



COURT MEMBER HANDBOOK

A GUIDE TO BEING A MEMBER OF THE COURT OF QUEEN MARGARET UNIVERSITY

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Foreword

This Handbook is a guide for members of the Queen Margaret University Court, the governing body of the University. In particular, it provides members with an overview of the key aspects of the University and of the University Court relevant to their role as a member of the University Court.

This guide is designed primarily as an induction document and reference point for new members of the University Court. However, it is expected that all members will find the consolidated guide to policy and practice useful in undertaking their roles as Court members.

The Handbook is divided into five main sections covering:

1. The Un

1. THE UNIVERSITY

1.1 About us

Queen Margaret University can trace its origins to the foundation in 1875 of the Edinburgh School of Cookery, an institution that operated throughout mainland Britain, pioneering the training of teachers in nutrition, public health and domestic science. Under the previous title of Queen Margaret College, the University operated under the auspices of the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) from 1975 to 1992, raising the majority of its programmes to Honours degree level and developing its

Table 1: Academic and Professional Services Staff by Gender (as at June 2021)

| Staff Type | Female | | Male | | Totals |
|------------------------------------|---------------|----------|--------------|----------|---------------|
| | Total | % | Total | % | |
| Research & Teaching | 212 | 71% | 86 | 29% | 299 |
| Professional Services Staff | 143 | 62% | 85 | 38% | 231 |

range of initiatives to increase the participation and retention of those from a broad range of non-traditional groups.

Our widening participation and retention strategy seeks to increase student numbers from non-traditional groups, including those that are first generation to go to Higher Education; from low progression schools; reside in communities in the lowest 20% and 40% of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (MD20); articulating students from

We have the 3rd highest graduate employment rate of any Scottish university, and 14th highest employability rate amongst all UK higher education institutions, with 97.1 % of those graduating from a full time undergraduate degree course at QMU going on to employment or further training within six months of graduating.

1.5 University Management Structure

The powers and governance framework of Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh are

functions are contained in sections 3 and 4 of the Order. The Statement of Primary Responsibilities of the Court is included at **Appendix 20** to this Handbook.

The Court is responsible for carrying out the objectives of the University, ensuring the financial sustainability of the University and approving the strategic plan. An important

The incumbent Chair of Court, Pamela Woodburn, was the first Chair of Court to be elected under the revised Court Standing Orders, adopted in October 2019, which set out arrangements in accordance with sections (2)-(8) of the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016 (**Appendix 22**).

The Chair provides leadership to the Court, presides at meetings of the Court and works closely with the Principal. The role of Chair and Vice-Chair, and mechanism for the
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2.2.5 Secretary

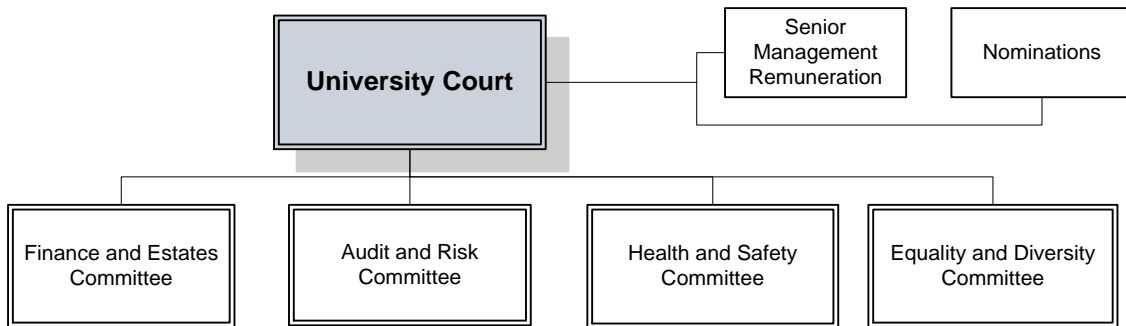
The Secretary is the person holding a senior administrative and managerial post within the University and who is responsible for the proper operation and conduct of the affairs of the Court. Section six of the Code (**Appendix 13**) provides that:

ensure that the governing body is appropriately supported such that it is able to discharge its duties. All members must have access to the advice and services of the Secretary to the governing body, and the appointment and removal of the Secretary must be a decision of the governing body.

The Secretary is solely responsible for commissioning legal advice for the governing body, and advising it on all matters of procedure.

2.3 Court Committees

The Court is supported in discharging its responsibilities by a number of committees including the Finance & Estates Committee, Audit and Risk Committee, Nominations Committee and Senior Management Remuneration Committee. The Health and Safety Committee and the Equality and Diversity Committee also report to Court.



It also receives and considers reports from the Scottish Funding Council as they affect the University, and monitors adherence with regulatory requirements. It also receives reports from the University of the South of Scotland from a regulatory and compliance perspective. The identification, assessment and management of risk is a standing item at each meeting of Committee. These matters are reported subsequently to the University Court.

2.3.3 Nominations Committee

Under the specific powers delegated to it by the Court, the Committee makes recommendation to the Court on suitable candidates for appointment to vacancies on the Court, on the re-appointment of existing members where appropriate, and appointment to Court sub-committees. The Committee also makes recommendation to the Court on suitable candidates for the role of Chancellor of the University. In pursuit of these powers, the Committee is authorised by the Court to seek any information it requires from any appropriate source, including independent professional advice and expertise if it considers this necessary.

2.3.4 Senior Management Remuneration Committee

The Senior Management Remuneration Committee develops, on behalf of the University Court, senior management remuneration policies and processes for final determination by the University Court. The SMRC determines and reviews the salaries and terms and conditions of the Principal and the Executive Board in line with agreed policies, and in accordance with good corporate governance and the provisions of the Scottish Code.

2.3.5 Health and Safety Committee

The purpose of the Health and Safety Committee (HSC) is to advise and recommend to the University Court the necessary processes to ensure the safety of staff, students and visitors to the University, and to ensure compliance with the relevant Health and Safety Legislation. The HSC reports to Court through the Principal as Convener of the Senior Leadership Team

2.4 Senate and its Standing Committees

2.4.1 Senate

Senate is the senior academic committee of the University. Senate is responsible for maintaining the academic standards of the University. The University Court delegates to Senate:

- (a) Its functions relating to the academic work of the University and any functions incidental or ancillary thereto;
- (b) Its function of conferring on any person higher and other education awards including degrees, diplomas, certificates and other academic awards or distinctions and honorary degrees; and
- (c) Its function of depriving the recipient of an award of that award. Only Senate can approve awards and only Senate can give final approval to any proposed changes to regulations.

In discharging any functions delegated to the Senate by the Court, the Senate has all the powers and duties of the Court in relation to those functions and may make recommendations to the Court on such matters as it thinks fit.

Senate delegates some of its responsibilities to a number of standing committees. The terms of reference of each committee include the following standard terms:

To act on behalf of Senate in accordance with such powers as may be delegated to the Committee by the Senate.

To consider and report on such matters as may be referred to the Committee by the Senate.

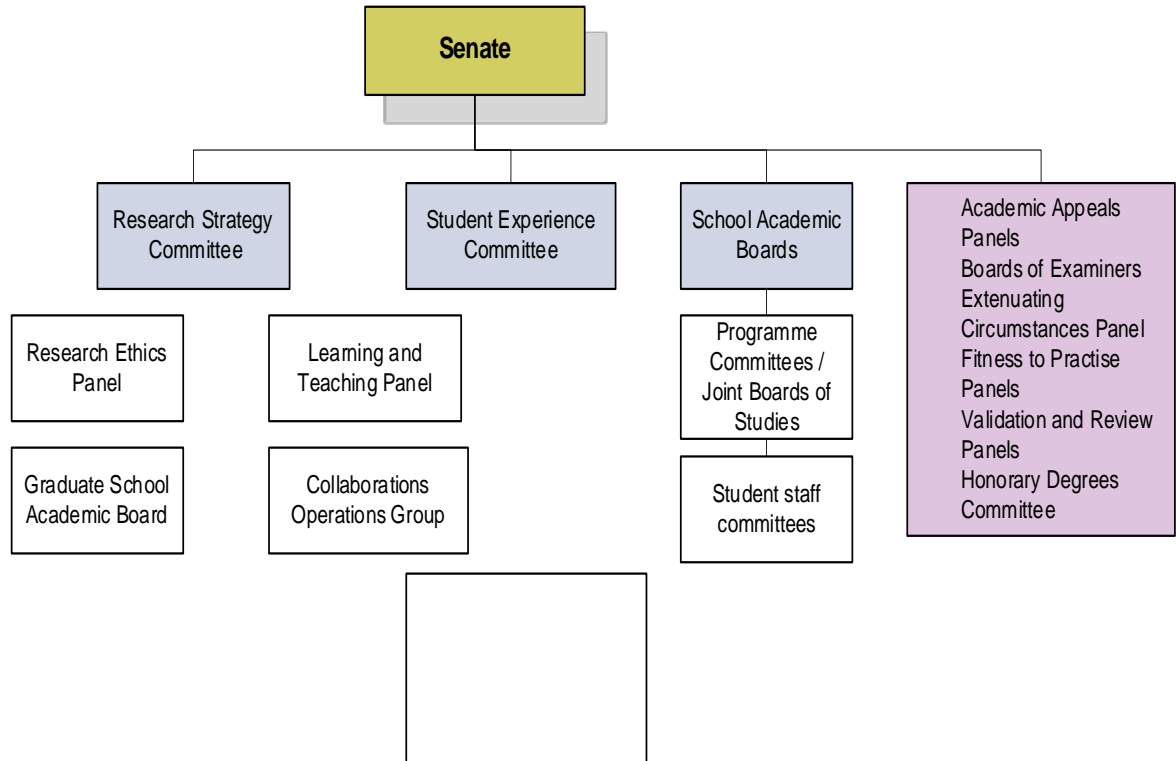
To establish such sub-Committees and Working Parties as are required to enable the Committee to discharge its responsibilities.

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To submit minutes of meetings to Senate.

To identify issues and advise Senate on the implications for resource allocation of { æcc^•Á , äc@ã } Ác@^ÁÔ [{ { äcc^q•Á!^ { äcÈ

Each Committees procedure will be that of the standing orders of the Senate.
 What follows is a list of key Senate Standing Committees with details of the remit of each. Full details of the remit, terms of reference and membership can be found at **Appendix 5**.



Research Strategy Committee (RSC)

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3. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COURT

3.1 Constitution and Membership of the Court

Section two of the Code (Appendix 13) provides that:

‘

Under the University's Code of Conduct for Members, members appointed to the Court are required to:

Support the aims and objectives of the University and promote the interest of the University and its students in the wider community.

ensure that the University complies with the provisions of the Act and other relevant legislation

3.5.2 Vice-Chair of Court

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including the Principal, are expected to give an account of the Institution's performance and should be available to answer questions. This event may or may not also include regular governing body business.'

The likely overall time commitment required of Court members averages around 10 days per year. The Court meets on at least 5 occasions per academic year, including at least one Strategy Day on campus in the spring, which may involve an overnight stay. Court members may meet individually with the Chair or the Vice-Chair once or twice a year, and may be required to attend sub-committee meetings three or four times a year. There is background reading associated with each of these meetings.

In addition to these requirements, Court members are invited to attend events held by the University, including the annual graduation ceremony in early July, professorial lectures, social and celebratory events.

3.9 Court Member Induction and Development

Upon joining the Court, new members receive a full induction. Regular opportunities for further development are also provided in accordance with indiv

3.12 Gifts and hospitality

The University has a published policy on staff accepting gifts, gratuities and hospitality. Court members must report gifts and hospitality offered to and accepted by them as members in relation to their role on the governing body.

Members are expected to observe the Nine Principles of Public Life in Scotland when conducting themselves on University business. A full description of these principles are provided at **Appendix 8**.

3.13 Expenses

Out-of-pocket expenses from members of University Court shall be authorised by the University. Such expenses can be provided on request.

4. CONDUCT OF UNIVERSITY COURT MEETINGS

Section five of the Code provides that:

The proceedings of the governing body must be conducted in a timely and appropriately transparent manner. Key officers of the executive should attend meetings to support effective decision-making, but must not unduly influence the business of the governing body. The governing body must review its effectiveness regularly and is expected to

4.2 Frequency of Meetings

A minimum of five ordinary meetings of the Court shall be held between the months of October and June each year on such days and at such times as the Court shall from time to time determine, such determination to be made no later than six months in advance of the first such ordinary meeting. One of these meetings will focus mainly on strategic issues. Extraordinary meetings may be called on the instructions of the Chair, Vice-Chair or on a requisition signed by not less than five members.

4.3 Notice of Meetings

The Secretary to the Court shall issue notice of a meeting of Court in writing to members and other persons who are to be in attendance at the meeting five days prior to each meeting (and shall use reasonable endeavours to do so seven days prior to each meeting).

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4.4.3 Amendments to Agenda Items

Amendments to an agenda item shall be considered as follows:

1. Where there is a single amendment, a vote on that amendment will take place;
2. Where there is more than one amendment, a vote will take place on each amendment in the order in which the amendments have been put forward; those amendments which have been agreed (if any) will then be consolidated into a single amendment; and
3. The agenda item (as amended) will then be voted upon.

4.5 Decisions of the Court

No member shall be entitled to have minuted his or her dissent from any decision of the Court, except at the meeting at which the relevant decision has been passed, provided that any member not present at the meeting at which the relevant decision was passed may at the next meeting have his or her dissent minuted.

Despite this, decisions of the Court shall bind all members of the Court, and no member may express dissent from any decision of the Court otherwise than in accordance with the provisions of that paragraph.

No agenda item, nor any amendment to an agenda item, shall be moved if it involves reconsideration of any question or matter which has been decided or adopted by the Court at any time within the preceding six months, unless it is moved by the Chair, or signed by the mover and by not less than one third of the total members of Court.

4.6 Minutes

Draft minutes of each meeting of the Court shall be sent to the members and to other persons who were in attendance at the meeting not later than 21 days after each such meeting, and shall be submitted at the next meeting of the Court for approval as an accurate record.

All members, and senior management who were in attendance at the meeting, shall be sent a complete set of draft minutes of the meeting. Other persons who were in attendance at the meeting shall be sent such parts of the minutes as are relevant to the

The Vice-Chair shall preside at any meetings at which the Chair is not present. If both the Chair and the Vice-Chair are not present at a meeting, the Court shall appoint one of its lay members who is present to preside. The Vice-Chair or a lay member appointed by the Court to preside over a meeting (as appropriate) shall have the same powers as the Chair would have had in relation to that meeting.

Confidentiality and Freedom of Information

The notice and supporting papers for each meeting of Court and the draft minutes of each meeting shall be circulated in accordance with the and the

The size of the group means that there is more chance to participate.
Discussion is likely to be more focussed on areas in which Court members can participate.
Court members may have been selected for specific skills or attributes.
Members hear of ideas earlier and feel they can make more of a contribution.

In terms of the involvement of Court members with senior management, it is noted that typically the Senior Leadership Team attend and provide information and reports to the Court that inform its decision making processes. In this regard, it is important that the

A lack of data on key aspects of the strategy, with the result that the Court has to take the strategy on trust.

A lack of financial rigour in a draft strategy or an over-optimistic set of assumptions.

A lack of time for Court members to consider a strategy fully given the complexity of some HEIs and the limitations of time for voluntary Court members.

A lack of consistency in parts of the strategy.

A lack of understanding of the external policy environment by either (or both) the executive or the Court.

Strategies for mitigating these challenges include:

An expectation that it is the job of the executive to construct, propose and implement the strategic plan.

Agreement about the initial criteria on which the strategy is based, using proposals from the executive and directly related to mission.

An arrangement so that, ideally, the governing body has at least two opportunities to discuss the detail of the strategy (and any sub-strategies): an initial scoping discussion when the overall framework for a strategy is considered and a second opportunity to discuss the draft strategy based on the agreed framework.

An understanding that the governing body is clear about what evidence it expects to see from the executive to support a proposed strategy, and thereby create the basis for performance indicators to measure the success of subsequent implementation.

Agreement about how the strategy will be reviewed and the data required for this.

5.2.2 Measuring institutional performance

Clause 51, of section five, of the Code provides that

'The governing body is expected to reflect annually on the performance of the Institution as a whole in relation to its strategic plan, with reference to agreed KPIs. Where possible, the governing body should benchmark institutional performance against equivalent metrics of other comparable institutions. The Institution's annual performance against KPIs and its progress towards meeting its strategic objectives should be published in its Annual Report.'

Advance HE highlights the following issues that m

targets and measures and the Court would agree to these. In so doing the Court should ensure that it is receiving the information it will need to satisfy itself as to the performance of the institution

The Court should consider the appropriate scale and frequency of the measurement process. While annual measurement is common, ongoing measurement and

The Court should satisfy itself as to the robustness, timeliness and integrity of the information it receives to ensure that it is able to effectively carry out its responsibilities in this regard.

According to Advance HE, in terms of performance measurement information the Court should be receiving, as a minimum:

Annual returns made to the respective funding body.

An annual report and associated documents for approval.

Annual accounts and financial statements.

Some kind of annual review of the implementation of the strategic plan.

External quality reports such as those produced by the QAA and numerous other professional bodies.

Specific information relevant to performance measurement by sub-committees, for example data to assess the achievement of HR strategy and so on.

The University Court has a fundamental role to play in the management of risk. Its role is to:

Set the tone and influence the culture of risk management within the institution. This includes:

- ! or on any relevant individual issue;
- ! determining what types of risk are acceptable and unacceptable;
- ! setting the standards and expectations of staff with respect to conduct and probity.

6. USEFUL INFORMATION

6.1 Glossary

The following are frequently referred to in reports of University Committees and in Court papers.

| | |
|--------|---|
| ASSaM | (School of) Arts Social Sciences and Management |
| COSHH | Control of Substances Hazardous to Health |
| CUC | Committee of University Chairs |
| EDC | Equality and Diversity Committee |
| ELIR | Enhancement-Led Institutional Review |
| FEC | Finance and Estates Committee |
| FTE | Full Time Equivalent |
| HEI | Higher Education Institutions |
| HESA | Higher Education Statistics Agency |
| IP | Intellectual Property |
| KE | Knowledge Exchange |
| OfS | Office for Students |
| OSCR | Office of Scottish Charity Regulator |
| QAA | Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education |
| REF | Research Excellence Framework |
| SAAS | Student Awards Agency Scotland |
| SU | Students' Union |
| SCONUL | Society of College, National & University Libraries |
| SFC | Scottish Funding Council |
| SITS | University Student Record System |
| SLC | Student Loan Company |
| SORP | Statement of Recommended Practice |
| SPSO | Scottish Public Services Ombudsman |
| SQA | Scottish Qualifications Authority |
| TRAC | Transparent Approach to Costing |
| UCEA | |

Useful web links and sources of information

Web links:

Advance HE -

To distribute funds to support teaching and research in higher education institutions.

To secure that provision is made for assessing the quality of higher education supported by the Council.

To provide Scottish Ministers with information and advice relating to all aspects of higher education in Scotland, including the financial needs of the sector.

6.2.2 Universities Scotland

Universities Scotland is the autonomous voice of the higher education sector in Scotland. It works for the Principals or Directors of Scotland's higher education institutions.

It is a membership organisation, funded by Scottish universities and colleges of higher education to support and promote their work, to argue for the public support needed to maintain and build on their achievements, and to develop policy on Scottish higher education issues.

Membership includes all Scottish universities and higher education institutions funded by the Scottish Funding Council. This body is the principal formal channel of communication between the Funding Council and the universities in Scotland which it funds.

6.2.3 Universities UK

Universities UK is the representative body for the executive heads of UK universities. Its