

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY REPORT 2021

6. COURT DIVERSITY AND COMPLIANCE WITH THE GENDER REPRESENTATION ON PUBLIC BOARDS (SCOTLAND) ACT 2018

- 6.1 The University has been actively seeking to increase the diversity profile of its Court, the governing body, since 2015. In support of this, the Court has adopted a [Statement of Intent on Diversity](#) which sets out its commitment to achieving a membership which reflects the diverse University community insofar as is possible and practicable. The Statement was reviewed and updated in 2018 to include an enhanced commitment towards improving diversity and achieving gender balance across all categories of membership on Court including those members who are not directly appointed by Court itself.
- 6.2 The Court has in 2020 achieved gender balance in its appointed independent membership and has, therefore, met the objective of the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018 (and continues to meet that objective). The Court is also a member of the Committee of Scottish Chairs' '40:40:20' policy commitment.
- 6.3 In July 2017 a revised composition of the Court was formally approved by the Privy Council. In addition to ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Higher Education (Governance) Scotland Act 2016, the need to achieve gender balance and diversity in the membership of Court was a key principle underpinning the changes. The new composition increased the proportion of the membership appointed by Court to 48% and therefore affords Court greater control over its composition.
- 6.4 When discussing membership of Court with bodies or individuals who elect or appoint members to join Court, it will, on each occasion highlight the Statement of Intent on Diversity. Overall, the Court's gender balance has improved from 29% female 71% male in 2016, to 52% female, 48% male on 31 July 2020.
- 6.5 Court members are invited to participate in the annual collection of equality monitoring data. When vacancies arise on Court the University undertakes a number of measures to seek to increase awareness of the positions among under-represented groups, but with a particular focus on women most recently.
- 6.6 Equality Impact Assessments of the role descriptions, person specifications and advertisement were undertaken. The recruitment process was carefully considered by the Court's Governance and Nominations Committee and based on previous recruitment processes, this identified the need in particular to be proactive in encouraging more female candidates and candidates from an ethnic minority background. Text was included in the advertisement of the roles to emphasise the diversity of the University community and action to encourage applications from women and individuals from protected characteristics groups currently under-represented on Court. The range of advertising networks used beyond mainstream print media was reviewed and include professional networks for women and other under-represented groups. These have included: Women on Boards; Non-Executive Directors; Diversity Network Sites (Ethnic Jobsite, Asian Jobsite, Diversity Jobsite, LGBT+ Jobsite, Disability Network and Disability Jobsite); and Communications to staff, students and alumni inviting nominations. Recruitment consultants engaged by the University to support the recruitment process were briefed on the University's ambitions regarding the diversity of Court and this was enhanced through proactive identification by the University of potential female applicants. A gender-balanced selection panel was also critical.
- 6.7 These steps have contributed to the achievement of gender balance in Court's appointed independent members and to the objective of the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018.

6.8 It is recognised, however, by the Court’s Governance and Nominations Committee that there is further progress to be made in enhancing the wider diversity of the Court towards achieving the aspirations set out in its Statement of Intent on Diversity and this remains a priority for action in forthcoming recruitment.

6.9 The University Court has a composition of 25. The following figures are based on the membership in office as at the following dates since 2019:

Table 6: Gender profile of Court 2019 and 2020

	31 July 2019	31 July 2020
Women	12	13
Men	13	12
% of membership	48% Female 52% Male	52% Female 48% Male

6.10 Reporting Information Specific to Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018 Section 8

The Act applies to those members of Court who are appointed by the Court but excludes members who are elected or nominated. For the University’s Court, this translates to being twelve of the thirteen independent members of Court (the Senior Governor who, while independent, is elected and therefore excluded). As at 31 July 2020, the University has fully complied with the objective of the legislation (and as at 31 January 2021 the objective continues to be achieved with six of the twelve independent members of Court being female). This has been achieved through the steps outlined in section 6.6. As required by the Act, the following further information is provided:

Table 7: Gender profile of Independent Members Appointed by Court 2019 and 2020

	31 July 2019	31 July 2020
Women	6	6
Men	6	6
% of membership	50% Female 50% Male	50% Female 50% Male

1 Aug 2018 to 31 July 2020

Number of Vacancies	Number of Recruitment Processes Undertaken	Number of Applications	% of Applications from Women	Number of Appointments Made	Number of Appointments Female
4	1	71	23%	4	2

6.11 No recruitment processes have been required since July 2020 but at the time of writing (March 2021), the recruitment process for three vacancies for independent members (one current and two future vacancies) is due to commence and is expected to conclude in June 2021. This will, therefore, be reported on in the next reporting period.

6.12 Action:

Actively monitor the diversity of Court and establish mechanisms for achieving a membership which reflects more closely the diversity of the University staff and student community (Action 12.1)