

THE UNIVERSITY OF KENT

Members of the Council: Role and Responsibilities

1. Background

- (i) The University's Council comprises 25 members of which 17 are lay, i.e. from outside the University. Lay members are appointed by the Council on the recommendation of the Lay Nominations Committee following a process including a skills audit of continuing members, an assessment of the Council's needs of its members, external advertisement, the submission of applications and interviews.
- (ii) Appointment is for 3 years from 1 August in the first instance and may be renewed for a further 3 year term making a maximum of 6 successive years.
- (iii) Two lay members of the Council have designated officer posts as Chair and Deputy Chair (Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee). Appointment is for 3 years from 1 August in the first instance and may be renewed for a further 3 year term making a maximum of 6 successive years.
- (iv) The limits on appointments set out in (ii) and (iii) above are separate.

2. Role

- (i) Lay members of the Council are expected to be fully involved in the work of the Council and also in the work of at least one or more of its key committees. Other involvement includes ex officio membership of the Court (one meeting per annum) and occasional attendance at degree ceremonies, open lectures, social, alumni or other University events.
- (ii) Generally, in terms of the overall commitment, this involves:
 - 1. Council (5 meetings per annum)
 - 2. One or more Council committees (generally 2-3 meetings each per annum) and/or ad hoc bodies.
 - 3. Court (1 meeting per annum)
 - 4. Degree ceremonies, open lectures, social/alumni/other events (occasional attendance).
 - 5. Induction or other training event (e.g. seminars/workshops provided by the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education) [occasional attendance].
- (iii) The normal pattern of Council meetings is as follows:

October:	informal lunch at 1 p.m., meeting at 2 p.m.
November:	informal lunch at 1 p.m., meeting at 2 p.m.
Feb/March:	Strategy Meeting – all day from 9.15 a.m.–4.30 p.m.
March/April:	informal lunch at 1 p.m., meeting at 2 p.m.
June/July:	informal lunch at 1 p.m., meeting at 2 p.m.

One of the meetings each year is normally held at the University's Medway Campus and preceded by a tour of a new building or facility; the other four meetings listed above are held at the University's Canterbury Campus. With the exception of the Strategy Meeting meetings generally last for 2-3 hours.

- (iv) Council committees* generally have 2/3 meetings per annum.

*Audit, Finance and Resources; Lay Nominations; Redundancy; Remuneration; Staff Policy; Safety, Health and Environment Executive Committee; Honorary Degrees (a joint Senate/Council committee).

There are some other bodies in the University which provide opportunities for lay members to be involved in their activities (e.g. Board for Research and Enterprise; Information Services Committee).

- (v) The Court's Annual General Meeting, for the presentation of the University's Annual Review and Accounts, is generally held at the end of January.
- (vi) Degree ceremonies are held in July (in Canterbury Cathedral over 4 days and 1 day in Rochester Cathedral) and November (in Canterbury Cathedral and Rochester Cathedral, one day each).
- (vii) Open Lectures are generally held at 6 p.m. on Wednesdays in term time.
- (viii) Council members are expected to use their expertise, experience and best endeavours in their involvement in University activities and to act within the scope of the powers of the Council or other bodies, as appropriate, in furtherance of the University's best interests. Liability insurance is in place to cover members of the Council provided that this is the case.

3. Time commitment

- (i) It is estimated that the time commitment of lay members is of the order of 10-12 days per annum, this being calculated on the basis of

- Council meetings: the equivalent of 3-4 days per annum
- Court meeting: the equivalent of 0.5-1 day per annum
- 1 committee membership/chairmanship: the equivalent of 1.5 - 2 days per annum.
- preparation and reading: the equivalent of 2-3 days per annum
- other activities: the equivalent of 2-3 days per annum

Note: In the University's recent experience the time commitment expected of lay members is compatible with substantive employment and is not unduly onerous.

- (ii) The time commitment of the Chair and Deputy Chair is greater than (i) above. This is estimated at 25-30 days and 20-25 days respectively.

4. Responsibilities of the Council

- (i) These are enshrined in documents such as the University's Royal Charter and Statutes and in other documents such as the Governance Code of Practice and Financial Memorandum with HEFCE* as well as in legislation. Other relevant documents include the Statement of the Council's Primary Responsibilities, the Council's Standing Orders and Paper on the working definition of "Governance" and "Management". In brief the Council, as the University's governing body, has ultimate responsibility for all University affairs. This means, in particular, that it is responsible for ensuring that the University is effectively managed, complies with relevant external requirements and for planning the University's future development. Many of the Council's functions are carried out through its sub-committees (listed in 2(iv) above) which submit regular reports to the Council. At every meeting the Council also receives a

report from Senate (responsible for the academic work of the University) on academic matters and an update from the Vice-Chancellor on relevant Higher Education matters and other significant national and local issues. The Chair also makes regular reports to Council and other reports include ad hoc reports on other important matters, copies of significant press releases, the CUC* Newsletter and HEFCE* Governance Bulletin. At most Council meetings there is a presentation on an important topic by the relevant University officer(s).

*HEFCE = Higher Education Funding Council for England
CUC = Committee of University Chairs

- (ii) Each year the Council's work, at its "routine meetings (in October, November, March/April and June/July), includes the following:
- review of performance against the University Plan and approved KPIs (key performance indicators);
 - approval of the revenue and capital budgets for the following year;
 - approval of major capital or building projects;
 - approval of the final year accounts and financial forecasts;
 - approval of a revised risk register;
 - receiving annual reports on health and safety, audit (from the Audit Committee and reports from external and internal auditors) risk, equality and diversity, Students' Union's accounts;
 - approval of the appointment/reappointment of lay officers and members of the Council;
 - approval of the appointment of the External Auditor;

Exceptional items would include the appointment of a new Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor or Secretary of the Council; consideration of a recommendation for the appointment of a new Chancellor; approval of a new University Plan; approval of amendments to the University's Charter, Statutes and Ordinances and other matters relating to governance.

Further information about the work of the Council may be obtained from the Secretary of the Council:

Karen Goffin, Secretary of the Council, Central Secretariat, The Registry, The University of Kent, Canterbury, Kent, CT2 7NZ. Telephone: 01227 823397 (or 01227 823903) Fax: 01227 823808. Email: K.R.Goffin@kent.ac.uk

A website for Governance/Council matters is to be created on the University's website. This will include the documents referred to in 4(i) above. In the meantime these and other documents relating to the Council may be found on the Central Secretariat's website: <http://www.kent.ac.uk/censec/>.