



THE ROLES OF THE RECTOR AND SENIOR LAY MEMBER

The primary formal role ascribed to the Rector by the legislation under which the University operates (principally the Universities (Scotland) Acts 1858 - 1966) is to preside at meetings of the University's governing body, the University Court. This includes opening and closing Court proceedings, holding a deliberative and a casting vote in the case of equality (should there be a vote on an item of business), assisting with setting the tone for respectful and inclusive debate and working constructively with the Senior Lay Member, Principal, and University Secretary to ensure Court meetings are conducted in a well-informed, fair, and decisive manner.

The role of the Senior Lay Member is similar to that of Chair of institution in many other Universities in that the Senior Lay Member is responsible for the leadership of the University Court, will chair the business items at Court meetings and will preside at Court meetings in the absence of the Rector.

The Rector

In addition to presiding at meetings of the Court the Rector also presides at meetings of the General Council in the absence of the Chancellor.

The Rector will normally preside over the five meetings of Court held each academic year and in addition attend two half day seminars in each year to allow in depth debate and discussion on strategic issues.

The Rector can also expect to be called upon to attend other meetings and University events and often undertakes an ambassadorial role at official ceremonies including graduations.

In recent times, Rectors have often seen their role as a point of contact for the University community, seeking to assist with difficulties or issues where they arise. It is anticipated that the Rector will have a good understanding of issues important to students and will often work closely with the student body, Edinburgh University Students Association (EUSA).

The Rector is elected by the staff and students of the University and cannot, due to the Ordinance that governs the election of the Rector, be a matriculated student or a member of staff at the time of nomination or at any time after the election before or during a term of office. The Rector's term of office is for three years.

The Senior Lay Member

The Senior Lay Member's role is similar to that of Chair of institution and is responsible for the overall leadership of Court and must ensure that Court conducts its business in an effective and efficient manner with due consideration of the appropriate legal and compliance issues.

The Senior Lay Member should ensure that members of Court work well together and that members conduct themselves in accordance with accepted standards of

behaviour in public life. This includes setting the tone for respectful and inclusive debate at Court meetings.

The Senior Lay Member acts as a critical friend to the University, the Principal and members of the senior team.

Through leadership of the Court the Senior Lay Member plays a key role in the business of the University but should not be drawn into the core day to day management which is the responsibility of the Principal and the senior management team.

The Senior Lay Member also has the responsibility, along with the Principal and others, to ensure that the institution is well connected and represented with its partners, stakeholders and other external bodies. This includes the Committee of University Chairs, Committee of Scottish Chairs and the Scottish Funding Council.

In addition to attendance at Court the Senior Lay Member will be the ex officio Convener of Exception Committee, a committee with delegated authority to make decisions which would otherwise require Court approval between meetings of Court. The Senior Lay Member will also contribute to the governance of the University in other significant areas such as membership of the Governance & Nominations Committee and the Remuneration Committee. There is also an expectation that the Senior Lay Member will participate in University ceremonial events such as graduations.

The commitment associated with the role of Senior Lay Member is a combination of time taken to undertake the formal tasks, such as attendance at Court and Committees, and the informal support and contact which are critical to the effective discharge of the responsibilities of the position.

The Senior Lay Member is elected following an open recruitment and interview process for an initial period of 4 years which is renewable for a further period of 4 years subject to satisfactory performance.

Approved by the University Court, 5 October 2026, with effect from 4 March 2027