

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE COMMERCIAL

SFC Board Meeting Minutes

The 152nd meeting of the Scottish Funding Council was held on Thursday 5 June 2025 at 1600pm via Microsoft Teams.

Present: Lorna Jack (Interim Co- Chair) (Chair); Professor Cara Aitchison (Interim Co-Chair); Francesca Osowska (Chief Executive); David Alexander; Dr Richard Armour; Mhairi Harrington; Professor Ewart Keep; Andy Kerr; Professor Sir Peter Mathieson; Professor Irene McCara-McWilliam; Professor Lesley Yellowlees

Apologies: Linda Hanna; Kate Lander; Alison Nicolson; Lynne Raeside (Deputy Director External Affairs & Policy).

In Attendance: Martin Boyle (Chief Operating Officer); Richard Maconachie (Director of Finance); Tiffany Ritchie (Acting Director of Finance); Helen Cross (Director of Research & Innovation); Dr Jacqui Brasted (Director of Access, Learning & Outcomes); Louisa Baker (Deputy Director, Governance & Planning); Peter Ward (Financial Analysis Lead, Dundee Recovery Team); James Harrison (Programme Manager, Dundee Recovery Team); Gillian Phillips (Senior Governance Officer) (Clerk).

1. Welcome and Chair's Business

1.1 The Co-Chairs welcomed Board members to the meeting and thanked them for their flexibility and co-operation in attending the meeting at short notice. The relevant apologies for absence were noted.

1.2 Board members were reminded that the matters to be discussed were considered highly confidential and commercially sensitive and SFC's Code of Conduct required them to act in SFC's best interests when acting as an SFC Board member. It was noted that comments which had been provided to the SFC Executive in advance of the meeting had been collated and shared with the Board immediately prior to the meeting.

2. University of Dundee: Request for Support- SFC Letter to Scottish Government

- 2.1 The Chief Executive provided Board members with a summary of recent activity in relation to the University of Dundee and advised the Board that the University had made a request for further funding and liquidity support following the publication of their most recent financial recovery plan.
- 2.2 Following discussions between the Chief Executive, Minister and Cabinet Secretary, it was reported that the Board was being asked to provide input to the letter from the Chief Executive (in her capacity as Accountable Officer) with the financial request from the University. It was confirmed that the letter was a formal request to the Scottish Government to acknowledge the University's funding ask to initiate the processes to make the first phase of this resource, of up to £20m for the academic year (AY) 2025-26, available to SFC subject to its further due diligence on the University's ask and associated recovery plans.
- 2.3 The urgency associated with the letter was underlined and Board members were advised that Scottish Government officials had requested that the letter from SFC's Accountable Officer be submitted to them by the end of the current week.
- 2.4 The Board was mindful of its role in fulfilling its duty to provide carefully considered advice and to give full consideration of the matters before it, particularly as it has not yet had sight of either the outcomes of the ongoing investigation into the University or any new strategic plan for the University.
- 2.5 Board members expressed significant concerns about the financial sustainability of the University of Dundee and asked the Executive Team to engage with the University to ensure that there is:
- A coherent and viable strategic plan,
 - Stable and appropriate governance,
 - Evidence based student number planning, and
 - Strong and credible leadership with appropriate capacity and capability.
- 2.6 ***Discussion Redacted.***
- 2.7 It also agreed that should funding be made available, the Board would expect to scrutinise and consider the University's initial funding request of up to £20m for academic year (AY) 2025-26 and attach testing conditions to any funding support.

2.8 However, given the continuing urgency of the situation, the Board agreed that it was prudent to initiate the Scottish Government's enabling Accountable Officer processes for the up to £20m element for AY 2025-26 whilst further assurance and due diligence work on the whole financial ask was carried out.

2.9 The Board also noted that the Scottish Government may consider a Section 25 order directing the application of any funds for financial support. The Board highlighted the impact that the current situation at the University of Dundee is having on the rest of the sector and that this should be outlined in the letter.

2.10 It was agreed that the Board's concerns would be articulated and reflected in the letter from the Accountable Officer.

2.11 The Chief Executive thanked Board members for their helpful and insightful comments. It was agreed that the revised letter would be shared with Board members in its final form, providing them with the opportunity to raise any reservations about the way forward. The intention was to submit the letter to the Scottish Government on Friday 6 June. It was noted that the Board would be provided with the opportunity to discuss sector challenges at its next scheduled meeting on 12th June.

3. Date of next meeting

Thursday 12th June at 0930am via *Teams*

Thursday 19th June at 0920am at the Gardyne Campus, Dundee & Angus College