

# The Role of Members of The University Court

## **1. The role of All Members**

**All members** of Court should:

- offer to Court the best possible level of expertise, information and advice in pursuit of achievement of the strategic aims of the University
- question intelligently the business before Court and debate constructively
- conduct themselves in accordance with the Nine Principles of Public Life in Scotland (which incorporate the original seven “Nolan Principles” drawn up by the Committee on Standards in Public Life)
- endeavour to attend meetings of the Court (normally five meetings each year) and to serve on other groups reporting to Court as the Court may require
- share collectively in the responsibility for the decisions made by the Court
- declare any interest, whether personal or business, which may conflict with their role as a member of Court or with any particular item of business under discussion
- respect certain aspects of confidentiality depending on the nature of the business under discussion
- act independently and in the best interests of the University, not as if delegated by any particular group or body, even when they may be nominated, appointed or elected by a particular group.

**Lay Members** in particular bring to the Court’s deliberations knowledge, expertise, judgement and balance which may not be available among the members appointed from amongst the staff or students of the University. Their principal assets will be their independence, detachment and the provision of an external view; and their principal contributions will be:

- to challenge rigorously
- to decide dispassionately and to give an independent view on possible internal conflicts of interest
- to listen sensitively to the views of others
- to remind the University of the public interest in its affairs and to advise on the public presentation of the University
- to offer specialist skills in given areas.

**Staff and Student Members** in particular bring to the Court’s deliberations knowledge, expertise and experience of the University, including its systems, procedures and culture. Their principal assets will be:

- to communicate a sense of the culture of the University to members of Court
- to raise matters of concern within the University without re-opening the detail of discussions and decisions that have taken place elsewhere in the University
- to bring to Court their knowledge gained from student engagement, wider academic and other activities, such as membership of regulatory and professional bodies and international contacts
- to bring to Court their knowledge and expertise of the range of student and academic matters, including both teaching and research
- to assist in the dissemination, where appropriate and respecting confidentiality, of Court business within the University community.

## **2. The qualities required of members of Court**

The qualities required of members of Court include:

- commitment to the University, its values and its objectives
- the ability to discuss a wide range of matters in a respectful and professional manner
- an appreciation of the broad social, economic and other trends affecting universities
- the capacity to question information and explanations supplied by officers of the University
- common sense, honesty and integrity.

## **3. Time required**

The time required of members of Court will vary, but will not normally be less than the equivalent of one day per month (or 12 days per annum). There are currently five scheduled meetings of Court per annum, one of these (November) being organised over two days. The main commitment will be during the period September to June, and the main time commitment will be spent reading and preparing for meetings. For those who are members of other committees or groups as well, then the time commitment will be greater.

Members of Court will also be invited to attend certain University functions and events, including Student Inaugurations, Graduation ceremonies and other functions. Members of Court are encouraged to attend as many of these as they can, particularly Graduation ceremonies.

## **4. Persons not appointable as lay members**

In the light of the role and responsibilities of Court the appointment of certain individuals as lay members could compromise effective good governance and so they would not normally be considered for membership. This may be due to:

- significant and/or recurrent conflict of interests, e.g. where an individual is a member of a governing body of another university, or is a member of staff of the firm employed as External Auditors to the University;
- a lack of wider experience, expertise or demonstrable independence; or
- persons, however eminent in public life, who are unable or unwilling to attend the main meetings of Court or to devote appropriate time to Court business.

The University's Statutes do not allow the appointment of current staff or students as lay members.

Approved by the University Court on 1 October 2025