

**UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE****UNIVERSITY COURT**

A special meeting of the University Court was held on 3 October 2011.

Present: Mr EF Sanderson (in the Chair), Principal Professor CP Downes, Professor RJ Abboud, Mr M Arnott, Emeritus Professor A Burchell, Mr R Burns, Mr D Cathcart, Mr J Elliot, Mr M Kendrick, Mr IA Kennedy (President, Students' Association), Dr LI McLellan, Dr H Marriage, Professor GJ Mires, Ms CA Potter, Dr AD Reeves, Dr AM Roger, Professor J Taylor, Mr IDM Wright.

In Attendance: University Secretary, Acting Director of Finance, Directors of Information Services, Human Resources, Strategic Planning, External Relations, and Policy, Governance & Legal Affairs and Mr R Isles.

Apologies: Dr J Lowe, Mr KA Richmond, Lord Provost Dr J Letford, Rector Dr BD Cox.

**1. CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL (SFC) REGARDING POSSIBLE MERGER WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERTAY**

The Court held a special meeting to discuss the contents of a letter to the Chairperson of Court inviting the Universities of Dundee and Abertay to meet with the SFC to consider options for merger.

The Chairperson opened the meeting by updating members on discussions he had had since receiving the letter. He then invited the Principal to report to the Court.

The Principal had spoken with the Chief Executive of the SFC, local MSPs, senior civil servants, the Cabinet Secretary for Education & Lifelong Learning as well with his counterpart at the University of Abertay in response to the letter from the SFC. In all of these discussions, he had made clear his dismay at the manner in which the contents of the letter had been leaked to the press.

The Principal provided Court members with a summary of the press coverage since the publication of the contents of the letter as well as an assessment of local reaction more generally. He also reported discussions that had taken place at the Senior Management Team.

The Principal provided an assessment of the current policy and financial context to the SFC's request, making reference to the Scottish Government's White Paper: 'Putting Learners at the Centre' as well as to the Spending Review and the Draft Scottish Budget.

The President of the Students' Association (DUSA) provided an update to members on the stance taken by DUSA as well as the President's own interactions with his counterpart at the University of Abertay. Thereafter, the Graduates' Council Assessors provided an account of the discussions at a routine meeting of the Graduates' Council Business Committee, which had been held on 29 September 2011.

The University Secretary presented a comparison of the missions of the two universities, setting out the strengths and performance of each. Court acknowledged the significant differences in the missions of the two institutions.

The Court engaged in a wide-ranging debate of the issues arising from the letter from the SFC.

- The Court decided:**
- (i) to support fully the stance taken by the University in its press release relating to the letter (**Appendix** refers);
  - (ii) to support the proposed approach to be taken by the Principal and the Secretary in their discussions with the SFC;
  - (iii) to record formally its dismay at the manner in which the University had been invited to engage in discussion and at the subsequent leaking of the contents of the letter; and
  - (iv) to await a report of the outcomes of the Principal's meeting with the SFC at its scheduled meeting on 24 October 2011.

**APPENDIX****UNIVERSITY PRESS RELEASE  
STATEMENT RE SFC LETTER  
(Minute 1)**

We received a letter from the Scottish Funding Council late yesterday (Thursday) requesting that we join them in discussions with the University of Abertay on the possibility of merger. This communication was totally unexpected and comes as a surprise to us at Dundee.

We are aware of the previous correspondence between the Funding Council and the University of Abertay. However, the University of Dundee is currently not involved in any discussions with our sister institution regarding merger.

Naturally, the contents of the Funding Council's letter have not yet been considered by the University's Senior Management Team or our governing body, the University Court. We will now take forward that process at the earliest opportunity.

In doing so, we would stress that there are significant differences between ourselves and the University of Abertay, particularly in relation to mission, scale, research intensity, international profile and governance arrangements.

We are dismayed that details of the nature of this letter were leaked to the Press before it had even been sent to the institutions involved. This is clearly unacceptable.

Dundee University is a highly successful institution and, like the rest of the sector, has a strong record of developing effective partnerships. We are more than willing to engage with like-minded institutions to enhance collaboration and efficiency. However, it is important that any discussions are driven forward by willing and autonomous partners, and where they make clear academic and financial sense.

University Press Office  
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