THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

ROLE DESCRIPTION: RECTOR

The Rector's principal role is to preside at meetings of the University's governing body, known as the University Court, at which major decisions affecting the University are taken. 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. In the absence of the Chancellor, the Rector will also preside at meetings of the General Council (a body primarily consisting of graduates of the University and staff in Grade 8 or above). Elected by students and staff, the Rector helps to ensure that the interests of the University community are considered in the decision making processes. The Rector also attends ceremonial events (e.g. graduations) and other University events.

Other responsibilities:

- While not a formal responsibility, in recent years 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. A Rector will often wish to have a good understanding of issues important to students and work closely with the student body, the Edinburgh University Students Association (EUSA).

- As a member of the University's governing body and a charity trustee (the University of Edinburgh is the largest charity in Scotland), to be collectively responsible for the stewardship of the University's assets, compliance with all relevant legislation and regulation and to oversee the University's activities, determining its future direction and fostering an environment in which the institutional mission can be achieved and the potential of all learners maximised. This responsibility includes considering and approving the University's strategic plan, which sets out the University's goals, aims and objectives and identifies the financial, physical, staffing and other strategies necessary to achieve them. More detail is set out in the section below titled 'Role of the University Court'.

- To act in accordance with the Nine Principles of Public Life in Scotland: duty, selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, leadership and respect. All members of the University Court are independent and cannot be bound by mandates given by others or seek to solely represent the interests of any group which elected or appointed them – this is line with principles of good governance and is essential in acting a charity trustee.

The role of the Rector is different to that of the Principal & Vice-Chancellor (who is the executive leader of the University) and any external invitations received by the Rector should be checked with appropriate staff before acceptance to confirm that they are not intended for the Principal & Vice-Chancellor. The role of the Rector is also different from the role of the Senior Lay Member of Court (who has a role similar to that of Chair of institution in many other universities and chairs discussion of the

business items at Court meetings). Further information about the distinction between the roles of the Rector and Senior Lay Member of Court can be found here.

Role of the University Court

The Court is the governing body and legal persona of the University of Edinburgh. It normally consists of twenty three and a maximum of twenty five members both internal and external to the University. The internal members are staff and students of the University. A number of the external members are appointed or elected by specific bodies while others are appointed by Court itself.

The Court is the employer of all University staff and the owner of all the University's assets (which are valued at £3.1 billion). It is responsible for the safeguarding of those assets, including the University's extensive estate, and ensuring proper financial control arrangements and accounting for the University's turnover of approximately £1.5 billion per annum, much of this derived from public funds. The Court is also responsible for ensuring effective audit and risk oversight arrangements and for the University's compliance with all relevant legislation and regulations, including health and safety of staff and students.

The Court is collectively responsible for overseeing the University's activities, determining its future direction and fostering an environment in which the institutional mission can be achieved and the potential of all learners maximised. This responsibility includes considering and approving the University's strategic plan, which sets out the University's goals, aims and objectives and identifies the financial, physical, staffing and other strategies necessary to achieve them. The Court takes all final decisions on matters of fundamental concern to the institution and is required to regularly monitor its own effectiveness and the performance of the University.

Term of office

If elected, the Rector will be hold office for a period of 3 years from 4 March 2027 to 3 March 2030.

Remuneration

There is no remuneration associated with the position but the University will meet reasonable expenses incurred in connection with membership of the Court or activities on behalf of the University including meeting child and other dependent care costs.

The Rector is also provided with secretarial assistance.

Time commitment

The Court currently meets five times a year on Monday afternoons, with two additional seminars held at the beginning and the middle of each academic year.

General Council meetings take place on a Saturday in February (in the centre of Edinburgh) and June (at various locations). The meetings are normally two hours in length, followed by a lunch.

The Rector will also be invited to attend other meetings and University events, including graduations.

Election

If you would like to stand for University Rector please see Elect your Rector for more details. To take part in the election you will need to submit a completed Nominations Form and an Acceptance of Nominations Form. These forms must be lodged with the Deputy Returning Officer no later than 12 noon on Monday,11 January 2027.

The University strongly recognises the benefits of a diverse University Court and welcomes interest from all sections of the community. Reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure that Members can fully participate in the work of the Court.

All Court Members must agree to abide by a Code of Conduct (in line with good governance practice), and to confirm that they are not disqualified from being a Trustee under the Charities and Trustee Investments Act (Scotland) 2005.

Confidential discussion

For an informal conversation, please contact Court@ed.ac.uk.

Further details about the University Court

Statement of Court's Primary Responsibilities
University Court webpages

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