University of Aberdeen
Appointment of Three Governors (Independent Members of Court)

Appointment Brief
February 2019
“Open to all and dedicated to the pursuit of truth in the service of others”

Founded in 1495 by William Elphinstone, Bishop of Aberdeen and Chancellor of Scotland, we are Scotland’s third oldest and the UK’s fifth oldest university. We remain true to Elphinstone’s guiding principle of a university that is “open to all and dedicated to the pursuit of truth in the service of others”.

Named as the Scottish University of the Year in the Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2019 and awarded the Queen’s Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education 2017 in recognition of our world-leading research into health economics and health services over the last forty years, we are committed to building further on our history and international reputation for teaching and research excellence.

Our research is at the forefront of addressing a number of challenges facing the world today, from healthcare research, to countering the obesity epidemic, meeting global food challenges and tackling climate change. We continue to innovate in pursuit of excellence in learning and teaching, ensuring that our students who will shape our society in the future are supported to reach their full potential.

Among the many pioneers who have been associated with the University of Aberdeen are five Nobel Laureates, with our alumni making major contributions to many fields, including science, the arts, medical research, business and politics.

We are proud to be at the forefront of innovations in teaching, learning and research and are committed to continuing our programme of Digital Transformation, which includes the continuous implementation of new technologies, greater accessibility of information, simplified business processes and enhanced training and development for students and staff.
Scottish University of the Year 2019

(Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide)

Global Outlook

We are proud of our heritage and remain true to our foundational purpose and, as a global institution with an international outlook, we are committed to the continued growth of our international student population and the expansion of student mobility opportunities. Our first overseas campus in Qatar opened in September 2017 in partnership with the Al-Faleh Group for Educational and Academic Services (AFG) and in the first year, 130 students of 14 nationalities (60% of them women) enrolled onto the business programmes.

In 2019, the Aberdeen/Sri Lanka medical pathway commences, which will allow students in Sri Lanka to undertake study leading to our MBChB degree. We enjoy strong links, including research partnerships, with other international institutions through membership of the Aurora Network of European Universities and through partnership agreements with Curtin University in Australia, and Wuhan University and South China Normal University in China.

We play a key role in the North East region as a stakeholder in the Aberdeen City Regional Deal and in shaping the educational, cultural and economic life of the local area.
Key Facts

In looking to our future and in developing our new Strategic Plan we will build upon our strong foundations of high quality teaching and research. Our strong performance across a number of areas has contributed to our continuing rise in league table rankings:

**Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE)**

We rose 27 places and are now ranked at 158 - 3rd in Scotland and 22nd in the UK.

**Times & Sunday Times Good University Guide**

We were recently named as Scottish University of the Year for 2019 in the Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide. We displayed a strong performance across several key indicators, resulting in a rise of 14 places from 40th to 26th in the UK – the biggest move by a university that appeared in the previous year’s top 40 and the third successive year in which we rose in the rankings. This earned us a place on the shortlist for UK University of the Year.

**Complete University Guide**

We rose from 40th to 28th in the UK, the biggest rise of any of last year’s top 50 universities and in so doing, entered the top 30 of the main league table for the first time. We rose from 7th to 4th place in Scotland, with six subjects being ranked amongst the top ten in the UK.

**National Student Survey (NSS)**

The National Student Survey (NSS) is an annual survey of nearly half a million UK students, with institutions scored across a range of criteria, including teaching, assessment, feedback, and communication. We consistently rank highly in the NSS, with our overall student satisfaction currently rated at 86.4%.

**Research Excellence Framework**

Preparations for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) exercise in 2021 are well underway. Our REF results in 2014 returned a strong performance, with 76% of assessed research judged as world-leading or internationally excellent. With respect to the impact of this research, 85% was judged to be world-leading or internationally excellent.
Finance and Strategy

Financial sustainability is of critical importance across the higher education sector, particularly at a time of financial constraint and political uncertainty at a national and international level. We achieved a turnover of £219.5M in financial year 2017/18. Approximately one-third of income (£74.3M) was received from the Scottish Funding Council for teaching and research and 26% (£56.1M) was generated by external research funding. A further 25% (£55.8M) was earned from tuition fees of which £25.9M was from international students. The underlying deficit for the year to 31 July 2018 was reported as £3.9M and a commitment has been made to return to an underlying break-even position by the end of financial year 2020/21.

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#panel7896

We have recently started the process of developing an ambitious Strategic Plan which will underpin our growth and ambitions as we look to 2040 and beyond. Our Strategic Plan will be developed within a culture of inclusiveness and transparency, underpinned by a series of wide-ranging debates which will take place across our entire community. The outcomes of these discussions will form the basis of our key strategic priorities, objectives and ambitions that underpin our institutional foundational purpose. In shaping our future strategy, we will build upon the successes we have achieved during the lifespan of our current Strategic Plan (2015-2020) (https://www.abdn.ac.uk/strategic-plan/) while remaining flexible and responsive to the challenges and opportunities which face us across the spectrum of higher education.
Our Governance and Structure

The mission, objectives and targets outlined in our Strategic Plan are approved and monitored through our governance structure:

The Court's 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. 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 plays an important role in representing and supporting students and has the right to chair Court meetings. Further information about the remit, composition and membership of the Court is available at: http://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/governance/court-information.php.

The Senate is responsible for academic matters, 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: http://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/governance/senate/index.php.

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”. Further information about the General Council is available at: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/general-council/role-of-the-general-council/.

The Senior Management Team is led by the Principal, who is the chief academic and executive officer. The Principal is supported directly by the Senior Vice-Principal, 4 Vice-Principals, Secretary to the University & Director of Operations, Director of Finance and Director of People.
The Roles

We are seeking to appoint three exceptional individuals who can support the University as it seeks to build upon its recent successes and develops an exciting new vision and strategy for implementation in 2020.

Responsibilities

Each governor is responsible, collectively with all members of Court, for the strategic leadership and governance of the University. 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.
Person Specification

The successful candidates will bring some or all of the following attributes:

- Significant experience of leadership and management at a senior level in either the public or private 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.

- Two candidates are required to be able to demonstrate the ability and experience necessary to serve on and potentially lead, the University's Audit Committee which meets five times a year.

- Experience in major capital projects, or information technology/digital transformation projects, or gained internationally, in particular in the area of partnership working, whether in a corporate or education setting, would be desirable.

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; and

- A commitment to furthering the values of higher education and the mission of the University of Aberdeen in particular.
Our Teaching and Learning

We are proud of our achievements in teaching and learning. We were judged to have performed particularly strongly in teaching quality, degree outcomes and graduate prospects by the Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2019.

In November 2018, the Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) reported that we have effective arrangements in place for managing academic standards and the student learning experience. This is the most positive judgement that can be bestowed and means that as an institution we meet sector expectations in securing the academic standards of our awards and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience we provide, both currently and into the future.

Our teaching is organised across 12 Schools, which encompass a broad range of disciplines and operate within a framework of devolved budgetary and planning responsibility. Further information about our programmes of study and our Schools is available online at: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/about/schools-institutes/index.php#research

We offer a flexible degree structure which promotes breadth as well as a depth of learning at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. Our curriculum is underpinned by a suite of Aberdeen Graduate Attributes (https://www.abdn.ac.uk/graduateattributes/), which describe the aspirations that we hold for our graduates.

Employability is a key focus within our curriculum, with a range of initiatives to encourage students to reach their full potential including an award-winning internship programme for undergraduate students.

Our online and distance learning portfolio (https://www.abdn.ac.uk/study/online/) continues to grow across a range of disciplines enabling learners to study individual courses on a stand-alone basis or to combine these in a ‘building block’ approach towards a full degree.
Our Research

We have a strong track record of providing innovative and impactful research-led solutions to emergent global and industrial challenges and a long history of working effectively with industry to translate excellence in research into commercial application and knowledge transfer activities.

In November 2017, we were awarded the highest national honour for a UK university - the Queen’s Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education – in recognition of our world-leading research into health economics and health services over the last 40 years. Our scholars from across the disciplines are recipients of prestigious awards and fellowships recognising their outstanding academic contributions, including the Royal Society, Royal Society of Edinburgh, Academy of Medical Sciences and Academy of Social Sciences.

In recent years, we have also created 25 staff spin-out companies, many of them within the innovation and incubator facilities across the campus. The portfolio of spin-out companies has achieved over £300m in investment to support commercialisation, adding to the economic development of the region and research partnerships.
Our Community

Our Students and Staff

Our diverse and vibrant community of over 14,500 students and 2,600 staff represent over 120 nationalities. We foster a caring and diverse culture, which promotes and nurtures equality, diversity, health, safety and wellbeing for students and staff. Our achievements in this area include accreditation at Silver level from Healthy Working Lives (https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/sport-and-exercise-1188.php) and Bronze level within the Athena Swan Charter, which promotes and recognises commitment to gender equality (https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/governance/athena-swan-2267.php).

We are committed to ensuring that all members of our University community are supported to achieve their full potential and that all students who have the potential to benefit from a University of Aberdeen degree can do so, irrespective of their background. We were one of the first higher education institutions in Scotland to be accredited as a Living Wage Employer and have established a dedicated Widening Participation team, which has implemented a number of innovative activities for prospective students, including a Summer School bridging programme (https://www.abdn.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/summer-school-for-access-2116.php) and a Gateway to Medicine programme (https://www.abdn.ac.uk/smmsn/undergraduate/g2m/index.php). Articulation Agreements are also in place with a number of FE Colleges to support students' transitioning to Higher Education. In addition, students from some of Scotland's most deprived areas benefit from a free place in our Halls of Residence for their first year, with 33 students taking up the offer in 2017/18.

We ensure that students are supported in all that they do through the provision of a comprehensive Student Support service and by working in partnership with the Students' Association (https://www.ausa.org.uk/) for the benefit of the student community.

We actively engage with our alumni through a variety of tailored national and international programmes and services, including events and volunteering opportunities. There is a strong tradition of philanthropy at Aberdeen and the generous support of generations of alumni, friends, companies and organisations has played an important role in our growth. Plans are underway to launch a major fundraising campaign as we approach our 525th anniversary in 2020.
Our Campus

The Old Aberdeen campus is the historic heart of the University and combines buildings of significant historical importance with state-of-the-art facilities for learning, research, and recreation. The Foresterhill campus, jointly owned with NHS Grampian, is one of the largest medical campuses in Europe and plays a significant role in supporting the health needs of the community.

Significant investment has been made in our campus infrastructure, including the modernisation of existing and development of new, cutting-edge facilities to ensure that staff and students are provided with high quality learning, teaching, research and social spaces, including:

- the Olympic-standard sports facilities provided in the Aberdeen Sports Village
- the award-winning Sir Duncan Rice Library
- the recently opened cutting-edge health teaching and research facilities of the Rowett Institute for Nutrition & Health and the Suttie Centre
- the refurbishment of the Hillhead Student Village and ambitious plans for a new Science Teaching Hub

We are committed to promoting environmental sustainability, as evidenced by the ground-breaking Rocking Horse Nursery, which was the first fully certified Passivhaus building in a Scottish university.
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.

We are a partner within the Aberdeen City Region Deal (providing opportunities for our research, industry engagement and commercialisation activities; notably in oil, gas and energy, food and drink, life sciences, digital innovation and entrepreneurship) and in the newly formed Oil and Gas Technology Centre (OGTC) (where we have created the National Decommissioning Centre along with industry stakeholders to address the challenges of the industry with an interdisciplinary approach).

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.

We are proud to work in partnership with a number of local organisations, including North East Scotland College, Inspire (Partnership Through Life), Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and Skills Development Scotland to host the award-winning Project SEARCH University of Aberdeen programme (https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/project-search-2431.php), which provides young adults aged 16-25 with additional learning needs to gain skills and experience to enter employment.

In 2018, over 70 young people graduated from our Children's University which was established in 2015 to provide a new and innovative route towards further and higher education for those aged 7-14. The programme also aims to encourage those from disadvantaged backgrounds to be inspired to take part in new challenges and activities.
Terms of Appointment

Time Commitment

The expected time commitment is a minimum of ten days per year including attendance at four meetings of the Court. It is expected that members will be able to serve on at least one sub-committee of Court if required and two vacancies are expected to carry with them membership of the University's Audit Committee (which meets five times per year), one of which will potentially include the role of Convener of the Audit Committee. Applicants will be required to demonstrate that they have the capacity and willingness to fulfil this time commitment.

Governor roles are unremunerated but reasonable expenses will be reimbursed in line with the University's Expenses and Benefits Policy. Directors and Officers Liability Insurance is in place.

Length of Appointment

The position is tenable for a period of three years and may be extended by mutual agreement. The commencement date for the three positions is flexible. One position is available from 1 August 2019, a further position from 1 October 2019 and a third position will be available from 1 August 2020.

Other Details

While the post-holder does not need to be based in the UK, flexibility in availability and being contactable at short notice when required are expected.

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.
Further Information

Should you require further information, Saxton Bampfylde would be pleased to arrange informal discussions on the role and appointment process with Caroline Inglis, University Secretary.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

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:

https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/documents/Court%20Statement%20of%20Intent%20on%20Diversity_Oct%202018.pdf

In keeping with that commitment and the requirements of the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018, we would particularly welcome applications from women and from individuals from protected characteristic groups currently under-represented on the Court who would further enhance its diversity. 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.

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 WVBW.

Click on the ‘apply’ button and follow the instructions to complete the application and Equalities Monitoring Form*. Please note that candidates are also required to submit a CV and covering letter.

The closing date for applications is noon on Friday 1 March 2019.

* The equal opportunities monitoring online form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application. Please complete as part of the application process.