

Dundee UCU's Evaluation of whether the SFC's Conditions of Grant have been met by the Strategy to Recovery

This review evaluates the extent to which the SFC's Conditions of Grant have been met by the Strategy to Recovery submitted by the University of Dundee on 10 June 2026. In the evaluation below we show that:

- The Strategy to Recovery does not meet most of the SFC's conditions of grant
- The Conditions of Grant give SFC the opportunity to ensure that the University uses public money for public purposes.
- The University has not undertaken meaningful engagement with staff, students, or campus unions in developing the Strategy to Recovery.
- The University has not provided any internal stakeholders (aside from Court members) access to any documents outlined in the Conditions of Grant. This has made it impossible for these internal stakeholders to ensure that the University Management has fulfilled its responsibilities in relation to the Conditions of Grant.

The evaluation follows the points listed in the [Conditions of Grant published on the SFC's website](#).

14. High Level implementation plan: The campus unions and staff have not been given access to or had sight of this document. Therefore, no internal stakeholders (barring Court) have been able to evaluate whether the university has met the Key Performance Indicators identified to ensure that the Conditions of Grant have been met.

16. Structure Change Implementation Plan: The campus unions and staff have not had sight of this document. Therefore, no internal stakeholders (barring Court) have been able to evaluate whether the university has met the milestones in the delivery of the plan.

Strategy to Recovery

17. The University of Dundee hasn't met the following conditions required of the Strategy to Recovery:

i) “stabilise the university’s finances”: The University Executive Group has embarked on two rounds of VS in the last 10 months and has now announced a round of targeted redundancies. Alongside the ongoing policy of a recruitment freeze, this will result in a loss of about 1000 jobs within the last two years. While the University Executive Group is claiming that these job losses will stabilise the university’s finances, neither staff, students, or campus unions have seen evidence to support this claim.

(ii) “create a strategic path to recovery that aligns immediate and medium-term actions to long term goals”: **No medium-term actions or long-term goals have been discussed with staff, students or campus trade unions.**

(iii) “rebuild trust and accountability”: **There has been no meaningful engagement with staff (as will be shown below), which has not helped to rebuild trust or accountability. Instead, the University has embarked on a disruptive reorganization which has inflated the management layer of the university yet again, both in numbers and in cost. A total of 20 Deputy and Assistant Vice-Principals positions (all at Grade 10, the highest pay grade in the university) have been created at a time of substantial FTE losses elsewhere in the organization. In August 2025, the University of Dundee deferred a nationally agreed 1.1% pay ward for academic staff. No promotion rounds have been held since autumn 2024. This stands in stark contrast with the creation of twenty new grade 10 positions at the top of the organization. This has resulted in further erosion of trust between staff and the university management.**

18. The Strategy to Recovery must:

- “be the subject of a period of credible and meaningful engagement with staff and students, as assessed against the appended engagement framework which draws on the Scottish Government’s National Standards for Community Engagement Framework”: **There has been no credible or meaningful engagement with staff or students as shown in the Appendix below.**
- “be subject to adequate scrutiny, endorsement and ownership by the University Court”: **Although Court has approved the Strategy to Recovery, it has done so without receiving accurate and up-to-date financial and staffing information required to make an informed decision**
- “include a clear vision to guide decisions (including decisions on significant organisational restructuring) with a view to ensuring that short-term actions do not risk undermining future recover”: **The University Executive Group’s shortsighted**

decision-making since December 2025 has had a detrimental impact on the university's recovery, both in the short term and in the long term:

- The University Executive Group has not provided accurate information on organisational restructuring or engaged meaningfully with staff about this. Management restructuring plans were presented to staff, Senate and campus trade unions as largely fixed. There was little or no opportunity to challenge the plans or to stop and reverse them. Senate discussions were totally separate from the University Court discussions and did not feed into the decision-making at Court at key moments in this process.
- The implementation of the VS scheme in March and April 2026 resulted in multiple instances documented by Dundee UCU of examination boards being unable to function properly due to inadequate staffing. Academic staff facing disproportionately high workloads were placed under even more pressure to ensure that the examination boards were completed in time for students to graduate in June, taking on administrative tasks typically performed by academic support.
- The shortage of staff has led to the withdrawal of support for income generation activities (e.g., funding applications by academic staff), as documented by Dundee UCU.
- “contain a detailed workforce plan and evidence of staff engagement, detailing the rationale for the future size and shape of the University and how the future staffing structure will support the University of the future”: As shown in the Appendix below, there has been no meaningful engagement with staff in the creation of the workforce plan. The loss of 1000 jobs in less than two years is an irreversible medium and long-term impact on the university and, DUCU argue, will lead to a decline and closure of the university.
- “provide evidence (including from staff engagement) for decisions around income generation and savings, providing a rationale for decisions that are being taken and how they will support long-term recovery and success”: The issue of income generation has not been discussed with staff or campus trade unions at all.

19. "To ensure that the structure of the future workforce is congruent with the medium term Strategy to Recovery, UoD must not begin a compulsory redundancy process, relating to the Strategy to Recovery before the Strategy to Recovery including the workforce plan and meaningful engagement with staff and students has been completed and evidenced to SFC by the University Court.": Dundee UCU has evidence that a process of redundancy already started at the University before the Strategy to Recovery was approved by Court or the SFC.

21. **Strategy to recovery implementation plan:** Neither campus unions nor staff have had sight of this document.

22. **Academic operating model:** Neither campus unions nor staff have had sight of this document.

23. The Academic Operation model should "be the subject of a period of credible engagement with staff and students, as assessed against the appended engagement framework which draws on the Scottish Government's National Standards for Community Engagement Framework": Neither campus unions nor staff have been consulted on this document.

24. **Longer term strategy:** Neither campus unions nor staff have had sight of this document

25. The Longer-term strategy should "be the subject of a period of credible engagement with staff and students, as assessed against the appended engagement framework which draws on the Scottish Government's National Standards for Community Engagement Framework": Neither campus unions nor staff have been consulted on this document.

The Longer term strategy should "provide evidence (including from staff engagement) for decisions around income generation and savings, explaining why decisions are being taken and how they will support long-term recovery and success": Neither campus unions nor staff have been consulted on this document.

Robustness and Transparency of Governance

28. Dundee UCU has evidence to show that the failings of the governance process in terms of its robustness and transparency continue despite the recommendations issued in the [Gillies report](#).

34. "UoD must consider and, as far as reasonably practicable, implement any recommendations arising from:

- any accountancy or other financial or commercial advisors commissioned by UoD; and
- any review (internal or otherwise) of the expenses process and procurement process at UoD."

There is no evidence provided to campus unions or staff to show this has been done.

35. **Leadership and Governance Plan:** Staff and campus unions have not had sight of this document.

39. "UoD must when reasonably requested to do so provide SFC with ongoing assurance that UoD has:

- an appropriate and robust model for the costing of its research activity;
- a suitable and appropriately resourced Strategy and Planning function; and
- has developed or reviewed its workload allocation."

Neither staff nor campus unions have been provided evidence that any of this has been done. There is no agreed workload allocation system in place. The costing of research activity continues to be flawed as the University relies on a model previously used.

45. "When undertaking voluntary severance, the UoD should consider the impact of the severances to ensure that they do not undermine the Strategy to Recovery and its workforce plan and provide evidence of this to SFC. The UoD process should adhere to Fair Work First Principles.": The University did not provide evidence to staff or campus unions that the VS scheme implemented in March and April 2026 met the requirements of Fair Work First Principles. The scheme did not include an equality impact assessment. No health and safety related risk assessment was undertaken at the start of the process.

46. "The University should consider the timing of both voluntary and compulsory redundancies to minimise the impact on students": The University Management was warned by campus unions that the timeline of the Voluntary Severance scheme enacted in March and April 2026 would create a situation of unprecedented risk to the Quality Assurance and Accreditation of the University degrees being processed and

ratified by examination boards in May. This was ignored by Management. The implementation of the VS scheme resulted in multiple instances documented by Dundee UCU of examination boards being unable to function due to inadequate levels of staffing of professional services staff. Staff who are already facing disproportionately high workloads were placed under even more pressure to ensure that the examination boards were completed in time to enable students to graduate. DUCU is aware of instances where understaffing led to errors in marking transcriptions that meant that students, who previously thought they had passed a module (based on the information they were given) will now have to do summer resits.

47-52. **Engagement strategy** – See Appendix below.

54. "SFC reserves the right to commission an independent expert to provide us with assurance that the UoD continues to comply with the conditions attached to the funding provided and is progressing the delivery against the products contained in this document. The UoD must comply with paragraph 66 of this document in relation to the access to be provided to the SFC appointed expert."

In light of 1) UoD management's opinion that the conditions of grant have been fulfilled, 2) the points raised above that clearly demonstrate the opposite, and 3) the conflicting interests of both parties as to what a sustainable strategy for the future of UoD should look like, Dundee UCU has urged the SFC to commission an independent expert to provide this assurance before deciding whether the University has met the conditions of grant. This request has not been taken up by the SFC.

Appendix. Review of the Engagement with Staff on the University Recovery plan – June 2026

The conditions of funding from the SFC to the University of Dundee state that

20. *The Strategy to Recovery must:*

- *be the subject of a period of credible and meaningful engagement with staff and students, as assessed against the appended engagement framework which draws on the Scottish Government's National Standards for Community Engagement Framework;*

[Scotland's National Community Engagement Standards can be found here.](#)

Standard 1 - Inclusion

How will we know we have met this standard?

- The people and groups who are affected by the focus of the engagement are involved at the earliest opportunity.

This did not happen. At no point in the process were staff or students engaged with “at the earliest opportunity.” Instead, they were engaged with after plans were put in motion or approved by Court. The management treated an information gathering activity through one staff survey and three staff workshops as equivalent to an engagement activity. Campus trade unions raised this at a Local Joint Meeting on Tuesday 3rd February, one hour before the first communication with staff on the Strategy of Recovery was planned. We pointed out that staff had not been involved in the design of the engagement process. Ironically, the campus trade union person raising this issue was cut-off mid-sentence and was told that all of the Community Engagement Principles would be followed.

- Measures are taken to involve groups with protected characteristics (see below) and people who are excluded from participating due to disadvantage relating to social or economic factors.

No special measures were taken. The workshops were face-to-face. There was no hybrid option, meaning that some staff with caring responsibilities, staff working part time, or staff who cannot incur the cost of travel for an additional day may have been excluded.

- Participants in the community engagement process commit to continued two-way communication with the people they work with or represent.

There has been no two-way engagement with staff in the Strategy to Recovery process. Staff’s opinions were recorded but no results or consequences of this exercise were ever shared with staff. There has been no meaningful engagement with staff since the survey and workshops took place in February 2026.

- A wide range of opinions, including minority and opposing views, are valued in the engagement process.

Due to the lack of any meaningful engagement, this never happened. Opposing views by staff and staff representatives were blocked by senior management from being presented to Court. When staff representatives sought to engage Court members, they were prevented from doing so. When staff reached out to Court members directly, they were publicly chastised and their integrity challenged. A draft alternative [strategy to recovery proposed by DUCU](#) was never discussed, neither at Court, nor with management.

Standard 2 - Support

How will we know we have met this standard?

- An assessment of support needs is carried out, involving all participants.

This assessment, if carried out, did not involve participants in the workshops or surveys or the broader staff or student populations.

- Action is taken to remove or reduce any practical barriers which make it difficult for people to take part in engagement activities.

There was a single timeframe for information gathering activity from the survey opening on 2nd February and closing on the 27th February 2026, the in-person workshops were also held in this period. No meaningful engagement activity took place.

- Access to impartial and independent development support is provided for groups involved in the community engagement process.

Access to development support was not available to staff at any time.

Standard 3 – Planning

How will we know we have met this standard?

- Partners are involved at the start of the process in identifying and defining the focus that the engagement will explore.

Staff and students were told what the first step in the process would be. At no stage were staff or students involved in the planning of the engagement with the Strategy to Recovery.

- A clear and agreed engagement plan is in place.

There was no agreed engagement plan.

- All available information which can affect the engagement process has been shared and used to develop the community engagement plan.

Impossible as there was no community engagement plan.

- Partners agree what the outcomes of the engagement process should be, what indicators will be used to measure success, and what evidence will be gathered.

Impossible as staff were not involved in the planning process.

- The timescales for the engagement process are realistic.

There was no engagement process.

- There are sufficient resources to support an effective engagement process.

See above.

Standard 4 – Working Together

How will we know we have met this standard?

- The roles and responsibilities of everyone involved are clear and understood.

This is possibly the only standard that has been met. It was clear from the start of the process that the role of staff was to provide information that could then be used to justify cuts to their own jobs. This contributed to the very poor participation rates vis-a-vis the staff survey and staff working groups. The outcome of the engagement process was pre-determined. Management's role was to produce and publish a University Recovery Plan, and to stick with it irrespective of the views collected from staff. In that sense, the roles were clear from the outset.

- Decision-making processes and procedures are agreed and followed.

There were no agreed processes and procedures.

- The methods of communication used during the engagement process meet the needs of all participants.

Emails have been the only method of communication.

- Information that is important to the engagement process is accessible and shared in time for all participants to properly read and understand it.

Again, there has been no engagement process.

- Communication between all participants is open, honest and clear.

There was no communication with participants following the survey and workshops held in February 2026.

- The community engagement process is based on trust and mutual respect.

There could not be less trust and mutual respect displayed by the University Executive Group and the Chair of Court during this process.

- Participants are supported to develop their skills and confidence during the engagement.

There was no engagement process.

Standard 5 - Methods

How will we know we have met this standard?

- The methods used are appropriate for the purpose of the engagement.
- The methods used are acceptable and accessible to participants.
- A variety of methods are used throughout the engagement to make sure that a wide range of voices is heard.
- Full use is made of creative methods which encourage maximum participation and effective dialogue.
- The methods used are evaluated and adapted, if necessary, in response to feedback from participants and partners.

There was no engagement process. There was no use of creative methods. There is no planned evaluation of the information collecting activities –at least, as far as the campus trade unions know.

Standard 6 - Communication

How will we know we have met this standard?

- Information on the community engagement process, and what has happened as a result, is clear and easy to access and understand.

There has been no engagement process.

- Information is made available in appropriate formats.
- Without breaking confidentiality, participants have access to all information that is relevant to the engagement.

Participants have not seen a summary of their own views collected in February 2026.

- Systems are in place to make sure the views of the wider community continuously help to shape the engagement process.

There was no engagement process. The Strategy to Recovery was sent to Court as a confidential document. University of Dundee staff have had no sight of the document or been informed of any of its contents.

- Feedback is a true representation of the range of views expressed during the engagement process.

The feedback has not been shared with participants. It is impossible to tell if this standard has been met.

- Feedback includes information on: » the engagement process; » the options which have been considered; and » the decisions and actions that have been agreed, and the reasons why.

There was no engagement process and there was no feedback shared.

Standard 7 – Impact

How will we know we have met this standard?

- The outcomes the engagement process intended to achieve are met.

If the intention was either to ignore the views of participants or to select only those views most palatable to senior management at the University of Dundee, then the process has achieved this aim.

- Decisions which are taken reflect the views of participants in the community engagement process.

How would participants know this? They have not seen either a summary of feedback or the Strategy to Recovery. (The latter document was only released to staff on 16 June 2026.)

- Local outcomes, or services, are improved as result of the engagement process.

Local services will be eroded by the £20m of job cuts included in the Strategy to Recovery.

- Participants have improved skills, confidence and ability to take part in community engagement in the future.

No.

- Partners are involved in monitoring and reviewing the quality of the engagement process and what has happened as a result.

That will be quite difficult for some partners, who will cease to be employed at the University of Dundee due to redundancy proceedings this summer.

- Feedback is provided to the wider community on how the engagement process has influenced decisions and what has changed as a result.

There was no engagement process.

- Learning and evaluation helps to shape future community engagement processes.

There is no way of capturing learning. There is no evaluation that participants are aware of.