

Election Statement for Pamela Woodburn

I am excited to be given the opportunity to stand for election as Chair of the Court of Queen Margaret University and to be able to tell you a little about myself, why I'm interested in the role and what I believe I can contribute.

I live and work in Edinburgh and I am a firm believer in the value of lifelong learning and the transformative impact higher education can have on lives. On a personal level I benefitted from the opportunity to access University education in my mid-career, by studying for a Master's degree which helped me switch profession from housing to economic development.



Throughout my career, I have undertaken a number of executive and non-executive roles in the public and charity sectors and can bring this experience to support the work of QMU.

My Experience

Governance experience – Over the last twenty years I have served on the Boards of several organisations. This includes eight years on the Court of Edinburgh Napier University and for five of these years I was the Vice Chair. This included participating in several sub committees spanning the University's work. The experience has given me a clear understanding of the Higher Education (HE) sector and the complexity of the work of the institutions. Some of my most enjoyable moments came from celebrating the students' success by taking part in the graduation ceremonies. It was clear their achievements were not just related to educational attainment but also about growing their self-confidence, becoming active citizens and expanding their interests and networks.

I have also been on the Board of a Further Education (FE) College in Lanarkshire. This gave me useful insights into the sector and of the different types of partnerships between FE and HE, especially related to students learning pathways. My experience also includes chairing the Board of a major housing organisation which had a large and diverse membership. This required good influencing skills and effective communication as well collaborative working with the Executive team.

My governance roles have given me the opportunity to contribute to areas I am passionate about as well as being able to use my skills effectively. Currently I am able to combine my interest in entrepreneurship with my interest in the role of nutrition in health and wellbeing, through a social enterprise - Nutrition and Diet Resources UK, which provides patient nutrition and diet information.

Business sector experience - earlier in my career I worked as Senior Director for the Government agency, Scottish Enterprise, and held a number of strategic and operational roles. I supported Scottish companies in key industries such as: tourism, food and drink, creative industries, financial services and I also developed programmes for the Business Gateway to support small businesses. The job also involved linking businesses with universities, for example in the field of renewable energy. This experience has given me: practical knowledge of the business sector, an understanding of the role of research as a driver of innovation and the need for a highly skilled workforce if the economy is to prosper.

International experience - over the last seven years I have worked in international development, supporting communities in low income countries to improve their education, health and livelihoods. This has given me the chance to travel and work in a number of countries in Africa and Asia. Working across different cultures has given me a greater understanding of the inequalities and injustice experienced by many communities and the importance of creating inclusive approaches. I currently work for Voluntary Services Overseas but I'll be moving to work, part time, for another charity in early 2021.

My Commitment to QMU

In the period before the election I was fortunate to be able to meet some of the students, staff and Court members. I learnt about their views regarding QMU's strengths but also some of their concerns for the future. As the Chair of the Court, I'd want to learn more about the key issues and opportunities to ensure the Court fulfils its responsibility for the University's strategic direction and oversight of its management. From what I have heard so far, together with my knowledge of the HE sector and changes in areas like the Scottish Funding Council's emerging "Time for Change" agenda, I have identified some key areas I think are important for the Chair to focus on. These cover both the internal and external operating environments.

Internal focus

- **Supplying leadership** for a cohesive Court to maintain the highest standards of governance.
- **Providing support and constructive challenge to the Principal** and senior leadership team whilst respecting the symbiotic relationship between the governance and management systems.
- **Ensuring opportunities exist to amplify the student voice** in the planning, provision and ownership of student support services, teaching and learning and in the Court's decision-making processes.

External focus

- **Acting as an ambassador to promote the distinctiveness of QMU** for being: student orientated with friendly supportive staff, having a great record of graduate employability and continuing to be a socially responsible University.
- **Proactively influencing and embracing change** including examining new models for students to access educational opportunities (at the start of and throughout their careers) to ensure the resilience and financial sustainability of the University.
- **Developing collaborative relationships and engagement plans with key stakeholders**, from: students, alumni, staff, local government, industry, professions, other education institutions, community groups, through to the Government.

I would describe myself as an effective influencer, someone who has a "can do" attitude, is easy to get along with, and a realistic optimist! I believe I have the practical knowledge, skills and enthusiasm to perform the role of Chair of the Court of Queen Margaret University and hope you can give me your support to achieve this by voting for me in the forthcoming election.