

University of Edinburgh

Information for prospective candidates for the role of the Academic Staff Member on the University Court

University Court

The University Court is the University's governing body and the roles and responsibilities of Court are broadly focused on strategy, taking the final decisions on matters of fundamental concern to the University and effective corporate governance. Court's [Statement of Primary Responsibilities](#) sets this out in more detail.

Court recognises a clear distinction between its responsibilities for governance of the University (for example in setting broad strategic policy, approving plans intended to achieve strategic objectives, ensuring that the University's key processes and procedures are sound; and monitoring the University's overall performance) and the Principal's responsibilities for management of the University, which in practice are shared with senior colleagues, notably members of the University Executive.

The membership of the Court, which totals 24, is drawn from a range of internal and external sources, including staff, students, alumni, the City of Edinburgh Council and external members appointed on the basis of professional experience relevant to the work of the Court.

The University's expectations of members

Prospective candidates should note that as a member of Court, the Academic Staff Member, on election, will require to acknowledge that they are familiar with the [Code of Conduct for Court Members](#) and understand their obligations under it. This includes acting in accordance with the Nine Principles of Public Life in Scotland (Duty, Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty, Leadership, Respect), complying with the duties of a charity trustee and declaring areas of potential conflicts of interest. All members should exercise their responsibilities in the interests of the University as a whole rather than as a representative of any constituency or other interest group.

The Court is entrusted with funds, both public and private, and therefore 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.

Members need to recognise and understand the distinction between executive management of the University (responsibility for which rests with the University's senior managers) and the role of Court in providing high-level strategic oversight and ensuring that adequate control and monitoring arrangements exist to ensure that management is exercising proper stewardship and working towards agreed strategic objectives.

The University expects all members of the Court to be willing to develop an understanding of the University and its teaching and research mission, and of its internal structure and culture. Alongside this, there needs to be a willingness to develop some understanding of the University's relationships with relevant external agencies and of the Scottish higher education system. The University endeavours to provide members with opportunities to develop these understandings. Members are expected to respect the confidentiality of Court business on those occasions when this is necessary.

The Court currently meets five times a year on Monday afternoons, with two additional seminars held on the same day as scheduled Court meetings, usually around the beginning

and the middle of each academic year. It is assumed that members will attend the majority, if not all, meetings, but it is recognised that on occasion for health or other reasons this will not be possible. All members are expected to be committed and willing to engage with the work of Court and the University.

Committees and other work

Much of the detail of the Court's work is dealt with through its committees, including Policy and Resources Committee, Audit and Risk Committee, Remuneration Committee, Governance and Nominations Committee and Exception Committee.

Members may be appointed to serve on Court Committees and their particular expertise and experience are taken into account by Governance and Nominations Committee in deciding which committees they may be asked to join. Court committees normally meet between three and six times a year on various days of the week. Members may also be asked from time-to-time to serve on short-term ad hoc groups set up for specific purposes.

The postholder will also be a member of the Senatus Academicus ('Senate'), the senior academic body with responsibility for the regulation and superintendence of the teaching and student discipline of the University and the promotion of research. Seven of the 24 members of the Court are also members of the Senate (the Principal, two Senate Assessors elected by the Senate, two student members and the Academic Staff Member and the Professional Services Staff Member on the Court) and help maintain links between Court and Senate, in addition to formal written reporting and information sharing between the two bodies.

Court members are also invited to attend a number of University ceremonial events, including graduation ceremonies, and some social events throughout the year. They are very welcome at these events, but it is recognised that other commitments may limit members' ability to accept all such invitations.

Further Information

This is a voluntary unremunerated role but reasonable expenses incurred in connection with membership of the Court will be reimbursed as per the [Expenses Policy](#).

If the individual holding the office of Academic Staff Member should leave employment at the University for whatever reason, their office as Academic Staff Member will end.

The period of office of the Academic Staff Member runs from 1 June 2026 for a period of four years and two months until 31 July 2030.

Further information about University Court and the role of the Academic Staff Member is available from Dan Wedgwood, Head of Court Services (court@ed.ac.uk).