Queen Mary University of London

Senate

Paper Title	**Senate Membership: Proposal for Consideration**
Outcome requested	To **consider** and provide feedback on the proposed changes to Senate membership.
Points for Senate members to note and further information	The phase 1 review of academic governance, reported and endorsed by Senate in October 2024 included a recommendation to consider reforming the size and membership of Senate so that it becomes a smaller body. *Recommendation 26: Once other recommendations have been implemented, consider whether Senate size and membership should be reformed so that it becomes a smaller body.* At the last meeting (March 2026) Seante discussed principles related to the further development of any proposals on the size and composition of Senate membership. That discussion has informed this proposal.
Questions for Senate to consider	Does Senate support this proposal on membership? Are there any suggestions on how this proposal could be improved whilst retaining a clear focus on the knowledge, skills and experience required for Senate to be effective?
Regulatory/statutory reference points	None specifically related to this paper.
Strategy and risk	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.
Reporting/ consideration route for the paper	For Senate to discuss. Any changes to the Membership of Senate must be approved by Council, as they would require changes to the Ordinances.
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Senate Membership Proposal

1. Introduction and background

1.1 This paper sets out a proposal for the future size and composition of Senate. The proposal aims to enable Senate to operate as a focused, effective academic governance body**,** providing robust assurance and supporting informed discussion and decision making. It also supports a membership composition that ensures the level and range of skills, knowledge, experiences, perspectives and academic disciplines for Senate to be effective.

1.2 The current Senate membership reflects a largely representative model, driven by ex-officio roles and faculty-based elections. The membership of Senate is specified in the University's Ordinances (Ordinance 10). It specifies that the membership of Senate shall be as follows:

a) President and Principal [1]
b) Vice-Principals [7], the Deans for Education [3] and Deans for Research [3]
c) Heads of Schools and Directors of Institutes: FMD [6], HSS [6] and S&E [5].
d) President and Vice-Presidents of the Student's Union for each of the faculties [4].
e) Elected of academic staff so there is an overall elected majority and an even number of members across each of the three faculties: FMD [12], HSS [12] and S&E [13].

1.3 As part of the governance review, data has been presented to Senate from member surveys, attendance benchmarking with other Senates and other good governance principles to provide a rationale for a changed membership. At the last meeting of Senate, in March 2026, a paper on the principles of Senate membership and composition was discussed, which set out much of this information. This is information and the summary of the discussion are provided in section 3 of this paper.

1.4 The CUC (Committee of University Chairs) has recently completed a consultation on a revised Higher Education Code of Governance. It includes a dedicated section on requirements related to academic governance. Whilst necessarily focussed on the role of Council in relation to academic governance, to fulfil the requirements the Council requires effective assurance from the academic governance groups (i.e. Senate).

2. Background information

2.1 A (re) survey of members has been completed in spring of this year. The survey overall shows improvements in several areas, especially those which have been the focus of actions from the first phase of the governance review (e.g. understanding of academic

governance and the role of Senate, the role of Boards of Senate, induction, engagement in academic governance).

2.2 Details of the survey result can be found in the associated paper on the agenda, but the most relevant questions related to this proposal are summarised below:

a) Members continue to believe that overall, Senate has the range of skills and perspectives to be effective, and there have only been small changes in the responses for this question.

b) There has been an increase in positive responses for whether the current structure and size of Senate enables effective discussion and decision making. Although a majority believes this is 'yes, to a limited extent'.

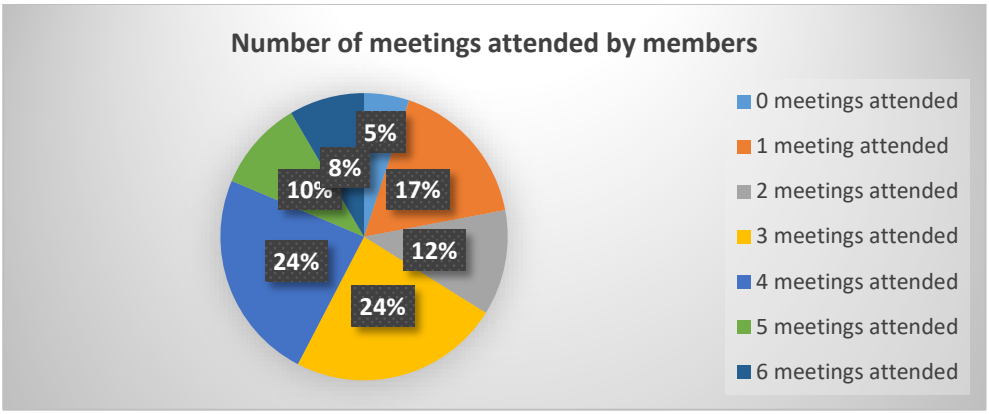
c) There have been modest improvements in members feeling that other Senate members are motivated, attending regularly and actively participating in discussion (although a majority still believe it is to 'some extent' or 'a limited extent') and in members feeling encouraged to participate.

d) There has been a significant increase in members feeling engaged and part of academic governance and members believing that Senate meetings involve participatory, quality discussions to enable effective academic governance.

2.3 Given the membership data included below, arguably what we are seeing is a greater polarisation of engaged and disengaged elements of Senate membership.

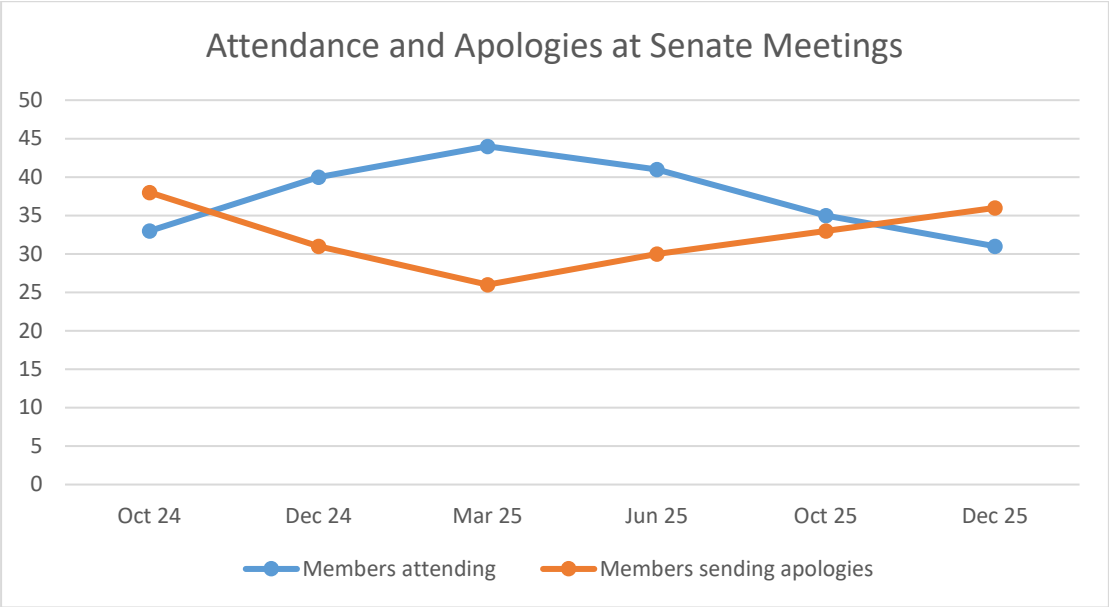
2.4 Analysis of Senate attendance for members of Senate who were members for the entire period of the last academic year (2024/25) and for the first two meetings of Senate this academic year, has shown:

a) 3 members did not attend any meetings
b) 10 members attended 1 out of 6 meetings
c) 7 members attended 2 out of 6 meetings
d) 14 members attended 3 out of 6 meetings
e) 14 members attended 4 out of 6 meetings
f) 6 members attended 5 out of 6 meetings
g) 5 members attended 6 out of 6 meetings
h) For the two meetings of this academic year alone there are 19 members who have not attended any meetings.



2.5 The total number of members in attendance for each meeting is as follows:

a) October 2024: 33 members attended and 38 sent apologies.
b) December 2024: 40 members attended and 31 sent apologies.
c) March 2025: 44 members attended and 26 sent apologies.
d) June 2025: 41 members attended and 30 sent apologies.
e) October 2025: 35 members attended and 33 members sent apologies.
f) December 2025: 31 members attended and 36 members sent apologies.



2.6 This attendance data suggests that there is an issue with engagement of Senate members.

2.7 Benchmarking of Senate sizes with other Russell Group institutions shows that whilst not the largest Senate, it is towards the larger end of a Senate. The sizes in this comparator group range from 109 at the University of Manchester and 109 at the University of Bristol down to 47 at the University of Birmingham and 35 at Imperial College London.

3. Principles Discussed at the last Senate meeting

3.1 Three key issues were presented for discussion by Senate at the last meeting:

a) Ensuring a wide range of perspectives: Diversity of ideas, backgrounds and experiences in their widest sense helps ensure informed and inclusive discussions. Currently this is interpreted as having ex officio and elected members from all schools and institutes (which is a key driver in terms of the overall size of Senate), but are there other dimensions and experiences that Senate may want to bring to bear to enable a richer diversity of perspectives and skills**.**

b) Balance of ex-officio and elected members: Currently, the Ordinances specify the balance of membership, that a majority must be elected academic members. As Senate's role is not to hold to account, but to give assurance, the key thing is to have the right skills and perspectives. Additionally, there is a need to provide opportunities for people to gain governance experience as part of their development and preparation for future leadership roles.
c) Size of Senate and the effect on meeting dynamics: With over 70 members, Senate is large body

3.2 Senate noted strong support for a group of appointed members within the membership composition. This would aid Senate in ensuring it had the required skillset to provide effective governance. Senate also noted there were also benefits to retaining some elected members to strengthen democracy and Senate's exposure to differing perspectives.

3.3 Senate noted the support for including Professional Services (PS) staff in relevant areas in attendance at Senate meetings, as required. Senate had noted support for the in-attendance category to also include PS staff from relevant areas in faculties.

3.4 Senate noted that a role description had been developed by the academic governance review working group. This role descriptor explained the skills and knowledge required of a Senate member, and it was suggested that further thought could be given to a skills matrix to identify any gaps across the membership. The potential for adding co-opted members of Senate to address identified skills gaps was also discussed.

4. Development of a proposal

4.1 In designing a proposal, consideration has been given to the above issues and feedback from Senate members.

4.2 This work forms part of the Internal Governance Review Project (Strategic Project SP119). The benefits linked to this strategic project, most relevant in this proposal, includes:

a) improved governance effectiveness scores on meeting composition and support, paperwork and the conduct of business, dynamics in and between meetings, the business and value of meetings, and communication and reporting;
b) constructive alignment with our leadership approach and workforce planning.

4.3 The 'talent and culture' strand of this work references the need for: *A diverse talent pipeline aligned with our leadership and reward frameworks and the PCI Enabling Plan.*

5. Membership Proposal

5.1 The proposed model reduces the size of Senate overall and across most categories of membership, whilst retaining key skills and experiences and providing opportunities for these skills and experienced to be complemented by appointed members in a way that is more flexible and responsive to the required knowledge, skills and experience Senate requires than at present.

5.2 The most significant change is the creation of two 'pools' of wider academic members via an appointment process, replacing the current category of elected academic members. This process would ensure appointments align to both the agreed role profile for a Senate member whilst also being responsive to the areas where Senate might benefit most from specific gaps in skills, experience, knowledge or disciplines represented at that point.

5.3 The two pools for appointments would be as follows:

a) A closed pool of specific/defined roles. Staff in these roles would be able to put themselves forward for appointment. These roles would include: Directors of Education, Research and Student Experience and Deputy Heads of Schools/Institutes across all schools and institutes.
b) An open pool, comprising all academic staff in the University who could put themselves forward to be considered as members of Senate. These nominations could then be subject to an appointment process from within each faculty.

5.4 The proposed membership model delivers:

5.5 **A reduced Senate Size:** This proposal reduces the size from over 70 members to 46 members. It includes a reduction in the number of ex officio members (including SET members and Heads of Schools/Institutes), helping to achieve a more balanced composition between ex officio and other categories of membership. A Senate of this size is more conducive to active participation, enabling members to contribute more effectively to discussion and decision-making. It also creates a more manageable forum for exploring flexible approaches to meetings, including hybrid delivery, supporting more efficient and effective operation.

5.6 **Reduced workload and meetings:** A smaller Senate supports a more proportionate and sustainable workload overall. Rather than including all Heads of School and Institute as members, it is proposed that a representative group from each faculty will be appointed by Faculty Vice-Presidents for two-year terms. This approach helps to manage demands on individuals' time while ensuring that the insights and experience of this key leadership group continue to inform Senate business. It also encourages members to engage from a

broader, institution-wide perspective, supporting consideration of academic governance and assurance across faculties and the University as a whole.

5.7 **A strong student perspective:** The proposal maintains the current number and structure of student representatives, including roles aligned to each of the three faculties. Within a smaller Senate, this results in a proportionally stronger student voice, reinforcing the importance of student engagement in academic governance and decision-making. Additionally, it is proposed that further work could be undertaken to ensure that the student perspectives on Senate are informed by the widest possible understanding of the range of student perspectives, in particular the experiences of international and postgraduate students.

5.8 **The ability to identify and support the development of emerging and future academic leaders**: The proposed membership structure creates opportunities for academic staff to contribute to Senate through a range of appointment routes. This enables a broader range of colleagues to gain experience of academic governance, supporting leadership and career development and succession planning, and ensuring Senate benefits from a mix of experience and perspectives at different levels across the University.

5.9 **A greater emphasis on skills, expertise and attributes:** By aligning a proportion of academic positions with specific roles or functional areas relevant to Senate's responsibilities, the model supports a stronger alignment between membership and the skills, experience and expertise needed for effective governance. This enhances the quality of discussion, scrutiny and decision-making.

5.10 **Supporting diverse ideas and experiences:** The model retains representation across faculties, disciplines and professional areas, ensuring a wide range of perspectives are reflected in Senate deliberations. This supports inclusive and well-informed decision-making, drawing on the diversity of experience across the University.

6. Membership Proposal

Membership	No faculty	HSS	FMD	S&E	Total	Notes
SET members	President VP Education VP Research	Faculty VP	Faculty VP	Faculty VP	6	Reduction of 2 VP roles. Retains key SET roles related to areas of academic governance and assurance.
Deans		Deans for Education and Research for each faculty			6	No changes.
Heads of Schools and Institutes		2 Heads of Schools	2 Directors of Institutes	2 Heads of Schools	6	Reduces the number of Heads of Schools and Institutes (currently all) to a smaller number whilst retaining HoS/I representation across faculties.
Student Members	SU President	SU VP	SU VP	SU VP	4	No changes.
Academic members (Closed pool)		4	4	4	12	These would be linked to specific roles (see 5.3 for examples) and to support development of talent and future leadership.
Academic Members (Open pool)		4	4	4	12	To retain the ability for other members to put themselves forward for Senate positions, to ensure wider representation and diversity.
Total	4	14	14	14	46	
In attendance:	SET members (all Vice-Presidents and Chief Officers), Deputy Vice-Presidents would have the right to attend all meetings and (for relevant agenda items) DEB Chairs would also have the right to attend meetings. This would only be as required. Relevant members of PS staff including the Director of Student Experience, Director of Governance and Legal Services, Director of Queen Mary Academy and Director of Research and Innovation would also attend meetings for relevant items, as required.					