

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

Wednesday, 25 September 2024

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

- 7.2 ABERDEEN 2040: SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE 2023/24
- 7.3 ABERDEEN 2040: STRATEGIC PRIORITIES IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR 2024-25
- 8.1 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER'S UPDATE
- 8.2 STUDENT RECRUITMENT UPDATE
- 9.1 CAPITAL PLAN
- 10.1 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 FROM THE MEETINGS HELD 18/19 JUNE 2024
Sections withheld relate to Court's discussion of Principal and Senior Governor Annual Performance Review and of Court's Annual Self-Evaluation of Effectiveness

There will be a meeting of the **UNIVERSITY COURT** on Wednesday, 25th September 2024 at 1.30pm to 4pm.

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 RECTOR'S REPORT (enclosed)
- 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REMINDER OF COURT AND MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES (enclosed)
- 3 MINUTES OF 18 and 19 June 2024 (**Strictly and Part Confidential**):
For Approval (enclosed)
- 4 ACTION LOG & MATTERS ARISING (enclosed)
- 5 REPORT FROM THE SENIOR GOVERNOR (enclosed)
- 6 REPORT FROM THE PRINCIPAL AND UPDATE ON HE SECTOR/
UNIVERSITY DEVELOPMENTS (enclosed)
- 7 STRATEGY AND RISK
 - 7.1 Strategic Risk Bi-Annual Report (enclosed)
 - 7.2 Aberdeen 2040: Summary of Performance 2023/24 (**Strictly Confidential**)
(enclosed)
 - 7.3 Aberdeen 2040: Strategic Priorities Implementation Plan for 2024-25
(**Strictly Confidential**): For Approval (enclosed)
- 8 FINANCE
 - 8.1 Chief Financial Officer's Update (**Strictly Confidential**) (enclosed)
 - 8.2 Student Recruitment Update (**Strictly Confidential**) (enclosed)
- 9 ESTATES AND CAPITAL PLAN
 - 9.1 Capital Plan: For Approval (**Strictly Confidential**) (enclosed)
 - 9.2 Reimaging our Campuses: Update on Implementation (enclosed)
- 10 REPORTS FROM COURT SUB-COMMITTEES
 - 10.1 Audit and Risk Committee (**Strictly Confidential**): For Approval (enclosed)
 - 10.2 Finance and Resourcing Committee
 - 10.3 Governance and Nominations Committee (enclosed)

- 11 GOVERNANCE AND REGULATORY
- 11.1 Gaelic Language Plan: For Approval (enclosed)
- 11.2 Outcomes Framework and Assurance Model from the SFC (enclosed)
- 11.3 Court Schedule of Business (enclosed)

12 FURTHER REPORTS FOR INFORMATION

- 12.1 Report from Partnership, Negotiating & Consultative Committee (enclosed)

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, 19 November 2024, 9am to 4pm

Close of Formal Business

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

- Attended graduation ceremonies from the 24th to 28th June, always a great pleasure to watch our students graduate, going into the world to make a difference. Massive thank you to our academic and professional services staff who do such a fantastic job teaching and supporting our students.
- Continue to have Rector's surgeries where I listen to students concerns and working with University staff to address these.
 - Concerns around AUSA funding cuts and the impact on funding students' societies, particularly sports clubs whose reduced activities will have an impact on students who rely on these sporting activities which has huge benefits on students physical and mental health.
 - Concerns around Ghanian Scholarship Secretariat and the challenges around recovering monies owed to the university.
- I met with IDP recruitment team (International Students Recruitment Specialist) in Lagos, who shared lots of insights.
- Welcomed the new Consular General of The Republic of Turkey to the University recently. Discussions were had around potential of working in partnership with universities in Turkey, with particular interests around targeted recruitment for law students with proposal for the Consular General to facilitate meetings between the University's team and Turkish Minister of Education and/or Turkish President. The University's Director of Student Recruitment, Ashar Ehsan, will progress this.
- Meetings held with stakeholders within Scotland, rest of UK and abroad, including The Master of Trades of The Seven Incorporated Trades of Aberdeen and The President of the Court of Appeal (Nigeria).

- Continue to have regular meetings with AUSA Sabbatical officers/CEO, Staff across the University, student engagement and wellbeing teams, Deputy Head of Student Support Nick Edwards, Principal, Senior Governor, University Secretary and COO
- Carrying out all other duties as Lord Rector, including reviewing Court Agendas, attending events, welcoming guests to the University – I have had quite a few in the past week, including Catholic Priests.

4 FURTHER INFORMATION

4.1 Further information is available from the Rector, 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.

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: <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/documents/policy-zone-governance-and-compliance/UoA-Scheme-of-Delegation-Revised-May-2024.pdf> . It should be noted, however, that Court as the governing body remains ultimately responsible for any decisions made by sub-committees on its behalf.

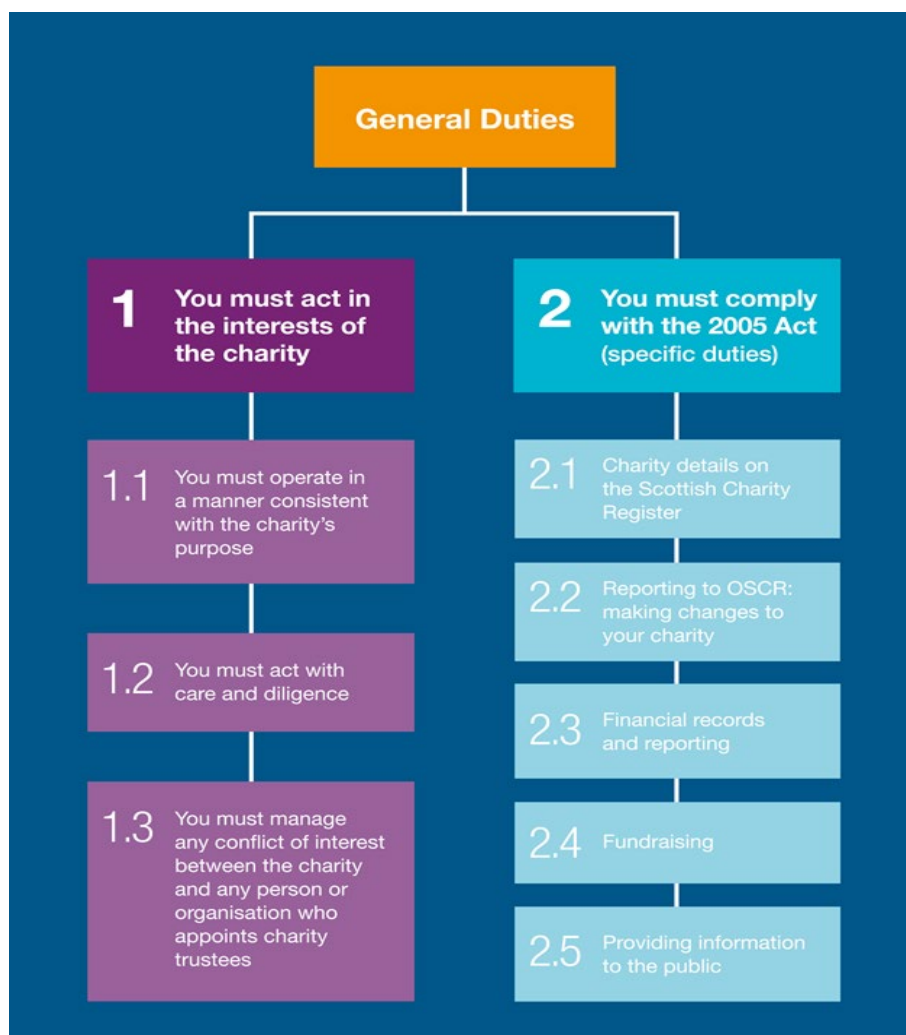
2. ROLE OF MEMBERS, CODE OF CONDUCT AND DUTIES OF CHARITY TRUSTEES

- 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: [https://www.sfc.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/uploadedFiles/Financial Memorandum with higher education institutions - 1 December 2014.pdf](https://www.sfc.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/uploadedFiles/Financial_Memorandum_with_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:

3.2 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 19 JUNE 2024

Present: Julie Ashworth
Martin Barker
Eleanor Bentley (up to minute 292)
Susan Bodie
George Boyne
Martina Chukwuma-Ezike (in the Chair for minutes 249 to 251)
Owen Cox
Iain Grant
Luke Halliday
Vanessa Mabonso Nzolo
Iain Mackay (via Teams)
Gary McRae
Helen Martin (up to minute 298)
Lyndsay Menzies (except for minutes 279 to 282)
Caryn Miller (via Teams) (except for minute 245)
Anne Minto
Charlotte Pope-Williams
Alison Rankin
Diane Skåtun
Robert Traynham (except for minutes 247 to 257)
Adaku Ufere
Neil Vargesson
Sai Shraddha S Viswanathan
Ilia Xypolia

In attendance: Iain Torrance KCVO (up to minute 283)
Seonag Mackinnon (via Teams)
Tracey Slaven (University Secretary)
Christina Schmid (up to minute 283)

Senior Management Team members:

Nick Forsyth (for minutes 283 to 285)
Karl Leydecker
Mark White

Clerk: Bruce Purdon

Apologies: Joachim Schaper, Otto Thoresen

NOTE BY CLERK: CLOSED BUSINESS SESSION OF 18 JUNE 2024

247 The Court also met on 18 June in closed session to discuss:

- (i) The Principal's Annual Performance Review;
- (ii) The Senior Governor's Annual Performance Review

248 The minutes of those discussions are restricted to Court members and held separately.

WELCOME AND RECTOR'S REPORT

249 The Rector opened the meeting and welcomed Christina Schmid, President Elect of the Students' Association who was observing the meeting.

250 The Rector noted that a number of members would leave Court over the course of the summer and that this would therefore be the last meeting for Susan Bodie, Vanessa Mabonso Nzolo, Iain Mackay, Lyndsay Menzies, Anne Minto, Charlotte Pope-Williams, and Sai Shraddha S Viswanathan. The Court joined the Rector and Senior Governor in thanking them all for their respective contributions to the Court and to the University more generally.

251 The Rector provided a written report on recent activities undertaken in the role (CT20240619_1). The Rector noted that issues related to assessment for had been raised by some students and that these were being reviewed by the University with engagement from the Students' Association.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND REMINDER OF COURT AND MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

252 The Court noted the standing reminder of the responsibilities of Court and members as charity trustees (CT20240619_2). No declarations of interest in the agenda were noted.

MINUTES

253 The minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2024 were received (CT20240619_3).

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

- Minute 209 – to replace the word material with financial.
- Minute 231 – to remove the reference to an individual and to provide clarification to the wording with regard to staff turnover in the student recruitment team.

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

ACTION LOG AND MATTERS ARISING

256 The Court received and noted a report on Matters Arising and the Court Action Log (CT20240619_4). This included an update for assurance on the University's capacity to agree and operate new transnational education and international partnerships.

REPORT FROM THE SENIOR GOVERNOR

- 257 The Senior Governor provided a report to Court on meetings and activities they had undertaken since the last meeting (CT20240619_5). The Senior Governor also reported on an Education and Business Conference, at which the University had been represented.

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

- 258 The Court received a written report (CT20240619_6) on developments within the University and in the wider higher education sector, which the Principal supplemented with an oral report.
- 259 In discussion, the following key points were noted:
- With campaigning in the General Election ongoing, there was a freeze on any new Government policy announcements. It was noted that two political parties were advocating electoral policies involving increased restrictions on international students coming to the UK. The Principal noted the University was hosting an election hustings event in the coming days and potentially a further one focused on Energy.
 - The Principal also reported on the recent Times Higher Education Impact Rankings, where the University had risen to Top 10 in the UK and Top 50 in the world. The Principal noted the achievement this represented by staff across the University. In further discussion, it was noted that some other rankings, such as the QS rankings, had been more challenging for Scottish universities. The Principal noted that this was seen by many to reflect the greater investment being made by some other countries in their universities, relative to declining investment in Scotland. This was being highlighted by the sector to the Scottish Funding Council and the Scottish Government.
 - The Principal noted that, as reported in the budgets paper later in the agenda, the University had made good progress against the savings target since the last meeting and had consolidated the institution's financial position.
 - The Principal also updated on Court on the University's partnership with AFG in Qatar, including requests in relation to the financial revenue sharing arrangements. The Principal noted the importance of the partnership to the University, directly but also because of the wider opportunities it opened up in the region.
 - The potential impact of the Migration Advisory Committee Review of the Graduate Route to a post-study visa for international students was discussed, in particular with regard to the use of recruitment agents by universities and whether this would impact negatively on recruitment. The Principal noted his concern that the negative impact had already been made due to UK Government policy in recent years.
 - Widening access to higher education and whether the level of staffing in the University dedicated to this was sufficient was discussed. The Principal noted that it remained a focus for the University and that while dedicated resource was important, entry criteria and admissions

processes were equally, if not more important, to achieving a positive change.

- The Secretary & Chief Operating Officer updated Court on plans for recruitment to staff positions in Development and Alumni Relations.

REIMAGINING OUR CAMPUSES REPORT

- 260 The Court received a paper (CT20240619_7) and presentation on the report and recommendations of the Reimagining our Campuses Project Board.
- 261 The Court was reminded that the remit of the Project had been to undertake a comprehensive re-imagining of the configuration and use of the estate across the Aberdeen campuses to ensure that management, investment, and development of them underpinned and supported the delivery of Aberdeen 2040 ambitions, encouraged interdisciplinarity and met the University community's needs in the post-pandemic world. The results of the review were intended to inform the development of the 10-Year Capital Plan.
- 262 The report detailed the approach to the review, which was undertaken in two stages. The first stage had been an information gathering phase. The second stage had been a creative re re-imagining of the future of our campuses via four working groups aligned to the key themes of Education, Research & Innovation, Sustainability (inc. Net Zero), and Inclusive, Accessible & Wellbeing. A fifth theme, Affordable, Efficient & Effective, was subsequently added in cognisance of the University's current financial context.
- 263 The Court noted that while all the outputs from the working groups would have a role in supporting development of a future Estates Strategy and Masterplan, the most significant strategic priority to emerge from the project was the need to deliver an efficient, effective and sustainable estate. Linked to this, the overarching recommendation from Reimagining our Campuses was that a series of programmes and projects be adopted to rationalise the estate with a view to maximising efficiency and alignment with Aberdeen 2040 priorities.
- 264 The report then detailed a total of 18 supporting recommendations, organised into *strategic*, *operational* and *enabling actions*.
- 265 The Court discussed the report and its recommendations in depth, with the key points from this being noted as follows:
- It was noted that representations to Court from some representatives of the Old Aberdeen community had been received. The need for proactive engagement and communication with key stakeholders not just in terms of statutory requirements, including the local communities of Old Aberdeen and Foresterhill, was recognised and would be included in the communications planning as part of any next steps. In this context, it was agreed it would be helpful to provide Court members with a communications aide memoir.

Action: Interim Director of Public Affairs

- The implications of hybrid/working from home, both positive and negative, particularly in an educational and research setting were discussed. It was suggested the challenge was how to make the campuses physical spaces where people preferred to work and which could stimulate and facilitate academic interaction that supported teaching and research ideas. It was noted that some staff held strong views on the need for single office space, with others noting it was how communal office space was designed that mattered rather than it there being single space offices.
- Court was assured that the report had recognised that postgraduate taught students had distinctive needs from the campuses. More broadly, it was confirmed that the report acknowledged that what represented 'high quality teaching spaces' would vary between academic discipline and different types of students.
- It was suggested that consideration be given to emphasising further the student dimension in the Report. The Court was assured, however, that the Students' Association had been engaged in the process and that their input had been taken into account and was documented in a further supporting paper which was considered too operational for Court. It was suggested, however, that consideration be given in any next steps to explaining where the key feedback points from key stakeholder groups, such as students, had been and how this had been taken on board.
- Court was assured that the report sought to address both current usage of sports facilities and the accessibility of the campuses. It was also acknowledged that creating more 'public realm' spaces on the campuses would be beneficial.
- The need for sustainability and net zero considerations was very much central to the project's considerations and would be part of next steps. The University intended to engage further with experts and other higher education institutions who had recent experience in this area from similar projects.
- It was confirmed that resourcing of reimagined campuses was outwith the scope of the Project and that this would be part of separate Estates master planning and Capital Planning processes.
- A number of members highlighted the breadth and scale of the Project, the extensive recommendations and that it also involved aspects of significant cultural change and technology. The importance, therefore, of both pace and the necessary professional, specialist and capital resources to deliver any agreed next steps and priorities would be critical. Court was reassured that the next stage would be to identify next steps, prioritisation, including any 'quick wins' from the recommendations, and an implementation plan.

266 The Court:

- Endorsed the report in terms of its general direction of travel;
- Noted the supporting recommendations.
- Agreed that it should receive a prioritisation and implementation plan at its September or November 2024 meetings

Action: Senior Vice-Principal

FINANCE

Budgets for 2024/25 and 2025/26

- 267 The Court received the University's proposed budget for 2024/25 and 2025/26, together with the supporting underlying assumptions, risk analysis, and an assessment of performance metrics and loan covenant compliance (CT20240619_8.1). The report also included the 10-year cash flow projection based on the two-year plan and a draft rolling investment plan for the digital and physical estate which informed the cash flow.
- 268 The Court noted that the budget was based on the Financial Recovery Plan as approved by Court in February 2024 and that the strategic aspirations of the budget remained 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 Transnational education and online education options, and the amplification of the academic and commercial impact of our research. The budget predicted a significant reduction in the underlying deficit to £6.7m in financial year 2024/25 and to £2.1m (deficit) in 2025/26.
- 269 The Court noted that while progress against the savings targets set out in the Financial Recovery Plan (£18.5m against a target of £19.7m) had been good, the outcome of the budget process included £5.3m of financial pressure to achieve the specified deficit in 2024/25. The aim was to achieve this through the primary strategic objective of growing revenues, by continuing to address the remaining Operating Costs savings up to previously allocated targets, and through natural turnover (gap savings) through 2024/25. The School and Directorate budgets also included an allocation of savings for 2024/25 to achieve the specified deficits and it was noted that the allocation of these targets in total between Schools and Directorates, and across each School and Directorate, remained to be finalised.
- 270 The Court noted that in 2025/26, a further £13.8m of additional income and/or savings was required to achieve the specified deficit and that this had been allocated as a £9.7m staff saving and £4.1m operating cost saving.
- 271 The Court noted that given the ongoing challenges in the external environment in the UK for recruitment of international students, for International Postgraduate Taught fees, the original assumption in the Financial Recovery Plan of a 15% reduction in fees from 2023/24 actuals had been increased to a 25% reduction.

- 272 The Court also noted that as reported in the Finance & Resources Committee Report to Court, it 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 the Committee to have scrutinised them fully.
- 273 The Court noted that the University was a participant in the U.S Department of Education's Federal State Aid Programme (US ED). The University had approximately 150 students receiving over \$3 million dollars of Federal Loans via the Programme and as such it was an important recruitment tool for the US Market. The report detailed that the University had been deemed to have breached the Accounts lodging deadline for the last 2 years (2021/22 and 2022/23). Whilst the 2022/23 Accounts were delayed due to the going concern issue, the 2021/22 accounts were deemed late due to a sector wide issue regarding wording in UK audit opinions. The University had appealed the position but this had been unsuccessful. As a consequence of the deemed breach, the Department of Education mandated that the University take additional measures to remain a participant in the Programme, the key one being is to lodge financial protection with it at the level of 10% of funds received. The University was, therefore, pursuing this option in the form of a letter of credit through its legal and financial advisors.
- 274 From the subsequent discussion of the report, the following key points were noted:
- Court sought assurances around the deliverability of the budget, both in terms of the projected level of revenue growth and its savings targets. It noted that additional prudence had been built in, for example in terms of the assumptions on the level of reduction in international PGT students which had been increased and decreasing the expected level of savings from staff turnover. It was acknowledged, however, that should income growth be significantly less than the levels forecast, then Senior Management would need to identify further measures to deliver the budget target. It was suggested that in such a scenario, if a further voluntary severance scheme was one of the measures required, Court would expect to see this being strategically focused.
 - It was agreed that Court should receive updates at each meeting on progress against the targets overall and within Schools and Directorates. The Chief Financial Officer would also provide further information to illustrate where there was a gap in savings still to be identified and therefore where potential pressure points in delivery of the budget were likely to be. It was suggested that sharing the timeline that had been prepared for Audit and Risk Committee with Court would be helpful.
Action: Chief Financial Officer
 - It was also asked that following the September/October student intake, the Court be updated on whether the University was in a position to

avoid a 'material uncertainty' statement being required by the auditors in the 2023/24 annual accounts. **Action: Chief Financial Officer**

- The need to ensure that investment in the University's IT infrastructure was sufficient to ensure the environment supported staff and students in a way which was competitive was noted.
- It was clarified that the level of funds disbursed to the University from the Development Trust SCIO was not within the University's control.
- The question of whether Court should have oversight of proposed changes to Professional Services Directorates was raised and it was agreed to share the most recent paper and presentation on this with Court [*Note by Clerk: Made available in Decision Time Resources area following the Meeting*]

275 Following discussion and scrutiny of the budget proposals, the Court:

- Approved 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.
- Approved the 10-year cash projection
- Noted that the budget met the new financial covenants (with a degree of headroom) and accommodated the risks, opportunities and sensitivities outlined in the report.
- Noted the position with the U.S Department of Education Federal Student Aid programme and the intention to lodge a letter of credit.

Strategic Plan Forecast to Scottish Funding Council (SFC)

276 The Court received and approved the Strategic Plan Forecast (CT20240619_8.2) financial years 2023/24 to 2025/26, for submission to SFC by 30 June 2023).

FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN PLAN

277 The Court received a presentation and paper detailing the proposed plan for a major new philanthropic fundraising campaign (CT20240619_9). It also received the associated Case for Support which articulated the University's core fundraising messages, what it would seek to accomplish with the support of donors and associated campaign related visuals in proof of concept stage.

278 The Court noted that the campaign plan had been prepared to:

- (i) Establish the basic fund-raising principles, assumptions, and definitions on which a University-wide, phased campaign could be launched and delivered.
- (ii) Establish a timetable for key activities required for the campaign. This plan will be the unifying master blueprint for the University's Development and Alumni Relations programme through to the successful conclusion of Phase 1 and transition into Phase 2.
- (iii) Outline the overall "core" operational requirements for the campaign, including the organisational structure, both volunteer and professional,

and to summarise supporting requirements of each Development & Alumni Relations function with regards to the campaign.

279 The Court noted the Plan set out a strategic framework for successful implementation and delivery of the campaign, including parameters, goals and objectives, and priority projects for fundraising, all of which sat under three key themes: Our Students, Our Research, Our Innovation.

280 **CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE** The Campaign would be in two phases with a working goal of [REDACTED]. Phase 1 was expected to launch in early 2025 and likely to conclude in 2027 with a target of [REDACTED]. Phase 2 would launch thereafter with a target of [REDACTED].

281 The following points were noted from the Court's discussion:

- Court sought assurance on how the financial targets of the campaign had been reached and tested against the University's donor pool and prospects. It was acknowledged that the campaign was ambitious and would be challenging and would depend on the University growing its donor pool and its corporate engagement. The proposed monetary targets were considered to be comparable to the University's peers in Scotland.
- A number of potential areas were suggested where the University's reputation was particularly strong and could help the campaign, including Divinity, the Rowett Institute, Medicine (noting also the University's position as home to the first Chair of Medicine in the English speaking world) and the University's connection with five Nobel Prize winners.
- It was confirmed that charitable research grants could be included in campaign fundraising totals. It was suggested that in future progress reports to Court it would be helpful to include a breakdown of the split between this and other broad categories of funding contributing to the overall total.
- Feedback was provided and noted on the campaign visuals. It was noted that these were at proof of concept stage and would be tested further with focus groups and stakeholders.
- It was clarified that the Development Trust SCIO Board had confirmed that it was for the University to first determine what its priorities for philanthropic support were and to then engage with the Trust on the campaign plan.
- The level of staffing resource that would support the campaign was discussed. It was confirmed that the scope of the plan had been developed based on the available level of staff resource to support it. The University would, of course, look to add to that resource should its financial position enable it to do so.

- It was noted that Court included individuals who could support with advice on GDPR and how in that context to enable greater interaction with alumni.
- The role of Court members in supporting and acting as ambassadors for the campaign would be important. It was suggested that members would find it helpful to receive further guidance and support on how they could most effectively do this at an appropriate stage.

Action: Senior Vice-Principal/Campaign Director

282 The Court approved the campaign plan and endorsed the Case for Support and campaign visuals.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES for 2024/25

283 The Court held a workshop discussion to help develop the University's strategic priorities for 2024/25, within the overarching framework of Aberdeen 2040. This was informed by a briefing paper to enable and stimulate discussion (CT20240619_10) which set out three potential strategic priorities:

- Quality
- New Revenue
- Ways of Working

284 Detailed feedback on each of the three potential priorities was received from each discussion group.

285 The Court endorsed the three strategic priorities and noted that the discussion would now inform the development by management of an Operational Plan and priorities for 2024/25 which would be considered formally by Court in September.

REPORTS FROM THE SENATE AND COURT SUB-COMMITTEES

AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE (INCLUDING STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER)

286 The Court received a report on the main items of business considered by the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting on 28 May 2024 (CT20240619_11.3).

287 The Court approved, on the recommendation of the Committee:

- Proposals for amendments to the University Financial Regulations and Delegated Authority Schedule in line with the key elements of the new institutional Costing and Pricing Policy for Work with External Entities, which had been approved for implementation under delegated authority by the Commercialisation Committee in March 2024.
- Proposals for a new format Strategic Risk Register, including eight high-level strategic risks, a revised risk template and updated guidance for risk scoring.

SENATE

- 288 The Court received a report on the main items of business considered by Senate at its meeting on 8 May and 5 June 2024 (CT20240619_11.1).
- 289 The Court discussed the proposed duration of the voting period for the Rectorial election and it was confirmed this was in line with practice elsewhere.
- 290 The Court noted that Senate had held an additional meeting on 8 May to discuss the University's financial position and recovery plan. It was noted that the Senate had requested to see the Financial Recovery Plan document in either full or redacted form. Court was advised that while a number of parts of that document were commercially sensitive, the key elements of the Plan had been provided to the University community through a range of communications and presentations. The key financial elements of the Plan were in the Budget paper before Court and the intention was to share that paper, with redactions if necessary, with the community. In addition, the Financial Recovery Group had been widened to include Senate and other representation from the University community beyond management. The importance of maintaining trust and the role of transparency in doing so was noted by Court. Equally, it was concluded, that the University was providing appropriate information and transparency and that in this specific matter, was doing so to a greater extent than might be seen in many other organisations.
- 291 The Court, on the recommendation of the Senate, approved the following:
- 1) Rector Election: The timetable for the election for the triennial election for the University Rector, to take up office on 1 January 2025:
 - Voting Opens 9am on Tue, 19 November 2024
 - Voting Closes 5pm on Thu, 21 November 2024
 - Results Declared 6pm on Thu, 21 November 2024
 - 2) Resolution: Changes to Regulations for Various Degrees for introduction in academic year 2024/2025 - encompassing students studying under the articulation agreement with Harbin Engineering University; Regulations for the Degrees of Medicine and Dentistry & Physicians Associate; and Regulations for Postgraduate Study.
 - 3) Resolution 'Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic).
 - 4) That both the Resolutions at (2) and (3) be passed forthwith, in accordance with the provisions of Section 6 (2) of the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966, so that the amended provisions may be applied with effect from the date on which they are passed by the University Court.
 - 5) Resolution: Changes to Regulations for Various Degrees – this being a Resolution approved by Court on 24 April 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. That process having been concluded and with no further comments received, the Court formally approved the Resolution.

GOVERNANCE AND NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

- 292 The Court received a report on the main items of business considered by the Governance and Nominations Committee at its meeting on 3 June 2024. (CT20240619_11.2), to provide an overview of the assurances obtained.
- 293 The main item of business noted was a report on recruitment to four vacancies for Independent Members of Court and recommendations for appointment from the sub-panel of the Committee. The panel had been established with delegated authority to make recommendations for appointment to Court. It recommended appointment of:
- Lesley Birse as an Independent Member/Chair of the Remuneration Committee.
 - Ewan Cameron as an Independent Member.
 - Fiona Islam Choudhury as an Independent Member.
- 294 It was noted that the panel proposed that a further recruitment exercise be conducted for the remaining fourth vacancy. The Panel, noting the priority skills identified via the Court's Skills Matrix, and the skillsets held by the recommended appointees, proposed that the recruitment focus on a skillset of sustainability, net zero and energy transition.
- 295 In discussion, it was confirmed that the range of advertising and networks used had been extended from the 2023 process and that a more diverse pool of applicants had been gathered. The Court discussed the potential focus of recruitment on diversity rather than skills, but a number of members noted the risks of 'tokenism' that might arise from such an approach and that the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance required the Court to adopt a skills based approach.
- 296 The Senior Governor confirmed that with the appointment of the three new members, the appointment to the vacancy for the Chair of Finance & Resourcing Committee arising on 1 August would be progressed.
- 297 The Court approved:
- On the recommendation of the sub-panel of the Committee, the three appointments to vacancies for Independent Members of Court, one of which also encompassed appointment to the role of Chair of Remuneration Committee, subject to due diligence and references to confirm eligibility of appointment, following which dates for the commencement of the appointment of each new member will be confirmed in consultation with them.

- The focus and process for recruitment to the remaining independent member vacancy, this being a skillset of sustainability, net zero and energy transition.
- On the recommendation of the Committee, a change to the Committee's composition and consequential change to the wording of the Court's agreed role description for the Senior Independent Member. The 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.

298 The Court also noted that the Committee had reviewed the Rector-Senior Governor Protocol and had confirmed that it considered the protocol to remain fit for purpose and that no changes were required.

PARTNERSHIP, NEGOTIATING & CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

299 The Court received a report on the main items of business considered by the Partnership, Negotiating & Consultative Committee at its meeting on 22 May 2024.(CT20240619_11.4).

300 In discussion, it noted that in the report the University and College Union had raised concerns regarding the operation of the University's Investigation Procedure. These were noted by management and that they would be considered further by the Policy Review Group.

301 The Court, on the recommendation of the Committee, received and approved the Collective Agreement on the Harmonisation of Terms and Conditions.

REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

302 The Court received a report on the main items of business considered by the Remuneration Committee since February 2024 (CT20240619_11.5), and the Committee's annual report for 2023/24.

303 In discussion, it was noted that the Committee had been advised in February that some of the Principal's objectives for the year were no longer achievable given the sector's and the University's circumstances. The reporting of this to Court in February was queried but it was confirmed that there had been no change made to the objectives, it regarded their achievability and that this was interlinked with the agreement by Court of the Financial Recovery Plan

Note by Clerk: Subsequent to the meeting it was confirmed that the relevant wording of the Remuneration Committee's June report to Court (section 4.12) was not intended to suggest a change to the Principal's objectives had been agreed in February, but instead that the Committee had agreed (in the sense that it concurred) that some of the objectives were no longer achievable given the change in the sector context.

- 304 The Court, on the recommendation of the Committee, approved its annual report for 2023/24.

COMMERCIALISATION COMMITTEE

- 305 The Court received a report on the main items of business considered by the Commercialisation Consultative Committee at its meeting on 21 May 2024 (CT20240619_11.6).
- 306 The Court briefly discussed the level of engagement from Schools on growing new commercialisation activity.

FINANCE AND RESOURCING COMMITTEE

- 307 The Court received a report on the main items of business considered by the Finance and Resourcing Committee at its meeting on 4 June 2024 (CT20240619_11.7).

AOCB

- 308 In discussion, it suggested that the Court might benefit from receiving a presentation on growth plans for online delivery and the development of the University's Digital Education Strategy. It was agreed to note this as a potential item for future. **Action: Clerk**

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 309 The Senior Governor proposed that the Court extend the duration of its meeting on 24 and 25 September 2024. This would now commence at 2pm on 24 September and conclude at 4pm on 25 September. All further Court meetings in 2024/25 were also to be extended to conclude at 4pm rather than 3pm.

CLOSED SESSION: ANNUAL REPORT ON COURT AND COMMITTEE EFFECTIVENESS

- 310 The Court then met in a closed business session for members only, with the Secretary, to consider the annual report on the review of Court and Court sub-committee effectiveness. The minute of this part of the meeting is confidential and held separately.

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**).

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY / FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
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:
 (i) Note the action log (**Appendix 1**).

4. FURTHER INFORMATION

4.1 Further information is available from Bruce Purdon, Clerk to the Court, email b.purdon@abdn.ac.uk.

16 September 2024

Confidentiality Status: Open

UNIVERSITY COURT: LOG OF FOLLOW UP ACTIONS FROM COURT MEETINGS

Appendix 1

Court Date	Minute Ref	Action Arising	Action By:-	Status
Apr 2023	173	<p>GOVERNANCE AND NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT</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	<p>Pending – revised policy is in development. To be provided to Court by circulation in late June 2024. September 2024: Vacancy has been filled by Alison Rankin. Updated Policy delayed but is being progressed.</p>
Nov 2023	054	<p>UPDATE ON RESEARCH STRATEGY AND RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK</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	<p>Pending – to be scheduled for a future meeting once the rules for REF 2028 are confirmed (sector awaiting that confirmation).</p>
Nov 2023	096	<p>COMMERCIALISATION COMMITTEE</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	<p>Pending - Time to be proposed in the Court's 2024/25 Schedule of Business due to be considered by Court in September.</p>

Feb 2024	147	<p>FINANCIAL RECOVERY PLAN</p> <p>A commitment was given to update Court on what might be achievable in terms of 'stretch targets' around income growth without removing the necessary prudent approach of the Plan that the University's financial position and covenant commitments required.</p>	Chief Financial Officer	<p>Pending</p> <p>Decision to be taken around stretch targets late summer 2024, 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.</p>
Feb 2024	169	<p>GOVERNANCE AND NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE: RECRUITMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS</p> <p>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.</p>	University Secretary	<p>Pending – session to be arranged for Sep-Dec quarter</p>
Apr 2024	192	<p>Action Log – Modern Languages Lessons Learned</p> <p>It was requested that the recommendations resulting from the review should return to Court for noting once available.</p>	Head of Governance & Executive Support, Clerk	<p>Pending – 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.</p> <p>Update September 2024: The report is not yet concluded but will be shared with Court at the earliest opportunity once complete.</p>

Apr 2024	213	<p>Annual Report & Accounts for Year End 31 July 2023</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>	Chief Financial Officer	<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. Update September 2024: Due to resource constraints and other priorities, it has not been possible to undertake this.</p>
Apr 2024	231	<p>VS/ER and Restructuring Activity</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>	Chief Financial Officer	<p>Pending – 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>

Apr 2024	241	<p>Pensions Advisory Group</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>	Chief Financial Officer and Director of People	<p>Ongoing – 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. Update September 2024: Work is ongoing with pensions advisors - now expected to be complete by December 2024.</p>
June 2024	264	<p>Reimagining our Campuses Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was noted that representations to Court from some representatives of the Old Aberdeen community had been received. The need for proactive engagement and communication with key stakeholders not just in terms of statutory requirements, including the local communities of Old Aberdeen and Foresterhill, was recognised and would be included in the communications planning as part of any next steps. In this context, it was agreed it would be helpful to provide Court members with a communications aide memoir. 	Interim Director of Public Affairs	<p>Complete: Included in today's papers.</p>
	265	<p>The Court:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Endorsed the report in terms of its general direction of travel; Noted the supporting recommendations. 	Senior Vice-Principal	<p>Pending: Update to Court in September planned (provided in today's papers) with further report to November Court</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed that it should receive a prioritisation and implementation plan at its September or November 2024 meetings 		
June 2024	273	<p>Budgets for 2024/25 and 2025/26</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was agreed that Court should receive updates at each meeting on progress against the targets overall and within Schools and Directorates. The Chief Financial Officer would also provide further information to illustrate where there was a gap in savings still to be identified and therefore where potential pressure points in delivery of the budget were likely to be. It was suggested that sharing the timeline that had been prepared for Audit and Risk Committee with Court would be helpful. 	Chief Financial Officer	<p>Update September 2024: Performance against overall savings, split across Schools and Directorates, will be collated as part of the year end process (currently on-going) and presented as part of the CFOs report.</p> <p>The initial assessment is the financial prudence mindset and actions installed during the financial year have delivered and the projected 2023/24 year end position will be better than the £12.5m figure projected in the Financial Recovery Plan.</p> <p>In addition, current measures in place should be sufficient to deliver the projected £6.3m deficit for 2024/25.</p> <p>Management have undertaken to re-assess the 2025/26 budget following the September 2024 intake.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was also asked that following the September/October student intake, the Court be updated on whether the University was in a position to avoid a 'material uncertainty' statement being required by the auditors in the 2023/24 annual accounts. The question of whether Court should have oversight of proposed changes to Professional Services Directorates was raised and it was agreed to share the most recent paper and presentation on this with Court 	<p>Chief Financial Officer</p> <p>Clerk</p>	<p>Update September 2024</p> <p>Removing this audit opinion remains a key priority for the Finance Team. The position for 2023/24 and 2024/25 outlined above should greatly improve confidence in the financial outlook. However, the external auditors base their audit opinion on 18 months/ 2 years hence so we will not have clarity on that position until we recast the 2025/26 budget following Snapshot 1 in early October 2024.</p> <p>Complete: Made available in Decision Time Resources area following the Meeting</p>
June 2024	282	<p>Fundraising Campaign Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The role of Court members in supporting and acting as ambassadors for the campaign would be important. It was suggested that members would find it helpful to receive further guidance and support on how they could most effectively do this at an appropriate stage. 	<p>Senior Vice-Principal/ Campaign Director</p>	<p>Pending: Guidance will be developed by the Campaign Director in consultation with Senior Vice-Principal in advance of public launch of the Campaign (c. Feb 2025).</p>

June 2024	308	AOCB In discussion, it suggested that the Court might benefit from receiving a presentation on growth plans for online delivery and the development of the University's Digital Education Strategy. It was agreed to note this as a potential item for future.	Clerk	Complete: Noted as potential item for 2024/25 cycle of meetings
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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. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	n/a	
Further consideration required by	University Court	25 September 2024

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

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

4. REPORT FROM SENIOR GOVERNOR

4.1 I am very much looking forward to our Away Day and the chance for us all to welcome in person our new members of Court who have joined us over the summer – Christina, Ainhoa, Fiona, Lesley, Ewan and for us as a Court to spend time more informally with both the external members of our sub-committees and the Senior Management Team. I hope that it will be a productive time together for us a group as we begin the new academic year.

4.2 It will be Robert Traynham's last meeting and I'd like to thank him for his service to Court and the University over the past three years. We should be all the more grateful given the number of occasions that have involved him getting up in the middle of the night in the United States to join meetings on teams.

4.2 The recruitment of a new Independent member of Court focused on skills and experience in sustainability and the environment is in progress. As I write, we are approaching the closing date for applications and we expect to have short-listed for interview by the time of the Court meeting. I will provide a further update then.

4.3 In addition to meeting as part of induction our new members of Court and with the new Students' Association Sabbatical Team, 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. I also joined the University's recent open session on interdisciplinary research.

- 4.4 Externally, as Chair of the Committee of Scottish Chairs (CSC), I am now attending the Executive Group meetings of the Committee of University Chairs (CUC). Next month, it will meet for an “Away Day” session covering the future political context for higher education in the UK and the CUC’s five year strategy and priorities for the next year. In addition, I will also next month Chair my first meeting of the Committee of Scottish Chairs.
- 4.5 In my role as Chair of the CSC, I am now regularly meeting with Claire McPherson, Director of Universities Scotland, and Mike Cantlay, Chair of the Scottish Funding Council.
- 4.6 Also in the external sphere, I have been able to promote the University, City and Region at a number of political events with both Scottish Government and opposition political parties. I have also been focused on entrepreneurial events including the [Lifted Project](#) and [Pathways](#) both of which seek to raise the participation level of women in the entrepreneurial economy.
- 4.7 Finally, you will see in your pre-reading for the Away Day that we have refreshed the Court buddy system pairings. I encourage you to make the most of your “buddies” both socially and professionally to support you in your role on Court.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

- 5.1 Further information is available from the Senior Governor, julie.ashworth@abdn.ac.uk.

9 September 2024

Confidentiality Status: Open

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

UPDATE ON UNIVERSITY ACHIEVEMENTS AND SECTOR DEVELOPMENTS

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

1.1 This paper provides Court with a brief overview of University achievements and policy developments relating to higher education since June 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 ARC FRC	29 August 2024 12 September 2024 17 September 2024
Further consideration/ approval required by	Court Senate	25 September 2024 23 October 2024

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

3.1 University Court is invited to note the update.

UNIVERSITY ACHIEVEMENTS

4. RECENT MAJOR GRANTS AND AWARDS

4.1 In 2023/24, the University submitted research applications with a total value of £267M and received new research awards with a total value of £69M, an increase of 28% and 30% respectively. Recent research grants to staff since May 2024 include:

- A total of £3.772M funding has been secured from NIHR (National Institute for Health and Care Research) for seven clinical trials, including:
 - Dr Andrea Woolner, Profs Graeme MacLennan and Siladitya Bhattacharya, School of Medicine, Medical Science and Nutrition (MMSN), have been awarded £1.4M to for an investigation into medical treatments for tubal ectopic pregnancy.
 - Professors Graeme MacLennan and Shaun Treweek in MMSN have been awarded £1M for an investigation into the clinical and cost-effectiveness of Children's Early Self-Care Support (CHESS) in children with neurodisability.
 - Professor Angus Watson with Prof Graeme MacLennan, Prof Shaun Treweek, Dr Jemma Hudson and Dr Kirsty McCormack in MMSN have been awarded £618K for a project entitled "Colo-Cap: the diagnostic accuracy of colon capsule endoscopy".

- Professors Graeme MacLennan and Marjon Van der Pol, MMSN, have received £512K for a project entitled “Effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of a peer-delivered, harm reduction intervention to improve quality of life, mental health, and related outcomes for people experiencing homelessness and substance use problems: the ‘SHARPS’ cluster randomised controlled trial.
- A total of £3.65M has been received from the BBSRC (Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council) since the last report across nine different Schools, including:
 - An award totalling £639K for a project on the dietary context of TMAO as a cardiovascular risk factor, led by Professor Jules Griffin, with Prof Frank Thies and Dr Petra Louis in the Rowett Institute.
 - Dr Bin Hu, MMSN, has been awarded £522K for a project entitled ‘Dynamic control of sister chromatid cohesion: How is DNA association of cohesion regulated by Wapl and acetylation’.
 - Professor Peter Van West, MMSN, has been awarded £401K for research into ‘diagnostics of Saprolegnia Parasitica.’
 - Professor Samuel Martin, Dr Elzbieta Krol, both in the School of Biological Sciences, and Professor Alex Douglas, MMSN, have been awarded £370K for a project entitled ‘Planktonic drivers of gill disease in farmed Atlantic salmon: from mechanisms to solutions.’
- The AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council) has awarded a total of £740K across three Schools, including:
 - A £527K award to Professor Kate Britton and Dr Edouard Masson-MacLean in the School of Geosciences (Archaeology), and Neil Curtis, Head of Museums & Special Collections, on a project entitled ‘Ark of the North: Opening up access to animal bone reference collection in Northern Scotland.’
 - Prof Kate Britton has also been awarded £167K for a project entitled ‘Word of mouth: Embodied stories of premodern women at work’.
 - Dr Elizabeth Tiarks, lecturer in the School of Law, along with colleagues in the Universities of Glasgow, Northampton, Leicester and Cambridge as well as various law enforcement, commercial technology third-sector and academic partners, has received £3.4M from Responsible AI UK (RAI UK) for a four-year collaborative project entitled ‘PROBAbLE Futures - Probabilistic AI Systems in Law Enforcement Futures’, with Dr Elizabeth Tiarks, receiving £16K.
- Professor Pieter van West in MMSN has received £130K from Bakkafrost Scotland and Cooke Aquaculture Scotland, Hendrix Genetics, MOWI Scotland, SAIC (Scottish Aquaculture Innovation Centre and Scottish Sea Farms Ltd, for a PhD programme on a big data and bioinformatics study to predict and prevent Saprolegniosis outbreaks in Scottish salmon farms.
- Seven University of Aberdeen research projects have been selected at the spring 2024 RSE (Royal Society of Edinburgh) Research Awards open call, sharing over £680k with 12 of the 19 Scottish higher education institutions. Projects include enslavement of asylum seekers, unhealthy eating habits, and liquid crystals and a £49K award to Professor Gearoid Millar in the School of Social Science for ‘21st Century Peace Work: Facing Complex Challenges.’

- Dr Ieuan Seymour, School of Natural and Computing Sciences, has been awarded £1.2M from the UKRI's Future Leaders Fellowship scheme to further his research into creating sustainable solid-state batteries for applications such as electric vehicles. The highly prestigious programme aims to establish the careers of world-class research and innovation leaders across the UK.
- Professor Anne Donaldson, MMSN, has been awarded a £2.2M Senior Fellowship award from the Wellcome Trust for a project entitled "Control of DNA Replication by protein dephosphorylation: the role of protein phosphatase 1 and its regulatory interactors".
- Interdisciplinary researchers at the University, including Dr Daria Shapovalova (Law), Prof Tavis Potts (Geosciences) and Dr Kate Gormley (Interdisciplinary Fellow), supported by a post-doctoral research fellow and research assistants, have received £575K funding through the Resilient Coastal Communities and Seas Programme for a project called 'TRANSitions in Energy for Coastal communities over Time and Space (TRANSECTS), which aims to enhance understanding of the impact that energy transitions have on local communities in terms of environmental and socio-cultural change. This project is one of four projects receiving funding from a [new £14.8m UKRI and Defra \(Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs\) research funding programme](#) launched in July, which takes a transdisciplinary approach to understanding and boosting the resilience of coastal communities across the UK
- Professor Suk-Jun Kim and Dr Christina Ballico, LLMVC, with Dr David Haro Monteagudo, School of Geosciences, have received £78K from the British Academy for a project on 'Futures of Listening: Water Knowledge from Two Cities'.
- Dr Isabelle Gapp, Interdisciplinary Researcher (Environment and Biodiversity Challenge) aligned to the School of Divinity, History, Philosophy & Art History (DHPA), has received £188k from the British Academy Knowledge Frontiers scheme for a community-led project entitled 'From the Floe Edge: Visualising local sea ice change in Kinngait, Nunavut.' The project, with a total award value of £259k, is being delivered in partnership with Duke University and Kinngait Studios, West Baffin Eskimo Co-Op.

5. RESEARCH-RELATED AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

- His Majesty The King approved the appointment of the University's first female Regius Chair of Physiology in July. Professor Mirela Delibegovic follows in the footsteps of insulin pioneer and Nobel Prize winner JJR Macleod who held the position from 1928 to 1935.
- Professor Celso Grebogi has been awarded the James Yorke Award in recognition of his breakthrough achievements in Nonlinear Dynamics and Chaos. He was presented with the prize at the Mathematical Analysis and Applications Conference (ICMASC) in Porto, Portugal on 22 June.
- Two members of staff received their New Year's Honours on 2 July. Paul Mealor, Professor of Composition, received the Lieutenant of the Royal Victorian Order (LVO), a gift given by the King to people who have served him or the monarchy in a personal way. Professor Mealor composed Coronation Kyrie for the King's coronation last year and has composed music for many other royal occasions. Professor James N'Dow, Chair in Urological Surgery, Director of the Academic Urology Unit, received his OBE for his services to advancement of the profession

of urology, his related cancer research and for his voluntary clinical and academic work.

- The University of Aberdeen will be hosting a Scottish Research Cultures Collaboration Manager on behalf of the Scottish university sector from autumn 2024, a new strategic role funded through a £300K strategic grant from the SFC and dedicated to advancing and advocating positive research cultures at a national level across Scotland. The postholder will be responsible for convening and facilitating sector activity, sharing best practice, developing new resources, and influencing the development of cross-UK initiatives. Funding has been secured for two years initially, until September 2026.

6. EDUCATION-RELATED ACHIEVEMENTS, AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

6.1 Academic quality and student experience activities since May 2024:

- The annual UK-wide National Student Survey (NSS) was published on 10 July where the University of Aberdeen achieved an excellent result, ranking 2nd in Scotland for overall student satisfaction and 15th in the UK for positive responses.
- The University participated in the annual PTES (Postgraduate Taught Experience)/ PRES (Postgraduate Research Experience) Surveys conducted by Advance HE for the second year in a row and saw an increase in engagement: PTES 16% (up 5%) and PRES 25% (up 4%). Overall satisfaction for PTES was 83% (sector 84%) and for PRES was 78% (sector 81%). Benchmarked against competitor institutions, the UoA is currently placed in the 3rd quartile.

6.2 Employability-related activities:

- The Careers and Employability Service has a [new enhanced AI-based platform, CareerSet](#), that gives students personalised feedback on CVs plus advice on how to tailor it to specific job opportunities. Students can also get feedback on their covering letters and LinkedIn profiles.
- The [MySkills](#) framework is set to go live for academic year 2024/25. This set of graduate attributes and skills, aligned with the Aberdeen 2040 strategic plan, empowers students to record, reflect on, and develop their skills, to ultimately enhance their employability prospects.

6.3 Education-related awards and recognitions:

- The University's Science Teaching Hub (Reiach and Hall Architects) has been named as one of the winners of this year's Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS) awards for best new buildings in Scotland.

7. INNOVATION, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND COMMERCIALISATION

- A regional ICURe (Innovation to Commercialisation of University Research) DISCOVER programme co-sponsored by the University of Aberdeen commenced on 8 May. The programme was an eight-week online market discovery programme, funded by the University, ONE (Opportunity North East) Life Sciences, and Innovative UK, designed to support researchers and technicians in exploring their potential market and included 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 took part.

- The Third Generation Project (TGP), an international think tank co-founded by Dr Bennett Collins in the School of Social Science, has been recognised by the 2024 MacJannet Prize for Global Citizenship. The prize, organised through the Taillores Network, recognises exceptional student civic engagement in projects that promote action around the principles of the Talloires Declaration, which recommends steps to elevate the civic engagement of universities around the world.
- The University has been awarded £134K from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund for an innovative Sparking Change pilot programme led by Prof John Barrow, Dean for Employability & Entrepreneurship, which focuses on nurturing the next generation of social entrepreneurs through interactive workshops for up to 180 participants, guest speakers and project development offered by the University to those with little to no experience of enterprise, innovation or entrepreneurship.
- Dr Andrew Dilley, senior lecturer in DPHA, has been appointed the new Deputy Director of the Scottish Graduate School for Arts & Humanities (SGSAH) as a part-time secondment. Professor Dilley was awarded £20K from the Scottish Graduate School of Arts & Humanities to fund his secondment.

8. EVENTS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- The University hosted a special energy debate organised by Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce in June where First Minister John Swinney, Scottish Conservative leader Douglas Ross and Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar discussed the further of the energy sector.
- The School of Psychology hosted the European Conference on Visual Perception in August. The annual meeting is devoted to the scientific study of human visual perception and this year attracted more than 800 delegates from 43 countries in fields including Psychology, Neurosciences, Cognitive Sciences, Computer Sciences, and Medicine.
- The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Gaelic visited the University on 26 August to learn of ground-breaking research initiatives by scientists seeking solutions to some of society's biggest challenges. Academic staff shared with Kate Forbes MSP new research initiatives such as the health and environmental benefits of hemp, the use of Data and AI to support net zero, hydrogen production using seawater, and novel antibody therapeutics to combat fungal infections.
- The University's 'Beyond Boundaries' campaign won a silver award in the Best Brand/Reputation Campaign category at the HEIST awards in July. The University was also shortlisted in two other categories: the team behind clearing 2023 was nominated in the Best Prospective Student Journey/Experience category, and the team running the Postgraduate Virtual Open Day competed for the Best Event Experience 2024.
- More than 120 items from the University's Egyptian archaeology collection are being exhibited in venues across China in 2024 at the 'Meet Ancient Egypt: Mummy, Life and Death in Ancient Egypt' exhibition designed by the Meet You Museum in Chian and the Expona museum exhibition network of Italy.
- The University has launched a new podcast series, 'Beyond Boundaries', exploring groundbreaking research and teaching being carried out by its

academics. The podcast is available across platforms including Spotify, Apple Podcasts and Amazon Music, as well as the University website.

9. PHILANTHROPY AND ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

- 9.1 The Directorate of Development & Alumni Relations (DAR) received £6.278M in income over FY 2023-24, an increase of 135% year on the previous year. This includes single one-off cash donations and payments on previous years pledges. Income received includes several significant realised legacies, including £3.265M from the estate of the late Dr Bernard and Mrs Ruth Smith which will be allocated to MMSN to support Neurology, and an additional £1M in unrestricted legacy income which has been allocated towards the Interdisciplinary Institute to support the cohort of interdisciplinary fellows and PhD students. Disbursements from the Development Trust SCIO to the University totalled £5.529M. This consisted of 316 disbursement applications covering a range of activities from PhD Scholarships, widening access scholarships, academic salaries, support for IDR to Development Trust Student Support Fund projects. This is up on £5.39 million in 2022-23 financial year.
- 9.2 DAR has also been focused on delivery of our in-person and virtual alumni engagement programmes. Over the last year, 12 new international chapters have been established and over 1300 alumni have attended 87 alumni events. Highlights include a series of UK events, events held in collaboration with some of the Schools, including a series of events in Bangalore, Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou with the Business School and School of Medicine, and an alumni event hosted by the School of Law with Lady Leonna Dorrian QC at the Supreme Courts of Scotland in Edinburgh.
- 9.3 Various volunteering opportunities continue to be promoted to the University's alumni community with over 400 volunteers engaged this year. We recently participated in the first ever alumni panel at an open day with alumni volunteers joining us virtually from Belgium, China and Singapore. Over two thousand new graduates have signed up to hear from the University.

10. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

- The University has achieved the Emily Test Charter Award in recognition of the work done to enhance the support offered to victims/survivors of gender-based, and sexual, violence. Following the tragic death of Emily Drouet while student at the University of Aberdeen in 2016, her mother, Fiona, has worked tirelessly at changing the outcomes for victim survivors, particularly those at risk of suicide, and the impact of gender-based violence in our society.
- 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.
- The University has entered into a new partnership with Forth Valley College to offer partnership degree and including free accommodation to students in their third and fourth years, in order to widen access for students to pursue pathways to further study in key employment sectors.
- Aberdeen Football Club Community Trust and the University of Aberdeen will extend their successful schools and communities partnership until 2025, providing support and input to the Trust's successful school and community engagement programmes throughout the north-east to encourage pupils to consider coming to university.

- eLearning Support Assistant Laura Forero Rincón has been awarded a SEDA/Jisc Student Partnership Impact Award which celebrates those who have had an identifiable impact at the university in terms of educational development above and beyond their standard institutional role.

UK DEVELOPMENTS

11. ELECTION RESULTS

- 11.1 Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced his new cabinet the day after the Labour election victory on 4 July. Of relevance to higher education, Bridget Phillipson was appointed Education Secretary, Jacqui Smith, Minister for Higher Education, Further Education and Skills, Patrick Vallance Minister for Science, Peter Kyle was appointed Science, Innovation and Technology Secretary and Jonathan Reynolds Business Secretary. The government provides a full list of cabinet appointments [here](#).
- 11.2 The new government proposed forty bills in the King's Speech during the state opening of Parliament on 17 July where the Labour Party set out its legislative agenda, but only one, the Skills England Bill, dealt with post-compulsory education.

12. IMMIGRATION

- 12.1 The sector has noted a softer approach to HE emerging with the new government. On 30 July, the Home Secretary, Yvette Cooper published a written [ministerial statement](#) setting out a new approach to immigration that links migration policy and visa controls to skills and labour market policies and addresses domestic workforce problems.
- 12.2 The Home Secretary noted that the government “strongly values the economic and academic contribution that international students make to this country, including those here on the Graduate visa” but emphasised that it was important to protect the system against abuse and that therefore the government would keep changes made by the previous government, including restricting overseas students from bringing dependents with them, increasing the general salary threshold for those on Skilled Worker visas to £38,700 (48% increase), and abolishing the 20% going rate discount so that employers can no longer pay migrants less than UK workers in shortage occupations.

13. 2024-25 PAY ROUND

- 13.1 The 2024-25 pay negotiations round between UCEA and the five HE trade unions was extended, with six meetings held in this round rather than the usual three. The final meeting was held on 28 June with UCEA presenting a [final offer to the five unions](#) (UCU, Unite, UNISON, GMB and EIS) in early July.
- 13.2 UCEA has offered a phased uplift to support universities to cope with financial challenges, first with £900 for all staff from August, followed by the remaining salary increase from March. The salary increase is between 2.5% and 5.7% weighted towards the lower end of the pay spine, with institutions having the option to defer by up to 11 months without back pay. The offer also includes a review of the New JNCHES pay spine, joint work on contract types, workload and pay gaps.
- 13.3 On 5 July the UCU higher education committee voted to [reject the pay offer](#) following a meeting of branch delegates where 36 out of 80 branches (weighted 51%) were against the offer, and thereby triggered a dispute resolution process with employers

which is ongoing. UCEA published their revised [“full and final offer”](#) on 27 August, which offers some minor changes but does not improve the core pay offer made in July.

14. ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

14.1 In June, [HEPI and Kaplan published their analysis](#) on the economic contribution made by international students. The economic impact (net) of international students is highest in Leeds Central and Headingley at £523m per year and lowest in North Norfolk at £2m. In Aberdeen South the net impact was £209m per year, the fourth highest of 57 constituencies in Scotland, £159m in Aberdeen North, £35m in West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine, and £33m in Aberdeenshire North and Moray East.

15. UUK BLUEPRINT

15.1 UUK has been [developing a blueprint](#) on the current higher education landscape with an expert panel of commissioners, for consideration by the new UK government. The blueprint contains recommendations for the sector and government on how universities can stimulate growth, drive innovation, and open up opportunity. Universities Scotland have also had input into this work to ensure specifically Scottish interests are included. The blueprint will be published in September.

16. NUS (NATIONAL UNION OF STUDENTS)

16.1 The NUS has brought forward a [package of reforms](#) aimed at strengthening NUS member engagement with and shaping of the work of the national union. As part of proposals to “empower different nations and liberations groups to determine their own ways of working” it is recommended that NUS ‘England’ and ‘UK’ are separated. This will empower Presidents in devolved nations to directly represent their own members in Westminster. The proposals have been passed by the NUS Scotland, Wales and USI (Northern Ireland) Conferences. The aim is to implement the changes in 2026.

17. QUALITY

17.1 The QAA has launched a [new version of the sector-owned UK Quality Code](#), the first new iteration since 2018. The Quality Code articulates the principles of UK higher education for securing academic standards and assuring and enhancing quality. There are also plans for a new sector-led and sector-owned Quality Council to champion and further enhance the quality of UK HE.

DEVELOPMENTS IN SCOTLAND

18. SCOTTISH UNIVERSITY FINANCES

18.1 Universities Scotland gave [evidence to the Scottish Education Committee](#) in early June on college and university finances, highlighting real terms cuts for almost a decade, a sudden and sharp drop in international enrolments, and criticising the manner in which temporary funded places were removed from the sector ahead of AY 2024/25.

18.2 Later in the summer, the Scottish Funding Council initiated discussions with universities to enhance transparency around the Scottish funding model and to

discuss further reduction to funded places. Monthly meetings have been scheduled between August and December which are attended by the University of Aberdeen.

19. SFC OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK AND ASSURANCE MODEL

19.1 SFC announced in June that regulation of the sector would be changing from AY 2025/26 with the introduction of a [new Outcomes Framework and Assurance Model](#) setting out high level expectations of colleges and universities in return for funding. The new Framework removes detailed annual negotiation through an Outcome Agreement and replaces the current arrangements with a retrospective examination of outcomes against a national framework. The University will start reporting through the new Framework in November 2024.

20. NEW KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND INNOVATION FUND (KEIF)

20.1 As part of a move to a new Outcomes Framework and Assurance Model, SFC also published guidance on the new five-year Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund (KEIF) strategies which universities will be required to submit for future years, with the completed strategies due by 31 January 2025.

20.2 The new [KEIF fund](#), starting from 1 August 2024, 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) 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, in part due to the removal of the uplift awarded for 2023/24.

21. NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT (TQEF)

21.1 Another component of the new Outcomes Framework is the introduction of a new Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework, published by SFC in the end of July. The [new arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement](#) apply to Scotland's colleges and universities, with the first seven-year cycle running between AY 2024/25 and 2030/31. The new arrangements represent a shift towards a tertiary approach to quality in Scotland based on cyclical external reviews by the QAA, institution-led self-evaluation, thematic enhancement activity, and annual quality engagement with QAA.

22. POST-SCHOOL EDUCATION AND SKILLS REFORM LEGISLATION: CONSULTATION

22.1 On 25 June the Scottish Government opened a [consultation on reforms to the post-school education and skills system](#) and associated proposals for legislation. The proposals, if implemented, will lead to a major transformation of the Scottish tertiary skills landscape.

22.2 The options put forward seek to address shortcomings identified by the Withers Review where it was noted that current arrangements for funding post-school learning and skills training were complicated and inefficient, with multiple agencies involved, leading to a lack of vision across the system, a lack of clarity as to who is responsible for what, a lack of comparable system-wide data and evidence, and no system-wide measures of success.

22.3 Three options have been put forward to consolidate skills funding, including moving all skills and training funding responsibilities from Skills Development Scotland (SDS) to the SFC, with a further option to potentially also move current SAAS (Student Awards Agency Scotland) student funding support functions over to the SFC. Research funding will remain within the SFC.

22.4 The University is engaging with the consultation, which is open until 20 September 2024, working in collaboration with Universities Scotland.

23. FURTHER INFORMATION

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).

16 September 2024

Confidentiality Status: *Open*

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT: BI-ANNUAL REPORT**1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

1.1 This paper is a bi-annual report to Court on institutional risk management, as standard under current reporting arrangements. It provides:

- An overview of updates made to the Risk Management Framework following the last Court in June, including progressing implementation of risk management arrangements at School level, as recommended following a PwC audit into the University's risk management arrangements.
- An update on the University's current strategic risk profile, with a copy of the latest iteration of the Strategic Risk Register (SRR) included.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously Considered by	Audit and Risk Committee	12 September 2024
Further consideration by	Court	25 September 2024

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

3.1 Court is invited to:

- **Note** the update given on the University's Risk Management Framework following the last meeting of Court in June (section 4).
- **Consider and discuss** the University's risk profile and the accompanying analysis, based on the latest iteration of the SRR (section 5).

4. UNIVERSITY RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK - UPDATES

4.1 Since the last meeting of Court in June, the University's Risk Management Framework has been updated to reflect a number of agreed changes. The Framework is attached as **Appendix 1** for information. These changes include:

- (i) Introducing the new SRR, comprised of eight major, strategic risks, and adopting this for reporting to the Audit and Risk Committee, and to Court, on a bi-annual basis going forward.
- (ii) Retention of the previous iteration of the SRR, but amended to focus more specifically on operational risks across different functional areas considered strategically important. This is now called the University Risk Register (URR).

This will be monitored by the University's Risk Management Committee (RMC), in addition to management at local levels and, where appropriate, risks might be escalated from there into the new SRR.

- (iii) Roll-out of a revised risk register template, which is now underway, along with updated criteria and guidance on risk scoring; providing more detail and clarity to users.
- (iv) Roll-out of risk management arrangements at School level. Schools have each been asked to develop a risk register which focuses on their own strategic risks, and only risks specific to their School, rather than generic risks that might be applied to all Schools. These registers will be monitored at School level, by their Executive committees, and considered institutionally once per year as part of the wider planning process.

4.2 Combined, these steps meet the audit recommendations set by PwC following their institutional audit into risk management in 2022/23. In terms of next steps, there will now be a focus on risk appetite, with discussions expected to take place at Court on this over the course of 2024/25.

5. STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER: RISK PROFILE

5.1 The SRR is currently comprised of same eight risks as when last considered by Court in June. The risks themselves remain unchanged, but are expected to change over time, as both the internal and external operating environments evolve. A description for each is given below for easy reference, in Table 1, and a copy of the full SRR is attached under **Appendix 2**; please cross refer when reading this report.

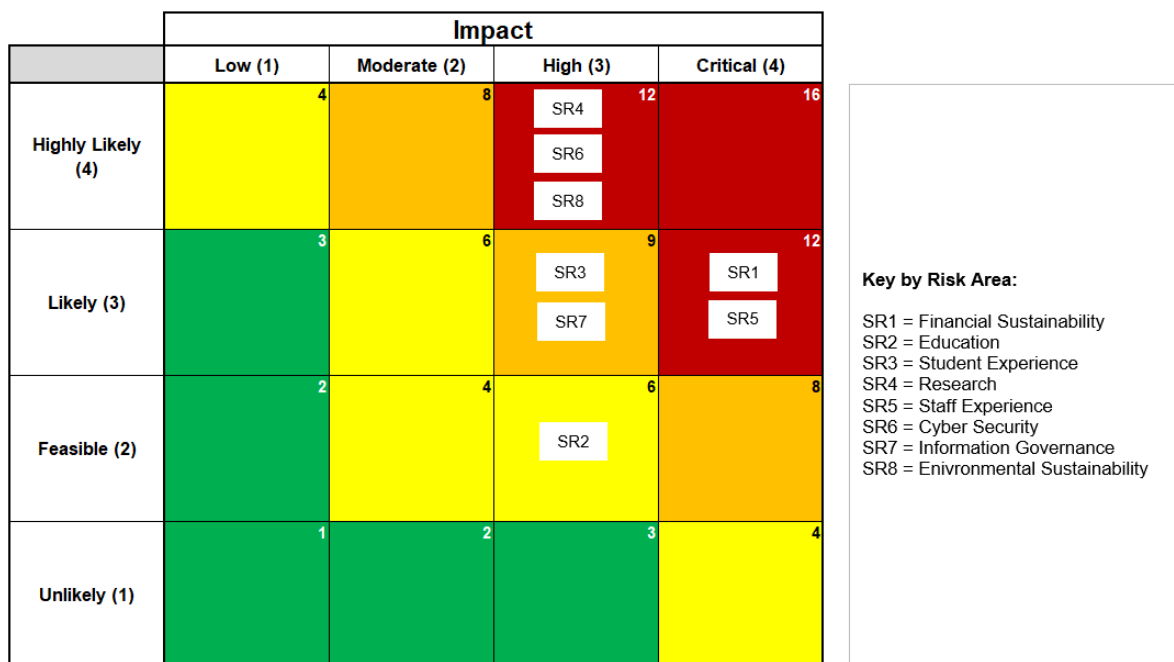
Table 1: New Strategic Risks

Ref	Risk Area	Risk Description
SR1	Financial Sustainability	The University is unable to align income with expenditure on a sustainable basis.
SR2	Education	The University is unable to provide a competitive education offer over the medium-to-long term.
SR3	Student Experience	The University is no longer able to deliver a world class student experience in line with competitors.
SR4	Research	The University's is unable to remain competitive as a research-intensive institution over the medium-to-long term.
SR5	Staff Experience	The University's current financial position, and the resultant mitigations, lead to prolonged periods of low staff morale.
SR6	Cyber Security	A failure, absence or compromise of IT Security procedures or controls results in loss, destruction or unauthorised access or modification of data and / or significant business interruption.
SR7	Information Governance	A failure, absence or compromise of Information Governance procedures or controls which results in the breach of security leading to the accidental or unlawful destruction, loss, alteration, unauthorised disclosure of, or access to, personal data. As well as the inability to meet accountability and legal obligations.

SR8	Environmental Sustainability	The University fails to make progress required, both internally and by external stakeholders like the Scottish Government, towards achieving its Net Zero targets.
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5.2 Since the last meeting of Court, the SRR has been reviewed in full, with in-depth discussions taking place at a risk management workshop held in August, attended by a range of key stakeholders, including Risk Managers. The SRR was also considered by the Risk Management Committee shortly thereafter. Changes made during this process include amendments to controls and mitigating actions, and reduction in score for one risk, Staff Experience (5); more detail on this is given after Figure 1, overleaf, which shows each risk against the University’s scoring matrix, based on the net scores currently given in the SRR (*please cross refer to the SRR when reading this*).

Figure 1: Strategic Risk Profile



5.3 Based on the above, the following should be noted:

- Once the new SRR has been established for a longer period, updates will include visual trends on changes to risk scores over time.
- Since the last report was submitted to Court in June, **there has been little change in the risk profile, with only one risk dropping in score**; Risk 5, relating to the Staff Experience. Given the high-level strategic nature of the risks in scope, and the relatively short time to have passed since that last report, only limited movement in risk scores, if any, was anticipated.
- Of the eight risks in scope, **seven exceed the allocated Target Risk Score**, and in parallel, the University’s appetite for risk in those areas. The only exception is SR2, which relates to the provision of a competitive education offer. However, as reported in June, while this might not be ideal, the net risk scores are considered prudent at the current time, reflecting not only the University’s current financial position, but also the financial pressures affecting the sector more broadly, and the stresses faced sector-wide as a consequence. These stresses are expected

to persist at least over the short-term. Within this context, the target scores represent a threshold against which the University will look to drive performance, through the implementation of controls and associated mitigating actions. It is expected that as the University continues its progress towards financial recovery – and at the current time, there is optimism that budget targets will be met for 2024/25, based on the latest available student recruitment data - then at least some of these risk scores will come down in line with both the appetite ratings applied, and the corresponding target scores allocated.

- The **Staff Experience** risk (SR5) was previously rated highest at net score 16, but this has been reduced to 12, with a likelihood of three versus an impact of four. This takes it closer to a target score of eight. The drop in score reflects tentative confidence that with the Early Retirement and Voluntary Severance schemes now closed, and staff now adapting following a period flux, there is a more positive outlook emerging. However, it is acknowledged that staff morale will continue to be impacted at least over the short-term, as the University takes the necessary steps to work towards its financial recovery. Factors likely to affect staff morale include the near-recruitment freeze, organisational restructuring, which is ongoing in some areas, and the potential for increased staff workloads, with less staff in place than previously. A number of measures are in place or under implementation to mitigate this risk, with regular communications now issued by senior management to the community to ensure transparency and to provide assurance. Work is also underway to enhance staff wellbeing support through roadshows and workshops.
- The **Financial Sustainability** risk (SR1) has an unchanged net impact score of four, and a likelihood of three, meaning a total net score of 12, exceeding the target score of eight. This risk refers to the potential that the University is unable to balance income and expenditure on a *sustainable* basis. The score reflects the challenges currently faced in aligning costs with income, which are ongoing, and the potential challenges faced in meeting budget targets, at least over the short-to-medium term; largely as a consequence of declining international student numbers, both at the University, and across the UK sector more broadly. While there is cautious optimism that the University will meet its budget targets for 2024/25, as above, the institutional budget target for 2025/26 will be challenging, making it prudent to retain the net score at 12 at this point. The Financial Recovery Plan is the primary mechanism to mitigate this risk, overseen by the Financial Recovery Group, though a number of other mechanisms are in place to drive new income generation. This includes the Operational Plan for 2024/25, which has a significant focus on new revenue streams, building on the previous plan for 2023/24.
- Three other risks, relating to **Research** (SR4), **Cyber Security** (SR6), and **Environmental Sustainability** (SR7), also have a net score of 12, but each with likelihood scores at four, and impact rated at three.
- The **Research** risk has a target risk score of 9. As with the report to Court in June, the high likelihood net score is driven by staffing concerns, focused on the potential inability to attract and/or retain high quality research staff, and a high quality professional services support function. Combined, this will impact the ability to generate research income, to produce high quality and impactful research, and to create a mature research environment. There are a range of

controls in place, with a view to ensuring the right staff are retained wherever possible, and to enabling enhanced monitoring of key indicators as a means of facilitating early intervention where required. Ultimately, protecting research performance is a priority within the wider context of financial recovery, and in particular, driving a positive outcome in the REF 2029.

- Under **Cyber Security**, which has a target risk score of six, it should be noted that in this case, the target score represents an ideal position, and that the current net score is considered tolerable in the interim, albeit, with the intent to reduce it further going forward. The net likelihood score of four reflects the current external environment, and the University's inability to prevent an external hostile attack from *being launched*; noting as previous that other universities across the sector have been subject to major attacks in recent times. The net likelihood score is offset to an extent by an impact score of three, based on the extensive controls in place to defend or mitigate any attack if or when that happens. Additionally, steps are being taken to improve staff uptake of training on cyber security, with a view to increasing the knowledge of potential threats, thereby reducing the potential for successful attacks via malicious emails, as an example.
- For **Environmental Sustainability**, which also has an *Averse* appetite rating and a target score of six, the risk is focused not on making progress towards net zero *per se*, but on making the level of progress *targeted* internally, and by key external stakeholders like the Scottish Government. The likelihood score here ultimately reflects the significant costs associated with achieving net zero, which for most organisations will pose major issues in terms of affordability. There are also questions as to whether the technology required to facilitate net zero is or will be ready, available and affordable within the target period. Moreover, it is considered a strong possibility that other organisations, on which the University will be dependent on for achieving its targets – for example, the National Grid - may face difficulties in achieving their own net zero ambitions, which would then have an adverse consequential impact on the University. The University's long-term ability to achieve targets set will therefore be challenging, and in-part dependent on factors beyond its control. However, the University remains firmly committed to its sustainability ambitions, which make up a key part of Aberdeen 2040, and there are a range of controls in place, with significant investment already made, meaning positive progress to this point.
- Two risks, relating to **Student Experience** (SR3) and **Information Governance** (SR7), have a net score of nine.
 - The **Student Experience** risk, which has a target score of eight, is focused on concerns that the University will be constrained in its ability to continue offering a world class student experience, in line with competitors. This is largely driven by current financial constraints, and the extent to which the University can invest in the quality of student facing services and facilities required to remain competitive. It also relates to the wider economic environment affecting students, linked to the cost of living, and the impact this may have on mental health across the student population; mental health challenges are already a growing issue. By way of control, the University closely monitors data relating to student satisfaction, and it is proactive in deploying funds to develop the learning environment where it can. It also has a wider range of support services in place, though these are often under

pressure. As with Research, protecting both Education and the Student Experience is and will continue to be an institutional priority, despite the current constraints on the ability to invest.

- In terms of **Information Governance**, which has a target score of six, the net score of nine reflects concerns over the University's ability to ensure compliance with the relevant legislation; noting that within this context, non-compliance would most likely be accidental rather than malicious, even if both are feasible. The University has a range of controls in place for this risk, with staffing and robust systems in place to ensure compliance to the extent possible. There are also mandated training modules which all staff are required to take, along with a live strategic project, which will deliver a comprehensive data management plan, including plans across all key functions University-wide.
- The lowest scoring risk relates to **Education** (SR2), and the University's ability to provide a competitive education offer over the medium-to-long term. This has a net score of six, with impact at three, and likelihood at two. This risk sits within its target risk score of nine, based on an *Open* appetite rating. At the current time, the University remains confident in the competitiveness and quality of its education offer, though acknowledges that the operating environment is fluid. The current financial challenges are set to continue over the interim, and significant pressures on staffing will remain at least over the short term, while the external environment continues to rapidly evolve; likely to give rise to new student expectations and demands, linked to factors like AI, which will require fast and agile responses. This risk will require close monitoring going forward, particularly given the fundamental importance of Education as one of the University's core functions.

6. FURTHER INFORMATION

- 6.1 Further information is available from Tracey Slaven, University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer, tracey.slaven@abdn.ac.uk and Hulda Sveinsdottir, Director of Strategic Planning and Governance, hulda.sveinsdottir@abdn.ac.uk, or Iain Grant, Head of Strategic Planning & Project Management Office, i.grant@abdn.ac.uk.

16 September 2024

Confidentiality Status: Open



University of Aberdeen
Risk Management Framework

Version 5.0

August 2024

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1. Executive Summary

This document is the University's Risk Management Framework. The Framework is comprised of two key components: the University's Risk Management Policy, and the University's Risk Management Process, which gives a detailed overview of the processes, tools and reporting structures in place for the effective management of risk.

The Framework applies across the University at all levels, including strategic organisational level, Schools, Directorates and on projects; risk management is an important part of the institutional Project Management Methodology. At organisational level, overarching accountability for the management of risk lies with the University Court, with additional oversight provided by the University's Audit and Risk Committee (ARC). ARC undertakes an assurance role, designed to help ensure the effectiveness of the University's risk management arrangements. In turn, the University's Risk Management Arrangements are managed by the Risk Management Committee (RMC), which reports into the Senior Management Team (SMT). Within this wider Framework, the University has a Strategic Risk Register (SRR) designed to support delivery of strategic institutional objectives, and a University Risk Register (URR), which is more operational in focus, spanning a number of key risk areas.

The Risk Management Framework was developed and is maintained by the University's Directorate of Planning and Governance, and management oversight coming from SMT, via the RMC. It aligns with best practice and internationally recognised standards for risk management, such as the ISO31000 Risk Management Principals and Guidelines document.

2. Risk Management - Key Terms and Definitions

The following definitions are provided for key terms. These definitions are recognised and accepted by the University and are applicable to the University's Risk Management Framework, encompassing all risk related policies and processes. All stated definitions are based on those given in the BS ISO3100:2018 Standard, and are therefore widely recognised across different sectors.

- **Risk:** In accordance with the ISO3100 (2018) definition, the University defines risk as the potential "effect of uncertainty on objectives". An "effect" is a deviation from an intended or expected outcome, which can be positive, negative or both, and which can address, create or result in opportunities or threats.

A risk will be considered as either a threat (negative) to the University's ability to achieve any given objective, or as uncertainty resulting from an opportunity (positive) which offers potential benefits to the institution.

An objective can have different aspects or categories; such as financial or regulatory, as examples, and can apply at different levels, within different contexts. For example, risks can be strategic or operational, and can apply to projects, processes and "business as usual" activities.

A risk will usually be referred to in terms of risk sources, such as cost uncertainty; potential events, such as a cyber-attack or a pandemic; the likelihood that they will occur, and their consequences in the event that they do unfold.

Note: it is important to recognise the difference between a risk and an issue. A risk is something that might happen, and therefore the outcome is uncertain. With an issue, there is no uncertainty; an issue is something that has happened or is happening.

- **Risk Management:** is defined as the "coordinated activities, systems and processes in place to direct and control the University with regard to the management of risk."
- **Stakeholder:** this is defined as a person, group or organisation that can affect or be affected by a decision or activity, or have the perception that they can affect or be affected. Alternatively, a "stakeholder" can also be referred to as an "interested party".
- **Risk Source:** this is an element which either on its own, or in combination with others, can potentially give rise to risk; for example, cost, schedule, user satisfaction.

- **Risk Event:** this is an occurrence or a change in circumstances, which can have several causes and a range of consequences. An event might be something that is expected but does not happen, or something unexpected which does happen. Brexit and the Coronavirus pandemic are both examples of events.
- **Consequence:** this is the outcome of an event which will affect objectives. This can be certain or uncertain, positive or negative, and can have direct or indirect impacts. As an example, consequences of an event like Brexit within a University context might be a decline in student numbers and a drop in tuition fee income.
- **Likelihood:** this is the chance that something will happen, noting it can be defined, measured or determined in quantitative or qualitative terms, objectively or subjectively.
- **Control:** this is a measure or measures that maintain or modify any given risk, and can include actions, initiatives, processes, policies or practices.
- **Risk Appetite:** this refers to the level of risk the University is willing to tolerate or accept in the pursuit of its objectives. When considering threats, risk appetite defines the acceptable level of exposure deemed tolerable or justifiable by the institution; when considering opportunities, risk appetite defines how much the University is prepared to actively put at risk in order to realise potential or expected benefits.

Risk Appetite is directly linked to Risk Tolerance; an organisation with a higher Risk Appetite will tolerate a higher level of risk, meaning its risk tolerance threshold - the point at which the level of risk exposure becomes intolerable or unacceptable - will also be higher.

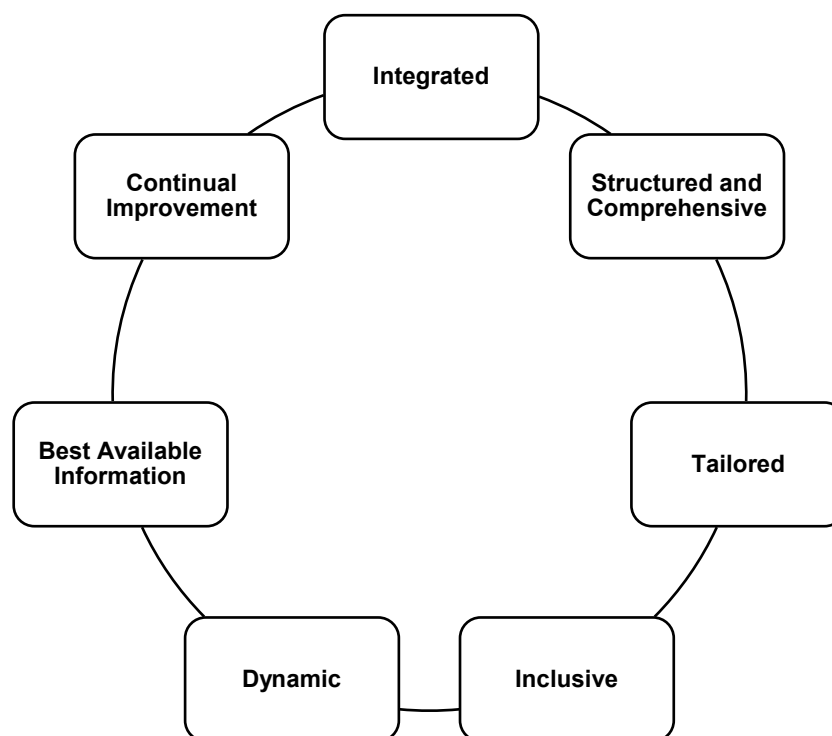
- **Risk Owner:** this is the person, persons or entity in authority accountable for the effective management of a risk.
- **Risk Manager:** this is the person, persons or entity with delegated responsibility for the effective management of a risk.

It should be noted that while Risk Owners and Risk Managers may be directly accountable and responsible for the management of specific risks, in practice, all stakeholders and University employees have a responsibility for good risk management.

3. Principles of Risk Management

The University subscribes to the principles set out overleaf for effective and efficient risk management, based on those included in the ISO 31000:2018 standard. These principles underpin this Framework document, and they will inform the continuous development and improvement of all institutional risk management arrangements.

Figure 1: Risk Management Principles



1. **Integrated:** risk management is a central part of the University's activities and its wider management arrangements, applicable institutionally, across Schools and Professional Services, and on projects.
2. **Structured and Comprehensive:** the risk management arrangements in place are structured and comprehensive, ensuring consistency of use across the University at different levels, and where applicable, ease of comparison.
3. **Tailored:** the Framework and processes in place should be customised and proportionate, taking account of context and the environment, internally and externally, as well as relevant institutional aims and objectives.
4. **Inclusive:** risk management will include timely involvement of key stakeholders, ensuring that all relevant knowledge, views and perceptions are considered as and when appropriate.
5. **Dynamic:** risk management provides the ability to dynamically anticipate, define and respond to changes or events timeously and effectively; noting risks will emerge, change and disappear in different areas under different circumstances over varying timelines.
6. **Best available information:** risk management should at all times be informed by the best available information. This is crucial for identifying and defining risks accurately; for determining the likelihood and scale of any consequences posted, and for informing the nature of the required response.
7. **Continual Improvement:** risk management arrangements are continually improved through learning and experience, underpinned by a process of continuous reviews.

4. Risk Management Policy Framework

4.1. University Position Statement On Risk Management

The University operates in a sector and wider environment where different sources, influences and events create uncertainty. Uncertainty manifests itself as "risk", and risk can affect the University's ability to achieve its aims and objectives across all areas of the organisation. Risk will take the form of a threat or may come with opportunities, but either way, risk management is key to addressing the uncertainty created by reducing the likelihood that risks might be realised, and the resultant consequences in the event that they are. It is the University's position, therefore, that the use of risk management should be

a cultural norm, inherent in its governance arrangements, and key to both driving performance and informing decision-making at all levels. The University's commitment to risk management, and the implementation of this framework, brings with it a number of high-level **benefits** which include, but are not limited to:

- Ensuring that risks are adequately identified, understood and considered when setting aims and objectives within the organisation, thereby enhancing the likelihood of successful outcomes.
- Similarly, ensuring that risks are adequately identified, understood and considered as part of decision-making processes, particularly where they concern capital investment decisions, the pursuit of opportunities or managing the impact of external issues like Brexit or Covid-19;
- In all cases, ensuring that the level of risk or the severity of potential consequences is minimised.
- Enabling a more proactive approach to management, which underpins better planning, enhances effectiveness and improves outcomes.
- Ensuring that the amount and types of risks taken across the University reflect its appetite for risk in any given area, and its wider strategic aims.
- Ensuring that information relating to such risks and their management is communicated to key stakeholders, thereby providing increased confidence and assurance when decisions are made.
- Ensuring that the systems and processes articulated herein are followed and are operated successfully, as part of an ongoing process of continuous improvement.

The Framework is owned by the Directorate of Planning and Governance, and endorsed and promoted by the Senior Management Team. It applies across the University at all levels, including at institutional level, and at the level of Schools and Professional Services directorates. Risk management should be integrated as an important governance and management function in each of these areas, making it part of daily business considerations, and a key factor that drives decision-making, as above. Risk management is also an integral part of the institutional Project Management Methodology, which is applied to all major projects undertaken by the University, including major change initiatives, strategic projects, international partnerships, and projects which require significant capital investment, such as those under estates and digital.

4.2. University Risk Appetite Statement

The University's Risk Management Framework defines Risk Appetite as *the level of risk it is willing to accept in the pursuit of its objectives*. Levels of risk are defined by category, as shown in Table 1, below.

Table 1: Risk Appetite - Categories and Definition

Category	Definition
Avoid	Unwilling to accept risk in this area to whatever extent possible; threats posed will have the potential to cause significant damage to the University, either in terms of compliance, health and safety, reputation, or financial sustainability. Detailed and robust plans for risk mitigation and control must be in place.
Averse	Prepared to accept only low levels of risk, with limited appetite for pursuing high-risk activities. Where risks are accepted, potential benefits should be significant, with rigorous controls in place to limit the potential for harm. Court approval required where risks are accepted as a consequence of pursuing objectives.
Moderate	Pursuit of opportunities is encouraged where the outcomes and projected benefits support the University's strategic vision. The risk identification and management process must be robust, with controls and mitigations in place, and clear processes for monitoring and control established.
Open	Willing to consider all projects or activities to achieve objectives, even where there are elevated levels of associated risk and where failure is possible. The projected benefits should be significant, and in line with institutional objectives. Reasonable measures for monitoring and control of risk should be in place.
High	Risk taking is encouraged in the pursuit of opportunities and objectives, through original, creative, pioneering projects or activities, providing due diligence is applied with risk

	controls in place. The chance of failure can be high and will be tolerated, providing on balance that the potential returns or benefits are significant.
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The University acknowledges that in order to achieve its strategic ambitions, there is a requirement to accept varying levels of risk in different areas. The levels of exposure will change depending on the nature of different activities the University is required to undertake, or on the opportunities it chooses to pursue; meaning its appetite for accepting risk will also vary, contingent on these different factors.

However, while the University’s risk appetite parameters will vary depending on the area of business under consideration, as above, it will always avoid or seek to minimise, through robust and controlled management, any activity that has the potential to cause the University significant financial, regulatory, legal or reputational harm, to endanger the health, safety or wellbeing of University staff or students, or to affect its ability to achieve its strategic priorities. These factors will be prioritised over any other consideration, including in areas where opportunities are commonly pursued, and the University is open to greater exposure.

Taking account of this, **the University’s Risk Appetite at a strategic level is defined as “Open”**. In line with the definitions given Table 1, this means that, while maintaining an aversion to risk where appropriate, the University is also open to the acceptance of risk in the pursuit of opportunities, where they underpin its strategic ambitions, and in turn, where on balance, there is confidence that the projected benefits are realistic and achievable, and that they outweigh any potential for significant harm.

For the **individual risk areas which comprise the URR**, all considered strategically important, risk appetite is assigned as follows:

Table 2: Risk Areas – Risk Appetite Ratings

Strategic Risk Area	Avoid	Averse	Mod	Open	High
Financial Management & Control				Open	
Estates and Facilities		Averse			
Student Recruitment				Open	
Education (UG and PGT)				Open	
Research and PGR					High
Digital and Information Services				Open	
People				Open	
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		Averse			
International Partnerships					High
Reputation				Open	
Reputation & External Environment				Open	
Environmental Sustainability					High
Leadership and Governance		Averse			
Regional Engagement					High

4.3. Risk Management And University Strategy – Aberdeen 2040

The University’s risk management function interfaces directly with its strategic planning arrangements at institutional level; it is a key tool used to mitigate and control risks which might affect the University’s

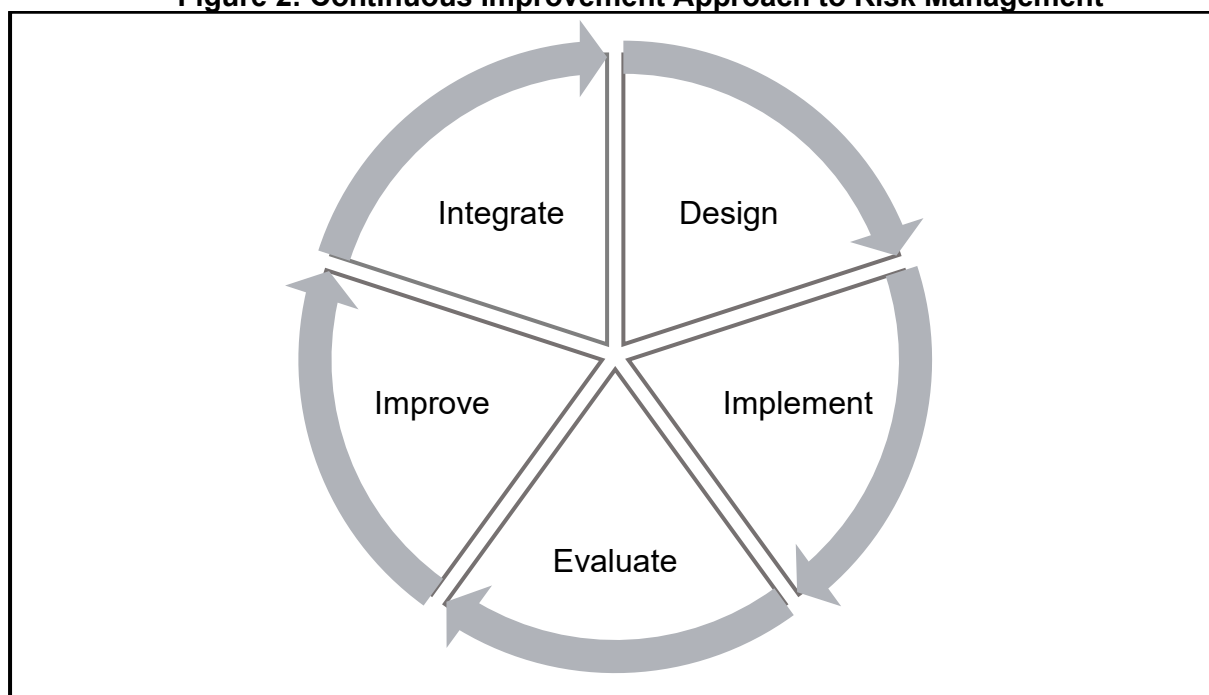
ability to achieve the overarching strategic aims and commitments mapped out in the [Aberdeen 2040 strategy](#). Major strategic risks are captured within the University's SRR.

4.4. University Approach To Risk Management – Continuous Improvement

The Risk Management Framework is a live document that will evolve over time, as the University continues to advance and mature its risk management arrangements, under an ethos of continuous improvement. The University will follow a cyclical continuous improvement model based on the following steps:

- **Design** risk management systems and processes, as part of a wider framework.
- **Implementation** of the framework at different levels of the organisation.
- **Evaluation** of the framework and its constituent policy and processes to ensure best practice and ongoing effectiveness.
- **Improvement** of the framework where areas of relative weakness or poor practice are identified.
- **Integration** of risk management into management of the University at all levels.

Figure 2: Continuous Improvement Approach to Risk Management



The University will evaluate and review the Framework annually via the Directorate of Planning and Governance. This will ensure that the Framework remains aligned to best practice and that the arrangements in place remain effective.

4.5. Risk Management: Accountability and Responsibility

Accountability and responsibility for risk management sits at all levels of the organisation:

- **University level:** as part of the institutional corporate governance structure, accountability for risk management lies with the University Court and with the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC). Within this context, Court has a remit to ensure the establishment and monitoring of systems of control and accountability for risk assessment and management; the remit for ARC can be [accessed here](#). SMT has delegated responsibility, as a core function, for oversight of the University's risk

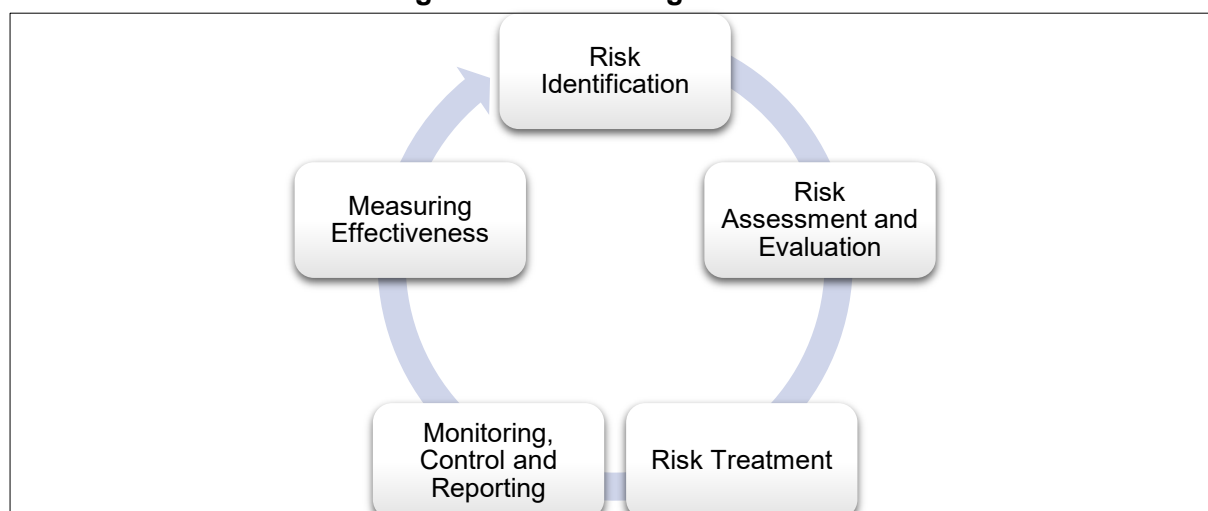
management arrangements, which includes management of all strategic risks via the SRR. SMT is informed in discharging this remit by the University's Risk Management Committee (RMC). SMT is also required to ensure that authority is delegated to manage risk at different levels of the University, including across Schools and Professional Services Directorates.

- **School level:** every School should have a risk register in place, and School Executive Committees have overarching responsibility for the management of all risks which might affect the School's ability to achieve its strategic aims and objectives. Heads of School will normally undertake the risk owner role, and will be responsible for appointing risk managers. School risk registers will be considered annually at institutional level as part of the annual planning process.
- **Professional Services Directorates:** significant risks are captured and controlled via the URR, which spans a range of risk areas designed to cover the full scope of University operations. Risk Owners and Managers will be appointed accordingly; risk managers normally from the relevant business area. Directors will also commonly act as risk manager for risks under the SRR in areas relevant to them, supporting the SMT lead designated as risk owner. The URR is overseen by the RMC, and where appropriate, risks may be escalated from the URR to the SRR.
- **For institutional projects of strategic importance,** including Digital, Estate-based and International projects, the Project Board will have overarching responsibility for ensuring that key risks are identified, monitored and controlled throughout the project lifecycle. Accountability for ensuring effective risk management takes place will normally sit with the Project Sponsor, with day-to-day responsibility falling to the project manager. The Project Board will normally report on risk as part of regular reports submitted to the appropriate authority; for example, the Digital Strategy Committee for Digital projects. Further information on risk management within a project context can be found within the [University's Project Management Methodology](#).

5. Risk Management Process

The following gives a detailed overview of the University's Risk Management Process, which is based on the cyclical workflow as below under Figure 3.

Figure 3: Risk Management Process



5.1 Risk Identification

The first step in the risk management process is risk identification. A variety of methods can be used for identifying risks, including brainstorming sessions with key stakeholders; formal or informal workshops; benchmarking exercises; horizon scanning; formal consideration by management groups, committees, boards or equivalents. When looking to identify uncertainties, a number of factors should be considered, noting these are often interlinked:

- Aims and objectives;
- threats and opportunities;
- vulnerabilities and capabilities;
- changes in the internal and external environment;
- the nature and value of assets or resources, for example buildings and finance;
- potential consequences and their impacts on objectives;
- limitations of knowledge and reliability of information;
- time-related factors.

The process of risk identification will vary depending on context and the level at which risks are being assessed. For example, at organisational level, strategic risks should be identified for ongoing management at the start of any major planning period to ensure that the strategic priorities outlined in any new strategy, like Aberdeen 2040, are taken account of. Consequently, risk identification at this level should be part of wider strategic planning arrangements. Similarly, at School or Directorate level, risks should align with the strategic priorities articulated in School or Directorate plans, and should therefore be identified early as part of the respective planning process.

Within a project setting, key risks should be identified at the start of a project, and managed throughout the project lifecycle. This should be done in accordance with the University's Project Management Methodology.

All identified risks should be recorded using the University's standardised risk register template, which comes with a supporting technical guide. These documents are [available here](#) via the University website.

5.2 Risk Assessment And Evaluation

5.2.1. Consideration of Risk Appetite

The risk appetite ratings applied to individual risk areas (*see Table 1, section 4.2, above*) should be used as a subjective tool to inform the decision-making of Risk Owners and Managers within each respective area when assessing and evaluating activities which incur risk; both in terms of potential mitigations, and when weighing up opportunities. The appetite ratings in this context thereby serve as guidance. This approach reflects the nature of risk management at the University, and across the wider sector, where the assessment of risk is predominantly – but not exclusively - a subjective or qualitative exercise, rather than data-driven.

5.2.2. Risk Scoring

When analysing and scoring risks, a number of factors should be considered, including:

- The likelihood of events and consequences unfolding, in terms of probability, and proximity - meaning time related factors.
- The nature and magnitude of those consequences, meaning their potential impact.
- The complexity of risks, and their connectivity and overlap across different risk areas.
- The effectiveness of current controls and planned or ongoing mitigating actions.

Once scored, risks can be categorised based on their perceived severity and the level of threat that they pose. This enables prioritisation, and it informs decision making on how to respond, both in terms of applying controls, or initiating mitigating actions. A determination can also be made on whether the level of risk incurred is in line with the University's appetite for risk in that area, and whether risk escalation is required.

The University determines risk scores using a 4 x 4 scoring matrix, shown in Figure 4. The matrix is designed to help project the **likelihood** of a risk occurring, in terms of probability and proximity, and the expected consequences or **impact** in the event that it does. The matrix provides a visual representation of the risk score via colour coding, which enables RAG ratings to reflect the perceived severity that each risk poses. Those risks RAG rated lowest will be coloured green, and those highest coloured red.

Figure 4: Risk Scoring Matrix

				Impact				
Probability		Proximity		Low (1)	Moderate (2)	High (3)	Critical (4)	
Likelihood	This event is highly likely to occur	76 - 100%	Could happen imminently	Highly Likely (4)	4	8	12	16
	This event is likely to occur	51 - 75%	Within 3 - 6 months	Likely (3)	3	6	9	12
	This event could feasibly occur	26 - 50%	Within 6 months to a year	Feasible (2)	2	4	6	8
	This event is unlikely to occur	1 - 25%	Unlikely for foreseeable future	Unlikely (1)	1	2	3	4

It should be noted that each Risk will be allocated two risk scores, as follows:

- **Unmitigated Risk Score** – often referred to as an inherent or gross risk score. This refers to the level of risk an activity would pose if no controls or mitigating actions were put in place.
- **Mitigated Risk Score** - often referred to as a residual or net risk score; this refers to the level of risk remaining after controls and mitigating actions are taken into account. The Mitigated Risk Score should ideally reflect the applicable risk appetite, and should fall within any agreed tolerance threshold; this can be shown via a *Target Risk Score*.

Given that the mitigated risk score is applied taking account of actions designed to mitigate the risk, it will normally be lower than the initial risk score, either in terms of impact, likelihood, or both.

The matrix as shown above is included within the University’s [Risk Register Template](#), along with guidance on how to score impact. More detail can also be found in [technical guidance documents](#), available on the University’s [Risk Management Resources site](#).

5.3 Risk Treatment

When an initial risk score is determined, a decision should be made on how to respond to the risk. This is referred to as **risk treatment**. There are four main options:

- **Avoid**: this means avoid taking the risk by not starting the relevant activity, or terminating the risk by discontinuing and thereby removing the risk source. This will not always be possible, particularly where risks are posed by external events outwith the University’s control, such as Brexit or Covid.
- **Treat**: this means adding controls and/or taking mitigating actions to reduce the likelihood of a risk occurring, or its consequences if it does. Unless a decision is made to avoid a risk, almost all risks should undergo some form of treatment if possible.
- **Tolerate**: this means accepting risk where this is an option, usually in pursuit of an opportunity. This should always be an informed decision that takes account of the expected cost-benefit trade-off. This might apply to opening an overseas campus, as an example.
- **Transfer** (the risk): this is normally done via insurance or through contractual arrangements; for example, on a capital construction project in Estates, the risk of cost overrun could be transferred to the contractor by agreeing a fixed price contract.

All controls applied to any risk, and all mitigating actions agreed, should be recorded in the risk register. This will then be used as a key tool for monitoring and controlling progress, which will include appraising the effectiveness of different treatments, and their impact on risk scores.

5.4 Monitoring, Control And Reporting

5.4.1. Monitoring and Control

Risks should be monitored and controlled on an ongoing basis. At an individual level, responsibility for monitoring and control lies with the risk owner and risk manager, in consultation with key stakeholders. This includes individual stakeholders and more collectively, stakeholder groups; for example, any relevant committee, project boards, or School Executive Committees (within Schools).

The SRR is owned by the Senior Management Team, with each individual risk owned by an SMT member. As stated above, oversight and accountability sits with the ARC, and the University Court.

The URR is overseen by the RMC, though each risk area is overseen by a committee or committees (or equivalent) relevant to the business area in question (see Table 3, below). Risk owners and managers are required to ensure that their risk areas are routinely reviewed via those groups on a routine basis.

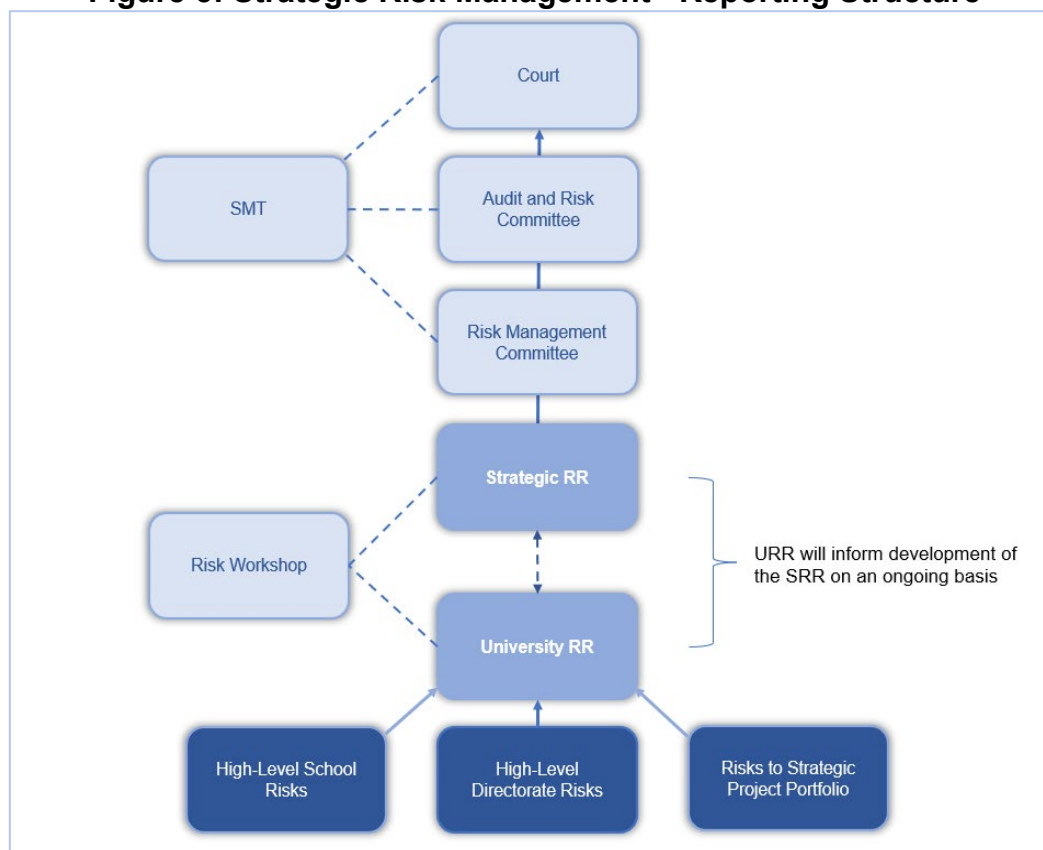
Table 3: Mapping Risk Areas to Committees

	STRATEGIC RISK AREA	COMMITTEES
1	Financial Management and Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SMT Finance and Resourcing Committee
2	Estates and Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estates Committee
3	Student Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Recruitment Committee
4	Education (UG and PGT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education Committee
5	Research and PGR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research Policy Committee
6	Digital and Information Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Strategy Committee Information Governance Committee
7	People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SMT Finance and Resourcing Committee
8	Health, Safety and Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health and Safety Committee Finance and Resourcing Committee
9	International Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Partnership Committee
10	Reputation and External Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk Management Committee
11	Environmental Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable Development Committee
12	Leadership and Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governance and Nominations Committee
13	Regional Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk Management Committee

5.4.2. Reporting

Reporting arrangements provide an additional level of monitoring and control. At University level, ARC and Court receive a high-level report on risk twice per year in February/March and September/October, as part of a bi-annual reporting process. Each of these reporting rounds will involve a workshop with key stakeholders, overseen by the RMC, and coordinated by the Directorate of Planning and Governance. These reports will provide summary updates on management of the risks which comprise the SRR, with a particular focus on those areas which pose the most significant risks at that time. The URR is also reviewed as part of this process, with an update on that going to the RMC. As part of that process, there is a concerted focus on potential risks at a more operational level, which may evolve into more strategic risks, which in turn might be escalated into the SRR. Therefore the interface between the URR and SRR is a key focus. In these ways, a monitoring and control function is being exercised at the highest level. Additionally, these reports will also provide assurance to ARC and Court that the University's risk management processes are being followed, and that they continue to function well. A visual representation of the institutional reporting structure for the SRR is given below.

Figure 5: Strategic Risk Management - Reporting Structure



5.5 Measuring The Effectiveness Of The Risk Management Process

5.5.1 Internal Assurance

The Directorate of Planning and Governance has responsibility for ensuring that the Risk Management Framework is kept up to date, in line with best practice, and that it remains effective. The Framework is reviewed on an annual basis, with oversight from the RMC, done in consultation with internal auditors if or where appropriate. Each review will take account of external risk management standards, with the overarching purpose of driving continuous improvement and enhancing maturity. On completion, a report on the review outcomes should be made to the RMC as standard. Additionally, by reporting to ARC biannually, as above, ARC will undertake an assurance function designed not only to ensure that all major risks facing the University are being effectively managed, but also to provide assurance that the University’s wider risk management arrangements are being properly implemented, and that they remain fit for purpose. This ensures that the Framework and its constituent processes are subject to scrutiny by an objective third party, albeit one internal to the University.

5.5.2 Internal Audit

The University’s risk management arrangements will also be subject to review as part of the internal audit process, carried out by auditors appointed at institutional level; currently PwC. Audits will take place on an ad-hoc basis; the last audit on risk management took place in 2019. This is an important assurance function carried out by an external authority on risk management.

University of Aberdeen - Strategic Risk Register

Risk Register Title: Strategic Risk Register

Ownership Group: Senior Management Team

Date of Last Update: April 2024

Risk Scoring Matrix

				Impact				
Probability		Proximity		Low (1)	Moderate (2)	High (3)	Critical (4)	
L i k e l i h o o d	This event is highly likely to occur	76 - 100%	Could happen imminently	Highly Likely (4)	4	8	12	16
	This event is likely to occur	51 - 75%	Within 3 - 6 months	Likely (3)	3	6	9	12
	This event could feasibly occur	26 - 50%	Within 6 months to a year	Feasible (2)	2	4	6	8
	This event is unlikely to occur	1 - 25%	Unlikely for foreseeable future	Unlikely (1)	1	2	3	4

NOTE: The above matrix provides criteria for scoring likelihood, based on either the probability that a risk will unfold and become a reality, or the potential timeline - proximity - within which this could happen. When scoring a risk, both probability and proximity can be considered together if or where appropriate; otherwise, the impact score should be based **only** on the **probability** of a risk crystallising.

The criteria for scoring impact is included on the next tab, with criteria set against a range of established risk areas.

Impact Scoring Guidance

The following criteria is advisory and directive, but does not cover every conceivable eventuality. Where appropriate, users should exercise subjective judgement when scoring impact, taking account of context and any unique circumstances, using the criteria below only as a guide.

Risk Area	Low	Moderate	High	Critical
Finance	Financial loss of £1-2m in total, or £500k - £750k per annum	Financial loss of £2-4m in total, or £750k - £1m per annum	Financial loss of £4-6m in total, or £1m - 2m per annum	Financial loss of over £6m in total, or over £2m per annum
Student Recruitment	1-2% below tuition fee targets.	3-5% below tuition fee targets.	6-10% below tuition fee targets.	More than 10% below tuition fee targets.
International Partnerships	Factors or events that have minimal or negligible impact on international partnerships. These factors are manageable and are unlikely to significantly disrupt or affect the partnerships between the university and its international collaborators.	Factors or events that have a noticeable impact on international partnerships but are generally manageable with appropriate actions and strategies. They may require some effort to address but do not pose a severe threat to the sustainability of the partnerships.	Factors or events that have a substantial and significant impact on international partnerships. These factors can potentially harm the partnerships and may require significant resources, effort, and strategic adjustments to address, recover from, or prevent.	Factors or events that have an extremely severe and potentially catastrophic impact on international partnerships. These factors pose a serious and immediate threat to the viability of the partnerships, demanding immediate and extensive actions to avoid severe damage or dissolution of the partnership.
Education & Student Experience	Short term impact on the quality of education delivered, or on the student experience; including potential minor impact on key areas like student satisfaction, continuation, or graduate employability.	Medium term impact on the quality of education delivered, or on the student experience; moderate impact on key areas like student satisfaction, continuation, or graduate employability.	Medium to long term impact on the quality of education delivered, or on the student experience; significant impact on key areas like student satisfaction, continuation, or graduate employability.	Long term impact on the quality of education delivered, or on the student experience; major impact on key areas like student satisfaction, continuation, or graduate employability.
Research	Short term reduction in ability to deliver research; minor impact on research quality, impact generation or on the research environment. Or, temporary reduction in research income.	Medium term impact on ability to deliver research; moderate impact on research quality, impact generation, or the research environment. Or, moderate reduction in research income, with recovery of 1-2 years.	Medium to long term impact on ability to deliver research; with significant and sustained impact on research quality, impact generation, or the research environment. Or, significant reduction in research income, with recovery of 3-4 years.	Long term impact on ability to deliver research, with major and lasting impacts on research quality, impact generation, or the research environment. Or, major loss of research income requiring long term recovery of 5 years or more.
Regional Engagement	No major impact on engagement across regional community; no significant impact on enterprise and innovation activity.	Short-term significant impact on engagement across regional community; noticeable impact on enterprise and innovation activity; noticeable reduction in engagement with local stakeholders.	Long-term significant impact on engagement across regional community; significant impact on scope and scale of enterprise and innovation activity; significant reduction in engagement with local stakeholders.	Catastrophic impact on engagement across regional community; reduction of enterprise and innovation activity to a minimum; extremely limited programmes that benefit the local community.
Reputation	Mixed local coverage on an issue or individual but limited impact on University reputation.	Adverse local or regional publicity, with limited damage to University reputation, but requiring a public relations response.	Adverse national publicity on a single issue, impacting on reputation nationwide, and requiring significant public relations response.	Adverse national or international publicity about multiple issues or core University functions, with the potential for major reputational damage, requiring a strategic and sustained public relations campaign in response.
Digital and Information	Minor disruption, with low impact on service delivery; dealt with internally	Moderate disruption, with reallocation of resource required to ensure continuity of services.	Significant disruption, with substantive management action required to recover and resume service provision.	Major disruption with impact on the strategic and operational activities of the University, potentially sustained for a lengthy period.
Estate and Facilities	Low impact on service delivery- dealt with internally.□	Minor disruption, with reprioritisation required to ensure continuity of services.□	Significant disruption, with substantive management action required to recover and resume service provision.	Major disruption, with impact on the strategic and operational activities of the University, potentially on a sustained and long term basis.
Operations	Low impact on service delivery, addressed quickly.	Moderate disruption, re-prioritisation needed for service continuity.	Serious disruption. Significant management action needed to recover.	Major disruption with severe impact on the strategic and operational activities.
People	Minor impact on staff operations, with minimal effect on student and/or staff wellbeing.	Moderate impact on staff operations with adjustments required, and/or a noticeable but manageable impact on student and/or staff mental, emotional or physical health	Significant impact on staff operations requiring substantive adjustments, and/or a potentially significant impact on students and/or staff well-being, affecting some aspects of their mental, emotional or physical health.	Major impact staff operations, leading to changes in workflow or productivity, and potentially major effects on student and/or staff mental, emotional or physical wellbeing.
Health and Safety	A minor injury, or impact on health, not requiring hospital treatment.	A significant or major injury resulting in less than seven days absence from work.	A major injury or ill-health resulting in over seven days absence from work.	Permanent disability, death or multiple deaths.
Environmental Sustainability	Actions we take that have a minimal or negligible impact on the environment or on the volume of greenhouse gas emissions for which we are responsible.	Actions we take that have a noticeable impact on the environment or on the volume of greenhouse gas emissions for which we are responsible. They are generally manageable with mitigating efforts.	Actions that have a substantial and significant impact on the environment and/or add substantially to the volume of greenhouse gas emissions for which we are responsible.	Actions we take that have a severe and potentially irreversible impact on the environment and/or represent a significant and sustained increase in the volume of greenhouse gas emissions for which we are responsible.

University of Aberdeen - Strategic Risk Register

Ref	Risk Area	Risk (what could happen)	Cause (potential source of risk materialising)	Consequences (potential impact of risk)	Owner	Manager	Likelihood	Impact	Unmitigated Score (gross)	Response	Controls (permanent or standing control measures)	Mitigating Actions (in progress or complete)	Status (due date or complete)	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigated Score (net)	Appetite	Target Risk Score	Movement
SR1	Financial Sustainability	The University is unable to align income with expenditure on a sustainable basis.	Unable to attract students in sufficient numbers e.g. due to a degree programme portfolio that does not align with current global demand, a hostile immigration system or other reason. Inability to meet tuition fee income targets on a sustainable basis, caused by e.g. a competitive international market, government policy, unpredictable conversion rates, or an internal failure in strategic decision making. Unable to successfully establish new TNE or international student recruitment partnerships. Unable to grow research income. Unable to grow academic and/or non academic commercial income. Unable to reduce and then control staff and operating costs to the target levels, while maintaining viable operations. Unable to deliver Financial Recovery Plan.	Unable to deliver Aberdeen 2040. Potential to exceed agreed deficit parameters and threaten status as going concern. An extended period of staff and operational cost cutting measures required University-wide. The University's ability to compete with comparator universities declines. Decrease in ability to attract and retain highest quality researchers, with consequential impact on REF. Difficulty in retaining high quality and high performing staff in Schools and in Professional Services more broadly, with adverse impact on staff morale. An adverse impact on Education the wider student experience. Inability to invest in Digital or Estate environments. Significant reputational damage. Sustained drop in league table rankings. Loss of confidence in the Executive.	GB	MW	4	4	16	Treat	Financial recovery plan in place, designed to put the University into a financially sustainable position. SMT Operational Plans for 2024/25 retains a focus on new revenue streams. Robust governance arrangements in place across all relevant areas to ensure oversight, and to inform early interventions where applicable. New student recruitment strategy in place. Regular reports to key stakeholders on student applications and conversion rates throughout the recruitment cycle. Use of third party providers to improve student application conversion rates. Realistic student intake target setting, with monitoring and control in place. Research income monitored closely and incentivisation. Reduction in levels of investment in Digital and Estate to sustainable level over short term, while investing enough to ensure compliance where required, and in key areas which are aligned to strategic priorities.	New international partnership strategy to be developed and approved. Exploration of new TNE opportunities. Develop new strategic framework for enterprise and innovation activity. New Costing and Pricing Policy for work with external organisations. Develop a new Intellectual Property, Equity & Revenue Sharing policy New Strategic Corporate Partnership offer. Review of Consultancy Policy Early Retirement Scheme implementation. Voluntary Severance Scheme implementation. Development of more robust project prioritisation methodology to ensure optimal use of limited funds.	September 2024 Sept 2024 (full due diligence) Complete June 2024 June 2024 Complete October 2024 Complete Complete October 2024	3	4	12	Moderate	8	No Change
SR2	Education	The University is unable to provide a competitive education offer over the medium-to-long term.	Degree programme portfolio does not meet current market demand, or deliver desired outcomes, for example, employability. Inability to attract high quality teaching staff required to deliver new or existing degree programmes. Inability to retain high-quality teaching staff, exacerbated by current financial climate. The University does not have the right composition of staff, in terms of teaching and research, in order to optimise its teaching capability. Insufficient volume of high-level professional services staff to support the education function. Generative AI and large language models fundamentally undermine the University's model of Education and Assessment. The University's digital teaching and learning environment for education does not support the current needs or expectations of staff or students. The University's physical teaching and learning environment does not meet the current needs or expectations of staff or students. Inflexible teaching models or modes of delivery do not meet the needs or expectations of staff or students. Unable to invest in the digital and physical teaching and learning environments.	Reputational damage nationally and internationally, in terms of standing and perception as a world class Education provider. Increase in rates of non-continuation. A decline in graduate outcomes. A decline in student satisfaction. A decline in levels of student achievement. Adverse and sustained impact on league table performance. Difficulty in attracting and retaining high quality teaching staff. Inability to attract students at all levels, with a consequential impact on tuition fee income and financial sustainability.	GB	JM	3	4	12	Treat	Annual review of portfolio to assess demand and student outcomes Work with communications and marketing to raise the profile of education at Aberdeen Work with the Centre for Academic Development to create a sustainable approach to staff development. Staff engagement to be monitored and approaches evaluated and revised as required. Streamlining of policies and process coupled with the use of digital to minimise as much of the manual processes as possible. Constant review of GenAI and the impact on education. Designing assessments that are fit for purpose in light of the continued evolution of AI. Horizon scanning of trends in education around the digital and physical estate and keeping up to date with sector approaches to meeting the current and future needs of students. Focus on flexibility and personalised learning in programme design and approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. Using data to inform intervention and decision making	Implement review of programmes Use learner analytics to maximise student success, retention and outcomes Annual review and update of staff development	July 2025 July 2025 July 2025	2	3	6	Open	9	No Change
SR3	Student Experience	The University is no longer able to deliver a world class student experience in line with competitors.	University is unable to invest sufficiently in the student-facing services and facilities required to deliver an outstanding student experience. University surpluses insufficient to invest in high-quality student-facing physical and digital environments. The mental health crisis affecting students in Higher Education impacts a rising number of students. The cost of living crisis, impacting the ability of students to balance study, and a need to work. Inadequate funding for the sector, including funding available to students who may be more vulnerable and in greater need.	Declining student resilience, due to factors like mental health or financial challenges. Student Support services faced with unmanageable demand. An increase in non-retention. A decline in student satisfaction. A decline in levels of student achievement. Lower application rates for Scottish domiciled students who would have to re-locate and leave home to study in Aberdeen. Reputational damage.	GB	JM	3	4	12	Treat	Close monitoring of student experience, evidenced by data Proactive approach to reviewing student learning environments and deploying funds where required to maintain standards Continue with the counselling service and taking a proactive app to monitoring student wellbeing Flexible learning opportunities to enable student to balance studies, life and work Working with students as partners in the co-creating of their learning Taking a data-driven approach to decision making	Enhance and automate the use of learning analytics Review and update all education-related policies and processes to ensure clarity and consistency Develop the terms of reference for a curriculum review to ensure fit for purpose now and into the future	July 2025 Ongoing December 2024	3	3	9	Moderate	8	No Change
SR4	Research	The University's is unable to remain competitive as a research-intensive institution over the medium-to-long term.	Inability to attract high quality research staff. Inability to retain high-quality research staff, exacerbated by current financial climate. The University does not have the right composition of staff, in terms of teaching and research, in order to optimise its research capability. Insufficient volume of high-level professional services staff to support the research function. Research environment not as mature or developed as at comparator universities. Insufficient research grant income generation, through a failure to capitalise on research opportunities. An inability to produce a higher volume of 3* or 4* research outputs on a sustainable basis. Aberdeen research does not have the level of non-academic impact required. PGR student recruitment not to required levels. Failure to comply with statutory requirements relating to international security, Trusted Research and Export Control licensing.	Reputational damage nationally and internationally, in terms of standing and perception as a research-intensive University. Reduction in quality submission to the next Research Excellence Framework. Adverse and sustained impact on financial sustainability, with potential cuts to the University's Research Excellence Grant from SFC. Adverse and sustained impact on league table performance. Difficulty in retaining high quality research staff. Reputational and individual damage, and financial penalties for non compliance with international security legislation	GB	NF	4	4	16	Treat	Monitoring of T&R staff FTE across schools and Units of Assessment / Panels through Pure to assess panel level changes in terms of standing and perception as a research-intensive University. Monitoring of research grants income (total and by FTE) through HESA publications, published PGR numbers, UKRI income and success rates by research councils Assess through annual review of outputs using Pure to collect output data Monitor number of impact case projects; introduce a comparable scoring mechanism to assess quality of impact case studies Monitor student number applications, offers and acceptances Assess due diligence responses, seek advice from RCAT, undertake entity checks, with monitoring through new group from International research, reporting to UPC and URC. New Dean appointed for People, Culture and Environment, with overarching plan to enhance research culture progressing. Second tranche of research leave awards in place for 24/25 to improve environment.	Ability to recruit new T&R staff limited, focus on ensuring recruitment for research grants progresses as quickly as possible. HoS to be aware of potential loss of T&R staff and identify retention pathways - particularly those with multiple grants and PGR students. Restructuring of R&I to ensure a focus for research support is protected, while achieving savings targets. Rebuilding EU funding pipeline. VPI(R) active in Universities Scotland/RKEC promoting Aberdeen. School level award and application targets generated, along with new process to focus on high value grants proposed via URC REF stock take launched for 2024 for all REF eligible staff to nominate a minimum of 1 additional paper for review. New Dean for Knowledge and Understanding appointed. Increased FTE to support impact (including new Dean for Impact and Engagement). Impact leads identified within schools, programme of impact training delivered for 23/24 and planned programme for 24/25, Impact case projects identified for all UOAs with prioritisation in progress. Restructure of some elements of the PGR College to align with overall student recruitment strategy. New Dean for PGR appointed. Undertaking Trusted Research due diligence, training programmes for staff involved in TNE and research within high risk areas and securing Export.	Ongoing Partially complete TBC - in line with PS restructuring Completed April August 2024 Complete Completed Prioritisation October 2024	4	3	12	Open	9	No Change
SR5	Staff Experience	The University's current financial position, and the resultant mitigations, lead to prolonged periods of low staff morale.	A combination of Early Retirement and Voluntary Severance increase workloads for staff remaining. The recruitment freeze prevents progress with work, on key projects or initiatives, or increases workloads for protracted periods. Re-shaping exercises in Professional Services and Schools lead to increased levels of uncertainty, unhappiness, and/or anxiety. Prolonged financial difficulties impact on job security, or perceptions of job security. Ineffective or lack of communication with staff, with associated lack of transparency.	Unable to retain high-quality staff. Higher staff turn-over. Loss of knowledge, expertise and institutional memory. Reduced quality of Education and student experience, leading to reputational damage and an inability to attract and retain students, impacting financial sustainability. Impaired ability to produce high quality research, impacting reputation and REF performance. Increase in industrial action, or industrial action taking place over sustained periods. Decline in rates of staff retention. Loss of confidence in the Executive.	GB	DD	4	4	16	Treat	Monitor voluntary staff turnover data/KPIs Analysis of statistics from Enhanced Retirement/Voluntary Severance departures Monitor staff exit survey data Monitor delivery of staff development programmes Regular engagement with campus trade unions both formally and informally Regular communication from Senior Management with progress updates on Financial Recovery Monitoring staff survey data	Review and ensure high quality leadership and development training Develop robust succession plans in place across Schools and Directorates Support local teams on the impact of enhanced retirement/voluntary severance Support Change Management/Restructuring ensuring appropriate change management policy is adhered to Actively consult with campus trade unions in relation to Change Management Deliver training to line managers on change management Enhance wellbeing support through roadshows and workshops	Ongoing October 2024 Ongoing Ongoing October 2024 September 2024	3	4	12	Moderate	8	Down
SR6	Cyber Security	A failure, absence or compromise of IT Security procedures or controls results in loss, destruction or unauthorised access or modification of data and / or significant business interruption.	Insufficient staff awareness and training. Hostile external attack Malicious internal activity (including out-going staff) Inappropriate system / software patching Inappropriate configuration on university managed equipment or software that leads to entry of malicious actors Legacy, unsupported applications and/or operating systems Failure in Cyber Incident Response Plan Successful attack on University supplier or partner leading to university security breach Shadow IT with poor security provides entry point to wider systems Non-compliance with travel abroad policies for "burner" devices Insufficient funding leads to aged equipment and / or systems going out of support and adding levels of cyber weakness	Loss, destruction or unauthorised access or modification of data. Exfiltration or encryption of data leading to ransomware demand Significant disruption to business activities. Loss of access to University systems. Significant Financial Impact (EM) Reputational damage Loss of connectivity to essential partners in eco-system due to system isolation Damage or distress to individuals	GB	TS	4	4	16	Treat	Monitoring of organisation by security team, including weekends where specific threat intelligence warrants (if volunteers available). MFA rolled out across all alumni, staff, contractors and students. Microsoft 365, VDI and VPN are covered by MFA with MyHR and external and shared account work underway. Multi-layered technical controls in place and continually assessed and improved (vulnerability management, email auto-forwarding, mobile management) to reduce risk. Information Governance Committee, Information Risk Working Group and Operation Security Group in place to provide policy, governance, prioritise risk mitigation activities. Adherence to and reporting to senior management based on Scottish Governance Public Sector Action Plan and Cyber Resilience Framework. Active participation in external networks and threat intelligence sharing groups and forums Regular audits, security assessments and penetration testing. Improvement of information security training and development for staff and students with the introduction of new mandatory training modules for staff. Incident Response retainer service to support local staff Policy, procedure and guidance framework in place, All published to all users on StaffNet where appropriate and subject to annual review. Supplier cyber and data assessments embedded into procurement process as standard, with review process in place. Security controls and security tools (SEM, MS tools) continuously reviewed to ensure that security and performance are optimal in the changing working environment.	Externally provided Managed Detection and Response/Security Operations Centre service to provide 24/7 monitoring and response capabilities now in operation. Supplier is escalating major issues and also remediating issues such as account hacks through permissions provided by University. Work to expand capacity to mitigate issues is on-going as is development of Out of Hours response capacity of the University.	June 2024	4	3	12	Averse	6	No Change

SR7	Information Governance	A failure, absence or compromise of Information Governance procedures or controls which results in the breach of security leading to the accidental or unlawful destruction, loss, alteration, unauthorised disclosure of, or access to, personal data. As well as the inability to meet accountability and legal obligations.	Insufficient staff awareness and training. Mistakes by staff in processing, e.g. email Inappropriate permissions structure around University data allowing inappropriate access Retention of data in an inappropriate format or beyond agreed timescales Lack of procedural adherence by staff in setting up external system access Lack of procedural adherence by staff in setting up partnerships and research agreements Cyber security breach	The accidental or unlawful destruction, loss, alteration, unauthorised disclosure of, or access to, personal data. Inability to meet accountability and legal obligations. Reputational damage. Damage or distress to individuals. Significant financial damage (EM) Potential investigation by statutory bodies	GB	TS	4	4	●	16	Treat	Data Protection Officer, in this area to identify and manage risk, and drive improvement. Installation of immutable data store to help protect data from ransomware attack. Information Governance Committee and Information Risk Working Group in place to provide policy, governance and prioritise risk mitigation activities Regular audits and governance assessments via adherence to and reporting to senior management based on compliance with the ICO Accountability Framework. Active participation in external networks and information governance groups and forums Improvement of data protection training and development for staff through the roll out of new mandatory annual training module for staff Development and implementation of International data transfer framework to structure University information governance response / engagement with international partners: to assess new international data transfers and review existing arrangements Regular monitoring of external environment for legal / environmental change that is relevant to University Information Governance risk and processes Contractual due diligence in place via supplier cyber and data assessment / DPIA / data sharing agreements and data processing agreements Policy, procedure and guidance framework in place, subject to annual review, and published to all users on Staffnet/toolkit as appropriate and updates communicated via ezine	Information and Records Management Project (IRMP) underway to help ensure data ownership is embedded within the University and retention schedules kept up to date and adhered to	June 2026	3	3	●	9	Averse	6	No Change
SR8	Environmental Sustainability	The University fails to make progress required, both internally and by external stakeholders like the Scottish Government, towards achieving its Net Zero targets.	The financial cost of achieving Net Zero within the anticipated timeline i.e. before 2040, is not affordable. Inadequate income and surplus generation to enable investment in programmes, projects and staffing. Inadequate staff resource and internal expertise to enable delivery. Net Zero technologies are not ready or insufficiently scalable to decarbonise key emission sources, notably Scopes 1 & 2. The National Grid and/or other key external enabling environments fail to achieve their own Net Zero deadlines, with knock on impacts on the University e.g. government targets to decarbonise critical national infrastructure are not met. Expansion of estate and/or student/staff numbers without adequate long-term planning to compensate for such growth. Availability of offsets to address hard to treat emissions (notably elements of our Scope 3 emissions portfolio) is limited, fails to keep pace with national demand, or proves prohibitively expensive. Failure to explore, endorse or to identify new delivery approaches e.g. forming a strategic delivery partnership to help the University achieve these targets, notably by assisting with the up-front capital cost of Net Zero delivery.	Significant reputational damage if the University is not able to meet its sustainability commitments. Potential failure to meet legal obligations. Adverse impact on future staff and student recruitment. Potential censure from Scottish Funding Council given the inclusion and enhanced status of Net Zero monitoring within annual reporting and Outcome Agreements. Potential recurrent cost implications of offsetting e.g. a higher than necessary annual offsetting bill to address any emissions we cannot eliminate (notably applicable to any future offsetting of Scope 1 & 2 emissions which we aim to eliminate entirely). Adverse impact on relationships with strategic partners with whom we share facilities/sites (e.g. NHS, ACC, NDC, etc.) who have their own Net Zero deadlines and targets. Delays in implementing key technologies result in increased capital cost in the longer term. A strategic delivery partnership (or other innovative approach) is delayed or cannot be secured.	GB	KL	4	4	●	16	Treat	Sustainable Development Committee established to provide oversight and direction across sustainability agenda. Sustainable Heating Programme Board established, with initial funds allocated to cover some projects in scope but with more work required to establish the nature and scale of the decarbonisation investment required. Policy Framework e.g. Sustainable Business Travel Policy, Heating Policy established and in place. Sustainable Design Guide (construction) established and in place. Strategic and Civic Partnerships and Engagement Sustainability established as a key theme within the Aberdeen 2040 Strategy Long-term NZ project register established and actively managed, integrated into wider Estates project planning and prioritisation. Sustainability Team established in Estates & facilities to drive institutional engagement with Net-Zero.	1. Development of a net-zero strategy and implementation plan (working group established early 2023, target data end 2024). Helps to clarify scope and scale of investment required to deliver net-zero. 2. Initial allocation of net-zero project funding identified. Subsequent allocations to follow. 3. Sustained investment over multiple years embedded as part of long-term financial planning (Note: initial allocations included in ten-year capital plan but nowhere near the scale predicted by AUDE tool). 4. Discussions with local partners about district heating and alternative heat sources e.g. hydrogen (Note: though in early stages this discussion is part of the strategic, regional case for net-zero investment). 5. Investigation of strategic / delivery partners i.e. industry bodies with capital and expertise to invest in public sector decarbonisation, with agreement on approach to follow. 6. Development of recommendations around heat decarbonisation and renewable energy generation options. 7. Establish a working group to agree an institutional offsetting approach (Note: sector discussion of Scope 3 emissions is rapidly evolving and there is a growing sense that some Scope 3 emissions may move to a 'track' rather than 'offset' category). 8. Enhanced awareness of Net-Zero among other key staff groups e.g. Finance, Planning, Procurement, Projects, with embedded expertise where necessary.	1. In development target date end 2024 2. In place - capital plan 3. Approach tbc 4. Ongoing, due date TBC 5. Ongoing institutional discussion, due date tbc 6. In development - mid 2024. 7. tbc - group not yet established 8. Emerging as part of Net Zero Strategy (see 1. above)	4	3	●	12	Averse	6	No Change

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY COURT
REIMAGINING OUR CAMPUSES

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Court on the *Reimagining Our Campuses* project following the presentation of the project's report in June 2024. A fuller update including a prioritisation and action plan will be provided to Court's next meeting in November.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously endorsed by	n/a	
Further consideration/ approval required by	n/a	

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

3.1 Court is invited to note the contents of the report, and to receive the requested briefing note (**Appendix 1**).

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 Court received the *Reimagining Our Campuses* report and recommendations in June 2024. Court endorsed the report and its general direction of travel, noting the recommendations and agreed it should receive a prioritisation and implementation plan at its November 2024 meeting.

4.2 This paper provides an update on the work that has been undertaken to date in preparing to return to Court in November with a detailed implementation plan. It also provides Court with information on a number of initiatives relating to *Reimagining Our Campuses* which have already commenced.

4.3 At the June 2024 meeting, Court members requested a short briefing note on *Reimagining Our Campuses* to help inform interactions with University staff, students and external stakeholders; this is provided alongside this update.

5. UPDATE

5.1 A *Reimagining Our Campuses* Steering Group has been established to coordinate the implementation of the findings and recommendations arising from the project. Specifically, the Steering Group will:

- Provide oversight of the implementation of the findings and recommendations arising from the *Reimagining Our Campuses* report;
- Provide input to inform and enable the development and delivery of an action plan to underpin the delivery of the report's findings and recommendations, particularly in relation to (i) establishing priorities, (ii) identifying resource requirements, and (iii) identifying risks and providing input to support their mitigation as appropriate;
- Facilitate effective communication and engagement with (i) Estates Committee, and (ii) Digital Strategy Committee, to ensure that activities, issues and proposals within their remits/areas of responsibility are appropriately considered and addressed; and
- Ensure effective communication and engagement with relevant stakeholders to ensure that progress towards implementing the *Reimagining Our Campuses* recommendations is communicated in a transparent manner.

5.2 The *Reimagining Our Campuses* Steering Group fulfils the function of an advisory group. It does not have any delegated authority for decision-making beyond that available to individual members acting within their role(s).

5.3 The members of the Steering Group are:

- Senior Vice-Principal (Chair)
- University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer
- Vice-Principal (Regional Engagement)
- Chief Financial Officer
- Director of Estates and Facilities
- Interim Director of Digital and Information Services
- AUSA Vice-President for Activities
- Senior Governance and Executive Support Officer (Clerk)

5.4 It is important to note that the *Reimagining Our Campuses* project was undertaken against a backdrop of severely constrained capital funding in the short and longer term. The project was nevertheless a vital one to allow the University to stand back and look at the bigger picture over a longer time horizon, and to establish a framework within which decisions about the deployment of available capital budget over the coming years can be taken.

5.5 The exercise concluded that the University's estate is too large for our current and likely future needs and should be rationalised to be more efficient and more effectively aligned to the priorities of Aberdeen 2040. To deliver an efficient,

effective, sustainable and digitally enabled estate means: challenging ourselves on current use of all spaces; reconfiguring our patterns of work and use to be less wasteful; divesting of property interests we no longer need to retain; re-shaping the campuses around what is beneficial for our future needs for education, research, innovation, collaboration, administration, social, sports and external engagement uses; and creating places that give students, staff and external communities a compelling reason to come to and spend time on our campuses.

5.6 The Financial Recovery Plan has meant that the available budget for capital for Estates, and Digital, is very limited in the short term and potentially the medium term. Nevertheless, while a significant proportion of the funding available under the 3 Year Capital Plan for 2024/2025 – 2026/2027 that has been brought to this Court meeting has by necessity been allocated to address statutory obligations, maintain building infrastructure and integrity, or been allocated to net zero projects as a condition of the SFC loan, £7.85 million of the available Estates capital has been earmarked to allow some key priorities that emerged through *Reimagining our Campuses* to begin to be addressed in the coming years, as follows:

- *Labs for the Future* with key impetus provided by the urgency of the Lab Gas Safety Programme - £2.3 million.
- Relocation of the University collections and the remaining limited academic activity from Marischal College to improved, more suitable secure accommodation on the King's College campus - £1.035 million.
- The transformation to new ways of working and space consolidation for MacRobert Building, Institute of Applied Health Sciences and Professional Services office accommodation - £3.9 million.
- Relocation of University activity from properties with commercial potential on the High Street in Old Aberdeen to facilitate potential for commercial income generation - £150,000.
- Feasibility work for the King's Innovation Quarter (KiQ), including the proposed King's Innovation Hub - £400,000.
- Projects to upgrade elements of library facilities at Polwarth Medical Library - £850,000.

5.7 It should be noted that these are provisional allocations which will need to be considered individually and as a programme of projects through the normal governance arrangements, overseen by Estates Committee, SMT, Finance and Resourcing Committee, and Court.

5.8 Following feedback from the Students' Union, a review dedicated to the sporting estate, its scale, condition and capacity to meet student needs and aspirations, informed by the developing Sport Strategy, is being undertaken in conjunction with the Students' Union. The outcomes of this will then need to be considered alongside other priorities in due course.

5.9 Not all recommendations under *Reimagining our Campuses* require capital investment. Other initiatives that are underway include:

- Identification and assessment of property interests that could be divested to generate income streams or capital receipts.
- Analysis of our space related data sets from both HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) submissions and Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) returns.

6. FURTHER INFORMATION

6.1 Further information is available from Professor Karl Leydecker, Senior Vice-Principal (e-mail: karl.leydecker@abdn.ac.uk)

10 September 2024

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open

Reimagining Our Campuses - Overview

10 September 2024 - Briefing Note for Court

Background

Reimagining Our Campuses was a year-long comprehensive reimagining of the configuration and use of the University estate at King's College, Foresterhill & Hillhead to ensure future investments support Aberdeen 2040, encourage interdisciplinarity, achieve sustainability commitments and meet post-pandemic needs.

Recommendations & Proposals – Key Highlights

The exercise concluded that the University's estate is too large for our current and likely future needs and should be rationalised to be more efficient and more effectively aligned to the priorities of Aberdeen 2040. To deliver an efficient, effective, sustainable and digitally enabled estate means: challenging ourselves on current use of all spaces; reconfiguring our patterns of work and use to be less wasteful; divesting of property interests we no longer need to retain; re-shaping the campuses around what is beneficial for our future needs for education, research, innovation, collaboration, administration, social, sports and external engagement uses; and creating places that give students, staff and external communities a compelling reason to come to and spend time on our campuses.

Alongside the priorities for the physical estate are a series of linked digital initiatives. These include an ongoing programme of investment in technology replacement to deliver a high-quality education, research and administrative environment, as well as investment in key transformational initiatives such as the smart campuses and student management system programmes.

The *Reimagining Our Campuses* recommendations are proposals only and set out a broad direction of travel to achieve our goals; specific projects or programmes of work will be subject to normal oversight and approvals prior to any work commencing. All planning and legal requirements will also need to be satisfied, as will appropriate stakeholder engagement. It is expected that all current and future initiatives will be required to demonstrate their contributions (as appropriate) to the following *Reimagining Our Campuses* themes within their proposals: Net-Zero, Smart Campus, Inclusive & Accessibility, Teaching & Learning Spaces Transformation.

What is Not Happening

- The High Street in Old Aberdeen is not being pedestrianised – it is a public highway that is not owned by the University.
- No listed or monument properties will be inappropriately impacted by any proposals.
- No privately owned properties will be incorporated into any proposals unless we are working together with their owners.
- No one will be required to work in a shared environment if the nature of their tasks requires a private space.

Next Steps

A report will be provided for Court in November 2024 to allow further consideration of the recommendations. It will deliver an implementation plan that will include details of the prioritisation of proposals, including identification of 'quick wins'; it will also explain the proposed pacing of proposals, recognising the scale of the professional, specialist and capital resources required for implementation.

Contact

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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 14 August 2024.** It is for information. The Court will recall that the Committee’s recommendations were approved by Court by circulation in August.
- 1.2 The agenda and papers of the meeting are available within the [Decision Time Resources](#) area.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	N/A	N/A
Further consideration/ approval required by	University Court	25 September 2024

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

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

4. MEMBERSHIP OF COURT FOR 2024/25 AND REAPPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

- 4.1 The Committee received a paper on the membership of Court for 2024/25. The Committee discussed in detail the process and timing of the appointment and re-appointment exercise and the need to ensure individuals on Court had the requisite skills, expertise, experience and other attributes to support the University in its endeavours. While individual circumstances could change without warning and therefore impact timings and previous discussions, the Committee recognised that appropriate succession planning processes are in place.
- 4.2 The Committee agreed the following recommendations, which were subsequently approved by Court by circulation.
 - Reappointment of Caryn Miller, as an Independent Member, from 31 October 2024 to 31 July 2027;
 - Reappointment of Gary McRae, as an Independent Member, from 1 October 2025 to 30 September 2026:

- Extension of first term for Otto Thoresen, as an Independent Member, for a period of 6 months to 31 March 2025.
- 4.3 The membership and periods of appointment of Court is attached for information at **Appendix 1**. There is currently a vacancy for an independent member which is in the process of being recruited and a further vacancy for an independent member when Dr Traynham demits from Court on 30 September 2024.

5 MEMBERSHIP OF COURT COMMITTEES FOR 2024/25

- 5.1 The Committee received a paper which outlined the composition and membership of the Court's standing sub-committees, identifying any current vacancies and potential appointments to those vacancies for consideration. The paper also reminded the Committee of principles for membership of Court committees that had been previously agreed by Court. It was also noted that Committee Chairs are supported by attendance at a relevant training programme, if not already undertaken.

Appointment of Committee Chairs

- 5.2 The Committee approved the following recommendations for the appointment of Committee Chairs, which were subsequently approved by Court by circulation:
- i. **Finance & Resourcing Committee:** To appoint Caryn Miller, Independent Member of Court, to the vacancy.
 - ii. **Investment Committee:** To appoint Ewan Cameron as Chair.
 - iii. **Commercialisation Committee:** To appoint Gary McRae, Independent Member of Court, as Chair of Commercialisation Committee

Committee Memberships and Vacancies

- 5.3 The Committee approved recommendations to Court for the membership of the Court's sub-committees for 2024-25. These have been subsequently approved by Court by circulation.

6 MEMBERSHIP OF COURT RECRUITMENT PANEL

- 6.1 The Committee approved a verbal recommendation from the University Secretary that, a panel of the Committee to undertake the shortlisting and interview of candidates for the vacancy for an independent member that was out at advert should remain largely unchanged from the previous recent recruitment exercise for consistency purposes. The panel would therefore consist of:
- Julie Ashworth, Senior Governor,
 - Iain Grant, Elected Professional Services Staff Member on Court,
 - Alison Rankin, Independent Member
 - Christina Schmid, Students' Association Nominated Member of Court
 - Adaku Ufere, Independent Member.

7. FURTHER INFORMATION

- 7.1 Further information is available from Bruce Purdon, Clerk to the Committee (email b.purdon@abdn.ac.uk).

5 September 2024 v1

Confidentiality Status: Open

COURT MEMBERSHIP AND PERIODS OF OFFICE 2024/25

Composition: 25 Members under Ordinance No 145

Rector

- Martina Chukwuma-Ezike (01.01.22 to 31.12.24)

Principal *ex officio*

- Professor George Boyne (w.e.f. 01.08.18)

Senior Governor

- Julie Ashworth (01.07.21 to 30.06.24; 01.07.24 to 30.06.27)

Academic Staff Member

- Dr Martin Barker (01.11.23 to 31.07.26)

Professional Services Staff Member

- Iain Grant (01.11.23 to 31.07.26)

Academic Trade Union Nominated Member

- Dr Helen Martin (01.11.20 to 31.10.23; 01.11.23 to 31.07.26)

Support Staff Trade Union Nominated Member

- Mr Owen Cox (01.08.20 to 31.07.23; 01.08.23 to 31.07.26)

Senate Assessors (4)

- Professor Neil Vargesson (01.10.19 to 30.09.23; 01.10.23 to 30.09.27)
- Professor Joachim Schaper (01.10.17 to 30.09.21; 01.10.21 to 30.09.25)
- Dr Diane Skåtun (28.01.20 to 30.09.21; 01.10.21 to 30.09.25)
- Dr Iliia Xypolia (03.10.22 to 30.09.23; 01.10.23 to 30.09.27)

Two Students Nominated by the Students' Association (2)

- Christina Schmid (01.07.24 to 30.06.25)
- Ainhua Burgos (01.07.24 to 30.06.25)

Independent Members (12)

- Eleanor Bentley (01.08.19 to 31.07.22; 01.08.22 to 31.07.25)
- Lesley Birse (31.08.24 to 30.08.27)
- Ewan Cameron (01.08.24 to 31.07.27)
- Luke Halliday (Senior Independent Member) (01.10.23 to 31.08.26)
- Fiona Islam-Choudhury (01.08.24 to 31.07.27)
- Gary McRae (01.10.19 to 30.09.22; 01.10.22 to 30.09.25; 01.10.25 to 30.09.26)
- Caryn Miller (31.10.21 to 30.10.24; 31.10.24 to 31.07.27)
- Alison Rankin (01.10.23 to 31.08.26)
- Otto Thoresen (01.10.21 to 30.09.24; 01.10.24 to 31.03.25)
- Dr Robert Traynham (01.10.21 to 30.09.24)
- Adaku Ufere (01.10.23 to 31.08.26)

Note: As at 1 October 2024, there will be two vacancies for independent members

Non-Voting Member / Governor Apprentice

- Shona Russell (01.09.24 to 31.08.25)

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

University of Aberdeen Gaelic Language Plan 2025-30**1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

1.1 This paper informs Court of the University's legal obligation to prepare a Gaelic Language Plan and invites Court to approve the third edition of the University of Aberdeen Gaelic Language Plan in advance of it being submitted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig, who have a statutory duty to approve Gaelic Language Plans, by the deadline of 9 October 2024.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee	2 July 2024
	Gaelic Language Plan Advisory Group	20 August 2024
	Senior Management Team	12 September 2024
Further consideration/ approval required by	Court	25 September 2024

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 3.1 Court is invited **to note**:
- the University's obligations under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005.
- 3.2 Court is invited **to approve**:
- the University's Gaelic Language Plan 2025 – 2030 (**Appendix 1**).

4. DISCUSSION

- 4.1 The University has a long, rich Gaelic history going dating to the time of its foundation in 1495 - the inscription on the tomb of Bishop Elphinstone outside Kings Chapel is in Old Gaelic (the Classical language). There is a strong heritage of Gaelic language and culture across the Northeast of Scotland – many place names and names of hills and rivers are derived from Gaelic and 'The Book of Deer', the oldest written record of Gaelic in Scotland with Gaelic written in its margins comes from the North-East of Scotland.

- 4.2 The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 secured Gaelic as an official language of Scotland. The aim of the Act is to ensure the continued promotion of one of the original languages of Scotland, to celebrate Scotland's diversity as a nation and to continue to promote multilingualism in Scottish modern society.
- 4.3 The establishment of Gaelic as an official language through the Act brings statutory commitments for the University, primarily to develop a Gaelic Language Plan. The Plan should detail how the University will promote awareness of the Gaelic language and support its use throughout the organisation. The Plan is reviewed every five years, and each plan should indicate where progress has been made.
- 4.4 The preparation and implementation of the University's Plan is overseen by the University's Gaelic Language Plan Advisory Group (GLPAG). The interim chair is Professor Pete Edwards, Vice-Principal Regional Engagement and the Group reports to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. It monitors activities and delivers an annual report on progress to Bòrd na Gàidhlig, an executive non-departmental public body responsible for developing and implementing the National Gaelic Language Plan.
- 4.5 In 2022 the University successfully secured funding from the Gaelic Language Plan Implementation Fund (GLAIF) to appoint a part-time Gaelic Language Development Officer to progress the University's commitments in its Gaelic Language Plan and to raise awareness of Gaelic and the Plan across the University; funding has recently been confirmed to extend the post until February 2026.
- 4.6 The third edition of the University's Gaelic Language Plan has been prepared under the guidance of Bòrd na Gàidhlig in line with the priorities of the National Gaelic Language Plan. The University's new Plan builds on the previous iteration by continuing commitments to further embed Gaelic in the University's operations, raise awareness and visibility of the language within the organisation, and create opportunities for Gaelic to be learned and used on campus. The new Plan aligns with Aberdeen 2040, particularly the *Inclusive* commitments. The strategic priorities for the new Plan, agreed with Bòrd na Gàidhlig, focus on teaching, research and community outreach. Key themes of the Plan include:
- increased awareness training for staff and students;
 - welcoming local Gaelic organisations on to campus and thus increasing opportunities for staff and students to engage with the language;
 - increased visibility of Gaelic through bi-lingual communications and participation in 'Seachdain na Gàidhlig' (World Gaelic week).
- 4.7 The Plan has been developed and shaped with input from a range of internal and external stakeholders. A formal five-week consultation process invited feedback via an online survey (which returned 71 responses) and two consultation events for the public and staff/students. The consultation document was shared with staff, students, internal networks and committees, local Gaelic organisations, the regional local authorities, other Scottish universities and the public through the University's social media channels. The responses were predominantly positive and focused on the implementation of a robust Plan and the opportunity that this presents for the University to progress its legal commitments and support Gaelic language and culture.

- 4.8 Internally, appropriate Heads of School and Directors have had the opportunity to review the Plan and actions pertaining to their areas.
- 4.9 Once the Plan has been approved by Bòrd na Gàidhlig it will be formally launched by the University. This will be an opportunity to showcase the work being undertaken to embed the language in the University and champion the language internally and across the Northeast of Scotland. Beyond the launch, the actions in the Plan will be progressed, monitored by the GLPAG and annual progress reports provided to Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

5. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 Court is invited to note the information contained in the paper, particularly the University's statutory obligation to prepare a Gaelic Language Plan and implement its actions. This duty aims to progress the promotion and awareness of the Gaelic language within the organisation and support the Scottish Government's commitment to afford the Gaelic language protection and prominence as an official language of Scotland.
- 5.2 Court is invited to approve the third edition of the University's Gaelic Language Plan for submission to Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

6. FURTHER INFORMATION

- 6.1 Further information is available from: Professor Peter Edwards, Vice-Principal for Regional Engagement and Interim Chair of the Gaelic Language Plan Advisory Group (p.edwards@abdn.ac.uk); or Janine Chalmers, Head of Organisational Development (janine.chalmers@abdn.ac.uk).

16 September 2024

Confidentiality Status: Open



GAELIC LANGUAGE PLAN

2025 -2030

This plan has been prepared under Section 3 of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005

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FOREWORD

As Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Aberdeen, I am delighted to introduce and endorse this third edition of our Gaelic Language Plan where we outline our continued commitment to promoting the Gaelic language and culture.

The University's Senior Management Team and I are committed to supporting the national aim of increasing the number of Gaelic-speakers in Scotland and increasing our community's awareness of and exposure to the Gaelic language and culture. The University of Aberdeen has, of course, a statutory duty under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 to play its part in supporting the language. Furthermore, we are proud to embrace this responsibility with a particular focus on our local community in the North-East of Scotland.

The previous edition of the Plan focused on Gaelic commitments that formed part of our core business. This included actions related to our Gaelic language courses, which provide learners and native speakers with the opportunity to improve their skills in the language. We have developed our priorities and commitments following a review of our second plan, taking into consideration our successes and challenges.

Since launching our previous Plan, we have developed a new University Strategic Plan, Aberdeen 2040, which aims to foster excellence through four themes: Inclusive, Interdisciplinary, International and Sustainable. With this third edition of our Gaelic Language Plan, we have built on our achievements to date and have developed strategic aims in line with the revised National Gaelic Language Plan and our Aberdeen 2040 strategic priorities. We have welcomed the engagement and feedback on the development of the Plan from our staff, students and external partners. We have worked in partnership with Bòrd na Gàidhlig and appreciated their support and feedback.

As a Higher Education Institution, we understand the important role we play in supporting the use and learning of Gaelic. During the lifetime of this Plan, we are committed to the strategic aims of promoting the positive image of Gaelic, increasing the learning and usage of Gaelic and contributing to the knowledge and understanding of Gaelic society, working with and strengthening links with our Gaelic community and local partners. We have set out detailed commitments under each of these strategic aims.

We look forward to working with partners to build upon the successes of our previous plans through this new five-year strategy.

Professor George Boyne

Principal and Vice-Chancellor

1. Introduction

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

The University of Aberdeen (UoA), founded in 1495, is the third oldest University in Scotland and the fifth oldest in the UK. It is renowned for world-leading research in health, energy, food and nutrition, environmental and biological sciences as well as for an outstanding track-record for arts and humanities research.

We are an international University with over 130 nationalities represented by our 3,500 staff and 16,000 students. We value the cultural complexity and diversity of our institution and how that enhances staff and student experiences.

Situated in the north of Scotland, we have a special connection with Gaelic and north-east Scots (Doric). The oldest example of written Scottish Gaelic comes from this area, from the Book of Deer, and Gaelic placenames can be found across the city and region. Gaelic was one of the languages of learning in Aberdeen in the medieval period and it is believed that the University's founder, Bishop Elphinstone, would have known Gaelic. There is Old Gaelic around his tomb on the Old Aberdeen campus in acknowledgement of the historic connection between scholarship and Gaelic at this University.

Ultimately Gaelic was replaced by English and Scots in the city, but it remained a vernacular language of communities in this region into the early twentieth century. For much of this latter period Gaelic and Doric existed side by side and while Gaelic is no longer a community language of the area, Doric is commonly spoken, and the University of Aberdeen is proud to support Doric through its Elphinstone Institute.

Traditionally many Gaels chose University of Aberdeen as their alma mater. The Celtic society is one of the oldest student societies at the University and is thriving to this day. Many Gaelic scholars have passed through the doors of the University as students or staff. The late renowned Professor of Gaelic Derick S. Thomson (Ruaraidh MacThòmais) and author Iain Crichton Smith (Iain Mac a' Ghobhainn) studied at the University; Thomson later became the Head of the University's Celtic Department in 1956. In more recent years, the renowned Gaelic scholar Donald MacAulay was a Reader in Celtic and Donald Meek held the first Chair in Celtic at the University.

Our foundational purpose is to be "open to all and dedicated to the pursuit of truth in the service of others". We still have that purpose and aim to enrich lives through our research, teaching, learning and sharing of knowledge to push boundaries and deliver our [Aberdeen 2040](#) strategic plan.

THE UNIVERSITY GAELIC LANGUAGE PLAN AND ABERDEEN 2040

Aberdeen 2040 is the University's twenty-year strategy designed to foster excellence and innovation through its themes of Inclusivity, Interdisciplinarity, International and Sustainability.

Through our *Inclusive* commitments we aim to create an inclusive working and learning environment which celebrates the diversity of our staff and students, recognising this is a strength of our University. Our Inclusive commitments have a key strategic link to the Gaelic language. This is the third edition of the University's Gaelic Language Plan, which supports and increases the use and learning of the Gaelic language and thereby increases the inclusivity of the Gaelic community.

This third edition of the University's Gaelic Language Plan makes commitments to *Interdisciplinary* research into Gaelic. Students can study Gaelic with a variety of other subjects. This supports the *Sustainability* of the Gaelic language. By having a robust and ambitious Gaelic Language Plan, we commit to sustaining Gaelic use in the University and to support the language across Scotland.

Our *International* commitments have a strategic link to Gaelic through our provision of international education to learners from around the world, becoming a more diverse and multicultural community and developing our campuses to create a caring environment that is alert to cultural differences. The Gaelic Language Plan aspires to engage with the Gaelic diaspora globally, for example, by enabling Gaelic language to be taken in combination with other subjects.

The preparation and implementation of the University's Gaelic Language Plan is overseen by the University's Gaelic Language Plan Advisory Group (GLPAG); the Group is chaired by a member of the University's senior management team, with executive responsibility for oversight of the University's Gaelic Language Plan. The GLPAG reports to the strategic body for EDI, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC). The University has a Gaelic Language Development Officer responsible for assisting with the development and implementation of the Gaelic Language Plan.

GAELIC IN ABERDEEN

Education

Aberdeen continues to offer Gaelic education opportunities for people of all ages. In the city there is a parent and child group (ages 0-5), a Gaelic medium nursery and primary unit, as well as a secondary school offering pupils the opportunity to undertake Gàidhlig N4/5, Higher and Advanced Highers. During the 2023-24 academic year, there were 33 Gaelic Medium Education pupils in Aberdeen, along with a further 16 pupils studying Gaelic at secondary school level plus six learners with the outdoor and Gaelic learning course. More information about Gaelic education provision in Aberdeen is available on the Aberdeen City Council [website](#) and the University's Gaelic Language Plan [webpage](#).

Language & Culture

Aberdeen has a *Gaelic Club*, which offers language and cultural events where speakers can use Gaelic as well as evening and weekend language classes for all levels. In autumn 2023 there were 105 adults learning Gaelic with the Club. Aberdeen has a *Gaelic Choir* and a *Fèis*, which is part of a wider network of Gaelic arts festivals and offers a week-long Fèis during the Easter holidays as well as weekly classes for some instruments. In September 2024 Aberdeen will run a local Mòd for the first time. The Gaelic community in Aberdeen comes together

once a month for a 'Srùbag', a 'coffee afternoon', with activities for adults and children including Gaelic language classes and conversation circles, music classes, craft activities and a Gaelic children's choir. Details about local and national Gaelic organisations, including where to find Gaelic resources and classes is available on our Gaelic Language Plan [webpage](#).

Census Data

Since the launch of our first Gaelic Language Plan, census data from 2022 has been released, providing new insight into the number of Gaelic-speakers in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

Since 2011, the number of persons in Aberdeen with abilities in the language rose from 3,174 to 5,969. In Aberdeenshire, there was a remarkable increase from 2,721 to 7,087 people who reported an ability in the language. The number of Gaelic speakers has also increased to 2,219 from 1,636 speakers in Aberdeen City and to 2,980 from 1,400 speakers in Aberdeenshire.

GAELIC AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

The University of Aberdeen has a long, rich Gaelic history, which is continued through our provision of a broad range of courses relating to Gaelic language, culture, and literature.

Over the period of the previous edition of our Gaelic Language Plan, we have continued to provide opportunities for students to undertake a degree in Gaelic, or to learn the language through two years of Sustained Study, which has enabled the University to bring the language to a wider audience. Our Gaelic courses and degree programmes are supported by the University's Gaelic Department, which is part of the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture (LLMVC).

Teaching the Gaelic language is the most significant way in which we support the national aim of increasing the number of Gaelic speakers. On average, 1.7% of our undergraduate intake each year register for Gaelic language courses. We offer Gaelic courses for learners and native speakers. This gives graduates the linguistic skills to confidently use the language and provides them with a wider background in the literature and culture, which aims to inspire graduates to move into careers where they can use the language and support its development.

Teaching and research is primarily based at our Old Aberdeen and Foresterhill campuses. Teaching is organised across 12 academic Schools which encompass a broad range of disciplines.

There are opportunities for staff to join a Gaelic undergraduate course, and information about Gaelic classes and learning resources (outwith the University) are promoted on the University's Gaelic Plan webpage.

Our academic colleagues in the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture are leading researchers and have developed significant links with Gaelic stakeholders. Whilst previously being the co-lead and initiator of the Soillse Research Network, researchers continue to contribute to national policy directions with a specialism in adult language teaching; they have cooperated with a private multinational company to launch the free

Gaelic version of Glossika, a new Gaelic learning app for intermediate learners, and develop Gàidhlig na Cagailte – a free learning resource - and Lapach gu Lìomhte. This is indicative of the University's commitment to the core aim of the National Plan in creating new speakers of Gaelic. In addition to this the University houses the National Centre for Gaelic Translation for research into Gaelic translation and researchers make active contributions to community language planning initiatives as well as cultural research projects. The University also publishes the leading journal in the field - *Scottish Gaelic Studies*.

This is the third edition of our Gaelic Language Plan. Our previous editions have set out ambitious commitments to increase Gaelic provision, increase the visibility of Gaelic and its use across the University. In the delivery of our previous plans, we have made advances in increasing the visibility and use of Gaelic, such as by adding bi-lingual signage to our main entrance, including Gaelic in many of our graduation ceremonies, having Gaelic represented at our Welcome Fair and other University events and creating a Gaelic Staff Network as part of our BeWell Network. Through these activities, we have been able to progress the principle of equal respect being afforded to Gaelic and English.

In partnership with students and the Celtic Society (Comann Ceilteach Oilthigh Obar Dheathain) the University regularly delivers Gaelic activities for staff, students and the wider public. We have a weekly Gaelic conversation circle where students and staff can practice Gaelic, we have piloted lunch time 'Eat and Learn' Gaelic language sessions and we organised a week of talks, workshops and events as part of 'Seachdain na Gàidhlig' (World Gaelic Week) which was well attended by staff, students and the public.

The achievements in Gaelic over the lifespan of the previous editions of our plan have been delivered in a challenging context including the COVID-19 pandemic and sector-level financial challenges. In developing this edition of our Gaelic Language Plan, we have considered previous commitments and our institutional strategic priorities, set out in Aberdeen 2040. We have carried some commitments and actions over into this Plan and ensured that the Plan supports the delivery of the National Gaelic Language Plan.

THE GAELIC LANGUAGE (SCOTLAND) ACT 2005

The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 (the Act) was passed by the Scottish Parliament with a view to securing the status of the Gaelic language as an official language of Scotland commanding equal respect to the English language.

One of the key features of the Act is the provision enabling Bòrd na Gàidhlig to require a public authority to prepare a Gaelic language plan. This provision was designed to ensure that the public sector in Scotland plays its part in creating a sustainable future for Gaelic by raising the status and profile of the language and creating practical opportunities for its use.

This document is the third edition of the University of Aberdeen's Gaelic Language Plan prepared within the framework of the Act. It sets out how we will use Gaelic in the operation of our functions, how we will enable the use of Gaelic when communicating with the public and key partners, and how we will promote and develop Gaelic.

The University of Aberdeen's Gaelic Language Plan has been prepared in accordance with statutory criteria set out in the Act and having regard to the National Gaelic Language Plan and the Guidance on the Development of Gaelic Language Plans.

THE NATIONAL GAELIC LANGUAGE PLAN

The University of Aberdeen supports the aim of the National Gaelic Language Plan 2023-28 to see an increase in the number of people speaking, learning using and supporting the Gaelic Language.

We are committed to the achieving this aim by focussing our work on the overall aim of the National Gaelic Language Plan which is to increase the use and learning of Gaelic.

We have set out in this third edition of our plan how we will contribute to progress with this aim through our daily operations and our internal and external corporate services.

2. Key Principles

EQUAL RESPECT

The University of Aberdeen will ensure that where Gaelic is included as part of our operations and services, we will ensure they are of an equal standard and quality as those that we provide in English.

ACTIVE OFFER

The University of Aberdeen will make an active offer of our Gaelic services to our staff, students and the public. This will ensure that where Gaelic services are made available by us, Gaelic users are made aware of their existence and are actively encouraged to use them.

This will take the responsibility away from the individual to ask for the service and will give Gaelic users the confidence to know that their needs will be met if that is their choice.

We will ensure that our Gaelic language services are as accessible as our English language services.

MAINSTREAMING

The University of Aberdeen will ensure that opportunities for the public and our staff to use Gaelic are normalised, in support of the National Gaelic Language Plan's aims.

3. Plan Commitments

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

This third edition of our Gaelic Language Plan sets out how we will embed Gaelic within our services and operations across the University as well as within our corporate communications with the public and key partners. We have embedded the key principles of equal respect, active offer and normalising Gaelic, as set out above, and building on the University's successes to date.

The University's strategic priorities are set out below.

Outreach: Increasing the Use of Gaelic

Purpose: Maintain meaningful relationships with key Gaelic partners and stakeholders across the City of Aberdeen and beyond, through our civic engagement agendas and where appropriate, initiate new partnerships to realise shared national ambitions for a prosperous and sustainable future for Gaelic in both Scottish and international communities.

Action	Timeline	Responsibility
Work towards creation of a 'Gaelic Hub' for Gaelic outreach activities.	2025-2030	School of Education/ School of LLMVC/ Directorate of People
Explore the financial feasibility of developing Gaelic language awareness training which could be delivered to external public and private organisations.	2025-2026	Directorate of People
Offer community support to local Gaelic organisations and our local authority, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hosting the Aberdeen Fèis (Fèis Obar Dheathain) once a year where feasible • hosting the Aberdeen Gaelic Club (Club Gàidhlig Obar Dheathain) • hosting the Aberdeen Gaelic Choir (Còisir Ghàidhlig Obar Dheathain) and the local Aberdeen Mòd, if and as required • developing a close relationship with Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils and offer information, support and practical advice. 	2025-2030 2025-2030 2025-2030 2025-2030	School of Education/ Directorate of People
Investigate offering an online Gaelic Medium Education (GME) Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programme.	2025-2027	School of Education working with

		School of LLMVC
Offer our Gaelic students opportunities to engage with local schools as ambassadors for learning and studying Gaelic.	2025-2030	School of Education working with School of LLMVC
Facilitate work experience opportunities in the local GME providers for our Gaelic students.	2025-2030	Directorate of People working with School of Education and School of LLMVC
Raise awareness of local Gaelic speaking religious services within Aberdeen and the surrounding areas.	2025-2030	Directorate of People

Teaching: Increasing the learning of Gaelic

Purpose: Continue to respond to the needs of the University's diverse student community through a student-centred and active learning approach to learning and teaching, underpinned by curricula that addresses the needs of, and challenges faced by minority language communities, and which supports the professional and skills development of students.

Action	Timeline	Responsibility
Deliver a range of Gaelic courses which can be taken separately or as part of a Gaelic degree.	2025-2030	School of LLMVC
Offer supervision in Gaelic-related post-graduate studies.	2025-2030	School of LLMVC
Investigate new market opportunities to promote the study of Gaelic, e.g. North America.	2025-2030	School of LLMVC with support from Student Recruitment & Marketing
Investigate opportunities in North America for support for Gaelic Studies at the University, e.g. sponsorship or fundraising.	2025-2030	Directorate of Development & Alumni Relations / School of LLMVC
Develop new marketing materials to promote Gaelic study opportunities – online.	2025-2030	Student Recruitment & Marketing / School of LLMVC

Research

Purpose: Undertake interdisciplinary research in line with the University's strategy – Aberdeen 2040, on Gaelic language and society that is impactful and will strengthen the status of Gaelic. Where possible, seek to develop meaningful collaborations and we will explore different ways of communicating our research on Gaelic.

Action	Timeline	Responsibility
Contribute to major relevant inter-university research projects.	2025-2030	School of LLMVC
Publish the pre-eminent Gaelic academic journal Scottish Gaelic Studies.	2025-2030	School of LLMVC
Contribute to the knowledge and understanding of Gaelic society through academic publishing and related knowledge transfer initiatives.	2025-2030	School of LLMVC

Promoting the positive image of Gaelic

In the following section we have responded to high-level aims of the National Gaelic Language Plan and carried forward commitments from the previous iteration of the University of Aberdeen's Gaelic Language Plan 2019 – 2024 where appropriate and continue to identify opportunities to develop the presence of Gaelic in our operations.

1. Promote the use of Gaelic in signage, branding and corporate communications

Aim	Action	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Logo and brand	1.1 Review the University's bi-lingual logo and amend if required to align with recently updated branding guidelines.	2025-2026	Brand & Marketing
	1.2 Use the bilingual logo on our website, our corporate stationary and offered as an option for email signatures.	2025-2030	
	1.3 Mainstream Gaelic in our revised branding guidance as part of routine review.	2025-2030	
2. Signage and Placenames	2.1 Maintain our Gaelic signage at the University's main entrance and extend this where possible.	2025-2030	Directorate of Estates & Facilities
	2.2 Install bilingual signage as part of renewal of physical signage.	2025-2030	

Aim	Action	Timeline	Responsibility
3. Promotion	<p>3.1 Continue to use communication channels to promote the University's Gaelic Language Plan, including the Staff News, plasma screens and social media.</p> <p>3.2 Endeavour to produce promotional materials for the University's Gaelic language courses, including related prospectuses, in a bilingual format.</p> <p>3.3 Encourage staff to use the Gaelic language online resource, for example bilingual email signatures.</p>	<p>2025-2030</p> <p>2025-2030</p> <p>2025-2030</p>	<p>External Relations working with Directorate of People</p>
4. Written communication	<p>4.1 Continue to respond in Gaelic to mail and emails received by the University in Gaelic.</p> <p>4.2 Mainstream Gaelic by, where possible and appropriate, including reference to it in our graduation ceremonies, exhibitions and events.</p>	<p>2025-2030</p> <p>2025-2030</p>	<p>External Relations / Directorate of People</p>

Aim	Action	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Reception and phone	5.1 Develop Gaelic language training for front-facing staff and include a bilingual message on the University's main switchboard for out-of-hours callers.	2025-2026	Directorate of People
6. News releases	6.1 Build on our practice of producing high profile and Gaelic-related media releases bilingually through professional translators.	2025-2030	External Relations
7. Website	7.1 Increase relevant bilingual web content, for example, webpages pertaining to the Gaelic Language Plan and Gaelic research and teaching.	2025-2030	External Relations / Directorate of People
8. Corporate Publications	8.1 Increase the use of Gaelic in our corporate publications; for example, the Senior Governor's Welcome and the Principal's Introduction to the University's Annual Report and Accounts.	2025-2030	Directorate of Planning & Governance
9. Language and Gaelic Orthographic Conventions	9.1 Where practicable, use professional translation services to ensure quality and accessibility for official translation, respecting Gaelic orthographic conventions.	2025-2030	External Relations / Directorate of People

2. Highlight Gaelic in public engagement

Aim	Action	Timeline	Responsibility
10. Public meetings	10.1 Continue to reference the Gaelic language in relevant University events, for example University Graduation ceremonies, and appropriate public meetings.	2025-2030	External Relations / Directorate of People
11. Media / Social Media	<p>11.1 Maintain a directory of Gaelic speaking academics available to engage with Gaelic media to support promotion of the University and its Gaelic activities.</p> <p>11.2 In order to showcase the University and the expertise in Gaelic, encourage Gaelic media to use the University as a location for filming/recording and support them to find interviewees.</p> <p>11.3 In partnership with the University of Aberdeen Students' Union, produce bilingual social media content for promoting Gaelic themed events, study and research.</p>	<p>2025-2030</p> <p>2025-2030</p> <p>2025-2030</p>	External Relations / Directorate of People
12. Exhibitions and Events	<p>12.1 When planning exhibitions, mainstream Gaelic by identifying if there are Gaelic themes which can be showcased.</p> <p>12.2 Build on our Gaelic themed events, aiming to host one event per year.</p> <p>12.3 Maintain involvement in Seachdain na Gaidhlig / World Gaelic Week.</p>	<p>2025-2030</p> <p>2025-2030</p> <p>2025-2030</p>	Directorate of People / Directorate of Digital & Information Services / External Relations/School of LLMVC

	12.4 Explore ways to incorporate Gaelic into the University's Cruickshank Botanic Gardens.	2025-2030	Directorate of Estates & Facilities
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3. Encourage the use of Gaelic by staff and students

Aim	Action	Timeline	Responsibility
13. Internal audit	13.1 Continue to identify levels of Gaelic language skills amongst staff in the biennial staff survey.	Staff Survey will run in 2024	Directorate of People
14. Induction	14.1 Review how to best to include awareness of the Gaelic Language Plan within staff induction programmes.	2025-2026	Directorate of People
15. Language training	15.1 Encourage and support key staff, who are involved in the implementation of the University's Gaelic Language Plan, to develop their Gaelic language skills.	2025-2030	Directorate of People
16. Using Gaelic	16.1 Celebrate and support the use of Gaelic on campus, such as through the existing Gaelic staff network, the Gaelic book lending library and Gaelic conversation circles and support self-sustainability of these.	2025 - 2030	Directorate of People
	16.2 Build on the success of the first Gaelic careers event by exploring how this can be sustained.	2025-2030	
	16.3 Enhance Gaelic webpages by providing basic Gaelic phrases, greetings, basic vocabulary, and job titles.	2025-2027	
	16.4 Promote the opportunities for staff to develop their Gaelic language skills and raise awareness of the Gaelic Staff Network.	2025-2030	

	16.5 Build on the pilot lunch and learn sessions to develop sustainable Gaelic language lunchtime sessions for staff.	2025-2026	
17. Awareness training	17.1 Develop and begin to deliver sustainable Gaelic awareness training for staff, with priority given to GLPAG members and Communications team staff.	2025-2026	Directorate of People
18. Recruitment	18.1 Recommend that Gaelic language skills become a desirable criterion for relevant University posts.	2025 - 2030	Directorate of People
	18.2 Continue to advertise and interview bilingually where possible where proficiency in Gaelic is identified as an essential criterion.	2025-2030	

4. Implementation and Monitoring

Delivery of the plan

The delivery of the University's Gaelic Language Plan will be over the period 2025-2030 and will be enabled by the Gaelic Language Plan Advisory Group (GLPAG).

Governance

The Gaelic Language Plan Advisory Group (GLPAG) has a remit to implement this Plan and it is chaired by a member of the Senior Management Team, reflecting the importance the University places on championing and promoting the Gaelic language. The Group comprises of staff from Schools and Directorates, including Gaelic speakers. The Aberdeen University Students' Union is represented on the Group.

The GLPAG will report on the progress of delivering the Gaelic Language Plan (GLP) to the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) on an annual basis. EDIC reports to the University's Senior Management Team (SMT) and to Court on an annual basis.

Monitoring

The progress of the Plan will be a standing item on the agenda of GLPAG, which will have overall responsibility for monitoring and advising on the Plan. We will prepare an annual monitoring report as required by Bòrd na Gàidhlig for consideration by GLPAG and SMT. We will proactively update our University community on progress with implementing the Plan and will share our annual monitoring report.

We will continue to ensure the GLP is aligned with our Aberdeen 2040 strategy.

Services delivered by third parties

When we work with external organisations, we will make them aware of the Gaelic Language Plan and will seek to ensure that they engage with the principles of the Plan, as appropriate.

CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT GAELIC LANGUAGE PLAN

Consultation on the Plan took place over a five-week period (June/July 2024) and invited feedback via an online survey (which resulted in 71 responses) and two open consultation events for the public and staff/students. We also proactively shared the draft Plan with local Gaelic organisations, the regional public authorities, other Scottish universities as well as through the University's social media channels.

As a result of the consultation, we have included more detail on the timelines and responsibility holders of each commitment. We have also provided greater clarity on our teaching and learning commitments and have included further detail on how the Plan will be monitored and progress shared with our community.

See Appendix 1 for further details on the consultation.

RESPONSIBILITY

The interim Convener of the Gaelic Language Plan Advisory Group (GLPAG) has overall responsibility for preparation, delivery and monitoring of University of Aberdeen's Gaelic Language Plan. They can be contacted as follows:

Professor Peter Edwards
Vice Principal for Regional Engagement
University of Aberdeen
King's College,
Aberdeen,
AB24 3FX
p.edwards@abdn.ac.uk
+44 (0)1224 273021
+44 (0)1224 272099

The Gaelic Language Development Officer has day-to-day responsibility for the delivery and monitoring of the University of Aberdeen's Gaelic Language Plan and will support the areas Schools and Directorates listed in the Action Plan. Queries regarding the day-to-day operation of the Plan should be addressed to:

Carola MacCallum
Organisational Development/Human Resources
University of Aberdeen
King's College,
Aberdeen,
AB24 3FX
carola.maccallum@abdn.ac.uk
+44 (0)1224 272650

Publishing the plan

The University of Aberdeen's Gaelic Language Plan will be published in Gaelic and in English on our website. In addition, we will:

- issue a bilingual press release to launch the Plan.
- publicise the Plan through social media platforms.
- distribute copies to arms-length organisations and other third-party organisations, explaining their role in the delivery of the Plan.
- distribute copies of the Plan to key stakeholders in the public, private and third sectors.
- distribute copies of the Plan to relevant Gaelic organisations and other interested bodies and make hard copies available on request.

Appendix 1

Consultation Process for the Development of the Gaelic Language Plan

The consultation on the University's draft Plan ran for a period of 4 and a half weeks, from the 13th of June to the 15th of July 2024.

The draft Plan was pro-actively shared with local Gaelic organisations, the regional public authorities, Scottish universities as well as internally with staff and students and externally through the University's social media channels. A webpage was also created.

The draft Plan was sent to Bòrd na Gàidhlig. They offered informal feedback, which has been incorporated.

As part of the consultation two open meetings, one for staff and students and one for the public, were held in a hybrid format, in person with a Teams link provided, on the 18th and 19th of June. The attendance at the meetings was small but the discussions were positive and constructive.

An online survey, which was open to staff, students and members of the public, was completed by 71 people. It was publicised through internal networks and external social media platforms. Most respondents were members of staff, followed by members of the public. A small number of students also provided feedback.

Analysis of Data

More than half (58%) of the respondents were members of staff of the University with members of the public being the second largest group at 21%. The breakdown of respondents can be seen in Chart 1 below.

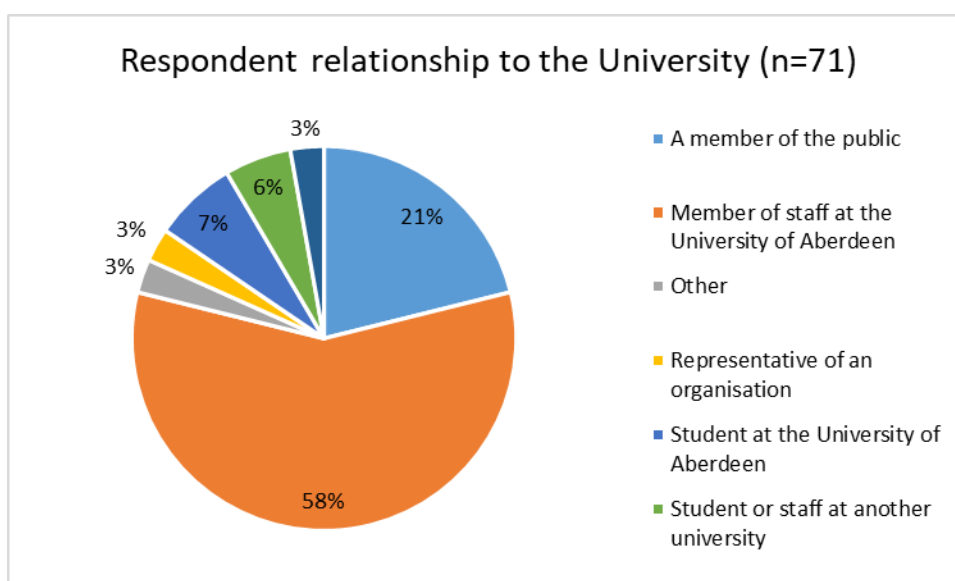


Chart 1: Respondents relationship to the University

There was a mixture of responses from both Gaelic-speakers (including learners) and non-Gaelic-speakers, with 50% of respondents speaking and understanding at least some Gaelic and 21% having an interest in learning. The language skills of the respondents can be seen in Chart 2 below.

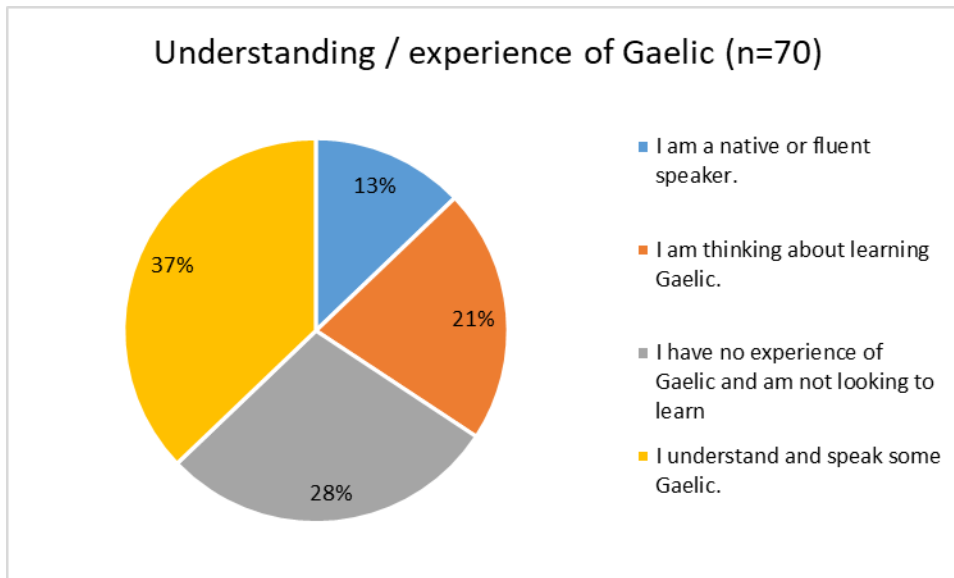


Chart 2: Respondents understanding / experience of Gaelic

Most respondents agreed that the draft GLP is appropriate, ambitious and clear. The extent to which respondents rated the Plan can be seen in Chart 3 below.

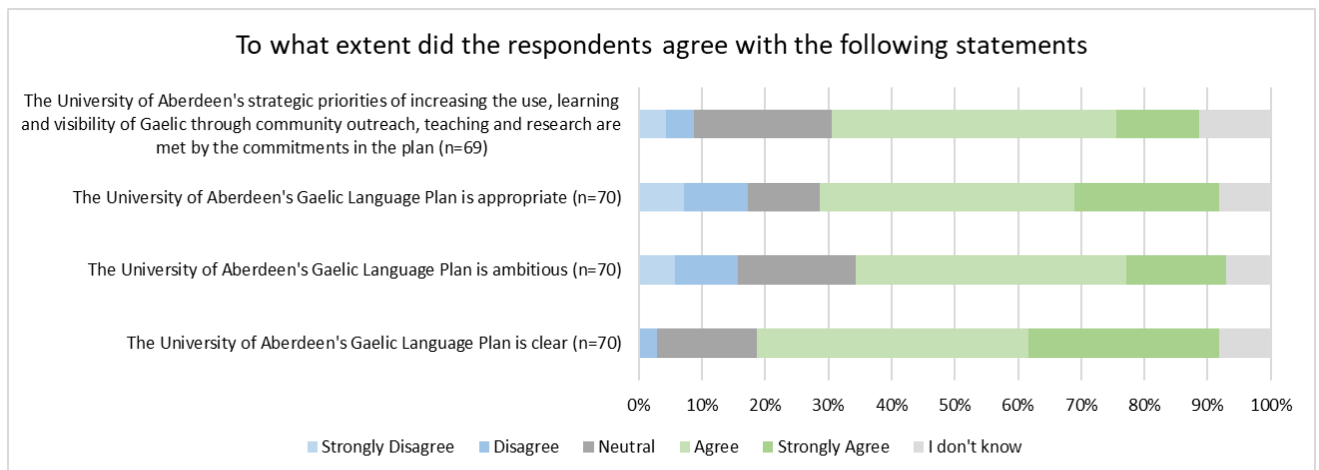


Chart 3: Respondents agreement with statements on the GLP

Of the 71 responses, 43 respondents provided additional free-text comments. Each comment was systematically reviewed and coded with one or more themes. The themes were then collated and summarised. The comments covered five main themes as follows:

1. The impact of the consultation on the provision of modern languages and Gaelic at the University and how the aspirations of the University's GLP aligned with Gaelic provision at the University.

2. Resourcing of the Plan, including the Gaelic Development Officer post
3. Community outreach
4. The aspirations for Gaelic teaching.
5. The desire to see similar provisions for Scots/Doric.

The respondents also made specific recommendations for actions to be included in the Plan, such as adding a timeline and a responsible lead for each action. Further detail on each thematic area can be seen below.

Theme	Feedback
Impact of the consultation on modern language and Gaelic provision held between November 2023 and March 2024	<p>At the time of the Gaelic Language Plan consultation, the University had recently concluded a consultation on the future of modern languages at the institution. While the modern languages consultation concluded with the University renewing its commitment to delivering Gaelic education and research, single honours degrees have been closed to new entrants, but other programmes with Gaelic continue.</p> <p>Responses highlighted the need for the University to re-affirm its commitment to supporting Gaelic. Consequently, there was a desire for more demonstrable alignment between the aspirations of the Plan and management support, better awareness of Gaelic by senior management and the GLPAG.</p>
Implementation and resourcing of the GLP	<p>Some respondents questioned whether resourcing the GLP is good use of resources in the current financial climate. However, most of the comments were supportive of the Plan and noted that adequate resourcing of the Plan will be required to enable effective implementation. Clarity was sought from respondents regarding the Gaelic Language Plan Development Officer post.</p> <p>Respondents requested independent, open and regular updates on implementation of the Plan.</p>
Outreach and promotion of Gaelic	<p>The commitments to community outreach, greater regional engagement and closer relationships with local Gaelic organisations were welcomed. Suggestions were made that collaboration with local councils could provide strategic opportunities e.g. greater resilience.</p>
Aspirations for teaching of Gaelic	<p>Contradictions between aspirations to increase the number of Gaelic speakers while reducing provision of (single honours) Gaelic degrees were noted. Some respondents expressed concerns about the ability to deliver current teaching commitments with the reduction in staffing. Some responses expressed the potential - given the history and geographical location of the University - for</p>

	the University to become a centre of excellence for Gaelic. The desire of staff to learn Gaelic was also mentioned.
Importance of Scots/Doric	Some respondents noted that they would welcome similar provisions for Scots / Doric. The University is mindful of its geographic location and is committed to supporting north-east Scots through its teaching, research and outreach activities based at the Elphinstone Institute and the School of LLMVC.
Specific recommendations for amendments.	The responses included practical suggestions for the GLP, e.g. timelines for the actions and commitments, a lead responsible for the implementation, and suggestions for training and awareness sessions.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

**SFC OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK AND ASSURANCE MODEL
OVERVIEW SUMMARY****1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

- 1.1 On 6 June 2024, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) published its new Outcomes Framework and Assurance Model. The new Framework articulates a revised approach to assurance and accountability that will replace a number of current arrangements, including the Outcome Agreement (OA), from Academic Year (AY) 2024/25. A copy of the SFC publication is [available here](#).
- 1.2 This paper highlights key points to note, though at this stage, detailed guidance for a number of different aspects of the Framework has not yet been released; where applicable, this will follow incrementally over the coming year. The new Framework formally went live on 1 August 2024 and is based around 11 outcomes. Reporting against the Framework, under the Assurance Model, will take a number of different forms. These include standard SFC data returns, new reporting requirements specific to quality enhancement, research, and knowledge exchange, participation in thematic reviews, and the submission of contextual commentaries. These will replace forward-planning Outcome Agreements in future.
- 1.3 The reporting requirements specific to quality enhancement, research, and knowledge exchange will be covered under the following, which are all new approaches to reporting.
 - Scotland's [Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework \(TQEF\)](#), which will also include a requirement to report against a Self-Evaluation Action Plan (SEAP).
 - [Research Assurance and Accountability Return \(RAA\)](#)
 - Annual progress against [Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund Strategy \(KEIF\)](#)
- 1.4 Contextual commentaries and thematic reviews will cover a selection of outcomes, but not all, and they will take the form of a retrospective narrative on performance covering the prior year, rather than a forward-looking plan. The first submission will not be required until November 2025. Guidance is expected in July 2025. This element of the Framework will be most akin to what was the OA.
- 1.5 The paper also highlights what is required by the SFC for the University to complete the AY 2023-24 Outcome Agreement process. This includes a Self-Evaluation and two case studies, due for submission to the SFC on the 2 December 2024.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

2.1 Court is invited to:

- **Note** the summary overview of the SFC's new Outcomes Framework and Assurance Model, passing comment as appropriate.
- **Note** the high-level timeline given in Section 8, and in relation, that both FRC and Court will receive a more detailed schedule of submission and reporting requirements in due course, as more information becomes available.
- **Note** next steps, which include taking forward meetings with key stakeholders to discuss the new arrangements.

3. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

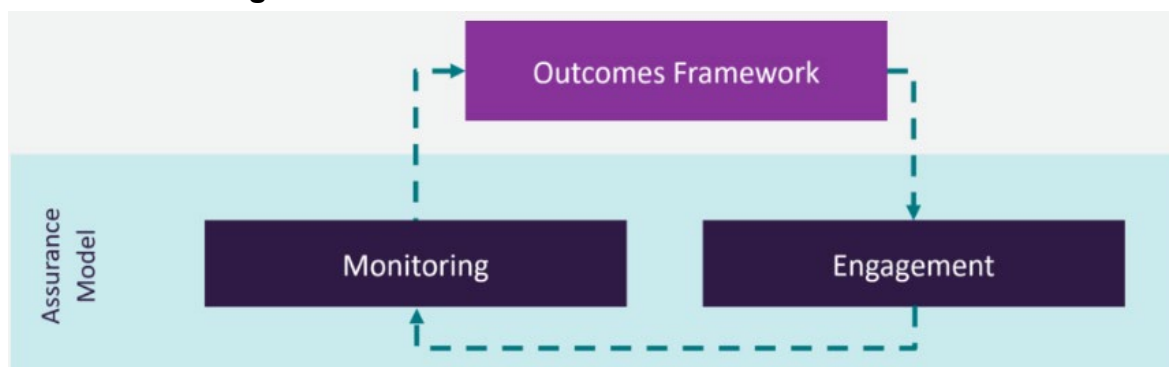
3.1 In June 2021, the SFC published a report on its *Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability*. This report articulated a commitment to revise the sector-wide approach taken to delivering outcomes and associated assurance, and this included Outcome Agreements - with a view to making them more focused and targeted. Within this, there was a particular emphasis on coherent provision, and setting clearer priorities for investment across the sector. The new Outcome Framework and Assurance Model is the result of that review.

3.2 In simple terms, the new approach is comprised of two distinct parts: the **Outcomes Framework** and the **Assurance Model**.

- The **Outcomes Framework** sets out the expectations the SFC has of universities (and colleges) in return for the funding that they receive. The Framework sets out nine outcomes that will apply to all universities, in addition to a further two, which will be cross-cutting. This will give 11 outcomes in total. Section 4, below, provides more detail.
- The **Assurance Model** is the mechanism by which the SFC will seek assurance, through *monitoring and engagement*, that the outcomes in the Framework are being delivered by universities; in short, providing confidence that the Scottish Government priorities for key stakeholder groups are being met. Assurance will take the form of reviewing progress against outcomes, rather than reviewing plans universities have to deliver them. Section 6 provides more detail.

3.3 The following is a high-level visual representation of the interface between the Outcomes Framework and the Assurance Model in practice.

Figure 1: Outcomes Framework and Assurance Model



- 3.4 It should be noted that while the new approach will replace the assurance and accountability arrangements previously in place, including the OA, the SFC will continue to communicate their expectations about the delivery of outcomes through funding allocations, guidance documentation, financial memoranda, and letters of grant with attached funding conditions.
- 3.5 The SFC have stated that the changes arising as a result of this new model will:
1. Make the SFC's expectations of universities clearer.
 2. Turn focus to the outcomes achieved by universities, rather than focusing on the activities they plan to undertake; noting the Outcome Agreement was focused on activities planned, while the annual Self-Evaluation was used for retrospective reporting against progress.
 3. Reduce the burden placed on universities by making greater use of existing data and sources of information, while also significantly reducing the requirement for written commentaries.
 4. Provide a set framework for the SFC through which it can monitor the full breadth of institutional performance.
 5. Take account of the nuances of circumstances specific to each individual university through a continued programme of regular institutional engagement.

4. THE OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 As above, the Outcomes Framework is built around nine outcomes that apply to universities, along with two other outcomes that are framed as cross-cutting, meaning they apply across each of the other outcomes in scope. This gives 11 outcomes in total, as listed below. More information on how the SFC has defined each outcome is available on request.
1. Funding regularity
 2. Good governance
 3. Financial viability and sustainability
 4. Estates and infrastructure
 5. High quality learning and teaching
 6. Student interest, access and success
 7. Skills and work-based learning
 8. Research excellence
 9. Knowledge exchange and innovation
 10. Net Zero (cross-cutting)

11. Equalities, diversity and inclusion (cross-cutting)

- 4.2 The SFC state that they do not expect these outcomes to change year-on-year, adding that they consider these outcomes to be consistent with what any well-performing university should be delivering for key stakeholders, regardless of explicit SFC expectations. It is also noted, as above under 3.6 (2), that the SFC will not be asking universities to submit written information in advance on how they will deliver against these outcomes, as was the request under the Outcome Agreement. Instead, reporting will be retrospective against performance.

5. THE ASSURANCE MODEL

- 5.1 The Assurance Model is made up of two primary components: *engagement and monitoring*.

Engagement

- 5.2 Engagement will cover a broad range of interactions that the SFC has and will have with universities and related stakeholder groups. These include:

- Regular meetings that the SFC has with universities, intended to focus on strategy, progress against delivery of the outcomes (including data and information submitted during the period prior to the meeting), and emerging issues, opportunities and challenges. This will include discussion of the data and information submitted in the monitoring returns.
- Dialogue between the senior leadership of SFC and the senior leadership and students of universities, every three to five years. These will focus on performance, strategy, risks, opportunities and challenges facing the institution.
- SFC Board engagements with funded bodies.
- Dialogue with representative bodies of universities and of their student bodies.

Monitoring

- 5.3 Processes for monitoring will retain many of the aspects currently in place, including those for data collection, but these will be incorporated within a wider structure. There will be different monitoring and reporting arrangements in place for different outcomes, and for some outcomes monitoring arrangements will remain unchanged. In broad terms, the monitoring approach will include:

- **Data and information returns** that may be regular or ad hoc, as needed to understand emerging issues.
- **Thematic reviews** into particular areas to gain assurance and identify good practice for wider dissemination. The SFC will be discussing topics and timelines for these reviews over the coming months before they are introduced in 2025/26.
- **Contextual commentaries** through which each university will set out its narrative account of how it has delivered against select outcomes in the Framework – this will supplement the data and information returns and support universities in placing context around these. These commentaries will form part of an annual, consolidated submission due in November each year.

The SFC will be having discussions with the sector in due course on the format and submission process for these documents, and will confirm details by July 2025.

5.4 However, of particular note, **three outcomes will now report under new arrangements**, and will not be reported on via contextual commentaries. Summary detail on this is as follows:

- **Outcome - High Quality Learning and Teaching:** reporting on this outcome will take place via the new *Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF)*. Detailed guidance on this is not yet available, though more information on the approach can be [accessed here](#). At the University of Aberdeen, this would be taken forward under the Vice-Principal for Education.
- **Outcome - Research Excellence:** reporting will now to take place against the new *Research Assurance and Accountability Framework (RAA)*. Guidance on this has been issued, [available here](#), and a return is due on 31 October 2024. This would be taken forward under the Vice-Principal for Research.
- **Outcome - Knowledge Exchange and Innovation:** reporting will now take place against an annual *Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund Strategy (KEIF)*. Universities are required to submit a five-year strategy to the SFC knowledge and innovation team by 31 January 2025. Guidance on this is [available here](#). This would be taken forward under the Vice-Principal for Regional Engagement.

5.5 A breakdown of current reporting requirements against each outcome, relative to the new arrangements to be implemented under the Assurance Model, is available on request.

6. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK AND THE ASSURANCE MODEL

Outcomes Framework

6.1 As above, the new Outcomes Framework and Assurance Model goes live on 1 August 2024. The outcomes set out in the Outcomes Framework will take effect from this date. Universities will report on how they have delivered against most outcomes during 2024/25 via different mechanisms, summarised above, with more detail given below.

Assurance Model

6.2 The Assurance Model will also go live on 1 August 2024. Many of the monitoring returns already in place will be retained, with submission timelines unchanged unless otherwise flagged by the SFC. New monitoring submissions will be discussed with the sector and timings agreed, with the expectation that they will be required from 2025/26, covering activities undertaken during 2024/25.

6.3 The thematic reviews will start from 2025/26, as noted, with the topics for review being discussed with the sector over the course of 2024, and notified to universities by July 2025. These may also include the submission of case studies

to support the thematic analysis and identification and dissemination of good practice. A schedule of thematic reviews will be published in due course.

- 6.4 As noted above, detailed guidance will be issued to universities on different aspects, in good time prior to the introduction of any new monitoring. A summary timeline of all reporting requirements over the coming year, as confirmed at this point, is given below under Section 8.

7. FINALISING THE OUTCOME AGREEMENT FOR AY 2023-24

- 7.1 As part of transitioning to the new arrangements, the SFC requires all universities to submit a Self-Evaluation on Outcome Agreements submitted for 2023/24, as per arrangements previously in place. Guidance for this has been issued, with the submission due by 2 December 2024. The Self-Evaluation will not include sections on the learning and quality or research outcomes included in the AY 2023/24 agreement; reporting against these themes will be taken forward separately. On completion, this will be taken to SMT for approval, and on submission, this will formally close the current Outcome Agreement process.
- 7.2 In relation, the University is also required to submit two case studies as part of the same process. The case studies are to focus on Outcomes for Students, and Outcomes for Economic Transformation and Social Renewal (one per theme). The case studies also have to be submitted on the 2 December 2024.

8 REPORTING TIMELINE

- 8.1 The following identifies key dates for submission of returns to the SFC under the Assurance Model. These include closure of the current Outcome Agreement process. This timeline is high-level, and will be populated in more detail by the Directorate of Planning and Governance over the weeks and months ahead as more information becomes available. The timeline identifies where Court approval is likely to be required based on information received to this point (column on the right).

TABLE 1: ASSURANCE MODEL - REPORTING

Deadline	Submission	Court
Throughout AY 2024-25	Standard SFC data returns to be submitted to required timescales. These will not require Court approval.	N
31 October 2024	New Research Assurance and Accountability (RAA) return due. This requires sign-off by the Principal on behalf of Court.	N
2 December 2024	Submission of the Self-Evaluation on 2023/24 Outcome Agreement, which will formally include the OA process. It is expected that sign-off for this, and the two case studies referenced below, will be required by Court.	Y
	Submission of two case studies to SFC, covering Outcomes for Students and Outcomes for Economic Transformation and Social Renewal.	Y

31 January 2025	New institutional Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund (KEIF) 5-year strategy due to be submitted to SFC. The SFC require that this is approved by Court. However, it has been agreed with the SFC that this can be considered and approved in principle by the Commercialisation Committee first on 23 January, and submitted to the SFC by the deadline of 31 January, with the caveat that formal Court sign-off will follow later after its meeting of 26 February.	Y
July 2025	Guidance on contextual commentaries to be released.	
28 November 2025	Contextual commentary on performance against Outcomes Framework in AY 2024/25. It is expected that sign-off for this will be required by Court on 3 December 2025, along with the two case studies referenced below.	Y
28 November 2025	Two case studies related to the use of funding to deliver aspects of the Outcomes Frameworks due to be submitted to SFC.	Y
30 November each year	Under TQEF, the Self-Evaluation Action Plan (SEAP) will be required for submission. It is not yet confirmed whether this will be required first in 2024 or 2025. SFC require sign-off for this by an “Accountable Officer” after it has been endorsed internally. Court is not required to review or approve prior to submission , but universities are required to share the submission with their governing bodies for information. The intention will be to take this to the November Court each year.	N

9 NEXT STEPS

9.1 Key next steps are as follows:

- The Directorate of Planning and Governance will be meeting with internal key stakeholders regularly to discuss the new Framework and Assurance Model. This will be designed to ensure shared understanding, clarity on roles and responsibilities, and clarity on reporting requirements.
- The Directorate of Planning and Governance is also developing a detailed schedule, covering a full annual cycle, for all submissions which will fall under the scope of the new approach. This will be taken to SMT for consideration on completion, along with new guidance or information as and when released by the SFC. Court will also be kept informed, as appropriate.

10 FURTHER INFORMATION

- 10.1 Further information is available from Tracey Slaven, University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer (tracey.slaven@abdn.ac.uk); Hulda Sveinsdottir, Director of Strategic Planning, Project & Corporate Governance (hulda.sveinsdottir@abdn.ac.uk), or Iain Grant, Head of Strategic Planning and Project Management Office (i.grant@abdn.ac.uk).

16 September 2024

Confidentiality Status - Open

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COURT

SCHEDULE OF COURT BUSINESS 2024/25**1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

1.1 This paper encloses a draft schedule of Court business for the year ahead (**Appendix 1**). The schedule is grouped into three thematic areas of business:

- Strategy and Performance;
- Compliance and Regulatory;
- Standing Items

1.2 It is acknowledged that priorities for the Court's time may emerge from discussions at its September meeting and will further inform the schedule. The Court is, therefore, asked to consider potential topics for scheduling as extended in depth discussion at the remaining meetings across the year. Some potential topics are noted below for consideration.

1.3 Comments on whether there are items of business that should be added to, or removed from, the schedule would be welcome.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	SMT	12 September 2024
Further consideration/approval required by	University Court	25 September 2024

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

3.1 Court is asked **to consider** the draft Schedule of Business and to provide any feedback on items for inclusion, including in particular which areas it might wish to schedule extended discussions.

4. EXTENDED DISCUSSION TOPICS

4.1 Potential areas of business that Court might wish to consider as one of the four subjects to be prioritised for an extended discussion are:

- Education potentially including focus on plans for growth of Online Education and Digital Education Strategy as noted by Court in June as potential item for this year.
- Commercialisation – the Court noted last year that the Commercialisation Committee suggested a more in-depth discussion of this area be scheduled for 2024/25.
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- Research/Research Excellence Framework 2028 (REF) – this is included on the Court’s Action Log for further discussion once the REF 2028 rules have been announced.
- Internationalisation and International Partnerships.
- Financial Sustainability.
- Aberdeen 2040 “Refresh” – this is to be noted as a potential item of business for the year, whether as extended topic or routine business, timing to be confirmed.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

5.1 Further information is available from Bruce Purdon, Clerk to the Court, email b.purdon@abdn.ac.uk.

12 September 2024

Confidentiality Status: Open

COURT – Schedule of Business 2024-25

		Meeting Dates				
Business Area		24/25 September 2024	19 November 2024	26 February 2025	30 April 2025	25 June 2025
STRATEGY & PERFORMANCE	Extended Discussion Session	Away Day Meeting – Court Development Time	To be agreed by Court	To be agreed by Court	To be agreed by Court	To be agreed by Court
	Financial Sustainability	Update on Financial Year-End 2022-23 and in year 2023/24 Forecast Update Update on Student Recruitment Intake for 2024/25 admission	Budget Report & Student Population Intake for 2023/24	Report on Forecast Budget Position (Post-January Student Intake)	Report on Forecast Budget Position Report on Position of Pension Schemes and USS Debt Monitoring Report	Financial Planning and Budgets 2025/26 to 2027/28 (Inc Cash Flow Projection) Report on Forecast Year-End Budget Position
	Strategy and Risk	Performance against KPIs for 2023 -24 Strategic Priorities for Implementation in 2024-25 Bi-Annual Report on Risk Management			Bi-Annual Report on Risk Management	
	People & Inclusion	Gaelic Language Plan			Report on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion/Public Sector Equality Duty biennial Report Equal Pay Audit (Required in 2025) Annual Gender Pay Gap Report	

		Meeting Dates				
Business Area		24/25 September 2024	19 November 2024	26 February 2025	30 April 2025	25 June 2025
	Estates & Capital	Capital Plan Update on Reimagining our Campuses Implementation	Reimagining our Campuses Implementation			Capital Plan TBC
	Reputation and Engagement		Report on League Table Performance		Development and Alumni Relations Annual Report Students' Association Report (or as part of Court Dinner Presentation at Students' Association)	
	Sustainability		Net Zero Strategy			
	International				Report on International Partnerships	
	Research & Interdisciplinarity		Research Strategy and REF (from Court Action Log - subject to REF28 rules being known)			
	Education		Self-Evaluation and Action Plan Report for SFC	Update on 2040 Education Work		

	Meeting Dates				
Business Area	24/25 September 2024	19 November 2024	26 February 2025	30 April 2025	25 June 2025
COMPLIANCE AND REGULATORY		Annual Report and Accounts		Prevent Duty Report	Strategic Financial Planning Forecast to SFC
	Update on SFC Assurance and Outcome Agreement Reporting	Going Concern Report			Senior Governor's Annual Performance Review
		External Auditor's report and Rep Letter			Principal's Annual Performance Review
		Audit Committee Annual Report			Court Committee Memberships for 2025/26
		Internal Auditor's Annual Report			Court Self-Effectiveness Evaluation
		Treasury Management Report (Bond Covenant Compliance)			
		Annual Report on Procurement			
		Modern Slavery Statement (Annual)			
		Research Governance Statement			
		Annual Report on Health, Safety & Wellbeing (HSW)			Six-Monthly Update on Health, Safety & Wellbeing (HSW)

	Meeting Dates				
Business Area	24/25 September 2024	19 November 2024	26 February 2025	30 April 2025	25 June 2025
STANDING ITEMS	Reminder of Statement of Primary Responsibilities and Duties of Trustees	Reminder of Statement of Primary Responsibilities and Duties of Trustees	Reminder of Statement of Primary Responsibilities and Duties of Trustees	Reminder of Statement of Primary Responsibilities and Duties of Trustees	Reminder of Statement of Primary Responsibilities and Duties of Trustees
	Minutes and action log	Minutes and action log	Minutes and action log	Minutes and action log	Minutes and action log
	Rector's Update	Rector's Update	Rector's Update	Rector's Update	Rector's Update
	Principal's and University/Sector Update	Principal's and University/Sector Update	Principal's and University/Sector Update	Principal's and University/Sector Update	Principal's and University/Sector Update
	Senior Governor's Update	Senior Governor's Update	Senior Governor's Update	Senior Governor's Update	Senior Governor's Update
		Senate	Senate	Senate	Senate
	Sub-Committee Reports	Sub-Committee Reports	Sub-Committee Reports inc: Remuneration Committee Report on Mid-Year Review of Principal's Objectives	Sub-Committee Reports	Sub-Committee Reports inc: Annual Report from Remuneration Committee (related to SFC Memorandum)

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 29 August 2024.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

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

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

3.1 Court is invited to note the report from the PNCC.

4. PARTNERSHIP WORKING AND RECOGNITION AGREEMENT

- 4.1 The Committee received the updated Partnership Working and Recognition Agreement (PWRA) including a new appendix detailing information that would be shared with the Unions.
- 4.2 The Committee discussed facility time for UCU and the request to increase the time from 0.8fte to 1fte. It was confirmed that the time should remain at 0.8fte.

5. PAY AND PENSION UPDATE

- 5.1 The Committee received an update on national pay negotiations, noting the Joint National Negotiations for Higher Education (JNCHES) was ongoing and a further update was expected in September.

6. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

- 6.1 The Committee received an update from Karl Leydecker, Senior Vice-Principal on the current financial position of the University. It was confirmed good progress was being made on the financial recovery savings plan target. This would be reviewed further once final student numbers were confirmed for the academic year 2024/25.

7. DRAFT FAIR WORK STATEMENT

- 7.1 The Committee received a draft statement of the University's commitment to this area. It was noted the draft statement would now be reviewed further by the Senior Management Team and Policy Review Group.

8. FACILITIES REPORTING TIME APRIL 2023 TO MARCH 2024

- 8.1 The Committee received and noted a paper confirming the reporting of trade union facilities time for the year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. It was noted that compared to 2022-2023 there has been a decrease in the number of hours spent on paid facility time from 2530 to 2432 hours, a decrease of 98 hours or 3.9%. This was still an increase on the figure of 2319 hours for 2021/22.

9. INVESTIGATION, GRIEVANCE, DISCIPLINARY AND CAPABILITY CASEWORK

- 9.1 The Committee received a paper providing an update on the number of investigation, disciplinary, capability and grievance cases in the year to date. This information is presented to PNCC twice yearly at the request of the Campus Trade Unions. There is a particular focus on the length of time taken to conclude casework in all categories, how this time can be reduced and how informal options for resolution can be used in some circumstances.

10. POLICIES FOR APPROVAL RELATING TO HARMONISATION

- 10.1 The Committee received and approved the updates to the Annual Leave and Pay Policy as well as the changes to the Statement of Written Particulars. The Committee approved the introduction of the new Retirement Tool Kit. The updates were made following negotiations with the Trade Unions and the Collective Agreement to Harmonise Terms and Conditions of Employment.

11. STAFF HARDSHIP FUNDS

- 11.1 The Committee received and noted a paper which provided options for utilising the small amount of funding remaining from the 2023 Staff Hardship Funds. The committee agreed that the remainder of the funds should be used to stock the food pantry located at the Crush Hall, University Office with essential toiletries and food items.

12. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY, EQUITY AND REVENUE SHARING POLICY

- 12.1 The committee reviewed the amendments that have been made to the above policy. UCU asked for further consideration over the wording for lecture performances being explicitly acknowledged as an exception to the University ownership of intellectual property in teaching material. The committee agreed to review further comments before the policy was sent to the Commercialisation Committee for approval.

13. WORKLOAD & WELLBEING

- 13.1 The committee discussed that workload remains a key concern. It was noted the work being done to gather information from across the University to inform decision-making around key recruitment. Information will continue to be gathered, including from the staff survey that will be launched in November and will then feed into individual school and directorate well-being plans.

14. FURTHER INFORMATION

- 14.1 Further information is available from Lindsey Hamilton, Clerk to the Partnership and Negotiating Consultative Committee (l.hamilton@abdn.ac.uk) or Debbie Dyker, Director of People, Director of Operations (Qatar) & Interim Director of Academic Services & Online Education (d.j.dyker@abdn.ac.uk)

06 September 2024

Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status: Open