



Court Members – General Role Descriptor

Introduction

Court Members may be:

- (a) employees or students of the University who become members of Court either through their named role (Principal, Deputy Principal, Vice-Principal, Students' Association President and Vice-President), through election from amongst academic staff or support staff or nomination by Senate or the trade unions.
- (b) independent lay people who have applied and been appointed by Court itself.

Once appointed, all members are charity trustees as the University is a registered educational charitable body.

This role descriptor is published on the University's website so that it is accessible to potential electors of Court Members.

Role of the Court Member

The main general role of a Court Member is, *inter alia*, to assist Court in performing its statutory functions. Court is collectively responsible for the proper conduct of the University's public business, for strategic vision, monitoring effectiveness and performance of the University, approving financial, estate and human resource strategies, ensuring equality and diversity, being the legal and employing authority and ensuring the good name and values of the University.

The general duty of Court Members as charity trustees¹ is to act in the interests of the charity (i.e. the University).

- Court Members must operate in a manner consistent with the charity's purpose.
- Court Members must act with care and diligence.
- Court Members must manage any conflict of interest between the charity and any person or organisation who appoints trustees.

¹ [taken from the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator website – accessed 17/3/2023]

Specific Duties, Personal Responsibilities and Standards

1. Standards

- a) All Court Members are responsible for ensuring that they conduct themselves in accordance with accepted standards of behaviour in public life, embracing selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

- b) All Court Members must provide an up-to-date Register of the Interests and shall make a full and timely personal disclosure of any actual or perceived conflict of interest.

2. Business of the University

- a) Court Members, if not also a member of the Executive Group, should endeavour to establish a constructive and supportive but challenging working relationship with the senior officers of the University, recognising the proper separation between governance and executive management, and avoiding involvement in the day-to-day executive management of the University.

- b) Court members are strongly encouraged to engage appropriately in the life of the University so that they develop a full and rounded understanding of the University's activities.

- c) Court Members are expected to sit on and, after a period of time, to potentially chair at least one of the following committees of Court: the Audit & Risk Committee, Chair's Committee, Finance & Corporate Performance Committee, Governance & Nominations Committee, People, Health & Equality Committee and the Remuneration Committee. Training and support will be provided if required.

3. Personal

- a) Court Members will have a strong personal commitment to Higher Education and the values, aims and objectives of the University.

- b) Court Members will, at all times, act fairly and impartially in the interests of the University as a whole, using independent judgement and maintaining confidentiality as appropriate.

- c) Court Members appointed or elected by a particular constituency, or otherwise drawn from a particular sector or community, must not act as if delegated by that

particular constituency²

- d) Court Members are expected to attend all meetings of Court and of committees of which they are a member, or give timely apologies if absence is unavoidable. [It is estimated that Court Members will need to devote at least 12 and up to 15 days per year to effectively fulfil the duties].
- e) Court Members are expected to attend induction/training events organised by the University or other appropriate bodies (such as Advance HE) as required.
- f) In order to ensure that Court operates effectively and their performance in the role, Court Members are expected to meet annually with the Chair on a one-to-one basis to discuss their performance in the role.
- g) Court Members are expected to share their view of the effectiveness of the Court and the effectiveness of the Chair *via* the Court Intermediary.

Note

Court has previously approved and published specific role descriptors for the roles of Chair, Vice- Chair, Intermediary, the Principal & Vice-Chancellor and Secretary to Court.

There is also a person specification for independent lay members of Court, which is adaptable to take account of particular skills and experience as determined to be required from time to time when Court is seeking new lay members.

Approved by Court April 2023

² See paragraph 22 of the Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance 2017