



University Committee for Quality and Standards

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Establishment

- a) The University Committee for Quality and Standards is established as a Committee of the Senate.¹
- b) The Court has delegated to the Senate all of its powers in relation to academic work and standards so that, subject to the terms of the [Charter and the Statutes](#) and to the powers reserved to the Court, the Senate is the principal body responsible for the academic work and standards of the University and in relation to:
 - programmes of study;
 - teaching and research;
 - the granting of awards; and
 - the regulation and stewardship of the education and discipline of the Students.
- c) The Senate reports to the Court on the discharging of these responsibilities.
- d) Statute 5.4(b) permits the Senate to delegate any of its powers to any Committee which contains at least three of its members (at least one of whom should be an ex officio member of the Senate).
- e) Ordinance C4 permits the Senate to establish standing committees and to prescribe the terms of reference, including the remit and composition.
- f) An operating principle of this Committee is that when a decision is required in relation to the exercising of delegated powers of the Senate, those persons present who are not Senators shall be invited to abstain from voting.

2. Reporting

The Committee reports to the Senate on matters of strategy, policy and regulation related to its remit.

3. Purpose

The purpose of the University Committee for Quality and Standards is to be responsible, on behalf of the Senate, for **all aspects of academic quality assurance**: progressing or engaging with institutional policy development; monitoring and review; oversight of the Quality Assurance Framework.

The Committee maintains oversight of the implementation of policies and procedures relating to additional assessment opportunities, amendments to registration (*including temporary suspension of studies*) and compulsory withdrawals, to ensure equivalence and fairness of treatment for taught students.

¹ from 1 August 2017 (Senate Minute M17/046)

4. Remit

The Senate delegates authority to the University Committee for Quality and Standards, with regard to taught programmes of study to:²

1. develop, recommend, monitor the implementation of, and report on Ordinances and Regulations; and to make, monitor, modify, and revoke policies and procedures related to:
 - the University's Quality Assurance Framework;
 - academic and other entry requirements and the recognition of prior learning;
 - conditions of registration, periods of registration, and changes of registration;
 - assessments, examinations, feedback, and progression;
 - the appointment of internal and external examiners;
 - the granting of awards resulting from taught programmes of study;
 - the deprivation and revocation of awards resulting from programmes of study.
2. consider and make recommendations, with an emphasis on quality assurance, with respect to:
 - the academic conditions associated with the establishing, modifying, or withdrawing of taught courses, programmes, and disciplines;
 - the academic conditions associated with the establishing, management, or termination of external academic partnerships for the delivery of taught programmes of study;
 - the University's programme of annual and periodic academic quality assurance reviews;
 - the findings of annual and periodic quality assurance reviews and action plans arising from these;
 - the University's participation in external quality assurance and enhancement activities, consulting as appropriate with the University Committee for Learning and Teaching;
 - the findings of external quality assurance activities and action plans arising from these, consulting as appropriate with the University Committee for Learning and Teaching;
 - reports from External Examiners, ensuring that action is taken to address issues raised.
3. approve, amend, or revoke the appointment of internal and external examiners;
4. consult with other committees and persons on matters of mutual interest;
5. to provide advice on such matters related to the Committee's purpose as may be referred to the Committee from time to time by the Senate;
6. receive regular reports from all Schools, including the minutes of the relevant School-level committees.
7. create and receive reports from such sub-committees and short-life working groups as are necessary to fulfil the responsibilities of the Committee.
8. where there are matters of quality assurance and quality enhancement that cannot be decoupled, a joint sub-committee of this Committee and the University Committee for Learning and Teaching can be established as and when required.

[Note 1: the Committee shall inform the Senate and UE of the creation, on-going work, and disbanding of any sub-committees and short-life working groups.]

[Note 2: the Senate must approve the Terms of Reference of any standing sub-committees that are to exercise delegated powers of the Senate.]

[Note 3: for the avoidance of doubt, and as outlined within the Remit, the Senate delegates authority in relation to **taught** programmes of study to this Committee. Commensurate responsibility for research programmes of study falls within the remit of the University Committee for Research and Innovation.]

² Through the [Senate Statement of Primary Responsibilities and Delegations](#)

5. Composition

The Committee shall comprise:

- The Chair of the Committee (who shall be nominated by the Principal and Vice-Chancellor and agreed by the Senate)
- The Vice-Chair of the Committee (who shall be nominated by the Principal and Vice-Chancellor and agreed by the Senate)
- The Principal and Vice-Chancellor
- The Deputy Principal for Education and Student Life
- The Director of Academic Quality from each School or Primary Academic Unit
- A student representative nominated by the Student Union
- A Dean of the University (as nominated by the Senate)
- Three members of the Senate appointed by the Senate
- An external member

The following are normally in attendance at meetings:

- The Global Director of Student Experience and Academic Registrar
- The Head of Academic Quality
- The Director of the Learning and Teaching Academy
- The Quality Assurance Manager
- The Academic Co-ordinator for the Student Union
- The Clerk to the Committee

The following are eligible to attend meetings:

- The University Secretary
- Two Deans of the University

6. Chair and Vice-Chair

- a) The Chair of the Committee is nominated by the Principal and Vice-Chancellor and agreed by the Senate.
- b) The Vice-Chair of the Committee is nominated by the Principal and Vice-Chancellor and agreed by the Senate and shall act as Chair in the absence of the Chair.
- c) In the absence of both the Chair and the Vice-Chair from any given meeting, those members present shall appoint one of their number as Chair for that particular meeting.

7. Equality and Diversity in Membership

The Committee exercises its responsibility, as far as possible, to promote diversity of representation within its membership and the membership of any working group or committee established by the Committee. The Committee will also act, in carrying out the business of the Committee, to promote equality of opportunity for all.

8. Quorum and Voting

- a) The quorum necessary to transact business is **five** members, at least two of whom must be members of Senate, and at least three of whom must be School staff (in their capacity as a Senate appointed member or as a School nominated Director of Academic Quality). In accordance with Statute Five, paragraph 4(b), the quorum of any Committee of the Senate exercising delegated powers shall include at least two members of the Senate.
- b) Members who are participating in a meeting by means of audio-visual conferencing or other means enabling them to speak with and be heard by all members present at the meeting simultaneously shall be deemed to be present at the meeting and to count towards the quorum.
- c) Normal practice is that wherever possible decisions shall be reached through consensus.
- d) All members of the Committee are entitled to vote in any vote of the Committee except:

- c1) when the Committee is required to vote on the exercising of delegated powers of the Senate, those persons present who are not Senators shall be invited to abstain from voting³.
- c2) when the committee is required to vote on a matter that is solely under the purview of the University Executive, then only those persons who are members because of their executive positions shall be eligible to vote.
- e) The Chair shall rule on instances where a vote is required, and whether any matter under consideration pertains to the exercising of delegated powers of the Senate, or whether a matter is solely under the purview of the University Executive.
- f) A person invited to be 'in attendance' at one or more meetings of the Committee is not entitled to vote.
- g) The Chair has a deliberative vote and a casting vote.

9. Attendance at meetings

- a) The Committee may co-opt members as appropriate for a specified period of time and report such co-options to the Senate at the earliest opportunity.
- b) In addition to the members, and those normally 'in attendance', other colleagues may at the discretion of the Chair be invited to attend meetings on an ad-hoc basis for particular agenda items, and to contribute to discussions at the discretion of the Chair.
- c) The Committee maintains a record of attendance at each of its meetings and reports this information in accordance with the Attendance Policy.

10. Forward Planning

- a) The Committee maintains a list of Standing Agenda Items and an annual schedule of activities.
- b) The Committee sets dates for its ordinary meetings two years in advance.
- c) As part of its annual year-end self-assessment, the Committee reviews its performance in fulfilling its Remit, and considers possible modifications to its Terms of Reference. This also gives opportunity to review the Composition (including the gender balance of its membership, and the opportunity to receive contributions from the University's different campuses), and to submit recommendations as appropriate to the Senate.

11. Principles of Operation

In fulfilling its terms of reference, the Committee shall follow the principles as agreed by the Senate to enhance academic governance seeking:

- a) closer alignment between the decision-making structure and the University's strategic objectives, to ensure that the decision making structures are fit for the delivery of the strategy;
- b) a more efficient approach to the decision making process, leading to clearer lines of reporting and accountability, a reduction in time taken to reach business-critical decisions, and high quality outcomes;
- c) main committees should focus on matters of strategy and policy, with operational matters being dealt with by the relevant colleagues in consultation with ad hoc working groups as required;
- d) minimisation of business considered by numerous different groups and with appropriate accountability for decisions taken;
- e) an assumption that decisions will be reached by consensus wherever possible;
- f) an assumption that each Committee will address business internationally;
- g) appropriate delineation between governance and management;
- h) the papers coming forward to committees should contain clear, evidence-based proposals for consideration;

³ A change to the Statute shall be proposed in due course to govern this situation

- i) greater use should be made of IT facilities to reduce the amount of paper being circulated, with members of committees and others being able to access committee papers on a local intranet with appropriate access authorisation; and
- j) effective communication of decisions to all relevant parties throughout the University.

12. Sub-committees and Short-life working groups of the Committee

The Committee is empowered to create such sub-committees and short-life working groups as are necessary to fulfil its responsibilities.

It is anticipated that this Committee will have one sub-committee:

- The **Studies Committee**

13. Frequency of meetings

- a) The Committee normally has five ordinary meetings each Academic Year in advance of Senate meetings.
- b) The Chair of the Committee may choose to hold periodic strategy days consistent with the strategic function of the Committee.
- c) Additional meetings (including meetings held in conjunction with other bodies) may be required – with the approval by the Chair – for more detailed consideration of particular items.
- d) Changes to arrangements, such as cancellation, rescheduling or additional meetings will be notified to members by the Clerk as soon as possible, and normally within not less than five working days of the scheduled meeting date.

14. Lifespan and Effectiveness of the Committee

This is an established Committee of the Senate and its lifespan is ongoing.

An annual year-end self-assessment is conducted, with a formal review of effectiveness every five years.

15. Actions that may be taken by the Committee

The Committee may:

- Approve
- Note
- Receive
- Consider
- Endorse
- Recommend
- Reject
- Ratify

16. Minutes

- a) Minutes of each meeting are distributed to members within two weeks of the meeting. The Chair approves the content of minutes before release.
- b) The minutes are presented to the Senate, with any matters for consideration and/or approval highlighted in a cover paper.
- c) The Committee's agenda and minutes are published on the University Intranet
- d) Agendas, minutes and papers are held electronically by the Clerk to the Committee.
- e) The Committee has traditional/formal minutes in accordance with internal University guidance on style and requirements regarding Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation.
- f) The agendas, papers and minutes for all meetings should be copied to the Head of Heritage and Information Governance for archiving purposes.

17. Resources

Clerk – Iain Dods, Senior Governance Assistant, Policy and Governance

Administrative support - Allocated from within the Academic Secretariat Regulation and Policy Division

Meetings - Normally five meetings per session

Version	Amendments	Approved by Senate
V1		17 May 2017
V2	Minor Amendments to reflect changes in Committee membership	11 September 2019
V3	Minor Amendments to reflect changes in Committee membership Italicised wording under sections 6 and 12 removed as they were historic	5 November 2020
V4	Minor amendments to reflect changes in Committee membership	22 September 2021 (approved by UCQS)
V5	Minor amendments to incorporate the Head of the Heriot-Watt Global College as a new Primary Academic Unit into the membership of the Committee.	12 April 2023 (approved by SCIBE)
V6	Minor amendments to the Remit (in order to express the Committee's role in quality assurance activities more distinctly from the role of the University Committee for Learning and Teaching), Composition, and Quorum and Voting sections.	24 January 2024 (approved by SCIBE)