



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Senatus Academicus

Wednesday 10 December 2025, 1:10-4pm
Larch Lecture Theatre, Nucleus, Kings Buildings / Microsoft Teams
Voting will be undertaken using Wooclap.

Agenda

1. Welcome and Apologies 13:10-13:25, 15 minutes (items 1 & 2)	
2. Minutes and e-Senate Reports To <u>approve</u> the minutes of the meetings held on: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 October 2025.• e-Senate meeting held 5-19 November 2025	S 25/26 2 A S 25/26 2 B
2.1 Matters arising a. Senate Action Log To note updates to the Senate Action Log	S 25/26 2 C
2.2 Report of the Senate Business Committee To note	S 25/26 2 D
3. Convener's Communications 13:25-13:35 (10 minutes)	Verbal Update
Substantive items	
4. Transparency, Accountability and Senate Oversight in the Context of Financial Restructuring 13:35-13:50 (15 minutes) To approve	S 25/26 2 E
5. Board of Examiners Project – Update and Approval Process 13:50 – 14:10 (20 minutes) To approve	S 25/26 2 F
6. Academic Contribution Framework 14:10 – 14:40 (30 minutes) To approve	S 25/26 2 G
Break 14:40 – 14:50 (10 minutes)	
7. Senate and Senate Standing Committee Elections 14:50 – 15:00 (10 minutes) To approve	S 25/26 2 H

<p>8. Senate Committee Membership updates 15:00 – 15:10 (10 minutes) To approve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senate Standing Committees • Senate Business Committee • Senate Exception Committee 	<p>S 25/26 2 I S 25/26 2 J S 25/26 2 K</p>
<p>9. Developing a General Framework for Delegation of Senate Authority 15:10 – 15:35 (25 minutes) For approval</p>	<p>S 25/26 2 L</p>
<p>10. Academic Development within The Academic Mission of The University 15:35 – 15:55 (20 minutes) For approval</p>	<p>S 25/26 2 M</p>
<p>Items for information To <i>note</i> the following:</p>	
<p>11. Senate Statement of Primary Responsibilities To <i>note</i></p>	<p>S 25/26 2 N</p>
<p>12. Senate, Culture and Inclusion To <i>note</i></p>	<p>S 25/26 2 O</p>
<p>13. Teaching Timetabling and Course Selection Project – Update To <i>note</i></p>	<p>S 25/26 2 P</p>
<p>14. Court Communications To <i>note</i></p>	<p>S 25/26 2 Q</p>
<p>15. Senate Standing Committee business: a. Senate Standing Committees Upcoming Business To <i>note</i></p>	<p>S 25/26 2 R</p>
<p>16. Research Strategy Group Report To <i>note</i></p>	<p>S 25/26 2 S</p>
<p>Date of next meeting: 4 March 2026 Deadline for papers: 26 January 2026</p>	



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Senatus Academicus

Wednesday 1 October 2025, 1:10-4pm

Lecture Theatre G.03, 50 George Square, Central Area / Microsoft Teams

Unconfirmed Minutes

Attendees: Catherine Abbott, Samer Abdelnour, Thomas Ahnert, Andrew Alexander, Omar Alfituri, Jana Alramahi, Katya Amott, Jonathan Ansell, Naomi Appleton, Kate Ash-Irisarri, Andy Aydin-Aitchison, Liz Baggs, Richard Ball, Kasia Banas, Dario Banegas, Michael Barany, Jacob Bard-Rosenberg, Frances Barnett, Louisa Bates, Richard Baxstrom, Sian Bayne, Matthew Bell, Christine Bell, Philip Best, Richard Blythe, Tamanna Bostani, Nicola Boydell, Julian Bradfield, Barry Bradford, Aidan Brown, Emily Brownell, Tom Bruce, Karl Burgess, Mette Cameron, Christopher Campbell, Mirko Canevaro, Jeremy Carrette, Leigh Chalmers, Sue Chapman, Jianyi Cheng, Seongsook Choi, Neil Chue Hong, Martin Corley, Elliot Crowley, Juan Cruz, Caspar Cubitt, Jo Danbolt, Kirsty Day, Giulia De Togni, Luigi Del Debbio, Jean-Christophe Denis, Chris Dent, Charlotte Desvages, John Devaney, Kevin Donovan, Julia Dorin, Leonidas Doulas, Donald Dunbar, Claire Duncanson, Susan Dunnett, Olivia Eadie, Georgie Elson, Mark Evans, Omolabake Fakunle, David Farrier, Tonks Fawcett, Valentina Ferlito, Sue Fletcher-Watson, Emily Ford-Halliday, Ross Galloway, Vashti Galpin, Einan Gardi, James Garforth, Akrit Ghimire, Antonis Giannopoulos, Stuart Gilfillan, Benjamin Goddard, Iain Gordon, Kim Graham, Lucy Grig, Marc Hadlow, Lauren Hall-Lew, Jeni Harden, Tina Harrison, Gareth Harrison, Helen Hastie, Olivia Hayes, Ailsa Henderson, Chris Heunen, Athena Hezi, Jane Hislop, James Hopgood, Jenny Hoy, Emma Hunter, David Ingram, Jakov Jandric, Amanda Jarvis, An Jiang, Hamish Kallin, Itamar Kastner, Meryl Kenny, George Kinnear, Dave Laurenson, Andy Law, Tom Leinster, Nazarii Lialiuik, Dawn Livingstone, Ewa Luger, Karen Luo, Sophia Lycouris, Antony Maciocia, Malcolm MacLeod, Cait MacPhee, Peter Mathieson, Sarah McAllister, Fiona McClement, Velda McCune, Gavin McLachlan, Encarni Medina-Lopez, Marc Metzger, Mihaela Mihai, Tijana Mitic, James Mitra, James Mooney, Steven Morley, Ben Morse, Simon Mudd, Rachel Muers, Harish Nair, Rupert Nash, Pau Navarro, Bryne Ngwenya, Killian O' Dochartaigh, Olga Oikonomidou, Richard Oosterhoff, Ugur Ozdemir, Diana Paton, Cheryl Patrick, Josephine Pemberton, Sari Pennings, Nick Polydorides, Sarah Prescott, Colin Pulham, Andrew Rambaut, Syjil Ramjathan, Emma Ramsay, Ken Rice, Carol Richardson, Simon Riley, Aryelly Rodriguez Carbonell, Liam Ross, Brodie Runciman, Enrique Sanchez Molano, Eberhard Sauer, Ash Scholz, Bernd Schroers, Kirsteen Shields, Stewart Smith, David Smith, Antonella Sorace, Courtney Stafford-Walter, Euan Stamper, Perdita Stevens, Wilfried Swenden, Emily Taylor, Alex Thomson, Sally Till, Suzanne Trill, Tamara Trodd, Ian Underwood, Shannon Vallor, Joris Veltman, Patrick Walsh, Lena Wanggren, Michele Weiland, Iain Wright, Ben Wynne, Chunyou Yao, Ingrid Young

In attendance: Meg Batty, Adam Bunni, Lisa Dawson, Arlene Duffin, Lucy Evans, Olivia Hayes (Clerk), Richard Kenway, Nichola Kett, Jan McClean

Apologies: Marialuisa Aliotta, David Argyle, Kelly Blacklock, Lisa Boden, Christina Boswell, Laura Bradley, Mary Brennan, Carol Campbell, Celine Caquineau, Jeremy Crang, Afshan Dean, Kevin

Dhaliwal, Stuart Forbes, Laura Glendinning, Richard Gratwick, Karen Gregory, Rachel Happer, Thorunn Helgason, Gavin Jack, Linda Kirstein, David Kluth, Paul Le Tissier, Jason Love, Catherine Martin, Kyleigh Melville, Chris Mowat, David Newby, Suvankar Pal, Pankaj Pankaj, Wayne Powell, Ajitha Rajan, John Rappa, Catherine Sudlow, Niki Vermeulen, Charles West

1 Welcome and Apologies

The Convener, Principal Professor Sir Peter Mathieson, welcomed members to the first Senate meeting of the 2025-26 academic session with special welcome extended to new members. It was confirmed that Senate had reached quorum. The Convener reminded members that the Senate meeting would be recorded to aid in the production of the minutes as per the Senate Recordings Privacy Statement.

Amendments to Senate business

The Academic Registrar, Lisa Dawson, updated Senate on how amendments would be handled for this meeting. She advised that an amendment form has been introduced for use from the October meeting onwards. The form is being introduced in response to member feedback and is intended to provide members with clarity on decisions and the purpose and implications of proposed amendments.

She advised that one amendment was received in time to be circulated in advance via the Senate Members Portal. The amendment would be considered under Paper H.

She informed Senate that members were able to propose further amendments without having previously notified Senate Support and that this is permissible under Standing Order 10. Where amendments are proposed without being previously notified, a short adjournment of up to 10 minutes may be required to confirm understanding and to set up voting. She also confirmed that where there are believed to be wider checking or advice required on amendments submitted, amendments may need to be returned to a future meeting.

Report of the Senate Business Committee

The Academic Registrar provided Senate with a verbal report of the Senate Business Committee. She reported that the Committee had met on 28 August to consider the agenda for today's meeting and that the Committee must meet five weeks prior to Senate to allow papers to be circulated two weeks in advance. At its meeting, the Committee recommended that seven of the eight papers submitted should be included on the agenda (billet) and agreed the order and time allocated to papers. The Convener of Senate accepted all the recommendations from the Business Committee.

There was one paper submitted for the agenda which the Business Committee agreed would be held. This paper was titled *Senate's Role in the Recruitment and Appointment of Vice-Principals*. The Business Committee Convener offered to meet with the paper author to discuss the paper contents and provide them with an opportunity to outline what information they were seeking, and whether it is possible to provide that through other means.

A late paper was submitted for inclusion on the agenda (billet) on 16 September, the day prior to Senate papers being circulated. The paper was titled *Senate Role in Board of Examiner Policy and Regulations*. This item was considered in line with the terms of reference of the Senate Business Committee by the Business Committee Convener, Vice-Convener and the Senate Convener, and they agreed that the paper would not be included on the agenda. It was agreed that the paper was not considered to be urgent noting the full agenda and time available for additional papers. The Academic Registrar noted that she offered to meet with paper authors and that there is upcoming engagement on the topic at two Senate Standing Committees (Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) and Academic Policy and Regulation Committee (APRC)) and that a paper on this topic would be presented to the December meeting of Senate. The wider Business Committee were informed of the decision.

The Academic Registrar also outlined a query raised by a Senate member in relation to papers not included on the agenda. The member asked whether papers not taken forward would be handled in line with the process approved by Senate in February 2024, in Paper S 23/24 2J: Suppressed Items from Senate Business. That process has now been superseded by the formation of the Senate Business Committee which was approved at the December 2024 meeting. The enquiring member was informed of this.

A Senate member thanked the Academic Registrar for the information and stated they had enquired in response to the Senate Clerk where, in approval of the Business Committee, it had been agreed that Senate's previously adopted process for handling suppressed motions was to be superseded. The member stated that their recollection, as supported by the minutes, was that the handling of suppressed items would remain explicitly with the Convener and there would be no change to the suppression handling procedures.

In response, the Convener of the Business Committee reiterated the establishment of the Committee and that the role of the Committee is to decide what items of business are brought to Senate. The member objected that this was inaccurate. The Business Committee Convener then clarified that the Committee provides recommendations to the Senate Convener on what papers are brought to Senate, and the priority and timings associated with these. To date, the Senate Convener has accepted all recommendations made by the Business Committee. The member reminded the Business Committee Convener of the obligation to disclose on the billet when papers are not included on the agenda in line with the process agreed via Paper S 23/24 2J in February 2024.

2 Minutes and e-Senate Reports

Senate approved the minutes of the meetings of 24 April 2025 (S 25/26 1A) and 20 May 2025 (S 25/26 1B) without requiring a vote.

Senate approved the e-Senate report of 27 August - 10 September 2025 (S 24/25 1C) without requiring a vote. On behalf of Senate, the Convener congratulated the large number of new Professors Emeritus and Emerita.

2.1 Matters arising

A member, who co-authored the paper referred to in the Report of the Senate Business Committee titled *Senate Role in Board of Examiners Policy and Regulations*, explained that the paper authors had been informed that the paper was rejected due to non-urgency, which the authors dispute. The member explained that the changes to Board of Examiners are expected to come into force in January and several members of Senate and the wider academic community believe that Senate should have greater input into the changes, and as the paper was not included on the billet the following motion is proposed:

1. Any regulation change relating to the operation of Boards of Examiners in the academic year 2025/26 must come to full Senate for approval.
2. Any change to the operation of Boards of Examiners in academic year 2025/26 that does not require changes to the regulations also requires approval by full Senate. Proposals for potential mechanisms for delegation of approval of minor changes are welcomed; such mechanisms would also require explicit approval by full Senate.

Proposer: Aidan Brown

Secunder: Ross Galloway

The Academic Registrar, Lisa Dawson, provided an update on the Board of Examiners project. She explained that the second iteration of designs is being worked through and shared with the critical friends group and, at this point in time, no policy changes are proposed. Once the second iteration of designs is complete, this should identify whether policy changes may be required. Papers providing an update on the project have gone to both the Academic Policy and Regulation Committee (APRC) and Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) in September. The project is working closely with Deans of Education and the elected Senate members on APRC have been invited to join the critical friends group to ensure wider input and bringing Senate views into the project.

The Senate Convener explained that a substantial change to the delegated authority to Senate Standing Committees required detailed consideration and requires further thought and understanding of the considerable implications if that change was to be made.

The Convener of the Senate Business Committee also spoke to the rationale for not including the paper in the October meeting of Senate, noting that it was a late paper and the project is not currently proposing any policy changes with discussions ongoing via the Senate Standing Committees. She explained that this is why the paper authors received the feedback that the paper was not considered to be immediately urgent, highlighting the ongoing work, space on the billet and that a paper will be forthcoming to the December meeting of Senate.

The member responded that whilst there may not be proposed changes in policy, a communication was circulated to colleagues in CSE which stated that 'we expect all Schools to adopt all recommendations for 2026/27 academic year' and listing various recommendations. He shared that the effect of recommendations that are to be adopted is indistinguishable from policy changes. He stated that, irrespective of any procedural issues with the motion, this is an extremely significant change to the running of Boards of Examiners and it would be shameful if the University's supreme academic body was not permitted to discuss and input into this.

The Convener of the Business Committee confirmed that Senate will have an opportunity to input into this project at the next Senate meeting.

Another member asked whether there would be no changes to the January Boards of Examiners and for confirmation that any changes would come to Senate.

Another member sought to clarify that if the paper was rejected at the December meeting of Senate that no changes would come into effect for January. She observed that this appeared to be a compressed timescale and asked if there was room for the changes not to come into effect as quickly as planned.

The Academic Registrar confirmed that a paper would come to the December Senate meeting, with further papers to go to the next round of Senate Standing Committees. The project is working with Deans of Education on a phased approach and to understand what is possible for the January Boards. She confirmed that any policy changes would be presented to APRC in the first instance in line with the delegated authority model and that APRC has delegated authority from Senate to carry out business relating to policy. She confirmed that the second iteration of designs is complete, and this will be shared with critical friends group which includes Senate elected academic member representation. Any changes would go through the relevant governance models, which would be APRC for any policy changes, and a paper expected for the December meeting of Senate.

Lucy Evans, Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary, Students, explained that the project is exploring what changes are possible and what changes will take longer. She confirmed that this will be communicated to staff in a transparent way, however decisions will not be implemented that will break anything, and the Deans of Education are critical in supporting this working.

Tina Harrison, Convener of SQAC, provided an update to Senate on the discussion that took place at the 29 September meeting of SQAC. The discussion was detailed and wide-ranging with several comments received on the Board of Examiners review. There is considerable expertise in SQAC and the Conveners of the Board of Examiners were invited to have further discussion on this. There is a clear avenue for elected academic Senate members to feed their views into the discussions taking place at SQAC.

A Senate member observed that colleagues agree that Senate will be able to discuss the Board of Examiners proposals at Senate and therefore the motion proposed should not be controversial and the member asked that Senate be asked to reach a decision on this motion.

The Convener explained in response that there has not been time to consider the implications of the motion and this will return to the December meeting for discussion. He acknowledged that members are entitled to bring motions without prior notification in line with the Standing Orders

Nichola Kett, Head of Academic Quality and Standards, observed that several members have previously provided feedback both in-meeting and via post-meeting surveys on motions and amendments and expressing a lack of understanding on what decision members are being asked to reach. She acknowledged that the Standing Orders allow for amendments to be proposed without prior notification, however consideration of such amendments does not align with the wishes or feedback from members which requests clear information and understanding ahead of Senate being asked to reach a decision.

The proposer of the motion, Dr Aidan Brown, stated Senate can make its own decision on whether it has sufficient information and proposed that the chair's ruling be overturned and the motion put to a vote.

Another member observed that members are being reassured that due process is being followed and information will become available, however remain deeply confused by precisely what the situation is. Staff have received explicit emails from College level outlining changes which are to be in place by the January Boards of Examiners, with these communications indicating that these changes are mandatory. The member explained that staff are very upset about this project as there is a lack of clarity and Senate is entitled to vote on the requirement for clarity.

Another member expressed concern that changes for the January Boards of Examiners are not being ruled out. He spoke to Schools which have professional accreditation requirements and the obligation to consult with professional bodies before changes of this nature are rolled out. There is insufficient time to do this between the December meeting of Senate and the January Boards of Examiners. This poses a risk to the continued professional accreditation of programmes. The member sought to have changes to the January Boards of Examiners explicitly ruled out as a reassurance on this point. In response to explanation from the Academic Registrar, the member welcomed the reassurance that the project is not mandatory for January, however observed that this was not the tenor of communications.

The Academic Registrar explained that the project is working with Deans of Education to identify a small set of pilot Schools, taking account of the feedback received via College roadshows, and confirmed it is not mandated for the January Boards of Examiners.

Professor Iain Gordon, Head of the College of Science and Engineering, spoke to the email communication which provided an update on the Board of Examiners review and outlined the changes that were anticipated for the January 2026 Boards of Examiners. This included decision trees and timelines for Exceptional Circumstances processes, as well as role descriptors and workflows for Course and Progression Boards. He reflected that Exceptional Circumstances and decision trees have been under discussion with Schools for quite some time and this element is try to address issues that Schools have experienced with regard to late Exceptional Circumstances. Concerns with regard to accreditation have also been raised in discussions with Heads of Schools and the review is seeking to identify some pilot schools to have an opportunity to understand any potential issues

Another member sought clarity on what Senate's role is in relation to the review, there have been references to discussion being held at Senate Committees and Senate input being sought. Senate is the senior academic body of the University and the motion is seeking for Senate to approve these changes. Senate's approval should be uncontroversial if the plans are reasoned and sensible.

In response, the Convener reflected that the concern related to the implications for Senate's delegated authority.

A student member explained that new student members did not have context for the discussion that was being held and, in the absence of a paper, that there was a lack of understanding of the discussion which was underway. The member reflected that decision-making on this topic was challenging in the absence of the required information and asked why this could not be returned to the December meeting of Senate for a decision, along with a paper provided for context.

The Convener observed that there are strongly held views that Senate is entitled to a vote. After a short adjournment, Senate approved the motion by a majority vote of 102. 16 members did not approve, 8 members abstained and 27 members stated there was not enough information.

Clerk's note: *an additional voting option was available to allow members to indicate where they believed they did not have sufficient information to make an informed decision on the item.*

2.2 Senate Action Log

Senate noted the status of actions as detailed within the Action Log (S 25/26 1D).

3 Convener's Communications

Financial Context of the University sector and the University of Edinburgh

The Convener outlined a recent announcement by the UK Government that there will be a levy on international student tuition fees in England. He stated that the details on this are limited at present. He noted that the Scottish Government has previously said that no such levy would be introduced in Scotland, and this may provide a competitive edge for Scottish institutions.

The Convener outlined that the levy would be linked to maintenance grants, which would be reintroduced in England and funded via the international student levy. He stated that the Scottish government may seek to match maintenance grants offered in England, however it is unclear where funding would be sourced to provide such grants and the Scottish government may look to introduce a similar levy on international students to pay for this. He stated there are potential implications for Scottish universities in any future decisions made by the Scottish government on

this topic, Universities Scotland are currently taking this up with the Scottish government and there may be further information to follow in due course.

4 EUSA Sabbatical Officer Priorities 2025/26

Katya Amott, Students' Association Vice-President Education, introduced the paper (S 25/26 1E). She outlined the priorities and drew particular attention to two priorities of importance to the Vice-President Education and the wider Sabbatical Officer team. Those are: addressing the awarding gap which affects widening participation students through strategic and evidence-based initiatives; and empowering student voice. She also highlighted the small bloc of student members and their wish to ensure that the student voice continues to be uplifted, protected and valued.

5 Amendments to the Laigh Year Regulations

Lucy Evans, Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary, Students introduced the paper (S 25/26 1F). Ms Evans outlined the changes to the Regulations, which allow student sabbatical officers from the Edinburgh University Students' Association (EUSA) and Edinburgh University Sports Union (EUSU) to matriculate as students without having to fulfil the normal academic requirements of their programme of study. A series of changes to the Regulations are proposed, these changes have come from and been discussed and agreed between the Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary Students, EUSA, EUSU and Colleges.

Senate recommended that Court approve the amendments to the Laigh Year Regulations without requiring a vote. The Regulations would be referred to Court for final approval.

6 Award of Degrees - (CLOSED)

Adam Bunni, Academic Policy Manager, Academic Quality and Standards, introduced the paper (S 25/26 1G). Dr Bunni explained in October 2024 Senate approved a trial to delegate authority to Boards of Examiners to formally award or confer degrees for the period 1 January to 31 December 2025. The paper seeks approval to move this delegation of authority from a trial to open-ended operation with the request being made in October 2025 to allow time to revert processes to previous ways of operating by 1 January in the event that Senate does not approve the open-ended delegation. Dr Bunni explained that traditionally degrees are awarded just prior to the relevant graduation ceremony, however during the trial period, degrees were awarded at the point of recording by the relevant Board of Examiners. The change to the delegation of authority is primarily proposed to support the student and graduate experience by reducing situations where graduates cannot take up further study or employment due to their award status. In approval of the trial and to aid in evaluation of the trial, Senate asked for information on errors in published awards during the trial period. A total of 23 errors were recorded, and these were the result of incorrect data entry. In all cases, the resolution of these errors resulted in an increase to a graduate's award. Some members contacted Dr Bunni to feedback on this point and suggested that there may be further errors where graduates received inflated classifications and where the University has not noticed and the student has not queried this. Dr Bunni acknowledged this was a possibility, however the current proposal has no impact on the likelihood that these errors would be picked up as the previous approach did not contribute any additional quality control assurances with regard to awards.

From a student experience perspective, graduates could access their Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) which includes written confirmation of their award status in

advance of their graduation ceremony. The delegation of authority to confer awards will remain with Senate and therefore Senate retain the right to reverse the delegation of authority at a future point should it wish to do so.

A member stated that the ceremony of Senate approving awards prior to graduation does not add value to the award process as there is no discussion of awards and members of Senate are not usually present.

They raised that the trial period is not yet complete and it is premature to seek approval for full delegation prior to the completion of the full cycle, noting that MSc Boards are still to take place. They expressed a view that MSc processes differ to Undergraduate processes and therefore a full cycle's experience is required before Senate is asked to consider making the trial permanent. In response, Dr Bunni stated that the differing processes between undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes do not have bearing on this particular element.

The same member also expressed concern that the conferral of degrees upon publication of results may make it harder to revise awards downwards if there is an error picked up after the conferral of an award. In response, Dr Bunni disagreed that there was an issue and explained that the process for making changes to awards is the same regardless of whether the award is technically conferred or not. From a student experience perspective, students consider their award as final from the point at which it is published and therefore there is impact to the student experience regardless of whether an award has been technically conferred or not.

Another member queried the rationale for the paper being marked as closed and the purpose of closed papers.

Dr Bunni explained that a closed paper is not publicly available and is available only to members of Senate. This paper is closed partly because the previous related paper was also closed, and partly because it contains sensitive information around the University's degree awarding processes and the risks to those processes.

Another member expressed the view that the issues which the paper seeks to resolve are centred on processes and systems which are largely the work of professional services colleagues within the exam board processes, working in tandem with academic colleagues. The member stated that in their experience the differences in the Assessment and Progression Tool (APT) within Euclid for postgraduate taught and undergraduate students increase the likelihood of problems arising at postgraduate taught level. The member supported the request for the trial to be complete before Senate is asked to decide on making the delegation permanent.

A student member raised the tight turnaround between postgraduate taught students receiving their award and further study commencing. This creates stress among applicants and therefore receiving awards earlier will allow graduates to make contingency plans where necessary. The receipt of awards earlier also gives graduates a competitive edge in the job market. Some international students, particularly those from North America, seek early graduation as internships commence earlier than those in the UK.

Another student member reflected on the student experience element and that the proposal intends to improve the student experience. The early award of degrees is of particular importance to international students. The member consulted with The Advice Place who have experienced fewer issues from international students seeking conferral of their award for employment and internships abroad during this award cycle when compared with previous award cycles.

A Senate member clarified that there is no impact on the date by which results are released, the decision is only relating to the official award of degrees.

Senate considered the amendment proposed by Chris Dent and seconded by Michael Barany. By a majority vote, Senate approved the amendment that a decision on making the trial permanent be delayed until the next meeting of Senate, and that the temporary delegation (but not the trial) be extended to cover the June 2026 exam boards. 95 members approved, 42 members did not approve and 20 members abstained.

Action: A paper be brought to the December 2025 meeting of Senate seeking a decision on the delegation of authority to exam boards for conferral of awards.

7 Senate Assessor Election Arrangements for 2025/26

Leigh Chalmers, University Secretary and Vice Principal introduced the paper (S 25/26 1H). The paper proposes some changes to the Senate Assessor Election Regulations. There is a complex legislative and governance framework underpinning the elections which is set out in the paper. Senate is invited to consider bringing the timing of the election forward to fill a vacancy in the non-Professorial Senate Assessor role and to consider proposed changes to the Election Regulations. The changes to the Election Regulations are primarily to extend the eligibility to stand for election to include all elected and ex officio members of Senate, except for those who hold an executive role, such as Provost and Vice Principals. This would revert the Election Regulations to the position to that was in place prior to 2022 and is intended to align with good practice in governance and to ensure the ethos and intention behind the legislation is honoured.

By a majority vote, Senate approved Option 2: to bring forward the Senate Assessor election, with the successful candidate for the non-professorial position filling the current vacancy until 31 July 2026 and then serving a new four-year term from 1 August 2026 (a 'double' election for that position). The successful candidate for the professorial position would take office on 1 August 2026 as originally envisaged. 107 members approved Option 2, 5 members approved Option 1, 2 members approved Option 3 and 24 members abstained.

Senate considered an amendment to the Senate Election Regulations proposed by Vashti Galpin and seconded by Kate Ash-Irisarri

Amend paragraph 10 of the Senate Assessor Election Regulations by re-adding: 'elected' and removing 'and are not Vice-Principals or the Provost', to give the following sentence:

"Only those members of the electorate, as defined in paragraph 6, who are elected academic staff, shall be eligible for nominations and nominations may be made only by members of the electorate."

Ahead of consideration of the amendment, the proposer explained that the amendment is seeking to resolve a divergence with a particular element of the legislation to ensure that a Senate Assessor who is an ex officio member of Senate is able to stand for re-election and that this can be achieved without expanding the candidacy to include all non-Executive ex officio members and that the pool of candidates should be retained as elected academic Senate members only.

In response, Ms Chalmers explained that expanding the candidate pool was proposed to ensure that the academic members of Senate are adequately supported and represented on Court. Prior to 2022 this was the position and there does not seem to be justification for Heads of

School, Deans of Research and so on being unable to stand for election as a Senate Assessor due to holding an ex officio position. Expanding the candidacy to include these members would be in line with good governance and in line with the spirit and intent behind the original ordinance for all academic colleagues who are members of Senate to be able to stand for election in these roles.

The proposer expressed that this position was not made clear in the paper.

By a majority vote Senate approved the amendment to amend the Senate Election Regulations. 105 members approved, 41 members did not approve and 10 members abstained.

Without requiring a vote, Senate approved the amended Senate Election Regulations and the Senate Assessor Nomination Form.

8 Amendments to the Senate Election Regulations

Olivia Hayes, Senate Clerk introduced the paper (S 25/26 1I). Senate is invited to recommend that Court approve changes to the Senate Election Regulations. The changes to the regulations include removing reference to specific dates within the Regulations, which will allow Senate to approve arrangements for the election at its December meeting, and for the elections to take place on a timescale approved by Senate. There is also a proposal to add a paragraph which states how the membership of non-Professorial members on Senate are handled when they are promoted to Professor during their term of office, Senate is invited to choose one of three options for handling this. Finally, Senate is notified of an update to the ex officio membership which are detailed in Table 1 and Appendix 1.

By a majority vote, Senate approved Option 3: that there be no change to existing practice for handling members who are promoted to Professor during their term on Senate. Members will continue as a 'non-professorial' member until the end of their current term of office. 62 members approved Option 3, 40 members approved Option 1, 21 members approved Option 2 and 20 members abstained.

Without requiring a vote, Senate recommended that Court approve the changes to the Senate Election Regulations.

9 Senate External Review

9.1 Senate External Review Task and Finish Group – Final Report

This item was provided for noting and therefore no time was allocated to this item on the agenda (S 25/26 1J), however one member raised a comment regarding an omission from the paper. There is an item missing from the summary table: that payment for students and some staff will be considered. This has not been finalised, however the member indicated that this should happen and it is crucial that the information is not lost.

Senate noted the paper subject to this correction.

9.2 Senate External Review Task and Finish Group – Recommendations

Professor Richard Kenway, Convener of the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group introduced the paper (S 25/26 1K). He highlighted that the group formally concluded in July 2025 however one important piece of business remains, which is the terms of reference and delegated authority for Senate Standing Committees. The group has had several discussions

and consulted with Senate and the deliberations on this are presented in the appendix, however the group felt they could not present full proposals for approval without firstly clarifying Senate's terms of reference and remit. The establishment of a terms of reference for Senate is Court business, therefore it is proposed that a holistic review be undertaken over the coming academic year with the support and involvement of the University Court, Academic Quality and Standards and Legal Services.

Lisa Dawson, Academic Registrar, outlined an amendment received in relation to the item. The amendment was received the day prior to Senate and proposes changes which are beyond the work plan outlined in the paper, and beyond the proposed plan from the Group outlined in Appendix 1. The requests of the amendment require advice from Court Services and further consideration of governance matters, as some of the requests related to non-Senate Committees. There has not been sufficient time to circulate the amendment to Senate, nor seek the advice required to support members to make an informed decision. Ms Dawson has discussed with one of the proposers of the amendment and agreed to discuss the paper, however not take a vote on this at the meeting. Colleagues would work together to bring a revised paper to the December meeting.

A member, who was one of the proposers of the amendment, reflected on their understanding of the paper and expressed difficulty in navigating and understanding the paper. The member highlighted commonality and that both the cover paper and the appendix agree that a new working group is required and that a review of Senate's terms of reference is required. They also highlighted the differences between the cover paper and the appendix, namely the composition of any new working group, the remit of a working group and the tasks the group should take forward. They also highlighted that the appendix indicates that a working group should look at Committees who do not currently report to Senate, but whose work is concerned with academic strategy noting Research Strategy Group and University Initiatives Portfolio Board as examples. The member expressed that the diverging approaches and vision outlined in the paper and appendix was challenging to navigate as a reader who has not been close to the work nor a member of the Task and Finish Group. They also highlighted that some members of the Task and Finish Group did not see the paper until this had been submitted to the Senate Business Committee and it was not formally signed off by members of the group. This adds to the sense that the group was unable to reach agreement on next steps, and therefore there are different approaches for taking the remaining pieces of work forward presented. The member expressed their view that it would be desirable for Senate to have greater input into the development of its terms of reference and scope to review the work of Committees undertaking academic strategy work.

Nichola Kett, Head of Quality Assurance and Standards acknowledged there are differences in the approach set out in the cover paper and the appendix and these were both presented to Senate as it is important to receive the outputs. The Senate External Review was undertaken in 2022/23 and this was flagged up as an issue affecting the University's governance. The next External Review will take place in 2026/27 and there is an opportunity to make progress toward the recommendations from the 2022/23 review and make changes ahead of the next review. The Standing Committees are part of Senate and any changes to these will come to Senate in line with the Standing Orders. Consultation with Senate is one of the key sources of information, however wider input is now required in order to make progress. The development of a Senate Statement of Responsibilities is an action arising from the Court Services External Review and non-Senate related Committees are not covered by the 2022-23 External Review recommendations and therefore both items remain out of scope.

A member, who was on the Task and Finish Group, stated that during discussions at the group it was difficult to make progress toward resolving the Committees issue without returning to the question of Senate's remit. The member queried how this would be resolved to allow progress to be made.

In response, Ms Kett confirmed that work towards establishing principles for Senate's Statement of Responsibilities would take place alongside consideration of wider Committee-related issues. In particular, benchmarking of other institutions and ancient Scottish institutions would take place to understand how Senate and its committees' function in comparable institutions. She confirmed that it was unlikely that a Statement of Responsibilities would be prepared in time for the December meeting of Senate.

Another member of the Task and Finish group acknowledged that this is a challenging problem which is how to enact the principles of academic self-governance in an ancient university and in the context of a modern managerialised university. This is a very challenging issue and no institution has established a good model for this. The member explained that the appendix sets out an approach which is intended to manage the issues which hinder the effectiveness of Senate and its meetings. The member stated their view that the disconnect between the cover paper and the appendix is a result of insufficient time to develop a shared understanding of academic self-governance and that more time is required to establish this understanding for the next step of the process to be effective.

A student member queried what groups and in what manner would input be sought from academics and students.

In response, Ms Kett confirmed that wider views were required and that the legislation which underpins the University's governance would define the boundaries for any substantial changes to academic governance. Ms Kett confirmed that students would be consulted and there would be a variety of mechanisms for seeking input, including via networks, Committee meetings, email, forms and so on. Ms Kett welcomed suggestions from wider Senate on this.

A member echoed the points on academic self-governance and agreed that greater input from students and elected members in the discussion was valuable. The member referenced the amendment and the intention that this would insist that any proposals would come to full Senate for approval. The member also highlighted that the workplan lists academics as a key stakeholder group, however this does not align with academic-led governance.

A member reflected on their understanding of the discussion, which was that agreement was reached by some members of the group and this is presented in the appendix, however other members wrote the cover paper. The member expressed their desire to vote on the visions presented, given that both groups of authors agree that further specific work is required. Ms Kett confirmed that any revisions to Senate Standing Committees would be brought to Senate as per the Standing Orders. She confirmed that the paper was shared with all members of Task and Finish Group.

The Convener confirmed that a vote on the paper and proposed amendments would not be taken as advice is required from other areas. The discussion has been useful in informing any revisions to the paper ahead of this returning in December.

Kim Graham, Provost, reflected on the helpful discussion and that it mirrored several discussions held within the Task and Finish Group. She confirmed that the paper was shared with members of the Group and the paper was informed by discussions held by the group. The

Group was unable to reach agreement and this is why the proposal outlined in the cover paper sought additional information to inform the next steps. There is common desire for an effective Senate with a clear remit and clear understanding of the Standing Committees who have delegated authority from Senate on specific elements of the academic mission. She highlighted that it takes a whole university to deliver an academic mission, including academic staff, professional services staff and students. With regard to academic strategy and items not being received at Senate, she stated that where work takes place that is relevant to Senate's remit it comes to Senate, or to the relevant Standing Committee, and that governance approaches are in place to ensure this happens. She expressed the view that greater clarity on the role and remit of Senate, and its Committees as well as clarity on what items of business are brought to full Senate is very important, though there will be different views on this and this is where the Group was unable to reach a conclusion.

A member of the Task and Finish Group sought to clarify that, while a draft paper was shared with the elected academic members of the group, a detailed workplan was not. The member stated that they had written to the Convener of the Task and Finish Group and the Academic Registrar to state that they could not make a decision on supporting the workplan without seeing the detail, and understood that others had written to the same effect.

Two further members of the Task and Finish Group supported this, with one member stating that the plan was not approved by elected members and was submitted without their agreement. Another member explained that the development of the holistic plan presented in Appendix 1 was running for considerable time, and stated that the draft paper presented was circulated to the group at a very late stage with a very limited consultation phase.

The Provost stated that members did have sight of the paper and that her understanding was that two emails had been sent to Task and Finish Group members during the development of the paper. She highlighted differing viewpoints on next steps during the Task and Finish Group discussions on the matter and that some members did not give their support for the workplan presented in the cover paper.

Ms Kett added that the workplan was circulated to the group. She indicated that feedback was received from Task and Finish Group members and a final version was circulated to the group, however the group did not give their support for this. Therefore, a workplan was developed which was informed by discussions and feedback from Task and Finish Group members and this is the workplan presented in the cover paper. She acknowledged that the workplan differs from the holistic plan prepared by some Task and Finish Group members as presented in Appendix 1.

The Convener concluded that it was clear from the discussion that further work is required before the item returns with a clear proposal. The Convener suggested that ensuring clarity and separating of actions arising from the Task and Finish Group and what is emerging as follow-on work. The Convener confirmed with the proposer of the amendment that they were content to hold a decision on this item until the paper returns in December.

Thanks were extended to Professor Richard Kenway for chairing the Task and Finish Group.

Clerk's note: *The Task and Finish Group received an email on 14 August which provided a brief outline for a workplan for which support was requested. Members were asked to provide comments or queries on the workplan. Some elected members requested additional information and did not receive a response. One sought an in-person discussion in which no specific action points were agreed. None expressed support, because those that responded did not feel they could make a decision based on the information provided.*

A further email which included the paper provided to Senate was received on 25 August – five days after the Senate paper deadline. Members were not invited to approve or provide feedback on the paper.

10 Portfolio Review and the Size and Shape of the University's Curriculum

Tamara Trodd, elected member of Senate introduced the item (S 25/26 1L). She explained that Portfolio Review, which is the process by which Colleges review and close programmes which fall below a specified enrolment threshold, is a tool of enormous power. She outlined examples of the volume of students and programmes which would be closed if a minimum enrolment threshold of 30 students was used, as has been suggested in paperwork on Portfolio Review. She outlined an example prepared by a colleague which suggested that, should the threshold of 30 be applied, in CAHSS this would result in 90% of programmes closing and 50% of students being lost. In CSE this would result in two-thirds of programmes closing and one-third of students being lost. A threshold of 30 would also result in some subject areas closing entirely and all programmes being closed in those areas. Dr Trodd explained that the closure of programmes is unlikely to contribute to savings targets, and referenced previous discussions on part-time programmes at previous meetings of Senate. She acknowledged that courses cost money and resource, including teaching space and staff time, but stated that available data suggests that courses make an efficient return, providing the example of a cost to income ratio of 10:1 generated by courses run by Edinburgh Futures Institute (EFI), even though these have relatively low enrolments. She explained that this example was used because EFI publishes clear income and cost data, however this is not currently available across the University, though there is work to develop this and such metrics are required to make informed decisions on course and programme closures.

She stated that where closures allow for savings on staff costs, these costs are not likely to be significant when considering the loss of income and that there is a risk that an effort to cut costs, has the result of also cutting income, requiring more cuts, and so on, until the organisation has no more costs, but no more income either. She further explained that some of the costs and workload for teaching, such as marking, attach to the student, rather than the course, so closing courses and potentially firing staff would not remove those costs, which would instead be shifted onto the remaining courses and staff. Dr Trodd suggested that Portfolio Review might be used as a way to identify candidates for redundancy in those associated with low-recruiting courses and programmes, and asked for discussion of why this is considered to be the best or most strategic way to achieve redundancies, and what the risks might be of such an approach.

Dr Trodd stated that closing or temporarily resting courses and programmes is a normal part of academic business and this routinely occurs across the institution for a variety of reasons, however decision making on such matters is best managed by the local areas responsible for teaching delivery. She highlighted the risks associated with such decisions being managed on a large scale via a centrally-driven process on the basis of numerical metrics. She quoted from a senior School role holder expressing concern at process being communicated out to Schools via the Student Experience Delivery and Monitoring Board (SEDaMOB) highlighting the timescales, process, compliance with the UK Quality Code and potential for providing a sub-standard offering to students as particular concerns. The colleague reflected on concerns that substantial academic changes are being implemented at a high level, against the judgement of academic colleagues and in contradiction to previous Senate motions on Portfolio Review.

Dr Trodd also reflected on the academic vision underpinning Portfolio Review and the absence of an established metric to demonstrate large scale savings and suggested that the process is potentially guided by a vision of a simplified and streamlined course and programme offering. Dr Trodd asked senior leaders why the vision or model of curriculum is better than the one which is currently in place and if the educational model is of so much greater value that it is worth the academic losses caused by course and programme closures. Dr Trodd highlighted the impact of

recent closures and the loss of opportunity for students resulting from programme closures, and the absence of graduates in specific fields also having a knock-on effect to industry. She stated that closing unique and special interest programmes has a wider impact beyond the University curriculum giving industry relationships, international partnerships and furthering community links and research as examples of areas which may be impacted by Portfolio Review. Dr Trodd asked senior leadership to explain how closing courses and programmes should be part of the financial strategy when evidence seems to suggest it will have a limited impact on saving measures and will instead impact income, student opportunity and the academic mission of the University.

Professor Kim Graham, Provost spoke to the motions as presented in the paper. She highlighted the common desire for a high-quality inspirational teaching portfolio, staff who deliver the outstanding research outcomes that the University currently produces and a holistic approach to academic delivery of teaching and research. Professor Graham disagreed with the suggestion that this is a top-down centrally driven approach, and the framework was established based on demand and agreed with the Heads of Colleges and the Vice-Principal Students. The framework enables Heads of Colleges and Schools to work with local areas to consider courses and programmes. It is at the discretion of the Heads of Colleges and Schools to decide what local areas offer, the vision and the academic offering in their areas, in turn influencing the shape of the School and College.

Professor Graham outlined a series of high-level principles for what a teaching portfolio should entail and indicated this should be inspirational; future-focussed; externally competitive; have high market demand programmes; be recruiting at the highest tariff levels; provides opportunities and increases employability; and helps to support research excellence. Additionally, the portfolio should be effectively focussed; ensure that legacy programmes and courses are not sitting on systems; be aligned to the capacity of academic staff; and balance staff workloads to enable the return of high-quality feedback in time to further improve the student experience; and considers the balance of cost between programmes with higher market demand, which in turn allows the delivery of small scale specialist provision which is important to the strategy of the University. Professor Graham agreed that the University does not want to lose income and assured Senate that the decisions taken by Schools and Colleges on course and programme closures are based on an assessment of what the scale of income may be for the particular courses and programmes which will close and that students will be provided with the opportunity to move to alternative courses and programmes. She concluded by highlighting that there should be an ongoing process that all institutions put in place on an annual basis to review course and programme offering in response to changes to the external environment, market conditions and enabling capacity to avoid overburdening staff.

Lucy Evans, Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary, Students spoke to the framework which has been set up to support this process. She reiterated that this is College-led and is undertaken with a focus on the structure and volume with the primary aim to improve student and staff experience. The framework is mindful of the wider economic context of the University, and will be shaped by the overall approach to its financial resilience, with a primary focus on the size and shape of the offering. Ms Evans explained that the framework provides a structure which ensures local agency and flexibility to facilitate pedagogical enhancement and an opportunity to provide a realistic offering to students which responds to feedback on staff workload and enables effective and efficient administration of the portfolio. Ms Evans explained that there is no institutional-level target number or proportion of programmes or courses to be closed, and the principles looked at minimum enrolment numbers as a guide to support decision making. Though work is required to develop a model on cost and revenue structures to discuss how decisions can be made in an informed way.

Ms Evans also provided an update on behalf of the Head of the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (CMVM), Professor David Argyle, who was unable to attend Senate. She explained that there are details on closures and suspensions which are available for CMVM, and the College is making progress towards a refined portfolio with a focus on postgraduate taught provision. The ongoing College modernisation restructure has allowed an opportunity to streamline the College offering, the College has two teaching schools and is undertaking further reviews of the postgraduate taught portfolio. Decisions to close programmes has been based on several factors including the framework, student recruitment data, staff availability, expertise to deliver programmes, governance and the reorganisation of the teaching portfolio as part of the College modernisation project. CMVM have set up a Portfolio Management Board who have responsibility for overseeing the entire portfolio and consider new programmes, major programme changes and programme closures. The Board will also have oversight of the course portfolio which is managed at School level.

Professor David Smith, Deputy Head of College Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS) provided an update on the College's perspective on Portfolio Review. He reflected on some of the terminology used to refer to the approach to Portfolio Review, noting terms such as large-scale, centrally-driven, inflexible and top-down as being an approach, he does not personally recognise, though acknowledged that this does not discount the individual experience of others. He explained that the College is taking a collaborative process as they seek to build a business-as-usual Portfolio Review process. The College has been working for over a year on this, with initial focus on postgraduate taught programmes. The College, with Schools, is seeking to actively review and refresh the portfolio of taught programmes and credit bearing courses. The work aligns with the institutional framework and seeking to alleviate workload pressures. The College established a Portfolio Review Working Group which comprised of professional services colleagues and Heads of Schools. The Group collaboratively established an approach to Portfolio Review within the College and details of the Working Group and their work is available on the CAHSS SharePoint site. Professor Smith summarised the following outputs from the Group:

- Stage 1 Postgraduate Taught Portfolio Guidance issued on 17 June 2024, the principles established as part of that were that the academic portfolio would be relevant, sustainable, fit for purpose, aligned to disciplinary and pedagogical ambition, and informed and aligned to national and international marked demands.
- Stage 2 Course Portfolio Review Guidance issued on 25 September 2024, and have been working towards having an annual timeline where all Schools work toward a business-as-usual Portfolio Review process undertaken as annual health checks.

Professor Smith outlined the next steps for CAHSS and advised that the College is at the early stages of scoping the Undergraduate Portfolio and the College's approach to this. A first meeting was held in September with Heads of Schools, the Director of EFI, the Director of Academic and Student Administration, Head of Academic Education, Dean of Quality Assurance and Dean of Education to consider what questions need to be asked as part of the Undergraduate Portfolio Review process. The College recognises the need for a costing methodology and is piloting a methodology in five Schools, learnings from the pilot will be used to shape the methodology to be fit for purpose. Professor Smith concluded by noting that the College is working with a focus on critical sustainability and undertaking this in partnership and collaboration with Schools.

Professor Iain Gordon, Head of the College of Science and Engineering (CSE) provided an update on the College's work toward Portfolio Review. The College have a framework and are working closely with Schools through the Director of Education and the Head of the Student Lifecycle. There were several pieces of curriculum reform work already in progress across multiple Schools within the College with many having already undertaken a review of their

curriculum and offering. There remain two Schools which the College is working closely with to consider clustering programmes and moving away from offering many versions of similar programmes. Professor Gordon confirmed that the framework is being discussed with relevant Schools and that School leadership is being supported to move changes forward through a well-governed process allowing colleagues to feed into this.

A student member highlighted the importance of student voice in the discussion on Portfolio Review and acknowledged the validity of some points raised. They noted the importance of considering nuance in reaching decisions on small, joint and specialist programmes, and considering student recruitment impact when considering the closure of these programmes. The University's appeal to prospective students may be impacted by closing those small, joint and specialist programmes and there is value in preserving student choice in degrees where it is financially viable, noting that these programmes contribute to the academic landscape and may elevate Edinburgh as an option to prospective students when considering the comparable offering at competitor institutions.

Another student member reflected on their programme's small intake as preserving diversity of thought within specific disciplines. The University can take a leading role in promoting this diversity within education. The member spoke to discipline-specific examples to illustrate their point, and that cutting programmes based on class sizes may inadvertently deprioritise different ways of thinking which challenge the mainstream and which lead to a deeper and well-rounded understanding of different disciplines. They also stated that future facing programmes will generally start with smaller intakes as these areas build and develop into the mainstream. The member concluded by encouraging the University to look beyond class sizes and consider the viable schools of thought small and unique programmes bring to the University.

Another student member reflected on their experience as a student in a small programme, of which they are the only student in their year. They reiterated the importance of the smaller degree programmes noting that it is paramount to the competitive nature of the programmes and to the wellbeing of students. The University is the only Scottish University, which offers the study of Scandinavian language at Undergraduate level, and one of two institutions across the United Kingdom. They reiterated the strength of the small degree offerings and the importance in retaining this for the diversity of students and diversity of thought which it fosters.

Professor Sarah Prescott, Head of CAHSS, strongly reiterated that Portfolio Review is not focussed on only small courses and programmes. She reiterated that the Review takes a collaborative approach and is considering the different ways to look at courses and programmes, and considering size and shape and what the wider community wants the Portfolio to be. She stated that the University cannot deliver what it delivers now with fewer people and has to think about how to navigate challenges including workload, delivering sustainably and wider sector challenges, and this includes reviewing the portfolio.

She stated the importance of considering changes in a holistic, careful, thoughtful way and in collaboration and in consultation for the portfolio to deliver the courses and teaching that the University wants for the future. She stated her personal connection to the topic and that the Review seeks to look after the breadth of disciplines, however also consider sustainability in its broadest sense and not just in a financial manner. The Review should also consider how areas can come together and benefit in an interdisciplinary way from the breadth of discipline. She highlighted that it is a misunderstanding that Colleges are looking only at small courses and programmes, which has not been representative of her experience when working with Schools on this piece of work.

A member requested that a vote be taken on the paper. The Convener agreed that a formal vote would be held.

By a majority vote, Senate approved Motions 1, 2 and 3 as contained in paragraph 22 of the paper. 103 members approved, 15 members did not approve and 11 members abstained.

11 Transparency, Accountability and Senate Oversight in the Context of Financial Restructuring - S 25/26 1M

Senate did not reach this paper before the conclusion of the meeting.

Items for information

Clerk's note: Items for information are not allocated time on the Senate agenda. Members are invited to direct comments on these items to paper authors.

12 Court Communications

Senate received and did not have time to consider the communications from the University Court as detailed within the paper (S 25/26 1N), and which related to the University Court meeting of 23 June 2025. No time is allocated on the agenda for discussion of items provided for information.

13 Report from Central Academic Promotions Committee - S 25/26 1O

Senate received and did not have time to consider the report from the Central Academic Promotions Committee as detailed within the paper (S 25/26 1O). No time is allocated on the agenda for discussion of items provided for information.

14 Senate Effectiveness:

14.1 Internal Effectiveness Review of Senate and its Standing Committees - Report on the post-meeting surveys (2024-25) - S 25/26 1P

Senate received and did not have time to consider the report on post-meeting surveys for the 2024-25 academic year as detailed within the paper (S 25/26 1P). No time is allocated on the agenda for discussion of items provided for information.

15 Senate Standing Committee business:

15.1 Annual Report of the Senate Standing Committees - S 25/26 1Q

Senate received and did not have time to consider the Annual Report of the Senate Standing Committees for the 2024-25 academic year as detailed within the paper (S 25/26 1Q). No time is allocated on the agenda for discussion of items provided for information.

15.2 Senate Standing Committee Membership - S 25/26 1R

Senate received and did not have time to consider the updates to Senate Standing Committee Membership for the 2025-26 academic year as detailed within the paper (S 25/26 1R). No time is allocated on the agenda for discussion of items provided for information.

Senate was informed that an amendment was received in relation to this paper proposed by Michael Barany.

Senate is asked to approve that the Senate Clerk shall repeat the process approved last year (S 24/25 1G) with the same Returning and Deputy Returning Officers or appropriate substitute as required to fill the vacant elected member vacancy on SQAC.

The Academic Registrar confirmed that Senate Support would carry out the process described in the amendment without requiring a vote.

15.3 Senate Standing Committees Upcoming Business - S 25/26 1S

Senate received and did not have time to consider the upcoming business for Senate Standing Committees as detailed within the paper (S 25/26 1S). No time is allocated on the agenda for discussion of items provided for information.

16 Research Strategy Group Report - S 25/26 1T

Senate received and did not have time to consider the report from the Research Strategy Group as detailed within the paper (S 25/26 1T), and which related to the Group's meeting of 1 July 2025. No time is allocated on the agenda for discussion of items provided for information.

Date of next meeting: 10 December 2025

Deadline for papers: Wednesday 5 November 2025



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Electronic Senate

Unconfirmed Report of e-Senate held 5-19 November 2025

Comments raised via e-Senate can be accessed on the Senate Members Portal

1 Conferment of the title of Professor Emeritus / Emerita - e-S 25/26 2A

Senate approved the conferment of the title of Professor Emeritus on the following professor:

- Professor Richard Morris, School of Neurological and Cardiovascular Sciences.

Senate noted the special minute provided for Professor Morris.

Three members commented on this item.

Two members communicated their approval.

One member extended their congratulations to Professor Morris and expressed their opposition to approving Emeritus status via e-Senate, stating their preference for this to be done in an ordinary meeting of Senate. They additionally stated their opposition was due to outstanding questions relating to the emeritus paper received by the last meeting of e-Senate, outlining concerns about good governance and a continuation with the approvals process in the absence of the requested information.

2 Court Resolutions - e-S 25/26 2B

To comment.

Senate noted the Court Resolutions

Three members commented on this item.

One member highlighted a grammatical error in Resolution 89/2025.

One member submitted comments which did not relate to this paper, but instead related to agenda setting processes. These comments have been noted and are available on the Senate Member's Portal.

Senate**10 December 2025****Senate Action Log**

Meeting date	Paper	Paper status	Action	Responsible	Target date	Action status	Update
1-10-25	S 25/26 1G	Closed	A paper be brought to the December 2025 meeting of Senate seeking a decision on the delegation of authority to exam boards for conferral of awards.	Academic Quality and Standards	10 December 2025	Open	Senate will receive a paper seeking a decision on the delegation of authority to exam boards for conferral of awards at its 4 March 2026 meeting. The dates and deadlines for the 10 December meeting did not allow for a full year of data to be provided to Senate as requested via an amendment at the 1 October meeting (see Paper S2526 2A: 1 October Minutes). The paper author consulted with relevant members and confirmed that the requested data could be provided alongside an updated paper at the 4 March meeting.
01-10-25	S 25/26 1J	Open	Completion of External Review Recommendation 11: We recommend that all Senators should get a briefing note on proper use of the Chat Function, and it should be an important	University EDI Lead	By 4 March 2025	Open	A paper is provided to Senate (S 25/26 2O: Senate, Culture and Inclusion) outlining work to progress actions related to EDI.

			section in induction. This should include information on expected standards of behaviour and the proper use of the CHAT function (see, for example, guidance at Glasgow University or UCL). Misuse of the chat should not be tolerated.				
01-10-25	S 25/26 1J	Open	Completion of External Review Recommendation 12: Senate would benefit from a special session on enhancing and updating knowledge of EDI.	University EDI Lead	By 4 March 2025	Open	This action was discussed very briefly at EDI Committee on 19 th November. A session will be developed next semester
01-10-25	S 25/26 1J		Completion of External Review Recommendation 13: An EDI impact assessment/assurance rating should be used in all Senate papers.	University EDI Lead	By 4 March 2025	Open	An enhanced approach to embedding EDI considerations in Senate papers was discussed between the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group and University Lead for EDI. This will be taken forward in discussion with Academic Quality and Standards.
01-10-25	S 25/26 1J		Completion of External Review Recommendation 14: We suggest that the University considers how the developmental membership of Senate could be promoted as part of the induction and development programme.	University EDI Lead	By 4 March 2025	Open	Discussions are planned with the Convenor of REAR (the University's Race Equality and Anti-Racism Subcommittee of EDI Committee) for 2/12.

			Specifically, the Staff BAME network could promote Senate as part of its mentoring programme.				
01-10-25	S 25/26 1J		Completion of External Review Recommendation 15: Consider adding some nominated members to Senate to widen diversity.	University EDI Lead	By 4 March 2025	Open	Discussions are planned between Academic Quality and Standards and the University EDI Lead

A summary of previous actions can be viewed on the [Senate Members Portal](#).

Senate
10 December 2025
Report of the Senate Business Committee

e-Senate agenda: 5-19 November 2025

The Business Committee considered two non-routine papers for the e-Senate meeting held 5-19 November. Based on the information requested in each paper, the Business Committee agreed to refer these two papers to areas of the University best able to respond to the requests.

The recommendations from the Business Committee were accepted by the Convener. Detail, including the title of papers, and the area the papers were referred to, is provided to note:

- **Senate Role in Recruitment and Appointment of Vice-Principals**
The Business Committee recognised that this is a reserved matter for Court and referred the paper, including relevant suggestions, to the Senior Lay Member of Court, noting their oversight of the appointment process in question.
- **Request for Information on Senior Academic Departures**
The Business Committee referred this paper to Human Resources to determine what information can be provided on the matters highlighted, including ensuring appropriate handling of confidential personal information as required.

The paper authors were informed of the decision of the Business Committee. The paper title and any responses will be recorded in the Business Committee Decision Log available on the Senate Members Portal.

Senate agenda: 10 December 2025

The Business Committee met on 13 November to agree the agenda for the 10 December meeting. To enable papers to be issued to Senate two weeks ahead of the meeting, the Business Committee meets at least 3 weeks prior to Senate.

The Business Committee considered fourteen items of substantive business and agreed that twelve of those items be included on the agenda (billet) for the meeting.

The Business Committee agreed to group items thematically, including ensuring items were prioritised in alignment with the feedback from committee members on the likely importance of papers to Senate.

The Business Committee received two items of business after the Senate paper deadline: 'Board of Examiners Project – Update and Approval Process' and

'Academic Development within the academic mission of the University'. The Business Committee agreed to include both items on the agenda, while expressing concern regarding time to fully assess the papers.

The Business Committee acknowledged the importance of discussion of both items at Senate, given the motions brought to the 1 October meeting on the Board of Examiners project, and the time-sensitive nature of the paper on Academic Development.

The Business Committee agreed that two items of business would be expedited by referring those to other parts of the University. The details on each of those papers is as follows:

- **Senate Role in Recruitment and Appointment of Vice-Principals**
The appointment of Vice-Principals is a reserved matter for Court, and the Business Committee has referred the paper to the Senior Lay Member of Court for consideration, given their oversight of the appointment processes in question.
- **Request for Information on University Initiatives Portfolio Board**
The paper will be referred to the University's Initiatives Portfolio Board to determine what information can be provided.

The Convener accepted the agenda recommended by the Business Committee for the 10 December meeting of Senate.

The full unconfirmed minute of the 13 November meeting and the Business Committee Decision Log is available on the Senate Members Portal.

At their last two meetings, Business Committee members briefly discussed options to make greater use of e-Senate. To provide time for this discussion, the Convener proposed that a separate 1-hour meeting of the Business Committee be scheduled to discuss this point, and to obtain feedback from committee members on the ways of working for the Business Committee.



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Senate

1 October 2025

Transparency, Accountability and Senate Oversight in the Context of Financial Restructuring

Description of Paper

1. This paper aims to improve confidence and strengthen engagement between Senate, University Court, and University Executive amid the ongoing economic restructuring. It promotes robust communication and timely sharing of detailed information among governing bodies, enabling Senate to fulfil its statutory duties under applicable legislation.
2. The proposed actions support Senate's core responsibility to oversee academic performance, safeguard educational quality during forthcoming budget reductions, and empower Senate to scrutinise measures and advise Court on academic risks.

Action requested/recommendation

3. ***Senate is asked to approve the following points as statements of Senate's collective view and requisition to the University Executive:***
4. **A.1.** Senate formally asks for detailed information pertaining to the restructuring of the University planned by the Executive by the next Senate meeting. To allow for proper scrutiny this information should be provided, if possible, in an itemised format by School and include, but not be limited to, the following:
 - 1) **Ongoing and planned academic and structural changes** covering course closures, degree programme modifications, staff reductions, recruitment freezes, and estate downsizing, with rationales, costs and impact assessments.
 - 2) **Financial planning and risk management** including state of reserves, revenue, capital projects, and cost-benefit analyses of proposed actions.
 - 3) **Stakeholder engagement and reputational impact** detailing consultations with staff and students, alongside assessments of potential reputational risks.
 - 4) **An analysis of the factors that motivate** the changes and how the planned changes preserve the University's mission and values

5. **A.2.** Senate formally asks the Executive to maintain clear accountability in the restructuring of the institution, beyond budget setting. Senate recognises the critical importance of Heads of School and local leadership teams in implementing changes, given their detailed understanding of local needs. However, the Executive should remain responsible for strategic coherence and consequences and provide clear evidence to Senate that local feedback and cross-consideration of risks have been thoroughly assessed before any proposed restructuring or budget setting.
6. **A.3.** Senate formally affirms its statutory responsibility under the Universities (Scotland) Act 1889 (as amended in 1966) to regulate and superintend the teaching and discipline of the University and to promote research. Given that major restructuring proposals directly affect the organisation, delivery and quality of teaching and research, Senate requires detailed data to enable it to fulfil these statutory responsibilities.

Background and Context

7. On 25 February, the Principal announced £140 million in budget reductions over 18 months. A voluntary severance scheme was implemented but a substantial shortfall remains. The Executive has indicated further measures including programme closures, operational expenditure cuts, centralisation of services, and staffing reductions. However, detailed restructuring plans have not been shared with Senate. Senate members and the wider University community have raised significant concerns regarding the potential impact on academic standards and institutional governance, as reflected in a recent vote of no confidence in the Executive and calls for enhanced transparency and scrutiny. This paper requests information and analysis to help restore the confidence of the University community.

Discussion

8. Under the Universities (Scotland) Act 1889, as amended in 1966, Senate's statutory functions are "to regulate and superintend the teaching and discipline of the University" and "to promote research". The scale and pace of the planned budget reductions (£140 million over 18 months) are unprecedented and carry inherent risks to the quality and stability of teaching and research. While the Executive has repeatedly assured the University that extensive analyses and risk assessments have been conducted, no plans have been shared with Senate. Access to detailed information is essential for Senate to fulfil its statutory role by effectively scrutinising the academic, financial, and reputational risks involved and ensuring alignment with the University's long-term academic priorities.
9. Senate acknowledges and values the essential role of Heads of Schools and local leadership teams in making informed decisions that reflect the specific needs of their areas. Nonetheless, Senate expresses concern that Executive-imposed budget reductions, without sufficient consultation, strategic planning, or mechanisms to gather and communicate local feedback, place undue pressure on local governance. This also fosters the wrong perception that local units alone bear responsibility for difficult decisions, while the Executive's

central role in both the financial challenges and subsequent measures remains insufficiently acknowledged.

10. This approach also increases the risk of a “crisis governance”, with urgent decision-making, limited transparency, and inadequate engagement with academic staff and students, thus threatening to erode trust, damage the University’s reputation, and compromise academic standards.

Resource Implications

11. The information requested by Senate concerns detailed plans and risk assessments that the Executive has previously confirmed are already in place. Providing this data should not require new analyses or impose a significant additional burden beyond collating and presenting it clearly. This transparency is crucial to restore confidence in the University’s governance.

Risk Management

12. Without access to detailed information, Senate cannot adequately assess the academic, reputational, and operational risks of restructuring or provide informed advice. This lack of transparency will undermine shared governance and weaken confidence in decision-making.
13. Moreover, the information requested relates to institutional-level plans and risk assessments, not personal data or details about identifiable individuals. There are therefore no valid confidentiality grounds to withhold such material from Senate. General assertions of confidentiality cannot justify denying Senate access to information required to fulfil its legal duties.

Responding to the Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development Goals

14. This paper seeks to strengthen transparent and accountable governance, enabling informed academic oversight and rebuilding trust across the institution. Access to the requested information will support decisions that safeguard the University’s core mission while enhancing its long-term financial and academic resilience.

Equality and Diversity

15. The requested information is essential for Senate to assess equality and diversity impacts of restructuring, ensuring that vulnerable groups are not disproportionately affected. Transparent governance and robust oversight will help safeguard the University’s commitment to inclusion and mitigate potential adverse effects.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of any action agreed

16. Senate formally asks that its view, if agreed, will be publicised with the Senate minutes and communicated to all staff via the Senate Support Team.
17. Should point A.1 be approved and the Executive fail to address it, Senate formally asks all staff to be informed of Senate’s decisions, requests, and any Executive responses or lack thereof. Sent via the Senate Support Team within two working days of the decision (if possible), this communication should

include, for transparency, the full wording of the requests and a statement on the Executive's non-compliance.

Consultation

18. The paper is based on wide consultation among elected members of Senate and information provided by respondents to the invitation to co-sign the elected members' open letter.

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Freedom of Information: Open

Senate

10 December 2025

Board of Examiners Project – Update and Approval Process

Description of paper

1. This paper:
 - i. Provides Senate with an update on the Board of Examiners project; and
 - ii. Asks Senate to approve relevant parts of the project.

Action requested / recommendation

2. Senate is asked to **approve** the approach as outlined in paragraphs 17-27.

Background and context

Project Update

3. Improving and enhancing the student experience will continue to be a strategic priority for the University. An area that has been raised by staff and students over recent years is related to Boards of Examiners.
4. In late 2024, University Executive commissioned a Review of Board of Examiners. Representatives from all Schools, Deaneries and other academic areas of the University (Bayes Centre and Edinburgh Futures Institute), and supporting teams (College Offices, School Teaching Offices, Student Systems, Academic Quality and Standards), convenors of the Senate Standing Committees (Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC), Senate Education Committee and Senate Quality Assurance Committee) were consulted during the review: [Summary of review period - Board of Examiners Review](#) [internal link].
5. Findings from the review included:
 - a) Current processes preparing for, running and recording outcomes from BoEs involve large amounts of time for both academics and professional services. This has resulted in errors which add to workloads and have had an impact on students receiving incorrect information about progression and awarding outcomes.
 - b) Inconsistency across Schools in how Boards are run can lead to varying outcomes for students.
 - c) Communication with students regarding the outcomes agreed by the Boards is inconsistent; Timing, level of detail and clarity on whether a student is being informed or consulted, all vary across the University.
 - d) Timings of Boards due to the significant administration means that students often have to wait many weeks for the outcomes of their assessments, sometimes well into the start of the next Semester.

6. Recommendations from the review were scoped into an implementation project which was endorsed by University Executive and University Initiatives Portfolio Board in May 2025 based on the benefits outlined for students and staff (see below).
7. The project is governed under the Learning & Teaching workstream. Members include College Deans of Education, three Heads of Schools, College Heads of Academic Administration/Student Lifecycle/Strategic Education.
8. The project team has been consulting on the planned changes through a Critical Friends group, which includes representatives from all Colleges and the three APRC Senate elected members, and with the College Deans of Learning & Teaching, Deans of Quality Assurance and the College Heads of Student and Academic Administration/Student Lifecycle/Strategic Education. Ongoing student engagement in the project has been through membership of the Senate standing committees and the Students Association President and Vice-President Education join the Critical Friends Group from December 2025.
9. The following have been identified as high-level benefits of the project:
 - **Student communication** – Improve timing, consistency and quality of communication, adhering to compassionate communication principles, to students regarding outcomes from Boards of Examiners.
 - **Consistency of outcome** – Reduce risk of student outcomes varying across different programmes, e.g. when Boards are applying different criteria for borderline cases or in applying Exceptional Circumstances; Reduce risk of errors occurring.
 - **Staff experience** – Enhance the staff experience by reducing workload peaks associated with Boards of Examiners. Standardisation of exam board processes and the application of regulations will foster a clearer understanding across subject areas and Schools. This approach allows for more efficient and higher-standard group training, enhancing comprehension among both Professional Services and academic colleagues, and minimising the effort and stress involved in resolving errors.
 - **Manage workload** – Reduce the negative impact on staff wellbeing because of excessive workloads. Reduction in use of overtime in Schools to manage peaks in workload related to Boards of Examiners.
 - **Risk reduction** – Reduce risk to the operation of Boards of Examiners by implementing consistent processes across the University to enable staff to offer mutual support and back-up, ensuring continuity in operations. Reducing this risk will ultimately reduce the risk to our students receiving their awards or progression outcomes.
10. Project areas of work are:
 - Timelines for late and retrospective Exceptional Circumstances
 - Exceptional Circumstances decision trees
 - Course mark ratification
 - Programme Board role and responsibilities

- Quality process
- The role of External Examiner

11. Further information can be found at: [Board of Examiners Review Implementation project](#) [internal link].

Approvals Process

12. At its meeting on 1 October 2025 Senate members approved the following motions by majority vote:
- Any **regulation** change relating to the operation of Boards of Examiners in the academic year 2025/26 must come to full Senate for approval.
 - Any change to the **operation** of Boards of Examiners in academic year 2025/26 that does not require changes to the regulations also requires approval by full Senate. Proposals for potential mechanisms for delegation of approval of minor changes are welcomed; such mechanisms would also require explicit approval by full Senate.
13. The model of delegated authority for Senate is outlined in Appendix 1.
14. Based on the current approach to the operation of Boards of Examiners, Schools have autonomy to adapt or change aspects of the process and operation of Boards locally, where these remain compliant with university regulations and policies. Schools will retain the ability to adopt on a voluntary basis the processes which have been developed through the Board of Examiners process, without requiring approval from Senate or its standing committees.

January 2026

15. The project team will work with and support Schools and programmes to pilot the following project areas of work:
- i. Exceptional Circumstances decision trees
 - ii. Course mark ratification

June 2026

16. Evaluation of the January 2026 pilot will lead where necessary to iteration of the designs, with further pilot activity taking place in Schools on a voluntary basis. Further pilot activity will take place of the following elements of the project:
- i. Programme Board role and responsibilities
 - ii. Quality process

Discussion

Changes for 2025/26

17. Approval will be sought from Senate for the changes to be introduced in 2025/26 on a mandatory basis to the process relating to late and retrospective Exceptional Circumstances.

Timelines for Late and Retrospective Exceptional Circumstances

18. The aim is to introduce revised timelines and a refined process for the handling of late and retrospective applications for Exceptional Circumstances for introduction during the Board of Examiners period at the end of Semester 2, 2025/26. The challenges posed by the current approach to the handling of late and retrospective cases (i.e. cases submitted after School-level deadlines) are having a significant impact upon workload in Schools and presenting an inconsistent experience for students. There is currently insufficient time between Exceptional Circumstances deadlines and Boards of Examiners — especially at Honours-level - to validate, determine and apply Exceptional Circumstances outcomes. This leads to late changes to outcomes, inconsistent practice, and poses risks to accurate, on time awards and progression.
19. The intention is to take a paper regarding the revised timelines and process to Academic Policy and Regulations Committee in January 2026, with a view to making a **recommendation for approval at the March 2026 meeting of Senate.**

Changes for 2026/27 onwards

20. Following the operation of Boards of Examiners in June 2026, further evaluation and refinement (where required) of processes will take place. The other elements of the project are scheduled for introduction from the 2026/27 academic year, subject to approval from Senate Sub-Committees, as required. An overview of these changes is below with proposed approval routes.

Exceptional Circumstances decision trees

21. Several Schools currently make use of algorithmic decision trees to determine outcomes in Exceptional Circumstances cases. Their use is compatible with the current Exceptional Circumstances policy. However, the intention is to introduce a standard decision tree for use across Schools, in order to promote consistency of outcome for students, and greater efficiency in the handling of workload around cases. The decision tree will include appropriate flexibility for situations where professional body requirements necessitate a deviation from the standard approach.
22. In order to be maximally effective, the decision trees will require the use of standard thresholds for discounting of course results at programme level as a result of Exceptional Circumstances (for example, a specific volume of credit being permitted for discounting when calculating classification). There will also be agreed thresholds for discounting of marks for components of assessment when calculating course results, provided students have met relevant learning outcomes.
23. The intention is to take a paper regarding the proposed standard decision trees to the March 2026 meeting of APRC, with a view to **making a recommendation for approval, for consideration by Senate at its May 2026 meeting.**

Course Mark ratification; Programme Board Roles and Responsibilities

24. The proposed course mark ratification process and the roles and responsibilities for staff involved in both Course and Programme Boards are broadly compatible with existing policy and regulation and reflect practice in some areas of the University. The intention is to provide Senate at its March or May meeting with an overview of any elements of the process, roles or responsibilities which would represent a change in policy, or mandate a change in practice for Schools, and **seek approval from Senate for the embedding of these elements on a mandatory basis from the 2026/27 academic year.**

Asynchronous operation of Course Boards

25. The use of asynchronous Boards of Examiners for confirming course results is common in some Schools and is permissible within current regulations. The current design for the Course Mark ratification process allows the use of asynchronous Course Boards across all Schools within a secure platform. **Approval from Senate will be sought at its March or May meeting for the mandatory operation of asynchronous Boards for confirming course results in all Schools.** The intention is that this approach would be an enhancement to – and therefore separable from – the course mark ratification process, and roles and responsibilities.

Quality Process and the External Examiner role

26. The proposed Course mark ratification process will change the way External Examiners assure the quality of marks/results for a particular course instance. If necessary, data gathered during the piloting of this process will feed into revisions to the External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy. The intention is to take a paper outlining the policy revision to Senate Quality Assurance Committee in March 2026, with a view to making a **recommendation for approval at the May 2026 meeting of Senate.**
27. The Review also recommended a more standardised approach to Teaching Quality Enhancement and the design of the course mark ratification process allows for more automated data collection on each course to provide information for these meetings. The intention is that where feedback and learnings from piloting this area of work result in change to policy, this would be discussed at Senate Quality Assurance Committee which would then make a **recommendation for approval to Senate.**

Approval Process

28. The proposed approvals process outlined above for the academic-related aspects of the project aims to ensuring appropriate input from and oversight by Senate of a strategic project relevant to its role whilst honouring the existing model of delegated authority by Senate to its committees and recognising the expertise, roles and responsibilities of members of standing committees.

29. The approvals process outlined above, developed in response to the Senate motions approved in October 2025, significantly changes the existing model of delegated authority and could require additional Senate meeting time, likely in the form of special meetings dependant on other Senate business and level of discussion. This impacts on:

- Workload for Senate members to prepare for and attend meetings;
- Workload and resources required for all departments and roles which support the effective running of Senate and its committees;
- The project team; and
- Timescales for the project.

Resource implications

30. Resource implications for running the project itself are being managed through the Learning and Teaching workstream. There are resource implications for those involved in consultation activity, including the Critical Friends Group. The resource implications of and support for schools and programmes piloting areas of work are being actively considered. Pilot activity from January 2026 onwards will be evaluated to inform future project phases. Ultimately the project benefits aim to reduce workload associated with Boards of Examiners and a plan will be developed to evaluate the impact of the project outputs.

Risk management

31. The current diverse practices across our Boards of Examiners has a negative impact on our students' experience, creates single points of failure and risks for the institution. Standardising processes will ensure more consistent application of policy and reduce risk levels across the University by enabling staff to support each other and ensure operational continuity. The risk of student outcomes varying across different programmes will reduce through the use of consistent processes.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

32. This project does not respond to the Climate Emergency or Sustainable Development Goals.

Equality & diversity

33. Bringing consistency to our Board of Examiners processes will ensure that all students are considered in the same way by our Boards. Where individual policies include an Equality Impact Assessment, these will be reviewed as part of any work undertaken to update the policies.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

34. Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of this work falls under the remit of the Board of Examiner Review Implementation Project. The project has a full communication plan and will be developing guidance for new processes complete with a training schedule. Evaluation will be undertaken across the whole project to ensure expected benefits are delivered and reported via governance structures to University Executive.

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Freedom of Information

Open

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Appendix 1 – Model of Delegated Authority

[Senate Handbook 2025/26](#): “As set out in the Universities (Scotland) Act 1889, the role of Senate is to 'regulate and superintend the teaching and discipline of the University and to promote research'. Senate has established standing committees to support Senate to fulfil its role; and Senate has granted delegated authority to these committees for specific purposes. By delegating certain powers to these committees, Senate business can be considered in a timelier manner, with appropriate scrutiny and expertise, but without creating unnecessary duplication of effort by Senate members. Consideration of routine business also enables Senate to consider issues of greater importance during its meetings. [Senate Standing Order 22](#) provides further information on Senate committees.”

Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC) [Terms of Reference](#) include: “**Scrutinise and approve proposals for new or revised academic policy or regulation**, ensuring that policy and regulation is only introduced where it is necessary, and that all policy and regulation is suitably accessible to its intended audience.”

SENATE

10 December 2025

Academic Contribution Framework

Description of paper

1. The paper invites discussion of the “Academic Contribution Framework” (ACF) recently approved by the University Executive.
2. Academic contributions are relevant to all aspects of Strategy 2030.

Action requested / Recommendation

3. Senate is asked to **approve** the following motions:
 - 3.1. **(M1)** The version of the ACF approved by the University Executive constitutes a material change in the University’s strategy related to research and teaching, which has been taken forward without the approval of Senate. Senate disapproves of this course of action by the University Executive and reiterates that matters of strategy related to research and teaching are the responsibility of Senate.
 - 3.2. **(M2)** The ACF approved by the University Executive has serious flaws that make it inappropriate for evaluating academic contribution. In particular, Senate rejects the use of the following metrics for evaluating academic contribution:
 - (a) Total number of published outputs in a given year (ACF 1.1)
 - (b) Total number of funding applications submitted in a given year (ACF 1.2)
 - (c) Total student contact hours in a given year (ACF 2.1)
 - 3.3. **(M3)** The ACF approved by the University Executive risks damaging the academic culture of the University by failing to acknowledge the value of collaborative and collegial working.

Background and context

4. The University Executive recently approved an “Academic Contribution Framework” <https://uoe.sharepoint.com/sites/Staffworkstream/SitePages/The-Academic-Contribution-Framework.aspx> that aims to “give academic staff clarity on how their contribution may be captured and how evidence of that contribution may feed into decision-making by evaluators if compulsory redundancy is required”.
5. The ACF was developed by an “Academic contribution working group” as part of the Staff Workstream, which is chaired by the Principal. The ACF paper notes that it was “shared with Heads of School for feedback” on 17/07/25, “Updated following feedback from UIPB” on 25/09/25, and approved by the University Executive on 7/10/25.
6. In a section about “Future Implications”, the ACF notes that “the way we define academic contribution at this crucial stage will shape organisational culture going forwards”. This highlights that the ACF is intended and expected to have an ongoing impact on the University’s teaching and research.

Discussion

7. The ACF diverges from the University’s existing strategy related to research.

7.1. The University's [Research and Innovation Strategy 2030](#) was launched in January 2024, following discussion at a special meeting of Senate on 6 November 2023, and approval by the University Executive and Court in December 2023.

7.2. The ACF appears to diverge from key aspects of the Strategy. For instance:

Research and Innovation Strategy 2030	ACF
<p>(i) "We are committed to nurturing excellence and innovation in each and every one of our disciplines." (p. 8)</p> <p>(ii) "We will provide an environment in which our researchers are inspired to be ambitious and disruptive in their enquiries." (p. 10)</p>	<p>Rather than focusing on "excellence" or "ambitious and disruptive" research, the headline metric is "Total number of published outputs in a given year".</p>
<p>(iii) "Key to our approach is encouraging our researchers across science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine (STEMM) and social sciences, humanities and arts for people and environment (SHAPE) to work together to innovate new approaches." (p. 8)</p>	<p>The ACF makes no mention of inter-disciplinary collaborations, unlike the University's promotions guidance and framework (discussed in paragraph 15 below).</p>
<p>(iv) "Responsible assessment requires avoiding the use of narrow metrics to assess research and researchers. We were early adopters of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment and the Agreement on Research Assessment, and are delivering a robust action plan on ensuring a balanced, including and fair approach to assessment, including through use of the narrative CV." (pp. 25-26)</p> <p>(v) "We will incorporate relevant aspects of the narrative CV into our recruitment, progression and reward processes, ensuring any evaluation and assessment of researchers and their research is nuanced, equitable and celebrates the diversity that is crucial to a flourishing research environment." (p. 26)</p>	<p>The ACF uses narrow metrics (such as number of publications and number of grant applications) to assess researchers.</p> <p>While the ACF does incorporate some elements of self-report narrative, these are dominated by the use of narrow metrics.</p>

7.3. By emphasising narrow metrics such as "Total number of published outputs in a given year", the ACF goes against existing commitments, including:

- The University's [Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment \(CoARA\) Action Plan May 2025](#), which includes "Commitment 2: Base research assessment primarily on qualitative evaluation for which peer review is central, supported by responsible use of quantitative indicators".

- The University is a signatory of San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), which is a cornerstone of the current REF 2029 'Approach to Submission'. Within DORA, journal-based metrics are specifically discouraged in Items 1, 4, 5, 15, 17 and 18.
 - The University's [Research Cultures Action Plan February 2023](#), which indicated that a "key measure" would be "Reducing reliance on metrics and embracing the narrative CV. Processes for recruitment, promotion and review should align with the sector-wide shift away from reliance on narrow sets of metrics, including through adopting the narrative CV."
 - The University's [Research Cultures website](#), which notes that "Undertaking research assessment responsibly means assessing the quality of the research undertaken and its outputs directly, rather than using quantitative short hands."
8. The ACF also diverges from existing strategy related to Learning and Teaching.
- 8.1. The University's [Learning & Teaching Strategy 2030](#) was discussed at the meeting of Senate on 11 December 2024, and approved by Senate Education Committee on 27 February 2025.
- 8.2. The Strategy emphasises a broad view of the student experience. For instance:
- (i) "we are committed to providing our students a high-quality learning experience that continually enhances their outcomes and overall success. This commitment is deeply embedded in our values, guiding us towards creating a supportive, inspiring, and enriching environment for all our students" (p. 4)
 - (ii) "We are committed to making learning accessible to all our students by exploring new forms of online and hybrid teaching, drawing on our research strengths to enhance these approaches." (p. 6)
 - (iii) "We will expand opportunities for our students to take ownership of their learning, make informed choices, and pursue their academic interests with autonomy." (p. 14)
- 8.3. In contrast, the ACF highlights "Student contact" (ACF Measure 2.1) as a key metric. This suggests a rather different view of teaching, explicitly equating it with "timetabled hours for lecturing, tutorials, practicals or student placement supervision" rather than the broader view of the student experience taken by the Strategy (i.e., a "supportive, inspiring, and enriching environment" that may include "online and hybrid teaching"). The ACF also takes no account of the academic contribution involved in providing students with assessment and feedback, overlooking a substantial part of academic work that takes place outwith contact hours. The ACF does include a self-report narrative about "Innovation and Recognition (teaching)" (ACF Measure 2.3) that may enable some consideration of contribution to the student experience more broadly, however this appears to be dominated by the use of narrow metrics.
9. Senate has a role in scrutinising policy and strategy related to teaching and learning, and to promoting research. As argued above, the ACF represents a material change from previously approved strategies in these areas, and as such should have been subject to scrutiny from Senate. This is the basis of motion M1.

Flaws in the ACF Metrics

10. The goal of this paper is not to give a comprehensive account of the flaws of the ACF, nor is it to propose a particular alternative. Instead, we focus on three particular metrics that feature in the ACF as approved by the University Executive. As discussed in the previous section, these metrics diverge from established University strategy related to research and teaching. Here, we highlight how each of these metrics (a) fails

to fairly evaluate academic contribution, and (b) has harmful long-term consequences for the University's teaching and research.

11. Total number of published outputs in a given year (ACF 1.1)

- 11.1. **Unfair.** The University's existing research strategy is focused on quality rather than quantity of research outputs. For instance, the University's [REF 2021 Code of Practice](#) noted that "decisions on output inclusion for REF 2021 will be based primarily on the quality of the outputs in terms of originality, significance and rigour" (see also the examples in paragraph 7). As such, academic staff have been encouraged to focus their efforts on quality rather than quantity of published outputs. The University's [Statement on the Responsible Use of Research Metrics \(May 2025\)](#) states that "Decision-makers will ensure that information to be used is clearly communicated well in advance to those being assessed." By retrospectively changing the emphasis from quality to quantity, this commitment to advance notice has not been upheld.
- 11.2. **Harmful.** The use of this metric for evaluating academic contribution sends a harmful signal to colleagues that the institution values quantity of publications rather than quality. This risks incentivising colleagues to produce lower quality research outputs (to instead focus on quantity), which would damage the University's performance in REF 2029, and its reputation more generally. REF 2029 comprises three assessed elements, one of which is People, Culture and Environment (PCE). The proposed Assessment Framework for PCE includes Responsibility, ('Upholding the highest standards of research integrity and ethics, enabling transparency and accountability in all aspects of research') and Inclusivity ('Ensuring the research environment is accessible, inclusive, and collegial. Enabling equity for under-represented and minoritised groups.'). Moreover, such institutional incentives risk contributing to Questionable Research Practices (see for instance <https://doi.org/10.1109/SIEDS65500.2025.11021201> which notes that "the publish-or-perish culture of academia" drives demand for predatory journals).

12. Total number of funding applications submitted in a given year (ACF 1.2)

- 12.1. **Unfair.** This metric represents a shift in the goal that has been communicated to academic staff. Colleagues have been incentivised to make focused and high-quality applications, rather than a large number of indiscriminate applications. For instance, the criteria for promotion to Reader (section 3.3 of [Academic Promotions Policy](#)) include "Significant record of success in securing research grants and awards".
- 12.2. **Harmful.** Using such a metric to evaluate performance incentivises indiscriminate applications, which again risks harming the University's reputation and also risks lowering the overall rate of success in securing funding and harming our standing with funders (in particular, with funders who have exempted the University from formal demand management due to our track record of high success rates). Moreover, the effort involved in reviewing applications (including pre-submission processes within the University) is a substantial cost to the academic community so incentivising this metric risks worsening academic workloads, as well as adding to the professional services workload involved in research support.

13. Total student contact hours in a given year (ACF 2.1)

- 13.1. **Unfair.** Individual academic staff typically have little opportunity to decide how many contact hours they will deliver in a typical year. They are allocated to teach particular courses that have particular delivery patterns, according to locally-developed workload models. This metric therefore disadvantages

colleagues who have not been allocated to teach courses that have a substantial number of contact hours, and substantially advantages those delivering lectures or tutorials that are double or triple-taught simply because there is inadequate room space.

- 13.2. **Harmful.** Equating contact hours with teaching is a regressive view of education, which fails to capture the broader academic work involved in teaching, and is not in line with the Learning & Teaching Strategy 2030. This metric undermines colleagues' ongoing work to develop supportive learning environments, e.g. through use of asynchronous discussion boards, office hours, and interaction with students as individuals.
14. The Equality Impact Assessment (https://www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/EqualityDiversity/EIA/HR-Academic_Contribution_Framework_16.10.25.pdf) does not fully recognise the evidence base detailing the association between many of the ACF metrics and characteristics of protected classes. The purpose of this paper is not to review the EqIA's deficiencies, but the paper will highlight some specific areas to illustrate the potential harm to the University operations of the deficient EqIA.
- 14.1. A particular concern is that the chosen evaluation period includes the Covid-19 recovery period, when many protected classes have a demonstrably lower output. For example, the EqIA notes that academic staff are broadly evenly represented across gender, however in this time period, women have had an outsized impact on their publication and project generation due to caring impacts during the Covid-19 pandemic (see, for instance: <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-020-01294-9>).
- 14.2. The ACF does not give enough detail regarding how each of these protected characteristics will be accounted for beyond a 'voluntary disclosure' which cannot be considered a fair practice given the individual's livelihood will be at risk if they do not voluntarily disclose protected characteristics.
- 14.3. The ACF does not demonstrate suitable engagement with the impact of protected class characteristics and academic output, which includes, but is not limited to, gender, disability, race, and carer status, and the published body of research demonstrating impact on publication metrics (see, for instance: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12109-022-09879-0>, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2022.2048634>)
15. Interdisciplinary research is particularly poorly served by the ACF. Given the acknowledged differences in disciplinary practices, academic staff who collaborate across fields may be exposed to different disciplinary practices; moreover, such variation in disciplinary practices exists between colleagues working in the same School or even Subject Area. The ACF does not propose sufficient guidance for how these colleagues will be evaluated. The University's guidance on promotions ([Interdisciplinarity and Team Research in Promotion Procedures Additional guidance](#)) states that individuals can "find it challenging to demonstrate their individual contributions" when they work with interdisciplinary research or as key members of a large team. The guidance notes that individuals in this position may achieve commendations at later career stages, and may have "rather fewer [publications] if they have been engaged in novel, complex, interdisciplinary interactions that have taken time to come to fruition".

Flaws in the ACF evaluation period

16. The evaluation period of 01/08/2022 to 31/07/2025 is based on the rationale that: "Older data will be substantially impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and data quality will be poorer as we go back in time. Capturing multiple years instead of a static

snapshot recognises that academic contributions vary over time and a single year may not be representative.” These are certainly relevant considerations, however the chosen period is problematic as discussed below.

17. **Academic contributions vary over time.** This is an important point, but the ACF does not properly account for the fact that the four different kinds of contribution being measured may occur with different intensities over different periods. This is a norm of academic career cycles. Moreover, research publications and KE/Impact outputs reflect activities/contributions in previous years, factoring time it takes to conceptualise, write, and publish research outputs (including time for peer review). Although this will vary significantly by discipline, a publication lag of 2-3 years or more would not be uncommon in many fields. Recorded research outputs in 2022-2025 will therefore likely reflect activities/contributions made in 2019-2021 for many staff.
18. **Impact of Covid-19.** The chosen evaluation period therefore unfairly advantages individuals who did not have high teaching loads or citizenship/leadership activities during Covid-19 (whose outputs are now more likely to show in 2022-2025), over those for whom Covid-19 might have meant they had to deprioritise their personal research to support the institution to deliver hybrid teaching and support students and staff, or whose research programmes were otherwise affected by the pandemic. Such colleagues may have been supported in recent years to get their research back on track, however the resulting research outputs will likely fall outside the chosen evaluation period as they are still in progress or going through peer review. These colleagues are doubly disadvantaged by the proposed framework, as their teaching, leadership and citizenship contributions from 2020-2021 will also, it seems, not be factored into their scoring, but may only be used to provide additional context. The EqIA does not recognise this.
19. Furthermore, the cut off date of August 2025 ignores all teaching and research contributions this academic year, which does not recognise current practise or reflect how workloads have responded to rounds of voluntary redundancy.
20. Failure to take account of the temporal misalignment of the measured outputs of different types of activity builds inequity into the framework’s design. This issue is not considered in the EqIA. Rather than mitigate or deal equitably with the impact of Covid-19, as is asserted in the EqIA, it may in fact reinforce unfairness. A fairer assessment would recognise and evaluate contributions over a much longer time period. For instance, as a minimum, a period of 5 years would align with the promotions process and minimise the risk of recency bias. It would make it more likely that an individual’s broad contributions are captured, which is simply not possible with such a restricted timeframe.

Risk to the University’s academic culture

21. The University’s [Research Cultures Action Plan February 2023](#) notes:

“It is our responsibility as an institution to foster a culture in which researchers are encouraged, supported and recognised for carrying out responsible research in a collegial way; where consideration is given to their personal wellbeing as well as the well-being of their professional relationships; and which challenges behaviours and structures that work against these goals. This is a shared responsibility for the University as an employer and an educational institution, and for all of us who work and study within the University.”

Through its focus on individual metrics, the ACF does not serve to foster the culture envisaged in the Action Plan. For instance, the ACF has no means of evaluating collegiality, such as taking time to discuss research with colleagues or to provide

informal mentoring to early career researchers in a way that does not necessarily lead to co-authorship of a publication.

22. The [Learning & Teaching Strategy 2030](#) includes a commitment to “Fostering Academic Communities”:

“Academic communities are essential for creating an inclusive, vibrant and supportive learning environment and a sense of belonging. We will continue to promote opportunities for student-student, staff-staff, and student-staff communities, fostering a culture of collaboration and cultivating an environment in which students and staff feel supported, valued, and empowered to succeed. We encourage team approaches to the design and delivery of teaching and involving our students as partners in learning, teaching and assessment.”

This commitment appears to be entirely absent from the ACF.

23. The measures and metrics employed by the ACF send a message to colleagues about what contributions will be valued by the University. This is explicitly acknowledged in the “Future Implications” section of the ACF paper. By failing to acknowledge the value of collaborative and collegial working, and broader citizenship/leadership contributions that are not easily captured through a quantitative metric, the ACF risks long term harm to the University’s academic culture.
24. For a vivid example of the risk, consider the University’s response to the Covid-19 emergency. This was underpinned by collaborative and collegial working (as evidenced, for instance, by the wide range of contributions rewarded by [Principal’s Medals in 2020](#)). In a future emergency, colleagues may give low priority to such efforts, if they believe that doing so would hurt ACF metrics on which their livelihood would depend.

Resource implications

25. Resources have already been invested in developing the version of the ACF that was approved by the University Executive. A potential implication of M2 is that further work would be required to revise the ACF or develop a more suitable alternative approach.

Risk Management

26. The potential for reshaping the profile of academic contributions across the University has significant implications for many activities listed in the Statement of Risk Policy and Risk Appetite (e.g., “Research” and “Education & Student Experience”).
27. The ACF poses a particular risk to the University’s reputation; the Statement of Risk Policy and Risk Appetite notes that “It is regarded as critical that the University preserves its high reputation”.
28. The ACF’s current implementation and inappropriate EqIA exposes the University to liability with regards to employment and equality law (see also Paragraph 31 below). There are demonstrable impacts on protected characteristics that have not received proper consideration.

Responding to the Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development Goals

29. The University’s approach to evaluating academic contributions has potentially significant implications for the way that our academic work addresses the Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development Goals.
30. Given the intended use of the ACF for decision-making related to compulsory redundancies, it is particularly relevant to SDG 8: “Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all”.

Equality and Diversity

31. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the University to “Assess the impact of policies and practices against the needs of the general duty”, which in turn includes “Eliminate unlawful discrimination” and “remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics”. The ACF has an accompanying Equality Impact Assessment, however this paper has noted some serious issues that have not been properly addressed.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

32. Outcomes of motions to be communicated by Senate Clerk to University Court and Executive, implementation to be led by Executive with oversight and evaluation by Court and Senate in their respective capacities.

Consultation

33. The authors consulted with other elected members of Senate while drafting the paper, and drew on concerns expressed by a wider group of colleagues.

Further information

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Freedom of information

Open

Senate

10 December 2025

Senate & Senate Standing Committee Elections 2026-27

Description of paper

1. This paper details proposed arrangements for the operation of the 2026 elections for academic staff to Senate; and elections of Senate-elected academic members to the Senate Standing Committees.

Action requested / recommendation

2. Senate is asked to approve the items below for the elections to Senate and the Senate Standing Committees:
 - The dates for opening the call for nominations and for submission of nominations.
 - The periods for voting.
 - The appointment of the Returning Officer and Deputy Returning Officer.

Background and context

3. Annual elections are held to elect academic staff members to Senate. These elections are conducted under the Senate Election Regulations (Appendix 2). Under University Ordinance 212 (Composition of the Senatus Academicus), academic staff elect from their own number 200 members of the Senate.
4. At its meeting of 1 October 2025, Senate approved amendments to paragraph 23 and 24 of the Senate Election Regulations to enable election arrangements to be approved at its December meeting and allow a more evenly distributed meeting cycle. More information on these amendments can be seen in [paper S25/26 1I](#).
5. The election of student members of Senate is managed by the Edinburgh University Students' Association.
6. Ex officio members of Senate are those members appointed because they have a role or position which includes membership of Senate. If an individual leaves this role or position then they cease to be members of Senate and the next individual to hold the role or position will take up the membership, i.e., the membership is linked to a role or position held and not to a specific individual.

Discussion

2026 Senate Academic Staff Elections

7. The Senatus Academicus (Senate) Election Regulations (Appendix 2) govern the election of academic staff to the Senate.
8. The proposed dates for the 2026 Senate Academic Staff Elections are as follows:

Wednesday 4 February 2026	Nominations open
Wednesday 4 March 2026 (12 noon)	Nominations close
Wednesday 25 March 2026 (9am) to Wednesday 8 April 2026 (12 noon)	Voting open online
By Friday 24 April 2026	Results announced

9. Possible conflicts and mitigating factors:
- Flexible learning week takes place from 16 February to 20 February 2026, which is during the nomination period. It is possible that some academic staff will take annual leave around this week. However, the length of the nomination period (one month) should ensure that all staff have opportunities to participate in the process.
 - Nominations and voting will take place online, therefore will remain accessible to staff working across different campuses and from home.
 - Nominations will be open for a full month, and voting will be open for two weeks, which is intended to ensure that all staff are able to access the process.
 - The nomination process will be completed before the Spring teaching vacation, with the bulk of online voting taking place before the Spring teaching vacation (6-17 April 2025).
10. The dates for the 2026 elections have been brought forward by approximately one month when compared with elections held in previous years (see [Paper S 25/26 11](#)). This is possible due to a change in the Senate Election Regulations which removed the requirement for the call or nominations to be made after 31 January and at the next Senate meeting which follows this date (see Paper S2526 2A: 1 October 2025 Minute). The change in timescale also allows for the results of the election to be notified to Senate before its final meeting of the academic year, in line with the Senate Election Regulations, and enables this notification to be provided in line with the revised timescales for the circulation of Senate papers.
11. Lisa Dawson, Academic Registrar is nominated as the Returning Officer of the Senate Academic Staff Elections. Olivia Hayes, Committees and Governance Manager, is nominated as the Deputy Returning Officer. Senate is invited to approve these nominations and appoint these candidates under paragraph 26 of the Senate Election Regulations (provided in Appendix 2).
12. The number of elected academic staff positions open for election in 2026 is as below.

Position	Total open for election 2026	Total positions
CAHSS Academic Staff (non-professorial)	10	34
CAHSS Academic Staff (professorial)	11	34
CMVM Academic Staff (non-professorial)	8	33
CMVM Academic Staff (professorial)	21	33
CSE Academic Staff (non-professorial)	9	33
CSE Academic Staff (professorial)	11	33
Total	70	200

13. Senate can be assured that any further vacancies arising from the elected Senate membership will be captured with a further calculation of the total number of positions

available for election in 2026 to be undertaken prior to the beginning of the nomination period. The total number of available positions will be advertised on the Senate website.

2026 Senate Standing Committee Elections

14. Three places on each of the three Senate Standing Committees are allocated to elected members of Senate.
15. Elected Senate members are nominally assigned to each College, however elected Senate members are not expected to act on behalf of the College to which they nominally represent. Each Standing Committee also has College representation responsible for representing the needs and wishes of the Schools and Deaneries within their College..
16. The process for electing academic staff to the Senate standing committees is as detailed in appendix one. Senate approved these election arrangements for use in 2023/24 and 2024/25. In February 2024 (paper S 23/24 2G), it was suggested that the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group review the election arrangements in line with their work on standing committees. The group has now been disbanded and did not reach a conclusion on this item. Separate work is taking place focussed on developing a Senate Statement of Primary Responsibilities which will also identify what elements of Senate's responsibilities are delegated to its Standing Committees. Any revisions to the terms of reference or composition of Standing Committees which arise from this work will will also consider arrangements for elections to Standing Committees. In the interim the previously approved arrangements will be used to conduct the 2026/27 Senate Standing Committee Elections.
17. The proposed dates for the 2026 Senate Standing Committee Elections are as follows:

Wednesday 25 March 2026	Nominations open
Wednesday 29 April 2026 (12 noon)	Nominations close
Wednesday 13 May 2026 (9am) to Wednesday 27 May 2026 (12 noon)	Voting open online
By Friday 12 June 2026	Results announced

18. In an effort to increase engagement with the main round of Senate Standing Committee elections, it is proposed that the nomination period be brought forward to run concurrently with the Senate Academic Staff Elections voting period. This is to ensure that staff have an opportunity to consider and engage with Standing Committee elections whilst they are still engaged with senate business and prior to the final meeting of the academic year, noting that the nomination and election period in 2024 and 2025 took place after the final meeting of Senate.
19. Additional communications will also be prepared for circulation during the nomination period in the event that there are fewer nominations than positions in a bid to fill vacancies via the main round of elections.
20. Possible conflicts and mitigating factors:

- a. The nomination period for standing committees will open before members are aware of the results of the main Senate Elections. Members who are seeking re-election will be eligible to nominate themselves prior to the Senate Academic Staff Elections results being announced. In the event that a member who is seeking election to a Standing Committee is not re-elected to Senate, then they will be removed from the election prior to candidate names being confirmed and prior to the voting period.
- b. There are a minimum of 3 working days where both the results of the main Senate elections will be known and nominations for Senate Standing Committees will also be open. This allows for any members who are successfully elected to submit a nomination for election to a Senate Standing Committee.
- c. Spring Teaching Vacation takes place from 6 April to 17 April 2026, which is during the nomination period. It is possible that some academic staff will take annual leave around this week. However, the length of the nomination period has been extended to five weeks which should ensure that all staff have an opportunity to participate in the nomination process.
- d. The voting period will take place during peak exams, marking and Board of Examiners period. Whilst it is appreciated that this will be a busy time for staff, voting will be open for two weeks, which is intended to ensure that all staff are able to engage with voting.
- e. Nominations and voting will take place online, therefore will remain accessible to staff working across different campuses and from home.

21. In 2024 and 2025 it has been necessary to run a by-election to fill vacancies which remain on Standing Committees following the conclusion of the main round of Standing Committee elections (see [Minutes of 9 October 2024](#) & Paper S 2526 2A: Minutes of 1 October 2025). Academic Quality and Standards are preparing proposals for handling by-elections to fill vacancies which arise mid-year or for positions which are not filled during the main election round. Running an additional election for unfilled positions requires staff resource and, where external election services are required, incurs financial cost. A proposal outlining proposals will be presented to Senate in March 2026.

Resource implications

22. Resource implications for managing the administrative tasks required for the elections are primarily met by Academic Quality and Standards.

23. The University's Information Services Group has outsourced the running of elections to Civica Electoral Services and the budget required for this will be met by ISG. The cost per Senate election to the University is likely to be in the range of £1500-1800. Further information is available from the [Information Services - election availability and entitlement website](#).

Risk management

24. The University's Risk Policy and Risk Appetite statement refers to the University holding 'no appetite for any breaches in statute, regulation.' Senate elections are mandated by University Ordinance 212.

Equality & diversity

25. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been conducted and is available on the [Equality and Diversity webpages](#). This assessment assumes a regular rotation/refreshment of members and the filling of most elected vacancies.

26. Senate Election advertising materials highlight the University's commitment to improving the diversity of key University committees and encourages all academic staff to consider standing. The Senate elections will be advertised widely through multiple channels.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

27. Senate and Senate Standing Committee elections will be managed by staff within Registry Services.
28. Information on the Senate Elections is available on the [Senate webpages](#), and the Senate Members Portal.
29. Following approval by Senate, the opening of nominations for candidates to stand for election to Senate will be announced through multiple channels including the Senate website, all-staff email, and social media.
30. Following approval by Senate the opening of nominations for candidates to stand for election to Senate Standing Committees will be announced via email to the elected staff members of Senate.
31. Senate members are encouraged to make themselves available if colleagues contact them wishing to discuss standing for Senate.

Authors

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October 2025

Freedom of Information – Open

Presenter

Lisa Dawson, Academic Registrar

Appendix 1: Senate Standing Committee: Election arrangements

1. Three places on each of the three Senate Standing Committees are allocated to elected members of Senate. The three elected member positions are nominally assigned to each College.
2. Current elected academic staff members of Senate plus Senate Assessors and the Academic Staff Member of Court will have the opportunity to nominate themselves for membership of one of the three Senate Standing Committees. Nominees cannot seek membership of more than one Committee.
3. Where the Senate term of a current member in one of these categories is due to end in July 2026, they can nominate themselves for membership of one of the Committees for 2026-27 as long as they have stood for re-election to Senate on the understanding that they would only be able to take up a place on the Committee if they secure another term on Senate commencing in August 2026.
4. In the event that the number of eligible nominees for a Committee does not exceed the three available places each nominee will be assigned to the membership of the Committee.
5. If vacancies remain following each College being assigned a position, any remaining positions will be allocated to interested nominees.
6. In the event that the number of eligible nominations for a Committee exceeds the three available places, an election will determine which nominees are assigned to the membership of the Committee.
7. Current elected academic staff members of Senate plus Senate Assessors and the Academic Staff Member of Court would be eligible to vote in this election (if an election is required).
8. If required, the election would be conducted by means of the Single Transferrable Vote, Weighted Inclusive Gregory Method (STV WIGM). For each Committee, the three candidates with the greatest share of the vote would automatically be elected to the relevant Committee. In the event of a tie, the successful candidate or candidates would be determined by the drawing of lots. Voting would be conducted online, and the counting of votes would be conducted using an electronic counting system.
9. For members assigned to a Committee, the term of office will run from 1 August 2026 until the end of 2026-27 (31 July 2027), with scope to subsequently seek election to the relevant Committee (in line with the arrangements agreed by Senate) for up to two further sessions.
10. Should one or more of the three places on a Committee remain unfilled following the conclusion of these nomination and (if required) election processes, the vacant place(s) would be offered to member(s) who had unsuccessfully nominated themselves for a place on a different Committee for 2026-27. Were there more members than places, the place(s) would be distributed to the member(s) who had received the most votes for the Committee that they had stood for (if an election had been held) or by drawing lots (if an election had not been held).
11. Should the members cease to be members of Senate prior to or during 2026-27, their membership of the relevant Committee will cease with immediate effect.

12. Senate is asked to approve the appointment of a Returning Officer and Deputy Returning Officer for the Senate Standing Committee election. Lisa Dawson, Academic Registrar is nominated as the Returning Officer. Olivia Hayes, Committees and Governance Manager, is nominated as the Deputy Returning Officer.

13. For information, a table of the positions open for election in 2026 is provided below.

Position	Total positions
Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee	Three: Each position is nominally assigned to a College.
Senate Education Committee	Three: Each position is nominally assigned to a College.
Senate Quality Assurance Committee	Three: Each position is nominally assigned to a College.

Appendix 2: Senate Election Regulations



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

Senatus Academicus (Senate) Election Regulations

Composition of the Senate (Ordinance 212 Paragraphs 1-3 and 5)

1. The Principal of the University will preside at any meeting of the Senate.¹
2. The Senate model will comprise the following categories with numbers apportioned as follows²:

Table 1

Position	Membership
Principal	1
Heads of Schools	23
Heads of Colleges	3
Other <i>ex officio</i> appointments	Approximately 50
Total <i>ex officio</i>	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

3. The elected membership of Senate will be broken down as follows:

Table 2

Position	Membership	Membership Breakdown
Elected academic staff (Professorial)	100 ³	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 ⁴	34 academic staff members from the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, with 3 positions prioritised for early career academic staff.
		33 academic staff members from the College of Science and Engineering, with 3 positions prioritised for early career academic staff.

¹ Ordinance 212 Paragraph 1.

² Ordinance 212 Paragraphs 2, 3, and 5.

³ Ordinance 212 Paragraph 3a.

⁴ Ordinance 212 Paragraph 3a.

Appendix 2: Senate Election Regulations

		33 academic staff members from the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, with 3 positions prioritised for early career academic staff.
Elected students	30 ⁵	See Appendix 2

4. Staff *ex officio* roles are detailed in Appendix 1. This list may be amended by the University Secretary from time to time, to reflect changes in organisational structures and job titles. Any changes will be notified to Senate at the next meeting of Senate.
5. The Students' Association will determine the office holders whose roles will entitle them to take up Senate membership and will be responsible for appointing these students to Senate.
6. The Students' Association must inform the Senate Support team if it is necessary to make any alteration to the list of office holders in Appendix 2 whose roles entitle them to Senate membership. Any changes will be notified to Senate at the next meeting of Senate.
7. Should a relevant Students' Association position become vacant for a period of time or a relevant student office holder be otherwise unavailable, the Students' Association will identify another appropriate elected student office holder to fill the vacant Senate position.
8. Election of Senate Assessors and Professional Services Staff to the University Court operates under separate regulations relating to election to University Court. Senate Assessors on the University Court will comprise two Senate Assessors. The Professional Services Staff Member elected to the University Court will also serve on Senate. Assessors and Professional Services Staff are elected for a four-year term on Court; they hold Senate membership as *ex officio* members for the duration of their term as Court members if their term as a Senate member would otherwise have concluded.

Term of Office (Ordinance 212 Paragraphs 4 and 6)

Elected academic staff

9. Elected academic staff will stand for a term of office which will not exceed three years from the first day of August of the year of election.⁶ Elected academic staff will demit office on 31 July of their final year in office.
10. There is no cap on the number of terms of office for which academic staff members may stand; academic staff members will be eligible for re-election for the same term of office provided that they demit office on ceasing to hold a contract of employment with the University.⁷

⁵ Ordinance 212 Paragraph 5.

⁶ Ordinance 212 Paragraph 4.

⁷ Ordinance 212 Paragraph 4a.

Appendix 2: Senate Election Regulations

11. Elected academic staff members may resign membership at any time.⁸ Their membership will remain vacant until the next scheduled Senate election.

Elected students

12. The term of office for undergraduate student members will be one year, starting on the first day of August in the year of election. The terms of office for postgraduate student members will be one year, starting on the first day of November in the year of election. Students will be eligible to stand for multiple terms of office consecutively. There is no cap on the number of terms of office for student members.
13. A student member will demit office on ceasing to be a student at the University. Student members may resign membership at any time.⁹

The Electoral Roll (Ordinance 212 Paragraphs 3 and 5)

Elected academic staff

14. Academic staff members who are eligible to stand for membership of Senate and elect members from their own number will hold appointments from the University Court, as attested by a contract of employment issued by the University.¹⁰ In practice, 'Academic staff' will apply to all members of staff who are categorised as 'academic' in the University's Human Resources records.
15. All members of staff who are categorised as 'academic', and who also hold a personal or established chair, will be eligible to stand and vote in the 'elected academic staff (professorial)' category. All members of staff who are categorised as 'academic,' and who do not hold a personal or established chair, will be eligible to stand and vote in the 'elected academic staff (non-professorial)' category. Members of staff who are categorised as early career academic staff, including both early career research and teaching staff who hold a position up to and including Grade 08 on the University Grade Structure, will be eligible for election to the reserved early career academic staff positions contained within the 'elected academic staff (non-professorial)' category.
16. Members of the academic staff who hold a personal or established chair will not be eligible to stand and vote in the 'elected academic staff (non-professorial)' category. Members of the academic staff who do not hold a personal or established chair will not be eligible to stand and vote in the 'elected academic staff (professorial)' category. Members of staff who are categorised as early career academic staff, including both early career research and teaching staff who hold a position up to and including Grade 08 on the University Grade Structure, will be eligible for election to the reserved early career academic staff positions contained within the 'elected academic staff (non-professorial)' category.
17. Where a non-Professorial member of Senate has been awarded the title of personal or established chair, they will continue as a 'non-professorial' member until the end of their term of office.
18. Academic staff members who hold any of the posts or offices which qualify them for *ex officio* membership will not be eligible to stand for membership of Senate in either of the elected academic staff categories,¹¹ but are entitled to vote in the election for the academic staff category relevant to their role.

⁸ Ordinance 212 Paragraph 4b.

⁹ Ordinance 212 Paragraph 6a, 6b.

¹⁰ Ordinance 212 Paragraph 3

¹¹ Ordinance 212 Paragraph 3b

Appendix 2: Senate Election Regulations

19. The electoral roll will be compiled from Human Resources' records on 31 January preceding the call for nominations meaning that nominees for the elected academic staff places will need to have been in their posts from this date in order to be eligible for nomination. Academic staff members who are allocated to the University Secretary's Group or Information Services Group will be included in the electoral roll for College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.
20. Academic staff in both elected categories will be eligible to stand for the places which have been allocated to the College of which they are a member. If an academic staff member is a member of multiple Colleges, they will stand in the College where they work a greater proportion of their time (based on full-time equivalent). If an academic staff member works for equal amounts of time across multiple Colleges, they will be permitted to select the College in which they intend to stand, on condition that they only stand for election in one College, and that they declare in writing to the Senate Support Team in which College they intend to stand.

Elected students

21. The eligibility for students to stand for offices which can entitle them to Senate membership will be determined according to the eligibility criteria used by the Students' Association to appoint students to official roles. All students who are registered on credit-bearing courses, or who hold sabbatical offices, will be eligible for student membership.

Election of Academic Staff Members to Senate (Ordinance 212 Paragraph 7)

22. Elections for academic staff members will be held annually and will be run by the Senate Support team. There will be two elections for each College each year, one for eligible professorial staff vacancies and one for eligible non-professorial academic staff vacancies. Both elections will usually be held on the same day.
23. The Senate Support team will inform Colleges of the number of vacancies in each elected academic staff category and will report on an annual basis the members of each College in each category who will continue in office. Senate Assessors will be included in the count of College elected members if they are continuing a term of office as a College elected member, otherwise they are classed as an *ex officio* member and are not included in the count.

Election Dates

24. The call for nominations for each election will be made after 31 January each year. No nominations will be accepted before this date.
25. Each year, elections will be conducted to a timescale that has been approved by Senate. The elections must take place in time to communicate the results to Senate before its final meeting of the academic session, and the results must be communicated to Senate no later than 30 June each year.

Appendix 2: Senate Election Regulations

Role of the Returning and Deputy Returning Officers

26. On an annual basis, Senate will appoint a Returning Officer and Deputy Returning Officer, who will be responsible for the management of the elections and the declaration of the results of the elections.
27. The Deputy Returning Officer will provide nomination forms calling for nominations and will draw attention to the correct procedure for making nominations. The call for nominations will be published by the Deputy Returning Officer and advertised via agreed channels.

Nomination and Validation of Candidates

28. Only members of the electorate in each category, as defined in paragraph 15, will be eligible to stand for election in that category. Eligible individuals will be entitled to nominate themselves as a candidate using the process specified in the call for nominations.
29. All nominations must be received by the deadline agreed by Senate. No nominations will be accepted after this date and time.
30. If the Deputy Returning Officer receives a nomination from an individual who is not eligible to stand for election under the terms defined in these regulations, the Deputy Returning Officer will contact the individual to inform them that their nomination will not be accepted. Where the individual whose nomination has not been accepted wishes to challenge the rejection of their nomination, they may do so by contacting the Returning Officer. The decision of the Returning Officer is final.
31. In the event of there being only one valid candidate for each vacancy and therefore an uncontested election, the Deputy Returning Officer will declare and publicise as soon as practicable the name of the valid candidate elected for each vacancy.

Conduct of election process

32. Each candidate will receive from the Deputy Returning Officer a copy of these Regulations.
33. If the Deputy Returning Officer has reason to believe that a candidate may have breached these Regulations, the Deputy Returning Officer will request a written explanation or clarification from the candidate. If the Deputy Returning Officer concludes that a material breach has occurred, the Deputy Returning Officer will inform the Returning Officer. The Returning Officer has the authority to disqualify a candidate, subject to the right of appeal by the candidate to the University Secretary (or specified delegated authority) within two working days of receiving written notification of the disqualification. The decision of the University Secretary (or delegated authority) will be final.
34. The validity of the elections will not be affected in the event that a candidate is unavailable to continue for any reason prior to the results of the election being announced and, where there is a greater number of candidates remaining than vacancies in any category, the election will proceed as planned. In the event of there being only one remaining candidate for each vacancy in any category and therefore an uncontested election in that category, the Deputy Returning Officer will declare and publicise as soon as practicable, and no later than two working days after confirmation of the uncontested election status, the names of the valid candidates elected.

Appendix 2: Senate Election Regulations

35. The Deputy Returning Officer will distribute to each member of the electorate via email a link to the voting system along with a link to the relevant web page to view information about the candidates.

Voting arrangements

36. The elections will be conducted by means of the Single Transferrable Vote, Weighted Inclusive Gregory Method (STV WIGM). The candidates with the greatest share of the vote will automatically be elected.
37. Voting will be conducted by staff online. All those on the electoral roll will be permitted access and will be able to vote on the online voting system on the election date(s).
38. Members of staff who are formally employed in more than one College will be entitled to vote in all Colleges in which they are employed.

Counting

39. All votes cast online will be counted together using an electronic counting system.
40. In the event of a tie, the successful candidate or candidates will be determined by the drawing of lots. The Returning Officer will draw lots from the pool of candidates whose votes are tied until the available vacancies are filled.

Declaration

41. The Deputy Returning Officer will ensure that the result of the election is posted to the Senate webpages as soon as is practicable after the result or results have been declared. The result of the election will be communicated to Senate at the first meeting following the elections.

Election of Student Members to Senate (Ordinance 212 Paragraph 8)

42. Elections for student members will be held annually on dates to be determined by the Students' Association. Elections for student members will be conducted by the Students' Association in accordance with election regulations determined by the Students' Association, and with section 16 of the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016.

2 December 2019

Document control

Date of approval / amendment	Details
2/10/19	Approved by Senate
2/12/19	Approved by University Court
5/2/20	Amended under section 4 by the University Secretary, Senate informed 5/2/20
27/1/21	Amended under section 6 by the Edinburgh University Students' Association, Senate informed 27/1/21
9/2/22	Amended under sections 4 and 6, Senate informed 9/2/22
8/2/23	Amended Appendix 1, Senate informed 8/2/23
7/2/24	Amended Table 2, Section 8, 15, 16, 22, 40 and Appendix 1
01/10/25	Addition of section 17. Amended section 24, 25 and Appendix 1.

Appendix 2: Senate Election Regulations

Appendix 1

Senate *Ex Officio* membership
(See regulations 2 and 4)

Position	Membership	Membership Breakdown
Principal	1	(Required under Ordinance 212)
<i>Ex officio</i> appointments	Approximately 70, with a <i>officio</i> members in total.	Heads of Schools (Required under Ordinance 212)
		Heads of College (Required under Ordinance 212)
		Provost
		Vice-Principals
		Associate Principal
		Assistant Principals
		Director of Library and University Collections
		Director of the Institute for Academic Development
		University Leads on Climate Responsibility and Sustainability; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
		Up to 6 College-level office holders per College nominated by that College. 5 office holders must hold academic posts (for example, Deans and Associate Deans). 1 office-holder will be a professional services staff member elected to that role by their peers.
Office-holders who are specifically entitled to Senate membership under the terms of collaborative agreements.		
		2 Senate Assessors on the University Court if not serving a term as an elected member.
		1 Academic Staff member on the University Court if not already a Senate member.
		1 Professional Services member on the University Court

Appendix 2

Student membership
(See regulations 5 and 6)

Position	Membership	Membership breakdown
Elected students	30	5 Sabbatical Officers
		8 Section Representatives
		5 Liberation Officers
		6 Undergraduate School Representatives
		6 Postgraduate School Representatives

Senate**10 December 2025****Senate Standing Committee Membership 2025/26****Description of paper:**

1. This paper seeks Senate approval for an update to the ex-officio membership of the Senate Education Committee to add the Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary, Students to the ex-officio membership.
2. It also notifies Senate of updates to the membership of the Senate Quality Assurance Committee.

Action requested / recommendation:

3. Senate is invited to approve the addition of the Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary, Students and the removal of the Vice-Principal, Students from the ex-officio membership of the Senate Education Committee. The Associate Principal will replace the current Vice-Principal, Students on the Committee as the Vice-Principal, Students leaves the University.
4. Senate is invited to also note the updates to the membership of the Senate Quality Assurance Committee and the Senate Education Committee, marked in track changes in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

Background and context:

5. Under the Senate Standing Orders (22a), Senate may appoint committees to which it delegates powers and approves the membership of these committees annually. A detailed background on the practical application of Senate Standing Order 22a was provided to Senate at its 20 May 2025 meeting ([Paper S24/25 6H](#)), though no proposal for application was formally adopted.
6. Senate currently delegates work to three standing committees: Senate Education Committee (SEC), Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC), and Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC).
7. Senate Standing Committees formally report to Senate annually, in addition to providing updates on upcoming business at each ordinary meeting of Senate. These committees feed into and out of College level committees (Undergraduate Education, Postgraduate Education, Quality Assurance) and specialist Support Services (the Institute for Academic Development, Careers Service, Student Recruitment and Admissions, Registry Services) via committee membership. Therefore, some committee roles are ex officio, to ensure that committee members have the appropriate knowledge, expertise, responsibility and accountability to fulfil the committee remit.
8. The type of standing committee member and how and why they are appointed is as follows:

Type of member	How and why they are appointed
Ex-officio	By virtue of their position. For example, the College Deans of Quality (or equivalent) are ex officio members of Quality Assurance Committee; Edinburgh University Students' Association Vice-President Education is an ex officio member of Education Committee.
Nominated	Nominated by colleges with responsibility for a particular, relevant area. For example, the Colleges shall each nominate two senior members of staff within the College with responsibility for learning and teaching.
Senate member	Elected by Senate. To represent Senate on standing committees. Elected academic staff members, Senate Assessors, and the Academic Staff Member of Court are eligible.
Co-opted members	Chosen by the convener for their expertise in a particular area, expected to serve for a time-limited period.
External member	Appointed from out with the University due to their relevant skills, experience and external viewpoint. Only SQAC currently has an external member.

Source: [Senate Standing Committee members' guidance](#)

- The current terms of reference for each standing committee are available on the [relevant committee page](#).

Discussion

- The Vice-Principal Students will conclude in their role at the end of November 2025. Via their oversight of the University's Teaching and Learning, this ex-officio role also held the position of Convener of Senate Education Committee.
- An email sent by the Principal and Provost to all staff on [4 September 2025](#) confirmed that the Deputy Secretary Students' remit would be broadened in a new Associate Principal role responsible for overseeing the delivery of strategic objectives in the learning and teaching portfolio, with outcomes delivered through partnership working with the Provost and Heads of College. This role will also lead the Learning and Teaching workstream of the current strategic change programme. This position commenced on 1 October 2025.
- Given the remit of the new Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary Students, we ask approval from Senate for them to take on responsibility for the Convenorship of the Senate Education Committee as part of their role, replacing the Vice-Principal Students.
- This change does not alter the number of ex-officio members, with the Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary, Students removed from the co-opted membership of the Committee.
- Senate formally approved the Senate Standing Committee memberships for 2025/26 at its 20 May 2025 meeting and noted changes which took place over the summer (to role holders and the outcomes of elections) at its meeting on 1 October 2025.

15. At the 1 October 2025 meeting Senate Support agreed, in response to a proposed amendment, to run a process to fill the one remaining Senate elected academic staff member vacancy on the Senate Quality Assurance Committee. The updated membership for the Senate Quality Assurance Committee is provided in Appendix 2.

Resource implications

16. There are no additional workload implications as there is already support in place for staff and students who are members of a Senate Committees.
17. There are workload implications for staff and students who become new members of Senate Committees.

Risk management

18. Appropriate membership of the standing committees supports effective academic governance and assists the University in managing risk associated with its academic activities.

Equality & diversity

19. The composition of the Senate standing committees is largely determined according to defined role-holders (e.g. defined Assistant or Vice-Principal, Director of a defined Professional Service or delegate) or as representatives of particular stakeholders (e.g. a College or the Students' Association). The membership is therefore largely a consequence of decisions taken elsewhere to appoint individuals to particular roles. Ensuring that appointment processes support a diverse staff body is part of the broader responsibility of the University.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

Details of the Senate Standing Committees' Membership and Terms of Reference are communicated via the [Academic Quality and Standards webpage](#).

Author

Academic Quality and Standards
October 2025

Presenter

Leigh Chalmers, Vice-Principal and
University Secretary

Freedom of Information: Open

Appendix 1: Senate Education Committee

Senate Education Committee - Composition

Role on SEC	Position	Name	Term	Member of Senate
Vice-Principal Students <u>Associate Principal</u>	Vice-Principal Students <u>Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary, Students</u>	Professor Colm Harmon <u>Lucy Evans (Convener)</u>	Ex Officio	Ex Officio
Deputy Vice-Principal Students (Enhancement)	Deputy Vice-Principal Students (Enhancement)	Professor Tina Harrison	Ex Officio	Ex Officio
2 x senior staff member from each College with responsibility for Learning and Teaching (nominated by their College)	Representative of CAHSS (Learning and Teaching)	Professor Mary Brennan		Ex Officio
	Representative of CAHSS (Learning and Teaching)	Dr Lisa Kendall		No
	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching)	Alexandra Laidlaw		No
	Representative of CMVM (Learning and Teaching)	Professor Gill Aitken		Ex Officio
	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)	Lorna Halliday		No
	Representative of CSE (Learning and Teaching)	Professor Linda Kirstein		Ex Officio
1 x senior staff member from each College with responsibility for postgraduate research (nominated by their College)	Representative of CAHSS (Postgraduate Research)	Professor Laura Bradley		Ex Officio
	Representative of CMVM (Postgraduate Research)	Professor Ruth Andrew		Academic
	Representative of CSE (Postgraduate Research)	Professor Jamie Pearce		Ex Officio
1 x Edinburgh University Students' Association, Vice-President Education	Vice President Education, Edinburgh University	Katya Amott	Ex Officio	Ex Officio

Role on SEC	Position	Name	Term	Member of Senate
	Students' Association			
1 x member of the Edinburgh University Students' Association permanent staff	Academic Engagement Coordinator, Edinburgh University Students' Association	Heather Innes	Ex Officio	No
1 x postgraduate research student representative	Postgraduate Research Student Representative	Patience Mulungi		No
1 x Head of School from each College chosen by the Heads of College	Head of School, CSE	Professor Jason Love		Ex Officio
	Head of School, CAHSS	Professor Willem Hollman		Ex Officio
	Head of School, CMVM	Professor Lisa Boden		Ex Officio
3 x elected member of Senate	Representative of Senate	Dr Sam Coombes	1 August 2025 - 31 July 2026	Academic
	Representative of Senate	Professor Patrick Walsh	1 August 2025 - 31 July 2026	Academic
	Representative of Senate	Professor Antonis Giannopoulos	1 August 2025 - 31 July 2026	Academic
Head of Academic Quality and Standards or nominee	Head of Academic Quality and Standards	Nichola Kett	Ex Officio	No
Director of Institute for Academic Development, or nominee	Deputy Director, Institute for Academic Development (Director's nominee)	Professor Velda McCune	Ex Officio	Academic
Director of Student Recruitment & Admissions, or nominee	Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions	Dr Shane Collins	Ex Officio	No
Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Services Division of Information Services, or nominee	Director of the Learning, Teaching and Web Services Division	Dr Melissa Highton	Ex Officio	Ex Officio

Role on SEC	Position	Name	Term	Member of Senate
	of Information Services			
Director for Careers & Employability, or nominee	Director for Careers and Employability	Shelagh Green	Ex Officio	No
Up to 3 co-options chosen by the Convener for their expertise	Co-opted member (Head of Academic Planning – Registry Services)	Marianne Brown	1 August 2024 - 31 July 2027	No
	Co-opted member (Digital Education)	Professor Sian Bayne	1 August 2023 - 31 July 2026	Ex Officio
	Co-opted member (Student Experience)	Lucy Evans	1 August 2025 – 31 July 2028	No
Committee Secretary	Committee Secretary	Patrick Jack		No

Appendix 2: Senate Quality Assurance Committee

Senate Quality Assurance Committee

Role on SQAC	Position	Name	Term	Member of Senate
Deputy Vice-Principal Students (Enhancement)	Deputy Vice-Principal Students (Enhancement)	Professor Tina Harrison (Convener)		Ex Officio
An external member from within the Scottish Higher Education sector with experience in quality assurance	Deputy Vice Chancellor and Vice Principal of Learning & Teaching, Edinburgh Napier University	Professor Nazira Karodia	1 August 2023 – 31 July 2026	No
College Deans of Quality (or equivalent)	College Dean of Quality (CMVM)	Professor Matthew Bailey		No
	Dean of Education Quality Assurance and Culture (CSE)	Professor James Hopgood		Academic
	Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Approval (CAHSS)	Dr Emily Taylor		Ex Officio
1 x member of staff from each College with experience of and an interest in quality assurance at School level (nominated by their College)	School representative of CMVM (Director of Quality)	Dr Jill MacKay		No
	School representative of CSE (Head of Student Services)	Faten Adam		No
	School representative of CAHSS (Director of Quality)	Dr Anne Desler		No
3 x elected member of Senate	Representative of Senate	Dr Michael Barany	1 August 2023 - 31 July 2026	Academic
	Representative of Senate	Professor Carol Richardson Vacant	10 November August 2025 - 31 July 2026	Academic
	Representative of Senate	Dr Sari Pennings	1 August 2025 - 31 July 2026	Academic
1 x Edinburgh University Students'	Vice President Education, Edinburgh	Katya Amott	Ex Officio	Ex Officio

Role on SQAC	Position	Name	Term	Member of Senate
Association sabbatical officer	University Students' Association			
1 x member of the Edinburgh University Students' Association permanent staff	Academic Engagement Coordinator, Edinburgh University Students' Association	Heather Innes		No
1 x member of staff from the Institute for Academic Development	Co-Director, Institute of Academic Development	Professor Catherine Bovill		Ex Officio
1 x member of staff from the Doctoral College	Representative of Doctoral College	Professor Laura Bradley		Ex Officio
1 x member of staff from Academic Quality and Standards	Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement, Academic Services	Brian Connolly		No
Up to 3 co-options chosen by the Convener	Co-opted member (Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling)	Marianne Brown	1 August 2024 – 31 July 2027	No
	Vacant			
	Vacant			
Committee Secretary	Committee Secretary	Sinéad Docherty		No

Senate**10 December 2025****Senate Business Committee 2025/26****Description of paper:**

1. This paper seeks Senate approval for an update to the ex-officio membership of the Senate Business Committee to add the Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary, Students to the ex-officio membership. The paper also informs Senate of updates to the membership to reflect role changes and the filling of vacant positions.

Action requested / recommendation:

2. Senate is invited to approve the addition of the Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary, Students and the removal of the Vice-Principal, Students from the ex-officio membership of Senate Business Committee. The Associate Principal will replace the current Vice-Principal Students on the Committee as the Vice-Principal, Students leaves the University.
3. Senate is invited to note the updates to the membership to reflect role changes and the filling of vacant positions as outlined in paragraph 9 and provided in Appendix 2.

Background and context:

4. Under the Senate Standing Orders (22a), Senate may appoint committees to which it delegates powers and approves the membership of these committees annually.
5. Senate established a [Senate Business Committee](#) at its [11 December 2024 meeting](#) and approved the composition of the Committee at this meeting.
6. The Committee was formed in response to recommendations arising out of the Externally Facilitated Review of Senate. The proposal for the Committee, including its composition and terms of reference, was drafted by the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group, with the composition of the Committee [approved by Senate on 11 December 2024](#).

Discussion

7. The Vice-Principal Students formally concludes in their role at the end of November 2025, and will demit from all roles associated with their Vice-Principal position, including their membership of the Senate Business Committee.
8. Senate is invited to approve the replacement of the Vice-Principal Students on the Senate Business Committee with the Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary Students, who now holds oversight of the Teaching and Learning

portfolio, working closely with the Provost and Heads of College. Appendix 1 provides a marked-up version of the proposed update to the composition.

9. The Vice-Principal Research and Innovation, Professor Christina Boswell, demitted from her role in September 2025 and Professor Liz Baggs has been appointed as Interim Vice-Principal Research and Innovation for one-year from 1 October 2025. Professor Baggs has been added to the membership of the Committee in her interim role. A vacant student representative position has also been filled by the Students' Association. The updated Committee membership is provided in Appendix 2.
10. There would be no change to the total number of ex officio members on the Committee which would remain as three: Provost, Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary Students & Interim Vice-Principal Research and Innovation. There would also be no change to the number of members on the Committee.

Resource implications

11. There are no additional workload implications as there is already support in place for staff and students who are members of a Senate Committee.

Risk management

12. Appropriate membership of the standing committees supports effective academic governance across the breadth of the University's academic mission further assisting the University in managing risk associated with its academic delivery.

Equality & diversity

13. The Senate Business Committee is cognisant of its commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. This commitment extends to the membership of the Committee and the way in which the Committee conducts its business.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

14. Details of the Senate Standing Committees' Membership and Terms of Reference are communicated via the [Academic Quality and Standards webpage](#) and the [Senate Members Portal](#).

Author

Olivia Hayes
Senate Clerk
Academic Quality and Standards
October 2025

Presenter

Kim Graham, Convener of the Senate
Business Committee

Freedom of Information: Open

Appendix 1: Composition of the Senate Business Committee

Marked up version displaying proposed updates to the Committee composition.

Composition:

1. Provost (Convener): in their role as Chief Academic Officer of the institution.
2. Students' Association Vice-President Education (Vice-Convener): to represent the views of students.
3. ~~Vice-Principal, Students~~ Associate Principal & Deputy Secretary, Students: to provide input on teaching and learning matters.
4. Vice-Principal, Research: to provide input on research matters.
5. 1 x elected academic staff member elected from the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.
6. 1 x elected academic staff member elected from the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine.
7. 1 x elected academic staff member elected from the College of Science and Engineering.
8. 1 x elected Professional Services Staff member: may be drawn from the Professional Services staff member on Court and the three College-elected Professional Services staff.
9. 1 x elected student member: may be drawn from any of the student member positions listed in Appendix 2 of the Senate Election Regulations.

Elected members are expected to represent the views of their Senate constituency.

Elected members are elected for a two-year term. Elected members shall cease to be members of the Senate Business Committee once their term of office as a member of Senate concludes.

Appendix 2: Membership of the Senate Business Committee 2025-26

Membership:

Position	Membership category	Name
Provost (Convener)	Ex Officio	Professor Kim Graham
EUSA Vice-President Education (Vice-Convener)	Ex Officio	Katya Amott
Vice-Principal Students Associate Principal, Deputy Secretary, Students	Ex Officio	Professor Colm Harmon Lucy Evans
Vice-Principal Research and Enterprise	Ex Officio	Professor Christina Beswell Professor Liz Baggs (Interim)
Academic staff member (CAHSS)	Elected	Dr Seongsook Choi
Academic staff member (CMVM)	Elected	Dr Enrique Sanchez Molano
Academic staff member (CSE)	Elected	Professor Nick Polydorides
Professional Services staff member	Elected	Ben Morse
Student member	Elected	Vacant <u>Tamanna Bostani</u>

Senate**10 December 2025****Senate Exception Committee Membership****Description of paper**

1. This paper seeks Senate approval for an update to the ex-officio membership of the Senate Exception Committee to add the Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary, Students to the ex-officio membership.
2. The paper informs Senate of updates to the membership of the Committee following the filling of vacant positions.
3. The paper also asks Senate, to approve updates to the terms of reference to reflect the update to the ex-officio membership of the Committee and to note outdated detail in the Senate Standing Orders.

Action requested / recommendation

4. Senate is invited to approve the addition of the Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary, Students and the removal of the Vice-Principal, Students from the ex-officio membership of Senate Business Committee. The Associate Principal will replace the current Vice-Principal Students on the Committee as the Vice-Principal, Students leaves the University.
5. Senate is invited to approve the changes to the terms of reference and composition of the Committee, notably the change of the Vice-Convenor of the Senate Exception Committee.
6. Senate is invited to note the outdated detail in Senate Standing Order 9 as detailed in paragraphs 15-17.
7. Senate is invited to note the changes to the membership of the Senate Exception Committee.

Background and context

8. The Senate Exception Committee operates under delegated authority, to make urgent formal business decisions which would otherwise require Senate approval between meetings.
9. The membership of the Senate Exception Committee, from 1 August 2025 onwards, is provided as appendix two and is accurate as of 26 November 2025.
10. There were five vacancies for elected academic members on the Committee and a call for expressions of interest was circulated to eligible members on 11 June

2025. Senate agreed a process for handling the filling of vacancies on this Committee and this was completed in November 2025.

Discussion

Membership

11. The Vice-Principal Students formally concludes in their role at the end of November 2025, and will demit from all roles associated with their Vice-Principal position, including their membership of the Senate Exception Committee. This role was an ex-officio member of the Senate Exception Committee, and held the position of Vice-Convener in line with Senate Standing Order 9.
12. Senate is invited to approve the replacement of the Vice-Principal Students on the Senate Exception Committee with the Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary Students, who now holds oversight of the Teaching and Learning portfolio, working closely with the Provost and Heads of College. Appendix 1 provides a marked-up version of the update to the composition of the Committee.
13. At its 20 May 2025 meeting, Senate were informed that there were five vacancies for elected academic members on the Senate Exception Committee and agreed a process for filling of vacancies on this Committee. The updated membership can be found in Appendix 2 with changes marked in track changes.
14. Following the conclusion of the process to fill elected academic members, there remains one vacancy on the Committee. Therefore, the agreed process was repeated and the remaining one position on the Committee has been filled. The updated membership is available in Appendix 2.

Terms of Reference and Composition

15. The terms of reference for the Senate Exception Committee designated the Vice-Principal Students as Vice-Convener of the Committee. This aligns with [Senate Standing Order 9](#) which states that quorum requires the engagement of the Principal or the Vice-Principal Students. Though the position of Vice-Convener is not explicit within the Standing Orders, this is implied by providing this position as an alternate to the Principal for quorum purposes:
*Four members of the Committee shall be a quorum and **will include the Principal or Vice-Principal Students and a Senate member.***
16. Since the Provost joined Senate in February 2023 (see [Paper S 22/23 3C](#)) this position acts in a Vice-Convener capacity for Senate in the absence of the Principal. Additionally, the Provost is the Convener of the Senate Business Committee in their capacity as Chief Academic Officer of the University. Therefore, it is proposed that the Terms of Reference for the Senate Exception Committee be revised to reallocate the Vice-Convener position to the Provost. The Terms of Reference formally detail the arrangements for Vice-Convener, quorum and membership. It is proposed that Senate note this as the authority for detailing these arrangements ahead of any revisions to the Senate Standing Orders.

17. It is good practice to resolve any outdated detail within the Standing Orders once identified. A wider review of the Senate Standing Orders is required and it is expected that this will take place after a Statement of Primary Responsibilities for Senate has been developed. Senate has previously been informed of errors contained within the Standing Orders (see [Paper S23/24 2L, 7 February 2024](#)) and it is proposed that Standing Order 9 be updated when the wider Senate Standing Order review takes place. In the interim, the Senate Exception Committee Terms of Reference is referred to as the authority on the Vice-Convenorship, quorum and membership until the Standing Orders are reviewed.

Resource implications

18. There are workload implications for staff and students who become members of Senate Exception Committee and for Academic Quality and Standards who provide support to the Committee.

Risk management

19. Appropriate membership of the standing committees supports effective academic governance and assists the University in managing risk associated with its academic activities.

Equality & diversity

20. The membership of the Committee is largely a consequence of decisions taken elsewhere to appoint individuals to particular roles. Ensuring that appointment processes support a diverse staff body is part of the broader responsibility of the University.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

21. The Terms of Reference and Membership, updated following the conclusion of the nomination process, will be published on the Senate Members Portal and the Senate SharePoint site.

Author

Olivia Hayes
Senate Clerk
Academic Quality and Standards
October 2025

Presenter

Peter Mathieson, Principal and Convener of
the Senate Exception Committee.

Freedom of Information: Open

Appendix 1: Senate Exception Committee Terms of Reference

1 Purpose

1.1 Under delegated authority, to make urgent formal business decisions which would otherwise require Senatus approval between meetings of Senatus subject to defined principles and on the understanding that any matter so referred can be referred to the full Senatus should this be the wish of the Exception Committee.

2 Composition

2.1 The Committee shall consist of at least six members.

2.2 The Principal, the Provost, the ~~Vice-Principal Students~~ Associate Principal, the Convener of the Research Strategy Group, and the Convener of each of the Standing Committees of Senate shall be ex officio members of the Committee.

2.3 Unless otherwise represented, the membership of the Committee must also include six elected academic staff Senate members, including at least one such member from each College, and a representative of the Edinburgh University Students' Association (normally the President).

2.4 The term of office for Senate members, where they are not ex officio members of the Committee, will be no longer than their membership of the Senatus and will be for a maximum of three years.

2.5 Edinburgh University Student Association annually nominate one fully matriculated student to be a member of the Exception Committee; this is normally one of the elected Students' Association sabbatical officers.

2.6 Previous members are eligible for re-appointment up to a normal maximum of two consecutive terms of office.

2.7 The Principal shall be appointed Convener of the Committee.

2.8 The Provost ~~Vice-Principal Students~~ shall be appointed Vice-Convener of the Committee.

3 Meetings

3.1 The Committee will be convened only if required and much of its business is expected to be conducted through correspondence.

3.2 The aim will be to circulate minutes, agendas and papers to members of the Committee at least five working days in advance of the meeting or prior to the conclusion of the consultation period. Notice of business shall be given to the Senatus to the extent possible, and papers made available upon request so that comments can be given to a member of the Committee. In cases of extreme urgency, which is likely to be the case given the nature of this Committee, and with the agreement of the Convener, papers may be tabled at meetings of the

Committee. If being conducted by correspondence the consultation period may be no shorter than a 24 hour period.

3.3 Papers will indicate the originator/s and purpose of the paper, the matter/s which the Committee is being asked to consider and any action/s required and confirm the status of the paper in respect of freedom of information legislation.

3.4 Four members of the Committee shall be a quorum. This number must include the Principal or ~~Vice-Principal Students~~the Provost and an elected academic staff Senate member.

3.5 A formal minute will be kept of proceedings and submitted for approval as soon as practicable to members of the Committee. The draft minute will be agreed with the Convener of the Committee prior to circulation.

4 Remit

4.1 To consider any matter between meetings of the Senatus that cannot await the next such meeting and with the delegated authority of Senatus to make a decision on the matter on behalf of the Senatus insofar as a decision cannot be deferred to a meeting of the Senatus.

4.2 The Committee in reaching a decision must be satisfied regarding the following:

- there is evidence of the consideration given to the equality impact of the matter under consideration; and
- there is a robust rationale for the proposals or options being presented by the identified lead senior officer or officers including information on the outcome of any consultation undertaken.

5 Other

5.1 A report on issues discussed at each meeting or concluded via correspondence will be provided to the next available Ordinary Meeting of the Senatus.

5.2 Membership of the Committee will be published on the University's website.

Approved by Senate on ~~11 October 2023~~10 December 2025

Appendix Two: Senate Exception Committee Membership 2025-26

Name	Position/School	Term of office	Composition Section
Professor Peter Mathieson (Convener)	Principal	Ex Officio	2.2
Professor Kim Graham <u>Vice-Convener</u>	Provost	Ex Officio	2.2
Professor Colm Harmon (Vice Convener) <u>Lucy Evans</u>	Convener of the Senate Education Committee, <u>Associate Principal Vice Principal Students</u>	Ex Officio	2.2
Dr Emily Taylor	Convener of Academic Policy and Regulations Committee	Ex Officio	2.2
Professor Tina Harrison	Convener of Senate Quality Assurance Committee, Deputy Vice-Principal, Students (Enhancement)	Ex Officio	2.2
Professor <u>Liz Baggs</u> Christina Boswell	Convener of the Research Strategy Group	Ex Officio	2.2
<u>Professor Jonathan Ansell</u> To be confirmed	<u>Elected academic member of Senate, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences</u> Elected academic member of Senate	<u>1 August 2024 – 31 July 2027</u> 1 August 2025 – 31 July 2028	<u>2.32-3</u>

<u>Dr Michael Barany</u> To be confirmed	<u>Elected academic member of Senate, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences</u> Elected academic member of Senate	<u>1 August 2025 – 31 July 2028</u> 1 August 2025 – 31 July 2028	<u>2.32-3</u>
<u>Professor Richard Baxstrom</u> To be confirmed	<u>Elected academic member of Senate, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences</u> Elected academic member of Senate	<u>1 August 2025 – 31 July 2028</u> 1 August 2025 – 31 July 2028	<u>2.32-3</u>
<u>Dr Seongsook Choi</u> To be confirmed	<u>Elected academic member of Senate, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences</u> Elected academic member of Senate	<u>1 August 2025 – 31 July 2028</u> 1 August 2025 – 31 July 2028	<u>2.32-3</u>
<u>Professor Malcolm MacLeod</u> To be confirmed	Elected academic member of Senate	1 August 2025 – 31 July 2028	2.3
Professor Patrick Walsh	Elected academic member of Senate, College of Science and Engineering	December 2023 – 31 July 2026	2.3
Katya Amott	Representative of the Edinburgh University Students' Association	1 August 2025 – 31 July 2026	2.3

Senate

10 December 2025

Developing a General Framework for Delegation of Senate Authority

Description of paper

1. This paper proposes to set up a short-life working group to develop and recommend to Senate a statement and process that constitutes the framework by which Senate Authority is delegated. This work follows the groundwork laid by Senate External Review Task and Finish Group which identified a lack of clarity on the delegation of authority, including to the Senate Standing Committees, and for proposals requiring further discussion in Senate. It seeks to develop the shared understanding required to fully address key recommendations and suggestions of the 2023 External Review of Senate that remain outstanding.

Action requested / Recommendation

2. Senate is asked to **approve** the creation of a short-life working group tasked with formulating a statement setting out the general principles surrounding the delegation of Senate authority. In doing so:
 - a. It should build on the work already done by the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group, which culminated in a report presented to Senate in October 2025 and is reproduced in Appendix 1 to this paper.
 - b. It should engage with members of Senate, including student members, to understand the nature of matters that require approval at formal meetings of full Senate.
 - c. It should engage with Senate Standing Committee convenors and members to understand the nature of 'business-as-usual' activities over which autonomy should be maintained.
 - d. It should engage with colleagues supporting Senate's operations to ensure its recommendations can be implemented within reasonable resource constraints.
 - e. It will operate on a consultative and collaborative basis to ensure as broad a buy-in as possible.

The short-life working group will present its recommendation to Senate for approval by May 2026 at the latest.

Background and context

3. The authors of this paper previously were members of the Task and Finish Group which was set up after the most recent External Review of Senate. As part of this work, we contributed to a document (attached as an Appendix) whose aim was to provide important definitions and principles around the issue of delegation of authority. We provided a vision of how Senate and its Standing Committees could work and interact in an efficient and effective manner, ensuring that Senate could meet its responsibilities through the work of its Standing Committees. This was informed by the results of a survey of Senate members as well as research literature on university governance.
4. The next step is to build on this initial work and bring a proposal on delegation to Senate for approval. The intention of this proposal is to define a general framework by which Senate Authority is managed and delegated. This is orthogonal to the separate workstream which is currently addressing Senate Terms of Reference/Statement of Responsibilities.

5. The External Review of Senate was conducted in 2023, making 18 Recommendations and 10 further Suggestions. At its meeting in February 2024, Senate approved the formation of a Task and Finish Group to develop proposals to address these Recommendations and Suggestions. The group met regularly until the end of July 2025: agendas, papers and minutes can be found [here](#). The Task and Finish Group presented its findings in relation to outstanding work at the October 2025 meeting of Senate, reproduced here in Appendix 1.
6. Whilst substantial progress was made with many Recommendations, the first headline finding of the Review, namely that “there is a lack of trust in Senate between elected members and the ex-officio members”, is arguably unresolved. This distrust has led to debate on matters of governance and procedure that “encroaches on the time that Senate has for substantive debate ... alienating some newer members of Senate.”
7. Much of this debate revolves around the issue of authority delegated to Senate’s Standing Committees. Whilst it is appropriate for Senate to delegate authority on operational matters where oversight is more effectively exercised at a lower level (e.g. Course Organisers, School Boards of Studies, College committees and, for institutional matters, its Standing Committees), trust is compromised when there is insufficient separation between the bodies responsible for the development of, approval of, and implementation of policies and regulations. [A survey of Senate members](#) carried out by the Task and Finish Group showed that respondents appreciated that committees are necessary and do important work, and that it is not possible for Senate as a body to do this work. However, there was a pervasive view that the current balance between committees and Senate is not appropriate in terms of delegated authority
8. Senate’s role is currently understood through the Universities (Scotland) Act 1889, which is to “regulate and superintend the teaching and discipline of the University and to promote research” and the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016 as “responsible for the overall planning, co-ordination, development and supervision of the academic work of the institution”. In the broader international context, academic self-governance is essential for academic freedom to be meaningfully exercised [Austn & Jones 2024 *Governance of Higher Education*]. Meanwhile, it is widely observed that conflicts often arise between academic boards and executive officers in modern managerialised universities [ibid.; Rowlands 2017 *Academic Governance in the Contemporary University*].
9. This conflict is most evident at the interface between Senate and its Standing Committees. With the aim of addressing this, the Senate External Review recommended that a Task and Finish group “establish the criteria for Senate Committee decisions that need further discussion in full Senate before a final decision is made” (Recommendation 18).
10. The Task and Finish Group was unable to reach full agreement on the principles by which an appropriate level of delegation should be determined. Nevertheless, there was a broad consensus that Senate should retain right of approval over the most strategic institutional decisions in relation to learning, teaching and research. It was also agreed that there is a substantial body of ‘business-as-usual’ activity which should be transacted by committees and submitted to Senate for information only.
11. The main point of disagreement was where the boundary should lie between matters requiring full Senate approval and those that Senate Standing Committees are designated to approve. Some members argued in favour of a narrow set of delegated approvals, so that academic self-governance on important institutional matters was meaningfully exercised through formal approval by Senate. Others considered that this would impact the institution’s responsiveness and agility, particularly regarding external requirements.

Discussion

12. It is in everyone's interest that Senate's time and debate is focussed on strategically important matters affecting the conduct of learning, teaching and research across the institution. Resolving the longstanding and contentious issue of delegation of Senate authority is a major part in achieving this.
13. To make progress, it is necessary to build a common understanding of the key issues between wider Senate members, Standing Committee convenors and members, and Professional Services colleagues supporting Senate's operations. Most importantly, defining the types of work passing through Senate and its Standing Committees that require full Senate approval will ensure that the wider academic community has confidence that the principles of academic self-governance are operating effectively.
14. We propose that this common understanding is built by convening a short-life working group with the sole purpose of formulating a process for recommendation to Senate for defining the principles by which Senate authority is managed and delegated.
15. We believe that the group would ideally be formed of the elected academic members of the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group, up to three student representatives (nominated by EUSA) and a colleague from Senate Support. The rationale for that proposed composition of the group is that the central issue is establishing effective academic self-governance, which elected members are best qualified to handle. Moreover, this group of elected members has a pre-existing working relationship that will expedite delivery of the final recommendation. Student representation is also important to ensure an improved meeting experience for student members, and in allowing students to contribute more effectively. Senate Support representation is included to provide advice and guidance, to act as a ready conduit to Senate Standing committee operations, and to ensure that any proposals brought forward take appropriate resourcing issues into account. Since this paper was initially submitted to Business Committee, we have been asked to remove reference to a Senate Support representative as there is not capacity to support this work alongside other work which is prioritised for the team.
16. The appendix to this paper (previously presented at the October 2025 meeting of Senate) summarises the many discussions that members of the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group had on this topic. The working group should use this as a starting point in its discussions. It should also engage with the groups identified in Paragraph 2 above, so that the resulting proposal: (i) allows academic self-governance to be exercised meaningfully and to the satisfaction of the academic community (including students); (ii) does not unduly constrain the ability of Standing Committees to pursue outcomes agreed by Senate or to be responsive to urgent needs; and (iii) does not create undue bureaucratic or administrative burden, or compromise Senate's effectiveness by placing too many items on its agenda. With regard to the last point, we note that over the past years, several items planned for approval at the Standing Committee level nevertheless occupied considerable time at full meetings of Senate, indicating that a clarification of delegated authority has potential to streamline Senate's business overall.
17. The working group should deliver its recommendation to Senate for approval at the first available opportunity, and no later than May 2026.
18. We understand that separate work is ongoing to develop a Statement of Responsibilities for Senate. The work described here can be conducted in parallel, as the two strands clarify distinct aspects of Senate's operation. The group must nevertheless be mindful that any proposed approach to delegation is adaptable to any future clarification of Senate's responsibilities. This will be an important point of collaboration for the proposed short-life working group.

Resource implications

19. In the short term, there will be workload implications for members of the short-term working group and its consultees. However, in the long term, there is scope for streamlining of Senate's operations, as noted in Paragraph 16.

Risk Management

20. This proposal is intended to address the issues and risks highlighted in the Senate External review, particularly around the issue of trust between elected and ex-officio members of Senate, and the fact that this is having a major negative impact on Senate's effectiveness.

Responding to the Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development Goals

21. N/A

Equality and Diversity

22. One of the long-term aims of this proposal is to improve the culture, conduct and atmosphere in Senate meetings, resulting in a more inclusive and respectful space for staff and students.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

23. Communication and implementation would follow Senate's approval of the working group's proposal. We understand that any change to Senate's working practices would be reviewed as a matter of course, typically one year after implementation.

Consultation

24. The background to this paper was discussed extensively by the Senate Task and Finish Group in its meetings. These discussions were informed in part through a survey of Senate members. The authors of this paper have also discussed the background issues extensively with elected members of Senate and the Senate Clerk. Progress of the Task and Finish Group and matters arising have been reported verbally by the Senate Assessors at meetings of the University Court.

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Freedom of information

OPEN

Appendix 1 - Proposed Plan for a holistic review of Senate and its Standing Committees

Background

There were six recommendations and suggestions from the AdvanceHE External Effectiveness Review of Senate Report (July 2023) relating to the Senate standing committee terms of reference:

- 1) *R.17. We recommend that the **VP Students** reviews the Terms of Reference, coverage and scope of the three Senate Committees with a view to identifying any overlap and considering if they together cover all university academic priorities.*
- 2) *R.18. We recommend that **Senate** establish a task and finish group (ideally with neutral facilitation) to explore the feasibility and establish the criteria for Senate Committee decisions that need further discussion in full Senate before a final decision is made.*
- 3) *S.9. We suggest that the **chair of each of the 3 Committee Chairs** [sic] clarifies the relevant scheme of delegation for their committee.*
- 4) *S.10. We suggest that the **Senate** gives thought to using a framework such as RACI as a framework for improving understanding and clarity about responsibilities, accountabilities consultation and communication relationships in Senate.*
- 5) *R16. We recommend that the **VP Research and Enterprise** undertakes a short review of how Research and especially PGRs could become more mainstreamed into Senate business.*
- 6) *S8: We also suggest a minor tidying up point of clarifying in the largely very clear public documentation on the University's governance on whether both UG and PG students are within the remit of the QAC and APRC.*

Main Conclusions

The recommendations and suggestions from the external review do not alone address all feedback and concerns that have arisen through the work of the Task and Finish Group and they have not been progressed holistically to date. The main issue discussed and where agreement could not be reached was on authority delegated by Senate to the Standing Committees, and the distinction between “business as usual” operational authority, and “policymaking” authority. The lack of a Senate terms of reference has also been identified as a barrier to progressing the recommendations and suggestions from the external review. Currently Senate has a role (in reference to high-level relevant legislation) and responsibilities (covering Senate business and delegated authority) which focus on academic matters.

The work needed to address both the external review recommendations and further feedback and concerns exceeds the external review recommendations and thus the remit of the Task and Finish Group.

Recommendation

A holistic review including the development of a terms of reference for Senate is required to properly and fully address the recommendations and suggestions from the external review and the further feedback and concerns gathered through the work of the Task and Finish Group relating to the Senate standing committees.

It is recommended that the review would take place over academic year 2025/26, aiming for changes to be implemented in 2026/27. It will be informed by:

- The external review recommendations and suggestions;
- Feedback and concerns gathered throughout the work of the Task and Finish Group;
- Internal and external expertise in academic governance, including scholarly research, where relevant;
- External benchmarking of other relevant universities' practices;
- Legal and external regulatory requirements; and
- Consultation across the University and Students' Association, to include Senate, the standing committees, Court Services.

2025/26

The current standing committee terms of reference remain in place. However, the standing committee conveners and Academic Quality and Standards are committed to ensuring that Senate is either kept informed of, consulted with and/or asked to approve standing committee business which relates to strategic areas of Senate's role as appropriate. Additionally, as requested, relevant standing committee papers to Senate will include information on *consultation* undertaken and the decisionmaking process followed. Standing committee papers which are presented to Senate for noting/information will include a rationale for this action. Finally, Senate will also continue to receive papers on: upcoming business; standing committee membership and priorities; and the annual report.

Issues identified by the Task and Finish Group to inform the review

Establishing a common terminology

It was observed in the meetings that different members sometimes had different understandings of key governance terms, and that this was precluding progress

towards agreement on core issues [T&F 27/5/25 p2]. To facilitate this, we offer the following definitions as a starting point, to be tested and refined by a future review group as it takes its work forwards. For example, it may be understood that there are activities within Senate's remit that are not captured by the below.

Policy – The University's Policy for the Governance and Publication of University Policies defines a *policy* as follows: "A high level statement of intent, setting out, in writing, how the University expects its staff, students and others to act in relation to a particular matter/area of its operations. The policy regulates and standardises how we act and can be relied upon by those to whom it applies."

The further definition of "University level policy" includes the following: "It is mandatory in nature and has implications for users and the University if it is not adhered to"; "it will have been consulted on and formally approved"; and "University policies fulfilling this definition can have different titles, e.g. code, policy, protocol, regulations. However titled, they will have been formally approved."

Strategy – A *strategy* is a pathway towards agreed outcomes. Typically, these outcomes sit at a high-level and a consensus has been established that achieving them is at least desirable, if not essential. A *strategy* document should specify the intended outcomes, the actions that constitute the strategy's implementation and the criteria for judging the extent to which the intended outcomes have been achieved.

Relevant to Senate – A *strategy* or *policy* is *relevant* to Senate if it directly relates to learning, teaching and/or research and affects practice in one or more of these areas across the institution.

Development – *Development* is the process of creating or modifying *policy* in order that it is sufficiently well-formulated to achieve the *strategy* that it serves. By its nature, development work may only reasonably be conducted by a small (but, advisedly, a representative) group. However, it is essential that this development is conducted through *consultation* and collaboration with all groups who would be affected by the resulting *policy*.

Consultation – *Consultation* is the structured process by which those who will be affected by, or who have legitimate interests in, a *policy* or *strategic* decision are given timely information and an opportunity to comment before the decision is finalised, with their views being demonstrably considered in the final outcome.

Approval – *Approval* describes the process of formal agreement that the *development* process has been conducted and completed correctly and with adequate consideration of and *consultation* with the groups who would be affected by the resulting *policy or strategy*.

Implementation – *Implementation* describes the process of promoting, training or embedding a *policy or strategy*, such that it results in those impacted by the *policy or strategy* acting in accordance with the *policy or strategy*.

Oversight – *Oversight* has occurred when a higher body is able to fully understand the rationale for decisions taken on its behalf during *policy development* and evaluation of its *implementation* with reference to the agreed *strategic* outcomes.

Governance – In the context of Senate, *governance* comprises: (i) the setting of *strategy* that is *relevant* to Senate; (ii) *oversight* of any resulting *policy development*; (iii) formal *approval* of any *policy* that is developed; and (iv) *oversight* of that *policy's* *implementation*.

In the following, we have italicised these terms when we feel that they should be understood as defined above.

Agreement of core principles

There was much discussion across several T&F group meetings (notably the meeting of 14 January 2025) on core principles that could be applied in determining the division of labour between Senate and its standing committees. Recurrent themes are summarised below. It would be desirable for a future review group to agree the relative importance of these principles, and whether there are any gaps, when taking its work forward. For example, additional principles might be suggested by relevant governance codes, etc.

Unique competency – A body of useful scholarly research on academic governance in the context of modern managerialised universities is summarised by J Rowlands [*Academic Governance in the Contemporary University*](#) (Springer, 2017) [referred to at T&F 14/1/25 p2]. Chapter 12 is recommended reading, containing practical suggestions for strengthening academic governance. A key suggestion is that “One way of responding to concerns about the ability of university academic boards to add value because of the tendency for important matters to be effectively predetermined is for academic boards to identify a primary role that is uniquely theirs, something for which they are well-qualified but is not replicated elsewhere” (Rowlands, p226). In T&F group meetings this was occasionally referred to as the *unique competency* principle.

Fit to meeting size and composition – A key consideration in which work should be undertaken by which group is the level and type of discussion that its size and composition allows. Relating to committees, Rowlands notes “[An] appropriately structured and comprised set of committees with clearly delineated decision-making and reporting responsibilities can do much to increase the effectiveness of an academic board [i.e. Senate]. Matters that require careful consideration in great detail, including academic policy, should be considered here and only recommended to the academic board when the relevant committee deems them to be ready for approval.” (pp231-2) In terms of the working definitions provided above, this suggests that standing committees would tend to focus on *development* and those aspects of *implementation* relevant to their remits, while Senate is better placed, due to the very wide range of perspectives that its large size uniquely supplies, to engage in *oversight* and *approval*. T&F group members noted a general desire for *strategic* issues to be reserved to Senate [T&F 14/1/25 p2]

Avoidance of duplication – T&F group members expressed a desire to avoid duplication of effort between Senate and its standing committees, for example, by rehearsing arguments that had already been considered in detail [T&F 25/2/25 p2]. Clear *oversight* could achieve this.

Presumption of approval – It was suggested that when Senate can judge that due diligence had taken place in *policy development*, subsequent *approval* of the policy should be uncontentious [T&F 25/2/25 p2]. Again, *oversight* is key in achieving this.

Least surprise – Experience indicated that passage of a paper through Senate was most problematic when most members were asked to approve a proposal (or note prior approval by a committee) when seeing it for the very first time, and therefore did not understand the underlying rationale or feel that they had the ability to contribute to the development process [T&F 14/1/25 p3]. This was encapsulated as a principle of least surprise [T&F 25/2/25 p3] which the T&F group itself attempted to implement in its own work, for example, by seeking feedback on draft proposals from Senate members before presenting them for formal approval.

Delegation of authority

The main question that was returned to repeatedly during T&F group discussions was the level of authority delegated to the standing committees, this reflecting concerns expressed in a survey of the wider membership [T&F 25/2/25 p3]. Although there was a broad consensus that delegation of authority should be clear both to

members of Senate and of its standing committees, the question of how this should be achieved was left unresolved. This remains a major task for the holistic review.

Elected members on the T&F group stated a strong preference that Senate committees should have delegated authority on a set of clearly and explicitly stated roles/activities (i.e., allow-listed delegated authority to act without Senate *approval*, and making recommendation for Senate *approval* in all other cases – see further discussion on this point at the end of the next section) [T&F 1/4/25 p4]. Greatest clarity is likely to be achieved by establishing a common Terms of Reference for all committees, with only a small number of committee-specific amendments that specify a set of clearly and explicitly stated roles/activities that constitutes its unique delegated authority.

Necessarily, that set will have to be adapted over time (e.g., when external operational reports cease, or when new activities become ongoing operational procedures) and so an established process should be developed. As an example, where a new *policy* is *developed* it should state clearly any business-as-usual activities that constitute its *implementation*. Senate could, at that time, be requested to *approve* any activities that will either 1) be added indefinitely to the remit of the committee, 2) be added for a fixed time period and reviewed; 3) be added for a fixed time period and ceased; or 4) require continuous consideration and *approval* from Senate. This would require a change to the Terms of Reference for that standing committee, which could be done “on the spot”, if approved, or be retained for the annual confirmation of standing committee terms of reference.

Concern has been expressed about the possibility of overburdening Senate with new approvals that currently sit within standing committee remits, thereby impacting the University’s ability to make decisions in a timely manner [T&F 25/2/25 p3]. There are various ways to mitigate these concerns, for example, piloting proposals before committing to them (rather than seeking to achieve perfection on paper [T&F 1/4/25 p4]) or simulating the implications of a change in approach by working through papers that previously came only to standing committees to determine which ones would then proceed to Senate, whether these would be seen as sufficiently *strategic* to warrant this, or if delays caused by waiting for the next meeting of Senate for approval would have had adverse effects on *implementation*.

Division of governance work between Senate and its standing committees

Two reasons why the delegation of authority is a complex and contentious issue are as follows. The first is the absence of a written remit for Senate: it is an inescapable logical conclusion that a Senate Standing Committee cannot have authority

delegated to it if that authority does not rest with Senate in the first place. The second is the current “blurring” of *implementation* activities (in the sense defined above, therefore including business as usual, day-to-day, and legally required monitoring and reporting) with *strategic policy development* activities. Revised Terms of Reference for the Standing Committees should clearly specify how governance work is divided between Senate and its committees.

As noted above, elected staff members believe that Standing Committees should be clearly and unambiguously empowered to *implement* operational tasks within their defined scope without requiring reference back to Senate other than to report on *implementation* [T&F 1/4/25 p4]. Receiving reports, submitting audits and reports to external bodies, assessing and monitoring the effectiveness of *policies* and the operation of the systems within the University should be considered entirely uncontentious (unless these audits and reports are required to be signed off by Senate/Academic Board/the University’s supreme academic body, in which case they must come to Senate). There should be no obstacles placed in any of the Standing Committee Terms of Reference that would prevent those essential tasks from taking place.

Further, those Standing Committees should be empowered to provide clarification, and adjust *policies* previously *approved* by Senate where it is readily demonstrable that the changes are minor (grammatical, specifically covering edge cases not explicitly considered in the original development of the policy, or similar) and do not materially change the original intent of the *policy*.

Where new *strategy* is required, or significant revisions (that will, for example, change the meaning, scope, or academic resource implications) of existing *policy*, the route should be along the lines of:

1. Standing Committee identifies a new *strategic* need or defect in current *policy* and flags to Senate as requiring attention. (The present paper provides an example of this step.)

Identification of new *strategic* needs or consideration of *policy* do not have to come from Standing Committees alone, Senate itself or other committees can also identify these considerations. The remaining steps would remain the same regardless.

2. Senate discusses and requests Standing Committee develop an appropriate combination of *strategy* and *policy* for *approval* on a specified timescale.
3. Standing Committee consults with relevant stakeholders (see next section) and presents proposed *policy* for *approval*, with interim affirmation of the direction of travel at key stages in the case of a complex *development* process.

4. Senate *approves* the final *policy*.

This is consistent with the notion of *oversight* as it is defined above.

Iterations of existing remits for the Standing Committees do not adequately define the boundaries on all those concepts. The word “approval” appears in several places, where a better governance model would follow from the core principles set out above (perhaps through the numbered process suggested above) with “Recommend for approval” being the expected terminology. This would lead to a clearer delineation between whether approval is delegated or not, and what strategy or policy development work has been delegated. We also believe that “allow-listing” or a clear list of permitted and agreed authority – specifically covering the operational aspects in particular – would be hugely beneficial.

Consultation *during policy development*

In the T&F discussions, the term *stakeholders* had been used frequently with respect to Standing Committees. Identifying who the stakeholders are together with their requirements and roles is likely to be helpful in taking this work forward.

Another matter for clarification is the role of discussion and *consultation* in Senate. Senate members have expressed a desire to be kept informed of planned work on *strategy* and *policy*, to have opportunities to engage with the *policy development* process, and to see information about *consultation* responses and evidence when exercising *oversight* [T&F 14/1/25 p3]. Here it is important to consider the *unique competency principle*, and determine when discussion at a full meeting of Senate is appropriate, or when discussion or other forms of *consultation* are better conducted elsewhere with the outcome reported to Senate so it can exercise proper *oversight*.

For example:

- When a standing committee identifies a *strategic* issue that is *relevant* to Senate, it provides an opportunity for a discussion in Senate to determine how that issue should be taken forward by a *responsible entity*, such as a Standing Committee or other relevant group, if appropriate. This is not just information-gathering from Senate because Senate has a formal responsibility for setting the *strategic* direction.
- In the course of its work, the *responsible entity* will almost certainly need to *consult* with multiple groups across the university. Senate should be one of those groups because of the diversity of elected staff and student membership. This

diversity ensures that feedback comes from all parts of the university, and not just through the university hierarchy. A better quality of *consultation* is likely to take place if such engagement takes place outside of formal meetings of Senate (as was previously done with special sessions on institutional curriculum and research strategies).

- In accordance with the principles of *avoidance of duplication*, *presumption of approval* and *least surprise*, it is important to *consult* with Senate before Senate is recommended to *approve* a *policy*. In addition, it will be imperative for documentation recommending *approval* to include details on the *consultation* performed and the rationale for either integrating or refuting details surfaced during *consultation*. It is inefficient for Senate to withhold approval due to insufficient understanding of its rationale or limited confidence that due diligence has been done. The T&F group used online tools to conduct this type of *consultation* ahead of recommending *approval* to Senate.

Oversight of related committees and working groups

The T&F group considered the coverage of its academic priorities by the standing committees, and noted that there were no apparent linkages between Senate and strategic research committees, and that consideration of the student experience had limited visibility [T&F 6/11/24 p2]. Separate proposals for building links between Senate and Research Strategy Group were presented to Senate in May 2025. Moreover, at the same meeting, Senate supported a recommendation to disband Knowledge Strategy Committee, albeit with plans for *oversight* over libraries and collections remaining to be fully developed.

More generally, it was noted that the University has many groups involved in *implementing* institutional *policy* associated with the student experience specifically, and academic work more generally, but which do not have a clear relationship or reporting line to Senate or its standing committees [T&F 6/11 p3]. This confuses *governance*, and furthermore makes it difficult for new members of Senate, particularly student members, to understand what Senate's role in relation to the academic work of the institution is.

A mapping exercise of some of these groups was conducted as part of the T&F group's work, and should be reviewed and extended to ensure all *implementation* groups that are *relevant* to Senate have been identified, and that Senate is able to exercise proper *oversight* over them (for example, through the Standing Committees, even if those groups formally report elsewhere). It has been suggested that ideally, all chains of reporting should end with Senate or Court [T&F 14/1/25 p3]

This holistic review would be an opportunity to integrate such considerations with the desire to strengthen *oversight* of research, student experience, libraries and collections and other matters *relevant* to Senate.

Next steps

We ask Senate to note the various issues that have arisen from the AdvanceHE External Effectiveness Review of Senate and the work of the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group, as described above.

We ask Senate to approve the establishment of a fixed-term working group to address the following strategic objectives:

- Develop a common terminology that describes the different types of activity that are conducted by Senate and bodies that report to it
- Establish a set of core principles that define a framework for developing, operating and evaluating remits for Senate and its Standing Committees
- Construct Terms of Reference for the Standing Committees that specify their delegated authority unambiguously
- Formulate operating procedures that determine how that delegated authority is exercised in practice, demonstrating that they are both robust and practical
- Formulate *consultation* frameworks that allow committees to demonstrate due diligence to Senate
- Ensure that all academic priorities, including work conducted by institutional committees and working groups, receive adequate *oversight* by Senate and its Standing Committees.

with the following outcomes:

- Approval by the appropriate body of the Senate remit
- Approval by Senate of the principles of delegated authority, operating procedures, *consultation* frameworks, basic terms of reference for all committees, and committee-specific ToRs, as well as other documents that may be produced.

The working group will have the following characteristics:

- An independent chair
- Similar membership categories to the Task and Finish group but with additional academic and *governance* expertise where appropriate. For continuity it would be

useful to have members in all categories who were members of the Task and Finish Group, if possible.

- A proposal for the working group's purpose, membership, terms of reference and lifespan will be brought to the December Senate meeting for approval.
- In terms of approach, it is important to note that the elucidation and application of principles depend on each other to some extent - an understanding of the current committee landscape is required to ensure that the principles are appropriate to apply.
- A useful exercise will be understanding the roles of the existing and potential standing committees, as well as other committees involved in governance and strategy that fall within Senate's responsibilities. By understanding these roles, principles can be expressed that capture them. As described in the earlier material, some of the roles that standing committees play fall outside Senate's purview. Additionally, some academic governance decisions do not come to Senate at all, and this hampers Senate in carrying out its responsibilities.

Senate

10 December 2025

Academic Development within The Academic Mission of The University

Description of paper

1. The paper provides a framework for supporting academic development in the university.
2. The framework follows processes established with Senate in 2009.
3. Academic development surrounding Teaching and Research is relevant to both Strategy 2030, and the operational purpose of Senate. Significant changes to the institutional approach to academic development require Senate oversight.

Action requested / Recommendation

4. Senate is asked to **note** the following points:
 - 4.1. The university's "size and shape" project has been conducting work directly related to academic development, in particular in the Staff, Research & Innovation, and Learning & Teaching workstreams.
 - 4.2. Discussion in previous meetings of Senate has reaffirmed the Executive's commitment to facilitate Senate oversight of academic "size and shape" outputs.
5. Senate is asked to **approve** the following motions:
 - 5.1. **(M1)** Material changes to the University's strategies for academic development require Senate oversight. This includes any changes to the outcomes of the 2009 review approved by Senate that mandated the formation of an Institute for Academic Development (IAD) and the appointment of its Director.
 - 5.2. **(M2)** The formation of a formal Review Panel, of similar structure to that convened in 2009, tasked with reviewing existing provision for academic development, at institutional level, to include the structure and remit of the IAD. This task may be delegated to an appropriate committee such as Senate Education Committee. This review should include consultation with all Schools, all Deaneries, and institutional experts on academic development.

Background and context

6. The university's Institute for Academic Development was established in 2009, following an internal and external review, discussion in Senate committees, and finally approval by Senate.
 - 6.1. On 4 February 2009, the Academic Policy Committee of Senate commissioned a review of teaching and learning support for staff and students. The review was compiled in June 2009 by internal and external members (including input from colleagues in Bristol and Helsinki), and considered chiefly the "fragmented" status of academic development, split at the time between a Centre for Teaching, Learning and Assessment, a Postgraduate Transferable Skills Unit, HR, ISG, and the Office of Lifelong Learning.
 - 6.2. At the time, "the University's current support for teaching and learning [was] fragmented across a large number of units and needs to be better coordinated and signposted". The Review also found it "vital that strategic and governance

arrangements are in place to ensure that support is meeting the University's strategic aims".

- 6.3. Senate's Learning and Teaching Committee agreed on its 9 September 2009 meeting that the review will form the basis for a Senate paper (LTC 09/10 1 B).
- 6.4. This paper was discussed by Senate on 14 October 2009. Its recommendations were approved: "Senatus noted the support given by student members to the proposals", and "Senatus endorsed the review's recommendations, and in particular the establishment of an Institute for Academic Development and the early appointment of its Director".
7. Academic development concerns not only teaching but also research, as demonstrated by the university's decision to sign the Concordat for Researcher Development.
8. The authors are not aware of any large-scale reviews of academic development at the institution since.

Discussion

9. The Institute for Academic Development is integral to the University's Strategy 2030 and core business of the University. The University's 2020 ELIR stated that "Our Institute for Academic Development remains central to our efforts".
10. The benefits and resources to academic development offered by the IAD are built into the strategy and infrastructure of the institution, including but not limited to:
 - 10.1. Support for teaching and well-being: seminar series, workshop series, writing workshops, support for different communities of practice within and across schools.
 - 10.2. Connections across Colleges: identifying good practices elsewhere and making them relevant to one's own College/School/Deanery. Senate members have noted the effects of IAD facilitation on their academic leadership, support for PIs, improvement of teaching, induction of new research staff, and developing PG societies.
 - 10.3. PG training that Schools/Deaneries do not have the resources for, or that cuts across disciplines.
 - 10.4. Providing centralised resources on the university website, including the Teaching Matters blog.
 - 10.5. Added prestige for the university, especially when it comes to leadership of national initiatives (e.g. setting up the Future Leaders Fellows Development Network), and developing reciprocal ties with academic developers in institutions outwith the UK.
 - 10.6. Administering the Principal's Teaching Award Scheme (PTAS), using funds from the UoE Development Trust.
 - 10.7. Organising the university's Learning and Teaching Conference.
 - 10.8. Supporting Advance HE fellowship through the Edinburgh Teaching Award (EdTA).
11. The Learning and Teaching Strategy specifies as one of its three Core Purposes the support of inspiring teaching: "cultivate an environment where our staff contributing to teaching and supervising are supported to succeed, empowered to be creative, and provided with opportunities for professional development and growth". A change to the Learning and Teaching Strategy would require appropriate discussion and ultimately, approval.

12. Senate has been repeatedly assured that moves falling under “Size and Shape” would be subject to Senate oversight.
13. At a Staff Information Session on Monday 3 November 2025, Deputy Secretary Students informed participants that a "plan and a vision" are being considered for the IAD. This document should be brought to Senate and the new Review Panel for discussion before any decision is made, much less implemented. The authors of the current paper requested a copy of the "plan and vision" but have not received one as of the time of drafting or final submission.

Resource implications

14. Considerable resources are needed to carry out this work, as it requires discussions across the entire university, in accordance with the established procedure in 2009. Some resources have already been invested in the executive’s current plan; sharing this existing plan with the subcommittee will not require additional resourcing, and is to be expected. For further details, see the "plan and vision" document.
15. The fate of PTAS and Advance HE funds under the Executive’s current approach is unclear; for further details, see the "plan and vision" document.
16. The impact on the UoE Development Trust under the Executive's current approach is unclear; for further details, see the "plan and vision" document.

Risk Management

17. The Executive's intent to restructure the IAD, potentially involving additional job losses ("voluntary redundancies"), has already garnered negative attention in local press and social media.
18. Changing the university’s approach to academic development without appropriate planning or Senate approval exposes the university to legal liability.
19. Changing the university’s approach to academic development without considering the effects of such a swift move risks the same detrimental effects identified in the review of the People And Money implementation.
20. The PTAS administers funding from the UoE Development Trust. Details of the Trust are not openly available, but it stands to reason that donors are aware that their donations go towards PTAS. Changing the target of donations without proper procedures in place might expose the university to a legal liability, not to mention reputational damage.

Responding to the Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development Goals

21. Academic development is relevant to SDG 8: “Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all”.

Equality and Diversity

22. No Equality Impact Assessment around the Executive's current approach has been made available; for further details, see the "plan and vision" document. The Review Panel or SEC will be expected to provide a thorough EqIA.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

23. Decision of the format of the Review Panel to be communicated by Senate Clerk to University Court, Executive, IAD and university community. To be logged in the Senate Action Log.
24. Outcomes of motions to be communicated by Senate Clerk to University Court and Executive; implementation to be led by the relevant subcommittee with oversight and evaluation by Senate.

Consultation

25. The authors consulted with other elected members of Senate while drafting the paper, and drew on concerns expressed by a wider group of colleagues (from all three Colleges). The short timeframe imposed by the Executive's actions did not allow for more extensive conversations. The "plan and vision" document was not shared with the authors. As the paper involves good governance in strategy setting, it did not solicit the views of colleagues or students in particular units.

Further information

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Freedom of information

Open

Senate

10 December 2025

Update on the development of a Statement of Primary Responsibilities for Senate

Description of paper

1. The paper provides Senate with an update on the progress towards developing a Senate Statement of Primary Responsibilities (SOPR). The update outlines the work undertaken to date, detail on how the wider Senate will be involved and a timeline for completion of the work. The paper also outlines a series of principles which will inform the work.

Action requested / recommendation

2. Senate is invited to note the timescales (paragraph 27) and provide feedback on the means for consultation (paragraphs 11-14) via the [Senate Members Portal](#).
3. Senate is invited to provide initial feedback on the principles which will inform the development of the SOPR (paragraphs 22-25) via the [Senate Members Portal](#).

Background and context

4. An [Externally-Facilitated Effectiveness Review](#) of The University Court concluded in June 2024. The report of the review identified a recommendation relating to Senate:
Recommendation 3: **That Court articulates the role of Court and the different responsibilities of Court and Senate more clearly**, both to new Court members and to continuing members on a regular basis.
5. Addressing this recommendation would enhance the clarity and transparency with which the University complies with requirements in the Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance that
 - “The governing body has responsibility for the effectiveness of the institution’s academic board” and
 - “The institution is expected to have appropriate measures in place to clarify the different responsibilities of the governing body and the academic board and to encourage a high level of mutual understanding between them.”

Senate underwent an Externally Facilitated Review which concluded in 2023. Following the receipt of the recommendations arising from the review, a Senate External Review Task and Finish Group was established, and this Group was responsible for considering the recommendations arising from the external review and for developing proposals for consideration by Senate. This group concluded in July 2025. The group held several meetings where the Senate Standing Committee Terms of Reference were discussed, and there was agreement that

the Senate Standing Committee remit and terms of reference were unable to make meaningful progress in the absence of a SOPR.

6. This paper sets out responsibility for the work, clarity on the approach, expected outputs, and an understanding of the involvement of Court and Senate.
7. The development of a Senate SOPR is intended to serve a dual purpose in addressing recommendations arising from both the Court and Senate External Reviews. The SOPR will address the recommendation arising from the Court External Review and enable progress to be made towards addressing recommendations relating to Senate Standing Committees arising from the Senate External Review.

Discussion

Responsibility, approach, Court and Senate involvement

8. The University Court is responsible for governance oversight of Senate and the wording of the SOPR will require Court's approval.
9. The University Secretary has overall responsibility for governance at the University and is directly accountable to Court therefore will be the senior lead for this work. The day-to-day work will be primarily undertaken by professional services staff in Court Services and Academic Quality and Standards. Staff from Legal Services will be involved where legal advice is required.
10. The project team will undertake sector benchmarking which will be used to inform best practice and identify approaches at comparable institutions which may be adopted. Benchmarking will be used as a starting point and is not intended to prohibit alternative options and solutions from being identified. Benchmarking will focus on other Scottish ancient universities as the governance structure of these institutions is underpinned by similar legislation. Benchmarking will also consider modern Scottish and Russell Group institutions, though it should be noted that these institutions will have governance structures which are not directly comparable to Edinburgh due to the differing legislation underpinning academic governance. Benchmarking has begun and the membership will be informed when initial findings are published on the [Members' Portal](#).
11. A critical friend's group will be formed comprised of elected academic Senate members which matches the number and composition of this category within the Task and Finish Group membership¹. It will be for Senate to nominate its representative members. This group will be used to gather suggestions and feedback on proposals from this membership category. The critical friends' group will not have formal decision-making responsibility for the development of the

¹ Eight (8) elected staff members, with representation from one member whose holds a dedicated research position such as a junior research associate, early career fellow or equivalent. An equal balance of representation across Colleges will be sought.

Senate SOPR, as this is the responsibility of Court. The creation of the critical friends group is to ensure the voice of academic elected Senate members are involved in the development of the Statement, as outlined in Appendix 1 of the [Senate External Review Task and Finish Group – Recommendations paper \(S25/26 1K\)](#). The wider Senate membership will be consulted on the SOPR as outlined in paragraph 13.

12. Consultation across the University and the Students' Association, including elected student members will also be undertaken to gather feedback on proposals. The consultation will include Senate Standing Committee members.
13. Whilst Senate is not formally responsible for the development of the Senate SOPR, it will be consulted throughout, with engagement sought via discussions at Senate meetings and formal consultation undertaken via the Senate Members Portal.
14. Senate will receive regular updates on a bi-monthly basis via the Senate Members Portal. This work is expected to complete by the beginning of AY 2026/27 should Court approve a SOPR at its June 2026 meeting.
15. Senate members are invited to provide feedback on the means for consultation (paragraphs 11-14) via the [Senate Members Portal](#).

Senate Standing Committees

16. The Senate Standing Committees are expected to have delegated responsibility for specific elements of Senate's responsibilities. Whilst the Terms of Reference for the Standing Committees are within the responsibility of Senate, the SOPR will reference the importance of the Committees as part of Senate's effectiveness. The development of a terms of reference for the Standing Committee is scheduled to take place in 2026-27 following approval of the SOPR by Court.

Good governance

17. The core function of Senate is to regulate and superintend the teaching and discipline of the University and to promote research.
18. The University Court is the governing body of the University and formally has responsibility for the effectiveness of Senate as established in Section 21 (b) of the [Higher Education Governance \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#), and in paragraphs 104-105 of the [Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance](#) (the Code).
19. Good governance is underpinned by sector-wide principles and standards, as set out in the Code. The Code primarily outlines the responsibilities for University governing bodies (the University Court) however can be used in general terms to identify areas of best practice for good governance more broadly: "*Good governance is critical to the effective operation of Scotland's higher education*"

institutions. Good governance at the institutional level is underpinned by sector-wide principles and standards, as set out in this Code.” (page 25, Code).

20. The following elements from the Code have been identified as relevant to the development of the Senate SOPR and will be considered in drafting:
- a) *Ensuring, in conjunction with the academic board, the quality of the institution’s educational provision and adequate provision for the general welfare of students;*
 - b) *Contain a broad summary of the authority that the governing body delegates to management and/or its committees. The Statement must be published on the institution’s website.*
 - c) *The governing body may delegate authority or allocate some of its work to committees, grant delegated authority to the Chair or a committee to act on its behalf, and delegate authority to the Principal and other executive officers of the institution. Such delegations must be clearly defined in a schedule of delegation that is formally approved by the governing body. Having delegated authority to other bodies or individuals to act on its behalf, the governing body is nevertheless still ultimately accountable and assumes collective responsibility for the actions taken.*

21. The Code also contains information on Committee membership, which refers to Committees with delegated responsibilities from the governing body. These principles may inform the development of terms of reference for Senate Standing Committees when this work is progressed in 2026/27. These elements are provided below for information and will be considered when reviewing Standing Committee terms of reference. This is expected to take place once the SOPR has been approved by Court. The pieces of text which are relevant only to the governing body (Court) have been removed from the italicised text to avoid confusion.

a) Committee membership:

Institutions are expected to set rules on committee memberships that are consistent with this principle. Institutions’ rules must not preclude membership of any of the governing body’s standing committees purely on the basis of the category of governing body member (in the sense of who appointed or elected that member). A conflict of interest may prevent a governing body member from taking up membership of a particular committee. Other than this, the primary determinant of committee membership is that its members have the ability (the required skills and the time) to contribute effectively to the committee.

b) Committee remits and terms of reference:

Committee remits and terms of reference must state the extent and limits of the committee’s responsibilities and authority and are expected to be published on the institution’s website. Committees must not exceed their terms of reference. Committees must distinguish between issues on which they are empowered to take decisions, and issues that they must refer to the governing body for decision. Where a committee is acting under delegated powers it should submit regular written reports to the governing body on decisions that it has taken on the governing body’s behalf.

Principles for the Senate Statement of Primary Responsibilities

22. The principles are to be high level and wide reaching to capture the full breadth of Senate business.
23. It is anticipated that the Senate SOPR will be presented in a format similar to the [Court Statement of Responsibilities](#), though drafted to be specific to the legislation and responsibilities of Senate.
24. We anticipate the SOPR will cover the following:
- a) Clarity on the responsibilities of Senate in relation to the University Court (address Court External Review);
 - b) Clarity on Senate's role in regulating and superintending the teaching of the University;
 - c) Clarity on Senate's role in regulating and superintending the discipline of the University;
 - d) Clarity on Senate's involvement in the promotion of research;
 - e) Confirmation of Senate's responsibility for the award of degrees, including honorary degrees;
 - f) Confirmation of Senate's responsibility for the award of Emeritus/Emerita status;
 - g) Confirmation of Senate's responsibilities in regulating the conduct of students of the University;
 - h) Confirmation of Senate's responsibilities in maintaining the quality and standards of the University's awards;
 - i) Clarity on Senate's involvement in contributing to relevant policies and strategies;
25. It is possible that future recommendations relating to Senate Standing Committees will result in a revision to the number, breadth and coverage of the Committees to align with the approved Senate SOPR. Benchmarking will outline areas of commonality and variation on Senate Committees between Edinburgh and the institutions reviewed via a benchmarking exercise, to be published on the [Members Portal](#).
26. Senate members are invited to provide initial feedback on the principles which will inform the development of the SOPR (paragraphs 22-25) via the [Senate Members Portal](#).

Timescales

27. The development of a SOPR is intended to facilitate a full review of Senate Standing Committees. The Task and Finish Group highlighted those efforts to advance the recommendation to review the Standing Committees was hindered by the absence of a Senate SOPR.

Action	Timescale	Responsible
Desk-based benchmarking	October	Senate Support
Meetings with Scottish ancient Universities	October – November, subject to the availability of colleagues	Senate Support & Court Services
Paper for December Senate	October - December	Senate Support & Court Services
Consultation with critical friends' group	December – January	Senate Support to facilitate
Senate consultation	December – February	Senate Support to facilitate
Paper for March Senate	February – March	Senate Support & Court Services
Further development work focussed on the SOPR and items delegated to Senate Standing Committees	March – April	Senate Support & Court Services
Consultation with critical friends and wider Senate	March – April	Senate Support to facilitate
Papers for May Senate	April – May	Senate Support & Court Services
Seek approval for the Senate Statement of Primary Responsibilities from Court	June	Court Services

Resource implications

28. The resource implications for both Registry Services and Court Services have been carefully considered alongside other work for 2025/26 in order to develop a work plan that is achievable and deliverable within the required timescale and resources.

Risk management

29. There is a risk to effective academic governance of the University if the issue of lack of clarity on the remit of Senate and delegated authority are not progressed.

Equality & diversity

30. There are no equality and diversity implications associated with providing this paper. Equality impact assessments will be completed where required for any further proposals to be developed in response to the AdvanceHE review of Senate and its committees.

31. The [Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance](#) outlines expectations on Equality and Diversity, these will inform the development of the Statement and any elements which may impact on EDI.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

32. Plans for consultation are outlined in paragraphs 11 to 14 of the paper. Actions taken in response to recommendations from the External Review of Senate will be evaluated. Court is responsible for carrying out the recommendations and review of actions in response to its External Review.

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October 2025

Freedom of Information Open

Senate**10 December 2025****Senate, Culture and Inclusion.****Description of paper**

1. This paper proposes an in-depth examination of how members experience the culture and inclusivity of the Senate, augmenting existing findings from the External Review of Senate.

Action requested / recommendation

2. Senate is asked to note this proposal.

Background and context

3. The Senate External Review conducted by Advance HE made several findings relating to equality, diversity, and inclusion and put forward recommendations regarding both the diversity and culture of the Senate.
4. The External Review found that the adversarial and fractious atmosphere which can occur within Senate meetings can be alienating, particularly for new and student members. For instance, only 16% of new members in the External Review survey found the Senate's culture conducive to effective discussion, scrutiny, and decision-making, while 70% of respondents disagreed with this statement overall. The External Review report highlights other behaviours that may contribute to exclusion, with survey respondents expressing concerns about the limited diversity of views in the Senate.
5. Discussions at the Senate External Review Task and Finish Group in April indicated potential appetite for developing a Senators' Behaviours Agreement (working title). The University Lead for EDI offered to convene a diverse group of Senators to explore further and support the co-development of an agreement as required.
6. Following the first meeting of the Senate this year, feedback on the meeting has further underscored the need for action to create an inclusive culture at the Senate, in which all members feel freer and empowered to contribute to effective academic governance of the University.
7. The current Senate Handbook contains only minimal content on expected senators' behaviour, which leaves an absence of guidance and expectation-setting.

Discussion

- 8. Proposal:** The University Lead for EDI and the Dean of Equity, Inclusion and Culture for the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine will run a series of focus groups over the next 2 months to better understand how colleagues and student representatives experience Senate. The purpose of these focus groups is to augment existing findings from the External Review with insights into (i) specific barriers to inclusive and effective discussion within the Senate, and (ii) recommendations for actions to overcome or dismantle these barriers.
9. Seven confidential focus groups will be run in total with:
- I. Sabbatical Officers and Student Representatives
 - II. New Senators (< than 1 year) divided into two groups by ex-officio members and elected members
 - III. Senators with 1-5 years' experience
 - IV. Longer-standing Senators (> than 5 years), divided into two groups by ex-officio members and elected members
 - V. Senate support staff (including colleagues who support Standing Committees)
- 10. Scope:** The scope of this proposal is limited to behaviours in the Senate, and not wider governance issues, which have already been examined through the External Review. The proposals may include recommendations for how meetings are conducted to enable a more inclusive and constructive culture, for example, but will not make recommendations on how the business of the Senate is organised.
11. The findings of these focus groups will be combined with the External Review and used to generate a new Senate Behaviours Agreement, which will be integrated into the Handbook, new Senate members' induction, and shared at a future meeting. It will build on positive steps already taken to improve inclusivity, such as the offer of enhanced induction sessions tailored to different member types.

Resource implications

12. N/A

Risk management

13. There are risks associated with a lack of inclusivity and a poor culture at the Senate undermining effective discussion, scrutiny and decision-making.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

14. This paper indirectly contributes to SDGs 4 (inclusive, equitable quality education) and 10 (reducing inequality).

Equality & diversity

15. This paper supports the advancement of equality, diversity and inclusion within a key institutional decision-making body.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

16. Senators from the groups outlined above will be contacted and invited to participate in a focus group scheduled for the next two months. Findings and a new Senate Behaviours Agreement will be brought to the March Senate meeting. Evaluation of the Agreement will be conducted after one full academic year of implementation.

Authors

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November 25

Freedom of Information Open

Senate

10 December 2025

Teaching Timetabling and Course Selection Project – Update

Description of paper

1. This paper provides Senate with an update on the Teaching Timetabling and Course Selection project.

Action requested / recommendation

2. Senate is asked to **note** the update.

Background and context

3. This project is part of wider work to rethink how we design and deliver our academic administration and support functions. The teaching timetable and course selection project aims to:
 - i. deliver a stable, detailed and accurate timetable to support students' learning;
 - ii. allow students to choose from a suite of courses that are available to them within transparent parameters;
 - iii. provide staff with a stable and accurate timetable to be able to plan their other University commitments;
 - iv. achieve improved working practices for staff in spaces where teaching happens, teaching administration, including consolidated and simpler processes, improved planning and reduction in urgent/complex queries to resolve.

The project will require significant change across: culture, policy, planning, process, organisational design and use of and appropriateness of space.

4. Improving and enhancing the student experience is a strategic priority for the University. Timetabling and Course Selection are repeated themes arising through student and staff feedback, which we are seeking to address as a priority to improve satisfaction.
5. In this context, the objectives of the project present ways to ensure these improvements are realised. These have been developed working closely with staff and students:
 - i. Responsibility and Accountability – A new Policy and set of “Principles and Priorities” specifying principles and responsibilities, with supporting processes and governance tailored to ensure that changes needed for the academic planning, teaching timetabling and student course choice objectives are clearly set out, adhered to, evaluated and available for all.
 - ii. Academic Planning – A university wide approach to timetabling and course availability agreed with Colleges and Schools that allows for greater accuracy in timetabling and equitable and realistic course selection for students. This includes:
 - A clear and new timeline so Academic and Professional Services staff in all Schools, and Student Experience Services taking part in and supporting delivery of teaching, and its

timetable, work towards academic planning dates that are consistent and aligned across the institution.

- A values system shift where both research and teaching are valued to support an improved student experience.
- Process/system improvements to reduce the administrative workload associated with academic planning in the following areas:
 - Early access to information needed for effective timetable planning;
 - Data-informed planning and forecasting at both course and programme level;
 - Reduce workload in processing enrolments and course choices processing.
 - Ensure foundations in place to facilitate future student self-enrolment.
 - Facilitates the delivery of the benefits of the project outlined above.

6. The project is governed under the Learning and Teaching Workstream. The project was approved by University Initiatives Portfolio Board in November 2024.
7. This paper provides an update on the Project.

Discussion

8. Between May and July 2025, workshops were held with all Schools, typically including a combination of Teaching Organisation and Academic Staff involved in the planning of teaching in their respective Schools. The purpose of these sessions was to understand the experience of timetabling, course selection and underpinning academic planning processes in each School. While there are many similarities, the process is currently different in every School.
9. This work has informed a strawman academic planning timeline, to be adopted consistently across the University. Work is now on-going to understand the impact and the change required in Schools and the central Timetabling Unit to achieve this.
10. The project planned to complete implementation of revised processes and timelines for Academic Year 28/29. However, in recognition of the benefits this project can realise, the project is seeking to accelerate its work in order to:
 - i. Specify and validate changes in timelines, processes, policies and systems used to deliver;
 - ii. Understand whether project could be implemented for 2027/28;
 - iii. Propose early wins or pilots that could be carried out in 2026/27 to support the most effective university wide rollout in 2027/28 or 2028/29..
11. The following key points have arisen through analysis and design so far:

- Earlier information provision: Key information will need to be provided earlier in the annual planning cycle to support timely and accurate timetable production.
 - Staff availability:
 - Teaching staff will be allocated to teaching activities in the timetable;
 - Staff will be expected to be available to teach across the full teaching week (Monday to Friday, 9:00–18:00), except where flexible working arrangements are formally approved by Schools and/or part-time arrangements are in place;
 - All teaching staff availability will be captured to enable timetable creation.
 - Tension between timing to publish stable timetable to minimise late changes and timing for staff sabbaticals, awarding of grants and variations in student recruitment and demand for courses.
 - Timetabling software: the process/algorithm/optimisation that frames the timetable should be as simple and quick as possible with clarity on what is being optimised.
 - Timetabling information: timely and quality information will inform other areas such as estates planning and resource allocation.
 - Teaching space allocations: appropriateness of space and accounting for movement between campuses is key to successful delivery.
12. The project is working with stakeholder groups to understand the impact of changes and design consistent processes to support successful implementation. These stakeholder groups, with representation from Schools across all three Colleges, include academic and professional services colleagues who are involved in timetabling and course selection planning and delivery. These Schools represent a range of curriculum, staffing or timetabling requirements and practices - ensuring these and related bottlenecks are considered within future design.
13. Detailed analysis of course selection processes will commence in early 2026. This will build on the work led by student interns following the Hack the Burgh event in 2025. The project will focus on improving the course enrolment and selection experience, working collaboratively with the Student Lifecycle Management Group (SLMG) [Course enrolment](#) Continuous Improvement Group. This group has focussed on introducing incremental improvements to the course enrolment experience each year. The project will support continued progress, ensuring that changes introduced will support wider work on course selection. The project will also work closely with work to redevelop Path – ensuring tools will support and align to project objectives.
14. New ways of working identified through this project will be supported by the development of relevant policy, replacing the current Timetabling policy, and underpinning Principles. These will be developed in consultation with our representative stakeholder groups, to provide clarity and consistency in the adoption of changes and will be overseen by Senate and its relevant Standing

Committees. A benchmarking exercise has been undertaken across 12 UK institutions to inform this work.

Resource implications

15. In the first instance, the implementation plans being presented to the Project Board will consider resource implications of the proposed changes.

Risk management

16. We have set out a commitment to improve to our student experience as a strategic priority. Part of our measurement of this is through of KPIs of national surveys and student satisfaction ratings. We continue to perform poorly compared with sector peers with experiences of timetabling and course selection repeatedly raised as issues for students and staff). This holds a reputational risk for the University.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

17. This project does not directly respond to the Climate Emergency or Sustainable Development Goals. Improvement in course selection and timetabling will clarify to students our university's syllabus offer in climate and sustainability.

Equality & diversity

18. An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and will be maintained throughout the project and implementation to ensure appropriate considerations are made for key student groups. The projects outcomes will support students who have caring responsibilities and widening participation students, through enabling greater planning and through providing greater certainty about their academic timetable, and staff members who have part time working arrangements.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

19. This paper is to note.

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Freedom of Information

Open

Senate

10 December 2025

Communications from the University Court

Description of paper

1. To update Senate on certain matters considered by the University Court at its meeting held on 6 October 2025.

Action requested / recommendation

2. Senate is invited to note the report.

Background and context

3. The University Court routinely reports to Senate on business which is of interest to Senate.

Discussion

4. Please see Appendix 1 for a report of business conducted at the 6 October meeting.

Resource implications

5. Where applicable, as covered in the report.

Risk management

6. Where applicable, as covered in the report.

Equality and diversity

7. Where applicable, as covered in the report.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

8. Regular reports on the Court's work of interest to Senate will continue to be submitted.

Author

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Governance & Court Services
November 2025

Freedom of Information

Open Paper

Appendix 1:

6 October 2025

1 Principal's Report

The Principal updated Court on policy developments in the Scottish and UK higher education sectors.

2 Student Surveys 2025: Results and Responses

Court received a report on the results of the 2025 National Student Survey, Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey. It was noted that the University had seen notable improvements in its results in all three surveys, especially in those areas that had been the particular focus of recent work to improve the student experience. In national rankings, these gains had been masked by improvements also achieved at other institutions. Court welcomed the progress made and the recognition that further efforts would be required to consolidate and build on this progress.

3 Sector-level Governance Report

Court received detailed reassurances that the University's existing systems and practices were in line with those promoted in the 'lessons for the sector' identified in the recent report into financial oversight and decision making at the University of Dundee. Court also discussed opportunities for further enhancing governance practices.

4 Other items

Regular reports were received from Finance, the Students' Association, the Sports Union, the Development and Alumni Office and Court's committees. Court approved revisions to the Remuneration Committee Framework for Decision Making, the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Policy & Procedure and the Anti-Fraud Policy. Court approved the bestowal of benefactor status to two major donors, the appointment of trustees to a philanthropic trust and a change in the ownership of some museum artefacts to reflect longstanding practical arrangements. Court noted the establishment of the Responsible Investment Advisory Group. Court also approved required funding to complete essential Estates and IS contracts.

Senate

10 December 2025

Senate Standing Committees - Upcoming Business

Description of paper

1. This paper informs Senate of the main points of activity and business the Senate Standing Committees will consider between December 2025 and March 2026.

Action requested / recommendation

2. Senate is invited to note the upcoming business of the Senate standing committees.
3. Please note that this paper is not intended for discussion during the meeting as it provides an update for information.

Background and context

4. As has been established as practice, a note of upcoming key items of business from the Senate Standing Committees is a standing item on the agenda for Ordinary meetings of Senate. This is intended to facilitate Senate awareness and oversight of Standing Committee activity. This note does not include a comprehensive overview of all business that the Standing Committees may consider during this period.

Discussion

5. A summary of the Standing Committee upcoming business paper is provided in Appendix 1. This summary is to inform Senate of the main points of activity and business the Senate Standing Committees will consider between December 2025 and March 2026.

Resource implications

6. This paper does not propose any actions. The resource implications of any actions which arise from the discussion would be considered by the relevant Senate committee.

Risk management

7. This activity supports the university's obligations under the 2023 Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

8. This paper does not respond to the climate emergency or contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Equality & diversity

9. This paper does not propose any actions. Any Equality, Diversity and Inclusion actions which arise from the discussion would be referred to the relevant Standing Committee.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

10. Any comments raised by Senate will be reported to the Standing Committees at their next meeting.
11. Additionally, the Senate Committees' Newsletter is prepared after each round of Committee business and this will provide information on business undertaken by Senate and its Standing Committees to the wider University community.

Author

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Professor Tina Harrison, Convener of Senate Quality Assurance Committee
Dr Emily Taylor, Convener of Academic Policy and Regulation Committee

Freedom of Information: Open

November 2025

Appendix 1: Senate Standing Committees: upcoming business December 2025 – March 2026**Senate Education Committee (SEC)**

Upcoming business:	Brief description and context:
1. Curriculum Transformation Programme (CTP)	This is a standing item on SEC agendas and a Committee priority for 2025/26. SEC will continue to discuss CTP's priorities and direction of travel, in alignment with the wider Learning and Teaching workstream.
2. Assessment and Feedback Groups	Assessment and Feedback is a SEC priority for 2025/26. Reports from the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group and the External Quality Review Oversight Group remain a standing item on the committee, whereby updates are routinely provided to SEC. An early priority for 2025/26 is the review of the University's Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities.
3. Mid-year Reflection on Committee Priorities	The Committee will review progress and updates on its priorities for 2025/26 as part of the mid-year review.
4. School Accessibility Reviews	This Committee will receive an annual update on the Accessibility Reviews conducted via the Learn Ultra project.

Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC)

Upcoming business:	Brief description and context:
1. College Annual Quality Reports	The Committee will consider the annual quality reports from the Colleges at its December meeting. The Committee will discuss themes that have emerged from the reports and agree actions. This follows consideration of School level annual reports in the September meeting of the Committee.
2. Student Support Model: Monitoring and Evaluation	The Committee will consider the report from the project board and discuss good practice within the model and any areas for development. The Committee will consider the evaluation framework for the support model going forward.
3. Student Data Monitoring Task & Finish Group update	The Committee will receive a report on the activities of its Data Monitoring sub-group (which is tasked with developing a systematic approach to address awarding gaps). The paper will set out proposals
4. External Examiners: Exceptional Appointments 2024/25	The Committee will consider the report on College approvals of Exceptional Examiner appointments made in 2024/25. This is a standard annual report received by the Committee.
5. PRES Results Reflections	The Committee will receive reflections on the PRES results in a report compiled by colleagues in the Doctoral College. Areas for action will be considered by the Committee.
6. Self-Evaluation Action Plan (SEAP)	The Committee will be presented with the SEAP – the annual reported to SFC. The report draws together QA activities and outcomes across the University and has input from EUSA sabbatical officers.
7. Internal Periodic Review: Reports and Responses	The Committee will review final reports and any responses provided by Schools in relation to their Internal Periodic Review.
8. Programme and Course Approval Management Policy	The Committee will receive an update to the Programme and Course Approval Management Policy as part of the routine review of policies.
9. Mid-year reflection on Committee priorities	The Committee will review progress and updates on its priorities for 2025/26 as part of the mid-year review.

Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC)

Upcoming business:	Brief description and context:
1. Periodic review of policies	<p>The Committee will consider a proposal to incorporate several guidance documents relating to PGR theses into a unified guidance document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thesis Format Guidance • Including Publications in Postgraduate Research Theses: Guidance • Lay Summary in Theses – Guidance • Signed Declaration in a Postgraduate Research Thesis <p>The Committee will also consider proposals for amendments to other policy documents due for review this year, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PhD by Research oral examinations by video link (Videolinked PhD oral) • Dual, Double and Multiple Awards Policy
2. Board of Examiners Project	The Committee will contribute as required to developments relating to the project, especially where these have implications for existing academic policy.
3. Assessment and Feedback Policy	The Committee will be invited to comment in due course on the draft Assessment and Feedback Policy.
4. Mid-year reflection on Committee priorities	The Committee will review progress and updates on its priorities for 2025/26 as part of the mid-year review.

Senate**10 December 2025****Communications from Research Strategy Group****Description of paper**

1. This paper provides a summary of issues discussed at the meeting of RSG on 23 September. The Group's responsibility for research policy and strategy are directly relevant to the achievement of the following outcomes set out in Strategy 2030, which are further developed in the University's Research and Innovation Strategy 2030:¹

- i. We will see our research having a greater impact as a result of partnership, international reach and investment in emergent disciplines.
- ii. We will be a global leader in artificial intelligence and the use of data with integrity.
- iii. We will have created opportunities for partners, friends, neighbours and supporters to co-create, engage with the world and amplify our impacts.
- iv. Edinburgh will become the Data Capital of Europe. We will deliver inclusive growth, provide data skills to at least 100,000 individuals, and create new companies and solutions for global challenges

Action requested / recommendation

2. Senate is invited to note the report.

Background and context

3. RSG monitors delivery of the University's Research and Innovation Strategy and its Research Cultures Action Plan². In 2025-26, RSG meetings in 2025-26 are on 23 September, 25 November, 3 February, 28 April and 25 June. The RSG meeting on 25 November took place after the deadline for paper for the meeting of Senate on 10 December.

Discussion

4. Please see appendix 1 for a report of business conducted at the meeting of RSG on 25 September 2025.

Resource implications

5. Where applicable, as covered in the report.

Risk management

6. Where applicable, as covered in the report.

Equality and diversity

7. Where applicable, as covered in the report.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

8. The [Research Strategy Group](#) committee site provides access to the agenda of meetings and open papers. The minutes of each meeting are uploaded after they have been formally approved.

9. Senate members may be interested in reading the [weekly ERO digests of news relevant to R&D](#) in the social, political and economic landscape in Scotland, the UK and further afield.

¹ <https://www.ed.ac.uk/research-innovation>

² <https://support-for-researchers.ed.ac.uk/research-cultures>

Author

10. Dr Susan Cooper, Research Policy Analyst and Secretary to RSG
REF, Research Policy and Performance Directorate, Edinburgh Research Office.

4 November 2025

Freedom of Information

11. Open Paper

Appendix 1:

Key points from the meeting of RSG on 23 September 2025

1. RSG Convenor's briefing

The key points in the oral briefing from the VP Research and Enterprise were:

- Recent announcements by the Universities UK President and Chief Executive of UK Research and Innovation; both new to their respective roles;
- The criteria used to determine the universities and research institutes that received money from the Global Talent Fund;
- Recent and forthcoming visits from research councils to the university; and
- The current status of the UK Higher Education sector's negotiations with the big 5 academic publishers which are Elsevier, Springer Nature, Taylor & Francis, Wiley and Sage

2. Senate -RSG update

The plan to develop proposals to implement the changes agreed by Senate to enhance its oversight of and engagement with research matters had been paused due to a joint Senate/Court work to develop a 'Statement of Primary Responsibilities'

3. University Size and Shape – Research and Innovation Workstream

At the time of writing, the University Initiatives Portfolio board had categorised the projects in five Size and Shape workstreams in line with the Court approved financial plan for 2025/26. Those that were expected to deliver financial benefit in 2025-26 or were essential because of the university's risk register would be prioritised. Research Ethics project was one such project. The other R&I projects were in tranches two and three as they were deemed to deliver efficiencies in the longer term.

4. Revising the University's Consultancy Policy

To support the University's ambitions to increase the diversity of income, Edinburgh Innovations (EI) was reviewing three key policies: Consultancy Policy: Services and Facilities; and Incentivisation. The first to be reviewed was the Consultancy Policy. In considering the revised draft Consultancy Policy, members were asked to be mindful of the other two policies which were closely related and would be reviewed next. In the discussion of the draft Consultancy policy, it was agreed that the Director of Consultancy and External Services at EI would seek feedback from College Research committees before the policy is presented to University Executive for approval.

5. International Partnerships: Global Action Plan and Innovation Framework

The R&I section of the draft Global Action Plan incorporated feedback given at the Major Initiatives Group on 18 September. It was suggested that the goals and associated actions should be sharpened up. It would make sense to assess progress in terms of the three missions of the R&I strategy. The best place for impact and engagement would be inclusion in the Plan's Goals and Actions rather than the KPIs which it was noted would include qualitative and quantitative indicators.

The International Innovation Framework related to the second goal for international research in the Global Action Plan and was at an earlier stage of development. In the discussion of the three types of International Innovation Partnerships (IIP) described in the Framework it was agreed that there was a degree of overlap in the geographic and disciplinary scope of the

Regional Industry/ Sector Partnerships and International Innovation Partnerships. Further work on the IIP Framework would ensure it was clear what success would look like and how this would be gauged.

6. Research Funder Relationships Plan

The need for a plan was to build on best practice and ensure that the University was making the most of visits from funders. The intention was that ERO activity combine with College and School level activity to maximise the efficacy and have a planned dissemination of information gained from the visits. Members agreed that:

- Funder Strategy Groups should be set up for the University's top five funders, which do not currently have such a group and thought should be given to the establishment of groups for other strategically important funders;
- Although not all funders make visits to the university or the funder visit is for representatives from all Scottish HEIs, establishing a Funder Strategy Group would be of benefit; and
- Account should be taken of training grants for research postgraduates

7. Implementation of the Trusted Research – Action Plan

The action plan, which covers the period up to April 2026, was designed to address the five categories of the National Protective Security Authority's (NPSA) Trusted Research Evaluation Framework (TREF). Compliance with the TREF is mandatory. The goal is to move the University TREF level from pre/foundational through foundational and into intermediate. It was recognised that the implementation of the action plan would require the commitment of staff with the right skills and experience mix. If such staff were unable to prioritise this area of work within existing workloads, the timescales for delivery would need to be revised. A progress report on implantation would be presented to an RSG meeting later in 2025-26.

8. Items presented for approval

Members approved:

- Progress report for the Research Cultures Action Plan 2023-25. Members agreed that University Executive should be asked to consider the report before it was published.
- Terms of Reference of the Implementation of Trusted Research Evaluation Framework (I-TREF) Group, after agreeing that the group should include representation from Communications and Marketing and the Institute of Academic Development; and
- Terms of reference of the AI and Data Ethics Advisory Board, after it was noted the reporting arrangements for the AI Data Ethics Review Board would be the subject of discussion between the Baillie Gifford Chair of Ethics of Data and AI, Convenor of Research Ethics and Integrity Review Group, and the secretary to RSG

9. Items presented for information

- Research Cultures Survey 2024 [Access is via the University's [Research Cultures site](#)]
- Reports on the latest Research Grants and Application KPIs; Industrial and Translational awards; Library Research Support; and Edinburgh Research Office;