

**Innovative****Caring****Inclusive****Collaborative****Minutes (Open) Approved University Court – 29 April 2026**

\*attended online; \*\* online from item 92.

**Members**

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David Brew (Chair)	Colin Graham (Vice-Chair)
Professor Liz Bacon	Lynne Hamilton
Andrew Bailey	Pam Herries
Liz Blackburn*	Fraser Keir
Professor Andrea Cameron**	Veronica Lynch
Dr Scott Cameron	Jim Macgregor
Col. Eur Ing Iain Davidson VR*	Antony Marks
Carla De Brito	Thomas Sloan
Fiona Drysdale KC*	Steven Traynor
Professor Ruth Falconer	Luke Webster
Kerith George-Briant	Professor Nia White

**Apologies**

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Dia Banerji	Dr Hadi Mehrpouya
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**In Attendance**

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Professor Alice Brown	James Nicholson (item 95)
Dr Hannah Coutts (items 93 & 94)	Dr Dianne Peden* (Clerk)
Eilidh Fraser*	Lauren Smith (Observer)
Frazer Greig (item 92.2)	Caroline Summers (Secretary to Court)
Vanessa Kind	Cullen Warnock (item 92.1)
Andrew Menzies	Rhonda McKay (Observer)
Professor Luke Millard (items 92.3 & 93)	

## Open Business

### Preliminary Matters

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#### 76. Welcome and Apologies

Oral Report

- (i). The Chair welcomed Court to its fourth meeting of the academic year. On behalf of Court, the Chair extended a special welcome to Vice-Principal (Faculty of Social and Applied Sciences) Professor Andrea Cameron and Vice-Principal (Research and Innovation) Professor Nia White, as the two nominated Vice-Principal members of Court with effect from 1 March 2026.
- (ii). The Chair highlighted that the University Chancellor, Professor Alice Brown was in attendance and Court agreed that she could remain for the entire meeting including consideration of reserved business.
- (iii). Apologies were received as noted above.
- (iv). The Chair highlighted that Equality Impact Assessments for relevant items were available via Admincontrol. Court was advised that enclosures 124-128 relating to the review of Key Court Documents had been deferred to the June meeting.
- (v). The Chair reminded members of the Abertay values (Caring; Inclusive; Collaborative; and Innovative), noting that this reflected the commitment arising from discussion at the Court Conference to strengthen visibility and integration of the values across University business and that new branding had been incorporated into meeting documentation.
- (vi). Court was reminded that its discussions are strictly confidential and that the open minutes of meeting of Court are published on the University website once approved. In addition, the papers of open business are published on the University's intranet along with the approved minutes.

#### 77. Declarations of Potential Conflicts of Interest

Oral Report

**Outcome:** None were declared.

#### 78. Feedback on Public Engagement Event

Oral Report

- (i). Court noted that the event was well received, with a good level of audience interaction and engagement.

#### 79. Minutes of Court 17 February 2026

CT/0426/106

**Outcome:** Court received and considered the minutes and approved them as an accurate record of its meeting held on 17 February 2026.

**80. Minutes of Court 18 February 2026**

**CT/0426/107**

**Outcome:** Court received and considered the minutes and approved them as an accurate record of its meeting held on 18 February 2026.

**81. Action List and Matters Arising**

**CT/0426/108**

- (i). Court was advised that the action list had been updated on 2 April 2026 and included ongoing and recently completed actions. Four actions had been completed since the previous meeting with four actions ongoing, none of which were due at this meeting.

**Court Matters**

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**82. Court Matters**

**CT/0426/109**

- (i). Court was advised that the paper provided an update on Court and Committee membership and recommendations from Governance and Nominations Committee on several appointments.

**Outcome:** Court approved the reappointment of Liz Blackburn for a second three-year term (1 August 2026 – 31 July 2029).

**Outcome:** Court approved the reappointment of Steven Traynor for a second three-year term (1 August 2026 – 31 July 2029).

**Outcome:** Court approved the extension of Jim Macgregor’s appointment to Court for two years (1 July 2026 – 30 June 2028) to complete his third and final term.

- (ii). Court received an update on sector issues and noted that the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) had recently published a near-final draft of the CUC Code of Governance for public consultation. Court noted that Scottish universities would be exempt from adopting the CUC Code but that it was likely to inform best practice and any future review of the Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance. It was noted that the Governance and Nominations Committee would review the draft CUC Code and report any relevant matters to Court in due course. Court noted that possible changes included more frequent external effectiveness reviews and an increased emphasis on academic governance.
- (iii). Court was advised that options were being explored to keep the University community updated on the work of Court as part of the wider programme of staff engagement activity.

### **83. Appointment Committee**

#### **83.1. Update from the Appointment Committee**

**Oral Report**

- (i). Vice-Chair of Court and Chair of the Appointment Committee, C. Graham reported that five applications had been received for the role of Chair with three candidates having been interviewed on 28 April 2026. Court was advised that, after lengthy deliberations, the Committee had not been satisfied that any of the candidates sufficiently met the criteria to proceed to the election stage. The Committee would now consider the next steps and discuss with the external search agency.
- (ii). C. Graham thanked all members of the Committee for the contribution they made and for the conscientious way they approached the process to date.
- (iii). Court agreed to hold a more detailed discussion under Reserved Business, without observers present. The minutes of that discussion are included under item 102.

#### **83.2. Minutes of the meeting held on 22 April 2026**

**CT/0426/110**

**Outcome:** Court noted the minutes of the meeting of the Appointment Committee held on 22 April 2026.

### **Committee Matters**

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### **84. Audit and Risk Committee**

#### **84.1. Minutes of the meeting on 24 March 2026**

**CT/0426/111**

- (i). Court was advised that the Committee had recommended one item to Court for approval: the Anti-bribery and Corruption Code of Conduct and Policy (CT/0426/130).

**Outcome:** Court noted the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 24 March 2026.

### **85. Finance and Corporate Performance Committee**

#### **85.1. Minutes of the meeting on 17 March 2026**

**CT/0426/112**

- (i). Court was advised that the Committee had recommended three items to Court for approval: the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Update (CT/0426/122); the Digital Strategy KPIs (CT/0426/119) and the Treasury Management Policy (CT/0426/131).
- (ii). In addition, the Committee had agreed by correspondence to recommend the Estates Strategy KPIs (CT/0426/118) to Court for approval.

**Outcome:** Court noted the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Corporate Performance Committee held on 17 March 2026.

## **86. Governance and Nominations Committee**

### **86.1. Minutes of the meeting on 5 March 2026**

**CT/0426/113**

- (i). The Committee had recommended the appointments made under item 82.

**Outcome:** Court noted the minutes of the meeting of the Governance and Nominations Committee held on 5 March 2026.

## **87. People, Health and Equality Committee**

### **87.1. Minutes of the meeting on 10 March 2026**

**CT/0426/114**

- (i). Court was advised that the Committee had reviewed the Equality Annual Report (CT/0426/123) and had recommended one item to Court for approval: the Visa Fee Reimbursement Policy (CT/0426/132).

**Outcome:** Court noted the minutes of the meeting of the People, Health and Equality Committee held on 10 March 2026.

## **88. Senate**

### **88.1. Minutes of the meeting on 25 March 2026**

**CT/0426/115**

- (i). Court was advised that Senate had approved a Proposal for an Abertay Postgraduate Block Model (item 45) and had reviewed the Retention, Progression and Module Performance Update (CT/0426/121).
- (ii). Court discussed the proposed Abertay Postgraduate Block Model, including potential resource implications for the estate. It was highlighted that further modelling work was underway as part of the implementation phase including estates usage and the way in which this would be timetabled. Some additional resource had been made available to facilitate this. Court was assured that it would be kept informed of any significant issues emerging from this work.
- (iii). In addition, Senate had recommended two items to Court for approval: the Student Success Strategy KPIs (CT/0426/120) and the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029 Code of Practice (CT/0426/129).

**Outcome:** Court noted the minutes of the meeting of Senate held on 25 March 2026.

## **Regular Reports**

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### **89. Report from the Chair of Court**

**Oral Report**

- (i). The Chair advised that the recent meeting of the Committee of Scottish Chairs included discussions relating to the CUC Code as well as recent developments affecting the Scottish higher education sector, including the new responsibilities of the Scottish

Funding Council, anticipated financial challenges for the sector, and the implementation of the Tertiary Education and Training (Funding and Governance) (Scotland) Act 2026, with implications for university funding and skills provision.

**90. Executive Group Report**

**CT/0426/116**

- (i). Court was advised that the report provided Court with an update on key institutional matters not covered elsewhere on the agenda, including SFC funding, student recruitment, financial performance, external engagement, academic developments, and strategic initiatives.
- (ii). Court welcomed the update on student recruitment, noting that the early projections would be refined as the planning and recruitment cycle progressed. An error in one of the tables was noted and would be corrected.

<b>Action:</b> Deputy Principal and University Secretary to ensure corrected version circulated to Court.
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- (iii). Court received an update on the heat network and noted that the Executive Group was actively considering the appropriate steps towards commissioning the full business case, including funding through a bid into Scotland’s Public Sector Heat Decarbonisation Fund.

**91. Students’ Association Report**

**CT/0426/117**

- (i). Students’ Association President, C. De Brito, and Students’ Association Vice-President, L. Webster, presented the report, outlining recent activities and engagement initiatives. Court was advised that their focus this term had been to strengthen community engagement, enhance student voice and democracy, create tools to support students before their arrival at Abertay with new inclusive initiatives as well as running the ongoing work around student officers’ campaigns.
- (ii). Court received an update on the recent Students’ Association sabbatical elections, noting a high level of engagement, attributed in part to increased visibility following the Association’s move to the Library. Court was advised that Louise Ling and Rosie Campbell had been elected as sabbatical officers from 1 July 2026.
- (iii). C. De Brito highlighted ongoing work to strengthen Student Voice, building on existing arrangements and informed by work undertaken with the Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching), Professor L. Millard. Further discussions were taking place with the AbLE Academy to explore practical enhancements, with a continued focus on ensuring students had an effective voice in their education. Court noted progress on the development of an international student guide, produced in collaboration with the International Student Representative, providing consolidated guidance on studying at Abertay and living in Scotland.

- (iv). Court received an update on the Language Accessibility Promise which aimed to improve accessibility of student-facing communications. The Association had raised this with the Executive Group who had committed to exploring this. Court noted that the policy review process may provide an opportunity to consider applying the underlying principles of the Promise.
- (v). Court noted the delivery of the annual Student Voice Awards, recognising the contributions of staff, students and societies. L. Webster reported growth in student societies, with numbers increasing from 22 in 2024–25 to 35 in 2025-26.
- (vi). Court noted an update on the recent referendum on affiliation with the NUS. This had not reached a quorum, and therefore no action would be taken, and the Association would remain affiliated to the NUS.
- (vii). Court noted the breadth of activity being undertaken and thanked the Students' Association for its ongoing work to support and represent the student community.

## **Main Business**

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### **92. Supporting Strategies – KPIs and Implementation**

- (i). The Chair highlighted that Court had agreed in February that the KPIs for the Estates and the Digital Strategies would be reviewed to take account of Court feedback and come back for approval. In addition, when Court approved the Student Success Strategy it was noted that KPIs had still to be developed and would be considered at this meeting.

#### **92.1. Estates Strategy**

**CT/0426/118**

- (i). Chief Estates Officer, C. Warnock, highlighted the changes which had been made in response to previous feedback. Court noted that the target for the proposed energy efficiency indicator was not dependent on delivery of the Heat Network and that targets had been set pragmatically, informed by sector benchmarks and the age and configuration of the campus. Court was advised that progress in reducing energy demand would continue to be reported through the annual Public Bodies Climate Change Report.
- (ii). Court discussed progress towards greater building automation, including a pilot of occupancy sensors in the Library, and noted plans to move towards more intelligent building management with minimal human intervention. Court noted that an accessibility audit had been completed and that a scoped programme of work would be developed to address identified issues.
- (iii). Court discussed the space utilisation indicator, noting a current baseline of approximately 20% and the definition of utilisation included in the paper. Court discussed the complexity of the metric, including the treatment of specialist spaces, differences inside and outside the academic year, and the potential value of capturing out-of-hours usage.

Court noted that sector-standard definitions currently focus on normal working hours and that further analysis, including more granular and shadow measures, could be useful. It was highlighted that the Senior Leadership Team would be undertaking a deeper dive into utilisation data.

**Action:** Chief Estates Officer to consider incorporating more granular and out-of-hours space utilisation data, including specialist spaces, in future reporting against the Estates Strategy KPIs.

- (iv). Court agreed that the scope and focus of the KPIs could be reviewed as implementation progresses, to ensure they continued to provide meaningful insight.

**Outcome:** Court approved the Estates Strategy KPIs.

## 92.2. Digital Strategy

CT/0426/119

- (i). Chief Digital Officer, F. Greig, highlighted that, following the approval of the Digital Strategy in principle by Court in February, the accompanying KPIs had been strengthened to provide clearer indicators on automation and benefits realisation. Court was advised that the proposed digital skills KPI remained under development.
- (ii). Court discussed the importance of an outcomes-focused approach to measuring automation and the reduction of manual processes and noted that this would be captured through benefits-realisation planning, including consideration of associated resource investment.
- (iii). Court discussed cyber security measures and assurance, noting that the University meets the Cyber Essentials standard and is progressing through the Scottish Government's Cyber Resilience Framework, with appropriate controls in place. Court discussed the appropriateness of the Cyber Essentials standard and noted that further assurance measures, including Cyber Essentials Plus and alignment with the National Cyber Security Centre's Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF), were being considered.
- (iv). Court noted that the KPIs would continue to be refined in response to feedback, including consideration of future cyber-related and digital capability measures. Court agreed that the scope and focus of the KPIs could be reviewed as implementation progresses, to ensure they continued to provide meaningful insight.

**Outcome:** Court approved the Digital Strategy KPIs, subject to the minor amendments as noted above.

## 92.3. Student Success Strategy

CT/0426/120

- (i). Professor L. Millard presented the Student Success Strategy KPIs, highlighting input from the Learning and Teaching Committee and Senate. Court discussed the balance between

realism and ambition in the targets and noted that these would be kept under review as performance trends and external factors evolve.

- (ii). Court discussed undergraduate retention and progression, with particular reference to direct entry into Levels 2 and 3. Court noted that focused interventions had resulted in significant improvements in retention and progression for direct entrants, reflecting sustained staff effort and an ongoing cultural shift towards student success.
- (iii). Court noted the student satisfaction measures, including the absence of a KPI for postgraduate taught (PGT) satisfaction. It was noted that the University does not currently participate in the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey and therefore lacks an external benchmark. Court requested that, as PGT provision continues to grow, options for developing an appropriate satisfaction measure be explored.

**Action:** Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching) to explore options for incorporating a Key Performance Indicator for Postgraduate Taught student satisfaction within the Student Success Strategy in future.

- (iv). Court discussed employability-related KPIs, including highly skilled employment and student entrepreneurship. Court noted the rationale for the proposed targets, recognising external influences on graduate outcomes and the role of programme design and placement opportunities in supporting employability.

**Outcome:** Court approved the Student Success Strategy Key Performance Indicators.

### 93. Retention, Progression and Module Performance Update

CT/0426/121

- (i). Professor L. Millard advised Court that the report detailed the institutional performance on retention, progression, and module performance and provided recommendations to address issues of concern. Court was advised that overall retention and progression rates had improved, with first-year retention increasing to 83% and overall performance approaching the 90% target. Court noted encouraging progress in relation to direct entrants and acknowledged that while challenges remain—particularly students disengaging after completion of Term 1—performance was moving in the right direction. Court was advised of plans to contact students who withdraw in order to better understand their reasons for leaving.
- (ii). Court discussed variations at departmental and programme level and noted ongoing programme redesign activity, including significant changes within the Dundee Business School. Court was advised that low pass and progression rates trigger action at module level through progression boards, with escalation to programme-level review and, where necessary, strategic decisions on programme redesign or discontinuation. Court noted that this was an ongoing process, not reliant on annual reporting cycles.

- (iii). Court highlighted the importance of using granular data to inform curriculum review and programme redesign decisions and agreed that future reports should include specific reporting on Scottish-domiciled students and other key student groups. Court discussed whether a formal correlation between National Student Survey (NSS) results and retention data had been undertaken. It was explained that these related to different student populations, with the NSS being completed by final year undergraduate students, but that some alignment was evident and that further analysis may be useful.

**Action:** Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching) to ensure that future Retention, Progression and Module Performance Update reports to Court should include specific reporting on Scottish-domiciled students and other key student groups and consider formal analysis of any correlation of retention and progression data with the National Student Survey Results.

- (iv). Court discussed the impact of retention on regulated programmes, noting that NHS Education Scotland monitors retention closely and takes account of contextual factors. Court noted that there were no accreditation risks identified and that progression statistics improved significantly beyond first year.

#### **94. Key Performance Indicator Update**

**CT/0426/122**

- (i). Head of Planning and Insight advised Court that the report provided the first update on the University's 16 institutional KPIs underpinning delivery of the 2025–2030 Strategy, previously approved by Court in June 2025. Court noted that all targets and RAG thresholds had now been confirmed. It was highlighted that the supporting strategy KPIs were to be incorporated into a wider performance monitoring framework.
- (ii). Court noted that KPI 5 was rated green and KPI 9 amber, with all other KPIs remaining at baseline and presented with directional indicators, recognising that for some measures a lower value represents improvement.

**Outcome:** Court approved the updated University Key Performance Indicators.

#### **95. Equality Report 2025-26**

**CT/0426/123**

- (i). Director of Student and Academic Services, J. Nicholson, highlighted that the biennial Equality Report provided an update in the intervening years between the legally required Equality Mainstreaming Reports. Court was advised that the report offered a high-level overview of key developments during 2025–26, including Student Data, Staff Data, Pay Gap Data and Court Data.
- (ii). Court noted increased ethnic diversity within the student body and a rise in the number of students and staff declaring disabilities. It was acknowledged that these changes reflected improved data collection and greater encouragement for individuals to disclose relevant

disabilities, rather than a material change in the underlying population. Court discussed the gender pay gap, noting that this largely reflected differences in grade of entry and length of service. Court was advised of the importance of understanding the data in greater depth, particularly in relation to the intersection of non-binary identity and mental health concerns and noted that the University will continue to monitor trends and consider implications for support services.

**Outcome:** Court noted the Equality Report 2025-26.

## **96. REF (Research Excellence Framework) 2029 Code of Practice** **CT/0426/129**

- (i). Professor N. White Nia introduced the University's REF 2029 Code of Practice (CoP) highlighting that an extensive consultation process had included a REF CoP working group, senior leadership team review, open consultation events, and feedback from the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee and Senate, with all relevant feedback incorporated into the final version. It was highlighted that Court approval was required prior to submission to the Scottish Funding Council by 11 May 2026.
- (ii). Court was advised that the complexity and evolving nature of the REF 2029 rules made it difficult to model the final submission, emphasising the importance of flexibility and ongoing analysis as more information becomes available. Court noted that there was a tension between maximising quality (which could limit funding) and maintaining sufficient volume for financial sustainability and institutional reputation, noting that the approach will vary by unit of assessment.

**Outcome:** Court approved the REF 2029 Code of Practice for submission to the Scottish Funding Council.

## **97. Policy Documents**

### **97.1. Anti-bribery and Corruption Code of Conduct and Policy** **CT/0426/130**

- (i). Court queried the wording of section 12.3 regarding procedures for malicious or bad faith reports. Director of Finance, Infrastructure and Corporate Services, A. Menzies, confirmed that the wording would be reviewed prior to publication to ensure appropriate clarity.

**Outcome:** Court approved the Anti-bribery and Corruption Code of Conduct and Policy, subject to the minor amendment noted above.

### **97.2. Treasury Management Policy** **CT/0426/131**

**Outcome:** Court approved the Treasury Management Policy.

**97.3. Visa Fee Reimbursement Policy**

**CT/0426/132**

**Outcome:** Court approved the Visa Fee Reimbursement Policy.

**Matters for Information**

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**98. Development Opportunities for Members of Court**

**Oral Report**

- (i). Court was advised that details of any opportunities would be circulated with the draft minutes when available.

**Concluding Matters**

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**99. Any Other Competent Business**

**Oral Report**

- (i). No other matters were raised.

**100. Departure of Court Member**

**Oral Report**

- (i). The Chair noted that this was the last meeting of Court for Professor R. Falconer, whose term of office as the academic-elected staff member of Court would come to an end on 5 June 2026. On behalf of Court, he thanked her for her contribution to Court, noting that Court had benefited greatly from her insights.

**101. Departure of the Chair of Court**

**Oral Report**

- (i). Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Professor L. Bacon noted that this was the last meeting of Court which D. Brew would chair prior to his term of office as Chair of Court ending on 15 May 2026. She highlighted the significant contribution which he had made to the University during his tenure and thanked him for the support he had provided to her and to Members of Court. On behalf of the University, she thanked him for his work to support Abertay. Court members expressed their gratitude and wished him well for the future. The Chair remarked that it had been a pleasure and an honour to act as Chair of Court and stated his confidence that the institution was well placed to face the challenges ahead.

**Date of Next Meeting: 17 June 2026**

**Chair of Court: David Brew**