

Job description: Vice-Convener of Court

Purpose: Similar to that of 'Chair' of institution, responsible for the overall leadership of Court, representing the University externally and acting as a critical friend to the Principal and the University's senior management team.

Key Responsibilities:

The role of the Vice-Convener of Court is similar to that of Chair of institution in many other Universities.

The principal roles of the Vice-Convener may be summarised as follows:

- Responsible for the leadership of Court, its effectiveness and its conduct;
- Acts as a critical friend to the University, to the Principal and to members of the senior team;
- Represents the University at meetings with external bodies and stakeholders including Committee of University Chairs (CUC), Committee of Scottish Chairs, Scottish Funding Council and Scottish Government and represents Court at ceremonial events including graduations;
- In the absence of the Rector presides at meetings of Court;
- Is responsible, in liaison with the Rector, Principal and the senior team in ensuring that the University is well connected with its stakeholders, including staff, students, General Council members and the wider community;
- May act on behalf of Court under formalised delegated arrangements to take forward matters between Court meetings such as signing off routine documents and detailed implementation arrangements for matters already agreed by Court: such matters to be formally reported to the next meeting of Court;
- In liaison with the University Secretary ensures an adequate and effective induction process is in place for all new members of Court and that there are on-going development opportunities for all Court members to enable Court to effectively discharge its responsibilities;
- Acts as a point of contact for all Court members wishing to discuss sensitive issues and matters of concern in respect of Court or University activities;
- In terms of good governance being ex officio Convener of Court Committees principally Finance and General Purposes Committee and Nominations Committee and contributing to the governance in other significant areas through membership and/or Convenership of the Remuneration Committee;
- Responsible for the appraisal of the performance of the Principal, in accordance with approved arrangements.

Period of Appointment

The appointment will be made for a period of three years from 1 August 2014. The appointee will be eligible for consideration for reappointment for a further term of three years subject to satisfactory appraisal.

Remuneration

In common with most higher education institutions, there is no remuneration directly associated with the position of Vice-Convenor of Court, but the University will meet reasonable expenses incurred in connection with the Vice-Convenership of Court and other activities on behalf of the University including meeting child and other dependent care costs.

Time commitment

The likely overall time commitment required of the Vice-Convenor for the effective conduct of the duties of the post is 2-3 days per month which will include attendance at Court, Committee meetings and events, along with discussions with the Principal and other members of the senior management team. The Vice-Convenor is expected to be flexible in terms of their availability and being able to be contacted at short notice.

The Court currently meets six times a year on Monday afternoons, with two additional seminars held at the beginning and the middle of each academic year. The Court's Committees normally meet between three and six times a year on various days of the week. The University does expect all members to be committed and willing to engage with the work of Court and the University. Court members are invited to attend a number of University ceremonial events and some social events throughout the year. They are very welcome at these events, but the University recognises that other commitments may limit members' ability to accept all such invitations.

Committee and other work

In addition to the ex officio membership of key committees, the Vice-Convenor will have the opportunity to be a member of other Committees and may be asked to serve on short-term ad hoc groups set up for specific purposes; this can include steering groups for major capital projects and appeal panels set up under the University's staff discipline arrangements. In addition the Vice-Convenor will be expected to participate in senior appointment panels.

The University Secretary and Court secretariat will provide support to the Vice-Convenor of Court.

Person Specification

The University is committed to promoting all aspects of equality and diversity and welcomes applications from all sectors of the community.

Experience

Essential:

- Significant experience and expertise in leading on strategic issues within a large complex organisation;
- Experience of chairing high level, strategic Board and Committee meetings and bringing often complex and sensitive matters to a satisfactory conclusion.

Desirable:

- Experience of, Research Councils, relevant Charities or Public/Government organisations.

Knowledge, Skills and Competencies

Essential:

- Relevant professional expertise and knowledge in matters relevant to successful operation of a large, diverse organisation, e.g. commercial acumen, risk management, organisational change;
- Understanding of financial processes, including an understanding of budgetary processes;
- Knowledge and understanding of the education sector;
- Able to demonstrate leadership skills and engender respect from others;
- Ability to interpret information, debate constructively and rigorously challenge;
- Awareness of probity issues and commitment to high standards of integrity, transparency and impartiality;
- Knowledge or understanding of governance in organisations;
- Ability to influence opinions and outcomes;
- Ability to communicate effectively at senior level and explain issues and decisions both orally and in writing;
- Skills of networking, influencing and advocacy;
- Understanding of strategic planning processes;
- Empathy with the values and vision of the University of Edinburgh;
- Understanding of the economic, social and political dynamics of Edinburgh and wider Scotland.

Desirable:

Candidates may have knowledge of two or more of the following:

- Human Resources;
- Information technology or information management;
- Legal work;
- Knowledge of the international environment particularly in relation to higher education;
- Risk management oversight;
- Current knowledge of the construction sector particularly at a strategic/planning level;
- Knowledge of philanthropic fundraising;
- Public sector, including government and local authorities;

- Knowledge of the University of Edinburgh or equivalent research intensive university.

Personal Attributes

The Vice-Convenor will have a strong personal commitment to higher education and have empathy with the values, aims and objectives of the University of Edinburgh. S/he will also share the University's vision and aspirations to national and international excellence as well as understand the multiple academic and business drivers needed to underpin this.

Individual members and the Court collectively should at all times conduct themselves in accordance with accepted high standards of behaviour in public life, which embrace selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Essential Personal Attributes include:

- Diplomacy and sensitivity;
- Sound judgment and judiciousness;
- Ability to deal with conflict in a constructive manner;
- Ability to establish good working relationships with a diverse range of people (staff, students, other members of Court and its committees);
- Demonstrable commitment to equality and diversity;
- Sympathy with and understanding of the University of Edinburgh's culture;
- Strong inter-personal skills;
- Integrity, tact, discretion, independence and objectivity;
- Calm, measured approach;
- Ability to constructively challenge.

Application Procedure

All applicants should apply via the University of Edinburgh's recruitment website <http://www.ed.ac.uk/jobs>. The application process is quick and easy to follow, and you will receive email confirmation of safe receipt of your application. The online system allows you to submit a CV and other attachments.

We anticipate interviews will be held in the week commencing 21 January 2014. You will be notified by email whether you have been shortlisted for interview or not.

The closing date is 5 pm on 16 Dec 2013.

The University of Edinburgh welcomes applications from all sectors of the community, particularly from traditionally under-represented groups.

As a member of Court the Vice-Convenor of Court is formally a trustee of the University in its capacity as a charity and will therefore be asked to confirm that s/he is not disqualified from serving as a trustee under the Charities and Trustee Investments Act (Scotland) 2005.

Confidential Discussion

Informal enquiries regarding the role may be made to University Secretary Ms Sarah Smith via email at University.Secretary@ed.ac.uk or telephone 0131 650 2144.