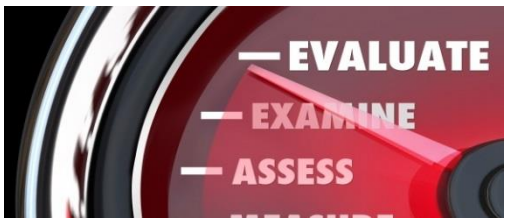


Annual review of the effectiveness of Court: Session 2016/17

1. Introduction

All Boards and Governing bodies should regularly review their effectiveness, and the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance requires the Courts of universities to do so annually, and, in that context, both to measure compliance with the Code and performance against Court's Statement of Primary Responsibilities. At its meeting in June 2015, Court agreed that it should consider an evaluative annual report on quantitative and qualitative aspects relating to the conduct of Court and its committees in the preceding academic year, as set out in the diagram below, and that a summary should be included in the Annual Report & Financial Statements.

This is the third such report, and is shorter than previous reports since an externally—facilitated review was held during the session. The report of this review is published on the University's website.

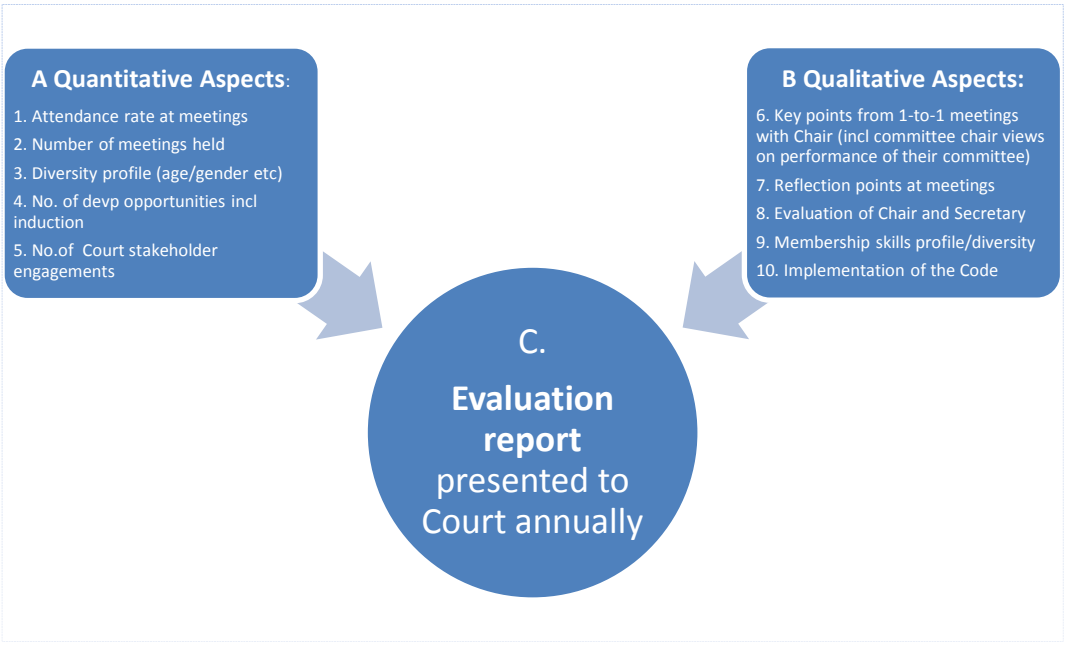


Fig 1: Approach to Annual Court Effectiveness Evaluation at Abertay

2. QUANTITATIVE MEASURES

A. Meetings and attendance

Court met on five scheduled occasions in the academic session 2016/17. There were no special meetings requested or required. Five of the six committees of Court also met five times each, in advance of the Court meetings; and the Remuneration Committee met on two occasions. Compared with session 20155/16, attendance at Court and its committees improved changes from 82% to 79%.

B. Membership profile

Gender Balance

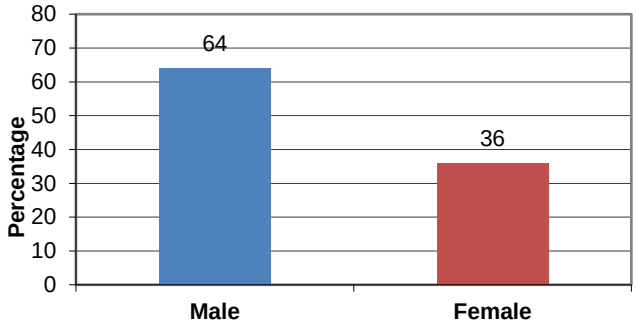


Fig 2 above: Gender balance among *all members in post during the year*

2015/16: 63% male/37% female
2014/15: 68% male/32% female

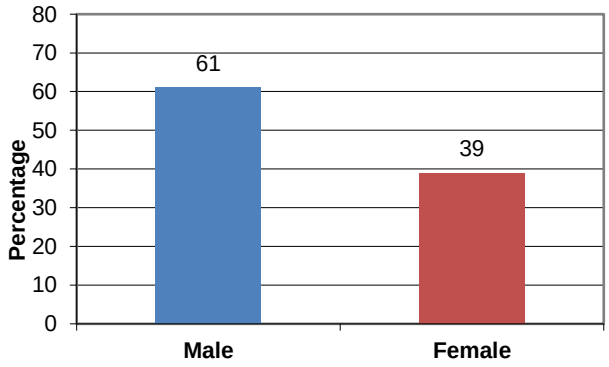


Fig 3 above: Gender balance among *all members of Court as at 1 August 2017*

2015/16: 64% male/36% female
2014/15: 64% male/36% female

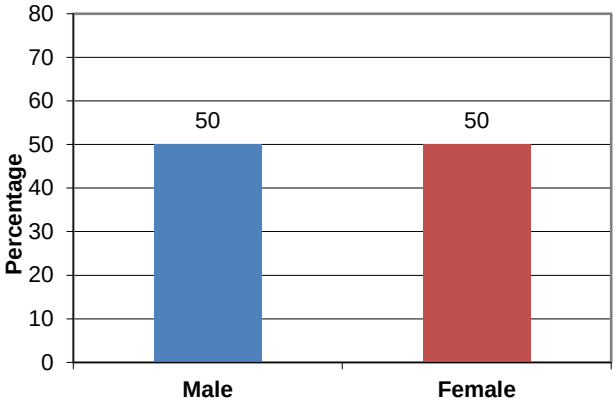


Fig 4 above: Gender balance amongst *independent members of Court as at 1 August 2017*

2015/16: 56% male/44% female
2014/15: 61% male/39% female

Age profile of independent members:

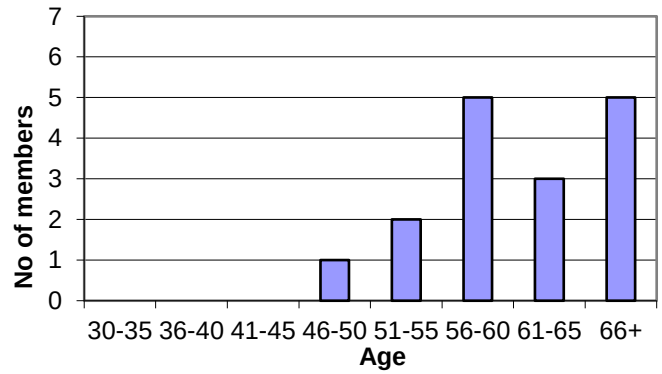


Fig 5 above: Ages of independent members of Court as at 1 August 2017

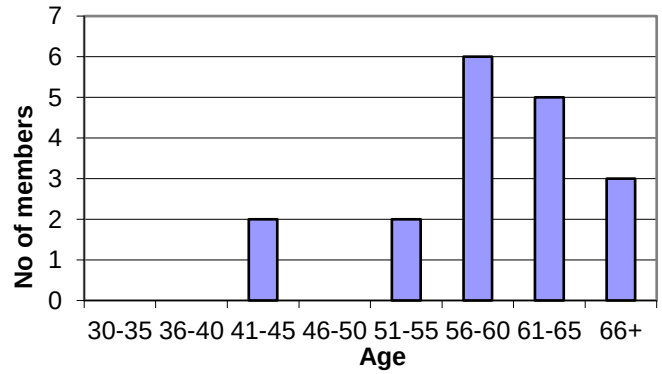


Fig 6 above: Ages of independent members of Court as at 1 August 2016.

Background of independent members:

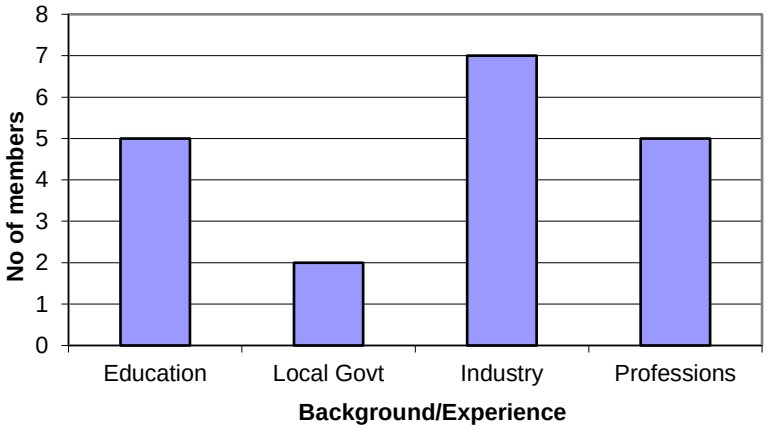


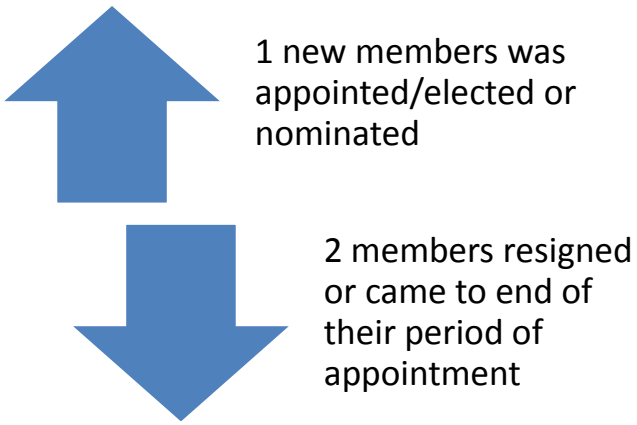
Fig 6: Main background/experience of independent members of Court

New appointments:

During the session (31 July 2016 to 1 August 2017), there were few changes in membership, as follows:

- 2 independent members stepped down before the end of their period appointment (one in December 2016 and one in July 2017) for personal reasons
- The Student President *ex officio* member was re-elected for a second period of office to the Students' Association and therefore remained as a member of Court.
- A new Student President was elected and took up post on 1 July 2017 thereby joining Court.

In summary:



Development opportunities:

- 6 members attended external development events run by the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education
- Visits to parts of the University also contributed to individual members' development (see below) by giving them first-hand insight into activities.

Engagement with stakeholders:

During the session, a number of members of Court participated in some or all of the following formal engagements with a range of stakeholders:

- Visit to Teaching and Learning conference poster presentation
- Visit to the new Collaborative learning suite
- Visit to the new Science laboratories
- Visit to and meeting with the External & Corporate Relations teams
- Visit to the School of Social & Health Sciences
- Attendance at 2 prize-giving events and participation in 3 graduation ceremonies (in November and July)
- Honorary Fellows event
- Public events at the University such as professorial lectures, exhibitions, staff summer party etc

3. QUALITATIVE MEASURES

Diversity:

There was improvement during the year in terms of gender balance amongst the lay members of Court, with the percentage of female lay members becoming 50% (from 44% thus continuing Court's target of Court comprising at least 40% women among independent members) through the departure of two male members. The overall gender split has improved slightly, but women still form less than 40% of the total membership.
On age profile amongst lay members, the skewed picture of a few years ago (where the majority of members were over 60) has improved such that there is more of spread of age range, albeit with no younger members under 40 and few in their 40s.

Feedback from members at meetings of Court and with Chair

At the end of each Court meeting, the Chair invites members to reflect on the conduct of business to ensure that views are captured as close to the meeting as possible. During the year, the only issue raised was the suggestion that Court should spend more time focussed on the core business – academic life of the University.

Chair's discussions with members

The Chair seeks, so far as practicable given the time pressures on all concerned, to meet individually with Court members each year. In 2016-17 he held such meetings with a number of Court members. All discussions were constructive. Court members were enthusiastic about their involvement with the University and strongly committed to good governance. Those who chaired or were members of Court committees said that they enjoyed their roles, and all Court members continued to take the view that the business presented to Court and its committees was appropriate and that the information provided enabled them effectively to discharge their governance responsibilities. They were content with the support provided to them by the University Secretary and her colleagues. They also considered that the relationship between the Court and the Principal and the senior executive team was a constructive one, with a good balance struck between working

together for the good of the university and challenging management and holding it to account in fulfilment of this crucial part of the governing body's responsibilities.

Evaluation of effectiveness of Chair and Secretary

Following the designation of one independent member as the Court 'Intermediary' and in line with the agreed procedure, there was an opportunity at the meeting of Court in December for the Intermediary to lead a discussion on the effectiveness of the Chair without the Chair present. The context for this discussion was the Court-approved 'Chair of Court: Role and Responsibilities' paper. Members of Court confirmed that they felt that the Chair was very effective in his role.

The Chair of Court with the Secretary agreed a Pathways objective for 2016/17 that related to her role as Secretary to Court. This was discussed at the end of the year between the Chair and the Secretary and achievement of the objective confirmed.

Engagement with stake-holders

All Court members, especially independent members, had a range of opportunities to meet informally with staff and students of the University and other interested parties such as Honorary Fellows (see above). Members particularly valued opportunities to meet students and staff whom they might not encounter at regular Court or Committee meetings. Further opportunities will be sought for engagement of this kind, to enhance the visibility of Court and assist the development of Court members.

The new methods - adopted in 2015/16 to increase the engagement with stakeholders – continued in session 2016/17. Specifically, Court members (especially lay members) were invited to attend meeting of Senate as observers and similarly Senate members were invited to observe Court meetings. During the session, four members of Senate attended Court meetings and four lay members of Court attended meetings of Senate. In addition, three staff members attended Court meetings as observers.

Meeting the principles of the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance

The Code was published in July 2013 and an action plan was approved by Court shortly thereafter. Such action as was required was largely implemented in 2013-14 and fully implemented by February 2015.

During 2016/17, work was underway to revise and update the Code, which was published in October 2017. The opportunity was taken to comment on the draft revised Code during the consultation periods.

Meeting the primary responsibilities

Court fulfilled its primary responsibilities as confirmed in the periodic effectiveness review.

4. Summary evaluation

On the basis of the above, there can be confidence that Court continues to be effective. There are significant areas of focus for session 2017/18 are:

- Implementing the Scottish Government legislation on HE governance;
- Implementing the recommendations of the externally-facilitated effectiveness review;
- Mapping practice against the revised Code and implementing any changes required.