



# THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

## **Procedure for Appointment and Operation of Established Chair Selection Committees**

### **1. Approval Process to create a New Established Chair Approval**

It is the responsibility of the School wishing to create and appoint to a new Established Chair to formally seek the approval of the Head of College, outlining in full the reasons for and financial implications of such a request.

Full discussion and relevant debate between the School and College should take place at this point, facilitating the request to appoint and ensuring relevant views and strategic opportunities inform the final decision and subsequent Chair specification. The Head of College may also choose to extend any consultation to expert persons outside the University and to any other body which may have an interest in the new Established Chair.

Following approval, a Resolution will be drafted to formally establish the Chair. As required by the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966 the establishment of the new Chair will be consulted on by both Senate and the General Council for a period of one month prior to Court approval. This process is a formality, separate from any selection process.

The recruitment process for the new Established Chair can commence as soon as Head of College approval has been granted. While these processes will normally be completed prior to advertising, the process of formal authorisation and recruitment can run concurrently.

Proposals to establish a new Established Chair can be developed at any point in the year, but ideally preparations for new roles should be planned well ahead, enabling them to be costed and included in the University's annual planning and budgetary cycle. This also enables forward planning around recruitment cycles, and effective management of Chair appointments, in alignment with the recommendations noted below.

### **2. Approval Process to appoint to an Existing Established Chair**

When an Established Chair becomes vacant, or is about to become vacant, the School should discuss with the Head of College whether it remains a strategic priority to fill the Chair in its current form, or alternatively, whether such a role can be filled at a more junior level, or the Established Chair used to fill an emerging strategic opportunity in another disciplinary or interdisciplinary area where a senior appointment would be necessary.

As for new Established Chairs (see Section 1 above), full discussion and relevant debate between the School and College should take place at this point, facilitating the request to appoint and ensuring relevant views and strategic opportunities inform the final decision and subsequent Chair specifications. The Head of College may also choose to extend any consultation to expert persons outside the University and to any other body which may have an interest in the replacement of the Established Chair.

Once replacement of the Established Chair is agreed, the Head of Court Services should be contacted to check that a Resolution exists that establishes the Chair. It is also helpful at this stage to confirm the patronage of the Chair and its title with the Head of Court Services. This information is also published on the [Governance website](#) and is updated on an annual basis.

### **3. Amendment to Chair Title**

If there is a requirement for the Established Chair title to be amended, a new resolution setting out the amended title should be drafted and approved by Court. The required processes can be initiated by informing the Head of Court Services of the amended Chair title. The Head of Court Services will also check the Patronage of the Chair at this point. The process to amend the Established Chair title can run in parallel with the recruitment process.

### **4. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

The University is committed to boosting equality, diversity and inclusion at the Chair level, aligned to ensuring our senior scholars are representative of society, and we benefit from a diversity of viewpoints, experiences and leadership perspectives in our Chair community.

Schools and Colleges should be actively committed to embedding equality, diversity and inclusion in all parts of the recruitment process, ensuring to advertise in ways which encourage applications from under-represented groups, developing criteria which allow evaluation of fit to roles through diverse activities, as well as taking account of the different pathways to leadership individuals from underrepresented groups may evidence. Special Committees (the selection panel) must be suitably diverse in their representation, and panellists appointed who understand, and are committed to, the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion and evidencing that in practice.

Decisions about each aspect of the recruitment process – the job description, attraction strategy, composition of the Special Committee, shortlisting, selection, and offer – should evidence and further the University's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, with support provided by the College as required.

The recruitment process must also account for expectations aligned to the University of Edinburgh's signature of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA).

DORA notes that consideration of research quality and excellence must be based on detailed assessment of research outcomes, rather than evidenced by noting journal titles / impact factors and other metrics, such as h-indexes. DORA also highlights the importance of placing value on research contributions that go beyond publications and grants, including innovation and impact outcomes, such as patents, commercialisation, generation of new technologies, toolkits and policy impacts, as well as partnership working which benefits external organisations.

Reflecting evidence<sup>1</sup> that some groups typically under-represented in academia have higher citizenship and teaching workloads during their careers, the Special Committee should be mindful of considering research outcomes in the context of the opportunity and time provided to candidates to deliver research outcomes. The University of Edinburgh is also committed to parity of teaching alongside research, and panels should look to evidence excellence and innovation in teaching and

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. Sümer, S., & Eslen-Ziya, H. (2023). Academic women's voices on gendered divisions of work and care: 'Working till I drop . . . then dropping.' *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 30(1), 49–65. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13505068221136494>

facilitation and commitment to a high-quality student experience as part of Chair appointments.

## **5. Recruitment Process to appoint a New Established Chair or an Existing Established Chair**

The School making the Established Chair appointment should prepare relevant information - including advert, further particulars, proposed attraction strategy, and planned composition of the Special Committee, paying particular attention to the points noted in Section 4 above regarding equality, diversity and inclusion.

These proposals should be approved by the Head of College, ideally prior to the commencement of the advertising and selection process. In exceptional circumstances, the approval and recruitment stages can proceed concurrently, subject to the understanding that, if at any stage the case is not approved, the process will be stopped and this outcome reported to the Head of Court Services.

As noted in Sections 1 and 2, it is important that the Patronage of the Chair is checked with the Head of Court Services. For example, for Curators of Patronage or Regius Chairs, the Head of Court Services is required to be involved from the advertising stage onwards.

If at interview stage there is a justification to appoint an additional Chair, the Head of Court Services should be contacted to ensure that a Resolution can be drafted, or other actions taken to implement the decision. This could involve seeking approval for a new Established Chair or approval via the Academic Promotions process for a new Personal Chair.

## **6. Special Committee (the selection panel)**

### **a) Composition**

Any proposals as to composition of the Special Committee should reflect the University's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. Efforts should be made to ensure a diverse composition of panellists, including ensuring diversity of disciplines, and across protected characteristics, in both internal and external members.

Proposals for membership of the Special Committee should ensure representation of relevant areas within the School, but also include individuals who can consider the wider viewpoints of the College or University, aligned to the expectation that those appointed to Chairs may well collaborate and show leadership that goes beyond an individual School.

It is not desirable for Special Committees to have more than 8 members, though this number may occasionally be exceeded where an organisation external to the University has a funding or contractual interest in the Chair.

Careful consideration should be given to the skills, standing, experience and relevancy of those appointed to the Special Committee, ensuring they are the best individuals to source and select the very best candidates, as well as ensuring the Special Committee has expertise to successfully apply equality, diversity and inclusion principles, and assess the diverse pathways that facilitate senior academic leadership.

It is expected that the proposed composition of the Special Committee will be agreed by the Head of College, and will normally include:

- the Head of the appointing College (Chair of the Special Committee);
- the Head of the appointing School;
- appropriate representation from the appointing School and/or other

collaborating Schools and / or Centres, where the Established Chair is likely to be interdisciplinary in nature (normally two representatives);

- Head of a School from another College (preferably whose subject area has relevance to the Chair being appointed to); and
- two external assessors who, by reason of their eminence and/or experience, can make a special contribution to the process of selection.

The Secretary to the Committee will also be in attendance.

In some circumstances, for example when appointing to a Regius Chair or a position of key strategic importance to the University, the Special Committee will be chaired by the Principal or Provost, usually at the request of the Head of College.

#### **b) Role and Responsibilities**

The Committee, and in particular the Head of College and Head of School, should give due consideration to the most effective method of attracting a strong, diverse pool of candidates for shortlisting and interview. Chosen attraction strategies, which might include Search Committees, specialist Executive Search advertising placement, should actively seek to embed equality, diversity and inclusion principles, with the aim of attracting a diverse set of candidates for consideration at interview. Particular attention should also be paid to the best means of attracting excellent candidates within the international marketplace, aligned to Edinburgh's commitment to recruiting the best talent from across the world.

The Further Particulars documentation, and other relevant paperwork, will usually be drawn up by the relevant subject area or Head of School in consultation with the Head of College. The same will apply for the wording and format of any advert. Ensuring criteria which allow leadership to be demonstrated through multiple avenues will facilitate a more diverse suite of applications, and boost diversity at the interview stage. Heads of College should ensure that – at interviews – there is a clearly competitive and fair process, as evidenced by interview of a number of suitably qualified applicants for the role (e.g., at least 3 applicants).

Everyone involved in the selection process, from the shortlisting stage onwards, must understand their role in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion, and avoiding unfair discrimination as part of the selection process.

All members of the Special Committee from Edinburgh must have completed the University's Recruitment and Selection Essentials and Equality and Diversity Essentials online training courses. External members of the Special Committee should be asked for evidence of participation in equality, diversity and inclusion training courses, through their own Institutions, and be provided with information about Edinburgh's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, as well as DORA (as noted in Section 4). The Head of College, as Chair of the Special Committee, is also expected to reinforce the importance of these principles at all stages of the process.

#### **c) Confidentiality**

As a general rule, the names of all candidates for Chairs will normally remain confidential to the members of the Special Committee, and the importance of confidentiality should be highlighted by the Chair of the Special Committee to all panellists during the recruitment, outcome and offer stages.

On occasion, however, the Special Committee may decide, before the Chair is advertised, that the names and the curricula vitae of the candidates will be made known to an agreed set of members of the School, on the understanding that all

such information is confidential.

On no account must any references received for candidates be circulated outside the Special Committee.

Conflicts of interest should be highlighted and managed appropriately. Panel members who consider themselves to have a conflict of interest should declare this to the Chair of the Selection Committee at the earliest opportunity, prior to shortlisting and interviews. The Chair of the Selection Committee will make a judgement as to whether the individual should remain part of the process or be replaced, in alignment with the University policy on [Conflict of Interest](#).

The Chair of the Special Committee is expected to manage conflicts of interest associated with internal candidates effectively, ensuring that internal and external candidates are treated with equity. Panelists should be reminded not to bring prior knowledge of candidates to discussions, ensuring fair treatment of all candidates throughout the process.

The Chair of the Special Committee and the Head of School should also be mindful of supporting internal candidates at the outcome stage, especially where individuals may not be successful in being appointed into the role. This should include ensuring compassionate communications of outcomes, and offering support and feedback as required.

## 7. Advertising (General)

Where approval has been obtained to appoint at Chair level in a particular area of specialism or an area of strategic interest to the University, the opportunity must be advertised initially on the University job website for fairness and transparency. Further information can be found on the University's website [here](#) or by contacting the relevant College HR team.

## 8. The Recruitment and Selection process

Each College has established practices for implementing appointment into new and existing Established Chair roles, including the named member of staff who acts as Secretary to the Special Committees, as noted below.

These colleagues can provide full guidance and advice on all stages of the process, aligned to implementation of the procedures as outlined in this documentation. The relevant team must be contacted prior to any recruitment exercise-taking place.

College	Contact Details
Science & Engineering	<a href="mailto:CSEHRAdvisors@ed.ac.uk">CSEHRAdvisors@ed.ac.uk</a>
CAHSS	<a href="mailto:CAHSSChairCommitteeSecretary@ed.ac.uk">CAHSSChairCommitteeSecretary@ed.ac.uk</a>
MVM	School Administrator for relevant area

Further general guidance on recruitment policy and practice can be found on [the HR website](#).

## 9. Review

This procedure was jointly agreed by HR and Colleges in October 2010 and was updated in August 2013. Updates to formatting and web links were made in December 2017. The procedure was further updated in May 2023 including:

- reflecting changes to the approval process agreed by University Executive in October 2021;

- delegating responsibility for chairing most Special Committees to Heads of Colleges, with the Principal or Provost being involved in Regius selection panels, or at the request of the Head of College, where a significant strategic appointment is being made; and
- further reinforcing the University's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion through enhanced promotion of good recruitment practice throughout the process, as well as ensuring the procedure aligns to the University's signature of DORA.

It is anticipated that the procedure will be reviewed again in May 2026.

#### **10. Relevant Links**

[Guidance and Criteria for the Award of the Title of Personal Chair](#)

[List of Resolutions founding Established and Personal Chairs](#)

[Conflict of Interest Policy](#)

Guidance on [Diversifying Recruitment](#)

[Recruitment and Selection Essentials and Equality and Diversity Essentials online training courses](#)