



Non-executive Director of the SRUC Board
Candidate Brief

Introduction



SRUC is a unique tertiary institution, rooted in Scotland's regions and communities, with a growing national and international profile in education, research and consultancy relating to the natural economy. Formed in 2012 through the merger of the Scottish Agricultural College with Barony, Elmwood and Oatridge Colleges, SRUC combines a history stretching back more than a century with a strong focus on the future.

Operating across the full tertiary spectrum, from further education to postgraduate research, SRUC brings together teaching, research, knowledge exchange and commercial activity in a way that is distinctive within the UK education sector. This integrated model positions SRUC to play a significant role in addressing major global challenges including climate change, food security, biodiversity loss and the transition to a more sustainable economy. Collaboration is central to SRUC's approach. Working with government, industry, communities and academic partners, SRUC supports innovation, skills development and applied research that deliver practical impact for Scotland's rural, land-based and natural economy sectors.

SRUC is entering an important new phase in its development. In 2024, it became the first Scottish education institution in almost two decades to secure Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP). The same year also saw the launch of Scotland's first School of Veterinary Medicine in 150 years and the UK's first tertiary veterinary school. SRUC was also awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize for the third time, recognising the international quality and impact of its work.

As SRUC launches its Strategy 2026–2031, the organisation is focused on building on its distinctive tertiary model, strengthening its research and

innovation capability, expanding its degree provision, and growing its commercial and international activities.

Joining the SRUC Board offers the opportunity to help shape the future direction of a distinctive tertiary institution with a growing national and international profile. At a time of significant change across the tertiary education sector and the natural economy, Board members will contribute to the strategic oversight of an organisation that plays an important role in education, research, innovation and skills development in Scotland and beyond.



Dr Kate Richards, Chair



Professor Wayne Powell, Principal and Chief Executive

SRUC – Who We Are

Our Vision: *To be a global tertiary powerhouse, a place-based university college working collaboratively to build a sustainable future for the natural economy.*

Our Mission: *We will define what tertiary education means in the 21st century. We will create a high-performing innovation and skills ecosystem that powers a natural capital-based economy. We will help to address major global challenges of climate change; food, water, and energy security; and biodiversity loss. We will drive imaginative new ways of working between business, government, communities, and academia.*

Our Purpose: *To deliver sustained impact and innovation in the natural economy and create a sustainable future for our staff and students, communities, business, and the environment, in Scotland and globally.*

Our strategy is clear: to foster innovation, drive sustainable growth and practices, translate research to impact and contribute to a thriving natural economy.

Our Vision, Mission and Purpose translate not only from the global, but to the national and local level. Given that SRUC's footprint reaches into many of the more remote and rural areas of Scotland, our role as an anchor tertiary institution that understands deeply the communities and regions within which we sit, is critical.

Our specialism is the Natural Economy, with a focus on taking a systemic approach, on maintaining a customer focus, and embracing new ways of working.

SRUC is home to 1000 FTE further education students, representing around 2500 learners, as well as approximately 1600 undergraduate students, 200 master's students and 80 PhD students. These students undertake study across a range of courses in the domains of circular economy, planetary health, science, society and business. In addition, SRUC delivered short course training to over 3000 individuals in the last year, more than 8500 knowledge exchange events (face to face, podcast, webinar, etc), and 600 apprenticeships.

The research power of Agriculture, Food and Veterinary Sciences at SRUC (joint submission with University of Edinburgh) has been ranked as number one in the UK based on the quality and breadth of work in REF2021. Research 'power' is an

overarching measure of research quality and volume. We have improved on the quality and size of our submission since the previous exercise, highlighting the scale and excellence of our combined research capabilities.

All 11 impact case studies submitted – eight of which involved SRUC research – were classified as ‘world leading’ (receiving the top 4* REF grading) or ‘internationally excellent’ (3*) in terms of their impact on wider society. All – 100 per cent – of the research environment was also classified as world class or internationally excellent, highlighting the outstanding quality, equipment and culture of the research base. A total of 87 per cent of overall research activity was ranked as 4* or 3*.

SRUC has an annual turnover of £92.3 million and employs approximately 1050 FTE staff operating from six campuses, eight farms, 24 consulting offices, six innovation centres and five veterinary surveillance centres located primarily across Scotland. SRUC’s main purpose is to advance education, science, research and environmental protection and improvement in the rural and land-based industries, both domestically and internationally. The commercial consultancy, and commercially-focused aspects of skills training and some research activities are undertaken through SRUC Innovation Limited.

It is SRUC’s intention to become a new and unique kind of university college for the 21st century that is regional, accessible, market-focused and responsive to a diverse range of challenges in the emerging natural economy. We will remain a strong and unique anchor institution where research, skills and business converge. Such convergence will create new insights that deliver big strategic leaps and new propositions for business, society and government.

All of this activity is firmly rooted in our distinctive ethos of a Scotland-wide presence through regional centres of global excellence. Our objective is to deliver on shared goals with government, business and other partners to drive forward the natural economy through inclusive growth, job creation and generation of commercial opportunities. We will be a research-led organisation pushing on to fulfil higher, world leading goals aligned with the UN SDGs. We will maintain our regional presence in Scotland; essential to allow us to be responsive to local needs. The unique integration of our research, education and consulting specialisms are key to allowing SRUC to deliver an unparalleled service to our students and customers.

SRUC is proud to be a tertiary organisation providing teaching and skills over the FE/HE spectrum. The award of degree awarding powers provides SRUC with a unique opportunity to develop its academic delivery model to serve the natural economy in Scotland and indeed globally. We have introduced a two-school model based on

Veterinary Medicine and Biosciences

and

Natural and Social Sciences

Our new schools are designed to encourage integration (education, research, extension) over the activities of SRUC and be true to our tertiary model. The schools operate across SRUC's full geographic footprint, leverage recent infrastructure investment, and are focused on growth.

The locations of all our campuses across Scotland can be found here – [Study at SRUC | Campuses](#)

SRUC Board and Governance

The current non-executive members of the SRUC Board are listed below. Their biographies can be found under the 'Non-executive Board members' header on the [SRUC Governance website](#).

Non-executive SRUC Board Members

- Dr Kate Richards (Chair)
- Dr Mia Aitchison (Union-nominated Member)
- Jamie Baker
- Dave Bell
- Simon Cunningham
- Craig Davidson (Academic Staff Member)
- Professor Sir Pete Downes
- Jarlath Flynn (Non-academic Staff Member)
- Dr Katrina Hayter
- Alex House (Student Member)
- Fiona Larg
- Oliver Mundell
- Andy Peddie
- Dr Neil Robertson
- Eilidh Rojanai (Union-nominated Member)
- Shaun Shirke (Student Member)
- Professor Mike Smith

Executive Leadership Team (ELT)

The current Executive Leadership Team is listed below. Their biographies can be found under the 'Executive Leadership Team' header on the [SRUC Governance website](#).

- Principal and Chief Executive – Professor Wayne Powell (also an executive member of the SRUC Board)
- Provost and Deputy Principal – Professor Jamie Newbold
- Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Chief Executive – Gavin Macgregor
- Vice Principal – Dr Mary Thomson
- Chief Financial Officer – Andrew Kirkness
- Director of Strategy, Governance and Engagement – Martin Boyle

Sub-Committees of the Board

The sub-committees of the SRUC Board are:

- Strategic Performance Committee (SPC) – Chaired by Professor Sir Pete Downes
- Remuneration and Appointments (R&A) Committee – Chaired by Jamie Baker
- Audit and Risk (A&R) Committee – Chaired by Fiona Larg
- Finance and Estates (F&E) Committee – Chaired by Simon Cunningham
- Student Liaison Committee – Chaired by Andy Peddie

Governance

SRUC is a company limited by guarantee (SC103046) and is a registered Scottish charity (SC003712). SRUC Innovation Ltd (SC148684), a wholly owned subsidiary of SRUC, undertakes SRUC's commercial activities in the areas of Consultancy, Education and Research.

SRUC's learning activities are funded by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). SRUC continues to receive a proportion of its funding for its research, veterinary and advisory activities directly from the Scottish Government.

Academic and government funded not-for-profit business is conducted through SRUC, while commercial (for-profit) activities are conducted through SRUC Innovation Ltd.

As outlined in the SRUC Articles of Association, the SRUC Board consists of at least one executive director (the Principal and Chief Executive) and up to 19 non-

executive directors which includes the elected Chair, staff, union and student members.

The Role of Non-executive Directors on the Board

SRUC is seeking to appoint up to seven Non-Executive Directors, with appointments phased through to 2027 as part of a planned programme of Board succession and skills renewal aligned to SRUC's Strategy 2026–2031. These appointments carry the responsibilities of both Company Director and Charity Trustee.

The Chair is responsible for the leadership of the Board and, together with the Board and the Principal, helps provide high-level strategic direction to SRUC to ensure delivery of its key objectives.

Board members collectively provide high-level strategic oversight and ensure that adequate control and monitoring arrangements exist to support the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) in exercising proper stewardship and working towards agreed strategic objectives.

Board members are asked to bring their expertise and experience to bear on this work. All members question intelligently, debate constructively, challenge rigorously and decide dispassionately, having listened sensitively to the views of others, inside and outside meetings of the governing body.

The Board is entrusted with funds, both public and private, and has a particular duty to observe the highest standards of corporate governance. This includes ensuring and demonstrating integrity and objectivity in the transaction of business, and wherever possible following a policy of openness and transparency in the dissemination of its decisions. Board members must apply the highest standards of corporate governance and observe the accepted principles of public life.

Board members are expected to develop a deep and thorough understanding of SRUC, its teaching, research, innovation and commercial mission, and internal structure and culture. In addition, the Chair is expected to build understanding of SRUC's relationships with relevant external agencies, partners, and the Scottish and UK higher education and tertiary education systems.

Qualifications and Experience

Candidates are sought who can contribute to SRUC's next phase of development as it delivers its Strategy 2026–2031 within a rapidly evolving tertiary education, research and natural economy landscape.

As part of ongoing Board succession planning and skills renewal, SRUC particularly welcomes applications from individuals with strategic leadership experience and expertise in one or more of the following areas:

- audit and risk governance
- tertiary education, skills, research, and international collaboration
- rural and land-based sectors, including current farming experience
- digital transformation, data and cyber resilience
- equality, diversity and inclusion
- innovation, commercialisation and entrepreneurship
- strategic communications, stakeholder engagement and organisational reputation

SRUC also welcomes candidates who can demonstrate experience of collaborative working across industry, government, academia and communities, aligned with SRUC's mission and strategic priorities.

Person Specification

Individuals joining the Board will be expected to bring independent judgement to bear on matters of strategy, performance, governance and institutional development. Board members will contribute to the strategic oversight of SRUC and support the organisation in delivering its mission across education, research, innovation and engagement with the natural economy.

These are significant and rewarding opportunities for individuals who wish to apply their experience and expertise within a complex and evolving tertiary education environment.

Successful candidates will bring the credibility, judgement and strategic perspective required to make a meaningful contribution to Board discussions and decision-making. Candidates should be able to challenge constructively, think critically, engage collaboratively and contribute to an inclusive and effective Board culture.

SRUC is committed to ensuring that its Board reflects the diversity of the communities, sectors and stakeholders it serves. Applications are welcomed

from all suitably experienced individuals who can contribute to the future direction and success of the organisation. SRUC particularly welcomes applications from groups currently underrepresented on the Board, including women, younger people, ethnic minority communities and disabled people.

	Essential	Desirable
Skills / Abilities	• Relevant professional expertise and strategic insight in areas critical to the effective governance, strategic oversight and long-term success of a large and complex organisation, for example finance, commercial development, organisational transformation, risk management or cultural change. Demonstrable ability to provide strategic leadership and judgement during periods of organisational, sectoral or political change. Ability to exercise sound judgement, act with integrity and independence, and command the confidence and respect of others. • Ability to analyse and interpret complex information, contribute constructively to debate, provide appropriate challenge, and support collective decision-making. Strong communication, advocacy, stakeholder engagement and interpersonal skills, including the ability to communicate effectively at senior level, both verbally and in writing. • Understanding of financial governance, financial sustainability and budgetary oversight.	• Ability to act as an ambassador and advocate for SRUC • Media, public affairs or strategic communications skills. • Ability to support innovation, organisational development and strategic change
Experience	• Significant experience and expertise of strategic leadership and change management within a large, complex organisation. • Experience of working within complex organisations in the private, public, or third sectors. • Experience of engaging and building relationships with senior stakeholders across the public, private or third sectors. Experience within the tertiary education, research or skills sector, or the ability to develop an informed understanding of the sector and its operating environment quickly.	• Experience of commercial, consultancy or industry partnership environments. • Experience of supporting organisations through periods of strategic or leadership transition. • Experience of working across international partnerships or collaborations relevant to SRUC's mission.

Knowledge	• Knowledge and understanding of education and research funding or the ability to acquire this knowledge quickly. • Knowledge and understanding of the principles of good corporate governance and their effective implementation. • Awareness of probity and public accountability issues, with a commitment to high standards of integrity, transparency and impartiality. Understanding of the economic, social and political context within Scotland and how this may influence SRUC and the wider tertiary education sector. • Understanding of SRUC's mission, strategic direction and role within Scotland's tertiary education, research and natural economy landscape, or the ability to develop this understanding quickly.	• Understanding of Scottish public policy, funding and regulatory environments relevant to tertiary education, research and skills. • Knowledge of rural, land-based or natural economy sectors. • Knowledge of SRUC, or of comparable tertiary education, research or mission-led organisations. • Understanding of tertiary education models and the integration of further education, higher education, research and knowledge exchange.
Additional Requirements	• Availability to commit appropriate time to the role, including board and committee meetings, stakeholder engagement, and preparatory work. • Commitment to the values, mission and strategic objectives of SRUC	

Personal Attributes

Applicants will have a strong personal commitment to higher and further education, research, innovation and commercial consultancy and have empathy with the values, aims and objectives of SRUC. They will share SRUC's vision and aspirations of national and international excellence and will understand the multiple academic and economic drivers needed to underpin this.

Individual Board members and the Board collectively should at all times conduct themselves in accordance with the accepted high standards of behaviour in public life, which embrace selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Essential personal attributes for Non-executives include:

- Diplomacy and sensitivity

- Sound judgement and judiciousness
- Ability to deal with conflict in a constructive manner
- Ability to establish good working relationships with a diverse range of people (staff, students, other Board members)
- Ability to demonstrate commitment to equality, human rights and inclusion
- Integrity, tact, discretion, independence and objectivity
- Calm, measured approach
- Ability to challenge constructively

Terms and Time Commitment

Non-Executive Directors are appointed for a period of 3 years in the first instance with the possibility of extension for a further three years subject to a satisfactory appraisal. This post is non-remunerated. Travel and subsistence expenses are reimbursed.

The role requires an appropriate level of flexibility and commitment and is expected to involve approximately 18–25 days per annum. This includes attendance at Board meetings, strategy sessions, committee meetings, stakeholder engagement activity and preparatory reading.

If successful, new Board Members may be invited to become a member of a Board sub-committee. Current sub-committees include Remuneration & Appointments, Audit & Risk, Finance & Estates, Student Liaison, and Strategic Performance. Committees meet four times per year.

These positions will be subject to a Disclosure Scotland check.

The SRUC central office is located at King's Buildings, West Mains Road, Edinburgh, EH9 3JG.

The location of the Board meetings alternates when practicable between all SRUC campuses. A full list of locations can be found here – [Study at SRUC | Campuses](#)
The position will be subject to a Disclosure Scotland check.

Application and Interview Process

AspenPeople Ltd. have a longstanding relationship with SRUC, and they have been appointed to support SRUC with the recruitment of Non-executive Board members. [To apply](#), please upload your application (CV, covering letter and equal opportunities form) All applications must include the following:

- **A full CV with your education and professional qualifications and full employment history.**
- **A short covering letter of no more than two A4 sized pages explaining why this appointment interests you and how you meet the appointment qualifications/experience and key competencies as detailed in the candidate brief.**
- **Names of at least three referees. Please note, referees will not be contacted without your prior consent.**
- **Please provide daytime, evening and mobile telephone numbers, together with an appropriate, confidential and acceptable e-mail address for all correspondence relating to your application.**

You should receive an automatic acknowledgment of your application – if you do not, please contact **Gillian Blackadder** at AspenPeople Ltd on **0141 212 7555**.

Contact Information

Should you wish to have an informal, confidential discussion about the post, please contact **Donogh O'Brien** at AspenPeople Ltd on **07795812574**, or **Katharine Price** or **Gillian Blackadder** on **0141 212 7555**.

Closing Date

The closing date for all applications is noon on **Thursday 10th September**.

Interview

Interviews will be conducted during **the week of 28th September**.

Please can you note any annual leave or prior commitments you have planned during this time, on your application.

Equal Opportunities Policy Statement

It is the policy of SRUC to provide equality of opportunity for all applicants for employment and for all its employees.

This policy applies regardless of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or any other protected characteristic.

SRUC is committed to the development and use of employment procedures and practices, which do not discriminate and which will provide genuine equality of opportunity for all employees.

Links to Supplementary Information on SRUC

The following links provide additional information that may be of interest to prospective candidates.

The SRUC website, [Home | SRUC](#), provides a significant amount of information about the organisation which may be of interest to prospective candidates.

Strategy: [SRUC | Strategy 2026 – 2031](#)

Accounts: [sruc-financial-statements-2025.pdf](#) (SRUC changed its year end to 31 July from 31 March in 2025. The 31 July 2025 financial statements report on a 16-month period)

Governance: Information on the current Board members of SRUC and SRUC Innovation Ltd can be found at [Governance | SRUC](#)

Studying at SRUC:

[SRUC | Study options](#)

[SRUC | School of Veterinary Medicine and Biosciences](#)

[SRUC | Student life](#)

[Study in Scotland](#)

Research at SRUC:

[Challenge Centres | SRUC](#)

[Research areas | SRUC](#)

[Research impact | SRUC](#)

Business Services:

[SAC Consulting \(sruc.ac.uk\)](http://sruc.ac.uk)

[Veterinary & laboratory services \(sruc.ac.uk\)](http://sruc.ac.uk)

[Enterprise Academy for the Rural & Natural Economy | SRUC](#)

[Commercial opportunities | SRUC](#)



SRUC

At the heart of the natural economy

SRUC is a company limited by guarantee (SC103046) and is a registered Scottish charity (SC003712). SRUC Innovation Ltd (SC148684) is an SRUC company. Registered Office: Peter Wilson Building, King's Buildings, West Mains Road, Edinburgh EH9 3JG.