

University of St Andrews

General Council Business Committee Terms of Reference

This Terms of Reference is a guiding document outlining the roles, responsibilities and expectations for members of the General Council Business Committee (GCBC): a volunteer committee of alumni. This document ensures clarity, consistency and accountability within the Business Committee and is created to govern their interactions and activities in supporting the University's mission.

The GCBC will work with the Vice-Principal (Governance) Registrar & Clerk to the General Council and the Alumni Relations Manager to maintain strong connections with the University's central operations. Reports will be provided to the General Council at its bi-annual meetings.

A refresh of the structure of the GCBC is necessary because the term of office of the current members comes to an end in June 2025. Rather than facing the consequences of not having a GCBC, the current members have considered and developed this bold restructuring, which creates a dynamic, inclusive alumni leadership body that truly represents our diverse alumni while directly advancing the University's ambitious vision. By fostering deeper connections across our global network, it transforms passive graduates into powerful advocates and active participants in shaping our university's future legacy.

1. Purpose

We propose the GCBC framework be refreshed to align the committee's purpose with that of the University Strategy 2022-27. The strategy outlines that "we seek to mobilise the support of our alumni, friends and global community. We will develop action plans for each of the themes and revisit this framework regularly to measure progress."

The GCBC shall exist to support and strengthen the relationship between the University and its General Council. The GCBC advises on alumni programmes and services, promotes alumni involvement and assists in fostering a sense of community.

2. Role of the General Council

The role of the General Council does not change and includes:

- Electing the Chancellor of the University
- Nominating two Assessors to the University Court
- Appointing committees of its own number, and to define the powers, and to determine the membership and the quorum, of such committees
- Commenting on draft Resolutions and Ordinances referred to it by the University Court

The General Council was instituted by the Universities (Scotland) Act 1858, but its constitution and organisation have been considerably altered by subsequent statutes.

The membership of the General Council is governed by ordinance No. 96 of the University of St Andrews and is as follows:

“The Chancellor, all graduates of the University (including honorary graduates) and holders of the Licentiate in Dental Surgery, members and former members of the University Court, Professors and former Professors of the University, Readers and Lecturers who have been in office for more than one year, former Readers and Lecturers who were members of the Council during their tenure of office as such and who continued in the employment of the University until retirement.”

The Chancellor of the University is elected by the General Council and is President of the Council.

The business of the Council is to take into consideration “all questions affecting the well-being and prosperity of the University, and to make representations from time to time on such questions to the University Court, who shall consider the same, and return to the Council their deliverance thereon.”

Members may raise any matter bearing upon the University, by reference to the Convener of the GCBC by emailing generalcouncil@st-andrews.ac.uk or by post to the Convener of the Business Committee of the General Council, General Council Office, 91 North Street, St Andrews KY16 9AJ.

3. Role of the Business Committee

The core responsibilities of the GCBC include:

- Supporting alumni programmes, services and events
- Acting as ambassadors for the University within their local and professional communities
- Assisting in fundraising efforts
- Offering feedback and insights on alumni needs and interests.
- Building and maintaining relationships with other alumni
- Providing feedback on new initiatives
- Provide updates to the General Council and discharging any tasks or remits that the General Council may choose to give it.

4. Membership of the Business Committee

Composition

- The committee will consist of between 10 and 20 members, representative of the alumni community
- The members of the GCBC will be representatives from the University’s global collection of alumni clubs, ensuring a diverse range of committee members
- The most active clubs, based on number of events per year, committee size and engagement with the University, will be invited to nominate one member of their club committee to sit on the GCBC

- At the end of the term of office of the GCBC at the June meeting of General Council, the Convenor will remain in post until the November meeting of GCBC to manage the call for nominations from clubs, which takes place between 1 July and 31 October.
- The nomination process will be managed at club level, including the call for nominees, screening of nominees and voting for their representative.
- The list of nominated members from the clubs will be collated by the Convenor and presented to the November meeting of General Council
- The appointment process will be reviewed annually in consultation with the Vice-Principal, Governance, Registrar & Clerk to the General Council
- The Principal and Vice-Chancellor, the Vice-Principal, Governance, Registrar & Clerk to the General Council, the Chancellor's Assessor, the General Council Assessors and the Alumni Relations Manager will also be ex-officio members of the GCBC, ensuring a connection with the central operation of the University is maintained

Qualifications

- All members of the GCBC must be members of General Council
- Members should demonstrate a commitment to the University and its alumni community

Terms of Office

- A nominated member shall be eligible to stand for re-nomination at the end of one four-year term, but having served two consecutive terms shall be ineligible either to be nominated for a third term or to be co-opted on to the GCBC during the two years before the next round of nominations.

5. Responsibilities of Members

Committee members are expected to:

- Attend GCBC meetings – online or in person
- Actively participate in discussions
- Represent wider alumni views – not just their own
- Volunteer at events or initiatives as needed
- Maintain confidentiality and professionalism in committee matters
- Advocate for the University and its alumni programmes
- Fulfil any specific roles or projects assigned during their term
- Understand that no pay and no expenses are offered for this role

6. Convenor and Leadership

Convenor's Role

- Once all members of the GCBC have been identified, they will be tasked with appointing a Convenor and Vice-Convenor for a renewable term of four years
- The Convenor will preside over meetings, ensure agendas are followed and act as the primary liaison between the GCBC and the University

- The Convenor will be invited to attend Alumni Weekend and General Council meetings in person to represent the GCBC

Vice-Convenor's Role

- The Vice-Convenor will support the Convenor and may assume their duties in the Convenor's absence

7. Meetings

- The committee will meet on a quarterly basis (or as needed)
- Meetings may be held in person, virtually or via hybrid formats
- A quorum, defined as 50% + 1 of the committee members, is required for official decisions

8. Subcommittees

The GCBC may establish subcommittees to focus on specific areas (e.g. events, communications, fundraising). Subcommittees will report to the GCBC regularly and may include non-committee members.

9. Reporting

The GCBC will provide a report to the General Council at its bi-annual meeting, to include a summary of activities and initiatives, and recommendations for future action.

10. Code of Conduct

Committee members are expected to:

- Adhere to ethical and professional standards in their interactions
- Avoid conflicts of interest and disclose any potential conflicts
- Respect the confidentiality of sensitive information discussed during meetings

Any breach of this Code of Conduct will be referred to the nominating club with a recommendation for action.

11. Amendments to Terms of Reference

This Terms of Reference document may be reviewed annually and amended by a majority vote of the committee.

Matthew Lawson
Convenor
General Council Business Committee
April 2025