Chair of Court Role

Applicant Information
May 2017

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1. Introduction

Abertay University is seeking to appoint the next Chair of its governing body, the University Court, and is looking for someone with experience of senior leadership or governance roles in private, public or third-sector organisations, who has a strong personal interest in, and commitment to, higher education.

Abertay University is a dynamic and forward-looking university based in Dundee, delivering excellence across a range of academic disciplines and with a strong record of supporting the educational achievement of students from all backgrounds.

The University values and promotes equality and diversity for staff and students and for University Court. Applications are particularly invited from women, people with disabilities and members of minority ethnic groups.

2. About Abertay University

Abertay University is a modern, pioneering and ambitious university with almost 4,000 students and income of about £34 million per year with a strong tradition of preparing students for the industries and jobs of the modern world. Today, this innovative approach is clearly visible in the University's programme provision which ranges from forensic, sport and food sciences to biotechnology, cybersecurity and computer games. For the latter, Abertay is renowned internationally.

Abertay has made its mark with high-quality, well-directed teaching and research, which in turn, provides a stimulating and enriching experience for our students. We are the leading modern university in Scotland for ‘research intensity' and best for student satisfaction. This is central to our long-term plan to embed a research-led culture throughout the institution.

Teaching and Learning

Our approach to curriculum reform - aimed at transforming the student experience and unlocking potential - creates a dynamic learning environment, which led to our shortlisting for the Times Higher Education University of the Year Award in 2016.

Our Teaching & Learning Enhancement strategy has three main objectives:

- Reforming our curriculum to revolutionise the delivery and design of programmes which will advance students’ knowledge; enhance students’ preparedness for post-graduation and the world of work; and recognises and facilitates different modes of learner journey.

- Incentivising students’ performance through an integrated approach to all aspects of assessment (formative, summative and recording achievement) with a focus on programme-level learning outcomes, joint Honours/GPA degree classification and implementation of the Higher Education Achievement Report.

- Raising the status of teaching in the institution in terms of leadership, professional recognition, reward and development.

Research and Knowledge Exchange

Abertay University is a compact, focused institution, which enables us to work effectively both within and across traditional research boundaries. The Abertay University Research and Knowledge Exchange strategy, R-LINCS (Research-Led Innovation Nodes for Contemporary Society), bridges conventional boundaries between research disciplines to devise innovative approaches to address societal challenges. R-LINCS is structured into four themes: Creative Industries, Environment, Security, and Society.
These themes address key local, national and international priorities, building on our existing areas of expertise and on our industry-facing heritage. Our ambitious long-term plan to build capacity and drive interdisciplinary research and innovation is being stimulated by a strategy framework and internal investment. Research underpins both our teaching and engagement with industry and society more generally. Abertay has a rapidly developing research culture, and submitted 30% more staff, and more Units of Assessment, for the Research Excellence Framework 2014 compared to RAE 2008.

Further information on teaching & learning and research at Abertay is available at:

https://www.abertay.ac.uk/discover/work-here/working-at-abertay/learning-development/tle/

http://www.abertay.ac.uk/research/ref2014/

**University Strategy**

Abertay is committed to being an excellent university, equal to the best in Scotland and making our own unique contribution to society. The values and principles that guide the activities of Abertay are seen in our strategic plan for the period 2015-2020: available at http://abertay.ac.uk/media/Strategic%20Plan%202015%20for%20web.pdf

Abertay University has achieved the Athena Swan Bronze Award, recognising the University’s achievements in respect of gender equality. The University is also proud to hold the Race Equality Charter Mark Bronze Award for our ongoing commitment and active steps to improving race equality for our staff and students; the only Scottish university to hold this award. Abertay University holds a Gold Award for Healthy Working Lives, a Silver Award for the Armed Forces Covenant; and is recognised as a Cycle Friendly Employer.

3. **The Role of Court**

The University Court is the governing body of the University. The composition, functions and powers of Court are set out in the University of Abertay Dundee (Scotland) Order of Council 1994. Under the Order, the objects of the University are to provide education, undertake and carry out research, make suitable and adequate provision for such activities, and conduct the affairs of the University in ways that promote its objects.

The University is committed to exhibiting good practice in all aspects of corporate governance. As the Governing Body of the University, Court is responsible for the system of internal control, which includes internal audit; delegation of responsibilities within a regulatory framework; and reviewing its own effectiveness. The system is designed to fulfil the responsibilities related to accountability, transparency and value for money inherent in good corporate governance practice. It emphasises the effective management of risk, using well thought-out and controlled risk-taking, leading to improved delivery of the University's objects, proper regard for organisational development, and ensuring the institution's long-term sustainability.

Court currently comprises lay (independent) members, *ex officio* members and staff members, with a maximum membership of 25 people. Lay members have 'experience of industrial, commercial or employment matters or the practice of any profession', include at least one person having experience in each of local government and the provision of education and remain an absolute majority. Of the maximum 25 members, up to 18 are lay members, 4 are *ex officio* (Principal, 2 Vice-Principals and the President of the Students' Association) and 3 are elected by and from among Senate, academic staff and support staff. Court membership will be revised in the near future to take into account the requirements of the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016.

Under its Governing Order, Court is required to meet at least three times per year. The agendas and papers for Court and its committees are published and available to staff and students of the
University. Approved Court minutes are published on the University’s website. The Committees of Court are:

- Audit Committee
- Chair’s Committee
- Finance & Corporate Performance Committee
- Governance & Nominations Committee
- People, Health & Equality Committee
- Remuneration Committee

Further information about Court and its current members can be found at https://www.abertay.ac.uk/discover/the-university/governance-and-management/university-court/

4. The Role of Chair: Role Description

The Main Purpose of the Role

The Chair is responsible for the leadership of Court and for ensuring that the necessary business of Court is carried out efficiently, effectively, and in a manner appropriate for the proper conduct of public business.

Role: Specific Duties and Responsibilities

1. Leadership

a) The Chair should ensure, *inter alia* through a good working relationship with the chairs of the Committees of Court and the Secretary to Court, that Committee business is carried out in a proper manner, efficiently and effectively, and that regular and satisfactory reports are presented to Court.

b) The Chair should ensure that Court acts in accordance with the instruments of governance of the University and with the University's internal rules and regulations, and should seek advice from the Secretary to Court in any case of uncertainty.

c) The Chair should ensure that Court exercises collective responsibility, that is to say, that decisions are taken corporately by all members acting as a body. The Chair will encourage all members to work together effectively, contributing their skills and expertise as appropriate, and will seek to build consensus among them.

b) The Chair should ensure that Court approves and operates a procedure for the regular appraisal/review of the performance of individual members of Court, and should participate as appraiser/reviewer in that process. The Chair should encourage members to participate in appropriate training events such as those organised by the Leadership Foundation for HE.

d) The Chair will be formally and informally involved in the process for the recruitment of new members of Court, and should encourage all members to participate in induction events organised by the University.

e) The Chair will be responsible for the appraisal/review of the performance of the Principal & Vice-Chancellor, and will make recommendations to the Remuneration Committee.

f) The Chair will be responsible for the appraisal/review of the performance of the Secretary to Court, taking care to ensure that any other duties the Secretary may perform for the University are excluded from consideration, and will make recommendations accordingly.

2. Standards

a) The Chair is responsible for ensuring that Court conducts itself in accordance with accepted standards of behaviour in public life, embracing selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.
b) The Chair shall ensure that the Secretary maintains an up-to-date Register of the Interests of members of Court, and shall make a full and timely personal disclosure. The Chair shall ensure that any conflict of interest is identified, exposed, and managed appropriately, in order that the integrity of Court business shall be - and shall be seen to be - maintained.

c) Since the University is a Charity, the Chair shall be responsible for ensuring that Court exercises efficient and effective use of the resources of the University for the furtherance of its charitable purposes, maintains its long-term financial viability, and safeguards its assets, and that proper mechanisms exist to ensure financial control and for the prevention of fraud.

3. Business of the University

a) The Chair is responsible for ensuring that Court exercises control over the strategic direction of the University, through consideration and approval, and that the performance of the University is adequately assessed against the objectives which Court has approved.

b) The Chair should, at all times, act in accordance with established protocols for the use of delegated authority or Chair’s Action (ensuring that such protocols are drawn up if none exist). All instances of the use of delegated authority or Chair’s Action should be reported to the next meeting of Court.

c) The Chair should endeavour to establish a constructive and supportive but challenging working relationship with the Principal & Vice Chancellor, recognising the proper separation between governance and executive management, and avoiding involvement in the day-to-day executive management of the University.

d) The Chair sits on the following committees of Court: the Chair’s Committee, the Governance & Nominations Committee and the Remuneration Committee and chairs the Chair’s Committee. In addition, the Chair is a member of the Honorary Awards Board of the University.

4. External Role

a) The Chair will represent Court and the University externally. The Chair will be a member of the UK-wide Committee of University Chairs and the Committee of Scottish Chairs.

b) The Chair may be asked to play a role in liaising between key stakeholders and the University, or in fund-raising. This role in particular should be exercised in a carefully coordinated fashion with other senior officers and staff of the University.

5. Personal

a) The Chair will have a strong personal commitment to Higher Education and the values, aims and objectives of the University.

b) The Chair will, at all times, act fairly and impartially in the interests of the University as a whole, using independent judgement and maintaining confidentiality as appropriate.

c) The Chair is expected to attend all meetings of which she/he is Chair or a member, or give timely apologies if absence is unavoidable.

d) The Chair will attend induction/training events organised by the University or other appropriate bodies such as the Leadership Foundation for HE as required.

e) The Chair will be offered feedback from Court annually on her/his performance as Chair via the Court Intermediary.
Personal Competencies

**Essential**

- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills, including the ability to establish good working relationships with other members of Court, the Principal and other members of the University Executive.
- Commitment to higher education and empathy with the purpose, principles and objectives of the University.
- Diplomacy and demonstrable authority, including the ability to manage conflict in a constructive manner.
- Networking, influencing and advocacy, including the ability to represent the University to a range of stakeholders (including students, staff, local community, Ministers, civil servants, potential funders and donors) and to build positive relationships.
- Ability to lead decision-making processes that ensure objectives are achieved and standards are maintained.
- Commitment to equality and diversity.

**Desirable**

- Good understanding of business principles and risk management.
- Good understanding of the current political environment in Scotland and the UK.

Knowledge and Experience

**Essential**

- Senior leadership experience (private, public and/or third sector).
- Considerable knowledge and expertise in matters relevant to the successful operation of a complex organisation.
- Experience of leading strategic change successfully.
- Understanding of the principles and effective implementation of good corporate governance.
- Experience of networking with senior external stakeholders.
- Understanding of how post-school education is provided in Scotland.
- Representational responsibilities in an appropriate organisational context.

**Desirable**

- Expertise in an area relevant to the responsibilities of Court.
- Understanding of the principles of good governance in the context of higher education.
- Experience of interacting with politicians, civil servants and senior business people in Scotland.
Expenses

The office of Chair is not remunerated, but the Chair is entitled to all travelling and incidental expenses (including, for example, childcare costs) incurred in the course of University business. Directors and Officers Liability Insurance is in place.

Period of Appointment

The appointment as Chair of Court is for three years starting in 2018 with the specific date to be confirmed and with the possibility of one further three-year period of office. The successful applicant will become a member of Court, shadowing the current Chair until he steps down, at which time the individual will become Chair.

Time Commitment

This is an important role, requiring time commitment and flexibility, given that the actual time spent on the role can be unpredictable. It is estimated that the Chair will need to devote approximately 30 days per year (or about 2.5 days per month or 3 days per month term-time) to fulfil effectively the duties of the Chair. Typically, the Chair is required to prepare for, travel to and participate in the following meetings and events per year:

- Five meetings of Court: these currently take place on a Wednesday afternoon from 2.00 pm for about 2 hours, preceded by meetings with key staff, visits to staff and students and lunch with senior managers and members of Senate.
- Five meetings of the Chair’s Committee.
- Five meetings of the Governance & Nominations Committee.
- Two meetings of the Honorary Awards Board and the Remuneration Committee (these are normally scheduled on the same days as the Chair’s and Governance & Nomination Committees).
- Regular meetings with the Principal and with the Secretary to Court (these are normally scheduled to coincide with committee meetings).
- Participation in graduation ceremonies (currently held on one day in early July and one day in late November).
- Occasional events, dinners, lectures, exhibitions etc including Honorary Fellow installation ceremonies.
- Attendance at meetings of the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) and at meetings of the Committee of Scottish Chairs (CSC); the former take place twice a year in London and the latter take place four times a year at various higher education institutions in Scotland.
- There may occasionally be additional times when the Chair is required to contact the University or visit the University or other organisations to contribute to the conduct of the University’s business between formal meetings.
7. Application Process

Enquiries

If you have any informal enquiries regarding the role, please contact: s.stewart@abertay.ac.uk; +44 (0)1382 308016 (University Secretary)

Making your application

To apply, please send a full CV and supporting statement detailing, with examples and evidence, how you meet the criteria in the Person Specification and outlining the contribution you would make to the University, by 31st August 2017 to Mrs Sheena Stewart, University Secretary at s.stewart@abertay.ac.uk.

or by post to:

Mrs S Stewart
University Secretary
Abertay University
Bell Street
Dundee
DD1 1HG

Interviews

The Governance & Nominations Committee will review applications and invite shortlisted applicants for interview on a mutually-convenient date.

Committed to Equal Opportunities

The University of Abertay Dundee is a Scottish Registered Charity, No: SC016040