

Statement of Senate's Primary Responsibilities

This statement is intended to support effective academic governance. The Senatus Academicus (henceforth 'Senate'), working through its committees as appropriate, carries out responsibilities that are essential to the University's academic mission and of consequence for the whole University community.

The powers of Senate are set out in the Universities (Scotland) Acts 1858, 1889 and 1966. Under this legislation, Senate has the power to 'regulate and superintend the teaching and discipline of the University and to promote research'. The Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016 sets out provisions on elections to, and the composition of, Senate. Senate also has a responsibility to ensure compliance with external regulatory requirements, including Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. The list of primary responsibilities derives from these sources and was prepared following consultation within the University and consultation with and benchmarking against the other ancient Scottish Universities. It has been approved by the University Court (henceforth 'Court'). This Statement builds on the requirement for a statement of primary responsibilities for Court (currently set out in provision 12, Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance (2023 version)) and the expectation that 'the institution...have appropriate measures in place to clarify the different responsibilities of the governing body [i.e., Court] and the academic board [i.e., Senate]', currently set out in provision 105 in the Code (2023 version).

When carrying out these responsibilities, Senate is expected to maintain an institution-wide perspective, in order to act in the best interests of the University.

While Senate has powers derived from statute, Court is the supreme governing body of the University and legal persona, with the power to administer and manage the whole revenue and property of the University. Court is empowered under statute to review any decision of Senate. The Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance affirms that Court is responsible for the effectiveness of Senate.

Senate's primary responsibilities are:

A: Regulating and superintending the teaching of the University

1. To approve the award of degrees and other qualifications.
2. To discuss changes to existing policy and the development of new policy relating to teaching, learning and teaching quality assurance, including research undertaken by students as part of a programme of study.
3. To approve changes to existing policy and the adoption of new policy relating to teaching, learning and teaching quality assurance, including research undertaken by students as part of a programme of study.
Note: A list of policies approved by Senate and its committees is maintained and available to Senate members. All University policies including those approved by Senate and its committees are published on the Policy Directory site (<https://policies.ed.ac.uk>)
4. To oversee the implementation of policy relating to teaching, learning and teaching quality assurance, including research undertaken by students as part of a programme of study.

5. To oversee the implementation of teaching quality assurance, including oversight of reporting to relevant external bodies.
6. To discuss the development of relevant University-wide innovations and changes intended to enhance the student experience, particularly those relating to educational experience and student engagement, in order to inform Senate's business.
7. To discuss the University's engagement with external requirements and frameworks that fall within Senate's remit, in order to inform Senate's business.
8. To make recommendations as a consultative body to Court on certain matters relating to teaching, learning and teaching quality assurance, including research undertaken by students as part of a programme of study, where indicated by legislation.

B: Regulating and superintending the discipline of the University

9. To discuss changes to existing policy and the development of new policy relating to student conduct and discipline.
10. To approve changes to existing policy and the adoption of new policy relating to student conduct and discipline.
11. To oversee the implementation of policy relating to student conduct and discipline.
12. To make recommendations as a consultative body to Court on draft Court Resolutions relating to student conduct and discipline, where indicated by legislation.

C: Promotion of Research

13. To discuss the development of the University's Research and Innovation Strategy
14. To note and discuss, as appropriate, major developments concerning the University's research provision and support for research.

D: Process and Good Governance

15. To adhere to University codes, policies and regulations in carrying out its business.
16. To approve the arrangements for the election of members to the Senate in line with University Court approved election regulations.
17. To approve arrangements for the election of Senate Assessors on the University Court.
18. To regulate the conduct of its proceedings and its members through Standing Orders and other mechanisms it may approve, subject to the oversight of Court.

19. As part of this, to discuss feedback and recommendations generated by internal and external effectiveness reviews of Senate and its Committees.
20. To adhere to principles of good governance on the delegation of authority to Standing Committees, as outlined in professional codes.
21. To note the activities of University Committees whose work has implications for areas under Senate's remit, in order to inform Senate's discussions and decision making in those areas.
22. To note the key activities and priorities of student representatives via annual reports.
23. To report to Court on Senate's activities including such matters or assurances as requested.
24. To note the activities of Court.
25. To make recommendations to Court in relation to certain matters (e.g. creation of new degrees, amending existing degree regulations) as specified in the Universities (Scotland) Act 1966; and to act as a consultative body to Court on all draft Court Resolutions and Ordinances
26. To approve the conferral of Emeritus/Emerita status on retiring professors.

Note on terminology

- *To approve: Senate or a body delegated by Senate (e.g. a committee of Senate) is the approving authority. It does not impede Court's ability to review any decision of Senate.*
- *To recommend (for approval or otherwise): On certain matters within Senate's competence, Senate is required to make a recommendation to a higher/approving authority. For example, the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Degree Regulations are contained within Resolutions of Court and therefore cannot be approved directly by Senate. This requires Senate to make a recommendation to Court.*
- *To discuss: Senate has an interest in the business and is expected to contribute via discussion. Senate's comments will be relayed to the approving authority. However, Senate does not have a role in making a recommendation to the approving authority. This includes matters for consultation with Senate. The approving authority is responsible for deciding how to engage with Senate's view.*
- *To note: Senate is expected to have an awareness of the business but no action is required. Senate is likely to receive updates via reporting.*
- *To oversee implementation: In these cases, Senate is responsible for ensuring that activity is carried out in line with policy. Day-to-day activities relating to implementation are typically delegated to Standing Committees, with Senate oversight carried out via reporting from the relevant Committee, often on an annual basis.*