



Abertay
University®

Independent Court Member Applicant Information

August 2026

#BeAbertay

Innovative

Caring

Inclusive

Collaborative

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About Abertay University

[Abertay](#) is a modern and friendly university in the heart of Dundee, Scotland, with a strong focus on teaching and preparing our graduates for the world of work, combined with excellence in research and knowledge exchange.

With roots stretching back to 1888, Abertay has always responded to the needs of industry, supplying a pipeline of graduate talent to work, lead and innovate across a wide range of sectors.

We pride ourselves in offering industry-relevant courses for both today and the future. We have around 5,000 students on our Dundee city centre campus and overseas, offering a range of programmes at both [undergraduate](#), [postgraduate taught](#) level as well as [postgraduate research degrees](#).

Abertay is currently ranked Scotland's Top Modern University by the Guardian University Guide 2026.

Scotland's top modern university

Abertay has a diverse academic portfolio spanning sciences, creative arts, business, informatics, social sciences and more. Having forged a reputation as one of the UK's leading tech universities, we're best known for our expertise in video games education and our degrees in this field have been consistently ranked top in Europe. From Mental Health Nursing to Civil Engineering, or Business Analytics to Ethical Hacking, our academic faculties offer degrees that prepare our students for employment and, in most cases, offer real-world work experience alongside their studies. Abertay is also a National Centre for Excellence for both video games and cybersecurity education.

An inclusive and friendly environment

We pride ourselves on offering an inclusive, friendly and welcoming environment for our students and staff alongside first-rate teaching and excellent student experience.

We're also proud to be the:

Top Scottish modern university for student satisfaction (Complete University Guide 2027)



Our Values

We aim to be:

Inclusive - equality of opportunity and inclusion are embedded in our ethos.

We welcome staff and students from diverse communities and aim to put people at the heart of all we do.

Caring - we believe in treating all people, animals, and our planet, with kindness and mutual respect.

Innovative - we strive for excellence in all we do, aiming to provide a high-quality environment for our staff and students to flourish, where innovation is encouraged and progress is realised.

Collaborative - we collaborate with others, both internally across our teams and externally with partners to support our ambitions, ensure professional excellence and customer services, and enable our community to thrive.

Our Student Community

The friendly and welcoming environment at Abertay is created by our students, who represent a great diversity of backgrounds and cultures. Over 60 nationalities are represented on campus, and [our courses](#) attract everyone from local school leavers to overseas research students.

We welcome a high proportion of mature students and a key priority for the University is working to widen access to higher education for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, an area in which we lead the way in Scotland.

Our Academic and Professional Services Staff

Apart from getting on with the business of teaching, many of the staff are either actively involved in research or work with industry. All of our researchers are involved in teaching and developing courses – giving our students the chance to learn from world leaders every day.

Coming to University marks a major step in our student's lives, and we're on hand to make sure that the transition is as smooth as possible. The University can offer advice and support on everything from accommodation and managing finances, to staying healthy and planning a student's individual workload.

We have a [counselling and mental health service](#) that can help students work through any problems, and we employ a team of students each year to act as mentors for all newcomers.

[Abertay Students' Association](#) also provides help and advice via the elected student executive.



Research, Knowledge Exchange and Innovation

Abertay isn't just a great place to be a student – the University is also home to [world-leading research](#) teams, whose discoveries are hailed internationally.

Abertay takes a highly applied, industry engaged approach to Research, Knowledge Exchange and Innovation, shaped by its identity as a modern university focused on real world impact. Our research culture is built around working across disciplines to address both local and global challenges, emphasising collaboration that bridges academia, industry and communities to create economic impact. The university is recognised as an Academic Centre of Excellence in Cyber Security Education and a National Centre for Excellence in Computer Games. Most recently we opened the £9m CoSTAR Realtime Lab, a leading-edge R&D facility funded through UKRI to supporting the converging games, film, performance and immersive industries.



Our Campus

Abertay has a city centre campus right in the heart of Dundee. Our buildings blend the modern with the historic, with the Edwardian Old College giving a taste of the past. The Kydd Building has specialist labs such as our Emergent Technology Centre, the National Centre for Excellence in Computer Games and Scotland's only industry-standard food science consumer research lab.

Across the road from the Kydd building is Annie's Cafe, the heart of the campus and a great place to meet, chat or work using free wifi. Above that is the cyberQuarter, a £18m cybersecurity research and development centre that works with businesses of all kinds, raising awareness of cybersecurity and developing cybersecurity solutions. Our award-winning and recently-refurbished Bernard King Library is a focal point for students, providing social areas, modern learning and collaboration spaces.

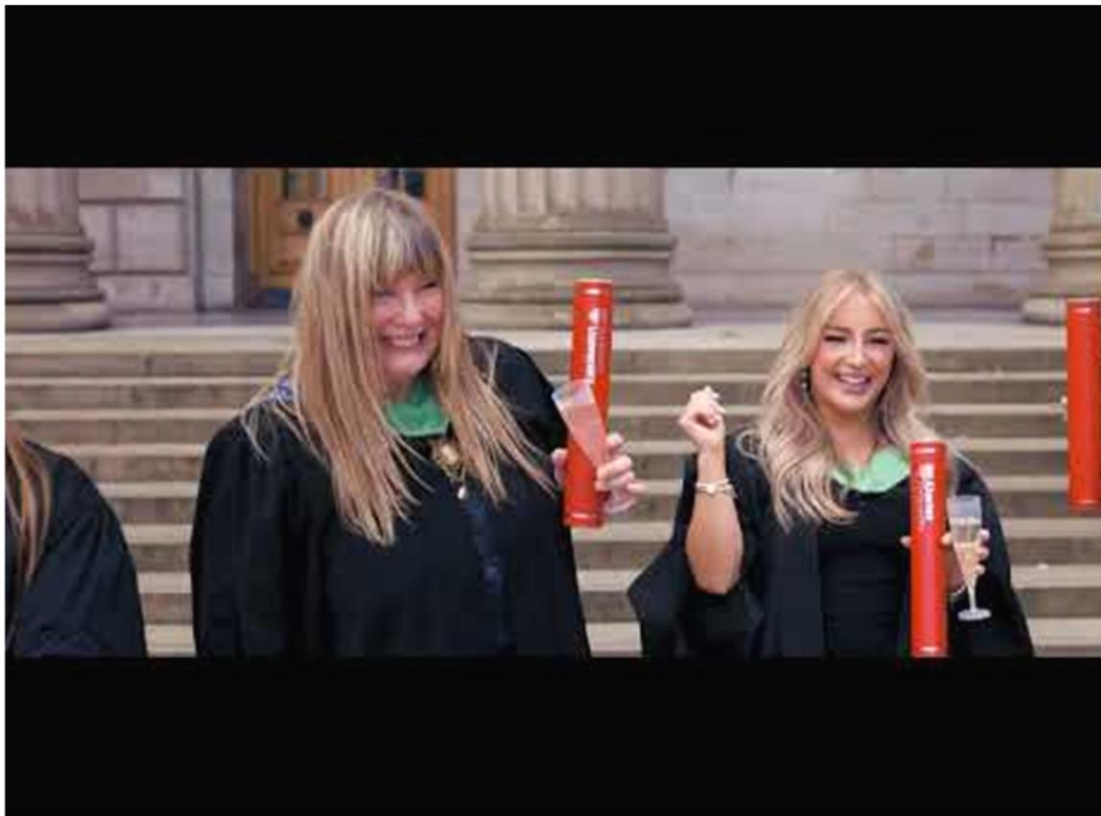
Strategy 2025-2030

Abertay's strategic focus has been set out up to 2030 ([Strategy 2025-30 | Abertay University](#)). We continue to adapt and develop in response to the needs of our students and the fast pace of change in the world around us.

Some of our key purposes are:

- To offer transformational opportunities to everyone who has the potential to benefit from Abertay's approach to university education.
- To inspire and empower our students, staff, and graduates to achieve their full potential, thrive in a digital world, and make a positive difference to the world around them.
- To innovate in all aspects of our work, fostering a culture of creativity, and engaging in research and knowledge exchange which has real impact.
- To work with our partners to prepare students for the world of work and a lifelong journey of learning and growth, with a strong emphasis on sustainability and global engagement.

[Click below to view our Strategy 2025 to 2030 video:](#)



The University Court

Universities in Scotland must adhere to the provisions set out in the [Higher Education Governance \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#) as well as the [Scottish Code of Good HE Governance](#). The University is required to report on how it is complying with the Code in its Annual Report, via a [Statement of Corporate Governance](#). The [University Court](#) is the Governing Body of the University. Its powers are set out in the University's constitutional document, which is 'The Abertay University (Scotland) Order of Council 2019'. The [University Court Statement of Primary Responsibilities](#) defines core, high-level responsibilities of Court. It sets out those matters for which Court is accountable as the University's governing body, including its obligations as a Scottish charity and as the principal financial and business authority of the institution.

Court plays a central role in shaping Abertay's future. Its members, drawn from a wide range of professional backgrounds (up to a maximum of 25), provide strategic insight, independent oversight, and a shared commitment to the University's success.

[Court Members | Members of Court | Abertay University](#)

There are a number of key role holders who support the work and effectiveness of the Court. These include the Chair of Court, who provides leadership to the governing body and ensures its effective operation, the Principal and Vice-Chancellor, who leads the University's Senior Leadership Team and the Secretary to Court, who acts as the principal adviser to Court, supporting governance, accountability and the delivery of the University's strategy.

[Court's Key Individuals | Abertay University](#)

Court meets at least five times each year and its work is supported by a number of committees, operating under delegated authority, each with a specific remit, which enable more detailed scrutiny of key areas such as finance, audit and risk, governance, and people, providing assurance, advice, and recommendations to Court to inform decision-making and support effective governance.

[Committees of Court | Abertay University](#)

The Opportunity

The University is now seeking to recruit new independent Court members to ensure the continued successful delivery of the University's priorities and objectives, the setting of its strategic direction and commitment to its values and mission.

The person specification sets out the key skills and experience we think are required for the role, but we are looking for new members to complement the existing membership

and bring diversity of thinking and skills to Court, particularly as we seek to implement our new Strategy.

Role Profile

Members of the governing body should have a keen interest in, and empathy for, Higher Education, and be willing to commit their time and expertise to helping the University deliver on its significant ambitions.

Interest would be particularly welcome at this time from individuals with skills and experience in relation to finance, governance and assurance, health and safety, sustainability, and equality diversity and inclusion, equality legislation or change management.

Court recognises the strengths that diversity brings, both to our governing body and our university, and is committed to encouraging applicants from diverse backgrounds and experience so that its composition reflects the community it serves.

Key Attributes

Personal Competencies

- Strong interpersonal and communication skills, including the ability to establish good working relationships with other members of Court, the Principal and other members of the University Executive.
- Commitment to higher education and empathy with the purpose, principles, and objectives of the University.
- Diplomacy, including the ability to manage conflict in a constructive manner.
- Networking, influencing and advocacy, including the ability to represent the University to a range of stakeholders (including students, staff, local community)
- Ability to contribute to decision-making processes that ensure objectives are achieved and standards are maintained.
- Commitment to equality and diversity.
- Good understanding of business principles and risk management.
- Good understanding of the current political environment in Scotland and the UK.

Expertise and Skills

The following areas of expertise and skills would bring particular value to Court and the role of an independent member:

- Demonstrable leadership experience in the private, public and/or third sector.
- Knowledge and expertise in matters relevant to the successful operation of a complex organisation.
- Experience of leading strategic change successfully.
- Understanding of how post-school education is provided in Scotland.
- Expertise in an area relevant to the responsibilities of Court.
- Understanding of the principles of good governance in the context of higher education.

Commitment

This is an important role, requiring time commitment and flexibility, given that the actual time spent on the role can be unpredictable. It is estimated that Independent Court Members will need to devote between 10 and 12 days per year, plus personal preparation time, to effectively fulfil the duties.

The successful candidate will be able to:

- Join Court as a full member and prepare for, attend and participate in five meetings of Court per year: these currently take place between September and June on a Wednesday afternoon from 14:00 for about 3 hours, preceded from noon by visits to meet staff and students and lunch with University senior officers. However, there may also be a need to meet and decide matters between meetings, on an *ad hoc* basis.
- Attend the annual Court Conference, which may be a 'strategy day' or 'away day'.
- Join at least one of Court's standing Committees, which meet between two and four times per year depending on the Committee, with additional meetings called if required. Meetings are held as a mix of in-person, online and hybrid.
- Participate in graduation ceremonies (currently held on one day in early July and one day in late November).
- Attend occasional events, dinners, lectures, attendance at Senate (the senior academic body of the University to observe proceedings) etc.
- Complete a Court induction process upon appointment, and subsequently participate in ongoing development activities, including performance reviews.

Conduct

All Court Members are expected to sign up to the [Code of Conduct for Members of Court](#) on appointment and to confirm that they are not disqualified from acting as a Charity Trustee in accordance with the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and as set out in the guidance from the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).

Court members are expected to disclose any real or potential conflicts of interest they may have. Please highlight in your application if there are any likely conflicts, so that we can explore during the recruitment process whether these would be manageable if you were appointed.

Term of Appointment

The appointment will be for an initial term of three years, with eligibility for reappointment for up to two further three-year terms. Appointments are available from **1 January 2027**.

Expenses

The Independent Court Member role is not remunerated, but individuals are entitled to all travelling and incidental expenses (including, for example, childcare costs) incurred in the course of University business. Directors and Officers Liability Insurance is in place.



Application Process

The closing date for applications is **12:00 on 28 September 2026**.

To apply, please submit the following by email to governance@abertay.ac.uk.

- CV
- Covering letter setting out your interest in the role and details of how you match the required criteria.

We also ask that all applicants complete an [Equality Monitoring Form: Independent Court Member Applicant – Fill in form](#).

Interviews

The Governance and Nominations Committee will review applications at its meeting on 8 October 2026, and shortlisted applicants will be invited for interview the week beginning 26 October or 2 November 2026 (to be confirmed).

Further Information

For a confidential discussion about the role, please contact Caroline Summers (Deputy Principal and University Secretary) by emailing governance@abertay.ac.uk

Annex A: General Role Descriptor for Court Members

Introduction

Members of the University Court (thereafter referred to as Court) may be:

- a) Employees or students of the University who become members of Court either through their named role (Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Principal and University Secretary, Vice-Principals, Students' Association President and Vice-President), through election from amongst academic staff or support staff, or nomination by Senate or the trade unions.
- b) Independent lay people who have applied and been appointed by Court itself.

*unless they are also Secretary to Court.

Once appointed, all members are charity trustees as the University is a registered educational charitable body.

This role descriptor is published on the University's website so that it is accessible to potential electors of Court Members.

Role of the Court Member

The main general role of a Court Member is, inter alia, to assist Court in performing its statutory functions. Court is collectively responsible for the proper conduct of the University's public business, for strategic vision, monitoring effectiveness and performance of the University, approving financial, estate and human resource strategies, ensuring equality and diversity, being the legal and employing authority, and ensuring the good name and values of the University.

The general duty of Court Members as charity trustees¹ is to act in the interests of the charity (i.e., the University).

- Court Members must operate in a manner consistent with the charity's purpose.
- Court Members must act with care and diligence.
- Court Members must manage any conflict of interest between the charity and any person or organisation who appoints trustees.

¹ taken from the [Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator](#) website – accessed 01/12/2025

Specific Duties, Personal Responsibilities and Standards

1. Standards

- a) All Court Members are responsible for ensuring that they conduct themselves in accordance with accepted standards of behaviour in public life, embracing selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership.
- b) All Court Members must provide an up-to-date Register of Interests and shall make a full and timely personal disclosure of any actual or perceived conflict of interest.

2. Business of the University

- a) Court Members, if not also a member of the Executive Group, should endeavour to establish a constructive and supportive but challenging working relationship with the senior officers of the University, recognising the proper separation between governance and executive management, and avoiding involvement in the day-to-day executive management of the University.
- b) Court Members are strongly encouraged to engage appropriately in the life of the University so that they develop a full and rounded understanding of the University's activities.
- c) Court Members are expected to sit on and, after a period of time, potentially chair at least one of the following committees of Court: the Audit and Risk Committee, Exceptions Committee, Finance and Corporate Performance Committee, Governance and Nominations Committee, People, Health and Equality Committee, and the Remuneration Committee. Training and support will be provided if required.

3. Personal

- a) Court Members will have a strong personal commitment to Higher Education and the values, aims and objectives of the University.
- b) Court Members will, at all times, act fairly and impartially in the interests of the University as a whole, using independent judgement and maintaining confidentiality as appropriate.
- c) Court Members appointed or elected by a particular constituency, or otherwise drawn from a particular sector or community, must not act as if delegated by that particular constituency².

² See paragraph 26 of the Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance 2023

- d) Court Members are expected to attend all meetings of Court and of committees of which they are a member, or give timely apologies if absence is unavoidable. It is estimated that Court Members will need to devote at least 10 and up to 12 days per year to effectively fulfil the duties.
- e) Court Members are expected to attend induction/training events organised by the University or other appropriate bodies (such as Advance HE) as required.
- f) In order to ensure that Court operates effectively, Court Members are expected to meet annually with the Chair on a one-to-one basis to discuss their performance in the role.
- g) Court Members are expected to share their view of the effectiveness of the Court and the effectiveness of the Chair via the Court Intermediary.

Note

Court has previously approved and published specific role descriptors for the roles of Chair, Vice-Chair, Intermediary, the Principal and Vice-Chancellor and Secretary to Court. These are available on the University's website at [Court's Key Individuals | Abertay University](#).

There is also a person specification for independent lay members of Court, which is adaptable to take account of particular skills and experience as determined to be required from time to time when Court is seeking new lay members.

Governance, Abertay University

✉ governance@abertay.ac.uk

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