



Alastair Merrill
Vice-Principal (Governance)

Andrew Neish KC



By email only to: ANeish@[REDACTED]

07 February 2023

Dear Mr Neish,

I am replying to your email to the Proctor, since you have raised several issues relating to university governance, for which arrangements I am responsible. I am aware of your previous correspondence with the Principal on these matters and would not wish to go over old ground. I would, however, comment on a couple of the issues you raise in your letter.

We do acknowledge that some of our EDI webpages contain out of date information. Updating websites is a Sisyphean task, but our Vice Principal for People and Diversity is planning a major overhaul of the EDI pages to streamline them, and to remove outdated information. This will also include ensuring the accuracy of references to or summaries of legislation, and I am grateful to you for highlighting two existing inconsistencies with the ipsissima verba of the statute; we shall look into these. On a point of detail, the University has not been a Stonewall Diversity Champion since last spring, and does not pay for any Stonewall services.

On the University's stated commitment to freedom of speech, without getting into detailed arguments over numbers of web references or specific job titles, I would simply point out that Freedom of Speech is included within the Social Responsibility statement at the start of the University Strategy precisely because we prize it highly. Moreover, building on that, our draft Diversity Action Plan includes a specific commitment to *'Develop a set of clear*

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principles around freedom of speech that enables discussion and critique within a culture of tolerance and respect’.

You state that you have made “a number of attempts to secure some meaningful engagement from the University with the detail of the issues I have raised”. As I am sure you recall, the Principal extended an invitation last autumn for you to visit St Andrews and discuss these in person with the relevant experts. You declined that invitation, indicating subsequently that you felt that the correspondence had reached “a natural conclusion”. It remains open.

Yours sincerely,

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