

Repository of Good Practice in Scottish HE Governance

Institution	University of Aberdeen
Name of practice (up to 30 words)	Revision to Rector and Senior Governor (Senior Lay Member) Protocol
Description of practice (up to 300 words)	<p>In response to a vacancy arising in the role of Rector, the University Court and the Student Association reflected on the challenge of attracting applicants to the role of Rector and the relatively low level of awareness of the role amongst the student population. The consensus reached was a desire to have a “working Rector” focused on engagement with students and providing a bridge both to appropriate services in the University and to raise issues at Court. The protocol was revised to reflect this rebalancing, with the Rector presiding at Court and leading a Rector’s update before allowing the Senior Governor as the Chair of the university to chair the business element of the meeting. Three strong candidates for the Rector vacancy were then secured based on the new protocol with the incumbent successfully supporting individual students and significantly increasing the profile of the role.</p>
Relevant section(s) and paragraph(s) of Code	<p>Section 6: Key Roles Paragraph 60 (“The exact interpretation of the Rector’s role with respect to the governing body is a matter for agreement by the governing body of the individual Institution concerned. Each governing body must set that agreement out clearly in a protocol, the content of which should be published and made clear to candidates for the posts of Rector and Senior Lay Member and reflected in the job descriptions for these posts.”)</p>

Institution	University of Dundee
Name of practice (up to 30 words)	Remuneration Committee: Membership and Operation
Description of practice (up to 300 words)	<p>The University has taken steps to ensure meaningful consultation with staff and student stakeholder groups in relation to the remuneration of the University Executive Group.</p> <p>As a result of consultation with student members of the Court, representatives of campus unions, and Remuneration Committee members, the membership of the Remuneration Committee was expanded to include a student member of the Court and a staff member of the Court whose remuneration would not be considered by the Remuneration Committee. These additional members were identified through an open call for interest followed by a selection process led by the Governance & Nominations Committee, and the process was accelerated to enable the new members to participate in decisions relating to the remuneration of the new Principal (appointed July 2018). The new members have been fully engaged in all of the business of the Committee since the beginning of the academic year, with the revised composition adding to the quality and robustness of debate and the further development of remuneration processes.</p> <p>The process of developing a framework for meaningful consultation with staff and student stakeholder groups has since resumed with input from these stakeholders. The number of meetings of the Committee has also been increased to 3 meetings per year with one meeting per year to be devoted to the Continuing Professional Development of its members, and one devoted to strategic/policy matters. The former was considered to be important in ensuring that staff and students on the Committee with no previous expertise in remuneration were able to effectively contribute to the business of the Committee – a move which was strongly endorsed by the stakeholders during the consultation process.</p> <p>The Committee has also sought independent assessment regarding its work and current practice.</p>
Relevant section(s) and paragraph(s) of Code	<p>Section 7: Committees and Academic Board</p> <p>Paragraph 80 (“the remuneration committee is expected to seek the views of representatives of students and staff of the Institution, including representatives of recognised trade unions, in relation to the remuneration package of the Principal and the senior executive team”)</p>

Institution	University of Edinburgh
Name of practice (up to 30 words)	Annual University Court Update
Description of practice (up to 300 words)	Since 2015, the University of Edinburgh has held an annual open event at which the Principal, Rector, Vice-Convener/Senior Lay Member and University Secretary have given an overview of the University's performance, governance structures, the role of the University Court and held a question and answer session. Recently, the event moved to being held online, which has enabled more people to attend than when held in person and a recording has also been made available after the event for those not able to attend in the timeslot.
Relevant section(s) and paragraph(s) of Code	Section 5: Effectiveness Paragraph 43 ("the Institution is expected to hold an annual stakeholder meeting in public , at which representatives of the governing body, including the Principal, are expected to give an account of the Institution's performance and should be available to answer questions")

Institution	Glasgow Caledonian University
Name of practice (up to 30 words)	The Court operates a Lay Governor Link Scheme, linking lay governors with senior staff within different functional areas of the University to provide additional insight and perspective to Court discussions.
Description of practice (up to 300 words)	<p>The Lay Governor Link scheme is part of the GCU Court’s continuing work to understand and engage with the University community and ensure that its deliberations are well-informed. As a result of the scheme it is likely that at least one lay governor will have an in-depth understanding of any given item of Court business and/or its context to contribute to Court’s consideration of the matter.</p> <p>The key features of the scheme are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each lay governor is associated with a School or other academic unit or one or more professional services or functions. The association with any area is likely to be for no more than two to three years with rotation thereafter so that lay governors build a range of experience and contacts. • The governor’s role is to listen, learn about their area, keep up to date with developments, understand the ambitions and challenges and contribute fresh perspectives on the basis of their own experience and skills. The governor may become a valued sounding board for the relevant Executive and manager and there may even be features of mentoring. • The lay governor’s role is purely non-executive and will not stray into that of an executive or a senior manager. • The lay governor role is not to champion their area uncritically or to seek to privilege it over others. Rather it is to gain a good local understanding and contribute to Court with particularly well-informed views. Equally, the governor is in a position to promote understanding of Court’s role and responsibilities within the University community. • How the contact is further developed is very much up to the individual governor and the designated senior manager.
Relevant section(s) and paragraph(s) of Code	<p>Section 5: Effectiveness (“Opportunities for further development for all members should be provided regularly, in accordance with their individual needs and responsibilities.”)</p> <p>Section 6: Key roles (“The Chair must act so as to ... ensure the Institution is well connected with its stakeholders, including staff and students.”)</p>

Institution	Glasgow Caledonian University
Name of practice (up to 30 words)	Court Networking Event Series
Description of practice (up to 300 words)	<p>The Court has established a practice of hosting a series of Court networking events prior to each Court meeting. The format of these events is that the evening prior to each Court meeting, the University will host an event at which a high-profile, external guest speaker will be invited to deliver an address to an audience of Court members, Students' Association Sabbatical Officers, Executive Board members, senior Academic staff and others on a topical issue. Each event incorporates a Q&A session with the speaker, providing those in attendance with an opportunity to raise any matters relating to the topic under discussion. Discussions at the event are conducted under Chatham House Rules to encourage a free-flowing and wide-ranging discussion around the chosen topic.</p> <p>One of the key purposes of these events is to provide an opportunity for Court to receive valuable insights from important and influential voices from across the sector, Government and the private sector and to have the opportunity to raise any particular questions. Beyond providing an additional CPD-type activity for Court members, this practice also contributes to Court effectiveness by providing opportunities for interaction between Court members and senior academic and professional services staff members from across the University, thus improving the connectedness of different parts of the University community.</p>
Relevant section(s) and paragraph(s) of Code	<p>Section 5: Effectiveness ("Opportunities for further development for all members should be provided regularly, in accordance with their individual needs and responsibilities.")</p> <p>Section 6: Key roles ("The Chair must act so as to ... ensure the Institution is well connected with its stakeholders, including staff and students.")</p>

Institution	Heriot-Watt University
Name of practice (up to 30 words)	Court Dinner Meetings
Description of practice (up to 300 words)	<p>The University has adopted a regular schedule of informal Court Dinner Meetings which take place the day before regular meetings of the Court. These themed meetings, which take the form of a presentation, question and answer and informal discussion throughout the evening, are designed to inform Court members about topical issues of interest or importance to the University whether these be internal matters, or within the external policy environment. The topics are highly varied, providing an opportunity for the Court to be more thoroughly briefed than would otherwise be possible in the time available in regular meeting agendas. Speakers have been both internal and external to the University. While these are not decision-making meetings, they enable members to expand their knowledge of relevant topics, explore issues, share thoughts and contribute to the formulation of ideas and approaches to guide future decision-making. The value of those meetings in terms of governors' increased understanding of the issues and contribution to the debate have outweighed the resource implications in terms of time and costs.</p>
Relevant section(s) and/or paragraph(s) of Code	Section 5: Effectiveness ("Opportunities for further development for all members should be provided regularly, in accordance with their individual needs and responsibilities.")

Institution	Heriot-Watt University
Name of practice (up to 30 words)	Court Strategy Days
Description of practice (up to 300 words)	Two of the Court's meetings in the annual schedule take the form of Court Strategy Days. These whole day events, one of which includes a full review of the University's performance against strategic performance indicators in the year, enable Court members to focus in more depth on strategic matters. Members of Court committees are invited to attend and to contribute to the discussions and there is also an opportunity for members to engage with key members of the University's executive team, including Vice-Principals, Deputy Principals and Heads of Schools who are also invited. The outputs of these events are frequently formulated into action points.
Relevant section(s) and paragraph(s) of Code	<p>Section 5: Effectiveness Paragraph 51 ("The governing body is expected to reflect annually on the performance of the Institution as a whole in relation to its strategic plan, with reference to agreed KPIs.")</p> <p>Section 6: Key roles Paragraph 61 ("The Principal is responsible for management of the Institution and for providing the governing body with advice on its strategic direction.")</p>

Institution	Heriot-Watt University
Name of practice (up to 30 words)	Review of Court meeting papers
Description of practice (up to 300 words)	<p>The Court established a short-life working group to review the quality and content of Court meeting papers with a view to making these more efficient and impactful. The Court member representatives on the Group were given the opportunity, referring to real-life examples, to suggest improvements, including methods of reporting which would better support Court members to discharge their responsibilities more effectively. A wide range of recommendations and action points emerged from this review with agreement that the subject of the effectiveness of Court papers should be revisited periodically. This has led to agreement for changed practices which amongst other things: reduce the amount of physical paper distributed; introduce summarised information for quick reference while making more detailed information available; and make effective use of IT.</p>
Relevant section(s) and paragraph(s) of Code	<p>Section 6: Key roles Paragraph 69 (“The Secretary is expected to ensure that papers are supplied to members in a timely manner and contain such information, in such form and of such quality, as is appropriate to enable the governing body to discharge its duties efficiently and effectively.”)</p>

Institution	Robert Gordon University
Name of practice (up to 30 words)	Ensuring the Board understands and values the academic imperatives of the University via a programme of visits to all parts of the institution, in addition to engagement with Academic Council.
Description of practice (up to 300 words)	<p>The Board annually carries out three visits to specific parts of the University as determined by considering the academic priorities of the university and contemporary issues within the sector. During the pandemic, visits were paused and more training on issues such as finance was provided. Visits have restarted and recently included visiting the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedic Practice (February 2022). This involved seeing the clinical skills suite.</p> <p>The visits supplement the induction and other training of Governors by ensuring that they have regular opportunities to meet with a range of staff within the institution and to experience the student facilities within the university. Appropriate School/ Departmental members/ officers of Academic Council will be involved in each visit.</p> <p>By enhancing their knowledge of the work of schools and departments contributes to the effectiveness of the Governing Body, and develops a higher level of mutual understanding between the Board of Governors and the Academic Council.</p>
Relevant section(s) and paragraph(s) of Code	<p>Section 5: Effectiveness (“Opportunities for further development for all members should be provided regularly, in accordance with their individual needs and responsibilities.”)</p> <p>Section 7: Committees and Academic Board Paragraph 83 (“The Institution is expected to have appropriate measures in place to clarify the different responsibilities of the governing body and the academic board and to encourage a high level of mutual understanding between them.”)</p>

Institution	Scotland's Rural College
Name of practice (up to 30 words)	To enhance internal consultation in addition to ensuring that adequate systems/practices exist for consultation with representative bodies.
Description of practice (up to 300 words)	SRUC has a diverse and geographically spread range of campuses. The SRUC Board undertakes a planned series of visits to a number of campuses or facilities during the year to give members the opportunity to gain direct understanding of the operations undertaken at these sites and to interact directly with staff and students. Although formal Board or Committee meetings may take place at different campuses during the year, these visits are separate to and independent of the Board Meeting calendar. Their purpose is to enhance Board knowledge and to permit better direct interaction with members. This initiative also addresses a recommendation on strengthening staff/student engagement which was made following an external governance effectiveness review carried out late in 2017.
Relevant section(s) and paragraph(s) of Code	Section 1: The Governing Body: Primary responsibilities Paragraph 5 ("The governing body should satisfy itself that the Institution has adequate systems and practices for informing and consulting with stakeholders' representative bodies, including recognised trade unions and student associations, in relation to the on-going development of the Institution and any significant proposals regarding relevant institutional policies. The governing body should also satisfy itself that the Institution has in place appropriate arrangements for engaging with the public and the wider communities which it serves.")

Institution	University of St Andrews
Name of practice (up to 30 words)	Opportunities for Non-Executive members to meet with University staff in advance of Court meetings
Description of practice (up to 300 words)	<p>Before each Court meeting, the Academic Assessors and the Non-Academic Staff Assessor organise open meetings for staff members across the University to meet with non-executive members of Court. This provides a regular and informal opportunity for Court non-executives to engage directly with staff across the institution, and hear their views on key issues. It raises the profile of Court and broadens awareness of the University's governance structures, and enables non-Executive members to be better informed about the concerns and priorities of members of the University with whom they would be unlikely otherwise to come into contact.</p>
Relevant section(s) and paragraph(s) of Code	<p>Section 5: Effectiveness ("Opportunities for further development for all members should be provided regularly, in accordance with their individual needs and responsibilities.")</p> <p>Section 6: Key roles ("The Chair must act so as to ... ensure the Institution is well connected with its stakeholders, including staff and students.")</p>

Institution	University of Strathclyde
Name of practice (up to 30 words)	Initial one-year term for co-opted lay members of Court, with subsequent four-year extensions
Description of practice (up to 300 words)	<p>For co-opted lay members of Court, the University's Statutes currently allow for an initial term of 'up to three years', plus a possible two extensions of three years each. In recent years, it has been practice to offer an initial one-year term to all co-opted members of Court or Court committees, with possible extensions up to a maximum of nine years. The one-year initial term gives both Court and the individual member the opportunity to verify over the course of one year that the appointment is a good fit, before committing to a longer term of office. While careful recruitment ensures that the opportunity to withdraw after one year is rarely used, this gives reassurance to both parties and provides for a natural early review point. In addition, it remains policy for the Convener of Court to have an annual 1 to 1 private session with each lay member to review their ongoing contribution to Court.</p> <p>This needs to be balanced with longer-term retention of valued members. To this end, Court is, as a result of a wider review of governance arrangements, changing the standard term of office to four years instead of three, resulting in a '1+4+4' system. These new arrangements bring the sought-after balance of initial flexibility and longer-term commitment and do so by creating a more coherent internal structure of the existing nine-year maximum total length of service, which is also the maximum recommended in the Code. The effects of these new terms of office will be monitored as part of regular Court effectiveness reviews.</p>
Relevant section(s) and paragraph(s) of Code	Section 2: The Governing Body: Membership Paragraph 19 ("Lay members who are appointed by the governing body must be appointed for a given term, which may be renewable, subject to satisfactory performance.")

Institution	University of the West of Scotland
Name of practice (up to 30 words)	Governor Development
Description of practice (up to 300 words)	<p>New members of Court are invited to attend induction sessions on the following topics during their first year as a governor. As well as providing induction, all continuing members of Court are invited to attend these sessions as part of ongoing CPOD and refresher activity. These sessions are offered throughout the academic year and not all at the point of coming into the role.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Context and the role of member of Court • Finance and Strategic Planning • Academic Life, Academic Quality and the Student Experience • Legal Responsibilities and Equality and Diversity • Research and Enterprise and non-EU Recruitment. <p>Additional sessions can be organised to suit individual requirements. In addition, a strategic discussion and presentation item is included at each meeting of Court.</p>
Relevant section(s) and paragraph(s) of Code	<p>Section 5: Effectiveness (“Opportunities for further development for all members should be provided regularly, in accordance with their individual needs and responsibilities.”)</p> <p>Paragraph 38 (“Each new member should have a programme of induction covering both general aspects of the role and matters specific to the particular Institution”.)</p>