Academic Staff Member Election 2026

Cormac Mac Amhlaigh

As a Professor of Public Law in the Law School, accountability is in many ways a foundational value of my discipline. Public law exists to ensure that those exercising power do so within lawful limits, transparently, and in the interests of those they serve. It is this commitment to principled accountability that drives my candidacy for the Academic Staff Member role on the University Court.

The Court performs many vital functions: strategic policy setting, approving plans, and ensuring sound process and procedures. All of these matter. But among the different responsibilities of the University Court, the one I regard as most important — and most in need of robust, sustained attention — is its function of holding the University executive to account.

The University's mission — excellence in research and teaching, pursued with integrity, inclusion and in the public interest — is what gives the institution its purpose and legitimacy. For our university, that means the highest standards of research, teaching and professional services must remain central to every major decision.

It is in this context that I am particularly alert to the University's current Academic Size and Shape project. This is the most consequential strategic process the University has faced in recent memory. The scale and pace of the changes under consideration — to Schools, to programmes, to the academic and professional services workforce, to the entire portfolio of teaching and research activity — mean that the Court's oversight function has never been more important. More generally, the University must ensure to uphold its values and commitments in a future of financial uncertainty in the sector more broadly, as well as in respect of its commitments regarding divestment and Zero by 2040.

My concern is to ensure that the University Executive's activities in these areas are pursued in a manner consistent with the University's values and its mission. Court must ask hard questions: whether the financial modelling is sound and transparent; whether the governance processes — including consultation with staff and trade unions — are being followed rigorously; whether equality impact assessments are genuinely shaping decisions; and whether the highest standards of research, teaching and professional services are being protected in this process.

My aim is to ensure that the Court performs its vital oversight function with the seriousness it demands — asking whether management's decisions genuinely serve those who work to deliver the excellence in research, teaching and professional services in the pursuit of the University's values, and whether the processes by which those decisions are made are accountable to us all in this period of change and uncertainty in the University's management.

I would welcome the opportunity to contribute to that work as the Academic Staff Member on Court.