



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH  
The General Council

# Billet

# Winter 2024



## **The February 2024 General Council Lunch**

Playfair Library, Saturday 17 February 2024, 1pm

Click on the link below and book your place online.

<https://www.epay.ed.ac.uk/conferences-and-events/student-and-academic-services-group/general-council/the-general-council-halfyearly-meeting-and-lunch-17-february-2024>

Closing date for applications, **Friday 2 February 2024.**

Please note that registrations after this date will not be accepted.

Photography/video material from the event will be used for the General Council website and publications.



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# welcome



## Welcome to Billet winter 2024

We hope you enjoy this issue, which contains information about the February 2024 General Council Meeting and elections and the Half-Yearly Meeting in June.

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 <https://www.ed.ac.uk/general-council>



Sir Philip Mawer

“ I can only urge all members of the Council to take advantage of the opportunity provided by our next Half Yearly Meeting on **17 February 2024** to make their voice heard.”

## Report by Sir Philip Mawer

Convener of the Business Committee of the General Council.

### A Continuing Voice for Alumni at Edinburgh

All universities look to retain the loyalty of their alumni, not least as a source of advice and financial support as those who graduate from them go on to make their way in the world and, hopefully, to prosper. Few provide alumni with a continuing voice in the governance of the university from which they graduate.

It is to the lasting credit of the Victorian reformers who fashioned the Universities (Scotland) Act 1858 that among their innovations, they provided just such a voice by establishing a General Council in each of the four ‘ancient’ Scottish universities, including Edinburgh. In doing so, they gave these Councils the right to comment on ‘all matters which affect the wellbeing and prosperity of the university’, including the statutory right to comment on draft Resolutions and Ordinances referred to the Council by the University Court.

The General Council is therefore part of the structure of governance of Edinburgh University, dedicated to furthering the University’s wellbeing and one of the principal means of holding the executive bodies within the University to account. That function is given its most visible expression in February of each year when, at the Council’s Half Yearly Meeting, the Principal gives his annual report on the state of the University. His report is followed by an opportunity for members to ask questions. It is a demonstration of General Council members’ constructive engagement with the institution to which they owe so much, an engagement driven not just by a sense of loyalty or out of nostalgia for the past but by their active wish to see the University deliver for today’s students and researchers, for the greater good of tomorrow’s world.

At the latest count, the General Council has a global membership of 275,000. What a powerful voice in support of the University that can be! I can only urge all members of the Council to take advantage of the opportunity provided by our next Half Yearly Meeting on 17 February 2024 to make their voice heard.

### Alumni and the University Community

The first meeting of the Business Committee during the 2023-24 academic year underlined the wish of Edinburgh University to embrace its alumni as fully part of the


university community. Addressing the Committee, the Vice Principal for Philanthropy and Advancement, Chris Cox, described the General Council as one of the strengths of the University, and the purpose of Development and Alumni’s work as being to help alumni and friends of the University to shape its future by supporting and inspiring students and researchers to make the world a better place. He reported that a record £60 million of philanthropic giving had been committed during the previous year, a tribute to the high international standing of the University’s teachers and researchers as well as to the generosity of donors and the hard work of his colleagues.

Alumni engagement with the University goes far beyond philanthropic giving, however, as the University looks for new ways in which to utilise the talents and experience of alumni in mentoring students and helping them to shape their practical skills to assist their future success. A different opportunity for alumni to get involved is through the many projects in and around Edinburgh funded through the University’s Community Plan. A recent report on one aspect of the Plan – which you can find at [https://www.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/atoms/files/community\\_grant\\_scheme\\_impact\\_report.pdf](https://www.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/atoms/files/community_grant_scheme_impact_report.pdf) – offers a positive evaluation of the University’s community grants scheme, through which the University has provided practical, not just financial help

to 213 individual projects, in partnership with 176 local organisations. Many of these projects have contributed to the achievement of the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals, particularly around improving physical and mental health and promoting inclusion.

### The Year in Prospect

As well as hearing from Vice Principal Chris Cox, the Business Committee’s first meeting of this academic year provided an opportunity to take stock of the issues likely to face the University, and therefore to dominate the agendas of the Committee and its Standing Committees, as the year unfolds. There is cause for both confidence in and concern for the future. On the positive side, the recent announcement by the UK Government that Edinburgh is to host the UK’s next generation exascale supercomputer is an expression of confidence in the University’s world leading expertise in such fields as ‘big data’, supercomputing and AI. Barely a week seems to have passed since the new term began without a report of some further advance spearheaded by the University’s Medical School or School of Veterinary Medicine. This record of success in leading edge research is replicated across many of the University’s other academic disciplines, underscoring the essential interdisciplinary nature of AI research and innovation.



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What a powerful voice in support of the University that can be!”

Edinburgh’s standing as one of the leading universities in the world has been helped by the welcome resumption of UK involvement in the Horizon scheme and confirmed in the recent Times Higher Education ranking of the world’s 100 best universities.

However, success never comes without bringing challenges in its wake. Staff and student satisfaction levels remain stubbornly low. Although the Marking and Assessment Boycott by some members of the University and College Union (UCU) at Edinburgh was called off nationally by UCU in early September and the University was able to inform all final year students of their degree result by mid November, the legacy of the Boycott is still affecting the assessment of some continuing students. The dispute about pay and conditions between the UCU and the Universities and Colleges Employers’ Association of which the boycott was an expression is still unresolved, although UCU no longer has a mandate to continue the Boycott. Cost of living increases and difficulties in finding accommodation to rent continue to hit some students hard. And the system of funding all the universities in the UK, not just those in Scotland, is showing increasing signs of strain.

Over the coming months the Business Committee and its Standing Committees will be considering these issues, finding out how the University is seeking to address them and discussing what, if anything, alumni can do through the General Council to help the University overcome them. So, in their initial meetings during the year:

- The Academic Standing Committee – Convener, Prof. Stephen Hillier – will be finding out what the University is doing to raise student satisfaction levels, in conversation with Lucy Evans (Deputy Secretary – Students), and hearing the student perspective from Sharan Atwal (President of the Students Association);
- The Finance and Services Committee – Convener, Almira Delibegovic-Broome – will be meeting Gary Jebb, the University’s Director of Place, to discuss issues of student accommodation among other matters relating to the University’s estate. At a later meeting they will explore the University’s latest Report and Accounts with the Director of Finance, Lee Hamill;
- The International Standing Committee – Convener, Krystyna Szumelukowa – will be reviewing the global challenges facing the University and taking stock of its extensive international partnerships, prior to meeting James Smith, Vice Principal International; and
- The Public Affairs Standing Committee – Convener, Candice Donnelly – is continuing its review of the General Council’s communication arrangements and will also be exploring the University’s approach to issues of sustainability with Dave Gorman (Director of Social Responsibility and Sustainability) and Gemma Gourlay (Head of Social Impact).

Last but by no means least, the Constitutional Standing Committee, chaired by the Vice-Convenor of the Business Committee, Gordon Cairns, will be continuing its work to update the General Council’s constitutional and business arrangements to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

#### Half Yearly Meeting, 17 February 2024

The next meeting of the Council will provide an opportunity for me to report further to you on the progress of all this work and for you to ask questions about it. Far more significantly, the meeting is your chance to hear from Sir Peter Mathieson, the Principal, how he and his team view these and other challenges facing the University, what they regard as the achievements of the past year, and how they see the opportunities and risks which face the University going forward. My colleagues on the Business Committee and I look forward to you joining us, online or in-person, to hear, and to ask questions following, his report.

Reports from the Standing Committee meetings can be found on the General Council website:  
<https://www.ed.ac.uk/general-council/business-committee/standing-committees>

# General Council Meeting

“... at the Council’s Half Yearly Meeting, the Principal gives his annual report on the state of the University. His report is followed by an opportunity for members to ask questions.”



## The General Council Meeting 17 February 2024

The next statutory General Council Meeting will take place at **10.30am** in the basement meeting facilities in the **McEwan Hall**, entered from the Pavilion in Bristo Square.

Registration and refreshments available from 10am.

As usual those attending are asked to sign the General Council register on the day.

General Council Half-Yearly Meetings are open to all General Council members and are free to attend.





## Questions

The February Half Yearly Meeting gives members the opportunity to hear the Principal's annual report and put questions to him on matters affecting the wellbeing and prosperity of the University.

Members can also submit questions in advance or on the day via the General Council e-mail – [General.Council@ed.ac.uk](mailto:General.Council@ed.ac.uk). Members are asked to give their degree and year of graduation, or otherwise the basis for their membership of the General Council, when they submit a question, whether online or in person.

**Sir Peter Mathieson**  
Principal

The formal meeting can  
be viewed online via  
livestream from the  
General Council website:  
*[ed.ac.uk/general-council](http://ed.ac.uk/general-council)*

WWW.





# Papers for the General Council half-yearly meeting

## Saturday 17th February 2024

### McEwan Hall, Teviot Place, Edinburgh

#### 10 – 10.30am

Coffee, tea and biscuits in the Robing Suite, McEwan Hall

#### 10.30am

General Council Meeting in Foyers 3 – 4, McEwan Hall

#### After the Meeting

Lunch in the Playfair Library (see page 17 for details)

The meeting can be viewed live online at:  
<https://www.ed.ac.uk/general-council>

Members are invited to submit questions in advance of the meeting by email to [general.council@ed.ac.uk](mailto:general.council@ed.ac.uk)

### Agenda for the General Council meeting

1. Results of the Elections for seven Members of the General Council Business Committee
2. Minutes of the Meeting of the General Council held at the Nucleus Building, Kings Buildings Campus on 10 June 2023 (Paper A)
3. Matters arising
4. Report of the Business Committee
5. Dates of future meetings of the General Council
6. Presentation by Professor Peter Mathieson, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, of the Annual Report to the University
7. Any other competent business
8. Adjournment

### Paper A

Minutes of the Meeting of the General Council held in Edinburgh on Saturday 10 June 2023.

#### Present:

Ms Debora Kayembe	University Rector, in the Chair
Ms Leigh Chalmers	Vice-Principal and University Secretary
Dr William Duncan	Secretary of the General Council
Sir Philip Mawer	Convener of the Business Committee
Rev Dr Harriet Harris	Chaplain to the University

*68 Members present (plus those attending online)*

#### 1. Minutes of the Meeting of the General Council held in the McEwan Hall, Teviot Place, Edinburgh

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 February 2023 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 of the General Council Business Committee, Sir Philip Mawer, began the summer meeting by congratulating the Chair, Deborah Kayembe, on her

impending installation as the 54th Rector of the University, and gave warm thanks for her support of the General Council during her term of office.

He acknowledged that, while the University had many recent achievements, it had a number of challenges facing it, which were also affecting the wider Higher Education sector. These included the current unsatisfactory system of university funding; challenges around student recruitment and ensuring proper support for students; issues around staff pay and pensions; the implementation of new University systems; and the debate around matters relating to freedom of expression, on which opinion may be deeply divided.

The Business Committee and its Standing Committees had continued to explore all these issues in greater detail with members of the University's senior leadership team and had met with the University Secretary, Leigh Chalmers. The Convener added that the Business Committee was due to meet the University's recently appointed Provost, Professor Kim Graham, at its final meeting of the session.

The Academic Standing Committee had been given a detailed look at the University's Student Counselling Services and how help is being delivered to students facing significant issues, and had heard how the relatively recently established Doctoral College is strengthening support for and engagement with Postgraduate Research Students across the University.

The Finance and Services Standing Committee had been briefed on the implications of AI (Artificial Intelligence) and on the continuing implementation of the People and Money system.

The Public Affairs Standing Committee continues to explore the effectiveness of the Council's communications with its members worldwide; and the International Standing Committee had met the recently appointed Director of Alumni Relations to discuss how the Business Committee can engage more directly and positively with alumni groups outside the UK.

The Convener paid tribute to all those who serve on the Business Committee for their significant contributions to the General Council and the wider University, and gave particular thanks to those who were standing down having reached the end of their current term.

Sir Philip concluded by expressing gratitude to the staff and students of the University who continue to pursue excellence in their chosen fields for the benefit of future generations.

The report of the Business Committee was approved.

A recording of the full report from the Convener can be viewed on the General Council website: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/general-council/half-yearly-meetings/past-meetings>

#### 4. i) Dates of future meetings of the General Council

The next Half-Yearly Meeting will take place on Saturday 17 February 2024, in the McEwan Hall, Teviot Place, Edinburgh. Any Motions for discussion at this meeting should have been received in the General Council Office by Wednesday 22 November 2023.

The following Statutory Half-Yearly Meeting will be held on Saturday 15 June, 2024 in The Edinburgh Futures Institute. Any Motions for discussion at this meeting should be received in the General Council Office by Wednesday 27 March 2024.

#### ii) Notice of forthcoming Elections

There will be elections for seven Members of the Business Committee in February 2024. Nominations on forms available from the General Council Office and on the website should have been received in the General Council Office by Wednesday 22 November 2023.

#### 5. Any other competent business

There was no other competent business.

#### 6. 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.

Rev Dr Harriet Harris closed the meeting with a benediction.

## Officers

Chairman: HRH The Princess Royal  
 Secretary: William Duncan, BSc, PhD, MCIPD 2026  
 Registrar: Leigh Chalmers, University Secretary ex-officio

#### General Council Assessors on the University Court:

Jock Millican, BSc, FCILT 2027  
 The Hon. Lady Wolffe (Sarah Wolffe KC) 2027  
 The Rt. Hon. Douglas Alexander, MA, LLB 2025

#### Business Committee:

Convener: Sir Philip Mawer, DLitt, LLd (Hon), MA, DPA, Hon FIA 2024  
 Vice Convener: Gordon D Cairns, LLB 2024  
 Convener of Academic Standing Committee: Stephen Hillier, OBE, DSc 2024  
 Convener of Constitutional Standing Committee: Gordon D Cairns, LLB 2024  
 Convener of Finance and Services Standing Committee: Almira Delibegovic-Broome, KC 2024  
 Convener of International Standing Committee: Krystyna Szumelukowa, BA Hons, M.Phil, MRTPI 2024  
 Convener of Public Affairs Standing Committee: Candice Donnelly, LLB (Hons), Dip LP, NP, WS 2026

#### Members:

Chancellor's Assessor: Sheriff Principal Alastair Dunlop KC ex officio  
 Lady Joyce Caplan, BEd 2024  
 Francis McManus, M.Litt., LLB (Hons), FRSPH, MREHIS, FHEA 2024  
 Graeme Reid, BSc, PhD, FRSB 2024  
 Frances D Dow, CBE, MA, DPhil 2024  
 Brian Smith, MA, MLitt 2025  
 Elisabeth Feldstein, MChem 2025  
 Kirsty MacGregor, MA, MBA, DipEd 2025  
 Arron Ashton, BSc 2025  
 Devin Scobie, MA (Hons), MPRCA 2025  
 Bruce Nelson, BSc, MBA, PhD, FCMI 2026  
 Alice Brown, CBE, FRSE, AcSS, FRCP EDIN, CIPFA (HON) 2026  
 Kate Hawley, BSc (Hons), MICFor 2026  
 John Clifford, MSc 2026  
 Manya Buchan, BA (Hons), MBA 2027  
 Ann Cormack, MBE, MA, PGDip 2027  
 Mary Gunn, PhD, MBA, MA, LLM 2027

Assistant Secretary: Alison MacLeary, MA (Hons)

# General Council Lunch



## The General Council Lunch Saturday 17 February 2024

Following the Half-Yearly Meeting on Saturday 17 February 2024, members of the General Council and their guests are cordially invited to the General Council Lunch, which will take place, once again, in the magnificent **Playfair Library Hall** in Old College.



We are delighted to welcome The Rt. Hon. Douglas Alexander (pictured) to give the after-lunch talk: “To see ourselves as others see us: perspectives from abroad”.

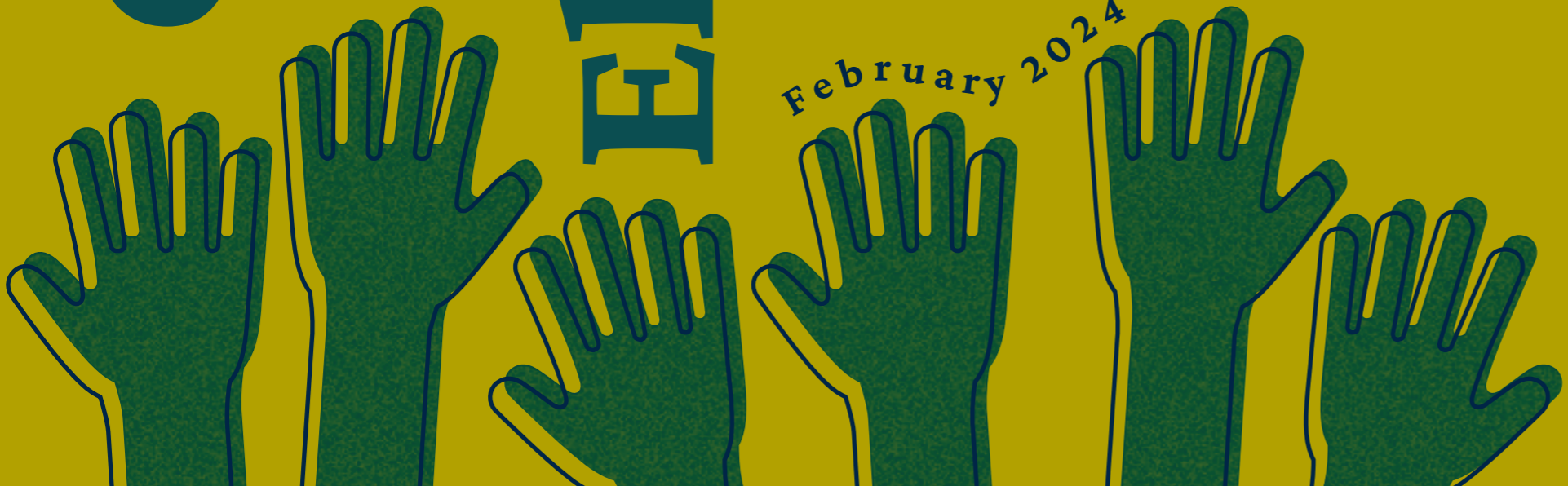
Over the last couple of years, Douglas Alexander’s work has taken him from the mountains of the Himalayas to the bomb damaged streets of Kyiv, from the White House to Silicon Valley, and to a Taiwan that’s fearful about its future. The Rt. Hon. Douglas Alexander will draw on these recent international experiences to suggest relevant lessons for our University and our nation as the world looks to meet the challenge of dangerous climate change, extreme global poverty, and growing tensions between major geopolitical powers.

If you would like to attend the next General Council Lunch, please book online at <https://www.epay.ed.ac.uk/conferences-and-events/student-and-academic-services-group/general-council/the-general-council-halfyearly-meeting-and-lunch-17-february-2024> or complete and return the form on page 18 no later than Friday 2 February 2024. Tickets, at £30 each, include a pre-lunch wine reception followed by a buffet lunch.



# General Council Election

February 2024



## **The General Council Election** February 2024

The following nominations have been received for the election of seven members of the Business Committee to serve from 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2028.

## Candidates for membership of the Business Committee

The names of the candidates appear in alphabetical order.



**Dr Nikhil Agarwal, PhD 2018**

*Proposed by Dr Luis Soares, PhD 2018*

*Seconded by Mr Nisheeth Srivastava, MSc 2011*



**Professor Richard John Andrews**

*Proposed by Rev Dr Harriet Anne Harris*

*Seconded by Professor Sarah Prescott*



**Mr John Donald MacDonald, BSc 1990**

*Proposed by Dr Mary Gunn, LLM 2014*

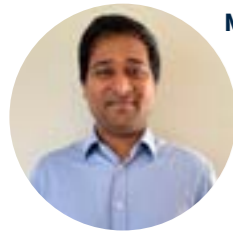
*Seconded by Mr Jonathan McGlynn, BSc 1988*



**Mr Charles Joseph Napier, MA 1995**

*Proposed by Mr Marcus Evans, LLB 1996*

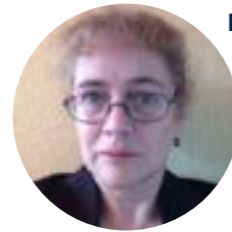
*Seconded by Mrs Sarah Skinner, MA 1995*



**Mr Nava Vikhyat Teja Reddy Bapuram, MA 2017**

*Proposed by Mr Rohan Mowgli Dodhia, BA 2015*

*Seconded by Mr Timothy Silvester, MA 2016*



**Dr Lucy Marjery Amayllis Blackburn, MSc 2016; PhD 2023**

*Proposed by Ms Lisa Noelle Mackenzie, MSc 2013*

*Seconded by Dr Katherine Helen Murray, MSc 2010; PhD 2015*



**Mrs Tamara Martine Carine Raidt, MSc 2022**

*Proposed by Dr Miriam Claire Gamble*

*Seconded by Miss Olivia Grace Thomakos, MSc 2022*



**Professor Graeme Alexander Reid, BSc 1977**

*Proposed by Professor Stephen Gilbert Hillier OBE, DSc 1992*

*Seconded by Dr Donald Bruce Nelson, MBA 1990*



**Mrs Almira Delibegovic-Broome, KC, LLB 1995**

*Proposed by Mr Kenneth Young, LLB 1995*

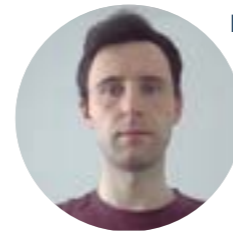
*Seconded by Ms Candice Donnelly, LLB 2005; Dip LP 2006*



**Mr Fraser John Macartney Forbes, BSc 1988**

*Proposed by Dr Mary Gunn, LLM 2014*

*Seconded by Mr Jeken Harry Andrew Elwin, BSc 1988*



**Mr Alan Gordon Ross, MA 2013**

*Proposed by Mr Richard Fitzpatrick, BSc 2013; MSc 2016; PhD 2021*

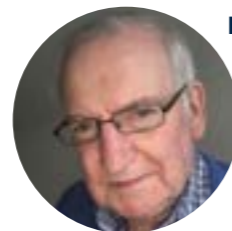
*Seconded by Mrs Sheila Ross, MA 1977*



**Professor John Calum MacDonald Gillies, BSc 1973; MBChB 1976**

*Proposed by Mrs Kirsty Joan MacGregor MA 1981; MBA 2001*

*Seconded by The Hon Lady Sarah Poyntell LaBudde Wolffe KC, LLB 1989*



**Dr David James Robert Houston, PhD 1976; MBA 1987**

*Proposed by Ms Krystyna Irena Szumelukowa, MPhil 2006*

*Seconded by Professor Stephen Gilbert Hillier OBE, DSc 1992*

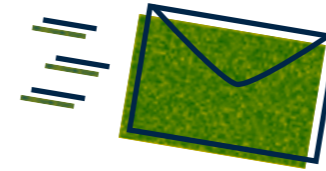
Only degrees awarded by the University of Edinburgh are shown above. Candidates, their Proposers or Seconders may have other degrees or awards. Candidates' statements are available on the General Council website.

## Voting in the election will be online only



except where members have

previously registered for a postal vote



or receive paper copies of Billet.

### 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.

Civica Election Services (CES) have been appointed to administer several University elections including the General Council Election 2024.

Voting in the election will be online only except where members have previously registered for a postal vote or receive paper copies of Billet.

### Online voting

A new much simplified procedure has been introduced for GC members voting online.

Voting instructions with individual two-part security codes will be emailed in early January.




Emails will be sent from [takepart@cesvotes.com](mailto:takepart@cesvotes.com) with the following subject line: University of Edinburgh General Council – Election for members of the Business Committee 2024.

Please follow the instructions within the email. A link will take you to where you can cast your vote and view information to help you make your choice.

### Postal Voters

General Council members who have previously registered for a postal vote, or who receive paper copies of Billet, will be issued with a voting pack, which will be sent by post from Civica Election Services in early January.

The pack will consist of the following documents:-

-  Voting paper – containing full instructions on how to complete the paper
-  Candidate statement booklet
-  Freepost business reply envelope

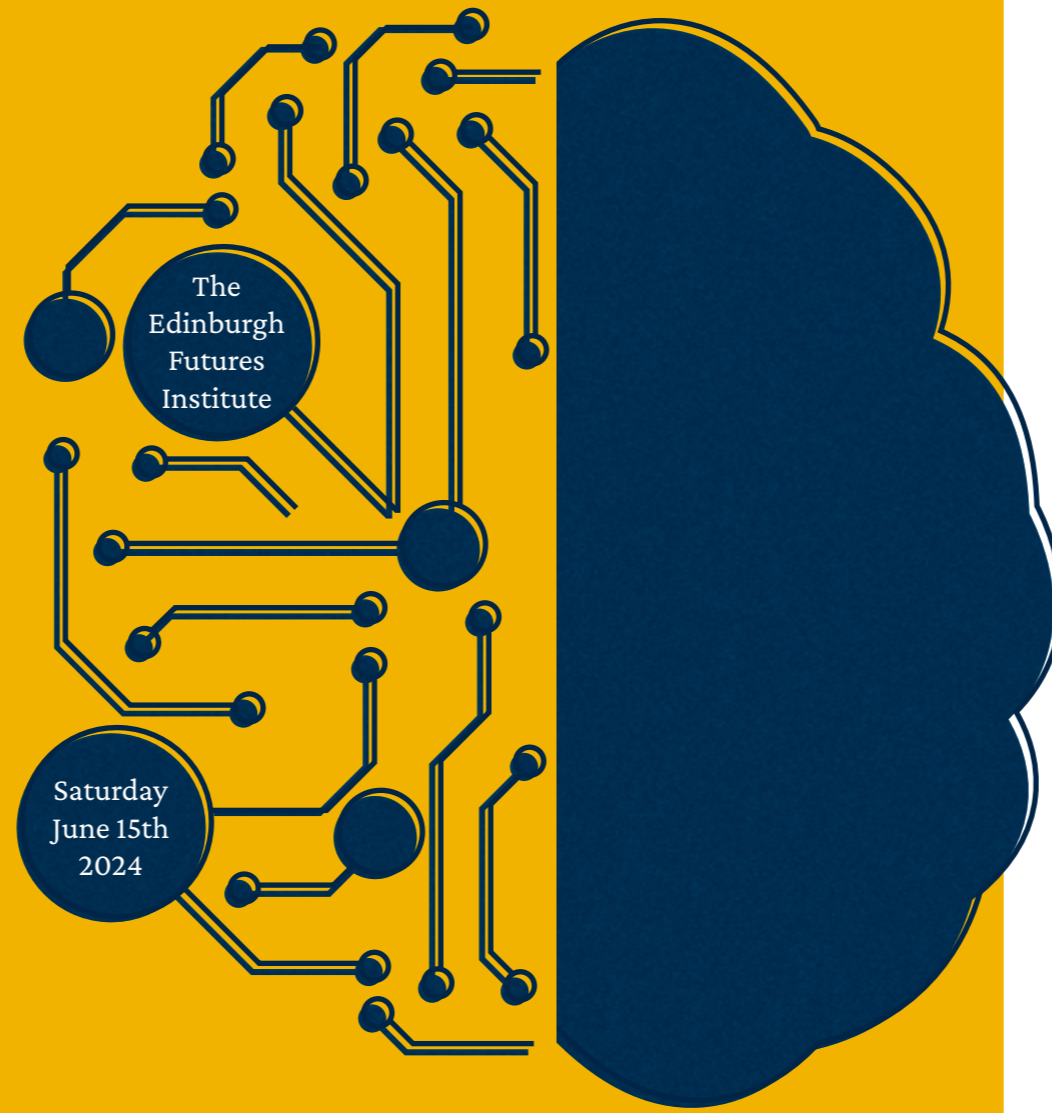
Members can vote by post by completing the voting paper and returning it to Civica using the reply paid envelope supplied, but those with email are encouraged to vote online using the much simplified process now available by following the instructions on the voting paper.

Members can only vote once, either electronically or by post, not twice. Duplicate votes will be invalid.

Voting opens in early January and closes at **5pm on Tuesday 13 February 2024.**

The vote count and analysis of results are managed by Civica Election Services (CES). The results will be announced at the General Council Half-Yearly Meeting on **17 February**. The Secretary serves as the Returning Officer.

# Summer Half-Yearly Meeting



## **Advance notice of Summer Half-Yearly Meeting** Saturday June 15th 2024, The Edinburgh Futures Institute

Following the morning statutory Half-Yearly Meeting of the General Council there will be an event for General Council members to celebrate the University's long association with AI (Artificial Intelligence).

More information will appear as it becomes available on the General Council website and will be included in the summer issue of Billet as usual.



**The General Council of The University of Edinburgh**

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