

## BRIEFING INFORMATION

### University Court

### Senate Assessor

#### **Vacancy in the Science and Medicine Professorial Academic Staff Constituency**

The University Court is the governing body of the University, its authority derived from Acts of Parliament which vest in the Court the administration of all property and revenues of the University and which give it the power to review the decisions of the Senate. Court thus has overall responsibility for the governance of the University, including all aspects of strategic planning and management of all resources, whether financial, human or physical. The membership of Court is drawn from outwith the University (lay members), senior management, student representatives, academic and non-academic staff, and representatives from St Andrews alumni. Court currently has 25 members, the majority of whom are lay members.

**Forthcoming vacancy:** A scheduled vacancy will occur on 1 August 2024 for the position of a Senate Assessor on the University Court, consequent to the present incumbent (Professor Sharon Ashbrook, School of Chemistry) completing her second and final term on Court.

The position is open to - and directly elected by - all professorial academic staff in the Faculty of Science and Medicine (*Schools of Biology; Chemistry; Computer Science; Earth & Environmental Sciences; Geography & Sustainable Development; Mathematics & Statistics; Medicine; Physics & Astronomy; and Psychology & Neuroscience*).

**Eligibility:** Eligibility for participation in the election is such that any professorial academic staff member in the above Schools, holding a permanent or fixed term salaried contract of employment (on the census date of 25 March 2024), can stand as a candidate and/or vote in their stated constituency. Please note, an appointment to the position of Senate Assessor will terminate automatically if the holder ceases being an employee of the University.

**Length of term:** The position will be for a standard term of four years from 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2028. Note, academic staff who are on research leave or otherwise absent from the University for more than one semester continuously should normally resign as a member of Court.

**Time commitment:** Members of the University Court are expected to attend five Court meetings annually (including one Away Day spread over two days) and, if requested, to participate in at least one of four Court committees (a time commitment of three or four meetings per year in addition to those of Court). Senate Assessors on the University Court additionally serve as members of Senate (which meets twice per semester).

**Nomination process:** No candidate may self-nominate. Candidates must be proposed and seconded by eligible academic staff (see above) in their relevant constituency. Staff may propose or second only one candidate in each election.

Completed nomination forms must be submitted electronically by the deadline cited on the form and accompanied by a short candidate profile (of no more than 250 words) that will be used in the eventuality of an election. In the case of only one eligible candidate being nominated for the given vacancy, no election shall take place and this candidate will be automatically appointed to the position.

**Method of voting:** Should an election be required; voting will be conducted online by the Alternative Vote system. The election will be administered by Civica Election Services (CES), and staff should be aware that, under schedule 2 of the Data Protection Act 1998, the University will transfer the following details to CES for the purposes of administering the election: staff ID number, name and email address.

**Election timetable:** Nominations for the position open on Monday 8 April 2024 and will close at 12 noon on Wednesday 17 April 2024. If required, an online ballot will be held from 12 noon on Wednesday 1 May 2024 to 12 noon on Friday 3 May 2024. The election result will be announced no later than Tuesday 7 May 2024.

**Nomination forms for the vacancy can be requested by emailing [court@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:court@st-andrews.ac.uk) or are available for download at [Governance Court](#).**

Court Office

Version approved on 01 April 2024

## Senate Assessors on the University Court

The Governance and Nominations Committee of the University Court has given considerable attention to discussing the skills and experience required for the appointment of new Court members. It is recognised that good governance depends upon getting the right mix of skills and attributes on Court. Such concerns clearly apply to all Court members, whether elected or appointed.

The University Court of course recognises the right of the various groups of staff and students to conduct open elections amongst their members for their representatives on Court. In practice, however, neither the electorate nor the nominees tend to be very aware of the role of Court or the responsibilities of its members. The Committee is therefore now offering such information to the bodies arranging for the election of assessors in the hope that this information might be made known to potential candidates and to the electorate.

The criteria that the Committee is currently applying to Court membership can be stated reasonably concisely and will of course change in part as the membership of Court itself changes and new needs become apparent.

1. It is particularly important that new members of Court (and perhaps particularly those who have been elected by particular constituencies) recognise that as Court members they formally become charity trustees. The obligations and responsibilities of charity trustees are significant. The duties are set out in statute and guidance, and a summary might be found at [oscr.org.uk/guidance-and-forms](http://oscr.org.uk/guidance-and-forms).
2. The four *general* duties of charity trustees are:
  - To act in the interests of the charity/University, putting these ahead of any other group (including the group that elected them)
  - To carry out their duties in a manner consistent with the charity's purposes
  - To act with due care and diligence
  - To ensure the charity complies with the provisions of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and with other relevant legislation

There are some factors that disqualify an individual from being a charity trustee. All candidates for election should confirm that they are not disqualified from acting as a trustee on a charity in terms of the guidance given in the 2005 Act and by OSCR.

3. With respect to desirable skills and experience, the four Senate Assessors make a vital contribution to the discussions and decision-making of Court by bringing academic perspectives to issues of:

- management and governance
- strategic planning across the Faculties
- challenges for the HE sector in general, including those concerning funding and finance

Senate Assessors to Court will additionally be elected to serve as members of the University Senate, candidates should also demonstrate willingness to:

- bring experience from their School and Faculty to senior academic University Committees
- be involved in policy development and administrative matters at the highest University level

A summary of the primary roles and responsibilities of Court can be found in Section 2.3 of the Court Handbook, available at: [University-Court-Handbook](#)

Court is committed to embedding the principles of equality and diversity across all the University's activities, including enhancing the diversity of its membership. Nominations from people from Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds and other protected characteristics underrepresented on Court are particularly encouraged.

---