

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN  
PARTNERSHIP NEGOTIATING AND CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE  
MINUTE OF MEETING HELD ON 02 FEBRUARY 2026 (TEAMS)

**Present:** Nicholas Forsyth (Convenor), David Anderson, Fraser Bell, Owen Cox, Daniel Cutts, Kelly Eccles, Nicholas Edwards, Brian Paterson, Linda Robertson, William Tocher, Mark White, Louise Alford (Clerk)

## 1 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 03 NOVEMBER 2025

The minutes of the meeting on 24 November were approved. UNITE noted there were concerns about the way in which TU Reps were appointed to the ACS workstreams and wished this to be noted from the previous discussion. The Convenor advised that Bhatti was no longer undertaking his Vice Principal role and that once an appointment had been made, that individual would be invited to future PNCC meetings. The Committee thanked Bhatti for his contribution and input.

## 2 TABLE OF ACTIONS / MATTERS ARISING

All items from the table of actions were confirmed as completed or progressing.

## 3 PAY AND PENSION UPDATE

The Committee received a brief update from M White, who advised that there had been no change since the previous PNCC meeting in November.

## 4 FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

M White advised that the University deficit was revised to £3-4.5 million but this was dependant on the January student 2026 intake. M White outlined that the current UKVI position around issuing student visas was having an impact on overseas student numbers. Depending on this factor, the deficit may need to be revised upwards. There was also a need to align where things were with the ACS project.

UCU thanked M White for this update and asked in light of this positive position, would the University promotions exercise be reopened.

N Forsyth noted that the position pre-Christmas was looking positive but the pace of UKVI processing visa applications and issuing CASS certificates was a concern.

M White noted that any decisions around the pay award and promotion would not be made without ensuring there was no longer term financial detriment to the University.

UCU noted concern that this was a different message from the one presented at the recent Town Hall meeting. Previous communication had advised that promotions were paused until the January intake was known, and that ACS had not been raised as a factor previously. UCU asked if there could be clarity and transparency around this. UCU also stressed that individuals were spending significant time on research and preparing applications and staff were working beyond what they were employed for.

UCU raised a query around salaries outlined within the recent University Annual Report, and that five individuals had been paid above £190k. N Edwards advised these individuals were Clinical Academics and were not new staff or members of management. Increases had been applied based on the NHS pay award which the University was required to implement. There would be funding from the SFC to cover these costs.

UCU also raised concerns around individuals who were receiving acting up allowances or modifications to salary on a temporary basis, this was not equitable and there should be an acknowledgment that people are taking on additional work.

## 5 ACS UPDATE

F Bell gave the Committee an update on current progress of the ACS Project and noted that there had been a lot of progress since their last meeting. There had been a Senate meeting and the workstreams had met. There had been an increased focus on the Academic reorganisation and the move from 12 to 4 faculties. There was also work ongoing by the portfolio review and the staff/student ratios. Professional Services was looking at a more integrated approach with a reduction in central Directorates and a wider pool of resource within the Schools. Additional workshops and drop-in sessions were taking place and the new Viva Engage tool for the whole community had been set up. Court are meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> February to consider the proposals and the Professional Services structure will be considered by the Principal in February also.

UCU and UNITE noted they had not been engaged in meaningful consultation and they had no sight of the business plan being submitted to Court in February. UCU noted that the Change Management Policy referred to consultation with the Trade Unions at the earliest stage before any business plans are drafted.

Nick F highlighted that it was not a business plan being submitted to Court in February but a paper. As soon as there was a formal plan the Trade Unions would be involved.

UCU responded that at the previous meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> November, they were issued a 9-page document but there wasn't sufficient detail included. UCU noted the preferred model by the University but there was no data, costs or evidence provided alongside this. UCU noted the workshops and Viva Engage were for the whole community and this was not the forum for formal Trade Union consultation. UCU have raised these concerns at a number of other meetings.

UCU noted that UNITE and UNISON were represented on two of the workstreams and UCU had been denied access to these groups despite requests to be involved.

UCU advised there had been a previous apology from N Edwards about how UNISON had been selected to participate in the People and Culture workstream. This had happened again with the Governance and Leadership workstream in that UNITE had been selected.

UNITE clarified the normal process when seeking Trade Union representation on such groups. The Trade Unions would decide collectively the name of the individual they wished to participate rather than management selecting an individual.

N Edwards advised that he had only recently been a member of SMT and he couldn't comment on what had happened with the Governance and Leadership workstream, he would need to find out further information.

UNITE explained that this issue had been raised in previous forums and there had been no sufficient explanation from management on why this had happened.

NF asked if it was possible to approach the Governance and Workshop leader to ask for clarification on whether the UNITE representative was present on this group in a TU capacity. N Forsyth noted that the UNITE and UNISON TU Representatives were appointed to the workstream as management representatives and not union representatives.

UCU noted that it was frustrating having similar discussions repeatedly. UCU had been kept out of the whole workstream process and did not find that this was equitable or fair. UCU were concerned that the University considered the current approach to be meaningful consultation.

UCU asked for clarification on when the stress risk assessment would be produced as indicated at the recent Town Hall meeting. N Edwards advised that this would be done once there was a firm set of proposals. There was local training taking place on stress risk assessments by the Health and Safety team.

UCU and UNITE noted that according to the Change Management Policy there can be no business cases taken to Court for approval without consultation with the trade unions. N Forsyth clarified that no business case would be taken to Court for a decision on 25 February but that instead a paper would be presented.

UNITE (supported by UCU and UNISON) asked to receive an indication of the expected savings and timescale by which those savings are expected, along with whether either collectively Court and SMT (or individuals from each body), would be taking full responsibility should either the value or timescale not be achieved.

**Action:** N Edwards to check representation details with Governance and Leadership workstream team lead.

## 6 CASEWORK FIGURES FOR 2025

L Alford gave a summary of the casework details noted in the paper. Average timescales were continuing to fall and the range in dates tended to represent the complexity of cases. Less investigations were proceeding to disciplinary hearings compared to last year. The number of grievances were similar to previous years. There was now a step in the grievance process where individuals were required to speak to their HR Partner before making any formal complaints. This emphasis on informal resolution would hopefully have a positive impact on case numbers for the coming year. Capability cases continued to be very small. L Alford offered to meet with any of the TU Representatives separately if they had any questions on the paper.

UCU noted that the formal case numbers didn't reflect the number of individuals who were speaking to them informally about issues at work, and this was continuing to rise. UNITE agreed that they were seeing a similar increase in informal enquiries. UNISON noted the same and were positive that the proposed Leadership Academy may assist with some of these issues.

UNITE thought it would be useful to plot alongside the figures what was happening at the University on a wider level, for example periods of flux or financial pressures.

## 7 CHANGE MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE

K Eccles talked through the proposed changes made in the Change Management Procedure. This was around incorporating the feedback from the Gordon Report.

UCU would like to ensure that the direct wording from recommendation 2 is implemented, and that there is an expectation that there is an informal phase before any change management process takes place. UCU were concerned about the footnote that stated there would be an allowance for the process to be subverted in certain circumstances.

K Eccles advised that the point around the process being amended when agility was required came from the Gordon Report and this was the reason it had been added in. There had been an in depth conversation with UCU about this at the Policy Review Group, and it was agreed this would be removed.

UNITE noted that section 5.1 of the revised Procedure gave some concern in that changes to Job Titles and Job Descriptions could be major changes for the individuals involved and also when whole teams or departments are involved. K Eccles explained that if there was no change to someone's terms and conditions, this would be seen as a minor change but where possible, TU colleagues would be kept in the loop. It was agreed that a synopsis or guidance would be included to give examples.

UCU advised that the Gordon report was about slowing down the Change process and decision making and it was essential that essence was captured at the informal

stage. UCU noted that they were in the pre change phase of ACS and their contribution could help the Institution stop making any mistakes. K Eccles advised that consultation would normally take place once there are details about what you are consulting on. They were in the planning and engagement phase and any formal consultation will then follow. UCU noted the Gordon Report talks about engaging with the Trade Unions before that change work happens and UCU were not being included. UCU confirmed they were happy to approve the changes as long as the involvement of the Trade Unions at an informal stage was captured.

**Action:** L Alford to feedback the changes suggested by the Committee to D Norris.

## 8. REWARD CONSULTATION AND NEGOTIATION GROUP

K Eccles introduced the paper and advised approval was sought from the Committee on the composition of the group and the updated terms of reference.

UCU explained their rationale for wanting to include a member of SMT on the group. They felt this was important for consistency, accountability and ability to resolve disputes locally. UNITE agreed and that a lack of continuity may be a problem.

F Bell talked about wanting to empower individuals to make decisions other than SMT and that there were other senior people present at that group, for example the Head of HR. N Forsyth confirmed he shared this view and that there also space at PNCC to hear and discuss any items raised.

It was agreed that an SMT member was not required to be on this group. The Committee approved the name change and remit.

UCU asked if this could be reviewed if it was felt the Group was not working properly. The Committee agreed to this.

**Action:** L Alford to feedback the recommendations to S Waldram.

## 9. FAIRWORK FIRST

UNISON noted that for the University to apply the Fairwork First principles they had to pay the Real Living Wage and have TU recognition. UNISON felt the Trade Unions were not being included in some change management processes and there wasn't the opportunity for them to provide an effective voice. UCU agreed with the points made.

K Eccles gave a commitment to looking at the Fairwork principles at the Reward Consultation and Negotiation Group. K Eccles noted that she would like to have an Institutional HR Plan in place and to look at making sure there was an effective employee voice. K Eccles noted that TU representation accounted for around 25 percent of the workforce.

UNITE noted that the Trade Unions were responsible for negotiating on behalf of 100 percent of the workforce. This was not about Trade Union members versus non-members. K Eccles advised that the People and Culture workstream would be looking at that whole staff experience and employee voice. UCU thought that the point made about representing all staff was key. Individuals may confide in their TU Reps and that was part of their value. UCU felt their contribution was being underestimated and they wanted a voice in these forums.

## 10. GOVERNANCE EFFICIENCY REVIEW

UCU advised they wanted to discuss the SUMS report. It was agreed that this would be placed on the Agenda at an earlier point in the next meeting.

UCU noted there had been no Dispute Resolution meeting organised following their recent notification. K Eccles advised that a meeting had taken place with Mary Senior. It was agreed that a meeting would take place with local UCU TU Reps about this.

**Action:** L Alford to note this item for the next meeting.

**Action:** K Eccles to organise Dispute Resolution Meeting with local UCU TU Reps.

## 11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 UNITE noted there was some concern over the Principal’s comments at the Town Hall meeting around research funding and grassroots research. N Forsyth confirmed the University would continue to undertake blue sky research and to look at models that would allow them to satisfy their civic purpose.

11.2 UNITE asked if there could be clarification on when the terms Acting and Interim were to be used. N Edwards provided clarity following the meeting and advised that consistency internally around this needed to be addressed.

## 12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Partnership Negotiating and Consultative Committee will be held on Monday 25 May 2026 at 1.35 p.m. in Room 100, University Office.

### TABLE OF ACTIONS

Reference	Description	Action by	Action Date
6 (3 <sup>rd</sup> November 2025 meeting)	UCU to be provided with update on Education review regarding course numbers	J-A Murray	Ongoing
9 (3 <sup>rd</sup> November 2025 meeting)	JCCRA remit and committee structure to be reviewed.	N Forsyth	Ongoing

5	Check TU representation details with Governance and Leadership workstream team lead.	N Edwards	Ongoing
7	Change management feedback from Committee to be submitted to D Norris	Clerk	Complete
8	Reward Consultation Group feedback to be submitted to S Waldram	Clerk	Complete
10	Governance Efficiency Review to be placed on next Agenda at an earlier opportunity	Clerk	Complete
10	Dispute Resolution meeting to be arranged with local UCU TU Reps	K Eccles	Ongoing