THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

University Court

23 February 2026

Pentland Suite, John McIntyre Conference Centre, Pollock Halls

Agenda

OPENING ITEMS

1 Minutes **A1**

To *approve* the minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2025

2 Matters Arising & Review of Action Log **A2**

To *raise* any matters arising and *review* the Action Log

3 Principal's Report **B**

To *note* a report from Peter Mathieson, Principal

4 Committee Business

- Policy & Resources Committee **C1**
- Governance & Nominations Committee **C2**
- Audit & Risk Committee: Note of workshop sessions **C3**
- Senate **C4**

KEY ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION/DECISION

5 Students' Association and Sports Union Reports

To *note* reports presented by Ash Scholz, President of the Students' Association

- Students' Association Report **D**
- Sports Union Report **E**

6 Finance and Planning Update Report **F**

To *note* a paper presented by James Gray, Chief Financial Officer

7 Responsible Investment Policy: Representations Process Update **G**

To *note* a paper presented by Kim Graham, Provost

8 Academic Staff Member Election Regulations 2026 **H**

To *note* a paper presented by Leigh Chalmers, Vice-Principal & University Secretary

ITEMS FOR NOTING OR FORMAL APPROVAL

9 Scottish Consortium for Rural Research **I**

To *approve*

10 Donations & Legacies and Alumni Relations Activity **J**

To *note*

11 Self-Evaluation Action Plan **K**

To *note*

12 Any Other Business

13 Date of Next Meeting

20 April 2026

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

University Court

1 December 2025

Raeburn Room, Old College

Minutes

Members Present:	Janet Legrand, Senior Lay Member Simon Fanshawe, Rector Rushad Abadan, Co-opted Member Katya Amott, Students' Association Vice-President Education Morag Angus, Co-opted Member Matt Bell, Senate Assessor Richard Blythe, Senatus Assessor Sandra Cummings, Co-opted Member Alastair Dunlop, Chancellor's Assessor Ruth Girardet, Co-opted Member Neil Johnston, Trade Union Professional Services Staff Member Tobias Kelly, Academic Staff Member Peter Mathieson, Principal & Vice-Chancellor Sarah McAllister, Professional Services Staff Member Douglas Millican, Co-opted Member Jock Millican, General Council Assessor Hugh Mitchell, Co-opted Member Christopher Morson, Co-opted Member Kathryn Nash, Trade Union Academic Staff Member David Ovens, General Council Assessor Ash Scholz, Students' Association President Kavi Thakrar, Co-opted Member Sarah Wolffe, General Council Assessor
Member Apologies:	Robert Aldridge, City of Edinburgh Council Assessor
In Attendance:	Leigh Chalmers, Vice-Principal & University Secretary Gale Macleod, Rector's Assessor Claire Sarafilovic, Governance Apprentice
Presenters & Observers:	David Argyle, Head of College, Medicine & Veterinary Medicine Fiona Boyd, Chief of Staff & Head of the Principal's office Lucy Evans, Associate Principal & Deputy Secretary Students Iain Gordon, Head of College, Science & Engineering Kim Graham, Provost James Gray, Chief Financial Officer

Louise Kelso, General Counsel & Director of Legal Services
Catherine Martin, Vice-Principal Corporate Services
Gavin McLachlan, Vice-Principal & Chief Information Officer, and Librarian
Sarah Prescott, Head of College, Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences
Rona Smith, Deputy Secretary, Governance and Strategic Planning
Daniel Wedgwood, Head of Court Services (clerk)

OPENING ITEMS

Opening and welcome

Simon Fanshawe, Rector, opened the meeting, noted the apologies received and welcomed members and attendees. He extended a particular welcome to Matt Bell, who was attending Court for the first time, having been elected to the position of Senate Assessor. On behalf of Court, he also thanked Claire Sarafilovic for her service as Governance Apprentice, this meeting being the last during her term in the role, the calendar year 2025.

The Rector noted recent events in which he had participated, including an event organised by the General Council involving Joanna Cherry KC and Rt Hon Jim Wallace, Baron Wallace of Tankerness, and expressed his gratitude to all involved.

1. **Minutes** **Paper A1**

It was noted that some amendments to the minutes of the meeting of 6 October 2025 had been requested in advance by a member of Court. Court provisionally approved the minutes, subject to subsequent circulation and approval of these amendments.

2. **Matters Arising & Review of Action Log** **Paper A2**

There were no matter arising.

Action Log

The Action Log was noted. There had been a minor update to the Action Log to reflect progress in the roll-out of new committee paper templates to high-level governance committees.

3. **Principal's Report** **Paper B**

Peter Mathieson, Principal & Vice-Chancellor, introduced the report and highlighted some recent developments, including the following:

- Two announcements in the UK Government budget would directly affect English universities, the implications of which were not yet clear for Scottish institutions. These were raising, over two years, caps on undergraduate tuition fee levels and the planned imposition of a levy on international student fees.
- The freezing of National Insurance payment thresholds, also announced in the UK budget, would raise the University's staff costs.
- The Tertiary Education and Training (Funding and Governance) (Scotland) Bill was progressing through Stage 2 scrutiny in the Scottish Parliament, with the

consideration of numerous proposed amendments. The University, through Universities Scotland, had made representations on the potential content of the Bill and continued to be closely engaged.

- The Scottish Funding Council had announced its conditions of grant for exceptional funding for the University of Dundee, following that institution's widely publicised financial difficulties.
- Professor Mark Parsons and colleagues had won significant new funding for AI Infrastructure, which related to the previous award to the University of the new UK national supercomputer.
- The University's Pleasance Gym had been named Education Facility of the Year at the National Fitness Awards.
- The University had won a Queen Elizabeth Prize for Education, in recognition of the Centre for Fire Safety Engineering's education, training and research.

Discussion focused on communications with staff and students. It was noted that communications with staff included a recent series of engagement meetings which had been open to all staff. It was noted that only a small percentage of staff had participated in these meetings, but also that they were part of a wider programme of communications, especially with regard to the current strategic change and cost saving initiatives, dedicated online resources and regular all-staff emails being part of this.

The opinions of staff and the means of gauging these were discussed. It was agreed that Court would receive an overview of the University's approach to internal communications. The value of focusing on core messages was emphasised. The importance of communications with students was also noted, while recognising the different concerns and needs of staff and students in this respect.

4. **Committee Business**

Policy and Resources Committee **Paper C1**

Court noted the report.

Governance and Nominations Committee **Paper C2**

Court noted the report.

Audit & Risk Committee **Paper C3**

This report was taken under item 7 (see below).

Remuneration Committee Annual Report **Paper C4**

Hugh Mitchell, Convener of Remuneration Committee, gave a brief overview of the committee's Annual Report, noting in particular the committee's analysis this year of the grade 10 population.

Senate **Paper C5**

Court noted the report. In discussion, it was noted that there remained widely-held concerns over both the conduct of Senate business, in both tone and efficiency, despite some recent improvements. It was observed that competing visions of the nature of governance activity contributed to this situation, but also that a small number of changes might bring about significant improvement. It was also noted that significant changes had already been made, in response to Senate's last effectiveness review, including the creation of Senate Business Committee to help manage Senate's meeting agendas.

KEY ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION/DECISION

5. **Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report**
[taken under item 8, below]

Paper E

6. **Risk Management Post Year-End Assurance Statement**

Catherine Martin, Vice-Principal Corporate Services, summarised the Statement, the purpose of which was to notify Court, in the context of considering the Annual Report & Accounts (see below) of any significant risks, failures of internal control, or developments on previously reported matters, since year-end 31 July 2025, and to provide reassurance that any such events had been taken into account. Court noted the matters listed in the paper.

In discussion, it was clarified that the University, rather than any supplier, was the legally responsible entity for the University website's compliance with accessibility standards. The paper noted a part of the website that had been identified as non-compliant and since adjusted to be compliant. The adoption of the relevant platform had preceded the relevant legislation in this case.

7. **2025-26 Student Intakes** **Paper F**

Rona Smith, Deputy Secretary Governance & Strategic Planning, provided an overview of student intake data. Overall, intake numbers and fee income from intakes approximately matched targeted levels, with some shortfall to budget for overseas intake, although there was variation across different parts of the University relative to local targets.

The following points were made in discussion:

- All those involved in student recruitment were commended for achieving overall strong recruitment levels in a challenging environment.
- It was noted that there was a significant number of accepted overseas applicants who had not taken up their places. It was clarified that this was in line with experiences at peer institutions and was largely attributable to specific international markets.
- It was confirmed that the University retained its strategic goal of diversifying its international student population, with the extent and pace of this diversification balanced against the importance of managing reduced demand from key markets.
- It was noted that rich analysis of patterns of demand and applicant behaviour, and contributing factors, were carried out, involving collaboration across the University. As part of this, information-sharing at sector level contributed to understanding of global trends and emerging new risks.
- It was observed that the University's current cost reduction measures could potentially affect international demand through their wider reputational impacts and that anecdotal evidence for this had been noted in the student and staff

communities. It was noted that analysis of intakes and applications data did not indicate such effects, observed movements in demand being in line with sector-level trends, and any divergence from these trends typically being positive. It was noted that the University's course offering remained wider than that of many peer institutions.

8. **Finance and Planning**

Audit & Risk Committee Report to Court [originally listed under agenda item 4] **Paper C3**

Douglas Millican, Convener of Audit & Risk Committee (ARC) introduced the report. The committee's greatest point of focus was the University's Financial Sustainability risk. The committee had sought additional information and assurance regarding current work to achieve the costs savings and strategic change that would be required in order to achieve the budget that Court had approved. It had been noted that such changes were challenging to implement in any organisation of the University's size and complexity, and that significant commitment had been shown to achieving them, but also that it had been reported that the profile of savings achieved was behind schedule, creating the risk of greater financial pressure in the next year. An ARC workshop on the Financial Sustainability risk had been held in late November and Policy & Resources Committee had held a similar event separately. ARC would continue to exercise particular scrutiny in this area, with further workshops planned in the new year.

In discussion it was noted that non-financial risks, including those connected to the University's reputation and the student experience, could have financial implications in the future. It was observed that work continued to track such risks more effectively.

Finance and Planning Update Report **Paper G1**

James Gray, Chief Financial Officer, introduced the report. In the context of falling behind savings targets in some areas, significant work was underway to develop a clear and detailed plan, with substantial clarification expected by the time of the next ARC workshop and a fully integrated programme to follow, encompassing cost reductions and risks.

The following points were made in discussion: [Note: this summary encompasses points relating to the topic of Paper G1 that were made during extended discussion of Paper C3, these papers having been taken together in the same part of the meeting.]

- The revised profile of required savings to meet the budget in Year 2 (2026-27) was dependent on maintaining targeted revenues, which were themselves subject to a degree of risk.
- A failure to achieve targeted savings in a timely fashion would exacerbate the imbalance between income and expenditure and, therefore, requiring change at a greater scale in the future.
- Large-scale change brought the risk of a deterioration in staff morale that could have long-term effects. It was noted that strategic change also held the potential to improve staff and student experiences and that current workstreams aimed to do so while also delivering savings.

- It was observed that the input of staff and student members of Court provided opportunities for Court to understand the impacts of actions to cut costs. The on-going development of these actions was a source of significant strain, especially given the possibility that compulsory redundancies might be used. Assurances were sought that efforts would be made to avoid compulsory redundancies and alternative measures considered.
- It was noted that compulsory redundancies remained a measure of last resort and that all realistic alternatives were under consideration. Any actions taken would need to have the potential to deliver savings sustainably and at sufficient scale. It was observed that the purpose of taking action to achieve financial sustainability was to avoid the need for action at a greater scale and with greater negative impact in the future.
- It was noted that the impacts on students of any cost reduction measures must be considered, including the ability to honour commitments made to students regarding educational provision.
- For staff, students, Court and wider stakeholders, clarity over intended actions, including with regard to any compulsory redundancies, if required, would help to remove the negative impacts of uncertainty in the current situation and enable a greater focus on achieving required financial outcomes and positive change. It was confirmed such clarity would be provided to Court in good time.
- In planning for future financial sustainability, a degree of agility would be crucial, given global uncertainty.

Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report **Paper D**
[originally agenda item 5]

Douglas Millican, Convener of Audit & Risk Committee (ARC) introduced the committee's Annual Report, summarising key points to provide context for consideration of the Annual Report and Accounts. The external auditor had confirmed overall assurance with the University's systems of governance and internal control. The external auditor was expected to deliver a clean audit opinion and Court was being asked to approve the University's Annual Report and Accounts subject to this being received.

Elsewhere in the Annual Report, ARC had noted some areas of limited assurance reported to it and ARC would continue to apply particular scrutiny to these areas.

In conclusion, the committee had recommended approval of the University's Annual Report and Accounts for 2024-25, while noting some matters for particular attention in the future.

Quarter One Forecast 2025-26 **Paper G2**
Draft Annual Report & Accounts 2024-25 **Paper G3**
United States Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (US GAAP) Financial Statements 2024-25 **Paper G4**

James Gray, Chief Financial Officer, introduced the Quarter One Forecast, the Annual Report and Accounts and the US GAAP Financial Statements. It was noted that a surplus of 6.5% EBITDA (as a percentage of total income) had been recorded in the accounts for

2024-25 and that this had been driven largely by income from non-core activities. Cash had reduced, while the trajectory of growth in staff costs and income showed a clear risk of producing a deficit position in the future.

Court approved, subject to receipt of a clean external audit opinion,

- the Annual Report and Accounts 2024-25;
- the US GAAP Financial Statements; and
- the 2024-25 Letter of Representation.

9. Students' Association and Sports Union Reports
Students' Association President's Report — Paper H
Sports Union Report — Paper I

Ash Scholz, President of the Students' Association, introduced the two reports, highlighting in particular improvements in the University's ranking in British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) and high levels of fundraising for charity achieved by the Sports Union. Sections of the Students' Association President's Report that reported student concerns over educational and support provision were also highlighted.

10. Student Experience Update — Paper J

Lucy Evans, Associate Principal & Deputy Secretary Students, introduced the paper, noting that the student experience remained the University's priority. It was recognised that further enhancements to the student experience were essential and it was the intention to continue to achieve these improvements irrespective of the financial context.

In discussion, examples were raised where it was felt that current actions to reduce costs had negatively impacted the University's education offering. It was noted that full academic governance arrangements remained in place and that any changes to provision were subject to appropriate scrutiny within Colleges.

Continued regular reporting to Court on the student experience was welcomed and reporting in more detail was encouraged. It was observed that many of the University's students benefitted from very good experiences and that it would be helpful for Court to hear these positive stories alongside reporting on areas for improvement.

11. Annual Court Internal Effectiveness Review — Paper K

Court noted the contents of the review and approved the review for publication.

12. Amendment to the Delegated Authority Schedule: Strategic IT Committee — Paper L

Court approved the proposed amendments to the Delegated Authority Schedule, including granting a £2m approval limit to the Strategic IT Committee, matching the limit that Knowledge Strategy Committee had previously had.

13. **Annual People Report** **Paper M**

Catherine Martin, Vice-Principal Corporate Services, introduced the report. It was noted that this year's report aimed to strike a new balance between reporting operational policy detail and conveying positive developments. This new approach was commended.

It was suggested that Court might in the future discuss the principles underlying the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies. It was noted that there would be wide consultation on planned review and update of relevant policies, for which the responsibility for approval lay with the University Executive.

ITEMS FOR NOTING OR FORMAL APPROVAL

14. **Donations & Legacies and Alumni Relations Activity** **Paper N**

Court noted the report.

15. **Laigh Year Regulations** **Paper O**

Court approved the proposed amendments to the Laigh Year Regulations, applicable to students seeking to take a year out of study to take up a position as a sabbatical officer in Edinburgh University Students' Association.

16. **Senate Election Regulations** **Paper P**

Court approved the proposed amendments to the Senate Election Regulations.

17. **Health & Safety Annual Report** **Paper Q**

Court noted the report.

18. **Chair Resolutions** **Paper R**

Court approved the Resolutions to create two professorial chairs.

19. **Any Other Business**

The Senior Lay Member, on behalf of Court, congratulated two Court members, Neil Johnston and Sarah McAllister, on their receipt of long service awards.

20. **Date of Next Meeting**

23 February 2026

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

B

University Court

23 February 2026

Principal's Report

Description of paper	A summary of important aspects of University business that have occurred since the last meeting of the University Court and are not covered in the substantive papers. Highlights of the Principal's main activities in the timeframe are also included.
Action requested	Court is asked to **note** the contents, any questions will be addressed during the Court meeting.
Appendices	N/A
Resource Implications	N/A
EDI implications	N/A
Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals	N/A
Consultation	Generally, no consultation is required as the paper is a report of recent news/activity however, where subjects covered require specialist input then consultation with the lead contact has taken place.
Freedom of Information status	Open paper

Principal's Report

Summary

1. The paper updates Court on key University activity in the period from the start of December 2025 to mid-February 2026.

2. The first part of the paper includes information on general University activity. The second part of the paper provides updates on activity that is specifically related to the four key areas of Strategy 2030: Our People, Learning, Teaching & Students, Research & Innovation, Social & Civic Responsibility.

3. Topics covered include: the latest political affairs activity, staff engagement and the Principal's key meetings.

Discussion

General

4. 2026 is undoubtedly an important year for the University of Edinburgh. One where we must turn our plans into action and successfully reshape our University to one that operates on a solid, financially sustainable, footing enabling us to do what we do best: invest in our students and staff and be a force for good locally and globally.

5. The changes that we must make will reach all parts of the University and bring many opportunities to improve what we do for our students and staff and how we do it. Those opportunities need to be maximised, which will require concerted effort from all parts of our community.

6. We do understand that the current uncertainty is difficult for everyone, particularly our staff, and we are working to provide greater clarity as soon as we possibly can. We are determined to limit the impact on our community by focussing on as quick a delivery as is possible over the next 18 months.

7. Of course, we are not operating in isolation and events, both local and global, continue at pace. There have been a number of policy announcements since Court last met including in mid-January the draft Scottish Budget for Financial Year 2026-27. With an eye on the Holyrood election on 7 May, the Budget was one prioritising "Scottish families, a stronger NHS, and investment in infrastructure". It also feels likely that for the first time in recent memory the HE sector and its future may feature in manifestos and during campaigning. That said, the only specific mention of universities during the Finance Secretary's speech was a reference to the £20m for the University of Dundee (within the existing £62m commitment). The overall outcome for the university sector was a combined increase in resource and capital funding of over £55 million which is equivalent to a 4.8% uplift on last year. The resource budget is up by 3.2%, which is a real-terms increase of less than 1% so that whilst welcome, this does little to repair the erosion of the previous decade or so in real terms and barely begins to address the sustained funding issues endemic in Scotland's universities. It does now seem clear that serious consideration of how universities are funded is underway. The 17 December launch of the joint Future Framework with Universities Scotland and the

Scottish Government with input from the other political parties is a welcome development, particularly as the first published output (quantification of the scale of the funding gap) is expected prior to the election.

8. Universities Scotland have also just launched their manifesto for the election, calling on all parties to support universities through new policies and funding approaches and reiterated the need to back the Funding Framework activity.

9. I have taken the opportunity to record two discussion-based interviews aimed at giving an open explanation of the difficult financial issues facing the sector and why the University of Edinburgh is taking the current, pre-emptive, course of action. One interview was with the BBC Scotland Podcast "Scotcast" and the other with two student journalists from the Student Newspaper. The interviews covered different perspectives and were part of a co-ordinated strategy that considers external communication alongside our internally focussed activity.

10. Looking further afield, we were very pleased that the UK Government confirmed that the UK will re-join the Erasmus+ programme (the European Union Student Exchange Programme) from January 2027. Although this is only for the final year of the current programme, without it we would not have been able to re-join for three years, i.e. until after the next Framework Programme (FP10) has been fully agreed and funded. We fervently hope that the UK will associate to all aspects of FP10, and do so rapidly to avoid the damaging delays that have so seriously impacted UK universities in recent years. Prior to Brexit, Edinburgh was one of the UKs biggest participants in Erasmus resulting in wide ranging opportunities for our students. We are currently assessing the exact nature of our reengagement as we submit our application in March.

11. For the current cycle of student recruitment, we are closely monitoring demand, as evidenced through the number of applications we've received, in comparison to the same point in previous cycles. Where we have the data, we are also monitoring against our peers. We have significantly enhanced our speed of offer-making. Whilst many metrics are ahead at an aggregate level, there remain a number of risks, noting variability by subject and volatility in recent cycles. We will keep Court updated as the 2026 entry cycle progresses. Further detail is provided in Paper F.

12. There is an emerging situation with regard to the UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) approach to the management of their funding schemes. This has developed following the publication of the UKRI budget in December and a statement regarding the greater alignment of UKRI investment with the UK Government's Industrial Strategy. This has meant that three of the Research Councils, Medical Research Council, Biotechnology & Biological Sciences Research Council and Engineering & Physical Sciences Research Council have implemented temporary measures and paused some of their funding schemes. There are serious concerns about the impact of these 'pauses' on early-career researchers. The situation at the Science & Technologies Facilities Council is one of greater financial pressure which is likely to result in more significant changes to levels of funding. We are actively monitoring and seeking to influence the situation

and have written to all of our research community to update and provide reassurance where possible.

13. I was delighted that the Chancellor, HRH The Princess Royal, was able to host our annual Chancellor's Dinner at the Palace of Holyrood House where our four 2025 Chancellor's Award winners received their prizes: Research - Professor Stuart Forbes; Rising Star - Dr. Sally Shaw; Teaching - Professor Judy Robertson; and Outstanding Contribution - Professor Michael Shipston.

14. Prof Tom Gillingwater, Head of Anatomy, Malcolm MacCallum, Anatomical Museum Curator, and I welcomed a delegation from the Muscogee (Creek) Nation for a formal repatriation ceremony to return eight skulls, remains that belong to them and their neighbouring tribe the Chickasaw Nation. They were part of the Edinburgh Phrenological Society's Museum collection that came to the Anatomy Department in the 1800s. We believe this is the first international repatriation to a Native American Nation.

    Related Events

    - Welcomed attendees to a morning of events celebrating ten years of the University of Edinburgh Global Compassion and Empathy Initiative.
    - Hosted a half day visit from Vivien Stern, Chief Executive of Universities UK, and several of her colleagues to the University, with sessions including on the next generation supercomputer and on the broader economic impacts of the University, finishing with a student roundtable involving eight student representatives.
    - Provided opening remarks at the General Council's Christmas reception.
    - Participated in several Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Board meetings.
    - Hosted a Universities Scotland Member visit to the Edinburgh Futures Institute.
    - Hosted a Universities Scotland Main Committee meeting and SFC Liaison meeting. Prior to the start, the group were joined by Ben Macpherson MSP, Minister for Higher and Further Education, for an hour-long discussion.
    - Delighted to participate in the Edinburgh Medical School 300 launch event.
    - Participated in a Russell Group Board meeting and was a member of the panel appointing the next Russell Group Chief Executive.
    - Gave my annual report to the General Council half-yearly meeting.
    - Participated in an interview on the BBC Radio 4 Today programme, in my capacity as Universities UK and Russell Group Lead for International Security in follow-up to the closed briefing meeting with the leadership of MI5 and the National Cyber Security Centre, at which I chaired a panel.
    - Participated in an Advance UK Executive Leaders Roundtable.
    - Chaired a UUK/Russell Group Security Risks in Higher Education meeting.
    - Participated in a Universities Superannuation Scheme Regional Dinner, hosted in Old College.
    - Participated in a Board meeting of the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland.
    - Participated in the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh President's Quinquennial Dinner.

Strategy 2030 Themes

Our People

15. Conversations with staff continue across the University with members of the senior team and their leadership teams hosting Q&A style events with people from their respective directorates including two "In Conversation" sessions with University Secretary Group Directors and a College of Science and Engineering Town Hall taking place since the start of the year.

16. Following University and College Union Edinburgh's (UCUE) vote to accept the offer made by the University in December, discussions have continued with Union colleagues on how we implement and the need for confidentiality during early engagement on the programmes of change. There have been a number of meetings since our return in January with some difficult steps to navigate, particularly with regard to redundancy procedures and expectations on how meaningful consultation is conducted.

17. On 6 February UCUE sent a failure to agree letter – the start of a process of balloting for a new mandate for industrial action, followed by a formal notification of a dispute received on 16 February. Following the recent change to trade union related legislation, any successful ballot opening after 18 February will have a mandate for 12 months, rather than previous 6 months. We remain in discussion with UCUE over the points raised in their letters.

18. Unison and Unite currently remain engaged and committed to continue discussions with the aim of avoiding job losses and identifying improvements to workload and job security.

Related events:

- Gave my annual report to the General Council half-yearly meeting.
- Continued discussions with UCU Edinburgh representatives on various staffing matters.
- Participated as a panel member in the recruitment process for the next Senior Lay Member.
- Received an update from the Team at GENDER.ED, the University's interdisciplinary hub for gender and sexuality studies.

Learning, Teaching and Students

19. Many of you have seen through social media and in the press, that Teviot Row House will reopen for our students in March 2026., please see the latest video about the Teviot Re-Opening. This has been a collaborative effort with EUSA as part of our ongoing drive to enhance students' sense of community and place and demonstrates our investment in our student experience. We are pleased with the results (for further details about the changes we have made, see: Edinburgh University Students' Association).

20. The year 2026 marks 300 years of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Edinburgh. Edinburgh Medical School, have launched a year-long programme of events and activities; to reflect on where our past has led us and chart a course towards a more equitable future, celebrating the people who will take us there.

21. The launch of this programme included a new commemorative tartan that represents Edinburgh Medical School and was unveiled during the exhibition launch, chosen from a student competition which was open to all art and design students at Edinburgh College of Art. Plus a collection of poetry including an exclusive poem written by Michael Pederson and competition winning poems by our medical students. We hope that you will join us in attending events during the year: Events | 300 years of medicine | College of Medicine and Vet Medicine.

22. January saw the arrival of hundreds of new students arriving for study at the University, primarily for doctoral study and those joining as part of our study abroad offer. We hosed a series of welcome activities, including EUSA and EUSU's Give It a Go Week, which allows new and current students to experience new activities offered by our hundreds of clubs and societies.

23. As reported in detail at the last Court meeting, our Learning and Teaching Workstream is overseeing a programme of work as part of our change programme. Activities under this workstream include significant changes underway for curriculum development, timetabling, course selection, boards of examiners, market insights and scoping plans for a new student record system. All activities are prioritised as enabling direct cost savings, as dependencies for other projects such as Academic Size and Shape and Student Administration Review, and critically, to meet our strategic intentions set out in the Learning and Teaching Strategy to improve student experience.

24. Our Student Counselling Service British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy Service Accreditation has been renewed until January 2031. The Assessment findings summary noted that we had made a high-quality submission with comprehensive responses and clear referencing to relevant evidence with all criteria are robustly met.

Related events:

- Participated in a meeting of the Academic Strategy Group with the majority of our Heads of School, discussion focussed on our Research & Innovation and Research Excellence Framework (REF) strategy and the Academic Size and Shape programme.
- Regular meetings with the EUSA President and Sabbatical Officers.
- Gave my annual lecture on the importance of proteinuria to MBChB medical students.

Research and Innovation

25. Launch of the new Research Cultures Action Plan 2026-28; our second iteration of this plan was approved by Research Strategy Group in November 2025, restating our commitment to foster an environment where research, researchers, and those who

support them can thrive. The Plan builds on our 2023-25 Action Plan to continue to improve our research cultures in line with our values, and details action in four areas across our whole research community: Recognition & Career Development, Engagement & Good Practice, Open & Responsible Research, and Data & Evaluation. More information here: Research Cultures Action Plan | Research Cultures | The University of Edinburgh

26. The Edinburgh Research Office Research Strategy Team has recently published an updated version of the "What Does It Mean for Me? Guide to the Research and Innovation Strategy 2030." This guide takes each of the 39 strategic priorities designed to enhance the research environment and foster world-class research and innovation and explains what their implementation means for staff and students. The guide can also be used as a resource for research leaders and professional staff involved in developing and implementing local research plans and strategies, as well as any member of the University community who wishes to gain a holistic understanding of how the R&I Strategy is being implemented. The Guide is available here: R&I Strategy SharePoint

27. Research Excellence Framework (REF) preparations: on 10 December 2025 Research England pressed 'play' after their three month 'pause' to provide greater clarity, particularly around the Strategy, People and Research Environment component of the assessment. On 27 and 28 January, respectively, we held a session with the Academic Strategy Group and a workshop with all our unit of assessment leads, to share best practice and to identify where there are concerns which we can respond to. This is ahead of a RAG exercise for all our units of assessment.

28. Scotland Beyond Net Zero (SBNZ), a coalition hosted at the University of Edinburgh which unites Scotland's universities in advancing climate and sustainability research, has developed a toolkit to help researchers articulate their contributions to sustainability and enhance their proposals to funders. The SBNZ toolkit, which is available on the SBNZ website, aims to complement and add to the delivery of the Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice by helping researchers to identify the different ways their research can be applied to sustainability challenges and to clearly explain the value and impact of their work. This aligns with the priorities of many funders, who are increasingly interested in supporting cross-disciplinary work focused on climate and sustainability challenges.

29. European Research Council (ERC) Consolidator Grants success: the University has won five awards in the latest round of Horizon's ERC 2025 Consolidator Grants. The competitive grants enable outstanding researchers to develop ambitious projects, build or strengthen their research teams, and develop their expertise. The highly regarded awards champion ground-breaking and ambitious research proposals across all disciplines within the EU and associated countries.

30. Other Research news:

- Six Edinburgh academics have been recognised for their mathematics expertise by a prestigious new national body. They are among a group of inaugural Fellows appointed to the Academy for the Mathematical Sciences. The new academy aims to bring together leading mathematicians across academia, business, industry and government to help solve some of the UK's biggest challenges. More information here: Maths experts join prestigious new academy | News | The University of Edinburgh
- Spinout Carbogenics has successfully closed a $3 million investment and grant funding round, positioning the firm for accelerated growth and international expansion. The funding will support the development of its breakthrough carbon removal technology, CreChar®, a biochar designed to transform biomass waste into a sustainable, carbon-negative solution, particularly within the biogas Industry. More information here: https://edinburgh-innovations.ed.ac.uk/news/3m-for-bio-carbon-spinout-carbogenics
- Four University of Edinburgh staff and student companies have been announced as finalists in Scotland's Life Sciences Awards 2026. The awards celebrate the leading players in Scotland's buoyant life sciences industry and recognise those who have contributed most to the sector in the last year. Nominees are: Roslin Technologies, Wobble Genomics, Cancan Diagnostics, and Touchlab. More information here: https://edinburgh-innovations.ed.ac.uk/news/four-finalists-at-scotlands-life-sciences-awards-2026

Related events

- Co-led a workshop on 'Elements of an institutional risk management programme for research security' at the Strengthening Research Security and Protecting Innovation in Europe's Academic and Research Institutions event held at the Hague, organised by the State Department of the US Government.

Social and Civic Responsibility

31. In January, The University published its first Investing for good: The University of Edinburgh's Social Investment Fund report, an example of a pioneering investment approach for delivering social impact in the UK HE sector. Since 2017, the University has been investing in socially positive causes, helping to improve lives across Edinburgh, Scotland and the UK through investment. Our dedicated £8 million fund remains the largest of its kind among UK universities, and has supported housing schemes for vulnerable adults, community-owned renewables projects and start-ups seeking to combat poverty and inequality.

32. In late 2025, the Data Driven Innovation Programme (DDI) won the Collaborative Initiative of the Year award at the Institute of Economic Development Annual Awards. Judges described the DDI initiative as a flagship model of collaborative economic development, delivering innovation, skills, and infrastructure at scale, and said it is a benchmark for data-led transformation.

In February, the DDI Annual Report was published, with case studies from the six hubs and the latest KPIs, including:

- The programme has exceeded its course target by 16%, meaning that the full end-of-programme Talent target has been achieved by year 8 of the planned 15 years. In the 24/25 academic year, we saw around 37,000 completions – a 17% increase from 23/24.
- In the reporting period (academic year 24/25) we delivered £187 million in research activity – an 18% increase compared with 23/24. We have delivered £744 million worth of activity in total, which represents 81% of our total research target for the full 15-year period of the Deal.
- We supported 89 early-stage data-centric companies, surpassing our unique company end-of-programme target by 51%. We have exceeded our follow-on funding target by over 700%, with DDI companies receiving £134 million funding in 2024/25 alone.

33. We also published our final public report on the University's Community Plan 2020-2025. This report summarises the breadth of progress made since the start of this Community Plan in November 2020, as well as that made in its fifth and final year (from November 2024 to October 2025): https://local.ed.ac.uk/our-community-plan/community-plan-progress-reports/final-2020-25-report

Political and civic engagement:

- In late 2025, we welcomed Artificial Intelligence (AI) Minister, Kanishka Narayan MP to the Bayes Centre to discuss the University's leadership in AI research and ethics.
- The University hosted the First Minister as he delivered a speech on world events to an invited audience at McEwan Hall. The same week, Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar MSP and deputy leader Jackie Baillie MSP visited the Usher Institute. We can expect more political visits in the run-up to the Scottish Parliamentary elections in May 2026.
- In mid-February, we welcomed local Edinburgh MPs to the Advanced Computing Facility, the host of the national supercomputer, to discuss the new investment in supercomputing by the UK Government, and what that means for the University, city and the nation.

Related events political and civic engagement:

- Participated in the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal Annual Conversation, involving UK and Scottish Governments, and also a Joint Committee meeting. Also chaired a meeting of the HE/FE Strategy Group.
- Met with the new Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Glasgow, Andy Schofield.
- Met with Chris van der Kuyl, Chairman 4J Studios.
- Met with Joe Griffin, Permanent Secretary, Scottish Government.
- Participated in the British Private Equity & Venture Capital Association Investment Forum, followed by a reception given by HM The King at the Palace of Holyroodhouse, with the Rt Hon John Swinney MSP, First Minister of Scotland.

- Participated in a meeting of the Newbattle Abbey College Trust.
- Participated in a meeting of the Life Sciences Scotland Industry Leadership Group.
- Welcomed the First Minister of Scotland, the Rt Hon John Swinney MSP to the University ahead of his speech on World Events held in the McEwan Hall.
- Participated in a meeting of the City of Edinburgh Council's Edinburgh 900 Working Group.
- Attended the memorial service for Lord Campbell of Pittenweem.

Related events global:

- Participated in a meeting in Old College to discuss opportunities with Mr Siddharth Malik, Consul General, Consulate General of India, and Mr Azad Singh, Consul, Consulate General of India. I also attended the 77th Republic Day of India Reception, hosted by Consul General in the City Chambers.
- Participated online in an extraordinary meeting of the Una Europa General Assembly.
- Chaired a panel on mitigating sector risks at the Vice-Chancellor event on Foreign Interference, organised by the Department for Education.
- Joined the 13th annual Chinese Burns Supper and China-Scotland Business Awards event, hosted by the China-Britain Business Council in Edinburgh.

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

C1

University Court

23 February 2026

Policy & Resources Committee Report

Committee name	Policy & Resources Committee
Date of committee meeting	2 February 2026
Action requested	Court is asked to **note** key points from the meeting and to **approve** the transfer of land from the University to Scottish Power Energy Network. Other recommendations to Court are dealt with elsewhere in the agenda of the present meeting.
Freedom of Information status	Closed paper. Minutes of PRC meetings are published at https://governance-strategic-planning.ed.ac.uk/governance/university-committees/court-committees/policy-and-resources-committee/minutes

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

C2

University Court

23 February 2026

Governance & Nominations Committee Report

Committee name	Governance & Nominations Committee
Date of committee meeting	5-12 December 2025: approval granted by correspondence 26 January 2026: Governance & Nominations Committee meeting
Action requested	Court is asked to **note** recent decisions of Governance & Nominations Committee and to **approve** appointments as requested.
Freedom of Information status	Closed paper. The membership of Court and its committees is published on the University's website.

Governance & Nominations Committee Report

Key points

Court and Committee Memberships

1. In December 2025, Governance & Nominations Committee (GNC) approved the appointment of Tony Povoas as an external member of Estates Committee, for a three-year term of office in the first instance, with effect from 1 January 2026.

2. GNC considered an overview of Court and relevant committee positions and noted that:

    - David Ingram, Professor of Fluid Dynamics in the School of Engineering, had been elected as Senate Assessor, to take up the position on 1 August 2026, following a programme of induction;
    - election regulations relating to the Elected Academic Staff Member of Court position would be put before Court as the first stage in the relevant election process, as this election was due before the end of the academic year;
    - recruitment to the external member positions of Estates Committee continued, following the successful recruitment of a member with digital estate expertise; and
    - the majority of remaining decisions regarding memberships would be made at the May meeting of GNC.

3. GNC recommended that Court approve the re-appointment of Douglas Millican as a member of Court for a term of four years, from 1 August 2026 to 31 July 2030.

4. GNC recommended that Court approve the re-appointment of David Argyle as a Curator of Patronage, from 1 April 2026 to 31 July 2027 (to match the end of his current term as Head of College). The Curators of Patronage formally appoint recommended candidates to a small number of long established professorial chairs, as well as holding a formal right of nomination to the office of Principal (via a recommendation from a Selection Panel and onward submission to Court for approval). Four of the seven Curators are appointed by the University Court and the remaining three by the City Council. They normally hold three-year terms of office, which are renewable. The three Heads of College are currently Court-appointed Curators of Patronage, along with the Senior Lay Member.

Communications by committees: review of ToRs and existing practice

5. During the November meeting of GNC, members had asked that committee terms of reference (ToRs) be reviewed, with particular attention to the possibility of communications issuing directly from committees without Court's involvement. This review had been carried out and it had been confirmed that no committee ToRs made reference to independent communications.

Paragraph 6: closed section

Committee Effectiveness Reviews

7. GNC received a proposal to introduce regular self-review for all committees of Court, noting that this was associated with previous recommendations made by Internal Audit when reviewing individual committees.

8. The following points were made in discussion:

- It would be desirable to tailor any process to different committees, given the different remits, compositions and governance roles of the committees.
- Other things being equal, Court and its standing committees might be subject to more thorough review processes than the thematic committees that report to them.
- While accountability within the governance hierarchy was important, there should also be a degree of independence in assessing the output of review processes.
- Therefore, it might be appropriate for Court to delegate the receipt and review of all committee self-reviews to GNC, as the body that standardly considered governance matters on behalf of Court.
- It might be helpful for review processes to include elicitation of views about the relevant committee from other members of Court.
- It was agreed that all the standing committees and thematic committees of Court should carry out such reviews.
- Holding such reviews annually would likely be overly burdensome and would also allow too little time for changes to bed in and be meaningfully assessed. It was suggested that a review process every two years might be appropriate for most committees and that the cycle of reviews should be staggered across different committees.
- A mix of 'fixed-choice' and 'open' questions would generally be desirable in order to balance consistency and comparability with richness of information. Within this, adequate scope for unconstrained comment should be ensured.

9. GNC agreed to the presentation to a future meeting of Court of proposals for a regular committee self-review process, on the basis of these observations.

Tertiary Education and Training Bill

10. GNC noted that the Tertiary Education and Training (Funding and Governance) (Scotland) Bill had recently been passed by the Scottish Parliament. While having few direct impacts on the University, this would introduce a number of changes in the higher education governance landscape, including the granting of certain additional powers to the Scottish Funding Council.

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C3

University Court

23 February 2026

Audit and Risk Committee Report

Committee name	Audit and Risk Committee
Date of committee meeting	5 February 2026
Action requested (if any)	Court is asked to **note** the key points from the meeting
Freedom of Information status	Closed paper

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C4

University Court

23 February 2026

Senate Report to Court

Description of paper	This report informs Court of the confirmed minutes from the Senate meeting held 1 October 2025 and provides a summary of Senate business undertaken at the following meetings of Senate: • The e-Senate meeting held 5-19 November, including the confirmed e-Senate report • The Ordinary meeting held 10 December 2025.
Action requested	Court is asked to **note** the confirmed minutes of the Senate meeting held 1 October 2025 and the confirmed e-Senate report of 5-19 November 2025. Court is asked to **note** the summary of Senate business from the 10 December 2025 meeting.
Appendices	Senate minutes are available on the University website
Resource Implications	Senate is responsible for considering the resource implications of its decisions during the course of its business.
EDI implications	Senate is responsible for considering the EDI implications of its decisions during the course of its business.
Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals	N/A
Consultation	This paper has been reviewed by the Academic Registrar.
Freedom of Information status	Open paper

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D

University Court

23 February 2026

Students' Association President's Report

Description of paper	This paper is to note developments at Edinburgh University Students' Association since the last Court meeting and to provide an update on current work and initiatives.
Action requested	Court is asked to **note** the report and **consider** its contents as supporting other initiatives and projects designed to improve student satisfaction and enhance the student experience.
Resource Implications	This is a regular update report, there are no resource implications outlined.
EDI implications	N/A
Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals	N/A
Consultation	N/A
Freedom of Information status	This paper is open, except for financial details and the details of ongoing estates project.

Students' Association President's Report

Summary

1. This paper includes:

- key areas of current sabbatical work, including on free breakfast clubs, new spaces in the university, policy reviews, and the financial situation of the university; and
- organisational activity, strategy and finance, noting the imminent re-opening of Teviot Row House, and the organisation's current work in preparation for a new Strategic Plan and our new financial year.

Discussion

2. There has been significant activity within the Students' Association over the past few months. As outlined below, we have been developing a new Strategic Plan that will guide our work over the next five years, with a focus on students and how we improve students' experience at university.

3. The development of this strategy has been a valuable process for the Sabbatical Officer team, offering important insights into setting strategic priorities and defining measurable outcomes. Alongside the ongoing Democracy Review and forthcoming governance updates, this Strategic Plan will support the Students' Association in remaining accountable, transparent, and responsive to the needs of our members.

4. The updates that follow provide an overview of our recent work. We have been actively engaging with student concerns regarding the University's financial position, especially considering the information presented by UCU colleagues to the Scottish Parliament's Education, Children and Young People Committee. As restructuring work begins within the colleges, it is a paramount concern for the Students' Association that student perspectives are meaningfully included and acted upon throughout these processes.

5. We share a collective ambition for a university that is prepared for the future, that develops academic provision which equips students with skills and knowledge in areas such as artificial intelligence, financial literacy, and climate change. It is our strong view that such developments should be co-created with students, to ensure that the University continues to offer an outstanding academic and developmental experience in the years ahead.

Key Areas of Recent Work

<u>Student Voice</u>

6. At our January Student Council meeting, we welcomed colleagues from the university working on the **Cohort Lead system**. Discussions revealed that there are numerous inconsistencies across Schools and Colleges in the support and community building that Cohort Leads offer, and VP Education Katya is picking up this feedback to work on best practices.

7. Together with the Student Voice team at the university, I am currently planning the **Learning and Teaching conference** this summer, in which Student Voice will be the focus. I am furthermore collating contributions from our School Representatives about instances in their departments when student feedback was acted upon in a positive way, to share best practices across the university and close the feedback loop.

8. As part of a Scotland-wide campaign, VP Community Akrit is working on encouraging **student voter turnout** in the upcoming Scottish Elections. Furthermore, the university has formed a new group to look over its support for commuter students and Akrit has ensured that our Commuter Students Representative is invited to the group.

9. Another big issue for me has been divestment. December saw the second meeting on the **Responsible Investment Advisory Group**, where I have continued to advocate for more urgency and transparency in the process. I have also collated more information for students on the work of the group on the Students' Association website, and I am engaging with the University's Communications and Sustainability departments to publish more proactive updates to students.

10. Nationally, I have been involved in the Student Reference Group of the **CUC Code of Governance review**. This will be of particular interest to Court members, as the Code sets out practices to deliver the highest standards of governance across Higher Education institutions.

<u>Student Life Affordability</u>

11. VP Activities John has successfully launched a **full breakfast club delivery** for all schools in the College of Science and Engineering. They are working with Deans at other Colleges and student reps at all schools in rolling out the remaining provision.

12. VP Community Akrit and I have been involved in the **student accommodation rent** setting process. We advocated heavily for not increasing the rent or staying in line with inflation and led a "Freeze Student Rents" Campaign. However, the rent sits now at an increase of 6.5%, after 7% last year and 8% the year before, and we are concerned that student accommodation is increasingly unaffordable for our students.

13. In December, VP Education Katya co-hosted a **Save Our Scottish Education** strategy session with the President of Union Affairs at St Andrews' Students' Union and the NUS Scotland President. This session brought together Sabbatical Officers from across Scotland and made decisions on which student representatives to put forward for a new tertiary education steering group, organised by the Minister for Higher and Further Education, Ben Macpherson MSP.

14. John is also continuing to deliver the **Blether Together Programme**, which seeks to create reliable, student led, and low-cost opportunities for community building. They are also supporting in the development of the Teviot Wellbeing programme.

Processes, Spaces, Policies

15. VP Community Akrit is advancing the development of the **Dharmic Prayer Room**, collaborating with the Hindu, Sikh, and Buddhism Societies. Simultaneously, he continues efforts to bring the Green Hub to life, with a renewed vision and strategy for its opening.

16. VP Welfare Syjil has made progress on an **Online Training Hub** for students. The project is currently with the University's Information Services Group (ISG) as they scope out the amount of training modules that the platform would need to accommodate and potential costings. This would transform the availability of training for students, from Suicide Awareness to Data Protection.

17. Furthermore, **Tackling Gender-Based Violence** (GBV), Syjil has launched the first iteration of the Survivors' and Solidarity Hub website! This semester's aim is to grow the website to feature more community elements, alongside the beginnings of a review of the university's Student Code of Conduct.

Give it a Go Week

18. Semester two began with Give it a Go week – our key mid-year activity to provide opportunities for existing students to reconnect, and for new visiting students to engage with student activities. Potterrow hosted a Cultural fair (400+ attendees), Activities Fair (1400 attendees) Volunteering Fair (290 attendees) and Vintage Fair. We ran 10 student-led See the City tours over the first weekend, and societies hosted their own welcome/beginners' events as part of the programme. We also kicked off the first of our weekly programme of Blether Together events, bringing students together informally in our Community Lounge over a shared theme, discussion topic or group activity.

Student Elections 2026

19. These elections include circa 40 roles, including the 5 full time sabbatical officer positions. Our elections resources online were revised and ready prior to Christmas to those thinking particularly about sabbatical roles early on. We are now promoting the elections and engaging with interested students prior to the deadline for nominations on 11th February. Campaigning begins from 25th February, with voting taking place from 2nd – 5th March and results announced on Friday 6th March.

Teviot re-opening update

20. We are preparing for the re-opening of Teviot in March. Student-facing and public communications have now been shared and generated some strong news interest and engagement from current students and alumni. This is a significant milestone in the Association's development, and all teams are working intensively to deliver a successful set of remobilisation projects now that the building has been handed over from the contractors. This includes making c £700k of our own investment into the space during this period, including kitchen fitouts, AV, till installations, furnishings some remaining decor and repairs to out-of-scope areas, and some hard landscaping of the exterior areas. Whilst we have been able to plan ahead of time, this still represents what for us would have been c 3 years' worth of capital projects being

delivered in around 2 months. At the same time, recruitment, training, and standard operating procedures for all spaces are also being finalised. We have new layouts and plans for Festival operations. A challenge remains the opening being at the start of a typically quieter time of year on campus for trading activity, and our Business Development team are working hard to maximise opportunity for events business from March onwards. We have secured activity related to the 300th Anniversary of the Medical School, alongside working to welcome additional graduation events business back to Teviot.

Paragraphs 21-24: closed section

Strategic Plan

25. We have been developing our next Strategic Plan to 2031, from 1 April 2026 and this will be finalised over the next couple of months. Informed by a wide variety of internal and external research and insight and developed with external support from strategic consultancy agency Thinking Out Louder our new plan will enable focus on key areas for our members.

26. The plan also articulates some key strategic investment areas to build capacity internally through areas such as our people, resources, good governance, strong partnerships, student insight and digital delivery.

27. We have also been advancing some review work in parallel with the planning process, to set some direction and build readiness for advancing some key elements:

Democracy Review

28. Supported by Coole Insight, and with some financial support from the University, our Democracy Review has focussed on developing plans to update and transform student voice activity supported by the Association, to build broader student activity with this core function. This builds on themes reflected in our annual members' survey and the review will deliver a report and set of recommendations to strengthen channels of feedback and representation over both the short and longer term.

Annual Members Survey

29. Our Annual Members' Survey ran for 3 weeks in November, following the university's Student Life Survey, and enables us to gather feedback on our services and activities, measure satisfaction, and track progress in relation to key organisational priorities. This year over 3,300 students completed the survey (6.7% response rate) which was a reduction on previous years, but reflects the shorter window available from the University.

- 73% of respondents are satisfied with their Students' Association overall (+4 since 2021)
- 70% feel we contribute positively to their experience at university (+6 since 2021)
- 54% feel we effectively represent them (+7 since 2021)
- 60% feel we represent their academic interests (+8 since 2021)

- Satisfaction with individual Association activities and services is high, including societies, the Advice Place, Representation, bars/catering, and events, ranging from 84 – 94% across our full range of activities and facilities.

30. Students were asked to suggest what the Association should prioritise campaigning on. The top 5 topics were: Cost of Living, Teaching and Learning, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Student Support and University Facilities, and Housing/Accommodation. When given the opportunity to suggest other topics, some students mentioned lobbying the University to ensure support for protests and activism, and on topics such as divestment and action around Israel/Palestine.

31. The full summary will be published on the University's Insights Hub in due course.

Risk Management

32. Financial risks are highlighted in the report.

Next steps/implications

33. We would welcome feedback from Court in relation to any of the issues outlined.

E

University Court

23 February 2026

Edinburgh University Sports Union Report

Description of paper	This paper is to note developments at Edinburgh University Sports Union (EUSU) since the last Court meeting, providing updates on current work and strategic process.
Action requested	Court is asked to **note** the impact that University Sport has on the student experience and sense of belonging as detailed in this report.
Appendices	N/A
Resource Implications	N/A
EDI implications	N/A
Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals	This paper contributes to the following SDGs; a. 3 – Good Health and Wellbeing. All the work we do at EUSU is focussed on enhancing the health and wellbeing of our university community. b. 4 – Quality Education. We believe our student/volunteer development efforts contribute to a more complete and expanded education for students.
Consultation	This paper sought consultation from Scott Ball (Sports Coordinator-Competitions) and Mark Munro (Director of Sport and Active Health).
Freedom of Information status	Open Paper

Edinburgh University Sports Union Report

Summary

- Semester Two has seen the Sports Union continue to flourish with a busy calendar of events, competitions and projects ongoing as always. The Sports Ball was the annual highlight that it always is and the Sports Union membership continues to grow, especially in the Intramural space.
- Edinburgh Sport is delighted to have researched its connection with academic attainment with results displaying that there is a statistically significant positive difference between sport engaged students and the wider student population in the proportion achieving a high degree classification (defined as a 2:1 or a first).

Background

1. The January Welcome for the Sports Union went smoothly and successfully, with continued high levels of participation and engagement. EUSU is currently retaining its fifth-place position in the BUCS table, displaying that we are continuing to thrive competitively, as well as an increased number of Intramural members taking part in our recreational offering. The on campus and online offering of EUSU continues to grow exponentially. This paper outlines the initiatives, priorities, and strategic direction of the Sports Union.

Discussion

Student Participation and Engagement

2. Semester two has attracted further student engagement within our Club and Intramural offerings. We are proud to report another year of increased Intramural participants with 2134 members, alongside a thriving club membership of 7888, illustrating that we have a touchpoint with many of the student population. In terms of gym visits, the Pleasance has been attracting 4700 visits a day throughout January displaying the student drive to get active at the start of this new year.

3. At the time of writing, we are in week four of Semester Two, with plenty of BUCS and Intramural fixtures being completed. Looking ahead the annual BUCS Nationals competition begins on the 13 February with 111 athletes set to represent the University across six sports. This always provides a highlight of the sporting calendar in which we hope to bring back medal success. We are currently maintaining our fifth-place position in the BUCS table and our 1st place position in the Scottish Student Sport table.

4. The Main Event series highlighting a focus fixture every Wednesday to increase the fan zone environment at the University has had a huge impact so far this year. 4 February culminated in a last-minute goal win for Women's Hockey 1s versus St Andrews, with a half time challenge enabling students to potentially win £1000 bringing the student community together with an electric atmosphere.

5. The Coaching and Volunteering Academy continues to educate our students with focus on the upcoming Learning and Development Week and wellbeing forums focusing on performance and student wellbeing.

Events and Good News!

6. 10 February marks the opening of nominations for the EUSU elections with the EUSU AGM being scheduled for 5 March. This will elect the incoming Sports Union President and Executive Committee allowing students to take on valuable leadership opportunities and contribute to the development of student sport at the University. There is a renewed focus on encouraging the student population to run in the election and a greater drive for voter turnout being led by the current Executive Committee.

7. The annual Sports Ball with 2000 student and staff attendees was once again a resounding success. This offers the chance to celebrate and mark the successes of the 2024/25 season. The event thanked the contribution of our volunteers, athletes, clubs, teams, coaches and officials which makes Edinburgh Sport the powerhouse that it is.

Direction of Sport at Edinburgh

8. Building on last year's publication of the University of Edinburgh's *Social and Economic Value of Sport report*, we have begun the phase two of this project. Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling in Registry Services have supported the preparation of analysis examining degree outcomes in relation to sport engagement. Across all years analysed (2020/21 to 2024/25), a statistically significant positive difference was observed between sport engaged students and the wider student population in the proportion achieving a high degree classification (defined as a 2:1 or a first).

9. We are delighted to announce Grace Reid as the University of Edinburgh's newest Global Ambassador for Sport. Following the retirement of the three-time Olympian, Grace seeks to share her experiences and help support the next generation of athletes at the University.

10. Technological developments remain at the heart of what Edinburgh Sport seeks to achieve over the next year with the announcement of Open Play as our next supplier partner. This will create our new Leisure Management System, enhancing the student and customer experience across our sites. This accompanies the ongoing work to develop the Edinburgh Sport brand including the development of a new Edinburgh Sport mascot.

11. The Cameron Bank project remains critical for the Sports Union and is under discussion at the level of Capital Projects Group and Estates Committee.

Current EUSU Context
Paragraph 12: closed section

13. The current focus is on delivering the planning submission for EUSU with its completion date being 25 February. Similarly to last year, we recognise the ongoing financial climate of the University and thus the planning submission will remain

mindful of this. The planning submission seeks to aid support for the continued delivery of student sport with the intention to make it as accessible to students as possible. Reducing club membership costs through club grants remains the core priority for the planning submission therefore.

Risk Management

14. No major risks.

Next steps/implications

15. The Sports Union President and Executive Committee oversee the strategic direction of the Sports Union.

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

F

University Court

23 February 2026

Finance & Planning Update Report

Description of paper	This paper provides an update on: • The budget-setting stage of the Planning Round for 2026-31; • The December 2025 management accounts; • The upcoming "half-year" financial close exercise; and • The approved and signed 2024-25 Annual Report and Accounts.
Action requested	Court is asked to **note** the contents of this paper.
Resource Implications	Court approved a two-year budget covering 2025-27 at its meeting in June 2025. Strategic decisions on resource allocations take account of our commitments around treasury cash, operating surplus and financial covenants. Risk monitoring is provided through monthly budget holder meetings and quarterly forecast reviews.
EDI implications	EDI considerations are embedded in the planning process with this commitment reflected in the Strategy 2030 key performance indicators.
Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals	Delivery of Net Zero is a clear commitment in Strategy 2030. Our ability to invest in this area remains fragile until we are generating sufficient annual operating surplus.
Consultation	This paper has been reviewed by the Chief Financial Officer, James Gray.
Freedom of Information status	Closed paper.

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

G

University Court

23 February 2026

Responsible Investment Policy: Representations Process Update

Description of paper	This paper provides an update on the development of a process for staff and student representations under the Responsible Investment policy, following discussion by the Responsible Investment Advisory Group (RIAG) and Policy & Resources Committee (PRC).
Action requested	Court is asked to: • **note** the update and attached draft process; and • **approve** a minor amendment to RIAG's terms of reference.
EDI implications	A submission form will be developed with accessibility considerations in mind, as will publication of the process when approved.
Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals	Representations may be received on climate/sustainability topics. The Responsible Investment Policy already focuses strongly on climate goals and contributes to other SDGs and includes a commitment to explore embedding nature into our investments.
Consultation	The paper has been informed by previous Court discussions and decisions on the topic and by an extensive review of practice at peer institutions in the UK. The draft representations process has been considered by RIAG at its first two meetings and by PRC. The topic of publication of advice has also been considered by Governance & Nominations Committee.
Freedom of Information status	Closed paper.

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

H

University Court

23 February 2026

Academic Staff Member Election Regulations 2026

Description of paper	The paper seeks approval for election regulations for a Court position for an elected academic staff member. This post is currently held by Professor Toby Kelly, who is serving a term of office running to 31 May 2026.
Action requested	To **approve** the recommended term of office for the position, in order to address a current misalignment with the academic year and other Court terms, and **approve**: • Academic Staff Member Election Regulations, including the appointment of Alastair Dunlop KC, Chancellor's Assessor, as the Court appointee to hear any appeals should the Returning Officer disqualify a candidate; • a minor amendment to Court's Standing Orders to improve accuracy regarding the current composition of Senate; and • a minor amendment to Court's Standing Orders to allow more flexibility on term dates where appropriate, which would permit the Academic Staff Member to serve a term of office of slightly over four years, to conclude at the end of academic year 2029/30 (31 July 2030), rather than 31 May 2030.
Resource Implications	Election costs will be met from existing budgets. There is a contract in place with external organisation Civica Election Services to provide voting services for such elections.
EDI implications	Publicity for the election will aim to encourage candidates from across the University's academic staff.
Climate & SDGs	N/A
Consultation	The draft election regulations have been shared with representatives of the recognised staff unions and any comments received will be reported at the meeting. Legal Services have reviewed the proposal for the length of term of office and advised on an addition to Court's Standing Orders to enable this.
Freedom of Information	Open paper

Academic Staff Member Election Regulations 2026

Summary

1. The paper gives:

   - A proposed term length for the position from 1 June 2026 to 31 July 2030 (four years and two months), slightly longer than the usual four-year term to realign the position with the academic year in future and the standard 31 July completion date for most Court member terms. An addition to Court's Standing Orders to enable this slightly longer term is proposed;
   - Key election dates proposed in the regulations and contextual information for these;
   - An explanation of some minor proposed updates to the regulations compared to the last iteration; and,
   - A minor proposed update to the text in Court's Standing Orders to reflect relevant changes to the Senate membership in recent years.

Background

2. The Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016 requires Court to include in its membership two persons 'appointed by being elected by the staff of the institution from among their own number'. The Act allows the two posts to be split into one post for 'support staff' (known as professional services staff at the University of Edinburgh) and one post for 'academic staff' (usually known as academic or research staff at the University of Edinburgh). Court agreed to split these two posts into academic and professional services positions and this was implemented in August 2020. In December 2021 the person holding the Academic Staff Member position chose to demit office early and Court considered whether the term length for the successor should be

   i. a four-year term; or
   ii. a shorter term of around two years, in order to finish the expected four-year term from 2020-2024 and remain synchronised with the Professional Services Staff Member position.

3. Court chose to apply a four-year term, which given the timing of the election and the desire to fill the vacancy as soon as practicable meant a term of office from 1 June 2022 to 31 May 2026, rather than the usual 1 August to 31 July academic year dates. Note that a shorter term to finish the expected four-year term is a legislative requirement for Senate Assessor positions but not for this elected staff member position.

Discussion

Term length

4. Given Court's previously expressed preferences for i) a four-year term rather than a shorter term of around two years, and ii) not leaving the post vacant in June and July to realign with the academic year, it is proposed that a slightly extended term length of four years and two months, from 1 June 2026 to 31 July 2030, be used on this occasion. This would realign the post to the end of the academic year/standard term completion

date of 31 July for most Court members without creating a vacancy in June and July 2026, including the June 2026 Court meeting. It would mean that the postholder will still be a Court member for the June 2030 Court meeting, giving an advantage in continuity of membership over the academic year/annual cycle of Court meetings and in giving more time for a successor to be inducted over the summer months of 2030 and observing a meeting first rather than immediately taking office and participating in a June Court meeting without a full induction. This takes the position slightly beyond the current four-year maximum term limit and would require a minor amendment to Court's Standing Orders to allow this, as at present the Standing Orders do not give Court the power to grant the Academic Staff Member a term longer than four years. In order to address this and any future similar issues, Court could amend the Standing Orders to add a new paragraph, 2.15:

<u>Proposed addition to Standing Orders of the University Court</u>

> 2.15 Where the term of a member of Court set out in this Standing Order 2 is not prescribed by law, Court shall have the discretion to increase that term limit in cases where it considers such variation to be appropriate to achieve synchronicity of the start or end date of that term in office with other Court members, provided that such variation may not increase the term limit set out in these Standing Orders by more than three months.

Summary of election regulations

5. The proposed election dates and other proposed changes are:

a) Election dates

Activity	**Date**	**Comments**
Compilation of electoral roll	Friday 27 February	Compilation dates are usually end January or end February for Spring elections. Also propose that staff employed on or before 27 February have up until 24 April to request their addition to the roll if not already included
Call for nominations open	Monday 30 March	- Avoids overlap with call for nominations for annual Senate member elections (4 February-4 March) and likely voting period for Senior Lay Member (11-17 March). - Does overlap with annual Senate member voting period (25 March-8 April) but avoids key dates when communications/voting emails will issue - Last week of Semester 2 teaching so high levels of academic staff expected to see communication of the call for nominations

Call for nominations close	Monday 11 May	Usually a four-week period but six weeks proposed as two of the weeks are the spring teaching vacation (was done for last Academic Staff Member election in 2022 for same reason)
Voting opens	Thursday 21 May	Gives 1.5 weeks to confirm nominations, check supporting statements and for Civica Election Services to then load all information on systems ahead of issuing email ballots. A similar length of time was used for the last Academic Staff Member election in 2022.
Voting closes	Wednesday 27 May (noon)	Gives 6.5 days for voting, same length as used for the last two elections (had been 2.5 days prior to this), given preferences for a longer voting period, e.g. part-time staff, absences

b) Other proposed changes

"The Deputy Returning Officer [addition in red: "or an independent provider of election services used by the University"] shall distribute to each member of the electorate via email a link to the voting system along with a link ~~to the relevant web page~~ to view supporting statements" Explanation of addition in red: addition to improve accuracy, reflecting the intention to use an existing contract with Civica Election Services for voting in University-wide elections, having used Civica for Court staff member elections in 2022 and 2024. Explanation of deletion of text: deleted "to the relevant web page" to improve accuracy as the link is expected to be to a secure page hosted by Civica Election Services rather than an open webpage - as done in recent elections
"Where a change of circumstances occurs which in the opinion of the Returning Officer renders the voting period insufficient to enable a representative vote to be obtained under the special conditions prevailing at the time (for example, a severe ~~weather leading the closure of many University buildings and staff not present on campus~~outage of the University network leading to a significant delay in the issuing of voting emails, the Returning Officer may extend the voting periods as they consider necessary" Explanation: updated the text with a more relevant example given that it is an online election

Minor amendment to Court's Standing Orders

6. Having reviewed Court's Standing Orders with respect to the Academic Staff Member position, it is recommended that a minor amendment be made to improve accuracy as follows:

Standing Orders extract

"2.9 The Academic Staff Member will be elected for a period of up to four years by and from among University staff who are academic or research staff and therefore includes all [addition of: "academic and research"] members of staff who are represented on Senate. The individual elected will also become a member of Senate if they are not already a member. The arrangements to conduct the election of the Academic Staff Member are approved by Court."

Explanation: in recent years Senate has added a small number of professional services staff to its membership so that it is no longer the case that all members of staff who are represented on Senate will be members of the electorate for this position. Adding "academic or research" to the first sentence of Standing Order 2.9 as above will reflect this.

Risk Management

7. Election to this position is a requirement of the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016 and the proposed election regulations will comply with the legislation and with the Scottish Code of Good Higher Governance. The election regulations have been drafted with risk mitigation in mind, including rules on good conduct and the option of varying the voting period in the event of unforeseen special circumstances.

Next steps/implications

8. If agreed by Court, the election will be organised as per the timetable and regulations. The individual elected, subject to agreement to the Code of Conduct for Court Members and other declarations, will take office with effect from 1 June and be in post for the Court meeting on 15 June.

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University Court

23 February 2026

Scottish Consortium for Rural Research proposal

Description of paper	This paper submits a proposal to transfer governance oversight responsibility for the Scottish Consortium for Rural Research (SCRR).
Action requested	Court is invited to **approve** the necessary constitutional and governance changes to be made to allow the transfer of governance oversight responsibility for the Scottish Consortium for Rural Research.
Resource Implications	None for the University of Edinburgh. There are no staffing implications for University of Edinburgh staff. Several staff are involved as chair of the SCRR Board and members of the SCRR Executive and/or Board but these are voluntary, unremunerated roles.
EDI implications	N/A
Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals	N/A
Consultation	The proposal has been reviewed and supported by the SCRR's membership at its Annual General Meeting in December 2025. Policy & Resources Committee reviewed the proposal at its meeting on 2 February and agreed to recommend it to Court for approval.
Freedom of Information status	Closed paper

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University Court

23 February 2026

Development & Alumni:
Donations and Legacies and Alumni Relations Activity

Description of paper	The paper provides a report on legacies and donations received by the University of Edinburgh Development Trust or directly by the University of Edinburgh from 1 October 2025 to 31 December 2025 and an update on current alumni relations activities.
Action requested	Court is asked to **note** the legacies and donations received and current alumni relations activities.
Resource Implications	N/A
EDI implications	There are no specific equality and diversity issues associated with the paper. However, cognisance is taken of the wishes of donors to ensure these reflect the University's approach to equality and diversity and that these comply with legal requirements. We also actively promote a range of EDI-related scholarships and wider programmes to donors, including the MCF programme, the Black British Scholarships programme, the Nyerere Scholarship and specific PhD scholarships to attract candidates from under-represented groups.
Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals	The preference of many donors to make a difference in the world through their support of our teaching and research ensures that a number of specific gifts tie in directly with the University's work across climate mitigation and the SDGs.
Consultation	This paper has been reviewed and approved by Chris Cox, Vice-Principal Philanthropy & Advancement and Executive Director of Development & Alumni.
Freedom of Information status	Closed paper – commercially sensitive

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University Court

23 February 2026

Self-Evaluation Action Plan (SEAP)

Description of paper	The University's annual report to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) on activities to effectively manage quality assurance and deliver on enhancement.
Action requested	Court is asked to **note** the plan.
Appendices	The Self-Evaluation and Action Plan is available on the University's website: https://registryservices.ed.ac.uk/academic-quality-and-standards/self-evaluation-action-plan-seap
Resource Implications	N/A
EDI implications	Quality assurance policies and processes are subject to Equality Impact Assessment.
Climate & SDGs	N/A
Freedom of Information status	Open paper

Self-Evaluation Action Plan (SEAP)

Summary

1. The University's Self-Evaluation Action Plan (SEAP) has been submitted to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), in line with the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework. It does not require Court's approval but is standardly provided to Court for information.

Background

2. The SEAP has been produced in accordance with the SFC Guidance on Quality for Colleges and Universities 2024-25 to 2030-31 which outlines the key elements of Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF). It will be used as part of the evidence base for the new institutional quality review process, the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER), and to monitor institutional progress with the outcomes of the TQER and support the annual institutional liaison meetings with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).

3. The report is divided into two sections: Self-Evaluation 2024-25 (reflecting on annual institutional quality assurance and enhancement activities and outcomes, including progress made since the last external review) and Action Plan 2025-2026 (a consolidation of the planned institution level enhancement activities arising from the self-evaluation). It is a concise, high-level summary of themes discussed and associated actions taken by various groups and committees across the institution, and as such is drawn from existing reports and papers and updates from relevant stakeholders.

4. The SEAP is intended to be a live document that can be revisited and updated throughout the academic year. A key aim of the process is to demonstrate to staff and students how their contribution to the activities that impact the quality assurance and enhancement of learning, teaching and the student experience are collated and used to document and drive strategic enhancement within the institution.

5. Student partnership is a key aspect of the TQEF and the SEAP has been produced in partnership with the Students' Association and reflects the interests and priorities of students. We will continue to work together with the Students' Association to engage students as partners on an ongoing basis in the preparation of the annual SEAP and in the monitoring of the implementation of the actions.

6. The SFC guidance stipulates that the Accountable Officer is sighted on, and has ownership of, the quality of the student experience, academic standards and academic integrity. Only once the Accountable Officer is satisfied with the thoroughness and effectiveness of the evaluation and action plan should it be submitted to SFC. It is not a requirement that the SEAP be reviewed and approved by the Governing Body prior to submission, however the SEAP should be shared with the Governing Body to support their oversight of quality assurance and enhancement. It is for the institution to determine when to do so based on their own governance schedules.

7. The SEAP was signed by the Principal before it was submitted to the SFC on 27 November 2025. The SEAP is now presented to University Court for information and to support oversight of quality assurance and enhancement.

Risk Management

8. The provision of a high-quality student experience is a high-level risk on the University's Strategic Risk Register, and is overseen by the Risk Management Committee reporting to Audit & Risk Committee and Court. Additionally, failure in effectiveness of the quality assurance framework, including aligning review activity with external expectations and taking action on findings, constitutes an institutional risk.

Next steps/implications

9. Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) will work together with the Students' Association to engage students as partners on an ongoing basis in the preparation of the annual SEAP and in the monitoring of the implementation of the actions.