INDEPENDENT GOVERNORS
APPOINTMENT BRIEF

Closing date: Noon on 2 April 2021
Reference number: WVBZA
Open to all and dedicated to the pursuit of truth in the service of others

Aberdeen is a broad based, research intensive University, which puts students at the centre of everything it does. Outstanding in a wide range of discipline areas, Aberdeen has also been credited for its international reach and its commercialisation of research ideas into spin out companies. The University has over 16,000 matriculated students and 3,600 staff representing 130 nationalities. We encourage bold thinking, creativity and innovation, and we nurture ambition with many opportunities for professional and personal development in an inclusive learning environment which challenges and inspires.

CURRENT CONTEXT

The University will build on the significant achievements above in 2021 and beyond. Underpinning our high performance and significant growth is a £100m investment in Aberdeen’s estate which will include the completion of a new Science Teaching Hub, the regeneration of the historic King’s Quarter, and a new Business School building. The University has also invested in 50 new academic posts, and 2020 saw the launch of 5 Interdisciplinary, cross-institution Research Centres that will catalyse world-leading research in our areas of research strength. The 5 Interdisciplinary Challenges are: Energy Transition; Social Inclusion and Cultural Diversity; Environment and Biodiversity; Data and Artificial Intelligence; and Health, Nutrition and Wellbeing.

The University of Aberdeen is a recent recipient of The Queen’s Anniversary Prize, awarded to recognise world-class excellence in innovation and practical benefit to people and society. The University was given this award for health service research leading to improvements in academic and clinical practice and delivery of health care.

INTERNATIONAL

Aberdeen is also increasing its international presence, positioning the University as a global organisation, and growing its collaborations overseas, a key one being its established partnership in Qatar. We are proud to be the first UK University to operate on a dedicated campus in Qatar. Phase 1 of this partnership with AFG College has successfully recruited over 600 students. Phase 2 will see the creation of a substantially larger campus, with capacity for at least 5,000 students and research activity. For further information on our Qatar campus, visit https://www.abdn.ac.uk/qatar/.
FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

In 2019/20 the University achieved an income of £233.8M, an increase of £5.3M resulting in an underlying surplus of £6.5M. Given the financial impact of the pandemic, this reflects the steady improvement over recent years in the University's financial position and the steps that have been taken to overcome the challenges resulting from Covid-19 over the past year.

The pandemic adds to the challenges that the HE sector currently faces, including a continuation of real term cuts to government funding, increased competition within overseas markets, higher pension contributions and the continuing uncertainty surrounding Brexit. Navigating these challenges, while continuing to grow the University's financial position remains a key strategic priority.

Further information on the University's financial position is available in our Annual Report and Financial Statements: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/annual-report-accounts--7872.php
On our 525th anniversary as a University we launched Aberdeen 2040, our strategic vision for the next 20 years. Four strategic themes will shape our learning and discovery, underlined by 20 commitments we have made against each theme:

**INCLUSIVE:** We welcome students, staff and partners from all backgrounds, organisations and communities. We value diversity.

**INTERDISCIPLINARY:** We innovate in education and research by generating, sharing and applying new kinds of knowledge. We learn together.

**INTERNATIONAL:** We connect with others and extend our networks and partnerships around the world. We think across borders.

**SUSTAINABLE:** We understand and nurture our environment, and take care of our resources, including our people and our finances. We work responsibly.

**OUR EDUCATION:** Recognised as the Scottish University of the Year in the Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2019, we remain true to our roots as an ancient Scottish university, combining breadth and depth in our degree programmes and drawing strength from the quality of our research. Our flexible curriculum encourages students to grow as independent learners and therefore to thrive as graduates in the diverse workplaces of the future and become change-makers across the globe. Our education is open to all and we are setting ambitious targets to further widen access.

**OUR RESEARCH:** Researchers at the University of Aberdeen have been at the forefront of innovation and excellence throughout the centuries, generating insights in medicine, science, engineering, law, social sciences, arts and humanities. This research has contributed to five Nobel prizes as well as other awards such as the Queen’s Anniversary prize. Our research is intellectually rigorous, working within our established areas of excellence as well as new methods of enquiry. We will continue to generate new knowledge addressing economic and societal issues with ambition and imagination, ensuring that it is globally excellent and locally relevant.

For further details on the Aberdeen 2040 strategy, please visit www.abdn.ac.uk/2040.
The University of Aberdeen is a registered charity and a legally independent and autonomous institution. The governance framework of the University flows from various Acts of Parliament, statutes, ordinances and resolutions from which the University derives the power and authority to carry out its activities. There are three main components of the University’s formal governance structure – Court, Senate and the General Council – with the management structure headed by the Principal and Senior Management Team.

**Court**

The Court is the governing body of the University and its principal role is to oversee the management of the revenue, property and other resources of the University. It comprises 25 members, the majority of whom are Independent members but with staff and student members. It approves the institutional mission and strategic vision and has a number of corporate and legal responsibilities. In common with other ancient universities, the Rector elected by the students plays an important role in representing and supporting them and also has the right to chair Court meetings. The Court is supported in its discharging its responsibilities through its sub-committees, the membership of which is drawn from across the membership of Court. The Court’s four standing sub-committees are: Audit and Risk, Policy and Resources, Governance and Nominations, and Remuneration. The Court, together with the Senate, also receives reports from three further joint committees: Education, Research Policy, and Student Experience.

Further information about the remit, composition and membership of the Court is available at: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/governance/court-information.php

**Senate**

The Senate has governance responsibility for all academic matters, subject to the powers of Court. It is responsible in particular for regulating teaching and academic standards, and the promotion of research. The Senate also approves all degrees to be conferred. The membership of Senate consists of ex officio members, academic members elected from across the Schools and student representatives.

Further information about the Senate is available at: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/governance/senate/index.php

**General Council**

The General Council comprises all University graduates and certain academic staff and is empowered “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”. The Court’s composition requires that at least four of its twelve Independent Governors must be members of the General Council.

Further information about the General Council is available at: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/governance/general-council-1636.php

**Senior Management Team**

The Court delegates responsibility for delivering the University’s Strategic Plan, as well as the overall management of operations, to the Principal and Senior Management Team (SMT). The University’s Senior Management Team is led by the Principal & Vice Chancellor – Professor George Boyne – who is the chief academic and executive officer of the University. The Principal is supported directly by the Senior Vice Principal and the University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer.

An organisational chart of the Senior Management structure is provided below:
UNIVERSITY SECRETARY & CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
Tracey Slaven

PRINCIPAL & VICE-CHANCELLOR
Professor George Boyne

SENIOR VICE-PRINCIPAL
Karl Leydecker

VICE PRINCIPALS

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
Research
Marion Campbell
International
Richard Wells
Education
Ruth Taylor
Student Recruitment
Alan Speight

ACADEMIC SCHOOLS

External Relations
Jenny Fernandes
People
Debbie Dyker
Estates & Facilities
Angus Donaldson
Finance
David Beattie
Digital Information & Services
Brian Henderson
Academic Services & Online Education
Gillian Mackintosh
Planning
Hulda Sveinisdottir
Research & Innovation
Liz Rattray
Advancement
Rob Donelson

Biological Sciences
Graeme Paton
Business School
Martin Meyer
Divinity, History & Philosophy
Paula Sweeney

Education
David Smith
Engineering
Igor Guz
Geosciences
David Muirhead
Language, Literature, Music & Visual Culture
Chris Collins
Law
Greg Gordon

Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition
Siladitya Bhattacharya
Natural & Computing Sciences
Pete Edwards
Psychology
Arash Sahraie
Social Science
Mervyn Bain
ACADEMIC STRUCTURE

The University’s academic structure comprises 12 Schools, each of which is overseen by the Senior Vice-Principal and operates within a framework of devolved budgetary and planning responsibility:

- Biological Sciences
- Business School
- Divinity, History and Philosophy
- Education
- Engineering
- Geosciences
- Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture
- Law
- Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition
- Natural and Computing Sciences
- Psychology
- Social Science

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES STRUCTURE

Professional Services activities are delivered through 9 Directorates. Each Directorate reports to the University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer:

- Academic Services and Online Education
- Development Trust
- Digital and Information Services
- Estates and Facilities
- External Relations
- Finance
- People
- Planning
- Research and Innovation
THE UNIVERSITY AND THE REGION

OUR ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY

As one of the oldest institutions in Aberdeen, we have historically been at the centre of the life and success of the city and region, and we continue to play a leading role in supporting the economic, social and cultural life of the local community, working with a wide range of organisations including being a key partner within the Aberdeen City Region Deal and Opportunity North-East.

Our large-scale and high profile public events programme includes highlights such as the annual May Festival and International Women’s Day Conference, amongst other year-round events and an annual programme of services and commemoration events in the historic King’s College chapel.

ABERDEEN AND ABERDEENSHIRE

With a population of approximately 230,000, the city stands between the Rivers Dee and Don. This historic city has many architectural splendours and the use of its sparkling local granite has earned Aberdeen the name of the Silver City. Recognised as the energy capital of Europe, Aberdeen nevertheless retains its old-fashioned charm and character making it an attractive place in which to live, study and work.

Aberdeen enjoys excellent communication services with other European cities - e.g. flying time to London is just over one hour with regular daily flights. There are direct air links to London (City, Heathrow, and Luton), Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Southampton, Belfast and East Midlands within the U.K. There are also flights to international hub airports: Amsterdam (Schiphol), and Paris (Charles De-Gaulle as well as flights to other European destinations (http://www.aberdeenairport.com). Road and rail links are also well developed.

The Grampian Region which took its name from the Grampian Mountains has a population of approximately 545,000. It is made up of five districts – Aberdeen, Banff & Buchan, Gordon, Kincardine & Deeside and Moray. The city and the surrounding countryside provide a variety of urban, sea-side and country pursuits. Aberdeen has first class amenities including His Majesty’s Theatre, Music Hall, Art Gallery, the P&J Arena, Museums, and Beach Leisure centre. Within a short time, beach pursuits, equine activities, salmon, trout and sea fishing, hill-walking, mountaineering, golf, sailing, surfing and windsurfing can be reached. The city and the surrounding countryside are repeatedly given high ratings for quality of life in surveys.

Aberdeenshire is one of Scotland’s most appealing regions. Royal Deeside and the Cairngorms National Park are within easy access of the city, and there are a variety of towns and villages scattered along the coastline. Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire cater for a wide range of tastes in sporting and cultural activities.

To find out more about Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire go to www.visitabdn.com
ROLE DESCRIPTION

RESPONSIBILITIES

Each governor is responsible, collectively with all members of Court, for the strategic leadership and governance of the University which is a charity. That translates into more specific responsibilities of which the following are key:

- To ensure that the Court exercises efficient and effective use of the resources of the University, maintains its long-term financial viability, and safeguards its assets, and that proper mechanisms exist to ensure financial control and for the prevention of fraud;

- To exercise oversight in respect of the academic, corporate, financial, estate and human resource functions delegated to the authority of the Principal as chief executive;

- To ensure that Court conducts itself in accordance with accepted standards of behaviour in public life, embracing duty, selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability and stewardship, openness, honesty, leadership and respect. Members must at all times regulate their personal conduct as members of the Court in accordance with these standards;

- To establish constructive and supportive but challenging working relationships with the University employees with whom they come into contact, whilst recognising the proper separation between governance and executive management;

- To act fairly and impartially in the interests of the University as a whole using independent judgement and maintaining confidentiality as appropriate;

- To act in accordance with the duties and responsibilities of charity trustees in law under the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005.

Governors are expected to serve on at least one committee of the Court and further University groups by mutual agreement, and to play a role in liaising between key stakeholders and the University and in fund raising where required. The role also offers a range of opportunities to participate in key events in the life of the University and wider community such as our graduation ceremonies.
PERSON SPECIFICATION

While the following skills, experience and attributes are considered priorities for the Court, so too is its diversity. Candidates who feel they possess less senior level experience but who could contribute to the Court through the diversity of their background or other experience are, therefore, encouraged to apply.

The successful candidates will bring some or all of the following skills and experience:

- Significant experience of leadership and management at a senior level in either the public, private or third sector, preferably gained over a number of years' service across a range of large and complex organisations. Experience of governance in a non-executive director/charitable trustee role would also be desirable but is not essential;

- Strategic Financial Experience;

- Strategic Risk Management;

- Strategic Project Management, with experience gained in relation to the areas of capital/property or IT/Digital particularly welcome;

- Legal skills/knowledge. Experience gained from professional practice is desirable but not essential.

The successful candidates will bring the following attributes:

- An ability to evaluate and monitor the performance of the University in a constructively critical manner, whilst mindful of the boundary between governance and management;

- The ability to identify and focus on key strategic and financial issues;

- A commitment to the highest standards of governance;

- The ability and the courage to exercise independent judgement;

- A commitment to furthering the values of higher education and the mission of the University of Aberdeen in particular; and

- A strong identification with the University and/or the most immediate local and national communities of Scotland that it serves. Although not an essential requirement, candidates who are members of the General Council (Graduates) are particularly welcome.
TERMS OF APPOINTMENT & FURTHER PARTICULARS

Governor roles are unremunerated, but reasonable expenses are paid. Directors and Officers Liability Insurance is in place.

Time Commitment

The minimum time commitment required is 12-14 days per year. This will include participation in at least four meetings of the Court per year (one of which is often an extended meeting) and at least one sub-committee of the Court. This does not include any induction activities or further commitments that the University may invite you to undertake at your agreement. Applicants will need to demonstrate that they have the capacity and willingness to fulfil this time commitment and to be prepared to be contactable at short notice when required.

Length of Appointment

The positions are tenable for a period of three years and may be extended by mutual agreement. One of the positions is available to commence immediately with further positions commencing with effect from 1 August 2021 onwards.

Other Details

Governors are trustees of the University in its capacity as a charity and candidates will therefore be required to confirm that they are not disqualified from serving as a trustee under the Charities and Trustee Investments Act (Scotland) 2005.

Candidates must also not have any unspent or pending criminal convictions of direct relevance to their ability to fulfil the requirements of the post. It should be noted that disclosure of a conviction will only result in an application being rejected if the University considers that it cannot manage effectively the risks associated with the conviction. Furthermore, candidates must declare any current or previous involvement in activities, organisations and/or financial affairs (including personal/professional bankruptcy proceedings) which may have had, or be deemed to have the potential to have, an adverse impact upon the University’s reputation.

Candidates should also declare if they hold a position with any other provider of Higher Education and consideration will be given as to whether this represents a conflict of interest which would prevent appointment.

To ensure independence, independent members are not permitted to hold an appointment as a member of staff of the University or to be a matriculated student of the University during their term of office. For the avoidance of doubt, applications from current members of staff of the University or matriculated students or applicants for study, will not be considered.
Equality & Diversity

The University of Aberdeen is committed to promoting equality, creating a culture of inclusivity and celebrating the diversity of its staff and student communities and the University Court believes that its own membership should represent the diverse nature of the University community and has articulated this in its Statement of Intent on Diversity, available online at:

Court Statement of Intent on Diversity Feb 2021.pdf (abdn.ac.uk)

In keeping with this and the requirements of the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018, the Court is gender balanced. In addition to maintaining that gender balance, the Court would particularly welcome applications from candidates who could bring a lived experience of the equality groups, including intersectional identities. The Court is seeking to address under-representation in relation to racial diversity in particular.

Reasonable adjustments for disability will be implemented for those who require them. Travel expenses incurred for attendance at interview will be reimbursed in line with the University’s policy on expenses.

The University’s commitment to gender equality has been recognised through the achievement of an Athena SWAN Bronze award at an institutional level and across all its subject areas. The University is also a Stonewall Diversity Champion to further LGBT+ equality. The University is signed up to Advance HE’s Race Equality Charter, affirming the University’s commitment to the charter’s aim of improving the representation, progression and success of minority ethnic staff and students within higher education.
HOW TO APPLY

Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to the University of Aberdeen on this appointment.
Candidates should apply for this role through our website at www.saxbam.com/appointments using code WVBZA
Click on the ‘apply’ button and follow the instructions to upload a CV and cover letter.

The closing date for applications is Noon on 2 April 2021