

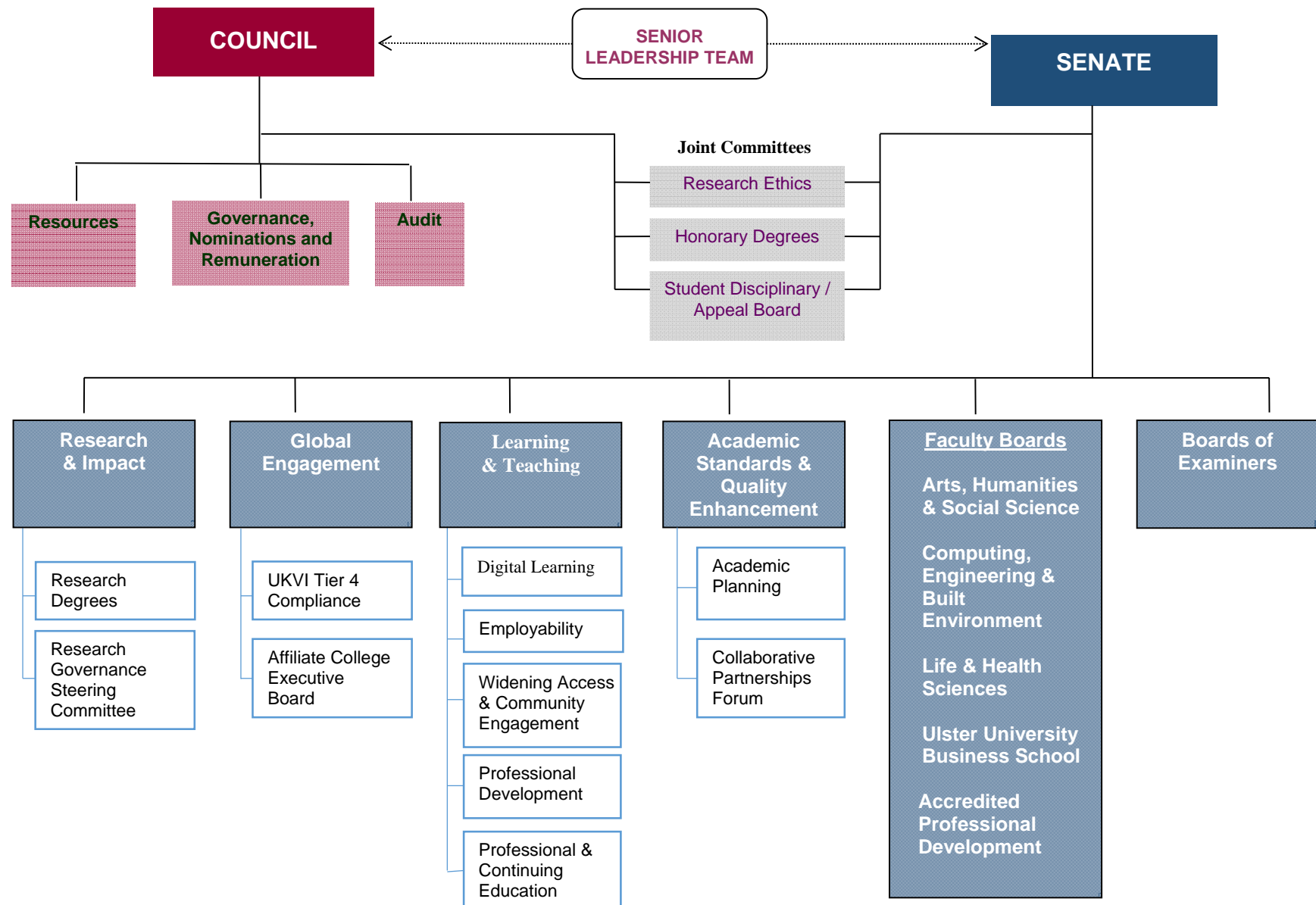


**THE SENATE**

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

**November 2017**

## Committee Structure





## **Introduction**

The University Senate is the principal academic committee in the University and plays a key role in both the academic direction and academic governance of the University. It is a key forum for the discussion of academic matters including those arising from the broader environmental context. It works in collaboration with the University Council, the Senior Leadership Team and the University's academic community.

Senate's role is three-fold:

- An advisory role - advising Council, the Vice-Chancellor and the senior leadership team on academic matters and ensuring that the Universities civic engagement activity aligns with the University's academic role. Matters may be referred to it for consideration and in addition, Senate shall maintain oversight of developments in the internal and external environment and their potential impact on academic matters;
- A academic governance role through
  - o determining strategies, regulations, policies and structures to secure and promote academic excellence in teaching and research in line with Statute II of the University;
  - o maintaining oversight of the exercise of academic matters within the University in line with the University's strategic priorities and to ensure the maintenance of academic standards, the quality of its provision and the student experience;
- Decision-making powers in areas where Senate has the final authority such as the conferment of awards or recognition of partner institutions in line with Statute II.

## **Terms of Reference**

Senate shall:

- 1 Carry out its functions as specified in Statute II of the University
- 2 Advise and make recommendations to the Vice-Chancellor and Council on:

- a. the strategic development, implementation and monitoring of academic objectives of the University;
  - b. The impact of developments in the internal and external environment on academic matters;
  - c. Academic priorities whilst remaining mindful of resource implications;
  - d. Significant changes in academic organisation;
  - e. Any matters which are referred to it by the Vice-Chancellor or Council;
- 3 Requests reports from, or refer matters to, relevant committees or members of the senior leadership team;
- 4 Consider academic matters raised by Faculty Boards, Committees of Senate or the academic community through a member of Senate;
- 5 Report any significant issues to the Council and provide an annual academic assurance report to the Council.

The Senate may:

- establish committees or working groups to consider, advise or determine matters on its behalf;
- delegate its powers and responsibilities to a committee, Faculty Board or officer of the University.
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The Senate will review its own effectiveness on a regular basis.

Senate has 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.

### **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](http://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 Ordinance XIV. The Vice-Chancellor is the Chair of the Senate. The Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Provosts, Executive Deans, 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 of the membership is made up of elected staff members. Three academic staff members are elected by each Faculty. In addition there are three elected Student Union representatives. 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.

### **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.

### **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 Leadership Team (SLT) report to Senate?**

SLT does not formally report through to Senate. However, the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy-Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellors report to each meeting of Senate on current issues 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](http://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?**

There are three elected members from the academic community of each Faculty. 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 a Professor. The other two members may be drawn from any member of academic staff in the Faculty (including the Professoriate).

Student Union representatives are appointed by the Students' Union.

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.

#### **How does the 'starred' system operate?**

Senate has adopted the 'starred' system for agenda items with only items starred discussed. This includes the minutes, matters arising and Chair's communications as well as key strategic papers which are starred in advance by the Chair. At the start of each meeting, members would be invited to 'star' any other agenda items they considered should be discussed. Recommendations included in papers not starred are approved without discussion and all other papers taken as noted by members. The intention is not to stifle discussion but to enable sufficient time for discussion of key matters. All members should therefore ensure that they had considered papers sufficiently in advance of the meeting to enable informed discussion/approval of items.

#### **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. 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 Secretariat 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 electronically seven days before the date of the meeting. The unreserved agenda and non-confidential papers are also available to all staff online and in advance of the meeting from [www.ulster.ac.uk/quality/qmau/senate.html](http://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 unreserved 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 - <b>Green</b>	refers to papers for general discussion
Status Code - <b>White</b>	refers to papers requiring approval by the Senate
Status Code - <b>Red</b>	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:

Mrs Janet Alleyne: Room J506  
Coleraine  
Extension: 24560  
[jmh.alleyne@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:jmh.alleyne@ulster.ac.uk)

Ms Claire Browning Room 16C13  
Jordanstown  
Extension: 66117  
[c.browning@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:c.browning@ulster.ac.uk)

### Other information:

The Council and Committees of the Council are serviced by the University Secretary's department. Further information on these Committees is available online at:

<http://www.ulster.ac.uk/secretary/secretariat/council.html>