



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH  
The General Council

# Billet

SUMMER 2023



# Welcome to *Billet* summer 2023

The General Council provides graduates with a continuing voice in the University's affairs, and every graduate automatically becomes a member. Academic staff and members of the University's governing body, the University Court, are also members of the General Council. It meets twice a year and has the right to comment on matters affecting the University's prosperity and wellbeing. For more information on the work of the General Council, visit: [www.ed.ac.uk/general-council](http://www.ed.ac.uk/general-council)

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## Report

by **Sir Philip Mawer**

*Convener of the Business Committee of the General Council*

Welcome to this summer 2023 edition of *Billet*, the content of which, you will find, is a little different from the one which preceded it. This time there is a greater focus on the important work of the Standing Committees whose members together make up the membership of the Business Committee. We have also taken the opportunity to include some reflections by retiring members about their time on the Business Committee and to introduce to you the three new members elected to serve on it from August of this year. More about this year's elections later.



The primary purpose of every edition of *Billet*, however, remains the same: to advise General Council members of the arrangements and the business for the next Half-Yearly Meeting of the Council. At the Council's meeting in February of each year, the Principal delivers his annual report on the state of the University. Those who attended this year's meeting will know that this is a vital opportunity for General Council members not only to hear the views of the University's senior leadership on the University's progress and prospects but for the Principal to be questioned about current issues and concerns. Anyone who may think this merely a pro forma sort of occasion has only to view the recording of the February 2023 event on the General Council website – [www.ed.ac.uk/general-council](http://www.ed.ac.uk/general-council) – to be disabused of that notion.

The character of the Council's summer meetings is different, and this year's will be no exception. Details of the arrangements and how to register for the meeting can be found on pages 15 and 23.

Briefly, the Business Committee seeks to use the Council's summer meetings not only to transact essential business but to enable members to explore in more depth a particular facet of the University's life and work. This year, the meeting will take place at the recently opened Nucleus hub at the King's Buildings campus at 10.15am on Saturday 10 June. After a short business session (open only to General Council members), there will be a presentation for members and their guests, starting at 11am, on current activity in the College of Science & Engineering, with a particular focus on the issue of sustainability. After a break for lunch, members and guests will be able to tour parts of the King's Buildings campus and to learn about some of the fascinating research being undertaken there. I hope that as many members as possible will take advantage of this unique opportunity and will bring with them a friend, neighbour or family member who would also be interested in learning more about what the University is doing to help society on this critical issue.

I mentioned earlier the February Half-Yearly Meeting and the opportunity this gives members to gain an overview of the current state of the University and the challenges and opportunities facing it. It is impossible to summarise adequately the extensive report the Principal, Sir Peter Mathieson, gave us in February. If I were challenged to do so, I would say the picture which



The Nucleus at the King's Buildings.

emerged was of a university which continues fully to demonstrate its world class credentials in teaching and research even as, like every other UK university, it faces significant challenges as a result of various social, political and governmental policy developments.

Many of the challenges identified by Sir Peter were further explored by the Business Committee when it was addressed in March by Leigh Chalmers, the recently appointed Secretary of the University (and the Registrar to the General Council). Among issues discussed were the size and make-up of the student population; student satisfaction and support; staff morale and the industrial relations climate; the management of change projects affecting the University; freedom of expression and academic freedom; and the impact of geopolitics and the international security agenda. A number of these were also followed up in subsequent correspondence. We were left in no doubt of the vigour and clarity of thought which Ms Chalmers is bringing to her demanding role or of her desire to be transparent and collegial in the leadership she is providing to her disparate team.

Looking ahead, it is clear that everyone who is concerned to ensure the continued prosperity of the University will need to demonstrate similar qualities if current challenges are to be overcome. The remainder of 2023 is likely to see further developments in relation to such hotly debated issues as gender identity and freedom of expression; historic and contemporary racism; and the desirable future size and shape of the University, including the make-up of its student body.

The General Council too faces challenges. It needs to modernise and update the rules governing its membership and to find ways of better engaging with its members. The changing shape of the student body – some 50 per cent of which is now drawn from outside the UK – means that the Council's membership is increasingly becoming global, with consequent implications for the way both the Council and its Business Committee do their work.

The election to the Business Committee earlier this year exemplified the changes which are underway. First there were nine outstanding candidates – three of them based outside the UK – for just three places on the Committee. Secondly, one of the three successful candidates is based in the USA and one of the others is based outside Scotland. Thirdly, the new electronic voting arrangements introduced by the University were not only much simpler but enabled a much increased level of participation by Council members, with just over 7,000 voting.

However, the new voting arrangements highlighted the fact that far too many alumni do not receive digital communications from the General Council, either because they have chosen not to do so or not kept the University informed of their current email address, or because they have unsubscribed, possibly by mistake. Ensuring that the Council's communications, electoral and meeting arrangements continue to be fit for purpose in a changing world is a priority which the relevant Standing Committees of the Business Committee are already addressing.

So there is much more to be done, on which I hope to be able to report further progress when we meet at the King's Buildings campus. Suffice it for me to say now that Council members can be confident – as they will see from the reports and personal reflections which follow –

of the quality and commitment of those they have elected to represent them on the Business Committee. They can also be confident of our shared determination to serve the University and the General Council with the same qualities of leadership and skill we expect to find, and I believe can see reflected, in the senior leadership of the University itself.

## Reports by the Conveners of the Standing Committees

### Academic Standing Committee

**Professor Steve Hillier**, *Convener*

The Academic Standing Committee's (ASC) remit includes all matters relating to teaching and research, and the provision of facilities that impinge on the academic life of the University.

Self-evidently, ASC business is essential to the University's academic mission, and maps closely to Strategy 2030. Teaching and learning remain high priorities as the University continues to emerge from the pandemic era.

The ASC met on 16 November 2022 with Dr Melissa Highton (Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Services and Assistant Principal Online Learning). She outlined the crucial role that digital approaches play in contemporary learning and teaching scenarios. Edinburgh was one of the first providers of masters degree level online teaching and learning in the UK, and still leads the way. In the discussion it was noted that there could be a tension between the online aim of learning at 'any time, any place, any pace' and the idea that the campus is still the 'centre of gravity' of the University.

ASC also scrutinised the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policy. EDI is embedded in the people strand of Strategy 2030 and affects students and staff at every level. Professor Sarah Cunningham-Burley (University lead for EDI) updated ASC on progress at its meeting on 26 January 2023. The initial emphasis on leadership is shifting to structures and governance through the work of the EDI Standing Committee (ESC), which Professor Cunningham-Burley convenes. EDI representatives have been appointed at college, school and corporate service level, including in Human Resources (HR).

The next ASC meeting in Semester 2 will be with Mr Ronnie Millar, Director of Counselling Services, to be briefed on the service's work and its impact on health and wellbeing across the student body. Future ASC meetings are likely to cover:

- the implications of artificial intelligence for teaching, learning and assessment
- an update on the Curriculum Transformation Project, and
- the University of Edinburgh Doctoral College.



The ASC is grateful to students and staff for their constant readiness to engage with and advise the Committee, which allows the General Council Business Committee to be kept abreast of relevant academic issues and be equipped to provide constructive and meaningful feedback and commentary in support of University affairs.

## Constitutional Standing Committee

**Mr Gordon Cairns**, *Convener*

The Constitutional Standing Committee (CSC) considers and advises on matters involving the relationship between the General Council and the Business Committee, including amendments that may be required to constitutional arrangements of the General Council as a result of legislative changes and the need to establish new procedures within the Business Committee to ensure the smooth running of the organisation.



CSC has recently been asked to consider introducing more flexibility around the length of members' period of office on the Business Committee, to help smooth turnover, along with clarification of who should be proposers or seconders of candidates seeking election to the Committee. It is also reviewing the policy in respect of reimbursement of expenses incurred by Business Committee members in connection with the work of the Committee.

The CSC is also considering changes that may be required to the regulations for election to the Business Committee as a result of a recent change of the computerised systems used within the University for election purposes.

It is anticipated that, where appropriate and subject to the approval of the Business Committee, proposals may be brought forward on some of these matters at a future Half-Yearly Meeting of the General Council.

## Finance and Services Standing Committee

**Almira Delibegovic-Broome**, *KC, Convener*

At the Business Committee meeting held on 2 March 2023, the Finance and Services Standing (FSSC) Convener updated the Business Committee on the FSSC's meeting with Lee Hamill (for further details of which, please refer to the FSSC Report of the meeting held on 30 January 2023 which you can find at [www.ed.ac.uk/general-council/business-committee/standing-committees/finance-and-services-standing-committee/reports](http://www.ed.ac.uk/general-council/business-committee/standing-committees/finance-and-services-standing-committee/reports)).



The FSSC will have two further meetings this academic year, addressing the traditional areas we seek to address each year.

On Tuesday 24 April 2023, the FSSC met with Mr Gavin McLachlan, Vice-Principal and Chief Information Officer. Mr McLachlan was invited to present on issues relating to digital security,

as well as on progress with resolution of any remaining technical issues related to the implementation of the People and Money system.

On Monday 12 June 2023, the FSSC will meet with Mr James Saville, Director of HR. Mr Saville has been invited to present on the key HR issues facing the University. It is expected that his presentation will cover, among other things, an update on industrial relations more generally, and the way in which the implementation of the People and Money system has impacted the HR function.

## International Standing Committee

**Ms Krystyna Szumelukowa**, *Convener*

The global reach of the University can be encapsulated in its 292 live agreements with 222 partners across 60 countries, not including commercial and research contracts. Their long-term sustainability with global access for all staff and students is key to successful partnerships, while close attention is necessarily being paid to freedom of speech and security concerns. Derek Macleod and Chris Yeomans of Edinburgh Global informed the International Standing Committee (ISC) in November 2022 of the processes of due diligence and approval in place to guarantee continued confidence in the reputation of the University. The Confucius Institute, and its setting within the University, was given a special focus. Established in 2007, it resides within the School of Literature, Language & Cultures which has oversight of its management and curriculum. More than 10,000 students have passed through and nearly 500,000 people have attended a wide range of events. An advisory board oversees its governance, and it continues to build valuable educational and cultural links between Scotland and China.



Our first meeting in 2023 was centred on Africa with examples of engagement looking to the future in the fields of health, agriculture, food security, political science, biological sciences and energy. We were privileged to hear from Nick Rowland, Regional Director; Francisca Mutapi, International Dean; and Ifeanyichukwu Ezinmadu, fourth-year Mastercard scholar. More than 1,000 students and 4,000 alumni and 20 active agreements are in place as a platform from which to develop a strategic programme with the African Academy of Sciences and the University's Centre of African Studies. TIBA (Tackling Infections to Benefit Africa) is already a prime example of a direct clinical care, training and research programme securing 90 per cent retention of skills and 80 per cent of funding in Africa. The welcome renewal of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program to 2030 for 850 postgraduate scholarships with a mix of on campus, digital education and doctoral training is a significant signpost for the future.

The ISC will continue to support the University in its aim to maintain its reputation as an international seat of learning. How to enhance the role of alumni across the globe via the General Council as the University reviews its own Global Strategy will also be part of our future agenda.

## Public Affairs Standing Committee

**Ms Candice Donnelly**, *Convener*

Throughout the 2022/23 session, the Public Affairs Standing Committee (PASC) has continued its focus on the University's engagement with the wider community. One area of particular interest has been the University's Community Plan, with which PASC has been involved since its development. With the Community Plan now in its second year, we welcomed Stuart Tooley's update at our January meeting, where we heard of its early successes and the natural challenges that come with implementing such an expansive programme. Committee members were pleased to hear that the board continues to drive progress, whether in diversifying representation on the board, building procurement and volunteer resource to better prioritise projects, and developing metrics to measure success and completion.



PASC also has a watching brief on the University's race review project. This is a complex topic, and the project team has spent considerable time ensuring clarity around the University's priorities for the review and engaging a broad group of academics to conduct extensive background research on the issues. The project is expected to move into a consultation stage later this year, where General Council members will have their chance to express views on the issues under review.

For the remainder of the session, we will return our focus to the Business Committee's own communications strategy. The February Half-Yearly Meeting was both livestreamed and recorded and we will be analysing the website visitor data to better understand how hybrid set-ups can be used to improve engagement. We also want to assess which parts of our new website have attracted the most readership, so we can consider how best to focus our efforts to produce communications that are both informative and interesting to our members. Finally, to finish the year, we hope to explore the University's environmental initiatives and study how it is working with local communities to meet its sustainability and social responsibility goals.



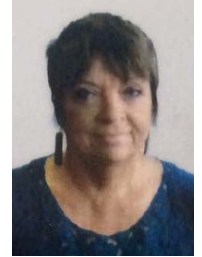
The University's Community Plan is progressing with the support of students, staff and local residents.

## Members of the Business Committee share their thoughts

We would like warmly to thank our valued members who have come to the end of their term of office for their dedicated support in the work of the Committee and its standing committees. Here they share some reflections on what that experience has meant for them.

**Joyce Caplan**, *Business Committee Member 2019–2023*

Gaining a new perspective within the University was for me not only a bonus but a surprise. After being a teacher here for over 30 years I became a member of the General Council Business Committee and for the first time had a 'helicopter' overview of all the University's diverse activities. It is the size of a small town (nearly 60,000 students and staff with several campuses) and has similar management challenges. I discovered people and places I didn't know existed!



At the Business Committee and the Academic Standing Committee we have presentations from those involved in the welfare of students and staff at all levels. I have found these both informative and engaging – and often challenging to our assumptions. As 'outsiders' we are able to offer comments on complex and often controversial issues as we live in the wider community and can be two-way interpreters in times of confusion. We can help uphold the University's core values of diversity, debate and diligence in rapidly changing times.

It has been a privilege to be a 'critical friend' of the University and its activities. To watch the energetic, transient cohorts of students who coped even in the difficult times of Covid – which denied many of them the experiences they had anticipated both academically and socially – has been inspiring. For me the high points of the year are student graduations, where we can share in the joy of achievement for all of us and realise: the future is on its way!

**Moyra Forrest**, *Business Committee Member 2015–19 and 2019–23*

It has been a privilege to be a member of the Business Committee. Its role as a critical friend to the University means meetings are both constructive and caring. The pandemic accelerated the pace of change and all are having to adapt to a hybrid world. However, nothing can compare with actually seeing and interacting with colleagues and invited speakers. The opportunity to visit departments and student accommodation blocks provided valuable insights into the size, disparate nature and challenges of the modern University.



I have served on both the Constitutional and Public Affairs Committees. A particular highlight was the General Council Half-Yearly Meeting focusing on some of the outreach work of the University.

**Bruce Ritson**, *Business Committee Member 2010–14; 2015–19 and 2019–2023*

My second period as a member of the Business Committee proved to be a time of unprecedented challenges. The lockdown, due to Covid, the consequences of Brexit and heightened international tensions all impacted on the life of the University.

The pandemic brought an end to face-to-face teaching. The academic staff responded magnificently to the challenge and within weeks most teaching and learning took place online. This was a very stressful time for all, particularly students who lost opportunities to socialise and work together.

The Business Committee aims to be supportive but not uncritical in response to the policies and challenges faced by the University. Student numbers are close to 50,000, approximately half from overseas. Edinburgh is ranked fourth in the UK research excellence framework, a priority that needs to be continually nourished. Maintaining ethical standards, and remaining conscious of diversity and aware of our responsibility to the wider community are all important, as is the need to ensure that the individual voice is heard.

The mental wellbeing and morale of students and staff is a major concern, particularly in recent times. The Counselling Service has grown enormously. But there is still concern that those with the most severe problems may pass unnoticed.

Serving on the Business Committee has provided a privileged insight into the activities of the University. Participating in the evolution of this great University has been a fantastic experience and opportunity.



LGBTQ+ staff/student training

**We also asked the newly elected members to give their thoughts and aspirations on joining the Business Committee.**

**Mary Gunn**, *Business Committee Member 2023–2027*

It is an honour and privilege to be given the opportunity by the General Council to serve the University and its stakeholders as a member of the Business Committee. In my role, I am committed to shaping the future leaders of tomorrow in Scotland and beyond. I aim to foster an environment that promotes excellence, inclusivity and innovation, and I aspire to bring a positive change that will benefit the students, alumni, faculty, and staff members of the University. In addition, I also aspire to improve the University's research and innovative activities, encourage entrepreneurship initiatives, and strengthen the University's engagement with industry and the local and international communities to create economic and social impact.

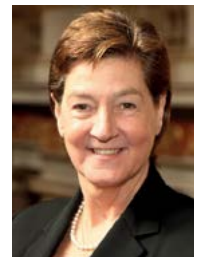
I bring to my role a depth of experience in global education governance, having served on the Business Committee of Brown University and as the president of alumni in Asia for IE Business School, Brown University, and the University of Edinburgh across a 25-year span. I also bring 30 years of executive and board level leadership in life science innovation and entrepreneurship, often through private/public partnerships. My commitment to Scotland extends to service on the board of a Scottish investment trust and 15 years of advisory service in private equity, finance, and sovereign wealth funds.

I am excited to work with fellow Business Committee members to optimise the University's prosperity and make a difference in the lives of those who look up to the University as a global leader.

**Ann Cormack**, *Business Committee Member 2023–2027*

Delighted to be elected to serve on the Business Committee, I aim to use my experience in business and other organisations to inform and contribute to how the Committee will carry out its role in the governance of the University.

I hope my non-executive and board roles in complex commercial, governmental and third sector global organisations will equip me to engage in constructive dialogue and advise on questions affecting the ongoing wellbeing and prosperity of the University. Like most organisations, challenges facing the University and its students include commercial sustainability in the context of volatility and uncertainty in the world; changes to the workforce and ways of working through the pandemic; capturing value from successful policies and action on diversity and inclusion; and keeping pace with the application of technology.



Additional dimensions I hope my experience can support include influencing and achieving government policy objectives and encouraging graduates to carry into the wider world the ethos and values of the University as well as their qualification, skills and learning gleaned at Edinburgh. Good governance means also supporting the University to find answers – strategies and the best ways of handling these and other challenges, to secure the University's growth.

As an Edinburgh graduate whose early experience there deeply influenced my adult life and work, I am honoured to serve on the Business Committee and look forward to working with colleagues to support the University's future success and influence in the world.

**Manya Buchan**, *Business Committee Member 2023–2027*

I am really excited to be joining the General Council Business Committee, and am so honoured to have been elected!

I moved to Edinburgh in 1999 after having graduated from Simon Fraser University in Canada with a BA (Hons) in Archaeology, during which time I also spent a year as an exchange student at the University of Dundee.

Soon after arriving in Edinburgh I started working at the University as a Senior Secretary in the Department of Physical Education, Sport & Leisure Studies. Other positions in Educational Studies and the School of Physics followed, leading to becoming the Head of Research Policy and Planning Services in Governance and Strategic Planning (GASP). Key achievements while working in GASP were the successful planning, management, and execution of the University's national research assessment submissions (RAE2008 and REF2014), and the successful procurement, implementation, and roll-out of the University's research information system.

It was while working at the University that I had the opportunity to study part-time for an MBA and it made me very proud to become a third generation Edinburgh alumna.

Since 2014, I have been working as a software Product Manager serving the higher education research sector. Key achievements have included:

- delivery of UK (REF2021), Australian (ERA2018), and Dutch (SEP2015–2021) assessment modules
- production of the highly successful UK REF Results Analysis Tool
- international launch of the Elements Research Funding Solution, supporting institutions in managing funding workflows and project lifecycles.

I am looking forward to bringing my knowledge and experience in research support and software product management to help the Business Committee to achieve its aims, particularly during the current challenging People and Money system implementation.



## Peter de Vink – a tribute

Peter Henry John de Vink was elected to the Business Committee in 2020. He died on 20 March 2023 before the expiry of his term of office, after a long battle with myeloma.

Peter was a 'big' man in every sense of the word. Large of frame, of voice and of personality. His childhood was challenging. Born in the Netherlands in 1940 during the Nazi occupation, he knew hardship, compounded by the imprisonment of his father who was active in the resistance.



After school and National Service he came to the University of Edinburgh to study business. From that point on, his commitment to Scotland, his adopted home, was only exceeded by his commitment to the University to which, he believed, he owed much of his later success.

On graduating with a BCom, he joined Ivory and Sime, then a leading Edinburgh fund manager. He soon displayed the 'highly developed commercial instinct' remarked on by his teachers. Within a few years, he became a partner and then a director, before leaving in 1978 to set up Edinburgh Financial and General Holdings. With huge energy and a talent for getting to know the right people, many came to feel they owed to him their subsequent business success.

Peter became an independent councillor in Midlothian, where he lived, before joining the Business Committee, serving on the Finance and Services Standing Committee, being determined to put his business talents at the service of the university he loved. A man of big ideas (many of them well founded), he was impatient with bureaucracy, big of heart, generous and hospitable to the last.

The gratitude, as well as the sympathy, of many go to his family as they grieve over his loss.

## Introducing the latest General Council Prince Philip Scholar, Abigail Haining

I really appreciate having the opportunity to go to university and this scholarship has allowed me to stay in the beautiful city of Edinburgh and make the most of my time studying here. I am a Scottish student from a small village on the other side of the bridges in Fife, so moving to a city was very exciting.



I chose to study Ecological and Environmental Sciences as I am fascinated by the natural world and when I read about this programme offered at the University, I knew it was the one for me. In the first semester I met all the wonderful students on my programme and have gone on several field trips, such as to the Royal Botanic Garden and to an airfield, which were great experiences. Through trying various societies and going to many events held by the University, I have formed friendships with some incredible students.

I have seen a growth in self-confidence through living independently and doing part-time work at a restaurant which has involved working with lovely people. I already feel like I have gained many skills and much knowledge so far, related to my degree itself but also life skills, such as time management and balancing all my commitments.

I look forward to what is to come over the next four years!



Students stroll in the Royal Botanic Garden.

## General Council Half-Yearly Meeting, The Nucleus, The King's Buildings, Saturday, 10 June 2023

The next Half-Yearly Meeting for Members of the General Council will be held at the recently built and most impressive Nucleus hub in the King's Buildings campus, beginning at 10.15am on Saturday 10 June, 2023. Registration, tea and coffee will be available from 9.30am.

The first part is a short business meeting, for General Council members only, to deal with the matters set out in the agenda shown on the following page.

This will be followed at 11am by a programme of events, open to General Council members and their registered guests, exploring some of the fascinating research taking place at the King's Buildings campus. This will begin with an overview presentation by Vice-Principal, Professor Iain Gordon FRSE, of current activity in the College of Science & Engineering, followed by short sessions on the theme of sustainability.

After lunch, there will be guided visits to various labs and research facilities.

The format for the day is as follows:

9.30am	Registration and teas/coffees
10.15am	General Council Statutory Meeting
10.45am	Break
11am	Overview presentation and series of short talks
1pm	Lunch
2pm	Campus lab visits
3pm	Guests depart

More information about the sessions can be viewed on the General Council website:

[www.ed.ac.uk/general-council/half-yearly-meetings/forthcoming-meetings](http://www.ed.ac.uk/general-council/half-yearly-meetings/forthcoming-meetings)

### Transport and directions

The King's Building campus is readily accessible on various Lothian bus routes. Directions to the King's Buildings campus and the Nucleus Building:

[www.ed.ac.uk/science-engineering/about/location-map](http://www.ed.ac.uk/science-engineering/about/location-map)

Please also visit the General Council website for up-to-date information relating to public transport and parking. Please note that free parking will be available on site for those attending the Half-Yearly Meeting.

### Registration

General Council meetings are open to all General Council members and are free to attend. On this occasion there will be no charge for lunch or refreshments.



Members may also bring guests to attend the programme of events following the statutory meeting which is open to members of the General Council only.

Bookings can be made via the General Council Office: [General.Council@ed.ac.uk](mailto:General.Council@ed.ac.uk) or by post. Please give the information requested in the booking form on page 23 when registering by email.

Closing date for all registrations, including guests, is **Monday 29 May**.

Please note that this event will be livestreamed and recorded for the General Council website.

## Papers for the General Council Half-Yearly Meeting on Saturday 10 June, 2023, 10.15am

### Agenda for the General Council Meeting

1. Minutes of the Meeting of the General Council held in the McEwan Hall on 18 February 2023 (Paper A)
2. Matters arising
3. Report of the Business Committee
4. Dates of future meetings of the General Council and Notice of forthcoming elections
5. Any other competent business
6. Adjournment

### Paper A

Minutes of the Meeting of the General Council held in Edinburgh on 18 February 2023.

Present:

Ms Debora Kayembe	University Rector, in the Chair
Ms Leigh Chalmers	University Secretary
Professor Sir Peter Mathieson	Principal and Vice-Chancellor
Dr William Duncan	Secretary of the General Council
Sir Philip Mawer	Convener of the Business Committee
Rev Dr Harriet Harris	Chaplain to the University

64 Members present (plus those joining online)

#### 1. Results of the Elections for three Members of the General Council Business Committee

The Chair announced that the three new members of the Business Committee elected to serve for a period of four years from 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2027 were Miss Many Buchan, Ms Ann Cormack and Dr Mary Gunn.

#### 2. Minutes of the Meeting of the General Council held in the John McIntyre Conference Centre, Pollock Campus, on Saturday 18 June, 2022 (Paper A)

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2022 were approved.

#### 3. Matters arising

The Chair reported that there were no matters arising from the minutes.

#### 4. Report of the Business Committee

In the light of the demonstration outside the McEwan Hall, Sir Philip Mawer began his report by reminding members of the role of the General Council in the governance of the University as a representative advisory body without executive responsibility. He expected the questioning of the Principal after his report to be courteous yet challenging. He then congratulated the Principal, on behalf of the General Council, on being awarded a knighthood in the recent Honours List for his services to higher education.

The Convener then outlined some of the challenges facing the University at this time, following economic turmoil caused by Covid and the war in Ukraine, which the Principal and his senior leadership team were having to cope with: the impact of inflation on university budgets; the effect of the rise in the cost of living on individual staff and students; current national disputes over the pay and pensions of academic staff, as well as difficulties following the implementation of new IT systems and the adverse effect of these on staff morale; and the current debate about universities and freedom of speech.

The Convener reported that the General Council Business Committee had been given a briefing on the issues which had arisen from the implementation of the new People and Money system. They had been assured that the problems were being systematically addressed and that lessons are being learned for the future.

The Convener then went on to describe some of the activities currently taking place within the Standing Committees.

The Academic Standing Committee, chaired by Professor Stephen Hillier, had heard from Professor Sarah Cunningham-Burley who has a lead role in the University's policies on equality, diversity and inclusion. They were reassured to know that very serious attention is being paid to this issue, alongside a focus on freedom of expression – a concept which lies at the heart of what we have traditionally understood to be a university – and what this means in the contemporary context.

The International Standing Committee, led by Krystyna Szumelukowa, had recently explored the University's strengthening relationship with Africa. The University's track record, not only in educating Africa's future leaders but in research which delivers direct benefit to Africa, is second to none. It is a story filled with hope and encouragement.

The Public Affairs Standing Committee, of which Candice Donnelly is the Convener, had recently received an update on the progress of the University's Community Plan, its exciting



*IntoUniversity at The White House, Craigmillar.*

programme of outreach projects in and around Edinburgh. The University has pledged more than £500,000 towards funding the 39 commitments in the plan, two of which – including the opening of the IntoUniversity learning centre in Craigmillar – have already been completed.

At its most recent meeting, the Finance and Services Standing Committee, chaired by Almira Delibegovic-Broome, met the University's Director of Finance to review the recently published Report and Accounts for the academic financial year 2021/22. Although the report shows the University to be in good financial health, the Committee had also discussed the University's arrangements for ensuring that it retains the financial resilience to overcome many of the challenges it still faces.

Finally, the Constitutional Standing Committee, led by the Vice Convener of the Business Committee, Gordon Cairns, met recently to discuss some aspects of the election process.

This year's election was notable for the large number of outstanding candidates, including two based in the USA and one in Chile, and for a new, much more straightforward electronic voting system, resulting in a very significant, welcome increase in voting. Sir Philip offered his congratulations to those elected and looked forward to welcoming them to the Business Committee.

The Convener concluded his report by thanking colleagues on the Business Committee for their unstinting commitment to the work of the General Council and to the wellbeing of the University, which remains a world-class institution, strong in research, enlightened in teaching and committed to furthering the good of the people of Scotland, the UK and the world.

The report of the Business Committee was approved.

## 5. Dates of future meetings of the General Council and Notice of forthcoming elections

The next Half-Yearly Meeting will take place on Saturday 10 June, 2023, in the Nucleus, King's Buildings campus. Any motions for discussion at this meeting should be received in the General Council Office by Wednesday 22 March, 2023.

The following Statutory Half-Yearly Meeting will be held on Saturday 17 February, 2024, in the McEwan Hall, Edinburgh. Any motions for discussion at this meeting should be received in the General Council Office by Wednesday 22 November, 2023.

There will be elections for seven members of the Business Committee in February 2024. Nominations on forms available from the General Council Office and on the website should be received in the General Council Office by Wednesday 22 November, 2023.

## 6. Presentation by Professor Sir Peter Mathieson, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, of the Annual Report to the University

The Principal began his presentation by stating that there is still much to be proud of and optimistic about. He said that there is an excess of superb talent seeking to join the University as students or staff and referred to new appointments within his senior leadership team. He reported that the University has moved to 15th place in the QS world rankings, which is the highest the University of Edinburgh has ever held. A new QS ranking which looks at teaching, research and operational functions as measured against indices of sustainability shows the University in fourth place in the world and number one in Europe. In the face of new geopolitical developments and other external events, the University has shown itself resilient and adaptable.



The University has grown in the last 12 months: staff numbers are approaching 16,000 and student numbers approaching 50,000. In 2020/21, growth had been more than anticipated as the University had to deal with accepting additional students whose results were better than had been expected, partly as a consequence of being awarded teacher assessed grades during the Covid-19 pandemic.

About a quarter of all students come from Scotland; about a quarter from the rest of UK and about half from outside the UK, of whom about 10 per cent are from the EU. As a consequence of Brexit, students from the EU now have international fee status. The College of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences is the biggest and accounts for more than half the student body.

Almost 60 per cent of students are undergraduates and around 30 per cent postgraduate taught (one or two year, mostly international students); the remainder are postgraduate research students.

The proportion of students from Asia has grown and those from Greater China remain the biggest contributor. A significant number of students come from North America and only

four per cent from the African continent. The University is part of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, which provides fully funded scholarships for bright students from Africa with leadership potential to come to universities outside Africa to develop their education and leadership skills, with a view to taking those skills back to their countries of origin. The University is actively interested in engaging and learning from the past and is in the midst of an academic-led review of race and racism in the University's history.

In terms of admissions the Principal reported that in the 2022 cycle there were 78,000 applications for 6,000 places. He emphasised that to create equality of opportunity, the University is strongly committed to the principles of widening participation so that able students from less advantaged backgrounds can have equality of access to university education, by assessing their potential according to a range of factors, not simply exam results. This is in line with Scottish Government requirements that universities admit an increasing proportion of students from the most deprived backgrounds.

The Principal also explained that in a system where the number of Scottish students the University can accept is capped by the Scottish Government, many well-qualified Scottish students will inevitably not be offered a place at Edinburgh. This cap does not apply to rest of UK, EU or other international students, and so Scottish students do not compete for places against these other groups.

In response to a question about the offers to Scottish students made by the Law School, he explained that the combination of the above factors had led to an unintended outcome this year, but he was confident this would not recur.

Financial highlights to July 2022: total income grew by 9.3 per cent to £1.2bn. Capital expenditure on land and buildings rose to almost pre-pandemic levels. The Principal reported a record rolling average for philanthropic income and took the opportunity to thank members of the alumni community for their support.

The Principal named the winners of the various University awards and detailed some of the current activities offering opportunities for alumni engagement.

The University continues to do well in research and from innovation and collaboration as part of the City Region Deal, and came fourth in the UK in the results of the 2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF).

The University had addressed some of the challenges of Brexit in a number of ways, including developing partnerships and alliances with other universities. Other priority concerns are staff morale; student satisfaction; freedom of expression; proposed legislation around the international security agenda; and the geopolitical situation.

The Principal commented on the widely reported difficulties in implementation of phase three of the People and Money system. In response to a follow up question on that and how the University handled other change management processes, he acknowledged the serious impact these were having on staff, students, suppliers and overseas partners. He emphasised his

commitment and that of the Senior Leadership Team to addressing the present difficulties and believed the measures recently introduced would improve the situation. He also recognised the need for a significantly different approach in future to implementing change management processes.

The strategic priorities, values and vision articulated in Strategy 2030 remain as relevant as ever. At a time of massive uncertainties in our society, universities have a key role to play in thought leadership, the production and dissemination of new knowledge, and in building greater resilience and stability. The University is doing its utmost to contribute to these goals.

The Principal concluded that despite some challenging issues that were being addressed, there was a great deal of which to be proud. He was optimistic about the future success of the University, and thanked the General Council for its support.

### 7. Any other competent business

There was no other competent business.

### 8. Adjournment

The motion by the Convener of the Business Committee that, for the purpose of considering matters which may be transmitted to the General Council by the University Court or any other business of a competent nature, the Business Committee be empowered to act on behalf of the Council, and that this meeting be adjourned to a date to be fixed by the Business Committee, was approved.

Rev Dr Harriet Harris closed the meeting with a benediction.

The Principal's full presentation, and the Business Committee's report to the meeting on 18 February 2023 is published on the website at:

**[www.ed.ac.uk/general-council/half-yearly-meetings/report-from-previous-meetings](http://www.ed.ac.uk/general-council/half-yearly-meetings/report-from-previous-meetings)**

## Officers

<i>Chairman:</i>	HRH The Princess Royal	
<i>Secretary:</i>	William Duncan, BSc, PhD, MCIPD	2026
<i>Registrar:</i>	Leigh Chalmers, University Secretary	<i>ex-officio</i>

### General Council Assessors on the University Court

Jock Millican, BSc, FCILT	2023
The Hon Lady Wolffe (Sarah Wolffe KC)	2023
The Rt Hon Douglas Alexander, MA, LLB	2025

### Business Committee

<i>Convener:</i>	Sir Philip Mawer, DLitt, LLD (Hon), MA, DPA, Hon FIA	2024
<i>Vice Convener:</i>	Gordon D Cairns, LLB	2024

A	Convener of Academic Standing Committee: Stephen Hillier, OBE, DSc	2024
C	Convener of Constitutional Standing Committee: Gordon D Cairns, LLB	2024
F	Convener of Finance and Services Standing Committee: Almira Delibegovic-Broome, KC	2024
I	Convener of International Standing Committee: Krystyna Szumelukowa, BA Hons, MPhil, MRTPI	2024
P	Convener of Public Affairs Standing Committee: Candice Donnelly, LLB (Hons), Dip LP, NP, WS	2026

### Members

*Chancellor's Assessor:* Sheriff Principal Alastair Dunlop KC *ex officio*

P	Moyra Forrest, DL, MA, MCLIP	2023
A	Bruce Ritson, OBE, MD, FRCPE, FRCPsych	2023
A	Lady Joyce Caplan, BEd	2023
P	Francis McManus, MLitt, LLB (Hons), FRSPH, MREHIS, FHEA	2024
A	Graeme Reid, BSc, PhD, FRSB	2024
F	Frances D Dow, CBE, MA, DPhil	2024
A	Brian Smith, MA, MLitt	2025
P	Elisabeth Feldstein, MChem	2025
I	Kirsty MacGregor, MA, MBA, DipEd	2025
I	Arron Ashton, BSc	2025
P	Devin Scobie, MA (Hons), MPRCA	2025
F	Bruce Nelson, BSc, MBA, PhD, FCMI	2026
I	Alice Brown, CBE, FRSE, AcSS, FRCP EDIN, CIPFA (Hon)	2026
I	Kate Hawley, BSc (Hons), MICFor	2026
I	John Clifford, MSc	2026

Assistant to the Secretary: Alison MacLeary, MA

'A' denotes a member of the Academic Standing Committee,  
'C' a member of the Constitutional Standing Committee,  
'F' a member of the Finance and Services Standing Committee,  
'I' a member of the International Standing Committee, and  
'P' a member of the Public Affairs Standing Committee.

## The June 2023 General Council Half-Yearly Meeting Registration form

**The Nucleus, King's Buildings campus, Edinburgh, Saturday 10 June, 2023, 10.15am**

Tickets for this event are free and include a light lunch.

- Name .....
- Address .....
- Postcode .....
- Preferred contact information, i.e. tel/email .....
- Degree .....  
Year of graduation .....
- Subject of study .....
- Other reason for General Council membership, e.g. University staff/Court member:  
.....
- Please indicate by ticking the boxes below which of the following you will attend.
 

The General Council Business Meeting (10.15–10.45am) [This part is open to General Council members only.]	<input type="checkbox"/>
Presentations/talks at Nucleus (11am–1pm)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lunch* (1pm–2pm)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lab demonstration visits (2pm–3pm)	<input type="checkbox"/>

\*Please advise of any access or dietary requirements for yourself or your guest(s):  
.....

Registration badges will be issued to event delegates which will provide access to the presentations, lunch and lab visits.

- Name(s) of guest(s) .....

**This meeting will be filmed and recorded for the General Council website and publications.**

*Please return to:* Ms Alison MacLeary, Assistant to the Secretary of the General Council,  
The University of Edinburgh, Charles Stewart House, 9–16 Chambers Street,  
Edinburgh EH1 1HT, Scotland, UK, or by email to [general.council@ed.ac.uk](mailto:general.council@ed.ac.uk)

Closing date for registrations: **Monday 29 May, 2023**

