

17 February 2026

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

Dear Mr Ross,

Education, Children and Young People Committee of 28 January, 2026

At the Education, Children and Young People Committee session on 28 January 2026, several Campus Trade Union representatives, including one from the University of Strathclyde, provided evidence. I welcome the Committee's constructive scrutiny and the opportunity to respond to the points raised, and to offer further context on the University of Strathclyde's governance arrangements, organisational change processes and support for colleagues.

I have grouped the University's clarifications under the following four headings:

- Governance
- Discrimination
- Collective Consultation
- Pension Provision

Governance

The University of Strathclyde is fully compliant with the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016 and the Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance (2023) ("the Code"). Our Court includes elected staff, student members and nominees from each of our recognised trade unions as well as members drawn from outside the University ("lay members"). All are full members, with equal voting rights and equal legal responsibilities to act in the interests of the University as a whole.

To support transparency, I would like to clarify the status and expectations of union-nominated members. Like all Court members, the Code makes clear they are required to act independently rather than as representatives of a constituency, and to observe appropriate confidentiality where commercially sensitive or reserved staffing matters are under discussion. These are standard governance practices designed to protect individuals and the institution.

Recognising that staff and student Court members may have less experience of non-executive governance than external members, we provide optional advance briefing discussions with senior officers to support their full participation. The assertion made to your Committee that a member of Court nominated by a Trade Union is told by the Vice-Principal, before Court meetings, that they may not speak is completely wrong. All members

The place of useful learning

are strongly encouraged to contribute actively, and no Court member has ever been discouraged from participating in debate. Minutes are published following their approval by Court at a subsequent meeting, with non-confidential papers available on request, in line with common governance practice.

I note the Committee's interest in the wider Scottish governance landscape. The University of Strathclyde Court has considered the Gillies Report at every meeting since its publication and has used its analysis as a stimulus to strengthen aspects of our own governance. While the circumstances at Strathclyde differ fundamentally from those at the University of Dundee, we are taking forward lessons relevant to the wider sector. In addition, I have led briefings for Court, Senate and staff leadership groups to ensure that the implications of the report are fully understood across the University and that appropriate governance enhancements are implemented.

Discrimination

Assertions made at the session that colleagues with disabilities have been targeted as part of our transformation activity are unfounded. The University is committed to fair, inclusive and respectful treatment at all stages of workforce planning. Our reshaping activity is driven solely by the need to ensure the long-term sustainability of our operations, protect our academic mission, and embed greater efficiency and resilience.

Transformation cases focus on reviewing roles and organisational structures, not individuals. All proposals and decisions are subject to equality impact assessment and must comply fully with equality legislation. The University remains committed to supporting colleagues with disabilities and ensuring adjustments and protections remain in place throughout any organisational change.

Collective Consultation

As part of our response to the significant financial pressures affecting the higher education sector across Scotland and the wider UK, we are undertaking a programme of organisational reshaping aligned with the aims of our Strathclyde 2030 strategy.

The scale of the financial challenge was communicated to colleagues throughout 2025 via staff engagement sessions and institution-wide communications from both our previous Principal in early 2025 and myself, when I took up the role in September 2025. Savings are being delivered through increased income generation, non-salary efficiencies, vacancy management, natural turnover and structural change.

We are currently engaged in collective consultation with our recognised trade unions on a range of proposals. Combined with an earlier process that began last year, these discussions may lead to the removal of up to 76 full time equivalent positions in the organisation. The current consultation is taking place over an extended period from January to March 2026 to ensure careful consideration of all views and alternative options. In the first instance, colleagues potentially affected have been invited to express interest in voluntary severance. Redeployment to alternative roles remains a priority wherever possible to minimise compulsory redundancies.

Pension Provision

On 1 June 2025, colleagues previously enrolled in the Strathclyde Pension Fund transferred to the Universities Superannuation Scheme, bringing all staff into a single, high-quality, defined benefit pension scheme, consequently improving the University's financial resilience.

This change followed extended consultation with Unite, Unison and UCU and, ultimately, received collective agreement from all three recognised campus trade unions. The University put in place a comprehensive package of additional protections for those transferring.

All accrued Strathclyde Pension Fund benefits remain fully protected and accessible upon retirement.

I trust this letter provides the Committee with a clear explanation of our approach and of the principles underpinning our governance, organisational change and staff support. We remain committed to acting with integrity, transparency and care as we continue to navigate the challenges facing the sector. I would be pleased to supply any further information that would assist the Committee in its work.

Yours sincerely,

A large black rectangular box used to redact a signature.

Professor Stephen McArthur
Principal and Vice Chancellor