



About Glasgow University's Rector

The Rector is the 'ordinary president' of Court in the words of the Universities (Scotland) Act 1858 and is entitled to chair Court meetings. The importance of chairing Court cannot be underestimated. It is vital to have a student focused voice at the chair of Court so that a student perspective is always at the forefront of decisions made by the Court.

Chairing Court is not the only role that the Rector can participate in. In recent times, the Rector has held surgeries for students, which any registered student can make an appointment for. This is a fantastic opportunity to speak to the Rector about any issues you feel he/she may be able to help with.

The Rector is also invited to a number of events held in the university:

- Commemoration Day in June
- Open Day in September
- Freshers' Address in September
- The Chancellor's Dinner in October/November
- The Court Dinner in December

There are also numerous invitations from departments, groups, clubs and societies to attend functions and events, but in all aspects other than attending meetings of Court the Rector's participation is voluntary. Clerical support and office accommodation is provided on campus for the Rector, as is an expenses budget to meet costs associated with University duties.

The potential value of a good rector to the interests of students is hard to exaggerate. He/she can exert considerable influence in Court and in the body politic of the university. He/she can be well-informed about student issues and concerns, can champion their causes, and can make sure that these issues are fully aired in Court.

History shows that celebrity may be an attractive feature, but it is not sufficient on its own to ensure a good quality rector. And every failure to elect a suitable person undermines the interests of students for decades to come. Persistent failure could easily lead to removal of the statutory role of rector.

Some history and background if you're interested, extracted from [The University Rector](#). Alternatively, click [here](#).

From the Reformation until the late 17th century rectors were ministers from within the Glasgow area. During the 18th and early 19th centuries local landowners or Scottish legal or political figures filled the office. Two renowned rectors prior to 1820 were Adam Smith, the author of the *Wealth of Nations* and Edmund Burke, the orator and political philosopher.

Glasgow's tradition right up to 1974 was the political rector, the elected politicians including 11 Prime Ministers, from Sir Robert Peel to Stanley Baldwin via Disraeli and Gladstone.

Other rectors during the 20th century have included the President of France, Raymond Poincaré, during the First World War; Compton Mackenzie, author and Scottish Nationalist and the Rev Dick Sheppard, pacifist, in the 1930s; Sir John Boyd Orr, nutritionist in 1945; Albert Luthuli, anti-apartheid campaigner and Nobel peace prize winner in 1962; The Rev George MacLeod, founder of the Iona Community in 1968; and Jimmy Reid, Communist shop steward in 1971.

Many candidates stood on a "working rector" ticket and from the 1930s many were successful, including Lord Reith, public servant, George Macleod, Michael Kelly, Lord Provost of Glasgow; and Johnny Ball, broadcaster.

Glasgow students have often voted on a principle of honouring heroes, resulting in the election of rectors who were not expected to chair Court or take an active part in the role as they have been unable to leave their country. Such rectors have included Poincaré, Luthuli, Winnie Mandela and Mordechai Vanunu.