMC's expectations of candidates' professional behaviour

The AKT is an exam quality assured by the GMC. Both universities and the GMC require all candidates to act professionally in relation to the AKT. Unprofessional behaviour, such as cheating or gaining an unfair advantage, would undermine confidence in the AKT.

#### *Fitness to practise at the point of registration*

Medical students with a UK primary medical qualification are entitled to provisional registration and a licence to practise if their fitness to practise is not impaired.

Examination misconduct in relation to the AKT may bring into question a candidate's fitness to practise as such behaviour falls below the standards of professional behaviour that the GMC and universities expect.

#### *The GMC expects doctors to act with honesty and integrity*

Patients must be able to trust doctors with their lives and health. To justify that trust, all doctors registered with the GMC must show respect for human life and make sure their conduct and practice meet the standards the GMC has set out in its core guidance, [Good medical practice](#).

In relation to acting with honesty and integrity, the GMC says that all registered doctors must make sure their conduct justifies their patients' trust in them and the public's trust in the profession\*.

The GMC and MSC guidance for medical students, [Achieving good medical practice](#), shows how *Good medical practice* applies to them as students. Medical students are expected to mature while they are at medical school and learn about professionalism as they progress through their course. Understanding how the GMC's core guidance for doctors applies during their course and in their future careers helps them be good students and, in the future, good doctors.

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\* Paragraph 65 of *Good medical practice*



The GMC and MSC make clear in *Achieving good medical practice* that medical students are expected to act with integrity. The guidance highlights, in the section Professionalism – key areas for concern, that cheating and plagiarism, including sharing the details of questions or tasks from exams, are behaviours that may lead to FTP action being taken against students.

### **What universities mean by examination misconduct**

In relation to the AKT, the following non-exhaustive list of behaviours may be considered to be unprofessional as they fall below the standards the GMC and universities expect; and, if proven, could amount to examination misconduct:

- Sharing, or attempting to share, any AKT exam content not published as formative material by, including on social media and other online fora
- not complying with the reasonable instructions of an invigilator or other examination official
- viewing, or attempting to view, the work of another candidate
- removing, or attempting to remove, materials or content (including through the use of recording devices) from an examination other than those specifically permitted
- Attempting to take the exam using a different exam browser than the one mandated by the medical school to lockdown the online exam environment securely.
- bringing, or attempting to bring, materials or devices (including internet-enabled devices) other than those specifically permitted into the examination
- releasing, or attempting to release, n any AKT exam content not published as formative material to other candidates, a third party/commercial organisation
- communicating, or attempting to communicate, with other candidates while under examination conditions
- gaining, or attempting to gain, information about the examination questions, other than any in the public domain, in advance of an examination date
- impersonating, or attempts to impersonate, a candidate
- bribery or attempted bribery (of another candidate, examination official or other relevant person)
- disruptive behaviour during an exam
- aiding or abetting, or attempting to aid or abet, any of the above.

### **How concerns about suspected examination misconduct will be dealt with**

#### *How examination misconduct is detected*

In relation to the AKT, suspected examination misconduct may be

detected and reported by:

- invigilators
- candidates
- university staff or other persons responsible for delivering the AKT in the UK or overseas at campuses of UK universities
- any other person who becomes aware of suspected examination misconduct and
- any software used by MSC Assessment or the university to detect cheating during the AKT.

Anonymous reports of examination misconduct will only normally be acted on if there is supporting evidence. However, medical schools will investigate any information about examination misconduct brought to their attention.

### **Examination misconduct**

Any suspected examination misconduct by a UK medical student will be dealt with under the medical school's or parent university's procedures for investigating and dealing with examination misconduct, unprofessional student behaviour or fitness to practise issues.

The release of scores to students may be delayed if a medical school is investigating a potential instance of exam misconduct.

This is so that a holistic approach to a medical student's fitness to practise is taken and any previous instances of examination misconduct, fitness to practise history and/or unprofessional behaviours are taken into account.

### **Sharing information about exam misconduct**

If a medical school suspects exam misconduct they may need to get in touch with MSC to get technical reports as to any anomalies detected by the exam delivery platform or an early indication of the candidate's score. In these instances it is likely that a student will need to be named so that an investigation can take place.

In all other circumstances medical schools need not identify individual students but should supply MSC with;

- details of suspected examination misconduct during the AKT in the exam report they will submit to the MSC.
- Details of any concerns about examination misconduct that arise following submission of their exam report.
- The outcome of any investigations

This information must be shared to allow MSC to maintain the integrity of the items used in the AKT, improve the security of the online delivery platform

where necessary and fulfil its obligation to GMC with respects to quality assurance of the AKT.

Medical schools should ensure that any suspected examination misconduct (whether during or after the AKT) is dealt with through their or their university's procedures for dealing with concerns about examination misconduct, professional behaviours or fitness to practise (whichever is appropriate). Details of any investigation will be submitted to the GMC as part of the provisional registration process.

If MSC becomes aware, through any means including software designed to identify collusion, that any exam misconduct may have occurred it will inform medical schools of the nature of the suspected misconduct, the names of the students involved and all the information needed for a medical school to investigate through its' own processes.

MSC will provide GMC with details of any instances of exam misconduct detected through internal processes described above and any steps taken to address these as part of annual report submitted at the end of the assessment cycle.

### **Penalties for examination misconduct**

In relation to their students, medical schools and/or universities will apply penalties for AKT examination misconduct applicable under their procedures for dealing with concerns about examination misconduct, professional behaviours and/or fitness to practise (whichever is appropriate). If a students fitness to practice is brought into question as a result of alleged misconduct in relation to the AKT it may not be possible for the university to graduate students and or for the GMC to register and provide a licence to practice.

### *Declaring findings of examination misconduct*

In relation to the AKT, UK medical students must declare any findings of examination misconduct and any penalty applied when they apply for GMC provisional or full registration with a licence to practise.

## UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

## COURT

**DRAFT RESOLUTION NO x OF 2024 [CHANGES IN REGULATIONS FOR VARIOUS DEGREES]**

After consultation with the Senatus Academicus, the University Court, at its meeting on < > passed the following Resolution:

1. On the recommendation of the Senatus Academicus, the following changes to Degree Regulations are hereby approved.
2. Following approval of a change in terminology by the Senatus Academics, in all existing regulations, for 'half-session' substitute 'term'; for 'half-sessions' substitute 'terms'.
3. This Resolution shall come into force on the fifteenth day of September, two thousand and twenty-four.

**1. GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR FIRST DEGREES****Regulation 1.1**

In the existing regulation, for '11' substitute '10'.

In the existing regulation, after 'weeks of teaching' insert 'and a further week, to be used at the discretion of each School (e.g., for the purposes of reading, revision or field trips,'.

In the existing regulation, delete 'revision and'.

- 1.1 For the purposes of the General Degree Regulations and the Supplementary Regulations, the following definitions shall apply:

**Half-sessionTerm:** a period, prescribed by the Senatus Academicus, which includes 11-10 weeks of teaching and a further week, to be used at the discretion of each School (e.g., for the purposes of reading, revision or field trips, followed by a period for revision and assessment.

**Academic Year:** the period which commences on the first day of a Winter Term and extends until the last day of the Summer Vacation in the succeeding calendar year.

**Session:** the aggregate of two half-sessionterms, whether or not these are immediately consecutive, plus, for purposes of the Regulations which govern students' progress, the summer diet of prescribed degree assessments following those half-sessionterms.

<b>Course:</b>	a defined programme of study, normally spanning a <u>half-session term</u> or a half of a <u>half-session term</u> , which is self-contained and leads to a specified amount of credit.
<b>Degree Programme:</b>	the aggregation of all taught elements leading to a defined graduating curriculum, including an Honours programme where appropriate.
<b>Programme Year:</b>	the stage of a degree programme, as defined in the Schedule of Courses annexed to Degree Regulations, on which a student is eligible to embark when registering at the start of any academic year or at the start of the second <u>half-session term</u> as appropriate, subject to their having completed or been exempted from the progression requirements of General Regulation 16, together with any Supplementary Regulations regarding progression to which they may be subject.
<b>Honours Programme:</b>	the aggregation of all Honours courses and assessment prescribed by the Senatus Academicus as qualifying for the award of a degree with Honours in a specified subject or group of subjects.
<b>Credit Point:</b>	the outcome of learning achieved by an average student through 10 notional hours of learning time.
<b>General Credit:</b>	credit previously obtained by a student which does not count towards the qualification for which that student is currently registered. (Note: The credit which does so count is termed 'specific credit').
<b>Class Certificate:</b>	a certificate confirming that a candidate has attended and duly performed the work prescribed for a course.
<b>Exemption:</b>	for the purposes of General Regulation 14, a concession made on the basis of successful completion of previous study which exempts candidates from attendance on and/or assessment in a specific course or courses, or from the requirement to obtain a specified number of credit points, but which of itself has no credit value.
<b>Recognition:</b>	for the purposes of General Regulation 14, the acceptance of successful completion of previous study as equivalent to the award of credit for a named course or courses, or to the award of unnamed credit of a specified value.
<b>Enhanced Study:</b>	any course drawn from those offered as (i) a course designated as 'Sixth Century', (ii) a course offered as part of a Sustained Study route, (iii) a Disciplinary Breadth course
<b>Sustained Study:</b>	a defined group of four 15 credit courses which taken together lead to a specified endorsement on the transcript.

**Disciplinary Breadth:** any course taken by a student in a discipline outside their specified degree intention, where that course is not included in the specification of their degree programme in the University Calendar.

**Short Course Approach:** study on an individual course basis rather than being registered for a specific degree programme. Students studying on this basis can elect to take one or more individual courses or to study on a course-by-course basis, building over time, to complete sufficient credits for the award of a degree or other award (subject to availability).

#### **Regulation 4.2**

In the existing regulation, following 'any academic year' insert 'and / or more than 45 credit points in at least one term'.

4.2 Candidates registered for part-time study may not register for more than 75 credit points in any academic year, nor more than 45 credit points in either half-session term. Candidates registered for more than 75 credit points in any academic year and/or more than 45 credit points in at least one term are deemed to be full-time. In the case of an Honours programme any period of part-time study must normally be continuous and not exceed twice the period of study permitted for completion of that Honours programme (or that part of it being undertaken by part-time study).

#### **Regulation 17.1**

In the existing regulation, for 'years' substitute 'terms'.

17.1 The Senatus Academicus may require candidates to discontinue attendance on courses:

- (1) if, being candidates registered on the University's Access Higher Education programme, they have not completed the programme to a standard deemed to be satisfactory by the Senatus Academicus; *or*
- (2) if, being candidates in programme year 1, they have not obtained 120 credit points within four half-session terms of full-time study or the equivalent from their entry to programme year 1 of the degree for which they are currently registered.
- (3) if, being candidates in programme year 2, they have not obtained by award or recognition or been exempted from, 240 credit points including at least 60 credit points at level 2 or above, within four years-terms of full-time study or the equivalent from their first entry to programme year 2 of the degree for which they are currently registered.
- (4) if, being candidates in programme year 3, they have not completed the requirements necessary for graduation with a non-Honours degree or admission to an Honours programme within four half-session terms of full-time study or the equivalent from their first entry to programme year 3 of the degree for which they are currently registered.

For the purpose of this Regulation two half-session terms of part-time study shall be counted as

the equivalent of one half-session term of full-time study.

### **Regulation 20.2**

In the existing regulation, for '90 credit points at Level 4.' Substitute '180 credit points at Level 3 or above with a minimum of 90 of these being at level 4.'

20.2 In order to qualify with the award of a Degree with Honours, candidates must achieve by award, recognition or exemption, not fewer than 180 credit points at Level 3 or above with a minimum of 90 of these being at level 4.~~90 credit points at Level 4.~~

### **Regulation 21**

In the existing regulation, after 'In the case of a candidate' insert, 'in their final year of study'

In the existing regulation, after 'Honours degree assessment' insert, '(courses at levels 3 and above)'

### **Regulation 21 (a)**

In the existing regulation, for '90 credit points at Level 4.' Substitute '180 credit points at Level 3 or above with a minimum of 90 of these being at level 4.'

### **Regulation 21 (d)**

In the existing regulation, for 'level 3' substitute 'level 1 or 2'.

In the existing regulation, for 'level 4' substitute 'level 3'.

In the existing regulation, after 'the assessment, but' delete 'the course is at level 1 or 2 or the course is at level 3 or above and'.

21. In the case of a candidate, in their final year of study, –who has failed to complete satisfactorily an element of Honours degree assessment (courses at levels 3 and above) at the time prescribed by Regulation 9.4 and who still wishes to obtain a degree with Honours, then the appropriate procedure from (a) to (e) below shall apply:

- (a) If the candidate has achieved at least 180 credit points at level 3 or above with a minimum of 90 of these at level 4 ~~90 Credit points at level 4~~ and has completed the assessment but been awarded a mark on the Common Grading Scale between E1 and E3 inclusive, they shall be awarded the same amount of unnamed specific credit, not exceeding 30 credit points in total, at level 1. Candidates may not receive compensatory credit for courses defined as compulsory for their degree programme. Candidates who have failed to achieve 90 Credit points at Level 4 or who have failed to achieve a pass in a compulsory course must refer to sub-sections (b), (c) or (d) below,
- (b) If, but only if, the failure is on account of illness or other good cause, the candidate shall be required to submit themselves for assessment at the next available opportunity, and shall be permitted to count the result of that assessment towards Honours classification;
- (c) If the failure is the result of absence or non-submission for any other cause, the candidate shall be awarded zero for the assessment concerned and shall be required to

submit themselves for assessment at the next available opportunity. The grade awarded at that reassessment will be capped at D3.

- (d) If the candidate has completed the assessment, but ~~the course is at level 3, or the course is at level 4 or above and~~ the mark awarded on the Common Grading Scale is below E3, the candidate shall be required to submit themselves for assessment at the next available opportunity. The grade awarded at that reassessment will be capped to D3;
- (e) If any of options (b), (c) or (d) above would normally apply, but medical advice indicates that it would be unreasonable to require a candidate to appear for assessment on a subsequent occasion, and if the candidate's past record provides sufficient evidence that they would have obtained Honours, the examiners may recommend the award of an *Aegrotat* degree, but only after obtaining the consent of the candidate. The award of an *Aegrotat* degree will debar candidates from counting towards Honours degree assessment any result achieved thereafter.

Notes: (i) For courses at level 4 and above, the timing and format of the assessment required under any of sub-sections (b), (c) or (d) above shall be determined by the Senatus Academicus on the recommendation of the Head of the relevant School.

### **Regulation 22.3**

In the existing regulation, following 'Level 2' insert 'or above'.

- 22.3 Any candidate who, while registered at the University, has obtained not less than 240 credit points, including not less than 90 credit points at Level 2 or above, from courses which can be counted towards graduation with a first degree, and who is not qualified for the award of any other degree, diploma or certificate of the University, other than the Undergraduate Certificate in Higher Education, shall be awarded an Undergraduate Diploma in Higher Education (UgDipHE).



## 2. Supplementary Regulations for the Award of the Degree of Master of Science (MSci) in Counselling Psychology

Insert new regulations as follows:

1. The Degree of Master in Science (MSci) in Counselling Psychology is an integrated Master's Degree. The MSci may be conferred as a first degree with Honours but only following the completion of an approved Honours programme.
2. Admittance to the Degree of Master in Science (MSci) in Counselling Psychology will be to level 1 of the programme. Advanced entry is not permitted.
3. In terms of General Regulations for First Degrees 16.1 (c), except with the permission of the Senatus Academicus, candidates may not proceed to programme years 3, 4 or 5 of the degree of MSci in Counselling Psychology unless they have obtained the approval of the Head of the School of Education, and complied with the requirements of Regulation 7, as appropriate to their intended Honours programme.
4. The Examiners may recommend a candidate who has failed to achieve the standard necessary for the award of the degree of MSci in Counselling Psychology be awarded the degree of Master of Arts in Psychology, Counselling and Education with an appropriate designation with Honours.
5. The degree of Master of Arts in Psychology, Counselling and Education may be conferred as an exit degree only.
6. Candidates for the degree of MSci in Counselling Psychology who have failed to meet the standard for progression into level 5, but who have successfully completed all other required elements of the programme and have achieved at least 480 credit points including 90 credit points at level 4, will normally be awarded the degree of Master of Arts in Psychology, Counselling and Education with an appropriate designation with Honours.
7. Candidates for the degree of Master of Science (MSci) in Counselling Psychology who have failed to meet the standard for progression into level 4, but who have successfully completed all other required elements of the programme and have achieved at least 360 credit points including 60 credit points at level 3, will normally be recommended for the award of Degree of Master of Arts in Educational Studies.

### 3. Supplementary Regulations for the Degree of Bachelor of Theology (BTh) (Distance)

#### Regulation 3

In the existing regulation, following 'and above must include' insert '180 credit points across levels 3 and 4 and'.

In the existing regulation, following 'level 4' delete 'and not more than 30 level 3 outwith Divinity'.

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|---|
| 3. BTh (Distance) Honours. 480 credit points from courses within Divinity. Total credits at level 3 and above must include <u>180 credit points across level 3 and 4 and</u> 90 credit points at level 4 <u>and not more than 30 level 3 outwith Divinity</u> . |
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### 4. Regulations for Degrees Undertaken at the Aberdeen Institute of Data Science and Artificial Intelligence at South China Normal University (SCNU)

#### Regulation 13

In the existing regulation, following 'Level 2' insert 'or above'.

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| 13. In respect of General Regulation 22.3, any candidate who, while registered at the Aberdeen Institute at SCNU, has obtained not less than 240 credit points, including not less than 90 credit points at Level 2 <u>or above</u> , from courses which can be counted towards graduation with a first degree (excluding courses in English Language), and who is not qualified for the award of any other degree, diploma or certificate of the University, other than the Undergraduate Certificate in Higher Education, shall be awarded an Undergraduate Diploma in Higher Education (UgDipHE). |
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## 5. Supplementary Regulations for the Degree of Bachelor of Laws (LLB)

### Regulation 8

Amend the existing regulation as follows:

8. Candidates must attend courses of instruction in an Honours programme comprising a dissertation and any six of the courses offered for the Degree of LLB with Honours, as specified in Annex A.
- (i) Excepting Candidates who have undertaken an approved period of study abroad during ~~the second half session of~~ programme year 3. In this case:
- a. Candidates undertaking the second term of programme 3 abroad (applicable to the Degree of LLB with Honours) must attend courses of instruction in an Honours programme comprising a dissertation ~~and~~ any five of the courses offered ~~for the Degree of LLB with Honours~~, as specified in Annex A.
  - b. Candidates undertaking programme year 3 in full abroad (applicable to the Degree of LLB in International Law and Comparative Law only) must attend course of instruction in an Honours programme comprising a dissertation and any four of the courses prescribed for the degree, as specified in Annex A.
- (ii) One of these Honours/Annex A courses may be replaced by a Level 4 course from another School, with the permission of the Senatus Academicus.

## 6. Supplementary Regulations for the Degree Bachelor of Laws (LLB) Accelerated

### Regulation 58

In the existing regulation, before 'Candidates for the degree by full-time study only: not less than two sessions.' insert '(i)'.

In the existing regulation, following 'Candidates for the degree by full-time study only: not less than two sessions.' Insert '(ii)Candidates for the degree by part-time study only: not less than four sessions'.

58. Subject to the provisions of Supplementary Regulations 58 to 59 every candidate for the Degree of LLB must obtain a minimum of 360 credit points. Candidates already in possession of a degree before registering for the LLB Accelerated will be awarded 120 credits of recognitions upon entry to the Degree. Candidates will be awarded 90 Level 1 unspecified recognitions, and 30 Level 3 unspecified recognitions. Candidates first enrolled during or after 2003/2004 must obtain a minimum of 60 credit points at level 3, with 30 credits in LS courses and 30 credits of Level 3 unspecified recognitions. Every candidate must be in attendance on classes for the following minimum periods, unless granted exemption by the Senatus Academicus, before applying for the degree.
- (i) Candidates for the degree by full-time study only: not less than two sessions.
- ~~(i)~~(ii) Candidates for the degree by part-time study only: not less than four sessions.

## 7. Supplementary Regulations for the Degree of Bachelor of Laws with English Law (LLB) Accelerated

### Regulation 63

In the existing regulation, before 'Candidates for the degree by full-time study only: not less than two sessions.' Insert '(i)'

In the existing regulation, following 'Candidates for the degree by full-time study only: not less than two sessions.' Insert 'Candidates for the degree by part-time study only: not less than four sessions.'

63. Subject to the provisions of Supplementary Regulations 63 to 64 every candidate for the Degree of LLB must obtain a minimum of 390 credit points. Candidates already in possession of a degree before registering for the LLB Accelerated will be awarded 120 credits of recognitions upon entry to the Degree. Candidates will be awarded 120 Level 1 unspecified recognitions. Candidates first enrolled during or after 2003/2004 must obtain a minimum of 60 credit points at level 3 or above in LS courses. Every candidate must be in attendance on classes for the following minimum periods, unless granted exemption by the Senatus Academicus, before applying for the degree.

(i) Candidates for the degree by full-time study only: not less than two sessions.

(+)(ii) Candidates for the degree by part-time study only: not less than four sessions.

## 8. Supplementary Regulations for the Award of all Degrees in Science

### Regulation 1

In the existing regulation, delete 'Degree of Master of Physics (MPhys)'.

1. First Degree programmes in Science may lead as appropriate to the award of a Bachelor's Degree (360 credits including 60 at level 3), a Designated Bachelor's Degree (360 credits including at least 240 at level 1 and 2 and 90 at level 3 in a specified discipline), a Bachelor's Degree with Honours (480 credits including at least 240 at levels 1 and 2 with at least 180 credits at level 3 or above, a minimum of 90 of these being at level 4), or an Integrated Master's Degree (600 credits including in addition to those required for the Bachelor's degree with Honours, 120 further credits comprising an enhanced research project or industrial placement). Candidates for a Designated Bachelor's Degree, Bachelor's Degree with Honours or Undergraduate Master's Degree must in addition comply with the specification for one of the relevant degree programmes specified in the Schedule of Degree Programmes. They must also satisfactorily complete any field work or practical courses as outlined in the programme prescription. The following awards are currently available: -

#### 1.1 At Bachelor's Degree Level

Degree of Bachelor of Science in Pure Science (BSc)

#### 1.2 At Designated Bachelor's Degree Level

Designated Degree of Bachelor of Science in Pure Science (BSc)

Designated Degree of Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences (BScBMS)

**1.3 At Bachelor's Degree with Honours Level**

Degree of Bachelor of Science in Pure Science with Honours (BSc)

Degree of Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences with Honours (BScBMS)

**1.4 At Integrated Master's Degree Level**

Degree of Master of Chemistry (MChem)

Degree of Master of Engineering (MEng)

Degree of Master of Geology (MGeol)

~~Degree of Master of Physics (MPhys)~~

Degree of Master in Science (MSci)

**Regulation 2**

In the existing regulation, following 'MEng' insert 'and'.

In the existing regulation, following 'MGeol' delete 'MPhys'.

2. Except very candidate for the degree must, unless granted a concession in accordance with General Regulations for First Degrees Regulation 14, attend during one of the following minimum periods, as applicable, approved courses of instruction in the University of Aberdeen:

- (i) *Candidates for the degree by full-time study only:* not less than three sessions in the case of the Degree of a Bachelor's or Designated Bachelor's Degree; not less than four sessions in the case of a Bachelor's Degree with Honours; not less than five sessions of full-time study including an industrial placement in programme year 4 in the case of the Degree of Master in Science (MSci); nor less than five sessions of full-time study including an extended research project or industrial placement in the final year in the case of other Undergraduate Master's Degrees.
- (ii) *Candidates for the degree by part-time study only:* not less than five sessions in the case of a Bachelor's Degree, not less than six sessions in the case of a Designated Bachelor's Degree and not less than eight sessions in the case of a Bachelor's Degree with Honours.
- (iii) *Candidates for the degree by a combination of both part-time and full-time study:* such period as may be determined in individual cases by the Senatus Academicus

In terms of General Regulations for First Degrees 4, part-time study is permitted at all levels for the degrees of MChem, MEng ~~and~~, MGeol ~~and~~ ~~MPhys~~. For the degree of MSci, part-time study is not permitted during the Industrial Placement. Candidates wishing to undertake part-time study during any part of the MSci Honours programme must seek guidance/approval from the Head of the appropriate School.

Note: For the purpose of this regulation full-time study during a session means either attendance in any academic year on courses leading to the award of more than 75 credit points, including a minimum of 30 credit points in each half-session term; or (for candidates attending blocked courses) attendance in any academic year on courses leading to the award of more than 75 credit points, including a minimum of 15 credit points in each of two six-week blocks together with pursuance of studies prescribed by a Tutor appointed by the Senatus Academicus of a minimum of 15 credit

points during each of the remaining blocks. Attendance not conforming to this definition is deemed part-time study.

Where a candidate is granted exemption or recognition on the basis of previous study, the minimum period of study for candidates in the University of Aberdeen may be reduced appropriately by the Senatus Academicus, but in no case shall the degree be awarded unless the period of study at the University of Aberdeen has been at least one session. In the case of candidates for an Integrated Master's Degree, the period of study at the University of Aberdeen must be at least three sessions and in no case shall the total period of study at a University or similar institution be less than four sessions.

## 9. Regulations for the Award of an Undergraduate Master's Degree

### **Regulation 12**

In the existing regulation, following '(MGeol)' delete ', Degree of Master of Physics (MPhys)',

12. The Degree of Master of Chemistry (MChem), Degree of Master of Engineering (MEng), Degree of Master of Geology (MGeol), ~~Degree of Master of Physics (MPhys)~~, and Degree of Master in Science (MSci) may be conferred as first degrees with Honours in Science but only following the completion of an approved Honours programme.

### **Regulation 14**

In the existing regulation, following 'MGeol' delete ', MPhys'.

14. In terms of General Regulations for First Degrees 16.1 (c), except with the permission of the Senatus Academicus, candidates may not proceed to programme years 3, 4 or 5 of the degree of MChem, MEng, MGeol, ~~MPhys~~ or MSci unless they have obtained the approval of the Head of the appropriate School, and complied with the requirements of Regulation 9, as appropriate to their intended Honours programme.

### **Regulation 16**

In the existing regulation, following 'MEng' insert 'or'.

In the existing regulation, following 'MGeol' delete 'or MPhys'.

16. The examiners may recommend a candidate who has failed to achieve the standard necessary for the award of the degree of MChem, MEng or, MGeol ~~or MPhys~~, be awarded the Degree of Bachelor of Science in Pure Science with Honours, in accordance with the Supplementary Regulations governing that degree. In the case of the degree of MSci, the examiners may recommend a candidate who has failed to achieve the standard necessary for the award of the degree be awarded the Degree of Master of Arts, Degree of Bachelor of Science in Pure Science or the Degree of Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences with an appropriate designation with Honours.

## 10. Supplementary Regulations for Postgraduate Study

### Regulation 1

In the existing regulations, after 'the Senatus Academicus' insert:

'Every candidate who wishes to graduate in person must normally do so in the academic year following the date of completion of their studies and will only be permitted to graduate once for the same degree. Any student who fails to apply to graduate in the academic year following becoming eligible to graduate will automatically graduate in-absentia and will not normally be permitted to attend a future in-person ceremony.'

Graduation ceremonies are held in June and November but degrees may be conferred in *absentia* at any meeting of the Senatus Academicus. Every candidate who wishes to graduate in person must normally do so in the academic year following the date of completion of their studies and will only be permitted to graduate once for the same degree. Any student who fails to apply to graduate in the academic year following becoming eligible to graduate will automatically graduate in-absentia and will not normally be permitted to attend a future in-person ceremony.

## 11. General Regulations for Research Degrees

### Regulation 41

In the existing regulations, after 'paid the tuition fees required' insert:

'Every candidate who wishes to graduate in person must normally do so in the academic year following the date of completion of their studies and will only be permitted to graduate once for the same degree. Any student who fails to apply to graduate in the academic year following becoming eligible to graduate will automatically graduate in-absentia and will not normally be permitted to attend a future in-person ceremony.'

#### REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION

41. The degree shall not be conferred on candidates unless:

- (i) they have completed the period specified under Regulation 15, read with Regulation 16;
- (ii) they have paid the tuition fees required.

Every candidate who wishes to graduate in person must normally do so in the academic year following the date of completion of their studies and will only be permitted to graduate once for the same degree. Any student who fails to apply to graduate in the academic year following becoming eligible to graduate will automatically graduate in-absentia and will not normally be permitted to attend a future in-person ceremony.

## 12. Schedule B – General Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Awards

### Regulation 13

In the existing regulation, after ‘professional engineering institutions’ insert:

‘The award of credit in such instances is not permissible for candidates registered on the Degree of MSc in International Human Resource Management as a consequence of the fact the programme is accredited, and the achievement of all courses is a requirement for completion.’

13. In exceptional circumstances, at the recommendation of the exam board, an external examiner may confirm at the exam board meeting the award of a Masters to a student notwithstanding a marginal fail in up to 30 credits, or up to 20 credits for programmes within the School of Engineering programmes in the School of Engineering that are accredited by Engineering Council licenced professional engineering institutions. The award of credit in such instances is not permissible for candidates registered on the Degree of MSc in International Human Resource Management as a consequence of the fact the programme is accredited, and the achievement of all courses is a requirement for completion.

### Regulation 16

In the existing regulation, after ‘paid the tuition fees required’ insert:

‘Every candidate who wishes to graduate in person must normally do so in the academic year following the date of completion of their studies and will only be permitted to graduate once for the same degree. Any student who fails to apply to graduate in the academic year following becoming eligible to graduate will automatically graduate in-absentia and will not normally be permitted to attend a future in-person ceremony.’

#### REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION

16. The degree shall not be conferred on candidates unless:

- (iii) they have completed the period specified under Regulation 15, read with Regulation 16;
- (iv) they have paid the tuition fees required.

Every candidate who wishes to graduate in person must normally do so in the academic year following the date of completion of their studies and will only be permitted to graduate once for the same degree. Any student who fails to apply to graduate in the academic year following becoming eligible to graduate will automatically graduate in-absentia and will not normally be permitted to attend a future in-person ceremony.



## UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

## UNIVERSITY COURT

**GOVERNANCE AND NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT****1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

1.1 **This paper provides a report on the key items of business considered by the Governance and Nominations Committee on 3 June 2024.** It includes recommendations to Court for approval, as detailed in section 3, and summaries of other item business considered (the detail of which is available through the agenda/papers of the meeting that are available within the [Decision Time Resources](#) area).

**2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED**

	<b>Board/Committee</b>	<b>Date</b>
Previously considered/approved by	N/A	N/A
Further consideration/ approval required by	University Court	19 June 2024

**3. RECOMMENDED ACTION**

3.1 The Court is invited to:

- (i) Approve, on the recommendation of the sub-panel of the Committee, three appointments to vacancies for Independent Members of Court. **See Section 4 and Annex 1;**
- (ii) Approve the proposed change to the Committee's composition and consequential change to the wording of the Court's agreed role description for the Senior Independent Member. **See section 5 and Annex 2.**

**4. MEMBERSHIP OF COURT AND COURT COMMITTEES***Recruitment of Court Independent Members*

4.1 The Committee received a verbal update on the recruitment of Independent Members to four vacancies, including to the position of Chair of Remuneration Committee, arising between 31 July 2024 and 31 August 2024. It was noted that this was at interview stage with the selection panel composed of four members of the Governance and Committee members due to conclude their consideration of candidates on 12 June. The panel had been established by the Committee with delegated authority to make recommendations for appointment to Court.

- 4.2 Following the meeting of the panel, recommendations to Court for appointment to three of the four vacancies are **enclosed at Annex 1**, together with a report on the process undertaken, skill sets prioritised and proposed next steps with regard to the remaining vacancy from 31 August.

*Verbal Report on Governor Performance Reviews*

- 4.3 The Chair reported that she had recently completed annual reviews with all members of Court. It was noted that the process was annual and was expected to be undertaken again in 2025, at which point the Chair would reflect on whether the process should move to being biennial.

*Reappointment of Independent Members of Court*

- 4.4 The Committee received a paper which outlined for information where the current periods of office of Independent Members of Court would conclude in 2024 and 2025, together with the periods of office of all members. The paper also reminded the Committee of the agreed procedure and criteria for the consideration of reappointment of Independent Members.
- 4.5 In discussion, it was confirmed that the Chair is and was undertaking discussions with the three Independent Members who were eligible for reappointment in 2024. Given the imminent retirement of four members, the importance of avoiding, if possible, high turnover in the Independent Membership was noted. It was also noted that a further circulation or meeting of the Committee to consider any reappointments might be required prior to the September meeting of Court.
- 4.6 The Committee was also reminded that Shona Russell had been previously recruited to succeed Susan Bodie as the Court's Governor Apprentice from 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025.

*Membership of Court Committees for Academic Year 2024/25*

- 4.7 The Committee received a paper which outlined the memberships of Court sub-committees for 2024/25, including where vacancies would arise.
- 4.8 The Committee noted that in addition to the vacancy for the Chair of Remuneration Committee (which was being directly recruited to as part of the above recruitment process), there would be a vacancy for the Chair of Finance and Resourcing Committee from 1 August 2024. It was confirmed that the Senior Governor was undertaking discussions with relevant members with regard to the vacancy but that the outcome of the recruitment of new Independent Members would also need to be considered in this context, as well as with regard to the other vacancies on committees. It was noted that proposals for appointments would return to the Committee either by circulation or through a meeting later in the summer, once the appointment of new members had been confirmed.

## **5 AMENDMENT TO COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE/COMPOSITION**

- 5.1 The Committee approved a change to the Committee's terms of reference in regard to its composition and the membership of the Senior Independent Member. This is presented to Court for approval at **Annex 2** together with a related consequential change to the wording of the role description for the Senior Independent Member.

5.2 The Committee noted that its composition currently included the Senior Independent Member as a member. The change proposed was for the Senior Independent Member to be either a member or have the right to attend/receive papers. The change was intended to recognise that the role carries with it an additional time commitment and given other commitments on other committees of Court, allows for flexibility for the current or future role holders to either be a regular member of the Committee or to attend and participate as a member when required.

## **6. COURT AND COMMITTEE EFFECTIVENESS REVIEWS**

6.1 The Committee received a paper which provided an assessment of the effectiveness of Court, the Audit and Risk Committee, and the Finance and Resourcing Committee when compared against the University of Aberdeen's effectiveness framework. **Note: This is included on today's agenda as a separate paper and item of business.**

6.2 The Committee noted the key points and common themes arising from the reviews, and that these would be considered further by Court.

## **7. RISK**

### *Review of the Leadership and Governance Risk*

7.1 The Committee received and reviewed the Leadership and Governance section of the Strategic Risk Register. In discussion, the Committee tested whether the mitigated risk scores were at the right level and feedback was noted for further consideration by the Senior Management Team for future updating of that section of the Strategic Risk Register.

### *Business Continuity Arrangements for Key Roles*

7.2 The Committee received and noted an assurance report on the main business continuity arrangements for key roles in the senior leadership of the University both with regard to Court and the Senior Management Team.

## **8. TRUSTEE SELF DECLARATIONS OF ELIGIBILITY TO SERVE AS CHARITY TRUSTEE**

8.1 The Committee received and approved a proposed new self-declaration form of eligibility to act as a charity trustee, which had been updated to incorporate the changes introduced under the Charities (Regulation and Administration) (Scotland) Act 2023 and the 'fit and proper persons' regime of HM Revenue and Customs applicable to charities claiming gift aid.

## **9. GOVERNANCE REVIEWS AND GOOD PRACTICE COMPLIANCE**

### *Internal Audit of Governance Review Implementation*

9.1 The Committee received and noted the Internal Auditor's report on the Governance Implementation Plan which had been prepared to implement the six key overarching recommendations from the 2021 externally facilitated Advance HE Review of Governance.

9.2 The Committee noted that the Internal Auditor report confirmed that the six key recommendations from the externally facilitated Advance HE Review of Governance had been satisfactorily addressed. The University's Audit and Risk Committee had also considered the report and endorsed the findings of the Internal Auditor. Since then, and as communicated to Court in May by the Secretary, the Scottish Funding Council had confirmed that the report provides them with assurance to consider the matter of the review of governance that they required the University to undertake to be closed.

*Scottish Code of Good HE Governance 2023*

9.3 The Committee received a paper which, as well as reminding it that the new version of the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance (2023) had come into formal effect in financial year 2023/24, provided the Committee with confirmation that none of the revisions in the Code required any changes to existing University and Court procedures/practices, in order to be compliant.

9.4 In discussion, some members queried whether the current practice of holding two separate pre-Court clarification meetings, one for Independent Members and one for Staff/Student members, was most effective in terms of the operation of Court and suggested these be combined. A range of opinions were expressed on this and it was noted that the intention of two separate sessions was to make the most effective use of both sets of members time given that Independent Members often were seeking to understand University/sector developments and context more than staff/student members needed to.

## **10. REVIEW OF RECTOR AND SENIOR GOVERNOR PROTOCOL**

10.1 The Committee received a paper which provided it with the current agreed Rector-Senior Governor Protocol. As there would be an election for the position of Rector at the start of academic year 2024/25, the Committee was invited to review the protocol and ensure it remained fit for purpose.

10.2 The Committee noted that the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance required that universities with Rectors, with the statutory right to preside, were required to have a protocol that articulated the respective roles of the Rector and the Senior Governor. The current protocol had been significantly updated in 2021.

10.3 Following discussion, the Committee confirmed that it considered the protocol to remain fit for purpose and that no changes were required.

## **11. FURTHER INFORMATION**

11.1 Further information is available from Bruce Purdon, Clerk to the Committee (email [b.purdon@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:b.purdon@abdn.ac.uk)).

11 June 2024 v1

**Confidentiality Status:** Part Closed – Annex 2 is closed until proposed appointments are approved and confirmed. CVs are closed and confidential to Court.

## GOVERNANCE AND NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

**TERMS OF REFERENCE****Constitution**

The University of Aberdeen Court has established a Committee of the Court known as the Governance & Nominations Committee.

**Scope**

The Committee has a standing role to advise Court on matters of governance and to conduct on its behalf, reviews of the University's governance. The Committee also has responsibility for considering nominations for vacancies in Court membership and vacancies in the membership of Court sub-committees.

**Membership**

Membership of the Committee shall be ten members appointed by the Court and shall be made up of:

- Independent Member/Senior Governor (Chair)
- Senior Governor (if not a member as Committee Chair), [Senior Independent Member](#) plus two further Independent Members [In addition, the Senior Independent Member will either be a member of the Committee or will have the right to attend meetings as required with the full rights of a member when present.](#)
- Principal
- Three other Court members providing expertise from across the Court including (as per the Scottish Code of HE Good Governance) at least one elected staff or Trade Union appointed Court Member and a Students' Association nominated member of Court.\*
- Up to two further co-opted external members

\* In line with Court's overarching principles for sub-committee membership, at least one of these three members to be a Senate Assessor

In addition, the Committee will have the power to co-opt additional members subject to the approval of Court.

Only members of the Committee have the right to attend Committee meetings. However, other University Officers or individuals may be invited to attend for all or part of any meeting, as and when appropriate and necessary. The University Secretary and the Clerk will normally be in attendance at meetings. The Senior Vice-Principal may attend in the absence of the Principal as their deputy in order to provide a Senior Management Team perspective but is not a member or alternate member of the committee.

**Meetings**

- The Committee shall normally meet three times a year and at such other times as may be required to enable it to perform its duties;
- The quorum necessary shall be 50% of formal membership (including Chair);
- All matters brought before the Committee shall be determined by a majority of those present at the meeting, and in the case of an equality of votes the Chair shall have a second or casting vote;
- The schedule of meetings will be agreed annually;
- Meetings of the Committee shall be summoned by the Clerk subject to the prior approval of the Chair. Unless otherwise agreed, notice of each meeting confirming the venue, time and date, together with an agenda of the items to be discussed, shall be forwarded to each member of the Committee, at least 7 calendar days before the meeting;
- No person other than permitted attendees shall be entitled to receive any papers relating to matters being considered by the Committee, unless authorised by the Chair.

### **Authority**

- The Committee is authorised to obtain, at the University's expense, outside legal or other professional advice on any matters within its terms of reference.

### **Remit**

The Committee is authorised by Court to:

- advise Court on matters of governance and conduct reviews of the University's governance on its behalf;
- ensure the University has met the governance requirements of the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance, Scottish Funding Council and charities regulator;
- review key governance risks and monitor the adequacy and effectiveness of respective mitigation, activities and controls;
- recommend to Court the process to be undertaken in the appointment or re-appointment of the Principal and the University Secretary & Chief Operating Officer, specifying also the authority of any selection committee within such process and the points at which its approval must be sought;
- receive assurance reports on the continuity plans for senior management positions (in the event of unexpected absences);
- make recommendations to Court on the appointment or re-appointment of independent members of Court, and appointments to Court Committees;
- advise Court on the process for the appointment and election of the Senior Governor as required and for ensuring there is a process in place for the annual performance review of the Senior Governor;
- monitor Court members' compliance with the Code of Conduct for Members of Court, including upholding the nine principles of Public Life in Scotland; and to undertake those duties ascribed to it by Resolution No 303 of 2021 (Procedure for Removal of members of the University Court);
- review annual declarations of interest from members of Court and Senior Management and to take further action where required.

- give advice regarding any matter of University governance or potential area of conflict of interest referred to it (e.g. international collaboration, ethical or reputational issues);
- consider all prospective donations of £1M or more, and any other prospective donations with the potential to give rise to significant ethical or public interest and to advise Court as appropriate. To ensure the University has appropriate policies and guidance in place relating to the same;
- consider and recommend to Court nominations for the award of University Benefactor.

## **Duties**

In fulfilling its role, the Committee shall:

- consider candidates on merit and with due regard for the benefits of equality and diversity;
- satisfy itself that the balance of competencies, skills, knowledge, experience and diversity on each appointment that falls within the Committee's remit supports the objectives of the University;
- satisfy itself that candidates can devote enough time to the role;
- satisfy itself that any candidate's business interests which might create an actual or potential conflict of interest with the University of Aberdeen has been identified and considered, and make recommendations to Court on the authorisation of any conflict of interest;
- ensure that a documented, consistent and transparent process exists and is applied to all the Committee's appointments and includes open advertising, encourages candidates from a wide range of backgrounds, and a robust selection process;
- ensure that so far as is within its control, the outcome of any decision by the Committee is not communicated to any candidate, before Court has approved the appointment;
- monitor the succession plan for each body that falls within its remit, and oversee the pipeline of succession to ensure that there are no gaps in appointments and the membership of each body meets the requirements of the Court's regulations and those of the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance, SFC or other relevant sector guidance.

## **Reporting Responsibilities**

- The Clerk shall minute the proceedings of all Committee meetings, including the names of those present and in attendance;
- Minutes of Committee meetings shall be circulated promptly to all members of the Committee and will be formally signed off at the next Committee meeting;
- The Committee shall report to Court on such other matters as Court may require. The Committee shall make recommendations to Court on the matters that have been considered or reviewed by it at the Court meeting following the meeting of the Committee;
- The Committee shall make a statement in the annual report about its activities.

## **Other**

The Committee shall:

- at least once every year, review its terms of reference and at least every two years, review its own performance to ensure it is operating at maximum effectiveness and recommend any changes it considers necessary to the Court for approval;
- be provided with appropriate and timely training, both in the form of an induction programme for new members and an ongoing basis for all members;
- give due consideration to laws and regulations, the provisions of the Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance and the Scottish Funding Council.

## **Membership 2024/25**

- **Julie Ashworth (Chair)**
- **Alison Rankin, Adaku Ufere,**
- **George Boyne - Principal**
- **Sai Shraddha S. Viswanathan – Student’s Association Nominated Member of Court**
- **Iain Grant (Elected Staff Member of Court), Ilia Xypolia (Senate Assessor)**
- **Sandy Batho, James Dunphy – External Co-opted Members**

## **In attendance:**

- Luke Halliday, Senior Independent Member
- University Secretary;
- Head of Governance and Executive Support
- Clerk.



UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

**ROLE OF SENIOR INDEPENDENT MEMBER**

The role of Senior Independent Member has been established to enhance the governance of Court and to lead for Court on matters where it would not be appropriate or feasible for the Senior Governor to be involved. The Scottish Code of Good HE Governance recommends that such a role should be established and undertaken by one of the independent members of the governing body. The Senior Independent Member will, therefore, be appointed by Court from amongst its independent members other than the Senior Governor or Rector. The role entails:

- 1) To be available to members of Court or Executive Officers as an intermediary if they have concerns which contact through the normal channels of the Senior Governor/Vice-Chair or Principal have failed to resolve or for which such contact is inappropriate;
- 2) To attend sufficient meetings of the Court to enable them to obtain a balanced understanding of any issues raised by members;
- 3) To lead the review of the performance of the Senior Governor, informed by feedback from both members of Court and the executive. To discuss the outcomes of that review with the Court and the Senior Governor;
- 4) To serve, when required, as Convener of the Court's committee for the appointment of the Senior Governor;
- 5) To undertake the role of Senior Governor on an interim basis in situations where the position is vacant or the Senior Governor is absent for a medium/long-term time period.

~~The Senior Independent Member will also be a member of the Governance and Nominations Committee.~~

**-"The Senior Independent Member will have the right to be a member of the Governance and Nominations Committee either as a standing member or on an as required basis."**

### **Time Commitment**

The expected time commitment is approximately 5 days per annum rising to 10 days in a year where a Senior Governor recruitment process is required.

## UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

## UNIVERSITY COURT

**PARTNERSHIP NEGOTIATING AND CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (PNCC)****1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

**1.1 This paper reports on the meeting of the PNCC held on 22 May 2024.**

**2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY / FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED**

	<b>Board/Committee</b>	<b>Date</b>
Previously considered/approved by	N/A	
Further consideration/ approval required by	N/A	

**3. RECOMMENDED ACTION**

3.1 The Court is invited to:

- **Note** the report from the PNCC.
- **Consider and approve** the Joint Collective Agreement, Item 12 (Appendix A)

**4. PAY UPDATE**

4.1 The Committee received an update on national pay negotiations, a further meeting was to be held nationally to consider the options.

**5. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY**

5.1 The Committee received a presentation from Mark White, Chief Financial Officer on the current financial position of the University. It was confirmed good progress was being made on the financial recovery savings plan target, but new cost pressures were highlighted.

5.2 It was agreed that guidelines would be drafted so there are clear expectations of the finance information which should be shared at PNCC.

5.3 The Committee discussed the impact that staff departures through the ER Scheme and Voluntary Severance had on workload. The Committee noted steps that were being taken to address this.

## **6. PURCHASE OF ANNUAL LEAVE SCHEME**

- 6.1 The Committee received and noted a paper confirming the updated terms of the Purchase of Annual Leave Scheme which had been updated following helpful feedback from the Unison.

## **7. POLICIES FOR APPROVAL**

### **7.1 Paternity/Partner Leave Policy**

The Committee received and approved the changes to the Paternity/Partner Leave Policy. The Policy was updated to take into account the changes to the way Paternity Leave and Pay can be claimed and taken, which will make it more flexible for fathers and partners to access.

### **7.2 Flexible Working Policy**

The Committee received and approved the changes to the Flexible Working Policy. The policy was updated to take into account the Flexible Working (Amendment) Regulations 2023 providing a new right to make two flexible working applications in a 12-month period.

### **7.3 Maternity/Birthparent Procedure**

The Committee received and approved the changes. The procedure has been revised to be presented in an accessible format and a section on responsibilities has been added alongside some minor changes to simplify wording/vocabulary.

### **7.4 Parental Leave**

The Committee received and approved the updated Parental Leave Policy. It was noted minor revisions were made to simplify language and improve clarity.

### **7.5 Special Leave**

The Committee received and approved the Special Leave policy. The arrangements for Special Leave had been amended to include the new right for those eligible, to a maximum of 1 week unpaid carers leave which can be taken as a minimum in half days.

### **7.6 Grievance Procedure**

The Committee received and approved the new section on Collective Grievances in section 8 of the Procedure.

### **7.7 Dignity at Work**

The Committee received and approved the new Dignity at Work and Study Policy. The Policy will replace the current Staff Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying in the Workplace. As such the Policy has been renamed to Dignity at Work and Study – Bullying, Harassment & Discrimination Policy.

## **8. POLICIES FOR CONSIDERATION**

- 8.1 The Committee received an update on the progress of the review of the Intellectual Property, Equity and Revenue Sharing Policy. UCU raised concerns that comments they raised during the policy review period had not been

addressed adequately in the draft of the Policy. The Vice-Principal for Regional Engagement has agreed to review these with the Convenor of the task and finish group whilst also considering any comments received from Senate.

## **9 INVESTIGATION PROCEDURE**

- 9.1 The Committee received comments from UCU that, in their view the Investigation Procedure was not working in the manner it was intended. UCU noted that they had received a number of concerns from their members regarding the impact of the implementation of the policy was having on them. These points were discussed with the Committee and it was agreed that the Policy should be referred to the Policy Review Group for review.

## **10 FAIR WORK FIRST COMMITMENT**

- 10.1 The Committee received and noted a paper which provided further detail on the Fair Work First Commitment. The next stage is for the Campus Trade Unions and Senior Management to agree a joint statement.

## **11 OUTLINE OF EDI TRAINING**

- 11.1 The Committee received comments on the update of EDI training. It was agreed that the comments should be reviewed through the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee

## **12 COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT**

- 12.1 The Committee noted that all of the Campus Trade Unions had agreed to the Collective Agreement on the Harmonisation of Terms and Conditions. Thanks was given to all parties involved for working together to agree to the Joint Agreement.
- 12.2 The Collective Agreement is attached as **Appendix A** for Court **approval**.

## **13 FURTHER INFORMATION**

- 13.1 Further information is available from Lindsey Hamilton, Clerk to the Partnership and Negotiating Consultative Committee ([l.hamilton@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:l.hamilton@abdn.ac.uk)) or Debbie Dyker, Director of People, ([d.j.dyker@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:d.j.dyker@abdn.ac.uk))

30 May 2024

**Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open**

## Appendix A

# COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT ON HARMONISATION OF TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT June 2024

Following negotiations with the recognised Campus Trades Unions (UCU, Unite and Unison) a Collective Agreement ('Agreement') has been reached, agreed by PNCC and approved by Court on 19 June 2024, resulting in changes to terms and conditions of employment as outlined below.

The changes will apply from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024, unless otherwise specified within the Agreement.

The changes are automatically incorporated into contracts of employment of staff and appropriate changes to policies and procedures will be made to reflect the detail herein.

### 1. Annual leave

1.1 Annual leave entitlement for staff Grades 1-4 will be uplifted to match the annual leave entitlement for staff Grades 5-9 with effect from the 2024/2025 annual leave year.

1.2 Annual leave entitlement for all staff from the 2024/2025 annual leave year will, therefore, be as outlined in the current Annual Leave Regulations for Staff Grades 5-9, with a total of 41 days' entitlement (for full time staff/pro rata for part time staff) normally including:

- 30 days for annual leave
- 8 days for Public/Statutory/Local holidays –
  - \*Christmas Day
  - \*Boxing Day
  - \*New Year's Day
  - \*2 January
  - Aberdeen Spring Monday Holiday
  - May Day
  - Aberdeen Summer Monday Holiday
  - Aberdeen Autumn Monday Holiday
  - (\*or days in lieu if these fall on a Saturday or Sunday)
- 3 University closed days to be taken at Christmas/New Year.

1.3 From October 2024, the Annual Leave Regulations for Staff Grades 5-9 will be renamed 'Annual Leave Regulations for Staff' and the Annual Leave Regulations for Staff Grades 1-4 will no longer be valid.

1.4 Staff Grades 1-4 will receive two additional days' leave in the remainder of the 2023/2024 leave year in order to accelerate matching to the entitlement for staff Grades 5-9. The two additional days are to be taken by staff between June 2024 and September 2024.

## **2. Public Holiday Payments**

- 2.1 The current terms and conditions for working on a public holiday, applying to staff Grades 1-4 and detailed in paragraph 2.2 below will be replaced with the terms and conditions detailed in paragraphs 2.3 to 2.5 below.

### *Public Holiday Payments - Current Terms and Conditions*

- 2.2 Any requirement to work a public holiday will be agreed in advance with the line manager. Where agreed that staff Grades 1-4 work a public holiday, they are entitled to receive an overtime payment (double time) along with a day off in lieu. Alternatively, staff may elect to be paid at standard rate for the time worked and receive 2 days off in lieu.

### *Public Holiday Payments - New Terms and Conditions applying as a result of this Collective Agreement*

- 2.3 From the 2024/2025 annual leave year, all public holidays will be treated as normal leave. This is with the exception of the public holidays falling on Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Day and 2<sup>nd</sup> January, as well as the three-day close down period (therefore 7 days in total over the Christmas and New Year period). The arrangements for the 7-day period are outlined in section 3 below.
- 2.4 The public holidays out with the 7-day Christmas and New Year period will be treated as normal leave. Staff who are required to work on these days will, therefore, not be entitled to enhanced rates of payment or day(s) off in lieu.
- 2.5 As a result of the acceleration of annual leave entitlement for staff Grades 1-4 (reference paragraph 1.4 of this Collective Agreement), the remaining public holidays falling during the 2023/2024 annual leave year will be treated as normal leave, therefore, will not attract the enhanced payment rates or time off in lieu currently applicable to staff Grades 1-4.

## **3. Payments for staff working during the 7-day Christmas and New Year Public Holiday/Closure Period.**

- 3.1 Where staff Grades 1-4 are required to work their normal duties as part of their normal work arrangements, during the 7-day Christmas and New Year Public Holiday/Closure Period they will be entitled to payment/time off in lieu as follows:
- An overtime payment based on double time along with a day off in lieu for each of the 7 days worked; or
  - Standard rate with two days off in lieu for each of the 7 days worked
- 3.2 The requirement to work will be based on clear justification on the grounds of a statutory need and/or service need with clear approval given by line managers.
- 3.3 This clause does not alter other existing agreed arrangements in particular services whereby cover is being provided, either remotely or on campus for particular activities during the 7-day period. The existing arrangements will continue to apply.
- 3.4 This clause does not alter other existing agreed arrangements for staff in receipt of call-out payments during the 7-day period who are required to be on call and who may/may not attend work as they are called out. The existing arrangements will continue to apply.

#### **4. Overtime Rates of Payment**

- 4.1 The following overtime arrangements apply to staff Grades 1-4 only and from 1 October 2024. These replace previous overtime arrangements in place.
- 4.2 Overtime will be limited to situations where managers have agreed that there is a clear statutory need or business need for it.
- 4.3 The overtime payment arrangements detailed below will only apply where staff have worked the full-time equivalent week of 36.5 hours. Part time staff working additional hours up to 36.5 hours will receive time off in lieu or payment based on plain time for additional hours worked up to 36.5 hours.
- 4.4 Where staff work one additional hour above 36.5 hours, time off in lieu will apply.
- 4.5 Thereafter where staff work additional hours the following overtime rates apply.
  - Monday to Saturday Time and a half (i.e., hourly rate x 1.5)
  - Sunday Double time (i.e., hourly rate x 2)

#### **5. Sickness Leave**

- 5.1 From 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025, the Sickness Leave terms and conditions applying to Grades 1-4 staff will be matched to the terms and conditions for Grades 5-9 staff as detailed below.
- 5.2 Provided that staff comply with the University's sick pay requirements and conditions, staff will be eligible for payment of up to 6 months at their basic salary and 6 months at half of their basic salary. Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) will apply as follows:
  - For staff on sick pay – SSP is inclusive and will be paid and offset against pay accordingly.
  - For staff on half pay – SSP is paid, as well as half pay.
  - If half pay plus SSP exceeds full pay the difference will be offset.
- 5.3 On 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025, terms and conditions will be matched for any member of Grades 1-4 staff who is absent and with any sickness in the previous 12 months being taken into consideration and deducted from the new entitlement in determining remaining sickness entitlement, with the example below provided to clarify.

Example 1: Grades 1-4 member of staff absent for 2 months in the previous 12 months at 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025: sickness entitlement will be calculated as 4 months at their basic salary and 6 months at half of their basic salary.

#### **6. Pre-Retirement Leave**

- 6.1 The Pre-Retirement Leave entitlements detailed below will apply to all staff with effect from 1 October 2024. These will replace the arrangements currently in place for staff Grades 1-4 and Technical Staff.
- 6.2 Staff will be entitled to Pre-Retirement Leave where they:
  - Are providing notice of retirement date above the contractual minimum notice period and as detailed in paragraph 6.4.
  - Are retiring at age 55 years or over.
  - Have 3 years' service at the intended date of retirement.

6.3 Pre-retirement leave is not available to staff taking flexible retirement (i.e., drawing some pension whilst continuing to work for the University on a part time basis), those retiring as part of the terms of a Voluntary Severance Scheme or those retiring due to ill health.

6.4 The maximum amount of pre-retirement leave is 20 days and as detailed below.

Notice of retirement provided	Pre-retirement leave days
12 months	20 days
11 months	19 days
10 months	18 days
9 months	17 days
Below 9 months	No entitlement

6.5 As Pre-Retirement leave is designed to assist staff in making the transition from work to retirement, staff cannot:

- take the leave in one block during their notice period or at the end of their employment, therefore bring forward their date of retirement.
- Exchange the leave for payment (i.e., it will not be paid in lieu if it has not been taken before the leaving date).

Signed (on behalf of the University of Aberdeen)





UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN  
UNIVERSITY COURT  
**REMUNERATION COMMITTEE REPORT**

**1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

1.1 **This paper provides a report on the key items of business considered by the Remuneration Committee since February 2024.** It includes a recommendation to Court for the approval of the annual report of the Remuneration Committee, and summaries of other business considered.

**2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY/FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED**

	<b>Board/Committee</b>	<b>Date</b>
Previously considered/approved by	N/A	N/A
Further consideration/ approval required by	University Court	19 June 2024

**3. RECOMMENDED ACTION**

3.1 The Court is invited by the Committee to:

- 1) **Approve** the Committee's recommendation to approve the Remuneration Committee's annual report 2023/24, as detailed in **Appendix A**.
- 2) **Note** the other items of business reported for information.

**4. REMUNERATION COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

4.1 The Committee formally met three times since the previous meeting of 13 February.

**Remuneration Committee consideration of Enhanced Retirement/ Voluntary Severance applications**

4.2 The Committee formally met on 19 and 26 April to consider applications received under the University's Voluntary Severance/Enhanced Retirement scheme (ER/VS), in accordance with the University's policy, the SFC's Financial Memorandum and sector good practice. A total of four applications were considered and approved by the Committee.

4.3 Each application was supported by a business case and options appraisal that showed the 'payback' in relation to the severance and those elements that were:

- severance pay, pension strain costs,
- payment in lieu of notice (PILON), and
- additional payments etc.

4.4 The Committee was mindful of the requirements of the SFC's Financial Memorandum and other guidance, CUC's related guidance, and institutional policies. The SFC was informed in advance of each application reviewed by the Committee, as required. The SFC did not respond with any concerns regarding the applications.

#### **5 June 2024 meeting**

4.5 At the meeting of 5 June 2024, the meeting received reports on the impact of the ER/VS scheme on activities addressing pay gaps, an update on cases considered under the Severance Policy, the draft annual report of the Committee, and actions supporting the annual performance review of the Principal.

#### **Wider impact of Enhanced Retirement/Voluntary Severance scheme on University pay framework and pay gap activities.**

4.6 The Director of People presented the paper and highlighted that although there was some interesting data around the age profiles of applications, this was unsurprising given the aim of the scheme. There had been no noticeable impact on gender pay gap data. The Director of People informed the Committee that 252 applications to ER/VS had been received.

4.7 It was confirmed that the University was seeking to make £19.7m savings and £7.7m had been saved due to the ER/VS scheme, £5m from a recruitment freeze and the remainder from operational savings.

#### **Report on cases arising under the University's Severance Policy.**

4.8 The Committee received a paper from the Director of People regarding the cases dealt with under the University's severance policy. The Committee considered the impact of the departure of staff in some Directorates and sought assurance that there were credible plans in place to deal with the changes in personnel.

#### **Annual report of the Remuneration Committee.**

4.9 Under the guidance of the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) it is recommended that Remuneration Committees should present a report the governing body on their activities. A draft report was presented to the Committee for endorsement and approval by Court. Following a number of revisions, the report is presented for Court's **approval** as **Appendix A**.

4.10 The draft report reflects the model template proposed by CUC in detailing the work of the Committee.

### **Principal's annual performance review.**

- 4.11 The Committee received a verbal update from the Senior Governor on the process and timing of the annual performance review of the Principal.
- 4.12 As requested by Court, the KPIs had been separated into those objectives that were data driven and those less so. The Committee was reminded that, at the February meeting, it was agreed that some of the objectives were no longer achievable given the sector's and the University's circumstances.

### **5 FURTHER INFORMATION**

- 5.1 Further information is available from Louise Thomson, Clerk to the Committee (email [louise.thomson@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:louise.thomson@abdn.ac.uk)).

5 June 2024

**Confidentiality Status:** Open

**APPENDIX A: REMUNERATION COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24**

**University of Aberdeen Remuneration Committee Annual Report to Court 2023/24**

The Committee of University Chairs (CUC) Higher Education Senior Staff Remuneration Code requires the production of a Remuneration Committee Annual Report. This document provides the information suggested within a template produced by the CUC for reporting on the work of the Remuneration Committee to the University Court.

**1. Governance Arrangements**

1.1 in 2023/24 the Remuneration Committee was one of five standing committees of the University Court, operating under delegations approved by Court in March 2023. The Delegated Authority Schedule can be found at: [UoA-Scheme-of-Delegation-Approved-by-Court-01032023.docx \(live.com\)](https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/governance/remuneration-committee-635.php).

1.2 The Remuneration Committee was responsible to the University Court for discharging its responsibilities with respect to: the remuneration, emoluments and terms and conditions of employment of the Principal, senior post holders and posts designated as ‘Senior Managers’ and those on grade 9 and above of the pay spine, while they remain staff in post on this point.

1.3 As is standard practice across the University Court standing committees, the first meeting of the year reviewed and recommended changes to the terms of reference of the committee. The terms of reference were significantly revised in February 2024, and approved by Court. The terms of reference can be found at: <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/governance/remuneration-committee-635.php>.

1.4 The composition of the Committee for the academic year 2023/24 was as follows:

Iain Mackay (Chair)	(Independent member of Court)
Julie Ashworth	(Senior Governor)
Owen Cox	(Trade Union nominated Court member)
Vanessa Mabonso Nzolo	(Student Association nominated Court member)
Charlotte Pope-Williams	(Independent member of Court)
Diane Skatun	(Senate Assessor member of Court)

In April 2024, in line with the revised terms of reference it was agreed to appoint an external lay member to the Committee: Sandy Batho.

1.5 The Committee was scheduled to meet twice in the academic year: 13 February and 5 June 2024. In response to the actions detailed in the Financial Recovery Plan, approved by the University Court, additional meetings took place to deal with cases arising under the University’s Early Retirement and Voluntary Severance Policies. The additional meetings were held on: 19 and 26 April, supplemented by two decisions made via circulation.

1.6 Attendance for the meetings detailed is provided below:

Iain Mackay	(4/4)
Julie Ashworth	(4/4)
Sandy Batho	(1/1)
Owen Cox	(2/4)
Vanessa Mabonso Nzolo	(4/4)
Charlotte Pope-Williams	(3/4)
Diane Skatun	(4/4)

1.7 Given the nature of the work of the Committee, full minutes of meetings are not publicly available. The Committee provides a written report to Court after each of its meetings. These are available on the University website.

1.8 The Committee approved a forward schedule of business at the first meeting of the academic year, which informed meeting agendas and the business to be transacted.

1.9 The Committee undertook an effectiveness review in 2022/23 and its findings were presented to the Governance and Nominations Committee and Court. Responses to the effectiveness questionnaire were mostly positive, with the conduct of meetings and culture and dynamics attracting the most positive rankings, followed by the governance framework and documentation section and strategic role. The areas not deemed quite as effective related to the committee's skills, competencies and diversity. The recruitment of an independent lay member to the Committee, along with a targeted campaign to recruit a new Chair for the Committee, were actions taken to strengthen this area in 2024.

1.10 At the end of 2023/24, the current Chair of the Committee left their role on Court. The Committee recorded its thanks to Iain Mackay for his service. A new Chair was due to be proposed to Court, for approval, at their June 2024 meeting.

## **2. Operating Environment**

2.1 The University is based in the North East of Scotland and faced a number of challenges in recruiting and retaining talent, given the geographical location. Recruitment and retention policies, therefore, reflect the challenges of the location, but also its advantages. The University's success in league tables contributed to the recruitment and retention of staff.

2.2 The University of Aberdeen continues to be committed to attracting and retaining a diverse selection of candidates of the highest calibre. Recruitment was undertaken in an environment of continuous improvement to support robust, relevant, sustainable and efficient process. The University acted to ensure candidates see it as an attractive employer. The University's Recruitment and Selection Policy can be found at:  
<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/documents/policy-zone-employment/RecruitmentAndSelectionOfStaff.pdf>

2.3 In exercising its functions, the Committee was required to oversee senior staff remuneration frameworks and policies that promote and support

alignment with the University's long-term charitable purposes, strategic aims and long-term sustainable success. Any proposals recommended to the Court satisfied the SFC's requirements and other good practice principles. Decisions were made:

- With independence, objectivity, and avoided conflicts of interests or loyalty;
- In a robust fashion, with decision-making around individual pay discussions informed by the University's academic, research and financial performance as well as reflecting the level of challenge of each role;
- Ensuring increases in emoluments demonstrated value for money, were proportionate and defensible in terms of public sector pay;
- Transparently, by disclosing related party transactions in the annual reports and accounts, as required in the Higher Education SORP;
- With deliberations and decisions fully documented; and
- With awareness of the ability of the SFC to challenge decisions of the Committee.

2.4 Recommendations for in-year salary increases for members of Professorial/Grade 9 staff were considered through the Professorial and Senior Staff Salary Review process. As detailed by the University, recommendations for Heads of School/Section should be submitted for consideration by the Remuneration Committee. It was agreed that no in-year salary increases for off-scale grade 9 staff would be considered in 2023/24 given the financial situation the University experienced.

2.5 When looking at processes to increase the pecuniary rewards offered to senior post holders, the following factors were taken into consideration:

- a) performance in support of the institution's strategic objectives in areas such as: teaching; management and administration; leadership of staff; partnerships and external relations internationally, nationally and locally; and major initiatives and projects.
- b) the size and complexity of the institution;
- c) the nature of the HE markets and issues of recruitment and retention;
- d) the institution's objectives in relation to the diversity of the workforce; and
- e) that some staff are on clinical scales that reflect NHS salaries.

2.6 To inform discussions and decisions, the Committee papers were drawn from data produced by: Higher Education Statistics Agency data; the Universities and Colleges Employer Association's Senior Staff Remuneration Survey; the Committee of University Chairs' Vice-Chancellor Salary Survey; and internal analysis of salary distributions.

2.7 The University operated a Contributions Awards scheme in 2023/24. The Contributions Procedure applied to all staff at the University and outlined the process to be followed by those wishing to be considered for a contribution award. Further information can be found at: <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/contribution-awards-9802.php>.

2.8 The University offered pension provision to all staff. The principal schemes offered to University’s staff were the Universities’ Superannuation Scheme (USS), the University of Aberdeen Superannuation and Life Assurance Scheme (UASLAS), NHS pension scheme, and the Scottish Teachers Superannuation Scheme. The University also contributed to the Strathclyde Pension Fund (LGPS), this is an ongoing commitment arising from the merger of the University and the North East Scotland College (NESCOL) where teaching staff were enrolled in that scheme.

**3. Institutional Performance**

3.1 The University introduced an Enhanced Retirement/Voluntary Severance scheme to help achieve the identified cost savings in the Financial Recovery Plan. As such, the Committee held additional meetings to consider cases that fell within its remit, as defined under the University’s Severance Policy: [https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/documents/policy-zone-governance-and-compliance/Severance\\_Policy.pdf](https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/documents/policy-zone-governance-and-compliance/Severance_Policy.pdf).

3.2 Each application was supported by a business case and options appraisal that showed the ‘payback’ in relation to the severance and those elements that were:

- severance pay, pension strain costs,
- payment in lieu of notice (PILON), and
- additional payments etc.

The Committee was mindful of the requirements of the SFC’s Financial Memorandum and other guidance, CUC’s related guidance, and institutional policies. The SFC was informed in advance of each application reviewed by the Committee, as required.

3.3 During the year covered by the annual report, the Senior Vice Principal was offered, and accepted, an extension to their fixed term appointment. The University recruited a new Vice Principal – Education in 2023/24. Professor Siladitya Bhattacharya was appointed to the role of Vice-Principal (Global Engagement) on an interim basis for a period of 18 months from 1 August 2024. Vice Principal appointments are agreed by a panel, with leadership provided by the Principal. The Remuneration Committee was informed of developments in relation to Vice Principal recruitment and appointments, in order to fulfil their wider remit.

3.4 In February, the Committee received an update of the Principal’s annual objectives and progress against them. The process was led by the Senior Governor.

3.5 As detailed in the University’s annual report and accounts, the Principal’s emoluments comprised:

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>Salary</b>	<b>£281,000</b>	<b>£260,000</b>
<b>Living allowance</b>	<b>£14,000</b>	-
<b>Pension</b>	<b>£18,000</b>	<b>£15,000</b>

<b>contributions to USS</b>		
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>£313,000</b>	<b>£275,000</b>
<b>Benefits in kind (see below)</b>	<b>£23,000</b>	<b>£16,000</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£336,000</b>	<b>£291,000</b>

3.6 The Principal was required to reside in University-provided accommodation as the University regards this as essential for the fulfilment of his duties. The living allowance was introduced on the removal of the customary tax exemption for the provision of accommodation by HM Revenue & Customs. Following a change to procedures in dealing with the Living Allowance, no living allowance payment was made in the previous financial year due to a timing issue. The Principal contributed £12,000 p.a. towards accommodation costs that resulted in a net benefit in kind of £23,000 (2022: £16,000). The increase in the value of the benefit in kind was mainly due to increased utility costs.

3.7 The remuneration (comprising of salary, living allowance and pension contributions) of the Principal, Professor George Boyne, in the financial year was £313,000 (2022: £275,000). His remuneration was 7.7 times (2022: 6.8 times) the median remuneration of the workforce which was £41,726 (2022: £40,504).

#### **4. Conclusion**

4.1 The Remuneration Committee asserts that it has fulfilled the duties delegated to it by the University Court and endorses the report for Court's approval.



## UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

## UNIVERSITY COURT

**COMMERCIALISATION COMMITTEE REPORT****1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

- 1.1 This paper is provided to University Court for information as an overview of the business conducted by the Commercialisation Committee at its meeting on 21 May 2024, to provide an overview of the assurances obtained, and for onward noting of specific items of business, as outlined in section 3 below.
- 1.2 The agenda, papers and draft minutes are available within the Decision Time Resources [area](#) for members of Court.

**2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED**

	<b>Board/Committee</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Previously considered/approved by</b>	N/A	
<b>Further consideration/ approval required by</b>	N/A	

**3. RECOMMENDED ACTION**

- 3.1 University Court is invited to **note** the Committee's consideration and discussion of the following matters:
- A presentation from the Director of Converge Challenge, Scotland's largest company creation and enterprise programme (items 4.1 – 4.8 refer).
  - An update on current commercialisation activity, including the sector and broader entrepreneurship environment (items 6.1 – 6.16 refer).
  - An update on progress in respect of commercialisation KPIs against Aberdeen 2040 objectives and underlying metrics in support of the overarching objective to grow enterprise and innovation activity across Schools (items 6.17 – 6.20 refer).
  - An update from the Start-up and Spin-out Panel (SUSOP) on significant developments within the University's portfolio of spinout companies and information on the pipeline of potential spin-outs (items 6.21 – 6.25 refer).
  - An update on School Action Plans in respect of the Enterprise and Innovation Strategy (items 6.26 – 6.30 refer).

#### **4. NEW EXTERNAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

- 4.1 The Committee welcomed new external (co-opted) members Gavin Steel and George Yule to the meeting and to the Committee.

#### **5. GUEST SPEAKER: CONVERGE CHALLENGE**

- 5.1. Claudia Cavalluzzo, Director of Converge Challenge, joined the meeting to present on Scotland's largest company creation and enterprise programme.
- 5.2. It was confirmed that the organisation encouraged, supported and launched Scotland's next generation of academic entrepreneurs, working closely with all Scottish universities to develop opportunities for entrepreneurship and to support the translation from research into commercial activity.
- 5.3. An overview was provided of the annual Converge Challenge competition, its award categories and notable prize winners, alongside details of the organisation's operation, funding streams, economic impact and strategic priorities.
- 5.4. A summary of Converge's collaborations with the University of Aberdeen was presented and it was confirmed that the numbers of applications progressing to full participation with the competition was increasing over time. Although the number of opportunities coming forward from the University was relatively low when benchmarked against certain other Scottish institutions, the high quality of Aberdeen's submissions was commended.
- 5.5. It was noted that the University had recently been awarded £134k of UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) funding in respect of its bid to develop and deliver a pilot programme on social entrepreneurship called "Sparking Change", which had been produced in partnership with Converge.
- 5.6. Discussion followed regarding the necessary factors for commercialisation and entrepreneurship success and best practice examples from across the sector. In particular, the following key elements were noted as those important to have in place:
- An institution-wide vision to embed entrepreneurship in all activity, including the curriculum.
  - A solid base of applied research which lends itself well to commercialisation.
  - Strong partnerships with industry and dedicated staff resource to focus on industrial and business engagement.
  - The ability to offer stage-gate investment funding for start-up and spin-out initiatives (noting that not all universities were currently in a position financially to offer this).
  - Training for academics on how to approach and work with industry and how to tailor solutions to business needs.
  - Extended reach of activity beyond Scotland.
  - Alumni engagement to identify successful individuals able to support commercialisation activity and/or funding.

5.7. The Committee asked regarding the University's current level of engagement with Interface, a free service to connect national and international organisations with Scotland's universities, research institutes and colleges. It was reported that extensive links were in place, with regular communications from Interface being shared across Schools, a series of innovation voucher projects taking place, and opportunities for student projects to assist with employability skills.

5.8.

## 6. COMMERCIALISATION

### **Vice-Principal's Update**

6.1. An update was provided by the Vice-Principal Regional Engagement on current commercialisation activity, including the sector and broader entrepreneurship environment. Members' particular attention was drawn to the following internal developments:


6.2. It was reported that governance approval processes were nearing completion in respect of two major policy developments: a new institutional Intellectual Property, Equity and Revenue Sharing Policy and a new University Costing and Pricing Policy for Work with External Entities.

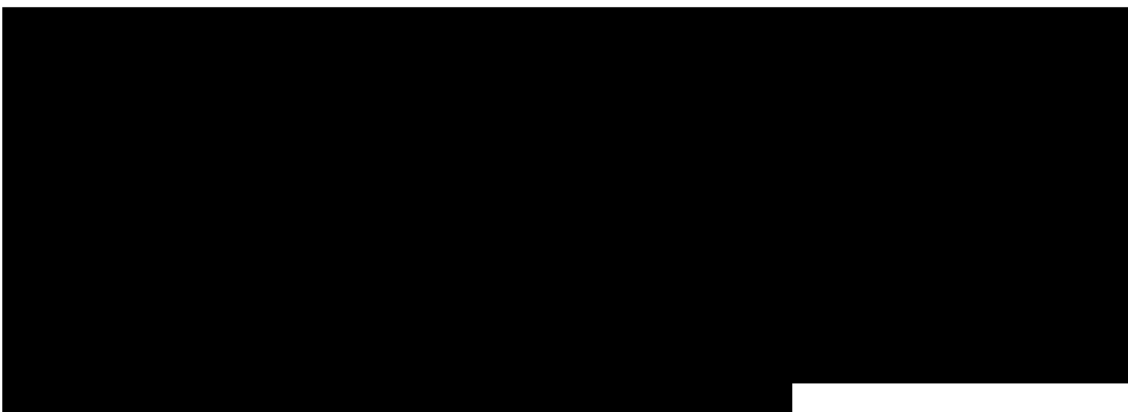
6.3.

6.4. The Costing and Pricing Policy had been considered by the Committee at its last meeting in February 2024. A revised draft had been endorsed by the Committee via circulation on 18 March 2024, and subsequently approved by the Senior Management Team on 4 April 2024. Necessary amendments had since been made to the University Financial Regulations and Delegated Authority Schedule, in line with the key policy elements. These were subsequently endorsed by the Audit and Risk Committee on 28 May 2024, with the revised Financial Regulations and Delegated Authority Schedule now presented to Court for approval under the Audit and Risk Committee Report elsewhere on the current agenda.

6.5. The number of Entrepreneurs in Residence (EiRs) had increased to five, following the appointment of Nassima Brown, Co-founder of Fennex Ltd, and Paul Nioi, Vice-President Discovery and Translational Research at Alnylam Pharmaceuticals. It was noted that the Vice-Principal Regional Engagement would now take forward the action to progress an informal meeting of the EiRs with the Committee.

- 6.6. The University had completed work to map itself against the recommendations in the Entrepreneurial Campus Blueprint (Tuffee Review). The Report's author, Professor Ross Tuffee had recently visited the University and had commended the exercise, noting that the University was one of few institutions who had taken this approach. Professor Tuffee had met with the University Alumni Relations Team to speak on mobilising alumni networks to support entrepreneurship and innovation. Work continued towards the realisation of the University's entrepreneurial curriculum, with proposals for content and delivery of entrepreneurial educational across the institution being developed by an active task and finish group.
- 6.7. A regional ICURe Discover programme co-sponsored by the University of Aberdeen and Opportunity North East was due to commence on 8th May. The opportunity had been promoted to University of Aberdeen staff members who had previously expressed interest in commercialising their research and were at the appropriate stage to benefit from the programme, with 11 participants confirmed, including both early career researchers and senior academics.
- 6.8. Following an invitation from Aberdeen City Council to develop a proposal for UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) funding, the University had submitted an outline bid to develop and deliver a pilot programme on social entrepreneurship called 'Sparking Change' and had been successfully awarded £135k for its delivery. The programme was to be delivered in Autumn 2024 and Spring 2025, and would be open to residents across Aberdeen, including students from the University of Aberdeen, Robert Gordon University and North East Scotland College (NESCol).

6.9. 

6.10. 

6.11. 



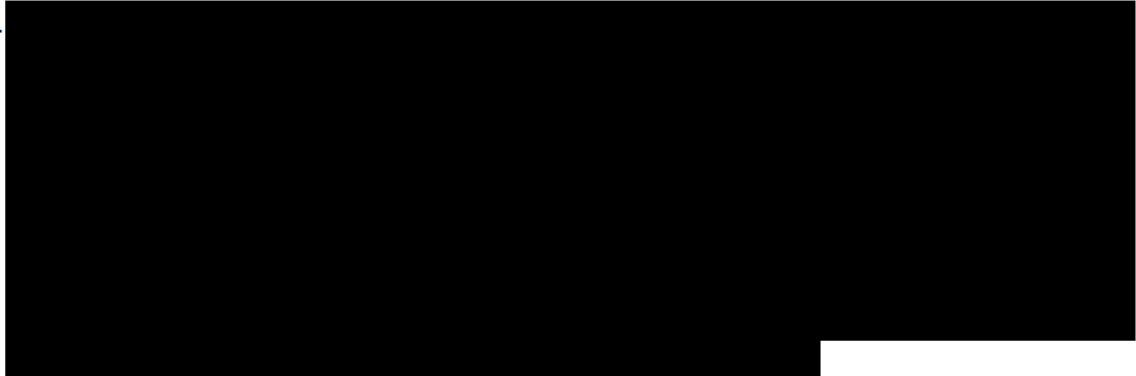
- 6.12. An update on external activities was also provided by the Vice-Principal Regional Engagement, as follows:
- 6.13. It was confirmed that the North East Scotland Regional Economic Strategy (RES) had been published in February 2024, and a copy provided to the Committee via circulation. Work on the University's accompanying RES Action Plan was expected to begin once work on the North East Scotland Investment Zone was concluded.
- 6.14. The Principal and Vice-Principal Regional Engagement had met with the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities on 2nd March to discuss the North East Scotland Investment Zone opportunity and to outline the University's ambitions around innovation and entrepreneurship in support of the regional economy. Development was now proceeding via a stage gateway process and further information would be presented to University Court in due course. It was confirmed that the total resource envelope for the Investment Zone was £160m over 10 years. The University was involved in the development of potential interventions to support the Investment Zone and the Vice-Principal Regional Engagement was in close liaison with sector counterparts to gain intelligence on those interventions most likely to attract funding.
- 6.15. Subsequent to the meeting, a General Election was called on 22 May 2024, and while informal activity to develop Investment Zone proposals is continuing, formal engagement with UK Government is now paused in line with pre-election rules imposed as a result of the pending election and the dissolution of Parliament on 30 May 2024.
- 6.16. It was reported that, from the 2024/25 financial year, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) were replacing the current University Innovation Fund (UIF) funding model with the Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund (KEIF). The new model was described as an evolution of UIF, designed to address national policy priorities (such as the Innovation Strategy and Entrepreneurial Campus blueprint) and to incentivise and recognise individual and collaborative strengths. The University would be required to submit a 5-year KEIF Strategy to the SFC in January of 2025.

#### **Commercialisation Key Performance Indicators**

- 6.17. The Director of Research and Innovation presented an update on progress in respect of commercialisation KPIs against Aberdeen 2040 objectives and

underlying metrics in support of the overarching objective to grow enterprise and innovation activity across Schools.

6.18.



6.19. The Committee expressed satisfaction that the University was taking steps to assess and assign value to commercialisation activity, with market size data now being addressed within reporting from the Start-Up and Spin-Out Panel. Members stressed the importance of providing value judgements against each disclosure or opportunity, in order to effectively prioritise progression activity.

6.20. Members noted the positive conversion rate from disclosure to patent, and it was queried whether the number of disclosures could be accelerated, whilst maintaining the same level of conversion. The Director of Research and Innovation confirmed that significant value-added work by Entrepreneurs in Residence (EiRs) was currently accelerating the numbers of disclosures, and that this could be further enhanced via additional training and promotion of opportunities within Schools. A more detailed patent filing strategy was in development, supported by the EiRs, which could ensure that conversion rates could also be maintained. The Committee commented on the importance of articulating the appropriate timing of patent filings, in order to achieve balance between the requirement under REF to publish research and the need to submit patent applications prior to research entering the public domain. It was further reported that increased internal communications and staff training sessions were being rolled out by the R&I Team in order to ensure that academics had appropriate awareness of IP and publication processes and to stimulate additional disclosures.

#### **Start-Ups and Spin-Outs**

6.21. The Director of Research and Innovation presented an update from the Start-up and Spin-out Panel (SUSOP) on significant developments within the University's portfolio of spinout companies and information on the pipeline of potential spin-outs.

6.22. The report included information previously requested by the Committee on pipeline opportunities including market size, probability of spin-out, estimated funding requirement and potential timeframe for spin-out.

6.23. Members sought clarification regarding the role of Technology Transfer Partnerships. It was confirmed that any projects and ideas that may lead to patent were presented to commercial companies under a Technology Transfer process. This activity was supported by Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs), an

Innovate UK funding programme that linked businesses with UK universities to deliver innovation projects. The R&I Team also provided essential internal support to academics going through the process of presenting their projects and ideas to potential commercial partners.

6.24.



6.25.



### **Enterprise and Innovation Strategy**

6.26. The Vice-Principal Regional Engagement delivered an update on School Action Plans in respect of the Enterprise and Innovation Strategy.

6.27. It was reported that academic Schools had been asked to indicate their priorities in respect of the strategic KPIs and supporting PIs previously approved by the Court Commercialisation Committee to monitor progress against commercialisation Aberdeen 2040 objectives. The aim of the exercise had been to try to map where Schools felt they could best contribute to the commercialisation agenda, according to their varying curricula and operating models.

6.28. Following identification of their priorities, Schools were next asked to develop short-term (2023-24 academic year) and medium/long-term (2024-25 onwards) action plans. Analysis of the resulting plans had been completed to identify common themes requiring central support and facilitation, as follows:

- Staff Development & Training: Briefings for staff on intellectual property, invention disclosures, patents, consultancy, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships.
- Business Development: Support for promotion of School expertise, development of business-academic relationships, growing contract research, consultancy and CPD.
- Entrepreneurial Education: Support to deliver entrepreneurial education to students and associated extra-curricular activities, including student startup support.
- Facilities & Services Offer: While Schools did not highlight this directly in their individual action plans, several of them did report during meetings that they

were not prioritising growth in facilities and services contracts (and associated revenue) due to the lack of an institutional offer in terms of facilities and services marketing, pricing, contract management and invoicing.

6.29.



6.30. Members asked regarding possibilities to ensure that collaborative working was taking place across Schools in support of entrepreneurship, and whether the Business School could take a leading role in supporting entrepreneurial education and training. The Vice-Principal Regional Engagement confirmed that the Business School would play an active role in supporting entrepreneurial curriculum developments. It was noted that Interdisciplinary Directors also had a key role to play in bringing colleagues from different Schools together.

## **7. FURTHER INFORMATION**

7.1. Further information is available from Jan Whitfield, Clerk to the Commercialisation Committee, [janine.whitfield@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:janine.whitfield@abdn.ac.uk)

**Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status:** Partially confidential/closed.

The following sections contain commercially sensitive information and should remain confidential pending final approval and publication: 6.2 – 6.4, 6.8 – 6.10, 6.25, 6.30.

The following sections should remain closed: 5.8, 6.11, 6.18, 6.24, 6.29.



## UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

## UNIVERSITY COURT

**FINANCE AND RESOURCING COMMITTEE REPORT****1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

- 1.1 This paper is provided to University Court for information as an overview of the business conducted by the Finance and Resourcing Committee at its meeting on 4 June 2024, to provide an overview of the assurances obtained, and for onward approval and noting of specific items of business, as outlined in section 3 below.
- 1.2 The agenda, papers and draft minutes are available within the [Decision Time Resources](#) area for members of Court.

**2. Previous Consideration By / Further Approval Required**

	<b>Board/Committee</b>	<b>Date</b>
Previously considered/approved by	N/A	
Further consideration/ approval required by	N/A	

**3. Recommended Action**

- 3.1 University Court is invited to:
- 3.1.1 **Approve** the following items endorsed by the Committee and now recommended to Court for approval:
- The University draft Budget 2024-25 to 2025-26 and 10-Year Cash Projection, noting that the Committee's endorsement is subject to Court's detailed consideration of the budget appendices (items 5.1 – 5.9 refer.)
- 3.1.2 **Note** the following items approved by the Committee via its delegated authority:
- The award of a flat funding settlement to the Students' Union for 2024-25 (items 5.18 – 5.22 refer).
- 3.1.3 **Note** the Committee's consideration and discussion of the following matters:
- An update on HE sector and University developments (items 4.1 – 4.3 refer).

- The Committee’s tour of the refurbished Biomedical Physics Building and fast-field cycling MRI scanner facility (item 4.4 refers.)
- An update on developments in respect of the Reimagining the Campuses Plan (items 5.10 – 5.11 refer). The outcomes and recommendations of the Project are presented to Court for approval under the current agenda.
- An update on developments under the new Student Recruitment Strategy (items 5.12 – 5.17 refer).
- An update on the impact and outcomes of Students’ Union funding during the 2023-24 academic year (item 5.18 refers).
- A presentation on growth plans for online delivery and the development of the University’s forward Digital Education Strategy (items 5.23 – 5.26 refer).
- The April 2024 Monthly Management Accounts (MMR) (item 6.1 refers).
- The outcomes of the Committee’s Annual Effectiveness Review 2023-24 (items 7.1 – 7.2 refer).
- The final meeting of the demitting Chair, Anne Minto, and demitting Member, Lyndsay Menzies (item 8.1 refers).

#### **4. PRINCIPAL’S INTRODUCTION**

4.1. The Committee received an update from the Principal on HE sector and University developments.

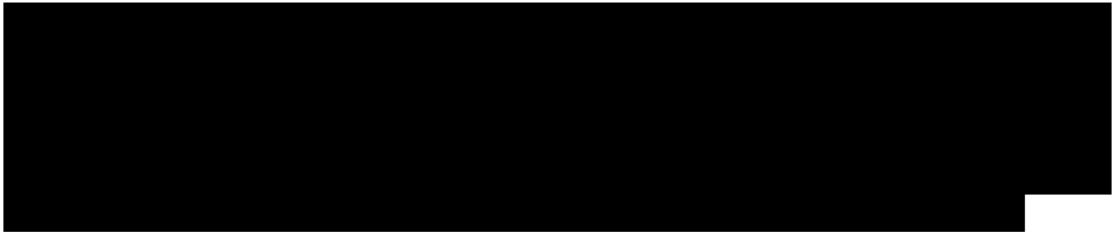
4.2. The Committee’s particular attention was drawn to the following:

- The pre-election period, which meant that no new policy announcements could be expected prior to the UK General Election on 4 July 2024.
- The outcomes of the UK Government-commissioned Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) review of the graduate immigration route, which had been published on 14 May 2024, concluding that there was no evidence of widespread abuse of the UK’s graduate visa route, and recommending that the entitlement remained in place.
- The current UK Government narrative regarding low value degree courses, and its potential impact on international student recruitment. It was confirmed that this did not directly reference the provision of Scottish universities, and that it remained the position of the Scottish Government that immigration to Scotland was welcomed.
- The University’s successful removal of its targeted cost savings from the budget, although it was noted that a further £3m would need to be found from additional revenue streams due to additional emerging risk. The University was now focussing on rebuilding revenue after the restructure of its borrowing and the cost savings required under the Financial Recovery Plan (FRP) and associated Voluntary Severance/Enhanced Retirement Scheme.
- The meetings currently ongoing across Schools and Directorates to provide updates regarding the planned restructuring activity under the next phase

of the FRP, and to ensure that priority areas could be appropriately focussed and resourced.

4.3. Members discussed the review of the classification of universities in the UK National Accounts, currently being undertaken by the Office for National Statistics, noting that since the early 2000s, universities had been classified together with non-profit institutions serving the households sector (NPISH). It was confirmed that the review would look at the level of ministerial control of HE and whether parts of the sector were subject to greater levels of control than others. It was noted that any change in classification could potentially lead to a move of all/some universities to the public sector, with both legal and financial implications.

4.4.



## **5. PLANNING AND RESOURCING**

### **University Budget**

5.1. The Chief Financial Officer presented the draft budget 2024-25 to 2025-26 and 10-Year Cash Projection.

5.2.



5.3.



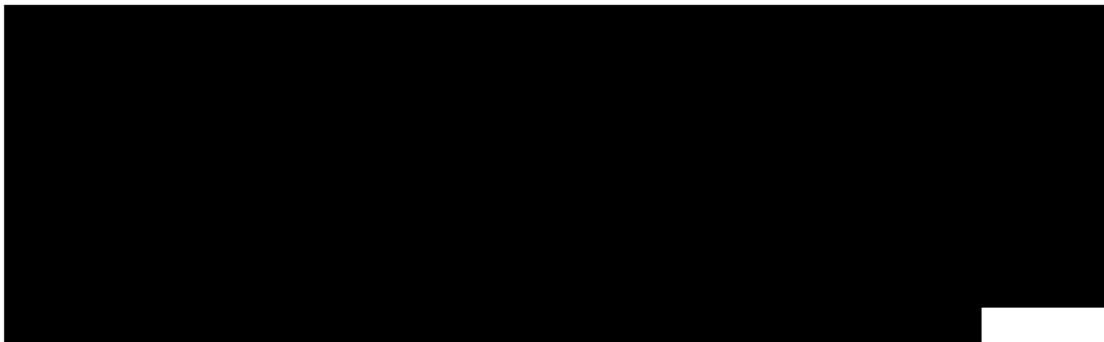
5.4. It was confirmed that, as a result of the cost savings made to date under the FRP, all borrowing covenants would be met during 2023-24 and 2024-25.

5.5. The Committee sought assurance that targets for additional revenue streams would be met, urging that Court should be presented with details of proposed

projects and a roadmap for the achievement of revenue targets as soon as possible. The Chief Financial Officer responded that the projections for TNE presented within the budget were based on pipeline activity and were subject to low levels of risk. The revenue levels with regard to online provision, fundraising and commercialisation represented stretch targets, but had been revised downwards from actual income projections in each area to ensure a margin of headroom.

- 5.6. Members asked regarding the final outcomes of the University's Voluntary Severance/Enhanced Retirement (VS/ER) Scheme and the potential impact of any associated resourcing issues on the University's ability to generate additional revenue. It was also queried whether it was an appropriate time to seek to reduce capital spend for digital developments and infrastructure. The Principal confirmed that the University would need to invest in professional services capacity in teams essential to revenue generation. There was a desire to invest further in the digital arena, but this needed to be balanced within the resource envelope available for financial sustainability.

5.7.



- 5.8. Members agreed that it was not possible for the Committee to fully endorse the budget without having had sufficient time to scrutinise the detailed budget plans for Schools and Directorates, which had been circulated as late addendums to the agenda and papers set for the meeting. It was therefore agreed to recommend the budget to Court for approval, on the basis that Court should ensure its satisfaction with the budget appendices.
- 5.9. The budget proposals and appendices are now provided to Court under the current agenda for final approval for implementation.

#### **Estates Planning**

- 5.10. The Committee received an update from the Director of Estates & Facilities to provide an update on developments in respect of the Reimagining the Campuses Plan.
- 5.11. A detailed update on the project and key recommendations are now presented to Court under the current agenda for consideration and approval for implementation.

#### **Student Recruitment Strategy**

- 5.12. The Committee received an update on developments under the new Student Recruitment Strategy from the Vice-Principal Global Engagement and Director of Student Recruitment.

5.13.



5.14.



5.15.



5.16. Members urged that consultation with the Student's Union should be embedded within project development processes to ensure that appropriate support mechanisms for international students overseas could be factored into proposals.

5.17. Confirmation was sought as to whether the new proposals would include a requirement for flying faculty, noting the resourcing challenges faced by the University under the Financial Recovery Plan and the University's commitment to net zero under the Aberdeen 20240 Strategy. It was confirmed that this would be explored as part of due diligence processes and the development of final business cases, however a flying faculty model would only be likely to be adopted in the earlier stages of new partnerships, as shared delivery would be the preferred model of both parties in the longer term.

**Students' Union (SU) Funding**

5.18. The SU Chief Executive and President delivered a presentation on the impact and outcomes of SU funding during the 2023-24 academic year, the options for the SU block grant for 2024-25, and proposals and costings for future SU projects subject to the levels of funding agreed.

5.19. Two options were presented for the Committee's consideration as follows:

- Option A – flat funding of £1,015,764
- Option B – a reduction to funding of £36k - £976,764

5.20. It was reported that the current challenges facing the SU included cost inflation, price increases at the Aberdeen Sports Village, staff wages and retention, the need to ringfence funds to support the University's overseas student body and increasing pressure on student advice services due to significant increases in the number of cases of disciplinarys and appeals (which had doubled since 2019). It was noted that the majority of student advice and representation cases related to international students.

5.21. The Committee noted that the funding reduction provided under Option B represented a 3.5% reduction on the previous year, and an 8.5% reduction since 2022-23, and that significant cuts were currently being applied to all University budgets, with the recent closure of the VS/ER Scheme as well as a targeted 18% reduction in operational budgets. However, in recognition of the significant work undertaken by the SU, the importance of its activity in support of student experience and satisfaction and the University's duty of care to its students, Members unanimously agreed to approve Option A: a flat funding settlement for 2024-25.

5.22. It was also recommended that the SU and University should continue to work together to align service provision and identify further cost savings, and that the SU should approach the University of Aberdeen Development Trust SCIO to apply for additional funding. Advice and guidance could also be sought from the University's Development and Alumni Team in respect of additional external funding bids.

**Online Education**

5.23. The Vice-Principal Education joined the meeting to deliver a presentation on growth plans for online delivery and the development of the forward Digital Education Strategy.

5.24. 

5.25. 

5.26.



**6. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

**Chief Financial Officer's Report**

Monthly Management Accounts

- 6.1. The Committee considered and endorsed the April 2024 monthly management accounts (MMR).

**7. COMMITTEE EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW 2023-24**

- 7.1. The Committee held a closed session to consider and discuss the outcomes of its annual review of effectiveness 2023-24.
- 7.2. Further details are provided to Court within the Annual Report on Court and Committee Effectiveness, provided under the current agenda.

**8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- 8.1. The Committee noted that it was the last meeting of the outgoing Chair, Anne Minto, and outgoing Member, Lyndsay Menzies. All present offered sincere thanks to Ms Minto and Ms Menzies for their service and commitment to the University, the Committee and Court, and wished them well for the future.

**9. FURTHER INFORMATION**

- 9.1. Further information is available from Jan Whitfield, Clerk to the Finance and Resourcing Committee, [janine.whitfield@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:janine.whitfield@abdn.ac.uk)

**Confidentiality Status:** The following sections contain commercially sensitive information and should remain closed: 4.4, 5.2 – 5.3, 5.7, 5.13 – 5.15, 5.24 – 5.26.