

1495



UNIVERSITY OF
ABERDEEN

Independent Member of Court

DIRECTORATE OF PLANNING & GOVERNANCE

Reference: UCIM2024002

Closing Date: Thursday 12 September 2024

Interview Date: Weeks commencing 30 September and 7 October 2024



WELCOME TO THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

open to all and dedicated to the pursuit of truth in the service of others

Since 1495, the University of Aberdeen has been open to all and dedicated to the pursuit of truth in the service of others. We still have that purpose. It defines our actions and underpins our ethos. We achieve our purpose through excellence in our core activities of education and research, which transform the world around us.

We are the fifth oldest university in the English-speaking world. Established to serve the north-east of Scotland, our university is a global presence in higher education. A dual focus on our region and the wider world is as important to us today as it was five centuries ago. We welcome others with respect, and work with them in trust. We value freedom of thought and integrity of action.

We are a broad based, research intensive University, and we put students at the centre of everything we do. Outstanding in a wide range of discipline areas, Aberdeen is credited for its international reach and commercialisation of research ideas into spin out companies. The University has over 16,000 matriculated students and 3,600 staff representing 130 nationalities. We encourage bold thinking, creativity and innovation, and we nurture ambition with many opportunities for professional and personal development in an inclusive learning environment which challenges and inspires.

<p>13th IN THE UK AND HIGHEST RISING TOP 20 UNIVERSITY Guardian University Guide 2023</p>	<p>158th in the world*</p>	<p>4th IN THE UK FOR OVERALL student satisfaction**</p>	<p>2019 SCOTTISH UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR</p>	<p>Awarded the QUEEN'S ANNIVERSARY PRIZE for Further and Higher Education in 2017 & 2021</p>
<p>5th IN SCOTLAND for Research Power***</p>	<p>14th IN THE UK for Science Collaboration****</p>	<p>1st IN SCOTLAND for Environmental Research Impact*</p>	<p>GLOBAL TOP 100 FOR 8 OF THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS†</p>	<p>HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLANNERS ASSOCIATION (HESPA) Strategy Award Winner 2021 for Aberdeen 2040</p>
<p>* THE World University Rankings 2022 ** NSS 2022 *** REF 2022 **** Publications co-authored with one or more organisations (CWTS Leiden 2021) † QS World Rankings 2022 † THE Impact Rankings 2022</p>				

The University is now seeking an exceptional individual to fill a vacancy on Court to ensure the continued successful delivery of the University's priorities and objectives, the setting of its strategic direction and commitment to its values and mission.

THE PERSON

The Court of the University of Aberdeen is seeking to appoint a new independent member (non-executive director) to fill a vacancy that will arise during Summer 2024.

Members of the governing body need to have a keen interest in, and empathy for, Higher Education, and be willing to commit their time and expertise to helping the University deliver on its significant ambitions. Applications are invited from individuals with a record of successful leadership within a public, private or third sector organisation, who are passionate about supporting an internationally competitive, research-intensive and diverse University.

Interest would be particularly welcome at this time from individuals with skills and experience in relation to sustainability and the environment as we seek to fully embed our commitment to net zero and addressing the climate crisis within our financial and strategic planning.

The Court recognises the strengths that diversity brings, both to our governing body and our institution, and is committed to ensuring that its composition is reflective of the perspectives and experiences of the University's staff and students, who bring their diverse and intersectional lived experience of religion, race, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability to work or study with them each day. Applications are therefore encouraged from candidates who can identify with these lived experiences and the challenges and barriers faced by marginalised communities.

KEY ATTRIBUTES

The new independent member of Court is expected to demonstrate the following attributes:

- Proven leadership skills at board level.
- A 'big-picture' view and strong understanding of governance.
- A commitment to higher education, and to the values and objectives of the University of Aberdeen.
- Integrity and effective communication skills.
- An understanding of the complex governance and strategic, political and economic context in which the University operates.
- An ability to contribute to strategic decision-making at board level as well as to question intelligently and challenge constructively.
- The ability to act as an ambassador for the University.
- A demonstrable commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- A willingness and ability to give the time required to contribute effectively to the work of Court and the University.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE & SKILLS

The following areas of professional expertise and skills would bring particular value to University Court and to the role of independent member:

1. Demonstrable expertise in one the following areas: strategic leadership of the implementation of corporate sustainability strategies, green finance, sustainability, or environment policy leadership.
2. Proven experience of connecting boards and executives to people and organisational priorities as a senior leader.
3. Demonstrable understanding of governance in a public/charity sector context.
4. Previous experience as a non-executive director/trustee.

COMMITMENT

The successful candidates will be able to:

- Join University Court as a full member and prepare for, attend and participate in five meetings per year. Meetings are held as a mix of in-person, online and hybrid, and are normally held during standard working hours. However, there may also be a need to meet and decide matters between meetings, on an *ad hoc* basis.
- Join one of Court's standing Committees, which meet between two and five times per year depending on the Committee, with additional meetings called if required.
- Join University Court from Autumn 2024 to serve a term of office of three years, with the possibility of re-appointment for a further three-years term. Any re-appointment is subject to satisfactory appraisals of performance during the first term in post. There is no automatic presumption of re-appointment as each case is considered on its merits, considering the diversity of the current Court and its balance of skills, experience and attributes.
- Complete a Court induction process upon appointment, and subsequently participate in ongoing development activities, including performance reviews.

REMUNERATION:

These posts are non-remunerated, however reasonable expenses incurred as result of the roles will be re-imbursed in line with the University's expenses policy.

AT A GLANCE

REMUNERATION:

Unremunerated, expenses covered

COMMITMENT:

5 Court Meetings per year and between 2 and 5 Committee Meetings per year

TENURE:

Three-year term (with possibility of re-appointment)

LOCATION:

Hybrid (Aberdeen and remote)





UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE

The University of Aberdeen is a registered charity and a legally independent and autonomous institution. The governance framework of the University flows from various Acts of Parliament, statutes, ordinances, and resolutions from which the University derives the power and authority to carry out its activities.

The University Court is the University's governing body and has ultimate responsibility for the affairs of the University. It sets the mission, strategic direction and values of the University and monitors and challenges the execution of the strategy by the Principal and Senior Management Team.

The Senate has governance responsibility for all academic matters, subject to the powers of University Court, who must secure appropriate assurance on academic governance and quality from Senate.

The work of University Court and Senate is supported through various key committees, which focus on particular areas of University activity. University Court has established a number of standing committees, which include the Audit & Risk Committee, Finance & Resourcing Committee, Commercialisation Committee, Governance & Nominations Committee and the Remuneration Committee.

MEMBERSHIP OF UNIVERSITY COURT

There are 25 members of Court, and membership consists of:

- The Senior Governor (Chair of University Court)
- The Rector
- The Principal and Vice-Chancellor
- 1 Member elected by academic staff
- 1 Member elected by professional services staff

- 1 Member nominated by a Trade Union from among the academic staff
- 1 Member nominated by a Trade Union from among the support staff
- 4 Assessors elected by the Senate
- 2 Students nominated by the Students' Association
- 12 Independent Members appointed by the Court (who may not be members of staff or students).

UNIVERSITY COURT MEETINGS

University Court typically meets five times a year.

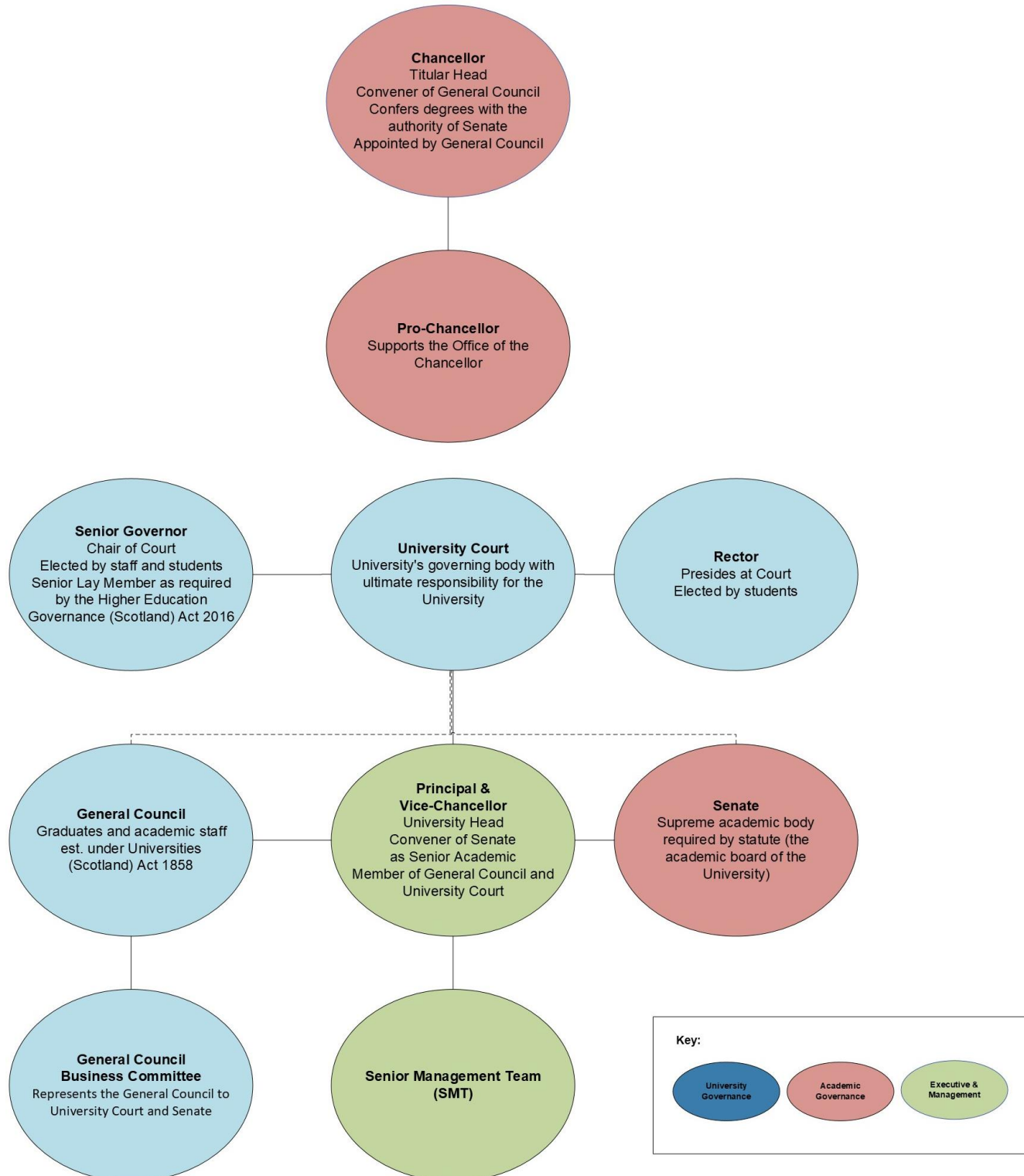
Meetings usually take place over two days, with pre-briefings and an evening dinner on day 1 and a full day's meeting from 9am to 4pm on day 2.

In September, a shorter formal business meeting is held before the Court dinner on day 1, with a full day's strategy workshop taking place on day 2.

The standing committees of Court meet between 2 and 5 times per academic year, depending on the committee. Most Court members sit on at least one committee.



GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE: PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND BODIES



UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN STRATEGY: ABERDEEN 2040

On our 525th anniversary as a University we launched [Aberdeen 2040](#), our strategic vision for the next 20 years. Four strategic themes shape our learning and discovery, underlined by 20 commitments we have made against each theme:

INCLUSIVE

We welcome students, staff and partners from all backgrounds, organisations and communities.

We value diversity. We will:

- Care for the wellbeing, health and safety of our diverse community, supporting and developing our people to achieve their full potential
- Encourage widening access to study, by having fair and flexible entry routes, offering diverse qualifications, and providing a range of modes of delivery; our students will be able to succeed whatever their personal and social background
- Develop a research portfolio that promotes national and international collaboration with stakeholders, including companies, organisations and governments
- Secure the highest standards of equality, diversity and inclusion, achieving accreditation across multiple strands and characteristics
- Eliminate pay gaps across all protected characteristics

INTERDISCIPLINARY

We innovate in education and research by generating, sharing and applying new kinds of knowledge. We will:

- Support a learning culture in which all our staff and students can exchange ideas and expertise across intellectual areas and organisational structures
- Design new courses and programmes which encourage interdisciplinary learning, and ensure that all our students can experience innovative, challenge-led education involving external stakeholders
- Build networks across our community to foster interdisciplinary interactions between our subject research strengths, using and sharing expertise to drive new understanding
- Listen to and work with external stakeholders regionally and globally to build partnerships that deliver imaginative solutions to societal and industrial challenges
- Develop our digital systems and enhance our buildings to create virtual and physical spaces that enable interdisciplinary exchange and innovation

INTERNATIONAL

We connect with others and extend our networks and partnerships around the world. We will:

- Provide an international education to learners from all around the world, becoming a more diverse and multicultural community
- Equip our graduates for global employment through our curriculum and teaching methods
- Harness our research expertise to form partnerships and networks around the world to meet the challenges of our age
- Ensure all our students can have an international experience, by studying abroad or working collaboratively with international partners
- Develop our campuses and processes to create a caring environment that is alert to cultural differences

SUSTAINABLE

We understand and nurture our environment, take care of our people and look after our resources. We will:

- Encourage everyone within our community to work and live sustainably, recognising the importance of our time, energy and resilience
- Educate all our students and staff to be leaders in protecting the environment
- Excel in research that addresses the climate emergency, enables energy transition and the preservation of biodiversity
- Achieve net zero carbon emissions before 2040
- Generate resources for investment in education and research year on year, so that we can continue to develop the people, ideas and actions that help us to fulfil our purpose

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The University values and celebrates a diverse working and learning environment and recognises the richness this brings, both in terms of contributing to the success of the University and creating safe and inclusive cultures. The University welcomes applications from individuals with diverse lived experiences.

The University supports flexible working, including hybrid working arrangements, and has [policies in place](#) to facilitate this where it is appropriate.

The University is committed to progressing gender equality across all its functions and has been a proud member of the Advance HE Athena Swan Charter, achieving an institutional Bronze award, four Silver departmental awards for the Schools of Psychology, Biological Sciences, Social Sciences and Education, and eight departmental Bronze awards. LGBTQ+ equality is championed through the University's membership of the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme, where the University has achieved a Silver award in the Workplace Equality Index. The University is on a continual journey to respond to, and combat, gender-based violence (GBV) in our community and beyond. We are proud to have been awarded the EmilyTest Charter in January 2024, in partnership with the charity, EmilyTest. We all have a role to play in knowing how to signpost colleagues and students to support for gender-based violence, and training and support is available to all staff on this topic.

The University is signed up to Advance HE's Race Equality Charter, affirming the University's commitment to the Charter's aim of improving the representation, progression and success of staff and students who identify as belonging to a racialised group. The University launched its Antiracism Strategy in 2022, representing a bold framework for progress on race equality. Recognising the importance of addressing the under-representation of racialised groups in the senior team, the University's new Recruitment and Selection Policy embeds specific positive action measures to address this.

The University is delighted to be accredited as a [Disability Confident](#) employer and strives to ensure that disabled staff and students have the opportunity to work and study in an inclusive, accessible and supportive environment. The University's Wellbeing Strategy commits it to progressing work to tackle stigma related to mental health and action to promote and improve health and wellbeing for staff and students. Candidates who are British Sign Language (BSL) users can contact us directly by using [contact SCOTLAND-BSL](#)

The University's work on [equality, diversity and inclusion](#) is supported by a range of networks and engagement activities, designed to provide safe spaces and raise awareness of the support available and the steps everyone can take to create inclusive campuses.



APPLICATION AND APPOINTMENT PROCESS

HOW TO APPLY

To apply, please submit the following elements by email to the Governance and Executive Support Team, University of Aberdeen at gest@abdn.ac.uk:

- Your CV.
- A covering letter, maximum two pages (A4), detailing how you match the criteria detailed above.
- A completed diversity monitoring form ([Recruitments | About | The University of Aberdeen \(abdn.ac.uk\)](#)) All candidates are requested to complete an Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form to assist the University in monitoring selection decisions to assess whether equality of opportunity is being achieved. Any information collated from the Equal Opportunities Monitoring forms will not be used as part of the selection process and will be treated as strictly confidential.

RECRUITMENT TIMETABLE

The closing date for receipt of applications is Thursday, 12 September 2024.

Selection panel interviews will take place weeks commencing 30 September and 7 October 2024.

INFORMAL QUERIES

For confidential enquiries please contact:

Tracey Slaven, University Secretary. Email: tracey.slaven@abdn.ac.uk

or

Louise Thomson, Head of Governance and Executive Support. Email: louise.thomson@abdn.ac.uk

Please do not send application forms or CVs to Mrs Slaven or Mrs Thomson.

Please quote the appropriate reference number on all correspondence: UCIM2024002



PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES OF UNIVERSITY COURT

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

1. To approve the mission and strategic vision of the University, including institutional and longer-term academic and business plans, and key performance indicators, and to ensure that they are consistent with the University's charitable purpose and meet the interests of stakeholders, including students, staff, alumni, local and national communities and funding bodies.
2. To safeguard the good name and values of the University, its charitable status and purposes.

SUPERVISORY OBLIGATIONS

3. To delegate to the Principal, as chief executive, authority for the academic, corporate, financial, estate and human resource management of the University, and to establish and monitor such management functions as shall be undertaken by and under the authority of the Principal.
4. To ensure the quality of educational provision through the review of decisions of the Senate made under its statutory powers to regulate and superintend the teaching and discipline of the University and to promote research.

CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITIES

5. To be the University's legal authority and, as such, to ensure that systems are in place for meeting the University's legal obligations, including those arising from contracts and other legal commitments made in the University's name.
6. To act as trustee for any property, legacy, endowment, bequest or gift in support of the work and welfare of the University, which is not within the control of the University of Aberdeen Development Trust.
7. To ensure that the University's constitution, as enacted in the Acts, Ordinances and Resolutions affecting the University 1858-1990 and subsequent legislation, is followed and that appropriate advice is available to enable this to happen.
8. To be the employing authority for all staff in the University.
9. To ensure that the University behaves ethically, responsibly and with respect for the environment and for society at large.

CONTROLS, ACCOUNTABILITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

10. To be the principal financial and business authority of the University, to ensure that proper accounts and financial records are kept, to approve the annual budget and financial statements, to ensure adherence to the funding requirements specified by the Scottish Funding Council, and to have overall responsibility for the University's assets, property and estate and their use.
11. To ensure the establishment and monitoring of systems of control and accountability, including financial and operational controls and risk assessment and management, so as to maintain the solvency of the University and safeguard its assets.
12. To ensure that processes are in place to monitor and evaluate the performance and effectiveness of the University against approved plans and key performance indicators, which should be benchmarked against other comparable institutions, wherever possible.
13. To ensure that arrangements are in place to promote the proper management of the health, safety and security of students, staff and others affected by the University.
14. To provide institutional leadership in equality and diversity and to ensure there are appropriate policies and procedures to support a culture in which all staff and students can thrive across the University and which meet relevant legislative and regulatory requirements.



15. To make provision, in consultation with the Senate, for the general welfare of students.
16. To ensure that procedures are in place for dealing with internal grievances, conflicts of interest and public interest disclosure.
17. To establish processes to monitor and evaluate the performance and effectiveness of the University Court and its sub-committees and to ensure that business is conducted in as open a manner as possible, in accordance with best practice in higher education corporate governance and with the principles of public life drawn up by the Committee on Standards in Public Life.
18. To ensure, through the appointment of co-opted lay persons, a balance of skills and experience amongst the membership of Court to meet its primary responsibilities.

MONITORING OF SENIOR EXECUTIVES

19. To appoint the Principal as chief executive, and to put in place suitable arrangements for monitoring his/her performance.
20. To appoint the Secretary to Court and to ensure that there is an appropriate separation in the lines of accountability between responsibilities to Court and managerial responsibilities within the University.