University Court

Appointment of General Council Assessor

The University of St Andrews, Scotland’s first university and the third oldest in the English-speaking world, has a strong international reputation for research and teaching excellence.

The Court, which is the University’s governing body, is seeking nominations from individuals with experience of leadership in significant organisations, companies or Higher Education institutions to fill a vacancy for a General Council Assessor to Court. The appointment will be for an initial period beginning in the autumn of the Academic Year 2019-2020 until 31 July 2022. This may be renewable, by mutual agreement for a further period of up to four years.

General Council Assessors are distinct positions amongst the lay membership of Court, appointed from the over 70,000 members of the General Council, the body of all graduates and senior academics of the University. Applicants for this post must be graduates of the University and must not be employed (remunerated employment or honorary employment) by or be a member of the governing body of St Andrews or any other Higher Education Institution. Applicants should be familiar with the demands of board-level governance and trusteeship, and have a keen interest in and awareness of the Higher Education sector. Commercial, procurement, financial investment and project management experience are particularly desirable skills. Women, BAME, and LGBT+ people are currently under-represented on Court. Expressions of interest from members of these groups are especially welcome.

Members of Court must be able to attend in person at least five meetings annually as well as participating in Court committees and working groups. They also play a visible role in key events in the University calendar, such as Graduation ceremonies. Lay members of Court, including General Council Assessors, are not remunerated, but appropriate expenses are paid, and there are many rewards from contributing to the strategy and governance of one of Scotland’s most respected institutions, and one of the world’s leading universities.

To express interest in this position, please complete the nomination form available from the webpage at https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/about/governance/court/ and submit it, together with a CV and supporting statement (of no more than 2,000 words), to Mr Alastair Merrill, Vice-Principal (Governance), University of St Andrews, College Gate, North Street, St Andrews KY16 9AJ no later than Friday 6 September 2019. If you wish to submit the materials electronically, please do so to the following email address: gcassessor@st-andrews.ac.uk

Informal enquiries about the role may be made directly to Alastair Merrill, Secretary to Court, or Margaret Sinclair, Executive Officer to Court, at gcassessor@st-andrews.ac.uk or by telephone on 01334 46 2553/2526. Interviews with short-listed applicants will take place on 2 October 2019. Reasonable expenses incurred in attending the interview will be reimbursed in line with University policy.

The University of St Andrews is a charity registered in Scotland, No. SC013532
Further Particulars

University Court Members

General Requirements

The University Court is the senior governing body of the University and incorporates representative members of staff, students and alumni, along with Non-executive external members. Court is responsible for overseeing the University’s operations and future direction and has committees covering areas such as planning and resources, remuneration, audit and risk, governance, health and safety, and academic assurance.

The chief executive officer of the University is its Principal and Vice-Chancellor (currently Professor Sally Mapstone). Members of the Executive (the Principal’s Office) are responsible for the development of strategy and running of the organisation and liaise with Court members through committees and informally. The two General Council Assessors, along with other independent, or lay, members of Court, bring their external perspective and experience to bear in helping the University to make the most of its potential and to carry out its core mission of excelling in research and teaching. The Court holds the Executive to account but equally importantly is involved in the life and thinking of the University.

Founded in the 15th century, St Andrews is Scotland’s first university and the third oldest in the English-speaking world. Teaching began in the community of St Andrews in 1410 and the University was formally constituted by the issue of a Papal Bull in 1413. The University is now one of Europe’s most research-intensive seats of learning, with over a quarter of its turnover coming from research grants and contracts. It is one of the top-rated universities globally for research, teaching quality and student satisfaction and is consistently ranked among the UK’s top five in leading independent league tables.

Its international reputation and a principled focus on quality make St Andrews one of the most sought-after destinations for prospective students from the UK, Europe and overseas, receiving on average some 12 applications for every place. It is also Scotland’s most international university, with around one-half of the student body coming from overseas.

Members of the University Court must be able to attend five Court meetings annually in person and will be expected to participate in additional Court committees (normally three or four meetings per year in addition to those of Court). Members may also be invited to serve on short term ad hoc groups set up for specific purposes. Appointments to Court are for an initial four-year period and renewal for a further four years is possible. Although Court members are not remunerated, members are entitled to reclaim the cost of all expenses reasonably incurred in the course of their Court duties.

Opportunities exist for Court members to participate in the general life of the University, and they are encouraged to engage with staff and students in a range of different contexts,
to gain a broader and deeper understanding of the workings of the institution. Court members can expect to be invited to various University events, including in particular the Graduation ceremonies in December and June, as well as special or public lectures and student-led events.

Members of Court must have a strong commitment to higher education and have empathy with the values, aims and objectives of the University of St Andrews. Individual members and the Court collectively should at all times conduct themselves in accordance with accepted high standards of behaviour in public life. To this end, Court has agreed a Code of Conduct, which states that all members of Court:

- Must make all reasonable efforts to attend every meeting of Court.
- Have a duty to read the papers to be considered by Court (normally circulated to members a week prior to each meeting).
- Must ensure that their views relevant to an item under discussion are heard by Court, always bearing in mind the best interests of the University.
- Must participate in ensuring that Court discussions are held and decisions taken in an honest, open and objective manner and that the taking of sectional positions is avoided.
- Must bring the same qualities of honesty, openness and objectivity to any work they have agreed to undertake on Committees of the University or on working parties established by the Court.

Court members are charity trustees of the University, and expectations of this aspect of the role are set out in the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator’s document ‘Guidance for Charity Trustees’ (www.oscr.org.uk). In broad terms, trustees are expected to act in the interests of the charity, ensure that it operates in a manner consistent with its purpose and act with due care and diligence in guardianship of the charity’s assets.

**Specific Requirements for General Council Assessors**

The role of a General Council Assessor is distinct from that of a co-opted Non-executive member of Court. As for all Non-executive members, nominees for this post must not be employed (remunerated employment or honorary employment) by or be a member of the governing body of St Andrews or any other Higher Education Institution, but it is an additional requirement that nominees for the post of General Council Assessor must be graduates of the University and, as such, members of the General Council, the body representing over 70,000 alumni and senior academics of the University. In addition to the requirements listed above, the General Council Assessors are expected to bring the perspectives of General Council to Court, and to engage with the General Council, including as an *ex officio* member of its Business Committee. More information about the General Council and its Business Committee can be found on the University website.

**Equality and Diversity**
The University of St Andrews is fully committed to respect and fair treatment for everyone, eliminating discrimination and actively promoting equality of opportunity and delivering fairness to all. The University aims to ensure that equality is embedded into all its functions, operations and activities. Women, BAME, and LGBT+ people are currently under-represented on Court, and expressions of interest from members of these groups are particularly welcome.

Personal Attributes

- Commitment to higher education and the future success of the University of St Andrews
- Integrity, tact and discretion
- Ability to challenge constructively
- Sound judgement
- Willingness to develop an understanding of the Scottish and UK Higher Education sector, and the University’s relationships with external agencies.

Skills, Knowledge and Competencies

Essential

- Professional experience relevant to the running of a large complex organisation
- An understanding of decision making in, and governance of, complex organisations
- Diplomacy and interpersonal skills
- Ability to understand and question constructively information and data, including financial reports
- Ability to act as an ambassador for the University
- The ability to contribute to strategic thinking and exercise sound judgement
- Demonstrable commitment to equality and diversity

Desirable

- Experience in Higher Education management or governance
- Experience in financial investment
- Experience in managing major projects
- Commercial and procurement experience
- Proven track record of alumni engagement

Confidential Discussion

Informal enquiries about the role may be made to the Vice-Principal (Governance), Mr Alastair Merrill, or the Executive Officer to Court, Ms Margaret Sinclair, at gcassessor@st-andrews.ac.uk or by telephone on 01334 462553/2526.

Nomination Procedure
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We plan to hold interviews on 2 October 2019.