

Academic Staff Member Election 2026

Colin Pulham

I joined the University in 1992 as a Royal Society University Research Fellow and have since served in multiple roles within the School of Chemistry: Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Course Organiser, Director of Studies (Personal Tutor), Director of Teaching, and Head of School (2015–2022). Since 2023, I have been Director of Impact and a member of Senate. Over three decades, I have seen at first-hand the talent, dedication, and creativity of colleagues who are the lifeblood of this institution. I am immensely proud of our University – its scholarship, its people, and its public mission.

That pride is precisely why I am standing for Court. I am deeply concerned that our current trajectory is undermining the things that make Edinburgh exceptional. Too often, recent approaches have felt antagonistic toward academic staff and overly transactional – treating colleagues as a cost to be controlled rather than as our most valuable asset. The handling of the marking and assessment boycott, persistent freezes on promotions and contribution awards, and restructuring of Professional Services teams have damaged morale and, critically, risk our ability to recruit, retain, and empower the people who deliver world-class teaching and research.

Short-term and savings-led decision making, rather than a thoughtful, long-term strategy has created uncertainty and reputational risk, including for REF2029. Initiatives such as Academic Size and Shape and the Academic Contribution Framework have been introduced without adequate consultation, clarity of purpose, or robust impact assessment. At the same time, there has been a reliance on costly external consultants when we should be harnessing the insight and ingenuity of our own community.

As the University's governing body, Court must be a visible, informed, and constructive steward of the institution's mission and values. If elected, I will work to ensure Court re-engages meaningfully with staff and exercises confident, evidence-based oversight.

I will urge Court to:

- (i) reconnect with staff through the establishment of regular, open staff–Court forums;
- (ii) strengthen evidence-based governance and adopt pilot-and-review approaches before major organisational changes, including robust equality impact assessments;
- (iii) commit to long-term strategy over short-term cuts, with a focus on sustainable income generation and protection of core academic strengths in teaching and research;
- (iv) treat staff as valued colleagues through prioritisation of fair processes for reward and recognition, and rebuilding trust through respectful dialogue and problem-solving;
- (v) reduce unnecessary spend on external consultancy by leveraging internal expertise and collaborative activity to develop solutions to our current challenges.

This agenda is not radical – it is responsible governance. It is Court stepping up to fulfil its duty of care to our students, staff, and the future of this remarkable University. With your support, I will work tirelessly and accountably to ensure that decisions are transparent, staff are heard and valued, and our strategy is ambitious, sustainable, and worthy of Edinburgh. If you elect me to Court, you will have my full commitment to deliver these priorities and to help steer the University back towards a collaborative, confident, and trusting culture – one that enables our community to thrive.