

GENERAL COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE REPORT TO COURT

This is the General Council Business Committee's June 2025 report to the University Court, mandated by the General Council meeting on 17 May 2025.

The Business Committee acts for the General Council between its meetings. The 21 members of the Committee who are elected by the General Council are diverse in geographical origin, age, degree subject and experience – including alumni and members of academic staff engaged in education, the law, public service, commerce and industry. For a number of years, the Committee has looked in some depth at a succession of topics which are important to the University and on which members of the Committee have particular expertise. Most of the work is done by small expert groups drawn from the Committee membership.

Recent topics have been:

- **Commercialisation of research.** The expert group comprised elected members of the Committee and four members of Court who were also members of the Business Committee. The group worked closely with the University's Director of Research and Innovation and the Dean of Enterprise and Innovation and concluded that much purposeful work was in hand in the University. The group offered expertise and assistance with a "Meet the Entrepreneurs" seminar series for undergraduates and postgraduates, as well as offering to support future funding applications and to link budding entrepreneurs with experienced alumni. The relevant Deans have stated that *'The Business Committee has contributed significantly to efforts to integrate entrepreneurial education, and broader commercialisation initiatives, for our students and staff. It has offered its expertise and willingness to consider our proposals. Its input has been crucial in shaping our plans and we look forward to continuing our partnership with the Committee as we advance this work.'* The Court is invited to note that sustained effort will be needed to embed a culture of commercialisation throughout the University research community and that more awareness-raising work is likely to be fruitful.
- **Graduate employability.** A small expert group of Committee members established close relations with the Careers and Employability Service and with the Dean for Employability and Entrepreneurship. Graduate employability is one of the factors which determines the University's ranking which in turn is important for future student recruitment. The group concluded that the University's work on the topic was excellent and could make no significant suggestions for improvement. Business Committee members have been provided with dates of careers fairs and details of mentoring, shadowing and internship schemes for circulation to their professional networks: dissemination of such information is the primary way in which the Committee can lend support.
- **Energy Transition.** The Committee received presentations from the University's Interdisciplinary Institute Director (Energy Transition) and from a Committee member with international experience on the topic, which is prominent in *Aberdeen 2040*. The Committee commended the work of the Centre for Energy Transition, particularly its inter-disciplinary and inter-institution approach. The Committee was delighted to learn that the Institute had recently won substantial funding from UKRI. The Committee hopes that Court shares its view of the great importance of Energy Transition to the University and to Scotland and will ensure that it has adequate funding for its challenging task.

Besides these main topics, the Committee kept abreast of what has been happening more generally in the University, particularly on finance, research, alumni relations, fundraising and student recruitment – and on the “Re-imaging the Campus” work, in relation to which the Committee (and indeed the General Council) remains concerned about the possibility of accidental and severe damage to Marischal East. The Committee has expressed its willingness to reinforce the University’s work in these and other areas.

The Committee is concerned that the linkage between the Court and the Committee, secured since 2017 by four independent Court members nominated by Court for appointment to the Committee, has been broken. Since during the year the last two such members retired from Court, there are now no Court members on the Committee. The Committee invites suggestions as to how the linkage may be restored.

This report has been submitted to the Court. in accordance with section 6 of the Universities (Scotland) Act 1858.

June 2025