

Final and approved

ROLE OF THE RECTOR 2026

President and Member of University Court

The Rector is the 'Ordinary President' of the University Court (the University's governing body at which major decisions affecting the University are taken), 'with a deliberative and a casting vote', as defined by the Universities (Scotland) Act 1858.

Whilst the Rector has the role of President of Court, under the terms of the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016, the Senior Lay Member is responsible for the leadership and effectiveness of Court.

The respective responsibilities of the Rector and the Senior Lay Member are set out in a protocol agreed by Court and all candidates for Rector must agree to accept and comply with this protocol as part of the nomination process. Under the protocol and in line with good governance, the Rector, in their presiding role as President, is responsible for opening and closing Court proceedings and setting the tone for respectful and inclusive debate and discussion while the Senior Lay Member, in line with their statutory responsibility for the leadership and effectiveness of Court, chairs those items of Court business concerned with policy, resources, accountability and performance review.

As President of Court, the Rector is expected to attend University Court meetings (there are four formal meetings each year in October, January, April and June, normally held on Friday mornings, plus a strategic away day over two half days in September).

Charity Trustee

As a member of Court, the Rector also becomes a charity trustee and is responsible (with other Court members) for the stewardship of the University's assets and compliance with relevant legislation and regulation. All members of Court, irrespective of their method of appointment, assume the same significant responsibilities and obligations.

All Court members are required to comply with:

- a. the University's Court Member's Handbook (updated and revised from time to time) and all procedures, protocols, and other procedures which govern the conduct and operation of Court;
- b. the Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance 2023 (the Code) which, in summary, requires that governing body members:
 - must take collective responsibility for the governing body's decisions;
 - must exercise their responsibilities in accordance with the ethical and behavioural standards set out in the Nine Principles of Public Life in Scotland and in the interests of the institution as a whole, rather than as a representative of any constituency; and
 - comply with good governance practices.

- c. the duties placed upon charitable trustees as a result of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005. The Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) provides detailed information as to [the duties and responsibilities of all charity trustees](#), including the general duties to:

- act in the interests of the charity (University), putting these ahead of any other group (including the group that elected them);
- operate in a manner consistent with the charity's purposes
- act with due care and diligence;
- manage any conflict of interest between the charity and any person or organisation who appoints charity trustees; and
- comply with the specific provisions of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and with other relevant legislation.

Student Voice and Engagement

The Rector plays an important role in ensuring that student concerns are considered at Court and has a role to play in keeping Court updated on student matters. The Rector is not part of the student representative structure at the University but helps amplify the student voice, acting as a complement to the student representatives on Court, and providing an important safeguard that these representatives will be fairly heard and that student interests will not be overlooked.

The Rector is expected to work closely with the student representatives in the Students' Association and must avoid setting up roles, structures or arrangements which risk duplicating or cutting across the Students' Association's established representative framework and structures.

The Rector is encouraged to engage with the student community to understand their issues and concerns. However, the Rector does not have a welfare role and must not provide any counselling, safeguarding, or similar service or advice to any student, or other member of the University community or engage in casework. The Rector is a volunteer and not an employee of the University. As such their role is to listen and signpost students to the appropriate service within the University.

Key responsibilities

Taking into account the above, key responsibilities of the role include:

- Opening and closing University Court and ensuring student interests are heard
- Exercising their responsibilities as a charity trustee and contributing to the effective governance of the University
- Developing an understanding of the University and its community
- Holding regular student 'surgeries' both in person and online to be well informed on student issues and concerns
- Participating in an official capacity in particular events (including Graduation ceremonies and occasional alumni events) at the invitation of the Principal or Development Office

- Working constructively with the Senior Lay Member, Principal, and University Secretary to ensure Court meetings are conducted in a well-informed, fair, and decisive manner
- Meeting regularly with the Presidents of the Students' Association to understand key issues and where the Rector can best contribute or add value
- Act as a member of the awarding panel for the Rector's Fund

Support for the Role

The position of the Rector is unremunerated, but the University will meet reasonable expenses incurred in connection with membership of Court or activities on behalf of the University, and in accordance with the University Expenses Policy. The Rector is provided with light-touch administrative assistance from the Court Office (in common with other Court members). They may also appoint a Rector's Assessor to support them, in consultation with the President of Union Affairs at the Students Association.

The Rector does not have a physical office, but venues to host surgeries/engage with students can be arranged through Court Office or agreed with the Students' Association.

Accountability

As a member of Court, the Rector is subject to the same fiduciary and trustee duties as all other members of Court. These duties are set out in this role description and if there are breaches Court may take steps to remedy such breaches, including where appropriate dismissal from Court.

Values, skills and experience

To carry out the role effectively the Rector should have the following values, skills, and experience.

- Commitment to the University as a whole, and its values and ethos as a community with the interests of students at its heart
- Experience gained beyond the University to bring an external perspective and broader insights relevant to the role (e.g. experience in the conduct of the affairs of a large institution or acquired across different organisational, professional, or civic contexts)
- Ability to build relationships of trust and influence with a wide variety of students, staff and stakeholders
- Time to engage with the student body and student representatives and attend the University from time to time

Candidates for the role of Rector are required to sign up to a number of nomination pledges (see Annex A),

Further information

Candidates interested in standing for election as Rector are strongly encouraged to contact the University's Court Office (courtoffice@st-andrews.ac.uk) to arrange for an informal discussion about the role.

Approved by G and N, May 2026, Court, June 2026.

Annex A

2026 Rectorial Election – Nomination Pledges

I *NAME*, as a candidate for the position of Rector at the University of St Andrews for the election year 2026, hereby pledge if elected to:

- comply with and carry out the role of Rector as set out in the Rector role description
- comply with the responsibilities upon me as a member of Court and charity trustee as set out in the Court Handbook
- work effectively and collegiately with the student representative officers and Students' Association to amplify the student voice
- work constructively with the Senior Lay Member and Principal to ensure Court meetings are conducted in a well-informed and fair manner
- abide by the protocol for Court meetings agreed by Court and all Court operating procedures and standing orders as agreed by Court
- engage with official University structures and decision-making processes to support the resolution of any issues / concerns
- use social media responsibly

By signing below, I acknowledge my commitment to these pledges and understand that any breach may have implications for my position (if elected) as Rector.

Signature:

Date: