



Role Description: University Court Member

The University Court

The University Court, or Court, is the governing body of the University of Edinburgh. It is usually composed of twenty-three members both internal and external to the University. The internal members include six staff members, two student members and the Principal & Vice-Chancellor of the University. The external members include a minimum of seven and a maximum of nine members appointed by Court itself, with a further three drawn from the University's alumni, two appointed by specific bodies and two appointed following election.

The Court is the employer of all University staff and the owner of the University's assets, valued at £2.4 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 £1.2 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 relevant legislation and regulations.

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.

Responsibilities of members

Court members collectively provide high-level strategic oversight and ensure that adequate control and monitoring arrangements exist to support management in exercising proper stewardship and working towards agreed strategic objectives. This work is distinct from the executive management of the University, responsibility for which rests with the University's senior managers.

Members are asked to bring their expertise and experience to bear on this work. The University greatly values the wide range of experience brought by all members to Court business. It is hoped that all members will question intelligently, debate constructively, challenge rigorously and decide dispassionately, having listened sensitively to the views of others, inside and outside meetings of the governing body.

The Court is entrusted with funds, both public and private, and has a particular duty to observe the highest standards of corporate governance. This includes ensuring and demonstrating integrity and objectivity in the transaction of business, and wherever possible following a policy of openness and transparency in the dissemination of its decisions.

Court members are expected to develop an understanding of the University, its teaching and research mission and internal structure and culture. In addition, members are expected to be willing to develop some understanding of the University's relationships with relevant external agencies and of the Scottish and UK higher education systems. The University endeavours to provide members with opportunities to develop this understanding.

Committee responsibilities and other work

Members often serve on Court Committees. Members' particular expertise and experience are taken into account in deciding which committees they are asked to join. Members may also be asked from time-to-time to serve on short-term ad hoc groups set up for specific purposes.

Please see the link for details of the various Court Committees as well as further information on the University Court:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/governance-strategic-planning/governance/university-committees/court-committees>

Remuneration

In common with most higher education institutions, there is no remuneration directly associated with membership of Court 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.

Time commitment

The Court currently meets five times a year, usually on Monday afternoons, with two additional seminars held at the beginning and the middle of each academic year. The Court's Committees normally meet between three and five times a year on various days of the week. The University does expect all members to be committed and willing to engage with the work of Court and the University. Court members are invited to attend a number of University ceremonial events and some social events throughout the year.