

SENIOR GOVERNOR ROLE DESCRIPTION

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

The Senior Governor is responsible for the leadership of Court, for its effectiveness, for its conduct and for ensuring the University is well connected with its internal and external stakeholders, including its students and staff. The Senior Governor plays a central role in setting and maintaining excellent standards of corporate governance and ensuring the Court discharges its responsibilities. Specifically, s/he will:

Governance Responsibilities

- Lead the University Court and ensure that its necessary business is carried out efficiently, effectively and in a manner appropriate for the proper conduct of public business;
- Ensure that Court acts in accordance with the instruments of governance of the University and with the University's internal rules and regulations;
- Ensure the Court exercises efficient and effective use of the resources of the University for:
 - Furthering its charitable purposes;
 - Maintaining its long-term financial sustainability; and
 - Safeguarding its assets
- Ensure the Court sets the strategic direction of the University, through an effective planning and risk management process, and that the performance of the University is adequately assessed against the objectives approved by Court;
- Ensure that proper mechanisms exist to (i) ensure financial control and to prevent fraud; and (ii) monitor the performance of Court and the University using appropriate performance indicators and other data in a constructively critical manner, being mindful of the boundary between governance and management;
- Act fairly and impartially at all times in the interests of the University as a whole, using independent judgement and maintaining confidentiality, and in the interests of the University as a registered charity in line with the expectations set out by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator;
- In common with the other Scottish Ancient universities, in the absence of the Rector or with her/his agreement, preside at meetings of the Court.*

Further information on the respective roles of Rector and Senior Governor is available online:

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/documents/policy-zone-committee-minutes/UniversityofAberdeen2018v1.pdf>

*For the Scottish Ancient Universities, the right to preside at meetings of Court and exercise a casting vote is reserved in the first instance to the Rector under statute. The Universities (Scotland) Act 1889 (as amended by the Higher Education Governance Act 2016) states that "the Rector and in his absence, the senior lay member (Senior Governor), shall preside at meetings of the University Court and in the absence of both of them a chairman for the time shall be elected by the meeting. The person presiding at any meeting of the University Court shall have a deliberative vote and also a casting vote in case of equality."

Leadership Responsibilities

- Establish a constructive and supportive, but challenging, relationship with the Principal & Vice-Chancellor while recognising the proper separation between governance and executive management, and avoiding involvement in the day-to-day operational and executive management of the University;
- Command the respect of Court and facilitate the conditions for all members to work together effectively, encouraging them to contribute their skills and expertise as appropriate, and seeking to build consensus;
- Ensure that the Court conducts itself in accordance with accepted standards of behaviours in public life, embracing the principles of duty, selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability and stewardship, openness, honesty, leadership and respect;
- Be responsible for appraisal of the performance of the Principal;
- Oversee the processes to recruit, select and induct the Principal and an effective group of governors as vacancies arise, in line with legislative requirements and recognised best practice guidelines;
- Ensure that there is effective evaluation and feedback on the performance of Court, its Committees and individual governors.

Ambassadorial Responsibilities

- Play a proactive role in representing the University at a national level to influence policy and decision-making that will affect the HE sector in general and the University of Aberdeen in particular e.g. Scottish Committee of University Chairs, the Committee of University Chairs and the Scottish Funding Council;
- Represent the University internally and externally with key stakeholders, including attendance at meetings, events and other occasions;
- Use personal networks and influence to advance the cause of higher education generally, and the University of Aberdeen in particular;
- Be involved in the promotion of philanthropic giving.