

**Fol document 1**

4 April 2023

Mr Graeme Dey MSP  
Minister for Higher and Further Education; and Minister for Veterans  
Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

Dear Graeme,

I'm writing to offer my congratulations on your recent appointment as the Minister for Higher and Further Education and Minister for Veterans in the Scottish Government.

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

Your appointment comes at a difficult time for the education sector as we continue our recovery from the pandemic and contend with the impact of the cost-of-living crisis. [redacted - Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation]. I hope that we can work together to ensure the financial sustainability of our world-class institutions and increase opportunities for everyone to benefit from a university education.

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

Very best wishes,

Professor Liz Bacon  
Principal and Vice-Chancellor

*From the office of the Principal and Vice-Chancellor*

**Professor Liz Bacon**

Bell Street | Dundee | Scotland | DD1 1 HG

**T:** [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information] (Direct) +44 | (0)1382 308000  
(Switchboard)

**E:** l.bacon@abertay.ac.uk | **W:** abertay.ac.uk

**Fol document 2**

From: [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]  
Sent: 19 September 2023 14:31  
To: Minister for Higher Education, Further Education, and Veterans  
<MinisterHEFEV@gov.scot>  
Cc: [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]@@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]@gov.scot>; Stuart Greig <Stuart.Greig@transport.gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]@@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]@gov.scot>; Communications Education & Skills  
<CommunicationsEducationandSkills@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]@gov.scot>; Sean McGivern <Sean.McGivern@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills <CabSecforES@gov.scot>; DG Education & Justice <dgej@gov.scot>; Director for Lifelong Learning and Skills <DirectorforLifelongLearningandSkills@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]@gov.scot

Subject: RE: Mr Dey visit to Abertay University on 22nd September - Briefing

Good afternoon

Please find attached briefing for Mr Dey's visit to Abertay University on 22<sup>nd</sup> September.

Thanks,

[redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]

[redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information] Senior Policy Officer | Higher Education Governance and Quality | Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Skills | Scottish Government

5 Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow, G2 8LU

E: [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]@gov.scot; Mob: [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]

**Minister for Higher and Further Education; Minister for Veterans**

<b>What</b>	Introductory visit to Abertay University
<b>Where</b>	Kydd Building, Abertay University, Bell St, Dundee, DD1 1HG
<b>When</b>	22 <sup>nd</sup> September 2023, 14:00-15:30
<b>Key Message(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Despite a challenging financial environment, we are keen to work with you to ensure that the Scottish higher education sector continues to play a key role in the lifelong learning and skills system in the years ahead, delivering the best outcomes and impact for learners, the economy and society.</li> <li>• Purpose and Principles sets out our delivery priorities for lifelong learning and skills, including our position on the Skills Delivery Landscape Review’s recommendations.</li> <li>• We continue to recognise and value the world-leading teaching, research, innovation and knowledge exchange delivered by Scottish higher education institutions, and the high esteem in which they are held internationally.</li> </ul>
<b>Who</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professor Liz Bacon (Principal &amp; Vice-Chancellor, Abertay University)</li> <li>• Professor Alastair Irons (Deputy Principal &amp; Deputy Vice-Chancellor)</li> <li>• Caroline Summers (Vice Principal, Strategy &amp; Planning)</li> <li>• Professor Gregor White (Dean of Design &amp; Informatics, Professor of Applied Creativity)</li> <li>• Gordon Weir (Director of Finance Infrastructure and Corporate Services)</li> <li>• Eilidh Fraser (Director of People and Organisational Development)</li> </ul> <p><i>Key Abertay contact:</i> [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information], Communications Manager ( [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]@abertay.ac.uk; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]</p>
<b>Why</b>	You accepted an invite to visit the University in July (ref: 202300351563).
<b>Supporting official</b>	[redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]@Institutional Governance and Reform Unit; Mob: [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]
<b>Briefing contents</b>	<p><b>Annex A:</b> Visit programme  <b>Annex B:</b> Abertay Uni – Potential issues/sensitivities  <b>Annex C:</b> Reform of Lifelong Learning and Skills System  <b>Annex D:</b> Other Higher Education issues – Lines to take  <b>Annex E:</b> Abertay University – SFC Overview  <b>Annex F:</b> Biographies  <b>Annex G:</b> Campus map/parking</p>
<b>Media Handling/ Social Media</b>	Comms arrangements to be handled separately. There are no plans for a press release or press attendance. Pictures for use on social media will be taken throughout the industry showcase section of the visit.

	SG Comms: [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information] Mob: [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]
<b>Meeting point on arrival</b>	You will arrive at Kydd Building main reception, where you will be met by Graeme Bletcher (Communications Manager, Abertay University).
<b>Car parking</b>	See Annex H.

**ANNEX A**

**VISIT PROGRAMME**

Time	Item
14:00-15:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discussion with Principal on funding matters and Abertay's strategic priorities (see Annex B)</li></ul>
15:00-15:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• [redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]</li></ul>
15:30	Minister departs.

**ANNEX B**

**ABERTAY UNI – POTENTIAL ISSUES/SENSITIVITIES**

**Abertay funding concerns (Provided by the University)**

***Background***

1. [redacted - Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation]
2. [redacted - Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation]
3. [redacted - Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation]
4. [redacted - Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation]
5. [redacted - Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation]
6. [redacted - Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation]
7. [redacted - Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation]
8. [redacted - Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation]

***University's response to financial challenges***

1. [redacted - Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation]
2. [redacted - Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation]

**SFC financial sustainability monitoring of Abertay (not for sharing externally)**

1. [redacted - Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation]
2. [redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

[redacted - Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation]

## ANNEX C

### REFORM OF LIFELONG LEARNING AND SKILLS SYSTEM

[redacted – outside of scope of FoI request]

## ANNEX D

### OTHER HIGHER EDUCATION ISSUES – LINES TO TAKE

[redacted – outside of scope of FoI request]

#### ***Abertay net zero campus investment / funding for estates strategy:***

- Welcome Abertay's support for the transition to net zero, using funds from the SFC's Financial Transactions programme, with the main campus buildings having undergone a major renovation to improve thermal efficiency and reduce carbon footprint.
- I would encourage Abertay to discuss future funding concerns with the Scottish Funding Council in the first instance.
- Aware that the SFC have supported five estates projects with its Financial Transactions programme funding totalling £11.36m, supporting Abertay's long-term vision for the campus.

#### ***Abertay application to Scotland's Heat Network Fund (SHNF) for full funding to create a new Energy Centre and associated accommodation:***

- The Scottish Government remains supportive of Abertay University's proposed heat network project.
- Scottish Government is committed to decarbonising all buildings by 2045 which is why we have made available £1.8 billion over this parliamentary session to boost the deployment of low carbon heating and energy efficiency retrofit.
- Heat networks will play a vital role in reducing the carbon emissions of how we heat our buildings. Through the Heat Network (Scotland) Act 2021, Scotland has very ambitious targets for the deployment of heat networks.
- Scotland's Heat Network Fund has made available £300 million to 2026 to accelerate roll-out of heat networks, helping establish the Scottish supply chain and leveraging investment.
- [redacted - section 30(b)(i) – free and frank provision of advice]
- To ensure value for money of public funds and fairness across the funding programme, grant support from SHNF is limited at a maximum of 50% of the eligible costs of the heat network.
- [redacted - section 30(b)(i) – free and frank provision of advice]

#### ***Abertay cyberQuarter:***

- The cyberQuarter is an £18 million cyber security research and development centre with a focus on academic and industry collaboration, and increasing access to cyber employment opportunities by nurturing cyber security talent from school age through to Higher Education.

- It will help establish the Tay Cities region as a centre of best practice in applied research, development and knowledge exchange in cyber security.
- I welcome the aims of the cyberQuarter to attract new and existing cyber security firms to the region, support the creation of new companies, boost the security and resilience of the Scottish business community and facilitate the creation of new products and services through innovation-led research.
- The Scottish Government's £6 million funding through the Tay Cities Region Deal will help build on Abertay's existing strengths to take advantage of these opportunities and deliver sustainable, inclusive prosperity for the region.

***Tay Cities Deal:***

- The Deal is investing £300 million in the Tay Cities region over ten years, with Scottish and UK Governments each contributing £150 million.
- Regional partners anticipate that the Deal will create 6,000 jobs and lever a further £400 million of investment into the region.
- The Deal includes over £50 million of funding to the universities of Abertay and Dundee to invest in research and innovation in cybersecurity, justice and life sciences.
- The Deal is supporting the Growing the Tay Cities Biomedical Cluster and JustTech projects at the University of Dundee (£40 million in total, of which £25 million is from Scottish Government, towards the Biomedical project, with the remainder from UK Government); and the cyberQuarter project at Abertay University (£11.7 million, of which £6 million is from Scottish Government).
- All funding through the Deal has been committed to named projects and programmes, as agreed with regional partners when the Deal was signed. No further funding is available.

[redacted – outside of scope of FoI request]

**ANNEX E**

**ABERTAY UNIVERSITY – SFC OVERVIEW**

**Widening Access / Articulation**

[redacted – outside of scope of FOI request]

**Student recruitment and retention**

[redacted – outside of scope of FOI request]

**Research**

[redacted – outside of scope of FOI request]

**ANNEX F**

**KEY BIOGRAPHIES**

[redacted – outside of scope of FOI request]

**ANNEX G**

**CAMPUS MAP/PARKING**

[redacted – outside of scope of FOI request]

### **Fol document 3**

## **Note of visit to the University of Abertay by the Minister for Higher Education, Further Education and Minister for Veterans**

**22 September 2023**

### **In Attendance:**

Minister for Higher Education, Further Education and Minister for Veterans  
Professor Liz Bacon (Principal & Vice-Chancellor, Abertay University)  
Gordon Weir (Director of Finance Infrastructure and Corporate Services)  
Caroline Summers (Vice Principal, Strategy & Planning)  
Professor Alastair Irons (Deputy Principal & Deputy Vice-Chancellor)  
Eilidh Fraser (Director of People and Organisational Development)  
Jackie McKenzie (Director of External and Corporate Relations)

[redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]

[redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]

[redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]

The Minister met with all attendees for a roundtable discussion. The following points were discussed:

- Attendees from the University of Abertay highlighted projected challenges around maintaining financial sustainability over the next two financial years. These challenges stemmed from a range of factors, including the difficulties the University currently experienced in attracting international and rUK students, leading to a high dependence on Scottish Government-funded Scottish domiciled students. Challenges with recruiting a diverse range of students had increased since the UK's exit from the EU. Other factors contributing to financial difficulties included covering recent increases in staff pay and energy bill levels, as well as the impact of covering costs arising from RAAC being present in some of Abertay's buildings.
- Attendees also highlighted work that was underway to diversify the University's provision in order to improve financial sustainability. This included delivering qualifications internationally, exploring new partnerships with countries such as Egypt and Sri Lanka, and continuing to drive forward a range of innovative work in the fields of technology, food technology and computer gaming. The aim was that over time the University would be less dependent on SG/SAAS funding as a proportion of its income. However, they noted that the benefits of this work to diversify funding sources would likely take time and would not mitigate the sustainability challenges projected for the next few financial years.
- [redacted - Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation]
- In relation to the point about the scope to revisit the funding distribution model, the Minister highlighted that any changes would have to be taken forward on the basis of a collective approach looking across the wider HE sector rather than on the basis of the perspective of any one type of institution. He also highlighted the role of SFC and Universities Scotland in

taking forward discussions in relation to the funding model and the specific issue of clawback of funds, and indicated he was content to have those discussions with both bodies at a sectoral level.

- [redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]
- [redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]
- [redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]
- In the context of discussions around reforming the tertiary education system, the Minister highlighted that a key priority was reducing duplication and inefficiencies in the funding system, and that a system where funding more effectively followed the learner was a key goal. All attendees agreed that this would represent a positive change.

[redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]

**Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Skills**  
**28 September 2023**

**Fol document 4**

From: [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]@gov.scot>  
Sent: 08 May 2025 13:06  
To: Minister for Higher and Further Education; and Minister for Veterans  
<MinisterHFEV@gov.scot>  
Cc: Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs 2024  
<CabSecforJHA@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal  
information]@gov.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills 2024  
<CabSecES2024@gov.scot>; Shirley Laing <Shirley.Laing@gov.scot>; Director of  
Safer Communities <DirectorofSaferCommunities@gov.scot>; Penelope Curtis  
<Penelope.Curtis@gov.scot>; Naureen Ahmad <Naureen.Ahmad@gov.scot>;  
[redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section  
38(1)(b) – personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal  
information]@gov.scot>; Erin Mckee <Erin.Mckee@gov.scot>; [redacted – section  
38(1)(b) – personal information]@gov.scot>; Communications Justice and Home  
Affairs <CommunicationsJusticeAndHomeAffairs@gov.scot>; Communications  
Education & Skills <CommunicationsEducationandSkills@gov.scot>; [redacted –  
section 38(1)(b) – personal information]@gov.scot>; Cyber Resilience Unit  
<CyberResilience@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal  
information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal  
information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal  
information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal  
information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal  
information]@gov.scot>  
Subject: RE: Brief and speaking note: Launch of Cyber Resilience and You! Learning  
resource at Abertay cyberQuarter 9 May

Hi [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]

As discussed, please see updated briefing for the Cyber Resilience and You launch  
at Abertay cyberQuarter tomorrow 9 May 2025.

The changes have been made to the agenda in relation to the order of speeches.  
The other change to be noted is the reservation of car park space number 10 for Mr  
Dey.

Any questions please let me know.

*Kind Regards*

[redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]  
| The National Cyber Security and Resilience Division | Scottish Government

**Minister for Higher Education, Further Education & Veterans**

**Briefing for Cyber Resilience and You Launch**

<b>What</b>	Launch of <i>Cyber Resilience and You!</i> a new online cyber resilience learning resource for university and college students funded by the Scottish Government. The launch has been organised to coincide with a visit to Abertay University's cyberQuarter Honours Project Showcase event.
<b>Where</b>	Abertay cyberQuarter, 1-3 Bell Street, Dundee, DD1 1HG
<b>When</b>	Friday 9 May 2025, 12.00-13.00
<b>Key Message(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Scottish Government is clear that cyber resilience and strong cyber security skills are essential in today's digital age. As cyber threats become more frequent and advanced, we need to be ready to withstand and recover from attacks quickly. This is why we are investing in cyber security education, training and skills to help build a digitally secure and resilient Scotland.</li> <li>• We want to equip and embed basic cyber resilience knowledge and skills of all college and university students in Scotland.</li> </ul>
<b>Who</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professor Liz Bacon - Principal &amp; Vice-Chancellor</li> <li>• Dr Natalie Coull - Head of the Department of Cyber Security</li> <li>• Professor Lynne Coventry, Head of cyberQuarter</li> <li>• [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]</li> <li>• [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]</li> </ul>
<b>Why</b>	Ministerial launch of the new <i>Cyber Resilience and You!</i> Online learning resource for all college and university students in Scotland. Funded by Scottish Government.
<b>Supporting official</b>	[redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]
<b>Briefing contents</b>	<b>Annex A:</b> Visit programme <b>Annex B:</b> Summary background <b>Annex C:</b> Top Lines <b>Annex D:</b> Abertay University – potential issues/sensitivities <b>Annex E:</b> Biographies
<b>Media Handling</b>	No media presence.
<b>Greeting Party and specific meeting point on arrival</b>	You will be greeted on arrival by <b>Professor Liz Bacon</b> at the main reception of the Kydd building (cyberQuarter).

<b>Specific entrance for Ministerial car/parking arrangements</b>	Car parking space number 10 has been reserved for the Minister to park within the staff car park along Bell Street. The Minister is to enter the barrier and press the intercom for entrance into the staff car park.
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**VISIT PROGRAMME**

<b>12:00</b>	<b><u>Minister arrives</u></b>  Greeted by <b>Professor Liz Bacon</b>  Walk to cyberQuarter foyer to be met by <b>Dr Natalie Coull, Professor Lynne Coventry</b> and [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]  Tea and coffee available
<b>12:10</b>	<b><u>Launch of Cyber Resilience and You!</u></b>  Opening remarks from <b>Professor Liz Bacon</b> .  <b>Minister</b> to deliver short speech.  Photo opportunity
<b>12:20</b>	<b><u>Live demonstration</u></b>  [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information] will lead a demo of the resource and invite the <b>Minister</b> to try it.  Photo opportunities.
<b>12:30</b>	<b><u>cyberQuarter Honours Project Showcase</u></b>  <b>Dr Natalie Coull</b> will introduce <b>Minister</b> to students and their projects  Photo opportunities
<b>12:50</b>	<b>Minister</b> to meet with four Abertay cyberQuarter partners: ScotlandIS, Smart Net Zero, Systal Technologies and NCR Atleos .
<b>13:00</b>	<b><u>Minister departs</u></b>

## ANNEX B

### SUMMARY BACKGROUND

#### ***Cyber Resilience and You!***

- The National Cyber Resilience Unit has worked with Abertay and St Andrew's Universities to develop the new e-learning resource.
- The focus of the learning is to raise awareness amongst students of cyber risks and equip them with the skills to protect themselves online so that they can make best use of digital technologies.
- The resource has been funded by the Scottish Government (£37,500) and is aligned to the National Cyber Security Centre's (NCSC) guidance.
- It is freely available to all students in colleges and universities in Scotland.
- The launch is timely given the current high profile of cyber security in the media. Educational institutions are prime targets for cyber crime due to the amount of sensitive data they hold.
- Improving cyber skills in the general student population helps reduce the risk of a cyber security incident at their place of study.
- *Cyber Resilience and You!* has been developed under two grant-funded projects:
  - the first, with St Andrews University, developed baseline material, co-designed with students and security staff and covering cyber security fundamentals of cyber security; and
  - the second, with Abertay University, aligned that with NCSC authoritative guidance and created a standalone, self-directed online learning.
- The Scottish Government has funded Abertay University to lead on the roll out of the learning resource and associated communications across colleges and universities in Scotland.

#### ***Abertay cyberQuarter***

- The cyberQuarter opened in June 2022 and has a clear focus on academic and industry collaboration, increasing access to cyber security employment opportunities and nurturing cyber security talent from school age through to Higher Education.
- The Tay Cities Region Deal funded the establishment of the cyberQuarter project (£11.7 million, of which £6 million is from Scottish Government). Abertay University has also provided funding of £6.5m.
- The cyberQuarter will help establish Tay Cities Region as a centre of best practice in applied research, development and knowledge exchange in cyber security.
- There is a major shortage of skilled cyber security professionals at a Scottish, UK and global level, and cyber security learning and research is a key strength at Abertay. The University was the first university in the world to offer a degree in ethical hacking and have a distinct teaching and research offer built around this and offensive cybersecurity. It was also one of the first universities in the UK to be awarded Academic Centre of Excellence in Cyber Security Education recognition in December 2020 by the National Cyber Security Centre.
- Abertay University's unique approach to teaching and research in cyber security and ethical hacking has been supported by SFC funding, and it is using its globally recognised gold standard Centre for Excellence to create a new home for

cyber security and digital economy companies in Dundee, based on the supply of talent in the region.

- As part of a network of universities including Oxford, Birmingham, Bath and UCL called the 'Cyber Security research and Networking Environment' (CRANE), Abertay has been successful in winning £6 million of funding from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) to nurture collaborative research and address cyber security challenges, particularly around manufacturing and emerging technologies.

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

## ANNEX C

### TOP LINES

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

## ANNEX D

### ABERTAY UNIVERSITY – POTENTIAL SENSITIVITIES/ISSUES

#### Funding concerns and student recruitment challenges

- [redacted - Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation]
- [redacted - Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation]
- [redacted - Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation]
- [redacted - Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation]
- [redacted - Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation]
- [redacted - Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation]
- [redacted - Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation]
- [redacted - Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation]
- [redacted - Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation]

### **Abertay University – Financial statement**

- In its latest annual accounts for the year through to the end of July 2024, Abertay University reported a deficit (before other gains and losses) of £578,000, down from a £1.2m surplus the previous year.
- The report notes that Abertay is taking action to ensure long-term financial sustainability by reducing reliance on Scottish Government funding, diversifying its income streams and generating operational efficiencies. Its downturn in Scottish student recruitment has coincided with increases in energy costs, pensions, employers' national insurance contributions and salary expectations within the labour market.
- [redacted - section 30(b)(i) – free and frank provision of advice]. The University have cited a number of factors to explain this trend:
  - a. EU students are no longer funded by SFC; therefore the pool of eligible students reduced from 2021-22 onwards as EU students graduated and were not replaced.
  - b. The loss of EU students, combined with an increase in funded places introduced following the revised 2020 SQA qualification results during the pandemic, increased competition for Scottish students between Scottish universities.
- In reviewing funding allocations for 2024-25, SFC removed some of the additional 'SQA' places introduced during the pandemic and redistributed the funding according to recruitment levels, leading to Abertay's number of places dropping by 76 FTE.
- Non-EU student fee income increased to £3.6m, compared to £3.0m the previous year. A focus on developing transnational education (TNE) has led to an increase in active TNE partnerships from 4 in 2022-23 to 6 in 2023-24, with further growth expected in 2024-25.

### **SFC Indicative Funding Allocations For 2025-26 – Abertay University**

- Teaching grant funding:
  - £18,870,728 (1.3% increase on 2024-25)
  - Reduction of 93.2 FTE funded places to 3,264.1, compared to 2025-26.
  - **Note:** The SFC has removed 2,500 additional 'SQA' places introduced in academic year 2021-22 and repurposed the associated funding to enhance the teaching unit of resource – teaching subject prices for 2025-26 have therefore increased by 3.3% across all six subject price groups.
- Research and Innovation grant funding: £2,104,243 (5.5% increase on 2024-25)
- Combined teaching/R&I grant funding: £20,974,971 (1.7% increase on 2024-25)
- Capital maintenance grant funding: £128,729 (0.4% decrease on 2024-25)

[redacted – outside of scope of FoI request]

**ANNEX E**

### **BIOGRAPHIES**

[redacted – outside of scope of FoI request]

**Fol document 5**

From: [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]  
Sent: 14 July 2025 10:06  
To: Minister for Business and Employment <MinisterforBE@gov.scot>  
Cc: Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills 2024 <CabSecES2024@gov.scot>;  
Minister for Higher and Further Education; and Minister for Veterans  
<MinisterHFEV@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal  
information]@gov.scot>; DG Education & Justice <dgej@gov.scot>; Director for  
Lifelong Learning and Skills <DirectorforLifelongLearningandSkills@gov.scot>;  
[redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section  
38(1)(b) – personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal  
information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal  
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information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal  
information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal  
information]@gov.scot>; Stuart Greig <Stuart.Greig@gov.scot>; [redacted – section  
38(1)(b) – personal information]@gov.scot>; Communications Education & Skills  
<CommunicationsEducationandSkills@gov.scot>; Communications Deputy First  
Minister, Economy and Gaelic <DFMEG@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and  
Cabinet Secretary for Economy & Gaelic <DFMCSEG@gov.scot>; [redacted –  
section 38(1)(b) – personal information]@gov.scot>; Adam Reid  
<Adam.Reid@gov.scot>; Naureen Ahmad <Naureen.Ahmad@gov.scot>; Catherine  
Topley <Catherine.Topley@gov.scot>  
Subject: Minister for Business and Employment visit to Abertay University - 15 July  
2025 - Briefing

PS/Minister for Business and Employment

Good morning

Please find attached briefing for Mr Lochhead's visit to Abertay University tomorrow  
afternoon.

Thanks,

[redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]  
[redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information] | University Governance and  
Workforce | Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Skills | Scottish Government

5 Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow, G2 8LU

E: [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]@gov.scot; Mob: [redacted –  
section 38(1)(b) – personal information]

**MINISTER FOR BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT - ABERTAY UNIVERSITY  
ENGAGEMENT**

<b>Date and time of Engagement</b>	Tuesday 15 July 2025, 13:30-15:00
<b>Where</b>	Kydd Building, Abertay University, Bell St, Dundee, DD1 1HG
<b>Who</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professor Liz Bacon (Principal &amp; Vice-Chancellor, Abertay University)</li> <li>• Andrew Menzies (Director of Finance, Infrastructure and Corporate Services)</li> <li>• [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]</li> </ul> <p><i>Key Abertay contact:</i> [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information], <i>Communications Manager</i> ([redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information] <a href="mailto:[redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]@abertay.ac.uk">@abertay.ac.uk</a>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]</p>
<b>Why</b>	You accepted an invitation in September (MiCase ref: 202400430339) to “learn more about the University’s commitment to growing the economy and providing opportunities for students.”
<b>What</b>	Meeting with Principal to provide an update on the University’s 2025-30 Strategy and linked areas of research/estates development; followed by demonstration of video games design students at the University’s Dare Academy, followed by a tour of the Competitive Gaming Lab.
<b>Media handling</b>	<p>Comms arrangements to be handled separately. The University has no plans for press but will take photos for social media.</p> <p><i>SG Comms contact:</i> [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Abertay Comms Officer:</i> [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information] <i>Mob:</i> [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]</li> </ul>
<b>Official support</b>	[redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information], <i>Senior Policy Officer, Lifelong Learning and Skills Directorate</i> ; <i>Mob:</i> [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]
<b>Briefing contents</b>	<p><b>Annex A:</b> Visit programme  <b>Annex B:</b> Key lines/messages  <b>Annex C:</b> Abertay Uni – Potential issues/sensitivities  <b>Annex D:</b> Abertay University 2025-30 Strategy  <b>Annex E:</b> Research and Innovation at Abertay  <b>Annex F:</b> Abertay estates masterplan and city heat network  <b>Annex G:</b> Abertay Dare Academy  <b>Annex H:</b> Abertay Competitive Gaming Lab  <b>Annex I:</b> Biographies  <b>Annex J:</b> Campus map/parking</p>

<b>Greeting party and specific meeting point on arrival</b>	You will arrive at the Kydd Building main reception, where you will be met by [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]
<b>Ministerial car/parking arrangements</b>	See Annex J

**ANNEX A**

**VISIT PROGRAMME**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Item</b>
<b>13:30</b>	Minister to arrive at Kydd Building reception greeted by [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]  Proceed to Lochnagar Room for <b>discussion on Strategy 2025-30 with focus on R&amp;D and estates vision (see Annexes D-F)</b> , along with Professor Liz Bacon (Principal & Vice-Chancellor, Abertay University) and Andrew Menzies (Director of Finance, Infrastructure and Corporate Services).
<b>14:30</b>	[redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information] will lead group to Centre for Excellence in Computer Games Education to meet Dare Academy students ( <b>see Annex G</b> ), led by academic Gareth Robinson of the Faculty of Design, Informatics and Business.
<b>14:45</b>	[redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information] will lead group to Competitive Gaming Lab ( <b>see Annex H</b> ) for demonstration from [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information] of the Faculty of Design, Informatics and Business who will explain the research conducted in the space and benefits to games industry.
<b>15:00</b>	Minister departs.

**ANNEX B**

**KEY LINES/MESSAGES**

[redacted – outside of scope of FoI request]

[redacted – outside of scope of FoI request]

***Abertay estates masterplan and application to Scotland’s Heat Network Fund (SHNF):***

- Welcome Abertay’s support for the transition to net zero, using funds from the SFC’s Financial Transactions programme, with the main campus buildings having undergone a major renovation to improve thermal efficiency and reduce carbon footprint.
- Scottish Government is currently considering options to extend our capital support for low carbon heat networks. Colleagues will provide an update to Abertay University once a decision is made on funding availability, including comment on the project’s suitability for a funding award.

[redacted – outside of scope of FoI request]

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

***Abertay cyberQuarter:***

- Welcome the work of Abertay, alongside St Andrews University and the Scottish Government’s National Cyber Resilience Unit, to develop ‘Cyber Resilience and You!’ - a new, free cyber resilience e-learning resource for students at Scottish universities and colleges. Funded by the Scottish Government, it provides an opportunity for all students to enhance their cyber resilience and safeguard against potential threats.
- The Scottish Government’s £6 million funding of the cyberQuarter through the Tay Cities Region Deal will build on Abertay’s existing strengths to take advantage of these opportunities and deliver sustainable, inclusive prosperity for the region.
- I was delighted to hear about Abertay’s success in co-leading the Cyber Security Research and Networking Environment (CRANE) alongside the universities of Oxford, Birmingham, Bath and UCL. Launched earlier this year, it will support collaborative research to address cyber security challenges, particularly around manufacturing and emerging technologies.

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

***Tay Cities Deal:***

- The Scottish Government has committed £150 million to the Tay Cities Region Deal, which aims to deliver sustainable economic growth in the region.
- The Deal is investing £300 million in the Tay Cities region over ten years, with Scottish and UK Governments each contributing £150 million.
- Regional partners anticipate that the Deal will create 6,000 jobs and lever a further £400 million of investment into the region.
- The Deal includes over £50 million of funding to the universities of Abertay and Dundee to invest in research and innovation in cybersecurity, justice and life sciences.
- The Deal is supporting the cyberQuarter project at Abertay University (£11.7 million, of which £6 million is from Scottish Government).

- All funding through the Deal has been committed to named projects and programmes, as agreed with regional partners when the Deal was signed. No further funding is available.
- Tay Cities partners are carrying out a review of the Deal to ensure the remainder of the Deal is successfully delivered
- As part of this process, all projects will be asked to provide assurance that they can be delivered. If this is not possible, funding may be reallocated to other projects through a process to be led by regional partners.

## ANNEX C

### ABERTAY UNI – POTENTIAL ISSUES/SENSITIVITIES

#### Abertay application to Scotland's Heat Network Fund (SHNF)

1. Abertay University is proposing procuring a private sector partner to deliver a heat network which will provide low carbon heat for the University's buildings, replacing gas boilers that are nearing end of life. [redacted - section 30(b)(i) – free and frank provision of advice]
2. [redacted - section 30(b)(i) – free and frank provision of advice]
3. [redacted - section 30(b)(i) – free and frank provision of advice]

#### Funding concerns

1. In its latest annual accounts for the year through to end of July 2024, Abertay University reported a deficit (before other gains and losses) of £578,000, down from a £1.2m surplus the previous year.
2. The report notes that Abertay is taking action to ensure long-term financial sustainability by reducing reliance on Scottish Government funding, diversifying its income streams and generating operational efficiencies. Its downturn in Scottish student recruitment has coincided with increases in energy costs, pensions, employers' national insurance contributions and salary expectations within the labour market.
3. Abertay's total annual income is circa £38m, of which 73% comes from SFC and SAAS. [redacted - section 30(b)(i) – free and frank provision of advice]

#### Student recruitment challenges

1. The university has experienced challenges recruiting students over recent academic years, largely due to pandemic qualification arrangements in schools that resulted in higher attainment by school-leavers and therefore acceptances at other, more competitive universities. A smaller pool of EU students has also created greater competition with other universities.
2. As a result, [redacted - section 30(b)(i) – free and frank provision of advice]. In reviewing funding allocations for 2024-25 and 2025-26, SFC removed some of the additional 'SQA' places introduced during the pandemic and

redistributed the funding according to recruitment levels. The overall impact of these changes is that the funded places FTE has decreased from 3,501.1 in AY2022-23 to 3,134.1 in AY2025-26.

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

## ANNEX D

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

## ANNEX E

### RESEARCH AND INNOVATION AT ABERTAY

#### Abertay Cyberquarter

1. Abertay's cyberQuarter opened in June 2022, and is an academic and industrial partnership designed to establish the Tay Cities region as a centre of best practice in applied research, development and knowledge exchange in cybersecurity. The project aims to stimulate collaboration between academia and industry, working with 150 businesses and supporting 500 jobs.
2. The Tay Cities Region Deal funded the establishment of the cyberQuarter project (£11.7 million, of which £6 million is from Scottish Government). Abertay University has also provided additional funding of £6.5m.
3. There is a major shortage of skilled professionals in the cybersecurity industry at a Scottish, UK and global level, and cybersecurity is a key strength for Abertay. The University was the first university in the world to offer a degree in ethical hacking and have a distinct teaching and research offer built around this and offensive cybersecurity. It was also one of the first universities in the UK to be awarded Academic Centre of Excellence in Cyber Security Education recognition in December 2020 by the National Cyber Security Centre.
4. The cyberQuarter has four key aims:
  - a. Collaborative research and development with the cyber security industry to develop solutions to improve cybersecurity amongst small and medium sized businesses;
  - b. Upskilling workers and tackling local and national skills shortages through the development of ethical hacking and offensive security activities;
  - c. Supporting businesses to raise awareness of cybersecurity risks and increase the adoption of new products and services to become more cyber resilient;

- d. Jobs growth in cybersecurity firms, from start-ups to large corporations, as new products and services are developed and commercialised.
5. During a visit to Abertay’s cyberQuarter in May 2025, the Minister for Higher and Further Education launched ‘*Cyber Resilience and You!*’ a new, free cyber resilience e-learning resource for students at Scottish universities and colleges. The learning module was funded by Scottish Government (£37,500) and developed in collaboration with Scottish universities and colleges. Its aim is to raise awareness amongst students of cyber risks and equip them with the skills to protect themselves online. Improving cyber skills in the general student population also helps reduce the risk of a cyber security incident at their place of study.

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

**ANNEX F**

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

**ANNEX G**

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

**ANNEX H**

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

**ANNEX I**

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

**ANNEX J**

[redacted – outside of scope of Fol request]

**Fol document 6**

From: [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]  
Sent: 16 July 2025 11:10  
To: Minister for Business and Employment <MinisterforBE@gov.scot>  
Cc: Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills 2024 <CabSecES2024@gov.scot>;  
Minister for Higher and Further Education; and Minister for Veterans  
<MinisterHFEV@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]  
@gov.scot>; DG Education & Justice <dgej@gov.scot>; Director for Lifelong  
Learning and Skills <DirectorforLifelongLearningandSkills@gov.scot>; [redacted –  
section 38(1)(b) – personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) –  
personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal  
information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]  
@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]@gov.scot>;  
[redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section  
38(1)(b) – personal information] @gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal  
information] @gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]  
@gov.scot>; Stuart Greig <Stuart.Greig@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) –  
personal information]@gov.scot>; Communications Education & Skills  
<CommunicationsEducationandSkills@gov.scot>; Communications Deputy First  
Minister, Economy and Gaelic <DFMEG@gov.scot>; Deputy First Minister and  
Cabinet Secretary for Economy & Gaelic <DFMCSEG@gov.scot>; [redacted –  
section 38(1)(b) – personal information]@gov.scot>; Adam Reid  
<Adam.Reid@gov.scot>; Naureen Ahmad <Naureen.Ahmad@gov.scot>; Catherine  
Topley <Catherine.Topley@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal  
information]@gov.scot>; [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]  
@gov.scot>  
Subject: RE: Minister for Business and Employment visit to Abertay University - 15  
July 2025 - Note

Good morning

Please find attached a draft note of Mr Lochhead's visit to Abertay University  
yesterday.

Thanks,

[redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]

[redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information] Senior Policy Officer | University  
Governance | Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Skills | Scottish Government

5 Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow, G2 8LU

E: [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information] @gov.scot; Mob: [redacted –  
section 38(1)(b) – personal information]

## Minister for Business and Employment – Visit to Abertay University – 15 July 2025

### Attendees:

- Richard Lochhead MSP, Minister for Business and Employment
- [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information], Assistant Private Secretary to Minister for Business and Employment, Scottish Government
- [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information], Senior Policy Officer, University Governance, Scottish Government
- Professor Liz Bacon (Principal & Vice-Chancellor, Abertay University)
- Andrew Menzies (Director of Finance, Infrastructure and Corporate Services)
- [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information]

1. Richard Lochhead (RL) met with Liz Bacon (LB), Andrew Menzies (AM) and [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information] to discuss the University's 2025-30 Strategy, support for the creative industries and its estates masterplan.

[redacted – outside of scope of FoI request]

[redacted – outside of scope of FoI request]

[redacted – outside of scope of FoI request]

2. LB summarised the University's 2025-30 Strategy, [redacted - Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation]. [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information] noted ongoing work between Universities Scotland and the Scottish Government to explore a future funding model for the sector to address financial sustainability challenges.

3. [redacted – section 38(1)(b) – personal information] explained Abertay's project to deliver a new energy centre as part of the University's plans for sustainable development and achieving net-zero targets, noting this is being done in collaboration with Dundee Climate Leadership Group (which includes Dundee City Council, Hillcrest Housing, Dundee and Angus College, NHS Tayside and the University of Dundee). [redacted - Section 30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation].

[redacted – outside of scope of FoI request]