Governance instruments

The University's governance instruments, comprising the Charter, Statutes, and Regulations, provide the constitutional and regulatory framework within which Senate operates. They define the powers, composition, and responsibilities of the University's governing bodies, ensuring that authority is exercised lawfully, transparently, and in alignment with the University's objectives and the requirements of the external regulators.

1. Charter

Point 8: There shall be a Senate of the University which shall, subject to the general control and approval of the Council, be responsible for academic standards and the direction and regulation of academic matters.

2. Statute VI.

THE SENATE

i. The Senate shall, subject to the general control and approval of the Council, be responsible for academic standards and the direction and regulation of academic matters.

ii. The majority of members of the Senate shall be elected members.

iii. The Senate shall have the power to discuss and declare an opinion on any matter whatsoever relating to the University and to request that the Council consider such opinions.

iv. The membership and powers of the Senate shall be further prescribed in the Regulations.

3. Regulation 4: Senate

These Terms of Reference should be read in conjunction with Regulation 4: Senate, which remains the definitive source of Senate's powers and membership.

Terms of Reference

Role and Responsibilities

Senate is the senior academic body of the University, established in the Charter and responsible to Council for 'academic standards and the direction and regulation of academic matters' (Statute VI. 1). This encompasses teaching, examining and research as well as oversight of quality assurance and standards of education provided by the University.

Senate exercises powers conferred by the Charter and Statutes, subject to the general control and approval of Council. It is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, as the head of the institution and the 'chief academic and administrative officer of the University'.[1]

Senate oversight of academic governance is delegated to its sub-committees, Faculties, Schools, and divisions; through these delegations Senate seeks assurance on effectiveness, quality, and compliance.

Powers of Senate

The powers and functions of Senate, as defined in Statute VI and Regulation 4, include the following:

- Directing and regulating teaching and examination
- Promoting research
- Authorising the award or annulment of degrees
- Regulating admissions and the discipline of students
- Declaring an opinion to Council on any academic matter and ask Council to consider it
- Discuss and declare an opinion on any matter whatsoever relating to the University[2]
- Recommending changes to the academic organisation of the University[3]
- Advising Council on any proposed alterations to the Ordinances, Statutes and Regulations of the University, that fall within Senate's remit.

Regulatory Assurance

The Office for Students, the sector's first regulator, was established as part of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017.

The Office for Students' objective[4] is to ensure that all students, from all backgrounds, with the ability and desire to undertake higher education are supported to access, succeed in, and progress beyond Higher Education. This includes ensuring students receive a high-quality experience and progress into employment or further study.

Senate is, on behalf of Council, responsible for providing assurance that the University is compliant with the conditions of registrations within its remit: Condition A: Access and Participation; Condition B: Quality and Standards; and Condition C: Consumer Protection Law, and such elements of Conditions E2 (Management and Governance), E3 (Accountability for Student Fee Expenditure) and E6 (Preventing and Responding to Harassment and Sexual Misconduct) as relate to academic governance, learning and teaching quality, and the student experience

This committee can, where relevant, take decisions which may have substantial impacts on the University's compliance with its freedom of speech and academic freedom obligations. Such decisions will have particular regard for the importance of free speech within the law.

[1] Charter point 6.

[2] Statute VI, point 3.

[3] Organisation of University and Regulation 4.

[4] OfS StrategyThese Terms of Reference are reviewed annually by Senate.

Approved March 2022

Approved November 2025

Reviewed November 2026

Additional Documents

- [Senate : Committees : Governance and Compliance : University of Sussex]
- [Standing Orders]

Workplan 2026-27

The workplan is developed to enable Senate to fulfil its responsibilities and to provide academic governance in relation to strategic matters within the Education and Students and Research and Innovation portfolios. It is subject to change throughout the academic year, as matters arise.

	11 November 2026	3 March 2027	23 June 2027
Strategy and Risk	• Vice-Chancellor's Report • Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) Report • Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) • NSS Outcomes and next steps •	• Vice-Chancellor's Report • Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) Report • Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) Report • Research Drivers Report •	• Vice-Chancellor's Report • Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) Report • Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) Report •
Compliance and Regulation	• OfS B Conditions Compliance Report	• Access and Participation Plan update • OfS B Conditions Compliance Report • Degrees Outcome Statement 2025	• OfS B Conditions Compliance Report • Student Protection Plan 2027-28 • Academic Framework, Progression and Award Regulations
Governance	• Faculty Reports to Senate • Precautionary Action Report • Research Integrity Statement • Review of Terms of Reference, role descriptor and work plan	• Faculty Reports to Senate • Precautionary Action Report • Honorary Degrees Nominations Report • Policy Approval and Decommissioning	• Faculty Reports to Senate • Precautionary Action Report • Tuition Fees and Scholarships Report
By exception	• Changes to Sub-Committee Structures • Changes to Regulations or Policies within Senate's remit		