

REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS OF COURT FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2022-2023

The Scottish Code of Good HE Governance (2023) requires the Court to review its effectiveness regularly and to report publicly on the results of effectiveness reviews and associated actions. The University Court keeps its own effectiveness under review in a variety of ways.

A review of the effectiveness of the Court is a standing item at meetings of the Governance & Nominations Committee. Members of Court are invited to complete a self evaluation questionnaire which is used to inform their 1-1 discussion with the Chair. This questionnaire seeks feedback from members on their personal experience as a member of Court and identifies any additional training needs.

As part of ongoing CPD activity, a Court Development Day was held in August 2022 which focused on improving engagement between members of Court and the Exec, UWS staff and students in providing members of Court with an increased understanding of “life at UWS”. This event also included a summary of “You Said – We Did” actions arising from the formal review process and discussion at the 2022 Court Strategic Workshop Event. A similar event is being planned for September 2023. Staff/student showcases were held at Lanarkshire and Dumfries Campuses and strategic presentation and discussion items from Professional Services Departments and/or key projects were reintroduced at formal meetings.

Led by an external consultant, a deep dive into the implications of the University’s pension arrangements was included as part of a meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee. All members of Court are encouraged to attend meetings of Senate as observers and graduation ceremonies and other events to increase their knowledge and understanding of UWS.

Induction sessions were held for new members of Court covering governance and the role of Court and finance, funding and strategic planning with a third one focussing on the legal responsibilities of a member of Court scheduled for June 2023. The enhanced expectations on induction of new members set out in the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance (2023) will be progressed.

A discussion on the overall effectiveness of the Court was held as part of the April 2023 Strategic Residential Event. This session built on discussion at the Court Development Day. Enhancements identified included:

- Increased opportunities for networking and engagement between members of Court and VCE
- Introduction of new paper cover sheet with enhanced executive summary section
- Changes to the scheduling of meetings of the Audit & Risk Committee to align more closely with financial reporting dates
- Clarification of expectations around categorisation of key specialism identified on the skills matrix

Overall, members confirmed comfort in the effectiveness of the Court.

Further enhancements identified during discussion will be taken forward. These include:

- Better understanding of role and work of Court for UWS staff and students
- Provision of more regular and detailed information about UWS to members of Court which would facilitate and inform external networking and engagement
- Procurement of new Board Portal Software
- The timing of publication of the annual Court Handbook
- 1-1 meetings between the Chair and new members of Court following first year of membership
- Enhanced support for student members as part of induction arrangements and throughout period of appointment
- Opportunities for members to meet more regularly with the Secretary to Court and other members of VCE