

**UNIVERSITY COURT**

**SUMMARY OF THE ROLE OF THE CHAIR OF COURT**

**The role of the Chair of Court**

The Chair is responsible for the leadership and effectiveness of Court and shall ensure that the University is well connected with its stakeholders, including its staff and students.

In overseeing the discharge of duties, the Chair should ensure that Court members work together effectively and efficiently and have confidence in the procedures laid down for the conduct of business. It is incumbent on the Chair that, both individually and collectively, Members of Court observe the nine principles of public life in Scotland as defined by the Scottish Government’s Model Code of Conduct for Members of Devolved Public Bodies.

These are: duty; selflessness; integrity; accountability and stewardship; objectivity; openness; honesty; leadership and respect.

The Chair of Court plays a key leadership role in University business but should not be drawn into the day-to-day executive management of the institution. A critical component of institutional effectiveness is the establishment of a constructive working relationship between the Chair of Court and the Principal. The relationship should be mutually supportive but respectful of the checks and balances imposed by the different roles within the University’s constitutional framework.

There is also a close working relationship between the Chair of Court and the University Secretary with whom there is a direct reporting link in relation to the conduct of Court business. The University Secretary provides guidance to the Court in terms of its responsibilities and discharge of duties under the University’s Charter, Statutes and Ordinances.

The performance of the Chair is reviewed annually by Court in accordance with the Scottish Code for Good Higher Education Governance.

**Chair of Court Responsibilities**

*Effective and Inclusive Meetings*

* To preside at meetings of Court;
* To ensure that members work together effectively, cohesively and in good spirit and have confidence in the procedures laid down;
* To ensure that Court discusses all of the key issues affecting the University and that its business is conducted smoothly and in accordance with Standing Orders;
* To contribute to collective decision-making and act only in the interests of the University;
* To ensure that Court operates efficiently and effectively, with all members having the opportunity to express their views and to participate in, and contribute to, decision-making;
* To monitor on an ongoing basis the performance of the Court, and ensure that it both observes the principles of public life[[1]](#footnote-1) and operates in a manner consistent with the concepts of good practice in corporate governance in higher education;
* To Chair the Governance & Nominations Committee, and be involved as a member of such other committees and working groups as Court may determine from time to time including the Remunerations Committee;
* To ensure that Court committees report appropriately on their work, and in particular on their use of delegated powers.

*Personal Integrity*

* To act at all times in ways that are consistent with the University’s values and especially its commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion;
* To be answerable to Court for actions taken on its behalf.

*Governance*

* To ensure that the effectiveness of Court and its members are regularly reviewed;
* To take delegated action when agreed by Court and to report back to Court on any action taken on its behalf;
* To work with officers to ensure the induction of new members.

*Interface with Management and the Executive*

* To ensure there is an appropriate balance of authority between the Court and the Principal and Vice-Chancellor and to develop and maintain a constructive, but appropriately challenging, relationship with the Principal and Vice-Chancellor which is mutually supportive but properly distinct;
* To develop and maintain a constructive, but appropriately challenging, relationship with the University Secretary and those officers that support the work of Court whilst maintaining a distinction between the role of management and governors;
* To appraise, on an annual basis, the performance of the Principal and Vice-Chancellor including seeking and considering the views of each member of Court.

*Ambassadorial Role*

* To act as an ambassador for the University at internal and external meetings, events and other occasions as appropriate;
* To represent the University on the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) and on such other bodies as Court may determine from time to time;
* To be responsible to the University’s stakeholders for the leadership and effectiveness of the University Court.

**Role specification**

In addition to the competencies required of all lay members of Court, the following represent key attributes for the role of Chair:

Experience and knowledge

*Essential*

• A track record as a successful executive or non-executive leader with substantial level experience working within an organisation of comparable size and complexity to the University;

• Professional expertise in matters relevant to the successful operations of a large, diverse organisation, e.g. commercial acumen, human resources, risk management, organisational change;

• Experience of chairing high level, strategic board and committee meetings;

* Excellent communication skills;

• Knowledge or understanding of governance in organisations;

• Understanding and experience of strategic planning, financial planning and budgetary processes.

*Desirable*

• Knowledge of the University of Stirling or equivalent research-led universities.

• Knowledge of philanthropic fundraising;

• Knowledge of the international environment, particularly in relation to Higher Education;

Personal attributes and qualities

The following represent key, essential attributes for the role of Chair:

• Integrity;

• Independence and objectivity;

• Tact, diplomacy and sensitivity;

• Sound judgement;

• Demonstrable authority;

• The ability to command the trust and respect of the Court, Academic Council and the staff and students of the University;

• The ability to address and resolve conflicting views in a constructive manner;

• The ability to constructively challenge;

• Calm, measured approach;

• The skills of networking, influencing and advocacy;

• The ability to establish cordial relationships with a diverse range of people across all of the University’s stakeholder groups;

• A strong personal commitment to Higher Education and empathy with the values and aims of the University of Stirling;

• Demonstrable commitment to equality and diversity.

**Terms of appointment**

In accordance with the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016 the Chair of Court is elected by the students, staff and Court members of the University. Under the Charter & Statutes, the Chair of Court holds office for four years. At the expiry of that period, the Chair is eligible for re-appointed for a further four years.

**Time commitment**

The time commitment associated with the role of Chair of Court varies from week to week, but is likely to amount to not less than one day per week on average, with some additional time at home for reading.

The Chair of Court must be available to provide informal support to the Principal and Vice-Chancellor, the University Secretary and members of Court. There may be occasions when the Chair is required to attend meetings at short notice.

Policy & Planning

August 2024

1. Scottish Government ‘[Model Code of Conduct for Members of Devolved Public Bodies](https://www.gov.scot/publications/model-code-conduct-members-devolved-public-bodies-2/), 2021 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)