

HERIOT-WATT UNIVERSITY COURT: EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STATEMENT

About the University

The heritage of Heriot-Watt University as an institution which promotes inclusivity stretches back nearly 200 years to our roots as the world's first mechanics institute, providing education "for the people". We were the first among our Scottish peer institutions to admit women as students, a truly radical step at that time. From our early life Heriot-Watt has attracted students and staff of many nationalities and from a diversity of cultures. Today, with campuses situated in the UK, Dubai and Malaysia and with transnational education students studying in more than 150 countries around the world we are one of the most internationally diverse universities in the UK. We remain strongly committed to embedding the principles of equality and diversity across all parts of our University community and in all of our activities, and we aim to develop a positive culture where all students and staff are equipped and supported to fulfil their potential.

Equality and Diversity and the Court

The Court, as the University's governing body, has a commitment to lead and to exemplify the University's approach to equality and diversity and social responsibility and to promote and facilitate equality and diversity goals across the University. The Court encourages appointed independent lay members from all walks of life to join its membership and we recognise the particular value that is added to the work of the Court through the balance of views that a diverse membership brings. The 25 strong membership of the Court includes 14 independent lay members (including the Chair (the senior lay member) as defined in the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016). We seek also to promote equality and diversity across our nine elected positions on the Court. We aim to apply the same principles to the membership of our Court committees.

To achieve the above we aim to:

1. carry out our selection and appointments processes in as open and transparent a way as possible, taking into account the non diversity related skills and experience that need to be represented collectively on the Court to ensure that it is fully effective in carrying out its responsibilities;
2. comply with the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018, observing the "gender representation objective" to achieve 50% of non-executive members on the Court who are women;
3. ensure that our vacancies are advertised across a wide range of media outlets and that we are explicit in our encouragement to applicants with different backgrounds and attributes. Similarly, our objective is to ensure that those responsible for the organisation of elections pay due regard to equality of opportunity and are explicit in their encouragement of diversity among potential candidates for election;
4. include training and advice on equality and diversity principles in our induction and refresher programmes for Court and Court committee members,
5. ensure diversity in the membership of relevant recruitment selection panels;
6. collect and review information on the equality characteristics of applicants to assess whether our advertisements have encouraged a broad range of applicants to apply, so that we can identify any imbalances and, where required, make improvements;
7. conduct our business in accordance with widely recognised governance good practice in relation to the promotion of equality and diversity, and remove any unnecessary barriers to membership;
8. make reasonable adjustments where necessary to ensure that all members are able to participate fully;
9. monitor and review the membership diversity of the Court and its committees annually;
10. achieve and maintain a balance of diversity across our Court and, in aggregate, our Court committee memberships which is broadly balanced in its representation of our diverse wider communities of internal (staff and student) and external stakeholders.

This Statement should be read in conjunction with the University's Equality and Diversity Policy (<https://www.hw.ac.uk/services/docs/EDPFinal.pdf>)

This Statement shall be reviewed at least every three years by the Court.