

Julie Ashworth

Why me?

I am excited by the opportunity, vision and ambition of the 2040 strategy. The University of Aberdeen is at the start of a new journey after a year of disruption and in an environment that remains volatile and uncertain. In this process so far I have been fortunate to meet virtually some of the wider team. I have found them to be hugely competent, engaging and warm. They are a team I want to work with – I am inspired by their pride in the university and their ambition.

For my part, I thrive on strategic ambition and challenge. As one of the first women to take part in the Clipper Around World Yacht race, I am comfortable making decisions that have big implications and I have a proven ability to absorb and analyse complex information.

One of my strengths is my ability to remain calm and keep the focus on long term goals.

I bring an energy to any role I undertake that centres on clear thinking, holding to values and being methodical.

What I bring

Leadership

I bring extensive leadership experience honed from years in commercial private sector positions in companies including Tesco, Punch Taverns, IBM and Liberty of London - combined with recent international work in Dubai and Australia. My leadership experience includes non-exec roles as a charity Trustee, Governor, and member of Court.

I am an experienced board advisor and chair, comfortable leading a Court / Board in its decision-making, development and assessments and in addition I work frequently with boards and individual directors on their development.

Recently I led on delivering turnaround strategies in two complex organisations, both with royal charters, both requiring financial stability, both requiring a restatement of purpose and clarification of executive and non-executive roles.

Governance

Recently I worked alongside the Director General of the IOD on the target operating model and the turnaround strategy. I hold a diploma in company direction and I'm finalising my chartered director award. I am familiar with codes of public office and the charity governance duties laid out by OSCR. Good governance is at the heart of the work that I do representing directors from private, public and third sectors in Scotland. I work as part of the Scottish advisory board, directly liaising on Covid-related matters on a weekly basis. How the Court works with both its internal and external stakeholders is of key importance. My pragmatic, collaborative and listening-focused approach will make this a priority, alongside the need for financial stability. I have recently led interviews for national director

(CEO) appointments and evaluations of the national chair. I am clear on the very real distinction between the role of the non-executive and the role of the executive.

Diversity and Inclusion

It is said that diversity is asking people to the party, but inclusion is getting them to dance. Certainly one is easier than the other! D&I is an integral part of my work; on the expert advisory group for IOD UK where we have recently reviewed the CRED report (Commission on race and ethnic disparity) and my membership on the national advisory council for women and girls (NACWG), ensuring intersectionality is considered alongside protective characteristics. I represent Scotland's voice on the Womens' Business council and I am Scottish lead for Women on Boards. The value of both contributing and listening is one I will engender at Court and with all aspects of the role. I am a speaker on D&I and regularly design and deliver courses looking for organisations asking 'how' to become more inclusive.

Education

Primary: I chaired the parent council and was a trustee director with SPTC (Scottish Parent Teachers Council - now 'Connect').

Secondary: I sat on the Governing Council of George Watsons College (advising on Board evaluation, policy and chair development). I lead the parent teacher forum at Merchiston Castle School and I am on the Scottish advisory board of Founders4Schools, an app that matches business speakers to educators or schools, thus ensuring pupils of all ages have access to diverse, entrepreneurial role models.

Within my own professional services firm, we have partnered with Melbourne Business school for research-driven content and I regularly sit on the University of Edinburgh Business School entrepreneurship panel.

During lockdown I worked in partnership with Women's Enterprise Scotland, WOB UK and Converge to increase the diversity of university spin out companies. Designing and delivering a pilot programme with the Universities of Strathclyde, Dundee and Heriot Watt, funded by the Universities' Innovation Fund was particularly enjoyable. I am also involved in the 'Future Directors' programme which we are developing with universities for undergraduates and post-graduates to include some of the IOD chartered governance work into their programmes.

On a personal note, my eldest is starting university this academic year, so I have been able to follow first-hand the student journey. The student experience after 2020 disruption must be a focus of any university alongside the impact of Brexit on research and recruitment.

What I offer

- Excellent up-to-date leadership and governance experience
- I am research and delivery focused.
- I bring a record of experience working with complexity in organisations that are a key part of the social and civic network of a Scottish city.
- I work with several Scottish bodies including the Scottish Advisory Board of the IOD, Scottish Business Network Advisory Board and the Royal Company of the Merchants of Edinburgh.

- I am exceptionally well-networked across all sectors in Scotland
- I am comfortable representing organisations in a wider context.
- I work in collaboration and partnership with organisations including Women's Enterprise Scotland, Scottish Development Goals Forum, Scottish Investment Bank, the Chairmen Network, SVc2UK and Chapter Zero (the non-Executive Directors Climate Forum)
- I contribute to cross-party working groups at the Scottish parliament on entrepreneurship

Other achievements

I am very proud to have achieved the following goals:

The Round The World Yacht race
Base Camp Everest
Kilimanjaro
Cycle across Northern India
Machu Picchu