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**University Court**

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**Minutes**

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18 June 2025 from 14:00 to 17:00 in the Boardroom, Kydd Building

\*attended via MS Teams

**Members**

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

**Apologies**

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Ms Pam Herries	Professor Edith Sim
Dr Hadi Mehrpouya	

**In Attendance**

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Ms Carla De Brito (observer)	Mr Andrew Menzies
Ms Eilidh Fraser	

**Secretariat**

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

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**Open Business**

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**Preliminary Matters**

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

- (i). The Chair welcomed Court to the sixth meeting of the academic year. Court was advised that Ms C. De Brito, the Students' Association President Elect was attending as an observer.
- (ii). Apologies were received as noted above.

**112. Declaration of Potential Conflicts of Interest****Oral Report**

- (i). The Chair reminded members of their responsibility to indicate if they had, or could be perceived to have, a conflict of interest in relation to the items for discussion.
- (ii). Students Association President, Ms D. Allaiouti, Students' Association Vice-President, Mr L. Webster and Ms C. De Brito noted a conflict in relation to Item 120: Governance of the Students' Association: Code of Practice as in their roles they are also trustees of the Students' Association. Court was content that they remained for the discussion relating to this item.
- (iii). Lay members of Court, Mr F. Keir, Mr A. Marks and Mr J. Macgregor noted a conflict in relation item 125.2: Court and Committee Membership. Court was content that they remained for the discussion relating to this item.

**113. Feedback on Pre-Court Session****Oral Report**

- (i). Court noted thanks to Dean of the Faculty of Social and Applied Sciences, Ms Andrea Cameron, Wellbeing Clinic Manager, Ms Wendy Nicoll and Wellbeing Clinic Interns, Mr David Brennan, Ms Clare Hart and Ms Amelie Jay for the tour of the Wellbeing Clinic and presentation of their work prior to the Court meeting.
- (ii). Court appreciated the opportunity to visit the clinic and to hear about the work being carried out. Court was pleased to hear about the clinic's success, especially the positive impact it had on student interns, who had spoken enthusiastically about their experiences and the clear benefits they had gained from their involvement.



## Court and Governance Matters

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### 114. Minutes of the meeting held on 30 April 2025

CT/0625/094

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

**Outcome:** Court received and considered the minutes of its meeting held on 30 April 2025, submitted as enclosure 94, and approved them as an accurate record.

### 115. Action List and Matters Arising from these Minutes

CT/0625/095

- (i). Court noted that the action list, submitted as enclosure 95, had been updated prior to the circulation of the meeting papers and that all actions were marked as complete.
- (ii). Court was advised that an update with regards to Action 0424/83 Risk Management Workshop would be provided under item 116: Annual Workplan and that the update to Action 0625/101 would be provided under item 135 within Reserved Business.

**Outcome:** Court noted the Action List.

### 116. Annual Workplan

CT/0625/096

- (i). Vice-Principal and University Secretary, Ms C. Summer, introduced the Annual Workplan for 2025-26, submitted as enclosure 96, noting that it would provide the basis for meeting agendas over the coming year, and would be updated as required ahead of each meeting.
- (ii). Court was advised that following discussions with the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC), Ms L. Hamilton, a Risk Management workshop would take place on the morning of 26 November 2025, prior to the Court meeting that afternoon. Court noted that that this addressed action 0424/83 and that further details would be circulated shortly. Court was advised that the Senior Management Team and the external members of ARC would also be invited to attend.
- (iii). Court was advised of the proposal for its Annual Conference to take place in conjunction with its February meeting. It was intended that this would follow a

similar format to previous years and that further details would be circulated shortly.

**Outcome:** Court agreed the Annual Workplan.

[Mr I. Davidson joined the meeting]

## **Matters for Discussion**

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

**CT/0625/097**

- (i). The Chair of Court introduced his report, submitted as enclosure 97, and highlighted that it provided an update on developments in the external environment including:
- (ii). Evidence relating to the financial sustainability of universities which had been submitted by Universities Scotland to the Scottish Parliament's Education, Children and Young People Committee;
  - The recent conference organised by the Royal Society of Edinburgh on the funding of tertiary education in Scotland; and
  - The Committee of University Chair's review of its HE Governance Code.

#### **117.1. 1:1 Feedback Meetings with Chair of Court**

- (i). Court was advised that the report also provided the collated feedback from the Chair's recent 1:1 meetings with members of Court. It was highlighted that the feedback had focused on how best to ensure members were able to fulfil their governance roles effectively and the report had been shared with the Executive Group prior to its submission to Court.
- (ii). Court was advised that there had been widespread agreement on the need to offer information and data to Court in a more readily digestible form and that the development of graphical, visual and narrative summary information with accompanying analysis of key performance trends would help make best use of members' time in enabling effective scrutiny.
- (iii). The Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Professor L. Bacon, thanked Court members for their feedback and highlighted that the Executive Group would continue to reflect on how best to address the issues raised. Court was advised that the Director of Finance, Infrastructure and Corporate Services, Mr A. Menzies, had presented a proposal for future financial reporting to the Finance and Corporate Performance

Committee (FCPC) at its meeting on 3 June 2025, which had been welcomed by the Committee.

**Outcome:** Court noted the Report from the Chair of Court.

## Matters for Approval

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### 118. Operational and Financial Planning for 2025-26 to 2027-28 (Confidential)

CT/0625/098

- (i). Mr A. Menzies introduced the Operational and Financial Planning for 2025-26 to 2027-28, submitted as enclosure 98, which summarised the outcomes from operational and financial planning for the next year and for the development of its three-year plan. He noted that the underlying financial performance projected in the plan represented a deterioration in the coming year in the University's performance as measured by EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization), with some modest improvement on that over the two subsequent years.
- (ii). Court noted that the paper would form the basis of the strategic financial plan submission to the SFC which was due at the end of June 2025. Court was advised that the paper acknowledged a deterioration in the University's projected financial performance for the upcoming year compared to the 2025-26 forecast presented to Court in June 2024. Specifically, Table 1 highlighted a £1.8m reduction in projected tuition fee income from on-campus international students. Court noted that this decline had been anticipated as early as September 2024, when it had become evident that international student numbers had not been maintained at the 2023-24 level and that, consequently, forward growth assumptions for this cohort had been removed at that point from the rolling projections and updates reported to FCPC.
- (iii). Court was advised that the deterioration in the University's financial performance reflected the stagnation in SFC funding in an environment where costs, being primarily staff related, continued to grow. The decision not to proceed with the additional campus had also impacted on future planning. Court was assured that the University continued to test its strategy of diversifying and growing income through the development of Transnational partnerships. Assumptions relating to the contribution from such activities continued to be conservative and prudent; and Management scrutinised the predicted expenditure profile, both revenue and capital, with a particular emphasis on robustly challenging proposals for additional or growing expenditure.

- (iv). Court was assured that Management had recognised the strategic commitment to a delivering an EBITDA target and also the fundamental importance of monitoring its cash position. Court noted that the University's analysis had focussed on separating that cash position in relation to sums arising from its operating activities, investing activities (notably Capital Expenditure) and financing activities (notably the servicing of its borrowings). Court was assured that there was a continued focus on the visibility of the net effects of these movements and on ensuring a transparency of the impact of the University's financial performance on its cash and investment balances and providing transparency and comfort over the University's continued going concern status.
- (v). Court noted that there while there had been a decrease in applications from Scottish students, acceptances had increased compared to the same point in the previous year. Court discussed the importance of conversion and noted that discussions were ongoing regarding the approach to Clearing, which would also involve the newly appointed digital marketing company. Court was also advised that the number of international student applications and offers was higher than at the same point last year, but that the budget assumptions assumed no growth.
- (vi). Court discussed the SFC Financial Transaction Loan of £10m and its impact on the financial plan. Court was advised that the loan was at an interest rate of 1% calculated quarterly on the reducing balance and was repayable, over a period of 25 years. In response to concerns that this was earmarked for a project which had not yet been formally approved, Mr A. Menzies confirmed that SFC had acknowledged the interdependence of the development of the proposed Health and Wellbeing Centre and Scottish Government's funding of the proposed Heat Network Energy Centre; and in doing so had confirmed that, in the event that the funds could not be utilised, early repayment of the loan could be made at 28 days' notice, without penalty. Mr A. Menzies confirmed that the whole amount was shown as the future spending profile was not known and was dependent on further Court approval of a specific scheme and business case.
- (vii). The Vice-Chair of Court, Ms H. Dunk, raised concerns that the approach was not in line with the University's Financial Regulations and Court's Scheme of Delegation, which state that financial borrowing of any value requires the approval of Court on the recommendation of FCPC, and that Court was required to approve a business case for major capital projects. Mr A. Menzies highlighted that the funding had been offered by SFC, and it had been a time-limited opportunity as the funds had to be disbursed ahead of the end of their financial year on 31 March 2025. The Chair noted that Court had discussed this matter at its meeting on 19 February 2025 and had agreed to delegate to the Chair's Committee the approval of the

acceptance of the formal offer of a loan and had agreed to ring fence the loan proceed pending further Court approval of a specific scheme and business case. Court was advised at its April meeting that the Chair's Committee had approved the terms of, and the transaction contemplated by the Loan Documents in respect of a Financial Transactions Loan of £10m from the SFC and had authorised the Principal and Vice-Chancellor to execute the Loan Documents on Court's behalf.

**Secretary's Note:** Mr A. Menzies confirmed that the financial plan submission to the SFC would include an amendment to section 6.4.2 Health and Wellbeing Centre stating: "In the event that the Energy Centre Project does not proceed, subject to Court's consideration of the matter, we will revert to the SFC in relation to an amended Health & Wellbeing scheme, an alternative use of the funds and/or the return of part or all of the loan funding".

**Outcome:** Court approved the Operational and Financial Planning for 2025-26 to 2027-28, specifically:

1. the assumptions on which the University's plans were based.
2. the financial plan as set out in Section 4-10, including the financial envelope for the capital plan (section 6) and the requirement for business case development and FCPC approval of any major projects not already approved.

**Outcome:** Court noted that this plan would form the basis of the strategic financial plan submission to the SFC which is due at the end of June 2025.

### **118.1. International and Partnerships Strategy Report 2024-25 (Confidential)**

**CT/0625/099**

- (i). Mr A. Menzies introduced the International and Partnerships Strategy Report 2024-25, submitted as enclosure 99, on behalf of the Dean of International and Partnerships, Ms Claire MacEachen, who was unable to attend. Court was advised that the report provided an update on actions related directly to the International and Partnerships Strategy, which Court had approved in April 2023, and covered International Recruitment; Partnership working, both locally and via Transnational Education (TNE); Abertay Online and Research and Knowledge Exchange (only in relation to this strategy).
- (ii). Court was advised that the report had been considered by FCPC at its June meeting (CT/0625/105) and that the Committee had recommended it to Court for noting, subject to a minor revision which had been made. Court noted that the report contained interim figures as the academic year was not yet complete and

therefore it had been agreed an update would be provided to the FCPC at its September meeting and subsequently to Court in November. Court noted that it had been agreed by FCPC that future reports would be considered annually in the autumn to ensure they contain information for the full year. Court asked that future reports contain detailed information in relation to the position versus budget/target and it was agreed that this would be included in future reports.

**Action: Director of Finance, Infrastructure and Corporate Services to ensure that future annual International and Partnerships Strategy Reports include detailed information in relation to the position versus budget/target.**

- (iii). Court raised concerns with regards to the under-recruitment and retention issues relating to Abertay Online. Professor L. Bacon provided an update on action to address these issues.
- (iv). The Chair, on behalf of Court, extended its congratulations to staff involved with this work and in particular highlighted that that the University had been shortlisted for the Herald Education Awards for its excellence in partnership working. Court noted that this recognition highlighted the valuable experiences gained not only by the University's TNE partners but also by Abertay students, who have benefited from engaging in diverse, multinational team environments, and that this type of approach provides genuine internationalisation of the curriculum at Abertay.

**Outcome:** Court noted the International and Partnerships Strategy Report 2024-25.

### **119. 2025-2030 Strategy Implementation: Key Performance Indicators CT/0625/100**

- (i). Ms C. Summers introduced the 2025-2030 Strategy Implementation: Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), submitted as enclosure 100, highlighting that it sought feedback from Court on the proposed focus of the KPIs associated with the new Strategy. The proposed KPI set had been developed from the existing 2020-2025 KPIs but with a clearer focus on tracking the financial position, income from international partnerships and non-SFC students, and recruitment of SFC-funded students.
- (ii). Court was advised that FCPC at its June meeting had considered the proposed KPI set and had been content with this, subject to one amendment which was to split the proposed indicator on tuition fees from non-SFC students (i.e. RUK and international students) into two separate indicators. Court noted that this change was reflected in the paper submitted to Court.
- (iii). Court requested that a KPI relating to staff costs as a percentage of income be added, and for consideration of whether staff costs as a percentage of expenditure



should be included in addition to this. Court also asked that the previous KPI relating to non-SFC income as a percentage of total income be reinstated.

**Action: Vice-Principal and University Secretary to liaise with Director of Finance, Infrastructure and Corporate Services to incorporate the additional indicators requested by Court.**

- (i). Court asked for a briefing session to be set up to provide members with a better understanding of the financial indicators specifically, highlighting the importance of these for the University's financial sustainability.

**Action: Director of Finance, Infrastructure and Corporate Services to arrange a session with Court with regards to the financial reporting and the associated Key Performance Indicators.**

**Outcome:** Court approved the proposed focus of the 2030 Key Performance Indicator Set.

Secretary's note: the briefing session will take place on 17 September, prior to the Court meeting.

## **120. Governance of the Students' Association: Code of Practice**

**CT/0625/101**

- (i). Ms C. Summers introduced the Governance of the Students' Association: Code of Practice, submitted as enclosure 101, highlighting that the Code of Practice was intended to meet the requirements of The Education Act 1994 and to explain how Court discharges its responsibilities under the Act. Court was advised that while there were longstanding governance arrangements in place for the University's relationship with the Students' Association, no formal Code of Practice was currently in place. Court was advised that the draft had been discussed with the Students' Association Chief Executive and reviewed by the University's legal advisors.
- (ii). Ms Summers noted that the Code would provide a framework for the review of the Students' Association's constitution over the summer, and for the finalisation of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Association which would formalise the operational relationship with the Association as well as set out in more detail the way in which some of the specific requirements of the Act were being delivered in practice.
- (iii). Court noted that it would be asked to approve the Students' Association constitution in September and that a detailed mapping would provide assurance on how all of the specific requirements were being met. The Code of Practice may

require to be updated at that point to provide more detail and signposting information.

**Outcome:** Court approved the Code of Practice relating to the operation of the Abertay Students' Association.

**Outcome:** Court noted that it will be asked to consider and approve the Abertay Students' Association Constitution at its September meeting, at which time a mapping document would be provided to give Court assurance that all of the requirements of the Act were being met.

### **121. Risk Management Policy and Framework Review**

**CT/0625/102**

- (i). Ms C. Summers introduced the Risk Management Policy and Framework Review, submitted as enclosure 102, highlighting that the Head of Planning and Insight, Dr Hannah Coutts, had undertaken the review but was unable to attend the meeting. Court noted that minor editorial changes had been made as well as changes to reflect the evolving risk management process and that the revised policy and framework had been recommended to Court for approval by ARC at its meeting held on 27 May 2025 (CT/0625/104).

**Outcome:** Court approved the revised Risk Management Policy and Framework.

### **122. Court and Committee Calendar 2026-27**

**CT/0625/103**

- (i). Head of Governance and Deputy Secretary, Ms D Peden, introduced the Court and Committee Calendar 2026-27, submitted as enclosure 103, highlighting that any further changes would be discussed with the relevant Committee Chair and agreed by the Committee. Court was advised there were some changes proposed to the schedule of meetings of ARC and FCPC.
- (ii). Court was advised that, at its meeting held on 4 June 2025 (CT/0625/115), Senate had approved the calendar for its committees, included as Annex A for information.

**Outcome:** Court approved the Court and Committee Calendar for 2026-27.

## Committee Matters

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### 123. Audit and Risk Committee

#### 123.1. Minutes of the meeting held on 27 May 2025

**CT/0625/104**

- (i). Court was advised that the Committee had approved the Audit Planning Report for the Financial Year 2025 Audit (item 63) and Strategic Internal Audit Plan (item 64). In addition, the Committee recommended three items to Court for approval: Item 53 – Terms of Reference (CT/0625/109); Item 54 – Committee Dates 2026–27 (CT/0625/103); and Item 61 – Risk Management Policy and Framework (CT/0625/102), which were considered elsewhere on the agenda.

**Outcome:** Court noted the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 27 May 2025, submitted as enclosure 104.

### 124. Finance and Corporate Performance Committee

#### 124.1. Minutes of the meeting held on 3 June 2025

**CT/0625/105**

- (i). Court was advised that the Committee had recommended five items to Court for approval: Item 52 – Terms of Reference (CT/0625/110); Item 53 – Committee Dates 2026-27 (CT/0625/103); Item 57 – Operational and Financial Planning for 2025/26 to 2027/28 (CT/0625/098); Item 59 – 2025-2030 Strategy Implementation: Key Performance Indicators (CT/0625/100); and Item 60 – Sustainable Travel Policy (CT/0625/106). In addition, the Committee had reviewed Item 58 – International and Partnerships Strategy Report 2024-25 (CT/0625/099) prior to its submission to Court for noting.

**Outcome:** Court noted the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Corporate Performance Committee held on 3 June 2025, submitted as enclosure 105.

#### 124.2. Sustainable Travel Policy

**CT/0625/106**

- (i). Mr A. Menzies introduced the Sustainable Travel Policy, submitted as enclosure 106, highlighting that it had been updated to incorporate key operational feedback from the Lead Voices group and it now explicitly addressed safety, accessibility, and inclusion, ensuring appropriate travel arrangements for all staff, students, and associates.

**Outcome:** Court approved the revised Sustainable Travel Policy.

**125. Governance and Nominations Committee****125.1. Minutes of the meeting held on 8 May 2025****CT/0625/107**

- (i). Court was advised that the Committee had recommended the following two items to Court for approval.

**Outcome:** Court noted the minutes of the meeting of the Governance and Nominations Committee held on 8 May 2025, submitted as enclosure 107.

**125.2. Court and Committee Membership (Confidential)****CT/0625/108**

- (i). The Chair introduced the Court and Committee Membership paper, submitted as enclosure 108, highlighting that it provided a summary of the Court and Committee memberships as at 1 June 2025 and an update on the outcome of the latest recruitment exercise for a vacancy for a lay member of Court. Court considered and approved a number of recommendations from the Committee as noted below.

**Outcome:** Court approved the re-appointment of Fraser Keir from 1 July 2025 for a third and final term of three years.

**Outcome:** Court approved the re-appointment of Antony Marks from 1 July 2025 for a third and final term of three years.

**Outcome:** Court approved the re-appointment of Jim Macgregor from 1 July 2025 until 30 June 2026, with a discussion to take place in Spring 2026 regarding the extension of this appointment for a further and final two-year period.

**Outcome:** Court approved the appointment of Ms Dia Banerji to Court from 1 August 2025 for an initial term of three years.

**Outcome:** Court approved the appointment of Ms Dia Banerji to the Finance and Corporate Performance Committee from 1 August 2025.

**Outcome:** Court approved the appointment of Mr Colin Graham to Court when the next vacancy arises for an initial term of three years.

**Outcome:** Court approved the appointment of Mr Colin Graham to the People Health and Equality Committee as an external member from 1 August 2025 for an initial term of two years.

**Outcome:** Court approved the appointment of Ms Maryam Deeni to the People Health and Equality Committee as an external member from 1 August 2025 for an initial term of two years.

**125.3. Committee Terms of Reference**

- (i). Court was advised that following the Governance Assessment Internal Audit, the Committee had agreed, that Committee Terms of Reference would continue to be reviewed annually. The Committee had considered the revised Terms of Reference by correspondence and agreed to recommend them to Court for approval.

**125.3.1. Audit and Risk Committee****CT/0625/109**

- (i). Court was advised that ARC had considered its Terms of Reference at its meeting on 27 May 2025 (CT/0625/104). The Committee had been content with the proposed changes and had requested that the Chair of FCPC be added to the composition under “in attendance”.

**Outcome:** Court approved the revised Terms of Reference for the Audit and Risk Committee, submitted as enclosure 109.

**125.3.2. Finance and Corporate Performance Committee****CT/0625/110**

- (i). Court was advised that FCPC had considered its Terms of Reference at its meeting on 3 June (CT/0625/107). The Committee had been content with the proposed changes and had requested that wording relating to sustainability be added under its responsibilities.

**Outcome:** Court approved the revised Terms of Reference for the Finance and Corporate Performance Committee, submitted as enclosure 110.

**125.3.3. People, Health and Equality Committee****CT/0625/111**

- (i). Court was advised that the People, Health and Equality Committee had considered its Terms of Reference at its meeting on 20 May 2025 (CT/0625/113) and had not requested any changes. Following the recent recruitment exercise for lay members of Court (CT/0625/108), GNC had requested a change to the composition of PHEC to include additional external members. No changes would be made to the Committee’s quorum at this time.

**Outcome:** Court approved the revised Terms of Reference for the People, Health and Equality Committee, submitted as enclosure 111.

**125.3.4. Remuneration Committee****CT/0625/112**

- (i). Court was advised that the Remuneration Committee at its meeting on 1 November 2024 had agreed to move to one meeting per year and that the Terms of Reference had been updated to reflect this.

**Outcome:** Court approved the revised Terms of Reference for the Remuneration Committee, submitted as enclosure 112.

**126. People, Health and Equality Committee****126.1. Minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2025****CT/0625/113**

- (i). Court was advised that the Committee had recommended two items to Court for approval: Item 47 – Terms of Reference (CT/0625/110) and Item 48 – Committee Dates 2026–27 (CT/0625/103).

**Outcome:** Court noted the minutes of the meeting of the People, Health and Equality Committee held on 20 May 2025, submitted as enclosure 113.

**127. Remuneration Committee****127.1. Report from the meeting held on 16 May 2025 (Confidential)** **CT/0625/114**

**Outcome:** Court noted the report of the meeting of the Remuneration Committee held on 16 May 2025, submitted as enclosure 114.

**Senate Matters**

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**128. Minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2025****CT/0625/115**

- (i). Court was advised that Senate had recommended two items to Court for approval: Item 52 – Terms of Reference (enclosure CT/0625/116) and Item 60 – Senate and Committee Dates 2026-27 (enclosure CT/0625/103). In addition, Senate had approved a range of items which were highlighted on the cover paper.
- (ii). Court asked for more information on Senate’s discussions on a potential move to Block Learning at Abertay. Court was advised that with this approach students study modules sequentially throughout the academic year, rather than study three in parallel each term. Court noted that other institutions had adopted this approach and students studying via Abertay Online already followed this model. A further pilot was planned for 2025-26. Court noted that Dean of Learning and Teaching, Professor Luke Millard, was setting up a workshop to hear from external

speakers who had been both successful, and unsuccessful, in delivering block learning. The implications for teaching and learning resulting from a change in approach were recognised and Court was advised that wider consultation would be undertaken with staff before any formal proposal came forward to the Senior Management Team and Senate for consideration.

**Outcome:** Court noted the minutes of the meeting of Senate held on 4 June 2025.

### **128.1. Terms of Reference**

**CT/0625/116**

**Outcome:** Court approved the revised Terms of Reference for Senate.

### **129. Academic Matters Report**

**CT/0625/117**

- (i). Court offered its congratulations to all those involved and acknowledged the external recognition of work being undertaken at Abertay as noted in the Academic Matters Report, submitted as enclosure 117.
- (ii). Court discussed the research by Dr Lara Woods which highlighted how children's media reinforced inaccurate gender stereotypes and what the impact of the research may be. Court welcomed the opportunity to better understand how research can influence decision-making. Professor L. Bacon highlighted that the Research Excellence Framework (REF), the UK's system for assessing the excellence of research in UK higher education providers, requires submission of impact case studies.

**Outcome:** Court noted the Academic Matters Report.

## **Matters for Information**

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

**CT/0625/118**

- (i). The Chair thanked the Executive Group for its report to Court, submitted as enclosure 118. Court discussed the recent UK Supreme Court Equality Act ruling and was advised that further guidance was expected to follow from both the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Scottish Government.
- (ii). Court was advised that University had issued emails to all staff and students confirming its commitment to an inclusive and welcoming environment for all staff, students and visitors, including members of the transgender and non-binary communities, and to upholding the law – when the requirements are clear – with support and compassion. Court noted that the email confirmed the University's

continuing commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and that all staff and students should continue to feel valued and know that there is no place for discrimination or harassment at Abertay. Court noted that, in response to an Open Letter which was received on 22 May, Professor L. Bacon, Ms E. Fraser and the Director of Student Services, Mr James Nicholson, met with a group of students on 13 June 2025 to discuss their concerns.

- (iii). Court welcomed the range of external engagements being undertaken by Professor L. Bacon and colleagues. Court noted that Abertay was represented on working groups relating to the work of the University of Dundee Strategic Advisory Taskforce established by the Scottish Government. Court noted that the report from the independent investigation into the University of Dundee would be published on 19 June. It was emphasised that Court would be kept up to date with any further developments on this and any other relevant issues over the summer months.
- (iv). Court discussed the University's application to Scottish Government Heat Network Fund, which had been submitted in November 2024, and noted that, while there had been engagement with the Scottish Government on this in May, there was no further update on outcome of that application. In response to a question, Court was reminded that a procurement exercise would still need to be undertaken if the bid was successful. Court discussed the impact on the proposed Health and Wellbeing Centre if the application was not successful.

**Outcome:** Court noted the Executive Group Report to Court.

### **131. Students' Association Report to Court**

**CT/0625/119**

- (i). The Students' Association President, Ms D. Allaiouti, introduced the Students' Association Report to Court, submitted as enclosure 86, highlighting that the report provided an insight into the work that had been undertaken since the last meeting of Court. Court offered its congratulations to all those involved and recognised the work being undertaken by the Students' Association. Court was advised that the report included a reflection on the year and activities that had been undertaken with regards to office-bearers' manifestos.
- (ii). Ms D. Allaiouti thanked Court for the opportunities for her personal and professional growth during her time on Court, highlighting that it had been a challenging although enjoyable role. She expressed thanks to the Executive Group, staff and students and colleagues in the Students' Association for their support during her tenure. On behalf of Court, the Chair thanked Ms D. Allaiouti for her work as a key member of Court. Court members expressed their gratitude and



wished her well for the future. Court noted that it looked forward to working with Mr L. Webster in his second term on Court and thanked him for his contributions to date.

**Outcome:** Court noted the Students' Association Report to Court.

## Concluding Matters

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### 132. Any Other Competent Business

### Oral Report

- (i). Court was reminded that all members of Court are charity trustees. The Chair highlighted that, as a result of a change in charities legislation, the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) had announced changes in relation to the information required on charity trustees from 30 June 2025, and had provided updated guidance on disqualification criteria for both trustees and those undertaking a senior management function, which would come into effect from 31 August 2025. Court was advised that colleagues in Governance would follow up with Court members to request the required information.

[Ms C De Brito left the meeting]

**Date of Next Meeting: 17 September 2025**

**Chair: Mr David Brew**