

Acting Chair of Court

Ian Mair

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Dear Francesca,

Thank you for your letter of 18 August 2025 in response to the submission of the University Recovery Plan (URP) on 11 August. Your letter was considered by the University Court at its meeting on 26 August and again on 9 September and I am pleased to provide this initial response.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my, and the Court's, gratitude for the ongoing supportive nature of the relationship with the Funding Council. In unprecedented circumstances, a collegiate approach to recovery is hugely welcomed.

In your letter you laid out three conditions for future funding and I wanted to give you a progress update against these below:

a) *Identify an accelerated plan to create stable long-term permanent leadership for the university.*

I note from conversations that have taken place post receipt of your letter that there is a recognition of the strength of the skills and experience we have in place currently, both interim and permanent, in key leadership positions and I note your letter was not intended to suggest otherwise. Nevertheless, establishing a long term permanent and stable leadership base is critical as we move forward.

Non-Executive

Significant progress has been made towards the appointment of a permanent Chair of Court with interviews and focus groups having taken place on the 10<sup>th</sup> September. I expect to move the process forward to elections in the coming days. Lay member recruitment to fill six current vacancies (in addition to the Chair) is also progressing well with a heartening number of high-quality applicants being lined up for interviews over the next two weeks. This will also facilitate a recasting of membership to Court sub-committees that will ensure progress against the University's response to the Gillies report.

Executive

Appointment of the permanent Chair is a necessary step in the process to recruit a substantive Principal and Vice Chancellor and will be one of the immediate processes to manage for the successful Chair candidate. Notwithstanding, conversations with search firms have already commenced. A process to hire a permanent University Secretary has also commenced but another Interim will be required to bridge the gap between the outgoing current Interim and the permanent replacement.



**b) *Identify, quantify and deliver immediate no regrets efficiencies.***

This is an area that we continue to work on. It goes without saying that the financial situation the University is in, with the need for public money to survive, is deeply regrettable and decisions required to return it to the thriving institution that we all desire are unlikely to involve outcomes that have zero regret. Easy and quick actions to reduce spending have already been implemented leaving matters of greater consequence remaining. I consider that the spirit of your letter seeks to strike the right balance between short-term decisions that address financial challenges sooner with the long-term impacts that are in support of a wider vision and strategic direction. We are continuing to explore the measures that could sensibly be taken in the coming months to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the University, consulting the University's staff as we do so, without unduly constraining our future strategic development.

**c) *Develop and execute a plan to deliver a University Strategy which can demonstrate appropriate and concrete engagement with staff and students to properly understand and consider their input into the University's vision.***

Staff and students have a legitimate interest in the future shape and direction of their university, and indeed effective strategy cannot be developed without their contribution. We have recently conducted a listening exercise in response to the Gillies Report and will move into a new phase of future looking engagement with staff and students that will act as the basis of a new shared vision and strategy. This will, in effect, be an early stage of our work to develop a new Strategic Plan to guide us on our journey to become, again, a thriving institution. As I know you will appreciate, the input of the permanent Principal is a key element of such a plan. This creates additional complexity which we will manage carefully, to ensure that the voice of our staff and students is heard over the coming months, but without unreasonably constraining the new Principal from being able to exercise his or her strategic leadership of the University.

**Liquidity support**

Finally, I would also like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude in the understanding of the tension in the duties of our Trustees in entering into the financial transaction of £12m while the University works through its Going Concern status. The conversion of the loan to a £12m grant alleviates this tension and will allow us to gain access to the vital liquidity support that you have offered. The Principal has written to you to confirm our intention to secure the proposed £12m resource grant as soon as possible and we look forward to a positive outcome from the discussion at the SFC Board.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Ian Mair