

The Role of Senate Members

Senate is the senior academic body of the University, providing Council with assurance on the quality, standards, and effectiveness of teaching, learning and research at Sussex. Senate is responsible for academic governance and is 'responsible for academic standards and the direction and regulation of academic matters' (Statute V1.1). Senate's remit and responsibilities as set out in the Regulations and Organisation of the University.

All members of Senate are equal and have the same responsibility to ensure the effectiveness of Senate. There are three different categories of members: ex-officio, staff elected, and student elected. Detailed explanations of categories of members can be found in Annex A.

Members should utilise their skills and experience to inform the discussion and decisions at Senate.

Members should always:

- Act in good faith, in the best interests of the University of Sussex and in line with our charitable purposes.
 - Uphold the "seven principles of public life" - selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.
 - Be collegial and constructive in approach.
 - Take collective and individual ownership for the issues under the Senate's remit and for the discussion and resolution of these issues. In taking ownership of the work of Senate, members should ensure that they are empowered to contribute to discussion and make decisions on matters referred to Senate. Members will be supported to do this through induction, ongoing training, and mentoring.
 - Be committed to communicating the work of Senate to the wider University community.
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Before the meeting:

- Papers are distributed a week before the meeting. It is Members' responsibility to read papers in advance of meetings. Members, if they wish, can raise questions on papers or proposed decisions in advance with the Secretary.
- Senate can have large amounts of papers but each one serves a purpose to enable the progress of the University's charitable purposes and strategic plan. Even though some papers are noted or approved without discussion they should still be read and considered properly as this provides members with the opportunity to highlight matters salient to the work of progression of academic standards and request that the item is discussed within Senate.
- Elected Senators can share the agenda with their representatives and consult representatives on the scheduled business to feed into the discussion at Senate.

- Please confirm with the Secretary if you are unable to attend a meeting. The membership of Senate is designed to ensure the broadest, most inclusive range of perspectives are involved in consultation and decision making. If members do not attend 3 consecutive meetings, they may be asked to step down.
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During the meeting:

Decision Making

- **APPROVE:** Senate is asked to make a decision on a matter and has the authority to do so under Regulations.
- **CONSIDER:** Senate is asked to consider a particular item to provide its opinion or direction, but not to decide on the topic at hand. The report should be clear on how the discussion will influence the topic/project and why Senate's opinion is being sought. If members are not clear on what is being asked, they can seek clarification from the governance team or paper author.
- **NOTE:** Senate is provided with information that is not for consideration or action. The implications of noting the item should be clearly outlined so that Senate are aware of what they are being asked to note and members can consider if it is appropriate to ask for further information.

How decisions are reached:

When Senate is asked to approve an item- either for recommendation to Council or for immediate implementation- members will be asked to anonymously vote on the matter. A vote will be held via an online voting mechanism. All members will be given support and training to use the voting platform. Members' votes should be informed by the paper and discussion. The minutes will capture the discussion and range of opinions. Each member of Senate will have one vote and with the majority deciding the outcome.

The CUC outlines that effective governance has '*a culture where all members can question intelligently, debate constructively, challenge rigorously, decide dispassionately and be sensitive to the views of others both inside and outside [of] meetings.*¹

Once a decision has been reached this is the decision of Senate and there is collective accountability for this decision on behalf of Senate. Discussion and difference of opinion will be recorded in the meeting's minutes, but all members should respect the decision of Senate after the meeting.

Discussion

- All members are encouraged to participate in discussion. As outlined above, the membership of a committee is decided to support decision making so it is important that all views are noted.
- Ask for clarification if you need it. Not understanding the decision required or context of a discussion is not something to be ashamed of, committees have a wide

remit and there will be areas or topics that you will be less familiar with. Clarifying the matter at hand is important to enable the committee to progress. In addition, if you are asking the question someone else in the room is probably thinking it too.

- All members need to be respectful of others' views. Challenge and debate are important to ensure that all aspects of a decision are considered but all members should respect opinions shared by other members.
- The Chair of Senate will encourage contributions from all Senate members. No member should dominate the discussion and should exercise a self-denying ordinance once they have made their point- once you have outlined your point, allow other members to contribute to the discussion.

Confidentiality

- Be aware of confidential items.
- The majority of items on a Senate agenda should be open and will be made available to everyone on Sussex Direct, however where required some items will be categorised as confidential. It is important that these reports and any decisions are not shared beyond members.
- A detailed explanation of how papers are categorised can be found on the University's website and in the Organisation of the University.

After the meeting:

- Do not share any papers, discussion or decision which came under the confidential section of the agenda.
- Elected Senators should share feedback from the meeting with their colleagues.
- Share any feedback on the meeting with the Secretary or governance team. Issues can be dealt with more effectively if they are addressed immediately and in a collegial manner.
- Minutes from the meeting will be circulated to members for comment. Feedback on the minutes should ideally be shared with the Secretary in advance of the next meeting so changes can be made prior to submission for approval.

Annex A: Types of Committee Members

Ex Officio Staff

Ex Officio posts are most often prescribed to those senior staff members who are wholly concerned with the central remit of Senate. Membership is by virtue of a person's job role within the University.

Senate's ex-officio membership includes: The Vice-Chancellor; The Deputy Vice-Chancellor; The Pro-Vice-Chancellors; The Heads of the Schools of Studies; Holders of the following offices: The Librarian; The Director of Information Technology Services; The Director of the Sussex Centre for Language Studies and The Convener of the Foundation Year.

Staff Elected Posts

The Elected Posts allow for Schools and Professional Services colleagues to select their representation on Senate. Individuals are elected through an open nomination process and a single transferable voting process. Each School has posts for two members of academic staff. Professional Services also have two posts for representatives.

Posts reserved for Members of the Students' Union

There are student representatives on most university committees, this ensures that the student voice is integrated into the governance structure.

There are two types of student posts on Senate:

- Ex-officio posts reserved for the USSU President and two other Sabbatical Officers of the Students' Union
- 5 elected student members of Senate who hold office for a period of one year and shall consist of the following persons: one of the Postgraduate Research School Student Representatives sitting on Doctoral School Committee; the Postgraduate Taught School Student Representative sitting on Teaching and Learning Committee and three Undergraduate School Student Representatives (1 Arts and Humanities, 1 Science (including BSMS), 1 Social Sciences)