



## Senate

Paper Title	Academic Governance Review Update
<b>Outcome requested</b>	a) <b>Note</b> the outcomes of the Senate Working Group and to <b>approve</b> the Senate Member Job Profile. b) <b>Note</b> the engagement work undertaken as part of phase 2 of the academic governance review. c) To <b>discuss</b> and <b>endorse</b> the proposed direction of travel for Senate Board structures and note their interaction with faculty level governance, subject to approval of memberships and terms of reference at the October meeting of Senate.
<b>Points for Senate members to note and further information</b>	<p>The review of academic governance commenced last academic year, and this first phase focussed on the role of Senate. A Senate Working Group was established to consider some of these recommendations. Outcomes of this work are reported, including on sources of support for Senate members and a proposed Senate Member Job Profile.</p> <p>Phase 2 has focussed on the Boards of Senate and how they interact with faculty level governance. The proposed Senate structure involves the creation of two main Boards of Senate: one dealing with education and student experience and the other related to research, with a sub-board structure to enable more detailed work, including consolidation of other groups. The proposal also includes the creation of a faculty level Education Board.</p> <p>The report proposes principles for the further development of the terms of reference and membership for these revised structures.</p>
<b>Questions for Senate to consider</b>	<p>Do members consider the arrangements will enable Senate to have effective oversight across its areas of responsibility, as defined by the <a href="#">Terms of Reference</a>?</p> <p>Senate may wish to provide comments on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>the principles for the new structures (section 8)</li><li>further areas to explore/consider (section 9).</li><li>suggestions for board memberships (paragraph 6.5)</li><li>whether Senate elections should be deferred (paragraph 10.2)</li></ol>
<b>Regulatory/statutory reference points</b>	<p>The proposals have considered alignment with the OfS' Conditions of Registration and other regulatory obligations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>CUC's Higher Education Code of Governance – Requirements for Council to seek and receive assurance that academic governance is robust and effective.</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OfS' ongoing conditions of registration - specifically the B and C conditions. These are about ensuring a high-quality academic experience, challenging, coherent and effectively delivered courses, positive student outcomes, integrity of academic awards and compliance with consumer law and requirements of the OIA.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategy and risk</b>	The review of academic governance forms part of the Internal Governance Review Project, a strategic project of the University. Ensuring academic governance is fit for purpose will help ensure delivery against the ambitions of the Strategy 2030 and reduce risks related to academic governance and regulation. The report makes recommendations to ensure appropriate alignment of academic governance with the University's strategy and consideration of risk.
<b>Reporting/ consideration route for the paper</b>	<p>Consultation on the current set of proposals has included discussions with: Deans of Education, Faculty Education Managers, Senate Working Group and Chairs of Senate Boards.</p> <p>The intention is for Senate to receive detailed terms of reference and memberships for the revised structures at the next meeting of Senate in October, for approval.</p>
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# Academic Governance Review Update

## 1. Executive Summary

1.1 This paper sets out the progress of the academic governance review, including the activity of the Senate Working Group and the work undertaken as part of phase 2 of the review. The paper sets out the proposed new academic governance structures. Senate is asked to consider these proposals, provide feedback and endorse the direction of travel so that further work can take place in developing detailed terms of reference to formally establish the new structures.

### 1.2 Senate is asked to:

- a) **Note** the outcomes of the Senate Working Group and to **approve** the Senate Member Job Profile (Appendix A).
- b) **Note** the engagement work undertaken as part of phase 2 of the academic governance review.
- c) To **discuss and endorse** the proposed direction of travel for Senate Board structures and note their interaction with faculty level governance, subject to approval of memberships and terms of reference at the October meeting of Senate.

## 2. Introduction and background

2.1 The review of academic governance forms part of the Internal Governance Review Project, a strategic project of the University. The wider project has included updating governance documents (such as the Charter and Ordinances, which has been completed) and includes ongoing work related to policy development and review.

2.2 The review of academic governance commenced last academic year. The first phase focussed on the role of Senate and, to a lesser extent, the Boards of Senate. The findings of this were reported to Senate in the summer and the final report for the first phase was reported to Senate in October 2024. The implementation of the recommendations is ongoing, and the progress has also reflected the further development of phase 2 of the review. Phase 2 has focussed on the Boards of Senate and how they interact with faculty level governance.

2.3 Senate's Terms of Reference permit Senate to establish such Boards and Committees with such terms of reference as it considers appropriate for the discharge of its responsibilities.

2.4 The responsibilities of Senate are defined in [the Ordinances \(Ordinance 10\)](#), approved by Council, the University's governing body.

### **3. Senate Working Group**

- 3.1 Senate agreed to establish a working group to take forward some of the recommendations and suggestions from the phase 1 report. The working group's remit has focused on elements related to membership. It has held discussions around diversity of Senate, elections and training and support for Senate members.
- 3.2 The group has developed a job profile for Senate members to make clear the nature of the role and outline the knowledge, experience and skills required to be an effective member. This is included in Appendix A and Senate is asked to approve this.
- 3.3 The group has overseen a survey of Senate members on their support and development. This survey has led to the agreed following actions:
  - a) Complete the revision and updating of the Senate Member Handbook.
  - b) Continue with the new style induction for Senate members (from 2024).
  - c) Development of the job description.
  - d) Introduce a series of briefing meetings for Senate members, linked to items on the upcoming agendas.
  - e) Introduce a touch base session for new members in January for their first year of Senate.
  - f) Ahead of any elections, include opportunities for prospective members to discuss the role with current members.
  - g) Proceed with work to establish (optional) buddy system for new members.
  - h) Proactively track attendance of members and contact members whose attendance falls below a certain threshold to understand the reasons for this. (This is intended to be purely a supportive measure to understand engagement).

### **4. Stakeholder engagement and research**

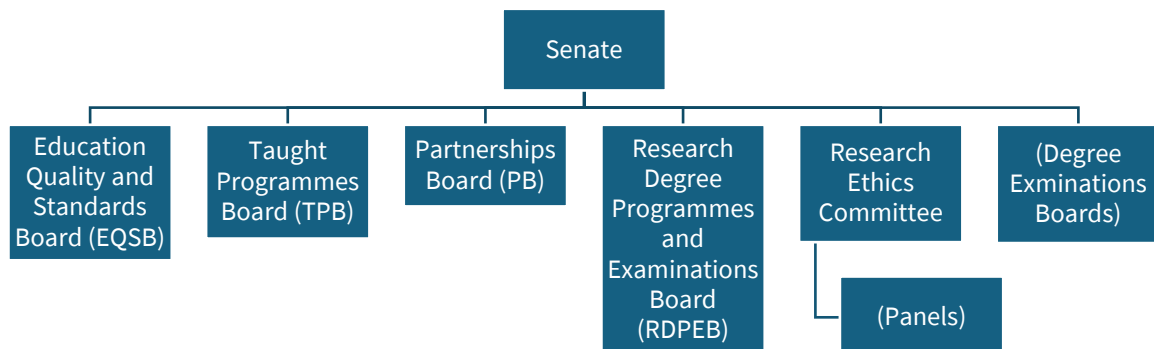
- 4.1 Phase 2 has consisted of further engagement activity, especially in relation to seeking insights and feedback from the Deans of Education and Faculty Education Managers, Students' Union, SET, Student Experience, Research Services and Governance and Legal Services Directorates. The emerging proposals were also shared with members of the Senate Working Group.
- 4.2 This second phase has also included discussions with other institutions. Four institutions have provided information and discussed their arrangements for academic governance (Sheffield, Imperial, UCL and Warwick). This has provided helpful insights into the benefits and challenges of different arrangements, but it is

also recognised that any proposals also need to meet the specific context of Queen Mary.

4.3 The main themes arising from discussions with stakeholders included:

- a) Identifying ways in which Senate members and other academic members with appropriate roles could input into some of the more detailed work of the boards of Senate, drawing both on experienced members and developing the experience and exposure of other academic members to academic governance.
- b) Rationalising the reporting routes to Senate and supporting greater accountability of the Boards.
- c) Providing the opportunity to delegate responsibilities from Senate to rationalise the volume of business at Senate.
- d) Preventing the duplication of roles and responsibilities across different groups both within Senate structures and beyond, in other operational and management structures in the University, including structures for the delivery of strategic priorities.
- e) Ensuring faculties have clear oversight of academic policies and quality assurance processes within schools and institutes, and that any faculty level structure had appropriately defined responsibilities and powers.

## 5. Current Senate Structure



5.1 The current Senate structure comprises of 5 main Boards and the Degree Examination Boards. The Boards of Senate are: Education Quality and Standards Board (EQSB), Taught Programmes Board (TPB), Partnerships Board (PB), Ethics of Research Committee (QMERC), Research Degrees, Programmes and Examinations Board (RDPEB) and three Degree Examination Boards (DEBs) for each of the faculties. Some of these Boards have established sub-boards. The Boards vary in size and some work was undertaken at the start of academic year to reduce the

size of some of the larger boards to help provide a more effective space for discussion and decision making.

- 5.2 In the first phase of the review of academic governance, Senate members were surveyed about the Boards of Senate. Members of Senate were mixed in their understanding of and their satisfaction of the work of the Boards of Senate. Most were only aware of the work of the Boards to some extent (38%), to a limited extent (14%) or not at all (17%) and only 29% were aware of their work to a great extent. Members expressed that there were too many Boards reporting to Senate to have effective understanding and oversight of their work and to know their membership, despite the Boards submitting written reports to Senate for each meeting. Members also felt that decision making from the Boards was where most decisions were developed before coming to Senate and some members described the decision making of the Board as opaque.
- 5.3 There is a need to balance the efficiency of decision making with engagement of academic members. In the first phase of the review, Senate members expressed the view that Senate was too large and doesn't allow for good governance, decision making or a sense of participation. There was a great sense that members wanted more input into decisions before them arriving at Senate where they were harder to influence in any meaningful way.
- 5.4 The feedback previously and for during further engagement in this phase has also included the need for a dedicated space for student voice (which currently operates loosely as a sub-board of EQSB); to ensure that Boards are focussed with respect of their agendas and membership; that the work of different boards is appropriately aligned; there are opportunities for involvement and development of the talent pipeline, whilst ensuring the right skills and authority for the structures.

## 6. Proposed Senate structures

6.1 The proposed Senate structure involves the creation of two main Boards of Senate: one for oversight of groups related to education and student experience and the other related to research. This would have the benefit of creating two clear reporting routes to Senate and enable Senate to have better oversight of the work of the main Boards, leading to clearer accountability. The names of the boards are not yet determined but an indication is provided below:

<b>Education Board</b>	<b>Research Board</b>
With the following sub boards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quality and Standards</li><li>• Taught Programmes</li><li>• Degree Examination Boards</li><li>• Student Voice/Student Experience</li></ul>	With the following sub boards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Research Degree Programmes and Examinations</li><li>• Research Misconduct</li><li>• Research Ethics</li></ul>

6.2 These two main boards would be able to have more effective oversight of more operational activity being undertaken by groups on behalf of Senate. This proposal would also enable clearer delegation of authority from Senate, particularly in respect of policies which would enable Senate to focus on its role of scrutinising arrangements and providing assurance on quality, standards and student experience, including to Council.

6.3 The creation of these two main Boards also reflects the two main strands of education and research in the University's 2030 strategy, providing the opportunity for alignment whilst recognising the discrete roles and responsibilities between academic governance and operational management and strategy delivery.

6.4 The Education and Research Boards would be chaired by the respective Deputy Vice Principals and both Boards would be accountable to Senate. The intention would be for these Boards to involve either Senate members or other academic members to enable academic engagement throughout the new structures.

6.5 One suggestion would be for the two main Boards of Senate to include some Senate members so that Senate can exercise oversight of, and to enable member participation in, the work of the Boards. Another suggestion, to enable opportunity for suitably skilled and experienced academic members to input into decision making would be to include opportunities for academic members to sit as

members of the sub-boards. This would also support clearer docking into career development paths.

- 6.6 The proposal includes the creation of a dedicated space for student experience and engagement work, without it impacting the core focus of work around quality and standards. Having this student experience board provides the potential to reduce the number of other groups more loosely within structures by consolidating them in the proposed arrangements (e.g. Student Voice Sub-Board; NSS Task Force and Survey Insights Group).
- 6.7 At present Senate has no specific powers or responsibilities for partnerships per se within the Ordinances, despite the existence of the Partnerships Board. It is proposed that oversight of partnerships should be located within management structures, ultimately reporting to SET and as such the Partnerships Board would cease to exist as a Board of Senate. This would better reflect the nature of the work of any group overseeing partnerships. However, there would remain responsibility within the respective governance structures of Senate to ensure any partnership arrangements meet the agreed educational and/or research standards, for example franchising and validation. Senate also has overall responsibility for supporting and fostering academic freedom, which would also be a consideration for partnerships.

## **7. Faculty level academic governance**

- 7.1 The direction of travel in relation to faculties is the creation of a Faculty Education Board for each of the three faculties which would report to both the Faculty Executive and into the Senate Boards, as relevant. At present each of the faculties have different arrangements, primarily based around Deans of Education Advisory Groups (DEAGs).
- 7.2 The intention is to establish a dedicated Board with specific responsibilities and that it would not simply serve as an advisory group. The groups would be chaired by the respective Deans of Education and include Directors of Education and a small number of PS staff. These groups would also have oversight of the work of School and Institute Education Committees.
- 7.3 Further work is required to develop fully proposals for faculty governance. This would include ensuring alignment with faculty executives and developing appropriate proposals for faculty research governance, which takes account of the work developing faculty operating models.

## **8. Principles for the new structures**

8.1 Through the stakeholder engagement the following principles have been identified for the development of the terms of reference and business plans for the new Senate board structures:

- a) Boards (and sub-boards) should contain people who have the specific skills and knowledge relevant to the responsibilities of the group. This should include small number of relevant Professional Services Staff.
- b) Boards (and sub-boards) should be accountable to the board/s above them in the structure and provide necessary assurance through clear reporting.
- c) Boards should be clear about their responsibility in terms of oversight and assurance of compliance with the relevant OfS Conditions of Registration.
- d) Terms of reference for the Boards (and sub-boards) should be a consistent structure and style. They should clearly identify the powers and decision-making authority of the body. The terms of reference may also refer to relevant strategic indicators, strategic risks, regulatory responsibilities for which the Board should have oversight of.
- e) The business plans for the Boards (and sub-boards) should be closely aligned and meetings appropriately sequenced to allow for this. This would include alignment of business for the formally constituted education group at faculty level.
- f) Boards (and sub-boards) could include in their membership, members of Senate so they can be appropriately involved in and have oversight of the academic assurance and decision-making processes.
- g) Boards (and sub-boards) could include in their membership a small number of other academic members, appointed on their skills and experience but which would also support the development of a talent pipeline for Senate and other roles in academic leadership and governance.

## **9. Further areas to explore/consider:**

9.1 The following areas will be explored and considered further over the coming months:

- a) Alignment between research boards in the Senate structures and interaction with faculties.
- b) How different groups in the structures will interact where issues may overlap e.g. in implementing academic regulations and consistency across taught provision and postgraduate research or where student experience matters are predominantly within the education and assessment space.
- c) Involvement of more non-ex-officio members of Senate and/or other academic members within the Senate Board structures, supporting the development of talent and improving engagement.

- d) Clear and consistent naming of groups within structures to improve clarity and understanding of the nature and powers of different groups across the University's structures.
- e) Consideration will need to be given to workload for any proposed memberships.
- f) Review of policy approval levels, to align with wider work on policy development and review and updating the Delegation Framework.
- g) Changes to the Partnerships Board, to become part of the executive/management structures and reviewing the risk categorisation of partnerships.

## **10. Next steps**

- 10.1 Following Senate feedback and/or endorsement of the direction of travel further work will be undertaken in relation to engagement on developing the proposals further. This will include work in relation to the further areas to explore and consider, as outlined above. This work will lead to development of memberships and terms of reference for the proposed structures. It is expected that these terms of reference will be submitted for approval by Senate in October.
- 10.2 Given the potential changes to structures and memberships, and the need to further consider the size and shape of Senate considering these, members are invited to provide a view on whether it would be appropriate to postpone elections for Senate. Elections are due to be held over the summer, but it may be more appropriate to defer these to next academic year following approval and implementation of the above proposals.
- 10.3 Further phases of the academic governance review next year will include reviewing and improving governance at the level of faculties, schools and institutes.

## Appendix A: Senate Member Job Profile

### The Role of Senate

Senate has responsibility for the academic activity of Queen Mary, subject to oversight by Council (the University's governing body). The core elements of Senate's terms of reference focus on academic standards, academic freedom, research and the academic organisation of the University.

Senate provides assurance to the Council on academic standards and the integrity of academic qualifications. To provide this assurance, Senate must be confident, through evidence-based judgements, that academic standards and quality are maintained and continually enhanced, with effective management of academic risks.

Senate delegates some of its powers and responsibilities to Boards of Senate. As such, Senate needs to ensure that these Boards are effectively fulfilling their roles so that the Council can be assured that the arrangements for academic governance are robust and effective.

The terms of reference and membership for Senate are set out in the University's Ordinances ([Ordinance 10](#)). *[Also add a link/s to the TOR/delegations for Boards of Senate].*

The essential work of Senate requires the active participation of each of its members; all members contribute their knowledge, experience and skills to discussions, to make informed decisions and safeguard the academic activity of the University. All members have a responsibility to ensure Senate business is conducted effectively and that academic governance is fit for purpose.

### The Role of Members of Senate

Senate members play a crucial role in enabling the Senate to discharge its responsibilities efficiently and effectively.

Members are expected to demonstrate standards of behaviour expected of such a role in the University. Members should have due regard to the [University's values](#) and the [Nolan Principles](#).

The key responsibilities of Senate members include:

1. Understanding Senate's remit and ensuring adherence to its powers, limitations and responsibilities, which are set out in the Ordinances, the Delegation Framework and other regulations. This includes respecting the distinction between academic governance and the operational management of the University.
2. Preparing for meetings by reviewing agenda papers in advance and through attending, where possible, any relevant briefing sessions.
3. Attending and actively participating in Senate meetings.

4. Engaging in debate and discussion on academic issues, including questioning and providing constructive challenge where required.
5. Providing an objective appraisal of issues and contributing to effective decision-making, through independent, evidence-based judgements.
6. Acting in the best interests of the University rather than as a representative or delegate of a specific group and not being influenced by personal or external relationships.
7. Participating in induction and other training provided to ensure a good understanding of the role and the regulatory context. This also includes ensuring completion of any mandatory staff training required by the University.
8. Participating in reviews of effectiveness, including responding to relevant consultations or surveys to help ensure academic governance is fit for purpose.
9. Assisting in raising awareness of the role of Senate and communicating key information and decisions across the University.

### **Skills, Experience, and Attributes Required**

Senate members are expected to demonstrate the following qualities and competencies:

1. Commitment to maintaining excellence in academic quality and standards within the University.
2. Understanding of Senate's remit, powers, and authority, alongside knowledge of wider academic governance and a willingness to develop this further.
3. Awareness of the University's academic strategic direction and quality assurance and review processes related to academic standards and integrity.
4. Knowledge and experience of academic practice at the University.
5. Knowledge of the Office for Students Regulatory Framework and other relevant external regulatory requirements and a willingness to expand this knowledge to align with regulatory or legislative changes.
6. Ability to engage in objective, open debate and discussion with professionalism and respect for diverse viewpoints (and confidentiality, where required).
7. Willingness to accept and support the implementation of consensus decisions made in the best interests of the University.
8. Commitment to ensuring good governance.

### **Time commitment**

Senate members are required to attend four formal meetings per academic year, each lasting approximately two hours. Members are also expected to dedicate time to preparing for meetings by reviewing circulated agenda papers. Members are required to attend induction training and are encouraged to attend other training and briefing sessions.

## **Support and development**

To support new and continuing members, the University offers:

- An induction session
- [to be developed further based on the work related to sources of support and advice to members]