Welcome to Billet winter 2018

We hope you enjoy this issue, which contains information about the February 2018 General Council Meeting and elections and the Half-Yearly Meeting in June.

*Edit*, the magazine for alumni of the University, is printed every summer. The electronic version is available online at [www.ed.ac.uk/edit-magazine](http://www.ed.ac.uk/edit-magazine).

The General Council provides graduates with a continuing voice in the management of the University’s affairs, and every graduate automatically becomes a member. Academic staff and members of the University’s governing body, the University Court, are also members of the General Council. It meets twice a year and has the right to comment on matters affecting the University’s prosperity and wellbeing. For more information on the work of the General Council, visit [www.general-council.ed.ac.uk](http://www.general-council.ed.ac.uk).

Report

by Professor Stuart Macpherson  
*Convener of the Business Committee of the General Council*

Two individuals stepping down from their posts have been giving the Business Committee of the General Council some thought. The first is, of course, the Principal and Vice Chancellor Sir Timothy O’Shea. We have recently held a reception for members of the General Council who kindly contributed to a fund to mark Sir Tim’s 15 very successful years at the helm of our University. At the Principal’s request the majority of these monies was donated to the O’Shea Global Scholars Initiative. Sir Tim has been a great friend to the General Council and we felt it appropriate to also arrange a personal gift for himself and Lady O’Shea. For this we commissioned a piece of glass art engraved by General Council member Alison Kinnaird. Alison’s glass work is rightly famous and is displayed in royal, public and private collections across the world. She produced a quite magnificent glass engraving depicting Old College. A photograph of this can be viewed on the General Council website. This was presented to the Principal and Lady O’Shea at a gathering organised by Dr Alan Brown and his wife Elizabeth in their wonderful Edinburgh home.

The other individual leaving us is Michael Mitchell, Secretary to the General Council. Michael has been outstanding in this role and through his detailed knowledge of the University has guided the Council and the Business Committee expertly over the past years. A small search committee was established to identify a successor and I anticipate presenting the proposed successor to you at the February Half-Yearly Meeting. Mike has reassured us that he will stay in post until someone is able to take over and then work to ensure a smooth handover. This process will be made all that much easier by the presence of his assistant Alison MacLeary who has evolved in her role splendidly over the 18 months since her appointment.

In my last report I announced that Professor Andrew Miller had been co-opted onto the Business Committee. I am very pleased to report that an additional two members have now been welcomed. The Right Reverend Brian Smith has been an enthusiastic attendee of our Half-Yearly Meetings and will bring many years of knowledge and experience to our discussions. Judith Drake is a more recent graduate currently studying for her PhD. Her viewpoint will be specially valued as it emphasizes the wide ranging diversity currently represented on the Committee. There will be five vacancies to be appointed by election in February 2018. I encourage any member of the General Council who would be interested in joining the Business Committee to either contact myself or simply put their name forward for future elections.
We have recently been in discussion with the University around the implications of the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016 and the subsequent Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance. A main area of interest for the General Council is the composition of the governing body; in the case of the University of Edinburgh this is the Court. Although neither document requires the General Council to continue to have Assessors on Court I am very pleased to report that the University values the contribution that our Assessors, past and present, have made to Court business and would like this link to continue. Current discussions revolve around the number and method of identification of our Assessors. The outcome of these discussions will be reported to the February 2018 Half-Yearly Meeting of the General Council.

At the time of writing we have held one meeting of the Business Committee this session. The main item was the setting of our objectives for the session. As in recent years this followed an informal meeting with current officers of the Edinburgh University Student Association. I consider it important that we make ourselves aware of the issues exercising the students and that these are borne in mind when agreeing our priorities. We agreed objectives under four headings which are:

**The student experience** around teaching and learning and in particular teaching quality, the Personal Tutor system and the teaching/research balance. **Student Wellbeing** with particular reference to mental health and counselling, transport, ensuring accessibility and housing. **Outreach**: paying particular attention to widening participation and integrating the student community. **Constitutional change**: General Council changes and leaving the European Union.

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**News**

**Half-Yearly Meeting, Edinburgh, June 2017**

The General Council Half-Yearly Meeting took place at 1.15pm on Saturday 10 June in the Queen’s Medical Research Institute (QMRI) building, Little France, Edinburgh. The event was preceded by a light lunch. Professor Moira Whyte, Head of the Medical School, gave a stimulating presentation on the work of the School. This was after the formal business meeting, which was kept to a minimum. There was a very good short report from the Convener, Professor Stuart Macpherson, who gave a summary of the recent activity of the Business Committee.

The meeting itself was followed by four revolving sessions. These were a visit to see the remarkable zebra fish project with multiple foci including nerve regeneration; the Centre for Dementia Prevention on dementia and Alzheimer’s disease; how Big Data and Medical Informatics are changing patient care as well as medical research and a tour of the inspiring Ann Rowling Neurology Clinic including the natural voice project.

This highly successful event was very well attended by General Council friends old and new. It provided an opportunity to illustrate developments in the Medical School and also showcased some of the unusual and stimulating Innovation Initiative Grant projects that have been carried out by staff and students. Those showcased were a Medical Brigade to Honduras, a Pint of Science and an Anatomy Body Painting workbook including a practical truly hands-on demonstration. All small-scale projects with a big impact.
Here’s what some of our participants had to say:

“What an excellent afternoon we all had at Little France on Saturday... I learned so much and it brings us closer to our University when we understand more of what goes on in research.”

“I can’t tell you how much I enjoyed yesterday’s meeting of the General Council. I thought it would be interesting but was quite unprepared for how stimulating it would be.”

“Just to thank you for Saturday’s event which I found most enjoyable and informative.”

“Many thanks indeed for all the work you put in to bring together such a fascinating event on Saturday afternoon. It certainly makes one very proud to be an alumni of a University which is making such an extraordinary contribution to medical research.”

“What an excellent event you organised for us on Saturday. Everything went like clockwork and the tour of the various departments after Moira Whyte’s interesting talk was so impressive.”

General Council Meeting, 24 February 2018

The February 2018 General Council Half-Yearly Meeting will be held in the new meeting facilities in the McEwan Hall. This will give members an opportunity to see some of the significant changes and renovations that have transformed this building. The meeting will take place at 10.30am and we look forward to hearing from the new Principal, Professor Peter Mathieson, for the first time. He will give us the Annual Report based on the University’s Annual Review 2016/17. Please do come along and meet our new Principal and hear his thoughts and ideas for our future. Further details and papers appear on page 13.

General Council Lunch, 24 February 2018

As usual following the Half-Yearly Meeting on Saturday 24 February 2018, members of the General Council, alumni, partners, family and friends are cordially invited to the General Council Lunch in the new meeting facilities which are part of the McEwan Hall redevelopment.

We look forward to welcoming our after-lunch speaker Mr JJ Chalmers, TV presenter and Invictus Games medallist (pictured right).

John James Chalmers (born 1987) served in Helmand, Afghanistan as a Royal Marine with 42 Commando. In May 2011 he sustained devastating injuries in a bomb blast in Afghanistan where he suffered facial injuries, lost two fingers and his right elbow disintegrated.

In September 2014, Chalmers was a medal winner in non-amputee cycling for Britain at the Invictus Games. He received a gold medal for the Men’s IRecB1 Recumbent Circuit Race, as part of a British Trio who crossed the finish line together. Earlier that day Chalmers had already won a bronze in the 1 mile time trial. He also won a bronze medal in the 4x100m mixed relay race.

Chalmers went on to present National Paralympic Day for Channel 4 as well as an online show for the IPC Athletics World Championships in Doha. He was a presenter for Channel 4’s award-winning coverage of the 2016 Summer Paralympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, as well as appearing as a guest on The Last Leg broadcast nightly live from a studio in Rio de Janeiro with the special series Live from Rio. He also featured on The Superhumans Show and appeared on the BBC’s coverage of Remembrance at the Cenotaph. In February 2017, Chalmers began presenting some of the sports segments on the BBC news channel in the afternoon.

If you would like to attend the next General Council Lunch, please book online by following the link at general-council@ed.ac.uk/whats-happening, or complete and return the form on page 19 no later than Thursday 15 February 2018.

Tickets at £22.50 include pre-lunch wine reception and a buffet lunch in the new McEwan Hall. Table wines will be available to purchase.
General Council Meeting

Edinburgh, 9 June 2018

The June 2018 Half-Yearly Meeting will be held in Edinburgh on Saturday 9 June. The location will be in George Square, starting in the refurbished Appleton Tower then moving to the University’s Main Library. In addition to the formal business meeting of the General Council, which will be kept as brief as possible, we will be hearing from our leading academic colleagues on the current priorities and challenges facing the Library and information technology with some suggestions as to how these might continue to develop in future. Following the presentations we will be visiting the Main Library and the Centre for Research Collections, creating opportunities to meet and engage with a number of leading library personnel and users, seeing their work and finding out how much study and curation has moved on.

Following the successful format of recent years there will not be a formal General Council lunch. Instead we plan to start with a snack lunch from 12.30pm onwards and then to move on to the meeting and the engagement sessions, finishing later in the afternoon.

More information will become available by spring 2018. We will be sending out further communications and there will be more on the General Council website.

General Council Election, February 2018

Candidates for members of the Business Committee

The following nominations have been received for the election of five members of the Business Committee to serve from 1 August 2018 to 31 July 2022.

The names of the candidates appear in randomly drawn order.

Ms Candice Elizabeth Philippa Donnelly, LLB 2005
Proposed by Mr Kieran Ferguson, LLB 2005
Seconded by Dr Andrew Steven, LLB 1994

Building on my experiences as a former student and part-time tutor, I am keen to use my expertise in corporate governance and strategic projects to support my University. If elected, I would look to build strong stakeholder partnerships and engage with alumni while the University implements its new development plan.

Mr Max Palmer-O’Connor, MA 2013
Proposed by Mr Lukas Gajdos, MA 2010
Seconded by Mr Fergus Deery, MA 2016

Graduated from Edinburgh in 2013 (MA in Linguistics) and have undertaken study on short courses at UCL (relating to higher education management). My professional focus is HE administration. Currently, I provide 1:1 executive support to LSE’s Academic Registrar – who leads the School’s administrative processes supporting the whole student life cycle.

Professor Ario Santini, BDS 1966
Proposed by Professor Francis McManus, MLitt 1984, LLB 1991
Seconded by Mrs Ann Mair, BCom 1967

My connection and graduation from two continental universities ideally places me in assisting with the spread of the University’s international links with institutes of learning, and peoples in Europe. My professional focus is the awareness of universities’ known problems of recruiting quality undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Continued overleaf
Mr Arron Ashton, BSc 2013  
Proposed by Mr Alastair Taylor-White, MA 2013  
Seconded by Miss Sophie McCallum, MA 2009
I graduated from the School of GeoSciences in 2013 and have worked in the public sector since. I ask for the opportunity to contribute on your behalf by bringing modern thinking and ensuring that the University continues to utilise its world-leading talent and reacts appropriately to the ever-changing global landscape.

Dr William Duncan, BSc 1972, PhD 1977  
Proposed by Professor Stuart Macpherson, OBE, MBChB, FRCS, FRCP, FRCGP, FAcadMedEd  
Seconded by Mr Gordon Cairns, LLB 1979
Being Chief Executive of Scotland’s national academy – the Royal Society of Edinburgh – for more than 30 years gives me considerable insight into the challenges and opportunities the HE sector faces from the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework, creation of UK Research and Innovation and Brexit as well as experience of working constructively with many senior academics.

Dr David James Robert Houston, PhD 1976, MBA 1987  
Proposed by Professor Stuart Macpherson, OBE, MBChB, FRCS, FRCP, FRCGP, FAcadMedEd  
Seconded by Miss Sophie Marshall, MA 2012
Originally a mathematical physicist, I returned later to the Business School leading to a successful career in general management and consultancy. During 2014–18 I have assisted the Business Committee with investigating the student experience and monitoring strategic finance. Let me help this fine University deal with further challenges ahead.

Mr Taylor Douglas Gibson Dewar, BCom 1996  
Proposed by Mr Johnathan Wilson, BCom 1996  
Seconded by Mr Richard Gordon, LLB 1996, PGD 1997
With twenty successful years in finance following graduation I’m keen to use the skills I’ve developed for others’ benefit. I understand the sector, its challenges and outlook and am used to interpreting and analysing information, listening to, questioning and informing stakeholders – all necessary attributes for a committee member.

Voting in the General Council Election
This is the opportunity for you to participate in the governance of the University by voting for members of the Business Committee of the General Council, who are responsible for much of its work.

In February 2012 the General Council introduced online voting on a secure website, the Elections channel of the MyEd Alumni Portal, which will be open from Monday 8 January 2018 until 1700 GMT Tuesday 20 February 2018. In order to vote you must register via the EASE registration process as explained below by 1700 GMT on Monday 19 February 2018 at the latest.

Voting Papers are only enclosed where members have specifically requested them previously, no later than 22 November 2017, and should be completed and returned in the enclosed addressed envelope to the Secretary of the General Council. Details of all candidates appear on pages 9–10. Anyone still wishing to vote by post may do so for subsequent elections by requesting a postal vote from the General Council Office before 22 November in the year prior to any election.

To be able to vote online you need to be a member of the General Council eligible to vote in this election and registered through EASE as a MyEd Alumni Portal user. Those who registered for previous elections do not need to do so again, simply use the same user name and password. If you have already used the Portal as a student, you should still be able to use your student username and password to access the Alumni Portal. If you are a new user you will need to contact the support service. To do this send an email to the Information Services helpline at IS.Helpline@ed.ac.uk requesting access to MyEd and giving your full name, date of and degree awarded at first graduation from Edinburgh. A username and initial password will then be sent to you. If you experience problems at any point when registering for, or accessing, the Alumni Portal, please also contact Information Services at the above address, identifying yourself by matriculation number (if known), full name, year and degree awarded at first graduation from Edinburgh.
Papers for the General Council Half-Yearly Meeting

On Saturday 24 February 2018

10.30am: Basement Meeting Rooms, Foyer 4, McEwan Hall, Bristo Square

10am to 10.30am: Coffee, tea and biscuits in the Robing Room, McEwan Hall

10.30am: General Council Meeting in Foyer 4, McEwan Hall

After the meeting: Lunch in Foyers 1–3 McEwan Hall (see page 7 for details)

Members are invited to submit questions to the meeting by email to generalscouncilquestions@hotmail.co.uk in advance of the meeting.

Agenda for the General Council meeting

1 Results of the Elections for five Members of the General Council Business Committee

2 Minutes of the Meeting of the General Council held in Queen’s Medical Research Institute, Little France, Edinburgh on Saturday 10 June 2017 (Paper A)

3 Matters arising

4 Report of the Business Committee

5 Dates of future meetings of the General Council

6 Notice of forthcoming Elections

7 Motion (Paper B) Changes for the appointment of General Council Court Assessors

8 Motion (Paper C) Appointment of Secretary

9 Presentations by Professor Peter Mathieson, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, and Professor Charlie Jeffery, Senior Vice-Principal, of the Annual Report based on the Annual Review.

10 Any other competent business

11 Adjournment

Paper A

Minutes of the Meeting of the General Council held in QMRI, Little France, Edinburgh on Saturday 10 June 2017

Present:

Sheriff Principal Edward Bowen
Rev Dr Harriet Harris
Ms Sarah Smith
Professor Moira Whyte
Dr Michael Mitchell
Professor Stuart Macpherson

79 Present

Chancellor’s Assessor, in the Chair
Chaplain of the University
Secretary of the University
Head of the Medical School
Secretary of the General Council
Convener of the Business Committee

"Fame" mural in the McEwan Hall.
1. Minutes of the Meeting of the General Council held in Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation, Edinburgh, on 18 February 2017

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 February 2017 were approved.

2. Matters arising

The Chairman reported that there were no matters arising from the Minutes.

3. Report of the Business Committee

The Convener, Professor Stuart Macpherson, began by thanking those involved for the success of the February Half-Yearly-Meeting, where he had given his last report of the Business Committee. Since then most of the activity of the Business Committee had taken place within the four Standing Committees.

Given that almost 50 per cent of students are now international, the topic of international relations is an important one, and the Academic Standing Committee met with Vice-Principal James Smith regarding the University’s Global Engagement Plan. Professor Smith has an ambition to guide the University to attain a place in the top 10 destination universities for all nations in the world. He also aims to encourage and assist students to gain overseas experience and therefore expand their CVs, and, of increasing importance, to develop partnerships by creating more regional offices in places such as Africa and India.

Teaching and learning and the Student Experience has been a familiar theme for the Academic Standing Committee who also heard from Dr Jon Turner, Director for the Institute for Academic Development, who described the support his organisation provides in the form of courses, workshops and online resources to students and staff in teaching, learning and research development.

The Finance and Services Standing Committee discussed Big Data, the Alan Turing Institute and industry partners with Professor Richard Kenway, Vice-Principal High Performance Computing, and at a second meeting, the work of Edinburgh Innovations (EI) with Dr George Baxter their new Chief Executive Officer. Dr Baxter explained that EI is a wholly owned subsidiary of the University and develops the interface between public and private sector industry and the University’s academic research base. Despite obvious successes in the past five years this is an area in which the University has fallen behind other UK institutions and Dr Baxter outlined his plans to rectify this situation.

The Public Affairs Standing Committee had also held two meetings. Firstly they discussed the University’s relationship with the Edinburgh Consular Corp. This conversation was led by Kristin Hannesdottir, a Business Committee Member who is Honorary Consul for Iceland and Dean of the Consular Corps in Edinburgh. The Committee subsequently discussed the challenges of transport for students around the University and it was made clear that a number of initiatives were already in place to alleviate the difficulties encountered and that the University would continue to work on further solutions as a very high priority.

Our most recent meeting of the Constitutional Standing Committee was an update on the proposed revisions to the Scottish Code for Good Higher Education Governance which, along with the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016, had led to discussions between the General Council and the University. Although at an early stage, the Convener was pleased to report the very positive support for the General Council from the University and their appreciation of our efforts, especially the contribution of the Court Assessors, past and present, to the deliberations of the University Court.

Finally, the Convener mentioned those members of the Business Committee whose term of office had come to an end, thanking them for their support and contributions and welcomed new member Professor Andrew Miller, internationally renowned Edinburgh science graduate and formerly Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Stirling, who would be joining the Business Committee next session.

The report of the Business Committee was approved.

The full text of the Convener’s remarks is contained in the Annex to the Billet.

4. Dates of future meetings of the General Council

The next Half-Yearly Meeting would take place on Saturday 24 February 2018, at Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation, Edinburgh [Post Meeting: venue changed to the McEwan Hall]. Any Motions for discussion at this meeting should be received in the General Council Office by the 22 November 2017. The following Statutory Half-Yearly Meeting would be held on Saturday 9 June 2018, in the Appleton Tower, George Square, Edinburgh and any Motions for discussion at this meeting should be received in the General Council Office by Wednesday 21 March 2018.

5. Notice of forthcoming elections

There would be an election for five Members of the Business Committee in February 2018. Nominations on forms available from the General Council Office and on the website should be received in the General Council Office by the 22 November 2017.

6. Any other competent business

There was no other competent business.
7. Adjournment

The Motion by the Convener of the Business Committee that, for the purpose of considering matters which may be transmitted to the General Council by the University Court or any other business of a competent nature, the Business Committee be empowered to act on behalf of the Council, and that this meeting be adjourned to a date to be fixed by the Business Committee, was approved.

The Annex to the Billet, containing supporting papers for the Agenda, including communications from the University Court, full Standing Committee reports and the Business Committee’s report to the meeting on 10 June 2017, are available on the website at www.general-council.ed.ac.uk/media (under Publications). General Council members may also request it by post from: Ms Alison MacLeary, General Council Office, Charles Stewart House, 9–16 Chambers Street, Edinburgh EH1 1HT; Tel +44 (0)131 650 2152; Email: general.council@ed.ac.uk; or pick a copy up at the location of the Council Meeting from half an hour beforehand.

8. From Molecule to Man: Research and Teaching at Edinburgh Medical School

Professor Moira Whyte, Head of the Medical School, gave a presentation illustrating developments in the Medical School and this was followed by four revolving sessions covering Big Data, Imaging, Dementia and a tour of the Anne Rowling Regenerative Neurology Clinic.

Paper B (Motion)

**Motion:** Changes for the appointment of General Council Court Assessors

**Preamble**

In consequence of the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016 there have to be changes to the composition of the University Court. There is no requirement for General Council Court Assessors in the Act. The University very much values the contribution of our Court Assessors and wishes to continue having them on Court. The proposal is to have three General Council Court Assessors, one of whom would be the Chancellor’s Assessor.

There are other requirements arising from the Act and from the principles of good governance. These relate to ensuring suitable balances with regard to equality and diversity and to having the necessary background experience and skills across Court as a whole.

Accordingly, it is considered that to better ensure that the most relevant and appropriate persons are appointed at any given time we move to a system of open advertisement, selection and appointment. A sub-committee of the Court Nominations Committee would be constituted with representatives from both the General Council and Court to conduct this open and transparent appointment procedure. The appointment of the Chancellor’s Assessor only would also be subject to formal approval by the Chancellor.

The Business Committee proposes:

That the General Council change from the current procedure for appointing a Court Assessor to one based upon a system of open advertisement, selection and appointment by a joint General Council and Court committee.

Proposed by the Convener of the Business Committee.

Seconded by the Vice-Convener of the Business Committee.

Paper C (Motion)

**Motion:** Appointment of Secretary

The Business Committee proposes:

That the General Council appoints Professor Ann Smith, BSc 1970, Phd 1974, as Secretary of the General Council for a period of four years.

Proposed by the Convener of the Business Committee.

Seconded by the Vice-Convener of the Business Committee.

Officers

**Chairman:** HRH The Princess Royal

**Secretary:** Michael J Mitchell, BSc, PhD 2018

**Registrar:** Sarah Smith, University Secretary *ex-officio*

General Council Assessors on the University Court

- Doreen Davidson, BA, AIPD 2021
- Dr Alan D G Brown, MBChB, FRCOG, FRCSEd 2019
- Ritchie Walker, MA, BSc, DipEd 2019

Business Committee

**Convenor:** Stuart Macpherson, OBE, MBChB, FRCS, FRCP, FRCCP 2020

**Vice Convenor:** Gordon D Cairns, LLB 2020

**A**

Convener of Academic Standing Committee:

Stephen Hillier, OBE, DSc 2020

**C**

Convener of Constitutional Standing Committee:

David M Munro, MBE, BSc, PhD 2020
The February 2018 General Council Lunch Booking Form

McEwan Hall new meeting rooms, Saturday 24 February 2018, 12.30pm for 1pm

Please send me _____ tickets (£22.50 each)

A cheque for £_____ is enclosed payable to The University of Edinburgh.

Name .................................................................................................................................

Address .................................................................................................................................

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Name(s) of guest(s) ..............................................................................................................

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Dietary requirements/preferences....................................................................................... 

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Year of graduation and subject of study ...............................................................................

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Please return to: Ms Alison MacLeary
Assistant to the Secretary of the General Council
The University of Edinburgh
Charles Stewart House
9–16 Chambers Street
Edinburgh EH1 1HT
Scotland, UK

Alternatively, book online at: www.general-council.ed.ac.uk/whats-happening

Closing date for applications: Thursday 15 February 2018