



Members of Council

Role description

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Members of Council role description

Appointment	
Term of office	Three years, or such lesser period as the Council may in individual cases determine. Members shall be eligible for further appointment, normally for a further period of three years and a maximum total of nine years.
Time commitment	Approximately 12 days a year.
Remuneration	Travel and subsistence only
Appointment	Approximately 12 days a year.

Nature and scope of the role

1. The Council is the principal governing body of the University of Essex and exercises oversight and control over the University and its affairs. In addition to being members of the University’s governing body, Council members also carry the responsibilities of Trustees of the University as an exempt charity. Whether external or internal, all members of Council have equal standing, with a majority of the Council’s members being from outside the University. The external members contribute a wide range of experience from the public and private sectors. Internal members help relate Council’s oversight and control over the University and its affairs to the experience of working in the University. The specific powers of Council are set out in a Statement of Primary Responsibilities.
2. The role of all members of the Council is similar to that of the non-executive directors of companies. Council members do not hold executive authority for the University’s operations. They bring to the Council’s deliberations a wide range of knowledge and expertise to complement the executive management responsibilities of the Vice-Chancellor and the University’s senior office holders.
3. Membership of Council requires acceptance of the Code of Governor Conduct and collective responsibility for the decisions reached by Council. Members exercise their responsibilities in the interests of the University as a whole, and no member of Council should act in a way that represents any particular internal or external constituency.
4. All members are invited to join Council for a three-year term and during this period may be asked to serve on one or more of the Council Committees. Council members are expected to

play a full part in the business of all Committees to which they are appointed. External members of Council may be eligible for further periods of appointment up to a maximum of 9 years.

5. Council recognises the benefit to the University of the membership of Council encompassing a diverse range of perspectives and enabling access to the skills and expertise necessary to discharge the responsibilities of the Council
6. More specifically, Council members have responsibility for:
 - a) Ensuring that Council exercises control over the strategic direction of the University, through agreement of a Strategic Plan, establishment of an effective planning process, and that the performance of the University is adequately assessed against the objectives which Council has approved.
 - b) Establishing constructive but challenging working relationships with the University senior officers, at the same time recognising the proper separation between governance and executive management, and avoiding involvement in the day-to-day executive management of the University.
 - c) Ensuring that Council conducts itself in accordance with accepted standards of behaviour in public life, embracing selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.
 - d) Ensuring that members make a full and timely disclosure of personal interests to the Secretary in accordance with the procedures approved by Council. They must as soon as practicable disclose any interest which they have in any matter under discussion and accept the ruling of the Chair of Council in relation to the management of that situation, in order that the integrity of the business of Council and its Committees may be and may be seen to be maintained.
 - e) Ensuring that Council exercises efficient and effective use of the resources of the University for the furtherance of its charitable purposes, maintains its long-term financial viability, and safeguards its assets, and that proper mechanisms exist to ensure financial control and for the prevention of fraud.
 - f) Representing the University externally, drawing on their personal influence and networking skills on behalf of the University, and where appropriate playing a role in liaising between key stakeholders and the University.

Personal qualities sought in potential members of Council

1. A strong personal commitment to the values, aims and objectives of the University.

2. The ability to at all times act fairly and impartially in the interests of the University as a whole, using independent judgement and maintaining confidentiality as appropriate to Council business.
3. A commitment to attend all meetings of Council, including away days and meetings of Committees of which they are a member.
4. A commitment to participate in induction activities arranged by the University and in appropriate training events.
5. Capacity to contribute approximately 12 days a year to Council business including meetings, away days, induction and training, and where appropriate involvement in University business outside of the formal Council schedule.
6. The skills to analyse complex issues and the ability to make an effective contribution at a strategic level.
7. A willingness to use their skills and expertise to support the work of Council.
8. Integrity, tact, discretion, independence and objectivity.
9. The ability to engage in constructive debate, rigorous challenge and effective decision-making.
10. Strong interpersonal, communication and listening skills.
11. An understanding of the distinction between governance and executive management.
12. A willingness to support the University's commitment to sustaining an inclusive and diverse community that is open to all who have the potential to benefit from membership of it, which ensures equality of opportunity for all its members, and that treats all its members with equal respect and dignity at all times.

Practical aspects of the role

1. All members are expected to attend Council meetings, normally four times per year, one whole away day and two half day Council events, and meetings of any Council Committees to which they are appointed. Attendance in person is preferred, but where necessary, may be by means of video or teleconference. In addition, on a voluntary basis, Council members are invited to attend one or more of the Graduation Ceremonies and the annual meeting of Court.
2. Senior officers of the University aim to make good use of individual members of Council in areas where members have particular expertise, and a willingness to support the senior office holders in this way is valued.

3. The likely time commitment needed is up to the equivalent of 12 days a year; members appointed to Council sub-committees may be required to attend up to an additional four days a year.
4. Members of Council should be contactable by email, which is the principal means of contact by the Secretariat.
5. All meeting papers and resources will be made available to members electronically. Members are expected to review these in advance of each meeting.
6. Members must participate in procedures established by Council for the regular appraisal/review of the performance of individual members.
7. Members should attend induction events arranged by the University and complete all deemed essential training to enable members to discharge their duties.
8. The University supports all External Council or committee members who may wish to take a period of leave for family or caring responsibilities.

Additional information

Further information about the University Council can be found on the University's web site at:

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/about/governance/council>

- [Statement of primary responsibilities](#)
- [Standing orders for Council](#)
- [Privacy Statement](#)
- [Essential training policy](#)

Other

- [Equality and Diversity monitoring form](#)
- [Register of Interests form](#)
- [Fit and Proper Persons Declaration](#)
- Code of Governor Conduct (available on request)