



Interim Principal & Vice-Chancellor
Professor Shane O'Neill

Douglas Ross MSP
Convener, Education, Children and
Young People Committee
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

e: Douglas.Ross.msp@parliament.scot

15 January 2025

Dear Mr Ross

Re: Correcting the Record

As Interim Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Dundee, I write to provide reassurance to you as Convenor of the Education, Children and Young People Committee regarding the governance and management of the institution.

On Tuesday 10 December 2024, University Court invited me to take on the interim leadership role and work with them to restore the University to a position of financial sustainability and health. That is what I am determined to do. I have committed myself, as leader of the University Executive, to meet the financial challenges facing the institution in a spirit of honesty, transparency and shared responsibility. This obliges me to bring to your attention the various inaccuracies, contained not only in Maggie Chapman MSP's letter to you of 17 December 2024, but also during her statements to the Education, Children and Young People Committee on 8 January 2025.

On Monday 18 November 2024, as Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost, I hosted a 'Principal's Questions' event for all staff, precisely for the purpose of answering questions. I set out for colleagues some key information explaining the key contributing factors to our difficult financial position, acknowledging what was known and what was still to be done in detailing how this happened and in setting out a full recovery plan. I then responded to questions for most of the session. The allegation that I would not answer questions at this event is false and it presents a highly misleading depiction of the approach we are adopting.



I am working with Executive Team and Court members to develop a comprehensive and compelling recovery plan. Driving this work is the clear understanding that our staff are the heartbeat of our university, and the key to our recovery. I have committed to providing them with updates as we progress. Staff are being kept informed through official channels, and I dispute any suggestion that staff must rely on external or social media for information.

On Thursday 12 December 2024, I attended a Townhall event, at the invitation of the three campus unions who were organising this to provide a forum for staff to share their views. I was invited to come and listen, which is what I did before agreeing with the organisers to speak briefly at the end. I did this to demonstrate a collective will to work together to set a new course and I acknowledged the frustrations and anxieties expressed and gave a commitment to continue to listen and engage with unions and other stakeholders.

The collegiate and constructive discussions I have had - and continue to have - with staff and unions have reaffirmed for me the fact that we have the will, the skills and the creative resilience needed to put the University on a steady path to a strong recovery. We are supported fully by our Court on this journey, and we have been engaging positively with the Scottish Funding Council on the development of our recovery plan.

All our collective energy is being directed at the development of a full recovery. Staff have been advised that we will be able to share this with them in a matter of weeks, and that this will be followed by an open and constructive consultation process.

Yours sincerely

Professor Shane O'Neill
Interim Principal & Vice-Chancellor