Senatus Academicus (Senate) Handbook 2024-25

July 2024

Senate Support within Registry Services

Contents

1 Introduction

This handbook is intended to provide information on the context, constitution, role and functions of Senatus Academicus (Senate) within the broader governance of the University, and to support Senate members in carrying out their role effectively. This handbook provides guidance for members and does not supersede information in relevant legislation, statutory instruments, University Ordinances or Resolutions.

Section 1.1: 'Senatus Academicus – a brief overview', provides essential information about the membership of Senate, Senate's role within the broader University context, and contact information for the Senate Support team.

The remainder of the handbook provides more detailed information on the conduct of business, role and functions of Senate.

1.1 Senatus Academicus – a brief overview

1.1.1 Membership

Senate has positions for approximately 300 members. These are divided into:
- 100 elected academic staff members (non-professorial)
- 100 elected academic staff members (professorial)
- 30 elected student members
- Up to 80 ex-officio members (including Heads of Schools, Heads of College, the Provost, Vice-Principals, College academic staff nominees such as College Deans, and elected Professional Services staff).

Senate is convened by the Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University, Professor Sir Peter Mathieson.

An induction for new and returning Senate members is provided annually in September.

Elections for academic staff to join Senate take place annually in Semester 2.
Election for Professional Services staff to join Senate take place every 3 years.
Student elections are managed by the Students' Association and take place in line with the academic cycle for relevant student representatives.

1.1.2 Role of Senate

Senate is the supreme academic body of the University, and the role of Senate is defined in legislation, in the Universities (Scotland) Acts and Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016. Under the legislation, Senate's role focusses on academic matters and as set out in the 1889 and 2016 Acts the role of Senate is:

- "to regulate and superintend the teaching and discipline of the University and to promote research" (Universities (Scotland) Act 1889)
- [to be] "responsible for the overall planning, co-ordination, development and supervision of the academic work of the institution" (Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016)

Routine business at Senate includes approving the award of University degrees including Honorary degrees; approving the conferment of Professor Emeritus status on retiring professorial staff; receiving regular reports and updates from Senate Standing Committees and regular updates from the Research Strategy Group and other relevant Committees, such as the Academic Promotions Committee and Knowledge Strategy Committee; considering and commenting on Court Resolutions including Degree Regulations and Resolutions relating to student disciplinary procedures; and regularly reporting to the University Court.

Senate delegates the handling of substantial detailed business to three Senate Standing Committees: Senate Education Committee (SEC), Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC), and Senate Quality Assurance Committee (QAC).

1.1.3   Senate SharePoint

The main source of information and resources is the Senate SharePoint. The Senate SharePoint is open to all staff and students at the University and includes the following:

- Information on Elections to Senate and its Standing Committees for academic staff members, including the Senate Election Regulations.
- Conduct of Senate Business, including the Senate Standing Orders
- Information on Senate membership, including a list of current members
- Dates of Ordinary meetings and e-Senate meetings
- Senate agendas, open papers, and minutes
- The Senate Committees Newsletter

[Senate SharePoint](#)

1.1.4   Senate Members Portal

The Senate Members Portal is a member-only area which provides information and resources specific to Senate members. The Portal is accessible only by members (via EASE login) and is used for the following:

- To share member-related resources such as the Senate Handbook and Induction materials
- To conduct meetings of e-Senate
- To share closed papers and minutes of Senate meetings and the Senate Actions Log
- To undertake consultation on proposals planned to come to Senate
- To provide news and updates on Senate matters between meetings

[Senate Members Portal](#)

1.1.5   Further information and support

The University website also contains high-level information on Senate and its Committees:
[Senate website](#)

Senate is supported by the Senate Support team in Academic Services: SenateSupport@ed.ac.uk
Please contact Senate Support if you need any further information.

2 Senate in context

2.1 The constitution of the University

The University of Edinburgh is constituted by the Universities (Scotland) Acts 1858 to 1966, and the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016. The constitution of the University depends on these Acts of Parliament. These Acts of Parliament are supplemented by Ordinances and Statutory Instruments, which are forms of secondary legislation and require approval from the Privy Council. Examples of Statutory Instruments (SIs) relevant to the University are the SIs that enabled the creation in 1998 of the Faculty of Education (formerly the Moray House Institute of Education), and that enabled the 2011 merger between Edinburgh College of Art and the University of Edinburgh. The governance and structure of the University is also shaped by Resolutions, which are approved by the University Court and do not require external authorisation.

The legislation relating to the University make specific provision for three major bodies in the Governance of the University:
- The General Council
- The University Court
- Senatus Academicus (Senate)

The legislation, supporting secondary legislation, and Resolutions referenced above set out the powers of these bodies.

General Council consists mainly of alumni of the University of Edinburgh, plus eligible academic staff and a more limited number from other related categories. It has a statutory right to comment on matters which affect the well-being and prosperity of the University and to be consulted on Ordinances and Resolutions. The aim is to ensure that graduates of this University have a continuing voice in the management of its affairs. There are three General Council Assessors on Court, appointed following an open advertisement and recruitment process overseen by a joint Court-General Council Selection Panel. It is also responsible for election of the Chancellor. Further information on the General Council can be found at:
- [General Council](#)

The University Court is the governing body and legal persona of the University. Court is convened by the Rector of the University, and its membership includes two Senate Assessors, elected from the Senate academic staff membership, and one Joint Academic and Senate Assessor, elected by all academic staff. Further information on the current Senate Assessors and the election of new Senate Assessors to Court can be found on the Court website:
- [The University Court](#)

The present powers of the Court are defined in the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966 and as amended by Ordinances/Statutory Instruments/Scottish Statutory Instruments. Court's Primary Responsibilities are [set out in this document](#). They include, among others, the amendment of the composition, powers and functions of bodies in the University and the creation of new bodies, the administration and management of the whole revenue and property of the University, internal arrangements of the University, appointments, review of decisions of the Senate and, on the recommendation of the Senate, the regulation of degrees and admission and discipline of students.

Under the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966, Court exercises its powers:
- By Ordinance, which requires consultation with the General Council, the Senatus Academicus and others having an interest and then Privy Council approval;
- By Resolution, which similarly requires consultation with the General Council, Senatus Academicus and others having an interest but not approval by Privy Council;
- Or by simple decision without the need for formal consultation.

Ordinances and Resolutions require consultation with Senate before they are approved by Court. Decisions that are made by Resolution include:
- Creation of new degree types
- Creation of new Chairs (Professorships)
- Approval of the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Degree Regulations
- Creation or amendment of student disciplinary procedures

A useful overview of University governance can be found on the Governance website:
> [University Governance](#)

Senate's role and responsibilities within the University governance structure are covered in section 3 below.

2.2 Academic Governance

Academic governance refers to the ways in which academic matters are governed within the University. This includes oversight and regulation of the academic provision of the University, and is separate and distinct from corporate governance of the University.

Academic governance is crucial to ensuring and maintaining the academic standards of the University. It is also vital to ensuring that the University fulfils the requirements and expectations of external authorities and agencies, particularly the Scottish Qualifications Authority, the Quality Assurance Agency (Scotland), Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, Research Councils, and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies where these accredit specific University of Edinburgh degree programmes.

Senate is the supreme academic body of the University, but both Senate and Court have roles in the academic governance of the University, under the relevant legislation. Senate also works within the strategic direction contained in the University's Strategic Plan approved by Court and its underlying strategies.

The University's academic regulatory framework is set out in its regulations, codes of practice and guidance, and these can be found on the Academic Services website:
- [Policies and regulations](#)

This academic regulatory framework is supported by the University's quality framework, which supports the management of academic standards and the student experience across the University's academic provision and student services and aligns with external body requirements, including the Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF). Further information is available on the Academic Services website:
- [Quality](#)

Senate has responsibility for the University academic regulatory framework and the University quality framework. These are managed, on behalf of Senate, by the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee, and the Quality Assurance Committee. Further details on the role of Senate and its Committees can be found in sections 3 and 5.

Senate plays a role in the development of new initiatives and strategic priorities which fall under its remit. New learning and teaching and research initiatives may arise from Schools and Colleges, and from University-wide projects.

Senate, via its Committees, reviews and has responsibility for the approval of the academic elements of such projects, while questions of University strategy, resource management and risk management are the responsibility of the University Court, supported by the University Executive[1].

Senate does not hold a budget.

3   Senate

3.1   Senate's role and responsibilities

Senate's role and responsibilities focuses on academic matters as outlined above.
Academic governance:

- Formally approving the award of University degrees, including honorary degrees.
- Approving the conferment of Emeritus status on retiring professors of the University, as set out in the HR Policy for the Award of Honorary Status.
- Commenting on draft Resolutions and Ordinances from Court, for example relating to the creation of new degree types or new Chairs (Professorships), or the Degree Regulations.
- Setting the academic regulatory framework (this responsibility is delegated to the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee).
- Maintaining the quality and standards of the University's awards (this responsibility is delegated to the Senate Quality Assurance Committee).
- Senate has delegated its powers to admit, examine and withdraw students, and to grant permissions, concessions and exemptions, to College level. Where the Head of College does not have authority to award a particular concession, the Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee may award the concession.[2]
- Senate has delegated its powers to approve courses and programmes to School Boards of Studies and relevant College committees: this is now managed under the Boards of Studies Terms of Reference, and the Programme and Course Approval and Management Policy, owned by the Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee.[3]

Learning and teaching:

- Discussing and advising on matters of strategic importance for learning and teaching development

---

[1] Statement of Court Responsibilities & University Executive remit
[2] As per Paper D1 *Devolution of Powers of Senate,* Senate 22 March 2006. Paper available upon request
[3] *Ibid.*

- Setting strategy on learning, teaching and curriculum development (delegated to the Senate Education Committee).

Promoting Research:
- Discussing and advising on matters of strategic importance for research development
- Receiving updates from the Research Strategy Group.

Regulating conduct of the students of the University:
- Conduct of the students of the University is regulated via the Code of Student Conduct (administration of the Code, approved by Court by resolution, is delegated to Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee).
- Academic misconduct is managed via the Taught Assessment Regulations, Postgraduate Assessment Regulations, and Academic Misconduct Procedures (delegated to Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee).

Senate also:
- Communicates policy changes approved by Senate or its Standing Committees.
  - Updates are communicated to Senate members and the wider University via the Senate Committees Newsletter available on the Senate SharePoint.
  - Academic Services communicate regulation and policy updates to the University community on an annual basis via an update to key stakeholders at the end of each academic session.
- Reports to the Court on any matter referred to the Senate by the Court.
- Approves jointly with Court the 'Laigh Year Regulations' which enable Students' Association Officers to take a sabbatical from their studies during their period in office.

To support it in carrying out its role, Senate receives regular reports and updates from:
- The University Court.
- The Senate Standing Committees.
- The Honorary Degrees Committee: including Honorary Degree nominations for Senate's approval.
- Knowledge Strategy Committee: this is a joint committee of Senate and Court.
- Research Strategy Group (RSG): this group discusses University-wide research policy issues and receives reports on issues relating to research policy, research integrity and the responsible use of research metrics from its subgroups. RSG reports to the University Executive, and provides updates to Senate.

3.2 Senate membership and elections

The composition of Senate is set out in University Ordinance 212: Composition of the Senatus Academicus. This Ordinance was drafted to implement the requirements of the Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2016, and developed following extensive consultation with Senate and other stakeholders. The Ordinance was approved by Senate on 29 May 2019, then by Court, and by Privy Council on 8 October 2019, and came into force on 1 August 2020.

Under Ordinance 212, Senate is made up of:

Position	Membership
Principal	1
Heads of Schools	20
Heads of Colleges	3
Other *ex officio* appointments	Approximately 50
Total *ex officio*	**Approximately 70 (maximum 80)**
Elected academic staff (Professorial)	100
Elected academic staff (Non-professorial)	100
Elected students	30
Total elected	**230**
Total Senate membership	**Approximately 300**

The elected membership of Senate is broken down as follows:

Position	Membership	Membership Breakdown
Elected academic staff (Professorial)	100[4]	34 Professors from the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
		33 Professors from the College of Science and Engineering
		33 Professors from the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine
Elected academic staff (Non-professorial)	100[5]	34 academic staff members from the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
		33 academic staff members from the College of Science and Engineering
		33 academic staff members from the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine
Elected students	30[6]	Elections arranged by the Students' Association

Elections for academic staff members take place annually and are organised by the Senate Support team. The nomination process and elections take place in Semester 2, and elections are held online. Senate elections are held under the Senatus Academicus (Senate) Election Regulations, which are approved by Court on the recommendation of Senate.

Ordinance 212, the Senatus Academicus Election Regulations, and detailed information on the terms of office, eligibility and annual timescales are available on the Senate SharePoint:

Senate Elections - Academic staff members

Senate members' roles and responsibilities

An induction event will be organised for both new and returning members annually. At this event, Senate members will be given a brief introduction to academic governance, an overview of Senate priorities for the year ahead, the Senate Standing Committees and the format of

---

[4] Ordinance 212 Paragraph 3a.
[5] Ordinance 212 Paragraph 3a.
[6] Ordinance 212 Paragraph 5.

Senate. A member-dedicated session is provided at Induction to help develop members' understanding of their role on Senate and outline members' responsibilities.

Responsibilities and Expectations of all Senate Members

- Be collegial and constructive in approach
- Attend each meeting and participate fully in the work of the Senate. This will involve looking ahead and consulting/gathering input in order to provide the broad spectrum of thoughts and opinions that are necessary for proper consideration of the area being discussed.
- Uphold the 'nine principles of public life': selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, leadership, duty and respect. These are described in the Court Members Code of Conduct:
  - [Court Members Code of Conduct](#)
- Take collective and individual ownership for the issues under the Senate's remit and for the discussion and resolution of these issues.
- Be committed to communicating the work of Senate to the wider University Community.
- Assess the impact of applying proposed new or revised policies and practices on the 'protected characteristic groups' set out in the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, subject to relevance and proportionality. Further details can be found at:
  - [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – impact assessments](#)
- Assess the impact of applying proposed new or revised policies and practises on privacy and data protection. Further details can be found at:
  - [Data Protection – impact assessments](#)

4   Senate meetings

The framework for Senate meetings is set out in the Senatus Standing Orders

- [Senate SharePoint – Operation of Senate](#)

Senate holds at least four synchronous Ordinary meetings per year, and during semester time. Meetings are normally held in October, December, February and May/ June. Additionally, business can be conducted electronically via a meeting of e-Senate which usually precedes an Ordinary meeting to conduct any routine business which is for information or for noting.

Ordinary meetings are planned to take place in hybrid format from 1:10-4pm. Senate members will receive a calendar invitation for each Ordinary meeting at the beginning of each year. Members are asked to accept the invitation to record their planned attendance. Members are asked to decline the invitation if they wish to send their apologies.

Each Ordinary meeting is preceded by 30 minutes of informal networking, this is usually held from 12:30-1pm. Further details on the location of the informal networking will be circulated to members with a calendar invitation.

Senate also holds Graduation meetings, and can hold Special meetings. Further information can be found below.

E-Senate and Ordinary Senate meeting dates are published on the Senate SharePoint:

- [Senate website – meeting dates](#)

4.1 Accessibility

If members require any specific support to be put in place in order to attend and participate in a meeting of Senate (e.g. British Sign Language requirements), please contact Senate Support at SenateSupport@ed.ac.uk so that arrangements can be made. All in-person Senate meetings will take place in wheelchair accessible venues with hearing induction loops.

4.2 Setting of dates of Ordinary Senate meetings

The dates of meetings in any academic year shall be determined by Senate at the final Ordinary Meeting of the previous academic year and published on the Senate website.

4.3 Conduct of business - Ordinary meetings

Senate Support will prepare and publish agendas and open papers to Senate members two weeks in advance of the meeting, via the Senate SharePoint. The final agenda and papers will be circulated one week in advance in line with Standing Order 7. Senate members are notified by email when the papers are available. Closed papers (confidential papers to which Freedom of Information or Data Protection exemptions apply) are circulated separately to Senate members via the Senate Members Portal. It is good practice to minimise closed business, in order to ensure as much transparency as possible regarding the operation of Senate. The minute for a closed item is usually included in the open minute of the relevant meeting, unless there is good reason for the business and discussion to remain closed.

When closed papers are discussed at the Senate meeting, those who are not required to be part of the discussion are asked to leave the meeting. Closed business is rarely used by Senate.

The Senate Clerk can provide advice on whether a paper should be closed: please contact SenateSupport@ed.ac.uk

Further detailed information on the conduct of Ordinary Senate meetings is set out in Senatus Standing Orders:
- [Senate SharePoint – Operation of Senate](#)

4.4 Agenda-setting

Senate agendas for routine business are compiled by the Senate Support team and approved by the Principal as Convener of Senate.

Agenda items should be competent Senate business (that is, within Senate's remit).

Agendas and papers are made available to members 14 days in advance of a meeting, with the agenda, which is referred to as the billet in the Standing Orders, to be finalised 7 days in advance of the meeting. This is in line with Standing Order 7.

Items which are marked 'For approval' or 'For comment' will be allocated time on the agenda and members are asked to please keep their comments brief to help adhere to these timings. The Convener will notify Senate when the discussion on an item is close to reaching the allocated time. Items which are marked 'For Information' or 'For Noting' will not normally be

allocated time on the agenda and members are able to submit comments on these items directly to paper authors

Agenda items should be submitted as a paper, using the Senate paper template, further information on papers is given below.

Agenda items may also be received from Senate Standing Committees, University Court, and other University committees.

4.5   Papers and motions

Members of Senate can submit papers to be considered for inclusion on the agenda (referred to as the Billet in the Senate Standing Orders). These should be communicated by email to SenateSupport@ed.ac.uk by the published deadlines.

All papers must be received in time to be included on the agenda. In practice this is 4 weeks prior to the relevant Senate meeting. Senate papers are circulated 2 weeks in advance of the meeting to allow members sufficient time to read and engage with the amendments process. The final agenda for Senate meetings is established 7 days in advance of the meeting, in line with Senate Standing Orders 7.

Papers will identify what action Senate is being asked to take, this is usually 'to comment, for approval, to note or for information'. The 'Action Requested' section of the paper will specify this. The 'Action Requested' section may also specify motions which Senate is being asked to reach a decision on. Any motions which are proposed should be seconded by another member of Senate, in line with Standing Order 10.

A Senate paper template is available via the link below:

- Senate SharePoint – Senate paper format and deadlines

4.6   Amendments to items on the agenda (billet) - Ordinary meetings

The Senate Standing Orders (Order 8) allow members to submit amendments to papers and motions on the agenda. All amendments must be proposed and seconded. Amendments may propose alternative wording, or suggest the addition of additional motions for Senate to consider.
To support robust and transparent decision making and clarity of proceedings, members are invited to submit amendments to items on the agenda at least 7 days prior to the relevant Senate meeting. This allows amendments to be compiled and circulated to Senate at least 2 days prior to the relevant meeting.

In line with the Standing Orders, members may raise an amendment with appropriate seconders during a meeting and without prior notification, however, for the reasons outlined above, this practice is discouraged wherever possible.

Further detailed information on the conduct of Ordinary Senate meetings is set out in Senate Standing Orders:
- Senate SharePoint – Operation of Senate

4.7 Conduct of business - E-Senate

The Senate Standing Orders (Order 8) allow Senate to conduct business electronically. Senate holds an e-Senate meeting in advance of each Ordinary meeting of Senate. E-Senate meetings allow routine Senate business to be conducted efficiently. Items of e-business are posted on the Senate SharePoint, and members are notified by email. E-Senate is open for two weeks, during which time members are invited to submit any comments, observations or reservations by via completion of a Microsoft Form available on the Senate Members Portal. Any comments received are shared with the Senate membership via the Senate Members Portal. A nil response to E-Senate papers is taken as assent.

Following the close of electronic business, the Principal will consider any comments received and decide, consulting as appropriate, whether the business may be concluded or should be referred to the Ordinary Senate meeting. Any formal business not resolved via e-Senate is referred to the next Senate meeting.

A report of all electronic business, which includes a summary of comments received, is reported to the next Ordinary meeting of Senate.

4.8 Graduation meetings

A Graduation Meeting precedes each Graduation Ceremony, in order to approve the list of Graduands. At a Graduation Meeting, other business of a non-contentious character may, at the discretion of the President, be transacted[7]. In practice, this occurs extremely rarely.

4.9 Special meetings

Under Order 2 of the Senate Standing Orders, Special Meetings may be called by resolution of the Senate or by the Principal, or on a requisition specifying the object signed by twelve members of Senate. Save in exceptional circumstances, a Special Meeting will be held within fourteen days of being called, and notice of the time, place, and reason for such a Meeting will be given to members by the Secretary as far as possible in advance: Special Meetings will not normally be held outside semester.

4.10 Freedom of Information, Data Protection and Records Management

Members should ensure that they have an awareness of the implications of information legislation. Key points to note are:

- Members' notes could be subject to a Freedom of Information request. Good practice is for members to dispose of any notes once any actions are complete and to dispose of any papers after the meeting.
- Members who receive closed papers should treat these in the strictest confidence. These papers should not be shared with anyone else, and should be deleted following the conclusion of the relevant meeting.
- If members receive an information request relating to Senate, they should always refer it to the Senate Clerk at SenateSupport@ed.ac.uk for action as soon as possible, as there are timescales to be adhered to when processing a request.

---

[7] See Order 3 of the Senatus Standing Orders

Further guidance on Freedom of Information, Data Protection and records management is available at from Records Management:

- [Records Management website](#)

4.11 Dissemination of committee business and engagement with stakeholders

The Minutes: The Senate Clerk is responsible for preparing Minutes of all meetings. The Minutes will convey the decision reached by Senate, key points raised by members and actions arising out of discussions. Minutes will not be a verbatim account of meetings and will give a balanced summary of discussions that took place. Minutes of the previous Ordinary Meeting (including the Report of e-Senate business), or any intervening Special Meeting, or any Graduation Meeting and Ceremonial, will be submitted and approved at the opening of the next quorate meeting of Senate.

- [Senate SharePoint – Agendas, papers and minutes](#)

Court Report: A summary of the business undertaken by an ordinary meeting of Senate and a note of what took place at E-Senate is sent to the University Court for information following each meeting of Senate. Court receives the full minutes of Senate meetings once these have been formally approved by Senate.

Any further business which requires onward consideration or approval by Court is referred to Court for consideration where required, for example, approval of the Senate Election Regulations.

Engagement with Stakeholders: Approaches to consultation with stakeholders for use by Senate and Senate Committees can be found on the [Academic Services Committees website](#). Senate and its Committees also engage with stakeholders through the means below:

- Annual planning of Senate Committees' activity
- Direct consultation in proposal/initiative development
- Annual reports to Senate and Court on Senate Committees' activities
- Annual reporting to external stakeholders, for example, Scottish Funding Council and Quality Assurance Agency
- Communicating Senate committee initiatives and policies to key stakeholders in the University via email
- Publicising Senate committee related initiatives and policies via the [New for… website](#) and the [Senate Committees Newsletter](#)

Consultation with Senate members on Senate-related matters or proposals planned to come to a future meeting of Senate will normally be undertaken via the [Senate Members Portal.](#)

4.12 Amendment of the Senate Standing Orders

The procedure for amendment is set out in section 26 of the Standing Orders. Notification to amend or repeal a standing order should be made in the last preceding Ordinary Meeting of Senate. Amendment or repeal shall require the approval of two-thirds of those voting on the

Motion for amendment or repeal, provided also that at least fifty members vote in favour of such a Motion.

5 Senate Committees and delegated powers

Senate's remit is wide-ranging and complex. Under the Senate Standing Orders (Order 22) Senate may appoint committees as it considers necessary to carry out its functions and responsibilities. These committees need not be composed entirely of its own membership, and Senate may delegate to any committee such powers as the Senate may think fit.

Senate has approved the delegations of its powers at various times, particularly from 2001 onwards, to a number of Senate Committees. The number, title, remits and membership of these committees has been subject to continuous review as the nature and volume of required activity has changed. The key purpose of the delegation of Senate's powers to individual committees is to ensure that business under Senate's remit is carried out in a timely fashion, with appropriate scrutiny but without unnecessary duplication of effort, and without using valuable Senate time to consider routine and high-volume work.

Committees with delegated powers from Senate can be divided into:

- Senate Standing Committees
- Other committees with delegated authority that report to Senate
- Committees with delegated authority that report to the Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee or the Senate Quality Assurance Committee.
- Joint Court and Senate Committees

5.1   Senate Committee membership

The rationale for the memberships of all Committees to which Senate delegates its authority is to ensure that they provide appropriate representation to enable each Committee to fulfil its remit. The majority of positions on Senate Committees are *ex officio*.

Three positions on each of Senate's Standing Committees are filled by elected members of Senate. Each position is nominally assigned to each College. Current elected academic staff members of Senate plus the Senate Assessors and the Academic Staff Member of Court are eligible to stand for election to one of the Senate Standing Committees. An election takes place on an annual basis, usually after the conclusion of the main Senate Elections Eligible members will be contacted with information on elections in Semester 2.

Senate Committees routinely include non-Senate members. The Senate membership has not routinely included professional services staff until 2024/25 and with the exception of a small number of senior *ex officio* roles (Vice-Principals and Service Heads). The Inclusion of professional services staff within the membership of Senate Committees ensures that their knowledge and expertise can inform effective decision-making.

Senate Committee membership includes academic staff appointed to relevant School and College roles in order to provide perspectives from across the University.

Fresh input via membership rotation must be balanced with the need to assure continuity of knowledge and experience. Senate and its Committees must also consider the University

Equality and Diversity Strategy in appointing committee members, taking into account that *ex officio* appointments are dependent upon the appointment processes to posts such as Directors and Deans within Schools and Colleges.

Senate Standing Committee memberships are approved annually by Senate.

5.2   Senate Standing Committees

Senate retains oversight of the work of the Standing Committees via an annual report from the Senate Standing Committee Conveners. At each Ordinary meeting, Senate also receives and can comment upon an update on each Senate Standing Committee. Standing Committees normally meet around 5 times per year, and though they can meet more frequently if the business they are considering requires this.

Senate members are notified by email when the agenda and open papers for Standing Committee meetings are published online. Senate members are invited to submit comments on Standing Committee business via elected Senate representatives and College representatives. Members are also invited to contact the Standing Committee Convener directly with comments.

Conveners of Senate Standing Committees are ordinarily members of Senate, and the membership of these committees is primarily made up of Senate members, including elected Senate representatives, academic representatives nominated by Schools or Colleges, student representatives, and representatives of support services such as the Institute for Academic Development, Academic Services, Information Services Group, Learning, Teaching and Web Services, Student Admissions and Recruitment, senior Academic Administration staff in College Offices, and the Students' Association.

In order to allow Senate to oversee how the Senate Standing Committees conduct their business under this delegated authority, the Committees report annually to Senate at the first meeting of the academic year (following the conclusion of the academic cycle on 31 July), and provide regular verbal updates at Ordinary Senate meetings. Most Senate Committee papers are 'open' and published on the relevant [Committees website](). Senate members can request access to the small number of 'closed' papers via email to [Senate Support](). A summary of Committee business is also available via the [Senate Committees' Newsletter]().

5.2.1   Education Committee

Senate Education Committee (SEC) is convened by Vice-Principal Students Professor Colm Harmon.

SEC is responsible, on behalf of Senate, for taught and research student matters, particularly strategy and policy concerning learning, teaching and the development of curriculum. The Committee has responsibility for the University's overall strategy in relation to learning and teaching:

- [Senate Education Committee website]()

5.2.2   Academic Policy and Regulations Committee

Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC) is convened by Professor Patrick Hadoke, Director of Postgraduate Research and Early Career Research Experience (CMVM). The

Convener of APRC is elected to this position by members of APRC on an annual basis in line with the Committee Terms of Reference.

APRC is responsible, on behalf of Senate, for the University's framework of academic policy and regulation, apart from those aspects that are primarily parts of the Quality Assurance Framework.

- [Academic Policy and Regulations Committee website](#)

5.2.3 Quality Assurance Committee

Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) is convened by Deputy Vice-Principal Students (Enhancement), Professor Tina Harrison.

The Quality Assurance Committee is responsible, on behalf of Senate, for the framework that assures standards and enhances the quality of the student learning experience.

- [Quality Assurance Committee website](#)

5.2.4 Senate Standing Committee Conveners' Forum

The Senate Standing Committee Conveners meet prior to each Committee cycle with Standing Committee Administrators, Academic Services Representatives on Committees, the Committees and Governance Manager and the Director of Academic Services. The purpose of this Forum is to support Senate Standing Committees in effective planning, information sharing and reporting. It is not a decision-making forum and is not a formal Senate committee.

5.3 Other committees & groups with delegated authority who report to Senate

5.3.1 Honorary Degrees Committee

The Honorary Degrees Committee considers College and other nominations for Honorary Degrees and Fellowships of the University of Edinburgh and recommends awards to Senate. The membership of the Committee, nomination procedures, and a list of current recipients of Honorary Degrees and Fellowships can be found on the Registry Services website:

- [Honorary Graduates and Degrees](#)

5.3.2 Senate Exception Committee

Senate Exception Committee has delegated authority to make urgent business decisions that would otherwise require Senate approval between the meetings of Senate, on the understanding that any matter so referred can be referred by the Exception Committee to the full Senate should this be the wish of the Exception Committee. Decisions of the Senate Exception Committee are reported to the next meeting of Senate.

- [Further information on the Senate Exception Committee](#)

5.3.3 Senate External Review Task and Finish Group (until July 2025)

Senate was the subject of an externally facilitated review in 2022/23. The report of the external review was presented to Senate in October 2023, along with a proposal to establish a short-life Senate External Review Task and Finish Group to take forward specific recommendations arising from the external review. The Group was formally established at the February 2024 meeting and the term of office for the group is 1 March 2024- 31 July 2025. Senate may consider extending the lifespan of the group at its final meeting of 2025.

The Senate External Review Task and Finish Group are responsible for considering the recommendations arising from the Advance HE Report and developing proposals in response for the consideration and, where appropriate, approval of Senate.

The group has representation across different Senate member categories and is chaired by Emeritus Professor Richard Kenway.

The group provides regular updates on its work via routine reports to Senate, and undertakes consultation with the Senate membership via the Senate Members Portal.

- [Further information on the group and its recent activities can be found on the Senate Members Portal.](#)

5.4 Committees with delegated authority who report to Senate Quality Assurance Committee or Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee

5.4.1 Student Appeal Committees

The Undergraduate Appeal Committee considers any appeals submitted by undergraduate students, whilst the Postgraduate Appeal Committee considers any appeals submitted by postgraduate students, and the Fitness to Practice Appeal Committee provides the mechanism through which students can appeal against a decision made by a College Fitness to Practise Committee. The Student Appeal Committees report to the Senate Quality Assurance Committee. The membership of the Committees is approved by Academic Policy and Regulations Committee.

- [Further information on Appeals Committees](#)

5.4.2 Student Discipline Committee

It is the role of the Student Discipline Committee to hear and adjudicate upon individual cases of alleged breaches of the Code of Student Conduct. The Student Discipline Committee reports to Senate Quality Assurance Committee. The membership of the Committee is approved by Academic Policy and Regulations Committee.

- [Further information on the Student Discipline Committee](#)

5.5 Joint Senate and Court Committee: Knowledge Strategy Committee

The Knowledge Strategy Committee's purpose is to oversee the University's knowledge management activities in the areas of Library, Information Technology, technology enhanced learning, Management Information and e-Administration on behalf of Court; and to give initial consideration to and advise on any other Court business in respect of the University's knowledge management activities.

- [Knowledge Strategy Committee](#)

Appendix 1 Committee diagrams

Senate and Court
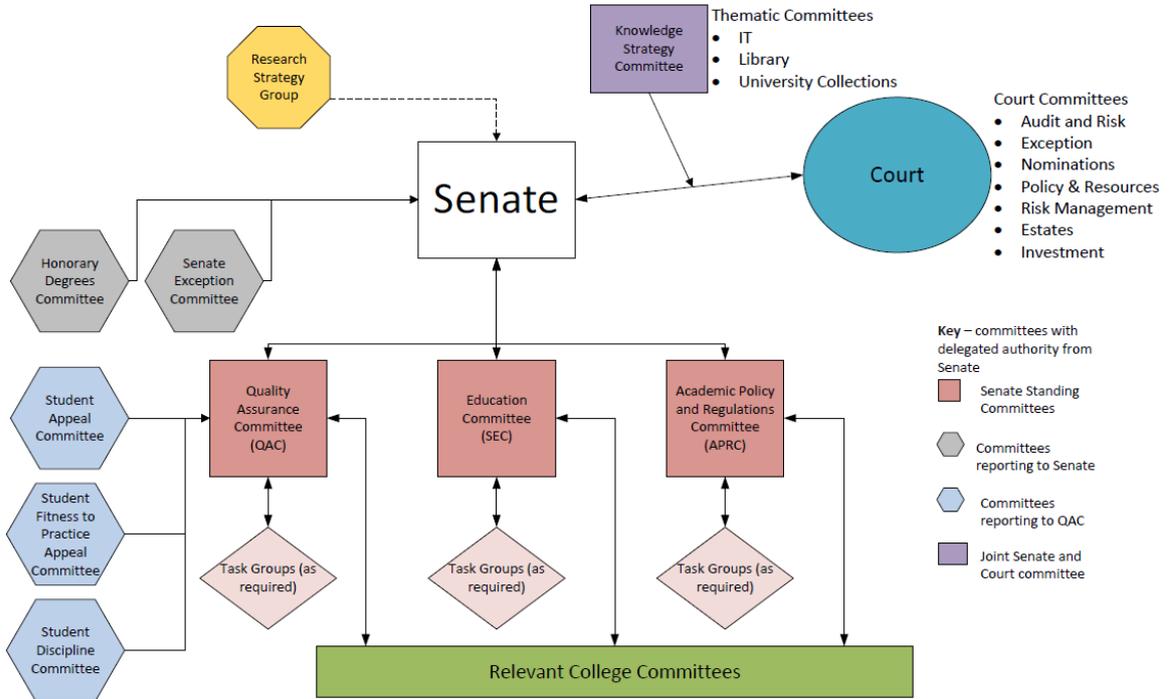
Senate and Colleges Committee Structure

Legend:
- Senate committees
- Knowledge Strategy subcommittees
- College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine
- College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
- College of Science and Engineering

Arrows indicate flow of information between committees

Knowledge Strategy Committee is a joint committee of Court and Senate

Committees:
- Library Committee
- CMVM Library Committee
- CAHSS Library and Information Strategy Committee
- Knowledge Strategy Committee
- Information Technology Committee
- CSE Library and Information Strategy Committee
- University Collections Advisory Committee
- CMVM Computing Professionals Advisory Group

- Academic Policy and Regulations Committee
- CMVM Undergraduate Learning and Teaching Committee
- CMVM Postgraduate Taught Learning and Teaching Committee
- CMVM Researcher Experience Committee
- Senate
- CAHSS Education Committee
- CAHSS PGR Committee
- Senate Education Committee
- CSE Education Committee
- CSE Postgraduate Research Committee

These committees report to APRC and SEC on the matters that fall under the remits of these Senate Committees

- Senate Quality Assurance Committee
- CMVM College Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee
- CAHSS College Quality Assurance Forum
- CSE College Quality Assurance Committee

- Research Strategy Group

Research Strategy Group is not a Standing Committee of Senate, and reports to the University Executive. RSG also reports regularly to Senate.

Colleges are represented on RSG by their Deans of Research, and Colleges and Schools are stakeholders of RSG.