

SUMMARY REPORT OF COURT 17 SEPTEMBER 2026

The Court met on Thursday, 17 September.

Members recorded their profound thanks and appreciation to Meg Lustman, Vice-Chair of Court, who demitted office following the meeting after more than seven years of distinguished service to the University and its Court.

Court welcomed new Lay Governor, Dr Yvonne Thompson, and Professor Jeff Breckon, PVC Research & Innovation, to their first meeting of Court.

The Chair opened the first meeting of the 2026-27 academic year by setting out her vision for how Court should operate and how governors should fulfil their role in that.

What follows is a high-level summary of the main issues addressed by Court on 17 September, which will also appear on the university website. Minutes of the meeting will be published on the university website in due course.

Yvette Hopkins
Chair of Court

1. Principal & Vice-Chancellor's Report

The Principal provided an update on key developments and activities since the previous meeting. This included the start to the new academic year, progress on executive recruitment and leadership appointments, the University's 150th Anniversary celebrations, engagement with sector bodies and national policy discussions, work arising from the National Student Survey results, and a range of external engagement, partnership and civic activities undertaken by the University during the reporting period.

2. Students' Association Student President's Report

The Student President reported on recent activities and initiatives of the Students' Association, including partnership working with the University through the Strategic Partnership Framework and Student Success Action Team. The report highlighted a broad range of activity undertaken since the previous

meeting, including Freshers' Week, student induction and welcome programmes, academic representation and student engagement initiatives, employability and inclusion-focused activities, and preparations for Black History Month.

3. Strategic Performance

- **Strategy update**

Court discussed in detail progress in the development and delivery of the University's Strategy 2035, noting the planned further consultation on the strategy with staff, students and stakeholders during Strategy Engagement Week in October; the first three-year plan associated with delivery of the strategy; and the current Programme for Change. The Court also discussed the dispute with the campus unions and the unresolved efforts to end the dispute through Acas conciliation earlier in the week.

- **Student Recruitment Report**

Court noted the still indicative Trimester A 2026-27 recruitment position, which showed recruitment broadly in line with planned targets, continued deep uncertainty around international recruitment, and strong underlying home demand reflected in record levels of Scottish-domiciled applicants for undergraduate study.

- **International Recruitment and Transnational Education (TNE) Report**

Court discussed work in train to support the University's international recruitment and transnational education (TNE) strategies which are designed to deliver sustainable growth, market diversification and long-term financial sustainability.

- **National Student Survey (NSS) 2026 outcome and resulting plans**

Court discussed the 2026 NSS results and the institution-wide plan to boost performance led by the Student Success Action Team (which includes student leaders) together with Heads of Department and Programme Leaders.

- **Research Report 2025-26**

Court discussed a report which included progress in: strengthening the University's research and innovation infrastructure; preparations for REF2029; development of research centres;

improvements to the postgraduate research environment; increasing research income performance; and commercialisation activity.

- **AI Report**

Court reviewed the progress of University's GenAI programme which now covers all aspects of the University's activity of education, research and service delivery. Court welcomed the development of an institutional AI vision to support the ambition of becoming a human-centred, AI-enabled university.

4. Finance and Risk

- **Finance and Risk Report**

Court discussed a report from the Chief Financial Officer which provided an update on the University's financial position, including the 2026-27 budget, year-end financial outlook, debt and cash reserves, key financial performance indicators, and the latest corporate risk position.

- **UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) Compliance and Action Plan Report**

Court received an update on UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) student sponsor compliance activity, including the recent UKVI Action Plan visit, submission of the University's 2026 Basic Compliance Assessment and ongoing engagement with UKVI.

- **Corporate Risk Register Annual Review**

Court reviewed the latest Corporate Risk Register and noted changes to the University's strategic risk profile and the mitigating actions to support the University's operational, financial and reputational resilience.

5. Statement of Court's Primary Responsibilities 2026-27

The Court approved the Statement of Primary Responsibilities 2026-27.

6. Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2025-26

Court approved the Statement which will be included in the University's annual accounts statement.

7. Standing Committee Business

The Court noted reports, and approved various recommendations, from the Finance and General Purposes Committee and the Court Governance and Nominations Committee.

8. Operational Matters Update and Communications Report

The report covered operations across Executive portfolios, including estates; security, safety and resilience; asset management and maintenance; the 150th Anniversary campaign activity, including the achievement of the campaign target of £1.24m for 150 anniversary scholarships.

9. Date of next Court meeting

The next meeting of Court will take place on Thursday 12 November 2026.