

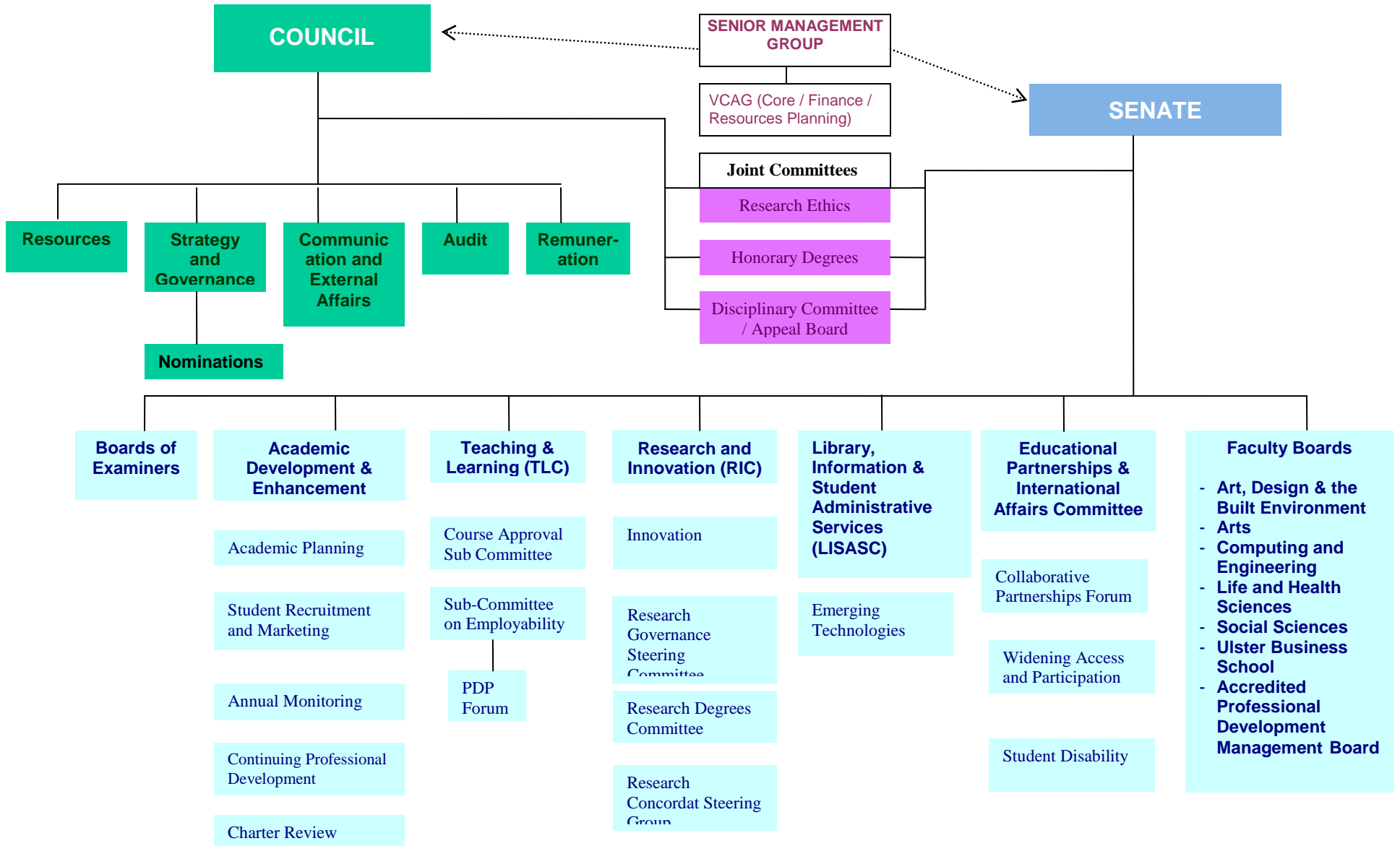


THE SENATE

**AN INFORMATION LEAFLET FOR STAFF AND
STUDENT UNION REPRESENTATIVES**

November 2011

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER COMMITTEE STRUCTURE CHART 2010/11



Introduction

The Senate is the supreme academic decision-making authority within the University and therefore has a key role in the academic governance of the University. It is responsible for the academic direction and strategies of the University in relation to teaching and learning, research and academic enterprise. It is also responsible for the establishment, monitoring and review of policies, procedures and the regulatory framework within which Faculties and departments must operate to ensure consistency and good practice in the superintendence of the University's awards and of students enrolled on these.

A Self-Effectiveness Review of the University Senate was undertaken in 2005/06 and a range of recommendations arising (including the production of this leaflet) taken forward to ensure that the Senate is better positioned to undertake its governance functions effectively. A further Self-Effectiveness Review was undertaken during 2010/11.

What is the role of the Senate?

As Senate is the most senior University Committee with responsibility for academic matters, it has a broad remit which is set out in University Statute II and covers the areas listed below.

- Determining the conditions for admissions and continuation of studies;
- Determining the extent to which other study or qualifications may be recognised by the University;
- Promoting, directing, regulating and controlling the teaching and research of the University;
- Regulating the conduct of examinations;
- Appointing internal examiners and nominating external examiners;
- Granting of academic distinctions both of the University and of those offered jointly with other institutions. Senate receives the recommendations directly from the Boards of Examiners; [Note that Honorary Degrees are granted and conferred through the delegated authority framework to a joint committee of the Council and the Senate.]
- determining the formalities attaching to the granting and conferment of academic distinctions;

- determining the functions of members of academic staff within their terms and conditions of appointment [Any Sub-Committee may make recommendations which affect the functions of academic staff for consideration by the Senate];
- prescribing and regulating the use of academic dress in the University.

Senate has, as an outcome of its Self-Effectiveness Review, delegated decision-making authority on a range of issues to its Committees where the detailed expertise and consideration is given. Senate retains ultimate responsibility for decisions made on its behalf and receives the minutes of its Committees to enable it to maintain an oversight of these decisions.

Senate may also discuss, declare an opinion and make recommendations to the Council on any matter affecting the University.

What type of issues does Senate discuss?

Senate has a wide range of areas on which it can make decisions or express opinions. If appropriate, it may also make recommendations to the University Council. Agendas are structured to give prominence to discussion of strategic issues.

Issues discussed in 2010/11 included student non-continuation and progression, the Academic Plan and a potential new model for placement.

How does Senate conduct its business?

Senate operates in accordance with its Standing Orders which are available online at www.ulster.ac.uk/quality/qmau/academicgovernance.html. These specify how Senate will operate, for example, by specifying the frequency of meetings per year and the numbers required to make a meeting of Senate quorate. They also set out details regarding attendance, voting, dissent, and the disclosure of interests.

Who are the members of the Senate?

The membership of Senate is defined in Statute II. The Vice-Chancellor is the Chair of the Senate. The Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Provosts, Deans, the Director of Information Services, the President of the Students' Union and up to two other members identified by Senate (if it so chooses) are ex-officio members of the Senate.

The remainder, and the majority, of the membership is made up of elected staff members. Three academic staff members are elected by each Faculty and two members are elected from the business support staff group. In addition there are four elected Student Union sabbatical officers. Senate may also co-opt up to two additional members.

Directors and/or other members of administrative or academic staff may attend meetings from time to time. They are not members of the Senate but attend to provide clarification or respond to queries in relation to specific agenda items. In addition, members of the Quality Management and Audit Unit act as Secretariat and attend to take minutes, provide clarification on operational matters and to ensure that meetings of Senate are conducted in accordance with its Standing Orders.

What is the link between Council and Senate?

The Council is the employing body of the University and is responsible for all resourcing matters including staffing, finance, estates and fee determination. Council has a predominantly lay membership but the Vice-Chancellor is a member of both Council and Senate and reports to Council on behalf of Senate. Where academic decisions have resourcing implications, Senate makes recommendations to the Council. The Senate may also express an opinion to the Council on any matter which it considers relevant.

The following table gives examples of the key functions of the Council and the Senate.

Functions of Council	Functions of Senate
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Determination of Corporate Plan, Business Plan and Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Organisation of Faculties/Schools

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Resource Strategy • Estates Strategy including purchase and sale of land • Approval of risk management strategy • Arrangements for internal and external audit • Appointment of Vice-Chancellor • Staff Development and Equality matters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approving Regulations for Awards • Prescribe regulations for examinations and assessment of students • Grant and confer awards • Recognition of educational institutions • Academic Strategies and progress against these
---	---

How does Senate relate to other University Committees?

Senate and Council are the two main governing bodies of the University. In order to conduct their business effectively, both Committees are permitted to establish Committees with delegated authority for particular matters. All Committees of the Senate provide their minutes to Senate with recommendations for consideration by Senate, where appropriate. In addition, a number of joint Committees exist and these report to both Council and Senate.

The University's full Committee structure is set out on page 2 of this leaflet.

Does the Senior Management Group (SMG) report to Senate?

SMG does not formally report through to Senate. However, the Vice-Chancellor reports to each meeting of Senate on the issues being discussed by SMG for the information of members.

What is the role of a member of Senate?

The primary role of all members of the Senate is to act in the best interests of the University, its students and staff by considering matters fully and fairly.

Members are expected to read papers provided, actively contribute to the debate and participate in the decision-making process. Members have a responsibility to ensure that decisions are well-informed, clearly expressed

and put into effect. Members may need to ask questions or challenge proposed courses of action in order to assure themselves of this.

Elected members represent their voting constituency and are expected to be familiar with the views of that constituency, or to make efforts to discuss matters with representatives from the relevant staff group, and to communicate decisions back to the relevant staff group. There are formal channels for communication via the Committee structure and the minutes and papers of Senate are made available on the University website at www.ulster.ac.uk/quality/qmau/academicgovernance.html . It is not expected, therefore, that elected members should circulate papers or minutes. However, members should play their part in ensuring effective and speedy communication by answering questions about Senate business, communicating key decisions when opportunities arise and contacting those who have expressed their views on matters discussed by Senate.

How can a member of staff become a member of the Senate?

A significant proportion of the membership of the Senate is elected by its relevant constituency. There are three elected members from each Faculty and two members representing the business support staff. Each elected member serves for a period of four years and may serve for two consecutive full periods of four years.

One of the elected members from each Faculty must be Professors or Heads of School. The other two members may be drawn from any member of academic staff in the Faculty (including Professors and Heads of School).

Student Union sabbatical officers are elected by the student body through elections arranged by the Students' Union and the Students' Union Executive agrees which representatives from the sabbatical officers will join the membership of Senate and other University Committees.

Elected members may resign from the Senate at any time by giving notice in writing to the Senate.

How is the Agenda for Senate drawn up?

Substantive agenda items are referred to the Senate from the Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellors and other Committees of the University. The Senate receives the reports from all its Committees, and from Joint Committees of the Senate and the Council, and matters requiring consideration by the Senate are identified. Members wishing to place items on the agenda should submit them to the Head of the Quality Management and Audit Unit with a supporting statement not fewer than 14 days before the meeting in accordance with the Standing Orders of the Senate.

Do members have to attend every meeting of the Senate?

Members of the Senate should attend all meetings. Where non-attendance is unavoidable, members should contact a member of the Secretariat to give apologies at the earliest opportunity giving the reason for non-attendance. Membership of the Senate will automatically cease if an ordinary member fails to attend three successive ordinary meetings without providing an explanation for their non-attendance satisfactory to the Senate.

What if a member of Senate disagrees with a decision made by the Senate?

Decisions are made during meetings by consensus. All members should contribute to the discussion and decision-making process of Senate. The Chair invites comments from members on matters for decision and asks the Senate for its consent to recommendations received from other committees or departments. The background information for most decisions is included in the relevant committee paper but if a member requires further information before agreeing to a decision, they can ask for this.

Any member may dissent from a decision made by the Senate and have this recorded in the minutes. This should be stated by the relevant member during the meeting at the point at which the decision is made. If a member is not able to attend a meeting but wishes to make comments on a particular issue to be discussed, they should contact another member of the Senate and ask them to raise the matter on their behalf.

What if a member of Senate has a personal interest in a particular matter?

If a member has a pecuniary, family or personal interest in any matter discussed, they should state that at the meeting and their view will not be counted in any vote on the matter.

A Register of Interests is held and updated annually by the Quality Management and Audit Unit. Members are asked to review the information held about their interests held on the Register and provide updates annually. Members should, however, advise a member of the Quality Management and Audit Unit of new interests as and when they arise. A copy of the Register of Interests is available at all meetings of the Senate and may be consulted by members.

How do I get copies of minutes and papers?

If you are a member of Senate, the agenda and papers will be sent to you in hard copy seven days before the date of the meeting. The Unreserved Agenda and Papers are also available to all staff online and in advance of the meeting from www.ulster.ac.uk/quality/qmau/senate.html. Minutes will be sent to you by email within 10 days of the date of the meeting. Minutes are published once they have been deemed confirmed (see below) together with a short digest of the minutes.

What if a member of Senate doesn't agree with the minutes of a meeting of Senate?

Minutes should reflect the key points of discussion and decisions of the Committee. Minutes are circulated initially as "unconfirmed" and therefore have the status of a draft document. If a member of Senate feels that an item is inaccurate or has been omitted, they should contact a member of the Secretariat within seven days of receiving the minutes. Their comment will then be brought to the attention of the Chair who will raise it at the next meeting of Senate and, if agreed by members, the amendment will be made before the minutes are deemed confirmed.

Minutes are deemed "confirmed" if no comments have been received by the Secretariat within seven days of circulation of the minutes. If comments have been received, they are deemed confirmed after amendments agreed at the next meeting of the Senate have been incorporated. The Chair signs the final confirmed copy of the minutes. Only confirmed minutes of the Senate are published on the web.

What is the difference between Unreserved and Reserved business?

Reserved areas of business include appointments, promotions and other matters affecting the personal affairs of individual employees of the University and the admission and academic assessment of individual students. Student members of the Committee may not participate in the consideration of Reserved business and the Students' Union members of the Senate leave the meeting before Reserved items of business are considered. All other business is deemed unreserved. Reserved papers must not be made available to student members or distributed beyond the members of the Senate, senior officers or committee secretariat.

Confidential matters are considered by the full membership but may not be discussed with other staff. Confidential matters will be clearly identified and this information will not be published on the University website as long as it remains confidential (see also information on status codes below).

All minutes and papers, regardless of status, are potentially discoverable under the Freedom of Information Act provided disclosure would not be contrary to the Data Protection Act.

What does the *Status Code* on papers mean?

All papers received by Senate have a Status Code. This is clearly indicated in bold on the top right of the front sheet of each paper. The following Status Codes are used:

Status Code - Green	refers to papers for general discussion
Status Code - White	refers to papers requiring approval by the Senate
Status Code - Red	indicates in-confidence papers restricted to members of the Senate

Further Information

Information on the operation of the Senate, its current membership, Standing Orders, agendas, papers and minutes is available from:

<http://www.ulster.ac.uk/quality/qmau/academicgovernance.html>

Secretariat:

Quality Management and Audit Unit

Mrs Janet Alleyne: Room J506
 Coleraine
 Extension: 24560
 jmh.alleyne@ulster.ac.uk

Ms Claire Browning Room 2H17A
 Jordanstown
 Extension: 66117
 c.browning@ulster.ac.uk

Other information:

The Council and Committees of the Council are serviced by Corporate Planning and Governance. Minutes of the meetings of these Committees are available online at: <http://plangov.ulster.ac.uk/governance/minutes.html>