



Role Description: Court Member

Role of the University Court

The Court is the governing body and legal persona of the University of Edinburgh. It is composed of twenty-three members both internal and external to the University. The internal members are staff and students of the University. A number of the external members are appointed by specific bodies while a minimum of seven and a maximum of nine external members are appointed by Court itself and are referred to as Co-opted members and a further three are drawn from the University's alumni and are referred to as General Council Assessors.

The Court is the employer of all University staff and the owner of all the University's assets (which are valued at £2.2 billion). It is responsible for the safeguarding of those assets, including the University's extensive estate, and ensuring proper financial control arrangements and accounting for the University's turnover of approximately £1.1 billion per annum, much of this derived from public funds. The Court is also responsible for ensuring effective audit and risk oversight arrangements and for the University's compliance with all relevant legislation and regulations, including health and safety of staff and students.

The Court is collectively responsible for overseeing the University's activities, determining its future direction and fostering an environment in which the institutional mission can be achieved and the potential of all learners maximised. This responsibility includes considering and approving the University's strategic plan, which sets out the University's goals, aims and objectives and identifies the financial, physical, staffing and other strategies necessary to achieve them. The Court takes all final decisions on matters of fundamental concern to the institution and is required to regularly monitor its own effectiveness and the performance of the University.

Responsibilities of members

Court members collectively provide high-level strategic oversight and ensure that adequate control and monitoring arrangements exist to support management in exercising proper stewardship and working towards agreed strategic objectives. This work is distinct from the executive management of the University, responsibility for which rests with the University's senior managers.

External members are asked to bring their expertise and experience to bear on this work. The University greatly values the wide range of experience brought by all members to Court business. It is hoped that all members will question intelligently, debate constructively, challenge rigorously and decide dispassionately, having listened sensitively to the views of others, inside and outside meetings of the governing body.

The Court is entrusted with funds, both public and private, and has a particular duty to observe the highest standards of corporate governance. This includes ensuring and demonstrating integrity and objectivity in the transaction of business, and wherever possible following a policy of openness and transparency in the dissemination of its decisions.

Court members are expected to develop an understanding of the University, its teaching and research mission and internal structure and culture. In addition, members are expected to be willing to develop some understanding of the University's relationships with relevant external agencies and of the Scottish and UK higher education systems. The University endeavours to provide members with opportunities to develop this understanding.

Committee responsibilities and other work

Members will be expected to serve on Court Committees. Members' particular expertise and experience are taken into account by the University in deciding which committees they are asked to join. Members may also be asked from time-to-time to serve on short-term ad hoc groups set up for specific purposes.

Please see the link for details of the various Court Committees as well as further information on the University Court:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/strategic-planning/governance>

Period of Appointment

Appointment will be made for a period of up to 4 years from 1 August 2021, subject to satisfactory appraisal. Appointees will be eligible for consideration for reappointment for a further term of up to 4 years subject to satisfactory appraisal.

Remuneration

In common with most higher education institutions, there is no remuneration directly associated with membership of Court but the University will meet reasonable expenses incurred in connection with membership of the Court or activities on behalf of the University including meeting child and other dependent care costs.

Time commitment

The Court currently meets five times a year on Monday afternoons, with two additional seminars held at the beginning and the middle of each academic year. The Court's Committees normally meet between three and five times a year on various days of the week. The University does expect all members to be committed and willing to engage with the work of Court and the University. Court members are invited to attend a number of University ceremonial events and some social events throughout the year.

Person Specification

The University is committed to promoting all aspects of equality and diversity and welcomes applications from all sectors of the community.

Experience

Essential:

- Professional experience and knowledge in matters relevant to the successful operation of a large complex organisation.

Desirable:

- Experience of partnership working for or with relevant charities or community-based or public or government organisations;
- Experience of dealing with strategic issues of a large business, commercial or public-financed organisation at senior management or board level.

Knowledge, Skills and Competencies

Essential:

- Relevant professional expertise and knowledge in matters relevant to successful operation of a large, diverse organisation, e.g. commercial acumen, risk management, organisational change;
- Understanding of financial processes, including an understanding of budgetary processes;
- Ability to interpret information, debate constructively and rigorously challenge;
- Awareness of probity issues and commitment to high standards of integrity, transparency and impartiality;
- Ability to communicate effectively at senior level and explain issues and decisions both orally and in writing;
- Skills of networking, influencing and advocacy;
- Understanding of strategic planning processes;
- Empathy with the values and vision of the University of Edinburgh;
- Understanding of the economic, social and political dynamics of Edinburgh and wider Scotland.

Desirable:

Candidates may have two or more of the following:

- Human Resources;
- Digital;

- Knowledge and understanding of the education sector;
- Legal work;
- Knowledge of the international environment particularly in relation to higher education;
- Audit and risk management oversight;
- Knowledge of philanthropic fundraising;
- Public sector, including government and local authorities;
- Involvement in improving the student experience or in management, teaching or on-line learning in secondary, further or higher education;
- Knowledge and understanding of approaches to ensuring sustainability and social responsibility within large complex organisations;
- Experience of the political, regulatory or legal framework in which the higher education sector operate;
- Experience of research management within or out with the higher education sector;
- Property and estates management expertise and/or knowledge of the construction sector;
- Knowledge and understanding of commercialisation of research and entrepreneurship;
- Knowledge of the University of Edinburgh or equivalent research intensive university.

Personal Attributes

Members of Court will have a strong personal commitment to higher education and have empathy with the values, aims and objectives of the University of Edinburgh.

Individual members and the Court collectively should at all times conduct themselves in accordance with accepted high standards of behaviour in public life, which embrace selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Essential personal attributes include:

- Diplomacy and sensitivity;
- Sound judgment and judiciousness;

- Demonstrable commitment to equality and diversity;
- Sympathy with and understanding of the University of Edinburgh's culture;
- Strong inter-personal skills;
- Integrity, tact, discretion, independence and objectivity;
- Empathy and enthusiasm with the values and vision of the University of Edinburgh;
- Empathy with current challenges facing the higher education sector;
- Ability to constructively challenge.