

STANDING ORDERS FOR ACADEMIC COUNCIL 2024-27

These standing orders apply to the Academic Council and, so far as is practical, to any sub-committees and working groups it may establish. In the case of sub-committees, references to Academic Council/Council shall be read as references to [name of sub-committee].

1 RESPONSIBILITIES

1.1 Academic Council is responsible for:

- i. general issues relating to the research, scholarship, teaching and courses at the University, including criteria for the admission of students; the appointment and removal of internal and external Examiners; policies and procedures for assessment and examination of the academic performance of students; the content of the curriculum; academic standards and the validation and review of courses; the procedures for the award of qualifications and honorary academic titles; and the procedures for the exclusion of students for academic reasons;
- ii. consideration of the development of the academic activities of the University and the resources needed to support them, and the provision of advice thereon to the Vice-Chancellor, University Executive Board and to the Court of Governors; and
- iii. provision of advice on such other matters as the Court of Governors or the Vice-Chancellor may refer to the Academic Council.

1.2 These responsibilities are summarised in the Academic Council terms of reference.

2 MEETINGS

2.1 The Academic Council shall meet at least four times in each academic year.

2.2 The dates of ordinary meetings of Academic Council will be agreed by Academic Council normally no later than its final meeting of the preceding academic year.

2.3 Dates of Academic Council meetings will be published in the [All Staff Calendar](#), usually no later than the end of the second semester of the preceding academic year. Any revision to the schedule of meetings requires the agreement of the Chair.

2.4 Special meetings of Academic Council may be called:

- i) by the Chair as they may deem necessary;
- ii) at the written request of at least 25% of members submitted to the Chair; such a request must include details of the issue to be discussed.

At least seven days' notice will be given of a special meeting, and the agenda will be limited to the item(s) identified as the reason for the meeting.

2.5 Meetings may not last for more than three hours. Council may resolve, by a majority¹, to extend this limit by no more than 30 minutes if it appears likely that the business will be completed within that time.

¹ More than half of the members present

4 NOMENCLATURE²

- 4.1 All papers presented to a meeting must be drafted using gender-neutral pronouns.
- 4.2 While the title Chairman or Chairwoman may, at the express request of the holder of that office, be used to address the post holder, the office itself will be known as the Chair.

5 PREPARATION AND CIRCULATION OF PAPERS

- 5.1 The Secretary will issue a formal call for all meetings by issue of an agenda specifying the business to be considered.
- 5.2 Normally all business for the meeting should be accompanied by appropriate documentation indicating clearly the issues for discussion and, where relevant, the options for consideration and the recommendation(s) to the meeting.
- 5.3 All items of business will pay due regard to ease of understanding and economy of expenditure.
Note: decisions about the allocation of resources are the responsibility of the University Executive Board (UEB).
- 5.4 The Secretary must receive notification of all business proposed for inclusion on the agenda of an ordinary meeting in writing, normally no later than fifteen working days before the due date of the meeting. Items will be included on the agenda at the discretion of the Chair.
- 5.5 The Secretary must receive all documentation³ for the agenda of an ordinary meeting no later than twelve working days before the date of the meeting. Documents received after this date will be included only with the agreement of the Secretary.
- 5.6 The agenda and relevant papers will be available electronically to members at least ten days before the date of each ordinary meeting. The Secretary will provide a password protected copy of the agenda and relevant papers by email to student members.
- 5.7 The agenda and non-confidential papers will be available via the intranet to all colleagues at least ten days before the date of each ordinary meeting.
- 5.8 Papers, motions and other items for special meetings will be available electronically as soon as they are available and, normally, no later than three working days before the meeting.
- 5.9 Council may resolve to postpone consideration of papers that are not available in accordance with 3.6 and 3.8 above.
- 5.10 The Secretary (or their nominee) will draft the minutes of each meeting. Once agreed by the Chair, the draft minutes will be available to members electronically within ten working days of the meeting concerned. The Secretary will provide a password protected copy of the draft minutes by email to student members.

6 ORDER OF BUSINESS

- 6.1 The Secretary will prepare the agenda in consultation with the Clerk and for agreement by the Chair.
- 6.2 The order of business will be:
 - a) *Announcements*
 - **Welcome and introductions⁴:** including formal introduction of new members
 - **Apologies for absence**

² For further guidance refer to the [Inclusive style guide: Part 1 – Gender Inclusive Language](#)

³ Documentation includes minutes of meetings of committees, reports, substantive papers, and motions

⁴ At meetings where there are new attendees and/or observers the Chair will invite all members to introduce themselves. Ex-officio members should give their name and role; nominated/elected members should give their name and their role on Academic Council (e.g. College academic representative)

- **Notification of items to be raised under Any Other Business and requests to debate starred items**
- **Chair's Business:** to receive information on issues identified by the Chair as of interest to the meeting

b) Items for discussion and/or decision

To consider papers and recommendations presented to the meeting from individuals or from sub-committees or working groups established by Academic Council.

c) Minutes

- **Minutes:** to approve as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting. No motion or discussion may be allowed on the minutes except about accuracy.
- **Actions and matters arising:** to receive a progress update on actions from previous meetings and deal with matters arising not included elsewhere on the agenda.

d) Items for information/report

Items for information or report normally will be listed after items for discussion or decision and usually will be starred.

e) Any Other Business

Items to be considered as Any Other Business must be requested through the Chair at the outset of the meeting.

f) Meeting Evaluation

To conduct a brief informal evaluation of the meeting, identifying what went well and what could be done better.

6.3 The order of business may be varied by the Chair, at their discretion, or by resolution of the meeting.

6.4 Items which, in the opinion of the Chair and the Secretary, are only a matter of report, or which are submitted for formal approval without further discussion, will be marked on the agenda with a star (*), and will be taken as received/approved without debate unless a member of the Academic Council requests, at the start of the meeting, that an item be unstarred and where this is agreed by the Chair.

6.5 All Academic Council meetings must include provision for questions on the agenda. A question may be submitted to the Secretary, in writing, no later than two clear working days before the date of the meeting. Any question(s) received by the Secretary in this timeframe, and a formal answer in response, will be tabled at the meeting. The questioner may ask one supplementary question on the tabled answer but no other discussion on the item may take place.

7 COMPOSITION AND MEMBERSHIP

7.1 Composition for Academic Council is determined within the University's [Articles of Association](#). Terms of office for members of Academic Council members are determined by the Court of Governors and specified within the terms of reference.

7.2 Composition and terms of office for any sub-committees or working groups established by Academic Council will be determined by Academic Council and specified within the terms of reference for the relevant sub-committee/working group.

7.3 Categories of membership are defined as ex-officio, elected, nominated and co-opted.

7.4 The generic responsibilities of a member of Academic Council will be recorded in a role description (see Annex A), which is subject to approval by Academic Council.

- 7.5 Participation in Academic Council meetings must be considered a priority commitment and absences (by ex-officio as well as elected, nominated or co-opted members) may be authorised only by the Chair. If a member (other than an ex-officio member) is absent from three consecutive meetings, their membership will cease (except that in the case of illness or other cause deemed by the meeting to be justifiable reason for absence, this requirement may be waived by a majority⁵ vote). A vacancy thus created will be filled in the normal manner.
- 7.6 Where the absence of an ex-officio member has been authorised by the Chair under 5.5 above, the member is entitled to nominate a substitute to attend on their behalf. The substitute shall be entitled to the same rights of participation in meetings as the substantive postholder.
- 7.7 If an elected or nominated member is on leave for a period of one semester or less, they are entitled to nominate an alternate member from the same constituency.
- 7.8 If a member (other than an ex-officio member) is on leave for a period of more than one semester they will be deemed to have resigned from Council (except that in the case of illness or other cause deemed by the meeting to be justifiable reason for absence, this requirement may be waived by a majority⁶ vote) and the vacancy thus created will be filled in the normal way.
- 7.9 Where a student member notifies the Secretary in advance that they will be absent from a specific meeting because of a formal educational commitment, they may nominate an alternate from the same constituency to attend that meeting. Formal education commitment includes attendance at a formal lecture, practical, field trip, studio class or visit which constitutes part of the curriculum and completing an assessment involving attendance at a specified time.
- 7.10 Where an ex-officio post is filled by an individual on an 'acting' or 'interim' basis, they shall be entitled to the same rights of participation in meetings as the substantive postholder.
- 7.11 Prior to making their nominations for the membership, the Chair will lead a discussion at Academic Council about gaps in the membership; this will inform the Chair when making their nominations. The Chair's nominees will be appointed only if supported by at least two-thirds⁷ of voting members.
- 7.12 Where the constitution provides for co-opted members, such members may be invited to join the Council, sub-committee or working group by resolution passed on a majority⁵ vote. The role of a co-opted member is to give Council the benefit of specialist expertise: they usually attend all meetings but are not voting members, nor do they count towards the quorum or the composition as specified in the Articles.
- 7.13 Council may invite expert witnesses or advisers to attend individual meetings; such individuals have no voting rights.
- 7.14 The Chair may permit one or more individuals to attend a meeting as observers. An observer may speak only when invited to do so by the Chair and has no voting rights.

8 QUORUM

- 8.1 The quorum for any meeting is as specified in the terms of reference.
- 8.2 A meeting must achieve a quorum before it may proceed to consider any business requiring a decision. If the meeting is not quorate at the due time for the meeting to start, the Chair will allow fifteen minutes for latecomers to arrive, after which, if the meeting has still failed to achieve a quorum, it will be adjourned.
- 8.3 If, during the meeting, a member claims that the meeting no longer has a quorum, the Secretary (or their nominee) will take a count of members. If a quorum no longer exists, the Chair will declare the meeting adjourned. Such declaration does not invalidate decisions taken before the question was raised.

⁷ At least two-thirds of the members present if put to a meeting or at least two-thirds of the full membership if considered by correspondence

9 CHAIR

- 9.1 The Chair of the Academic Council shall be the Vice-Chancellor and the Deputy Chair shall be the nominee of the Vice-Chancellor.
- 9.2 The Chair of any sub-committees or working groups established by Academic Council will be determined by Academic Council.

10 RULES OF DEBATE

- 10.1 The Chair of the meeting will conduct the business at that meeting. Rulings by the Chair on all questions of order, relevancy, regularity and interpretation of Standing Orders are final.
- 10.2 The relevant member, invitee or the Chair of Academic Council will introduce briefly each substantive item on the agenda. The introduction will be limited to information not included in the paper that members need to be aware of when discussing or deciding on the item of business. It is assumed that all members have read and are wholly familiar with the papers.
- 10.3 A recommendation that is agreed is known as a decision.
- 10.4 Following the introduction of the paper, the Chair will call for discussion of the recommendation(s).
- 10.5 Members may speak only on the topic under discussion.
- 10.6 The Chair will encourage all members to participate fully and will ensure that no individual member or small group of members dominates Council's discussions or decision-making.
- 10.7 Only one member may speak at a time. If two or more members signify their wish to speak, the Chair will call upon them in turn.
- 10.8 Members may propose amendments to the recommendation(s) and these will be debated before a decision is taken.
- 10.9 The Chair will draw the debate to a close when a consensus has been reached and will at that point state the decision for the record. The Chair, or a majority¹ of members, may request a formal vote on any decision by show of hands or a secret ballot.
- 10.10 Decisions will be agreed by simple majority⁸. Where there is a vote by show of hands or secret ballot resulting in an equality of votes, the Chair has a second or casting vote.
- 10.11 Only in exceptional circumstances may a decision passed at a meeting be altered within a period of one year from the date on which it was initially agreed; the Chair will decide which circumstances are considered exceptional.

11 PROCEDURAL MOTION

- 11.1 The following, in order of precedence, constitute procedural motions:

- a) That a point of order be considered:

A point of order alleging a breach of these Standing Orders must be raised immediately the alleged breach has occurred, and must be addressed to the Chair directly, in the form of a question. A point of order must be heard immediately. The Chair's ruling on points of order is final.

- b) That the debate be now adjourned.

⁸ A simple majority is a majority in which the highest number of votes cast for any one option exceeds the second-highest number, while not constituting an absolute majority.

Example: At a meeting there are 21 members present. 10 members vote in favour, 8 members vote against and 3 members abstain. The decision is that the recommendation is agreed

- c) That the meeting be now adjourned (until a specified time or date).
- d) That an item of business is withdrawn.
- e) That the meeting proceeds to the next item of business.
- f) That one or more Standing Orders be suspended. This is subject to a two-thirds majority of members present voting in support. The member(s) proposing such suspension must clearly state the nature and urgency of business and the clause affected.

11.2 Upon being formally proposed and seconded, a procedural motion will be put to the vote without further discussion, other than as provided in 9.3 below. A procedural motion shall be passed by a simple majority⁸, except where specified in 9.1a and 9.1f above.

11.3 When a procedural motion is proposed that an item of business is withdrawn under 9.1d above, the presenter of the paper has the right to sum up.

11.4 Points of information: a member enquiring about the procedure of a subject under debate may raise a point of information when the current speaker has concluded.

12 CONFIDENTIALITY

12.1 Discussion of issues relating to individual colleagues or students will be treated as confidential.

12.2 Discussion of names of discipline, salaries, financial considerations and assessment will be treated as confidential on the advice of the Chair.

12.3 Where a named colleague or a named student is to be considered, the Chair shall, if they deem it appropriate, ask some members to withdraw: they shall receive neither the agenda for, nor any subsequent record of, the relevant portion of the business.

12.4 Documents circulated on the agenda and marked 'Confidential' or 'Strictly Confidential' may be retained by members but not disclosed to others or used as background for general discussion without the approval of the Chair of the meeting concerned, even when decisions relating to those documents are a matter of public record.

12.5 Documents tabled at the meeting and marked 'Strictly Confidential' will be numbered on the issue and collected before members leave the meeting. In no circumstances may the contents be disclosed or used as background for discussion, even when decisions relating to those documents are a matter of public record.

12.6 In no circumstances may the contents of documents or presentations shared on screen at a meeting and introduced as 'Strictly Confidential' be disclosed or used as background for discussion, even when decisions relating to those documents or presentations are a matter of public record. The Chair may instruct members that no record (e.g. a photograph or screenshot) may be taken of a document or presentation shared on screen.

13 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

13.1 Members must declare the nature and extent of any personal interest, direct or indirect, which they have in the matters on the agenda for each meeting unless they have previously been declared.

13.2 Members must absent themselves from any discussions of Academic Council in which it is possible that a conflict will arise between their responsibility to act in the interests of the University and any personal interest (including but not limited to any personal financial interest).

14 ACADEMIC COUNCIL WORKING GROUPS

14.1 A working group reporting to Academic Council will be established to consider any issue identified by Council as requiring debate; or to discuss issues or proposals falling within Council's remit from UEB or external agencies. Establishment of a working group and its composition will be approved by the Chair or, where the timescale permits, by Council itself.

- 14.2 The meeting(s) of Council to which a working group will report will be identified when the group is established. Normally a working group will continue in existence only until its (final) report has been received and considered.
- 14.3 All working groups established on behalf of Academic Council will have terms of reference and membership that are subject to approval by Academic Council. The terms of reference will state that it is a working group of Academic Council.
- 14.4 An Academic Council working group will have a minimum of four members, normally drawn from across the University and, where appropriate, stakeholder groups. The Chair of the group must be a member of Academic Council; other members need not be. Members will be drawn from individuals whose current expertise corresponds directly with one or more aspects of the group's work. Each group will have the authority to co-opt additional members as necessary.
- 14.5 The Secretary to the working group will be responsible for inviting nominations for members (other than ex-officio members) on behalf of the Chair of the working group.
- 14.6 The composition of working groups will ensure breadth of representation as far as possible. This may be achieved by:
- a) ensuring nominations are invited from a wide range of areas across the University;
 - b) ensuring individuals are not asked to join more than one working group in any two-year period;
 - c) ensuring membership involves both staff with positions of responsibility and others with a relevant interest; and,
 - d) achieving a balance of representation between academic and professional support colleagues appropriate to the subject under review.
- 14.7 Student representation will be sought on all working groups, normally through nomination by the Students' Union.
- 14.8 All Academic Council working groups will be established with the generic remit of considering a specific issue or issues on behalf of the University and to report to Council, with the primary objective of assisting and informing debate. Unless a working group has been specifically established with delegated authority, the report will take the form of an analysis of the issues discussed, the options available, and the implications thereof, for Council to debate.
- 14.9 The Academic Registrar, as Clerk to Academic Council, will allocate a Secretary to all Academic Council working groups. Usually this will be a member of the Academic Registrar's Department or the nominee of the Clerk to the Court of Governors and Head of University Governance.
- 14.10 The Secretary to the working group will circulate reports from Academic Council working groups and the conclusions of Academic Council to all relevant departments.

15 AMENDMENT TO STANDING ORDERS

- 15.1 These Standing Orders may be amended by Academic Council for approval by the Court of Governors.
- 15.2 A proposal to amend Standing Orders will be considered by Academic Council based on an item of business notified to the Secretary in accordance with 3.4 above and published in the circulated agenda.
- 15.3 No amendments will be made unless supported by a majority⁵ vote of the Academic Council and approved by the Court.
- 15.4 The Secretary to Academic Council (or their nominee) will review these Standing Orders at the end of each three-year cycle, unless otherwise determined by the Academic Registrar and the Chair of Academic Council.

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