



Statement of the Court's Primary Responsibilities

The authority and responsibilities of the University Court are derived largely from the statutes contained in the Universities (Scotland) Acts from 1858 to 1966 and in the Ordinances and Resolutions made there under. In addition the University Court has responsibilities within the terms and conditions of the Financial Memorandum agreed with the Scottish Funding Council.

The list of primary responsibilities given here derives from these sources and has been prepared with reference to the statements of the other ancient Scottish Universities. This Statement is also compliant with the requirements of provision 12 of the Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance (2023).

Broadly the roles and responsibilities of Court are focused on strategy, taking the final decisions on matters of fundamental concern to the University and effective corporate governance. More specifically:

The Court's primary responsibilities are:

I. Strategic Direction

1. To approve the mission and strategic vision of the University and its major priorities as expressed in the University-level Strategic Plan underpinned by complementary strategies and long term academic and business plans.
2. To ensure that the approved mission and strategic vision of the University takes proper account of the interests of stakeholders, including students, staff, alumni, the wider community and funding bodies.
3. To ensure strategies complementary to the University-level Strategic Plan are in place and in particular to approve financial, estates, staff, information technology and management strategies in support of institutional objectives and priorities as expressed in the approved University-level Strategic Plan.
4. To ensure strategies are in place to enhance the student experience.
5. To ensure processes are in place to monitor and evaluate the performance and effectiveness of the University against the University-level Strategic Plan and to approve key performance indicators (KPIs), which should where possible be benchmarked against other comparable Universities.
6. To promote and safeguard the reputation and values of the University.

II. Responsibilities in relation to Management and Senate

1. To appoint the Principal as chief executive, including the terms and conditions of such an appointment, and to put in place suitable arrangements for monitoring his/her performance which include consultation with all members of Court.

2. To delegate authority to the Principal, as chief executive, for the academic, corporate, financial, estate and HR management of the University subject to reserving such matters to itself as the Court thinks appropriate.
3. To establish and keep under regular review the policies, procedures and limits within which such management functions shall be undertaken by and under the authority of the Principal.
4. To appoint a University Secretary to the Court and to ensure that if the person appointed has managerial responsibilities in the University, there is an appropriate separation in the lines of accountability.
5. To review decisions made by the Senate as prescribed in statute.
6. To ensure that the Senate has processes in place for monitoring and reporting the quality of education provision and to monitor quality enhancement arrangements.

III. Exercise of Controls

1. To ensure the establishment and monitoring of systems of control and accountability, including financial and operational controls and risk assessment, arrangements for internal and external audit and regularly reviewed schedules of delegated authority.
2. To be the principal financial and business authority of the University, to ensure that proper books of account are kept, to approve the annual budget and financial statements, to have overall responsibility for the University's assets, property and estates and to safeguard long term sustainability.
3. To ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for the management of health, safety and security in respect of students, staff and other persons affected by the University's operations.
4. To ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for promoting equality and diversity in respect of students, staff and other persons making use of University services or facilities.

IV. Corporate responsibilities

1. To be the University's legal authority and as such, to ensure that systems are in place for meeting all the University's legal obligations, including those arising from contracts and other legal commitments made in the University's name.
2. To ensure adherence to the requirements specified by the Scottish Funding Council in terms of its Financial Memorandum and other funding documents including ensuring delivery of outcome agreements.

3. To be the employing authority for all staff in the University and to ensure that obligations thereto are met including with regard to the welfare, development and reward of employees.
4. To put in place appropriate arrangements for determining and regular review of the performance, remuneration and conditions of service of staff.
5. To ensure that arrangements are in place to protect the academic freedom of relevant staff with due regard to relevant legislation and the governing instruments of the University
6. To make provision for the general welfare of students, in consultation with the Senate and EUSA.
7. To act as trustee for, or make appropriate alternative arrangements for the trusteeship of, any property, legacy, endowment, bequest or gift in support of the work and welfare of the University.
8. To make appropriate arrangements compliant with relevant legislation for the trusteeship of any pensions scheme established by the Court for University employees and to employ the employer-nominated trustees.
9. To ensure that at all times it operates within the terms of the Universities (Scotland) Acts 1858-1966, Ordinances and Resolutions made under those Acts and any other relevant legislation; and that appropriate advice is available to enable this to happen.
10. To ensure that the University acts ethically, responsibly and with respect for society at large and the sustainability of the environment.

V. Effectiveness and transparency

1. To conduct its business in accordance with best practice in higher education corporate governance, with the principles of public life drawn up by the Committee on Standards in Public Life and with best practice in regard to equality and diversity.
2. To ensure that clear procedures are in place in the University for handling internal grievances, potential conflicts of interest and 'whistleblowing' complaints with due regard to relevant legislation.
3. To put in place arrangements for the appointment of co-opted members of the Court so as to maintain a broad balance of expertise taking account of the principles of equal opportunity.
4. To establish processes to monitor and evaluate the performance and effectiveness of the Court itself and that of its Committees.

Approved by Court, 12 May 2014; updated on 2 December 2024 to refer to the most recent version of the Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance