

University of Warwick - Academic Governance Framework

1. Introduction

This Academic Governance Framework articulates the primary purpose and relationship of the Council, the Senate and UEB. These are three main bodies that run the University, all distinct but interrelated.

- The **Council** is the corporate governing body.
- The **Senate** is the academic governing body.
- The **University Executive Board** (UEB) is the senior management and leadership body.

The Council is the University's governing body, with ultimate accountability for our strategic direction. The Senate is responsible for the academic work of the University. University Executive Board leads on the delivery of the University Strategy and is accountable to the Council.

The University has adopted a definition and a set of overarching principles for good academic governance and an articulation of which matters are within scope for academic governance. Each of these are set out below.

2. Academic Governance at Warwick

Definition of Good Academic Governance

Good academic governance is where the Senate and its committees work coherently on behalf of the Council to self-govern education, research, and student matters inclusively and transparently, in support of the values, sustainability, strategy, and regulatory compliance of the University as a whole.

Academic Governance Principles

Taking a principles-led approach recognises that not every scenario can be foreseen and designed into the architecture, tools, or process of our academic governance system. Instead, those responsible for facilitating academic governance can look to a set of guiding principles that ensure any decisions they take are in the spirit of those principles.

- a. Senate and its committees lead by example in upholding these principles.
- b. Rounded, robust decisions uphold the interests of the University and its community overall, having regard for the diversity of our academic disciplines.
- c. Decision-making is informed by and improves the experiences and outcomes of our diverse student and staff communities.
- d. The rationale for reaching decisions is captured and shared with the University community.
- e. Diversity of thought is important in the scrutiny of proposals and encouraged through inclusive, respectful discussions that uphold Academic Freedom, Freedom of Expression, and the principles of Dignity at Warwick.
- f. The Academic Governance and External Governance of the University operate in a mutually informed and effective way.

- g. The remit, authority and parameters of the Senate, its committees and policy development processes are published and communicated transparently, implemented consistently, and designed as a coherent system in a way that builds understanding and trust over time.
- h. The memberships of the Senate and its committees include representation of senior responsible officers, academic units, subject matter experts and our diverse staff and student bodies.
- i. Students are partners in their education and student experience, including through our academic governance system.
- j. Staff and students involved in academic governance are supported to effectively fulfil a defined set of responsibilities and make an active contribution.
- k. Defining, evaluating, and improving the effectiveness of our approach to academic governance is a continuous and shared endeavour for all staff and students involved.

The Scope of Academic Governance

The following broad aspects are agreed by the Senate as the scope of academic governance at Warwick:

- **Student:** access, admission, registration, success, wellbeing, experience, conduct and discipline, complaints and contention, students' union, and student organisation.
- **Education:** strategy, qualifications and courses, teaching and learning, curriculum, assessment, progression and award, quality assurance, partnerships and credit transfer.
- **Research:** strategy, performance, quality, impact, knowledge exchange, training and development.
- **Academic:** strategy, academic freedom and freedom of speech, organisation (faculties, departments, centres) and governance, resourcing, academic dress, library administration.
- **Advice to Council on:** academic staff appointments and conditions, academic resourcing, Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor appointments, scholarships and prizes, estate development.

3. Academic Governance Committee Typology

The following typology defines the role of each level of academic governance body that operates within the University's Academic Governance Framework.

Body	Definition	Committees/Tier
Principal Academic Body	Established in the <u>Charter and Statutes</u> .	Tier 1 - The Senate
Strategic Committees	Established by the Senate to deal with specific business on its behalf. The Senate Committees have broad strategic oversight; provide assurance to the Senate; and have delegated authority to approve policy.	Tier 2 - (e.g. Research Committee / Education Committee / Academic Resourcing Committee)

Sub-Committees	Bodies established on a long-term basis by a higher committee to deal in more detail with an area of the committee's business. A group that represents a larger body (e.g. Council/the Senate) and either has delegated authority to make decisions on behalf of that larger body or, after discussing proposals makes a recommendation to that body. It has the functional responsibility for proposing policy and approaches to strategy.	Tier 3 - (e.g. Academic Quality and Standards Committee / Board of Graduate Studies / Student Learning Experience and Engagement Committee)
Panels	Panels are responsible for implementing and operating a policy framework.	Tier 4 - (e.g. Senate Sub-group; course approval panel; examination requests panel; regulations scrutiny panel)
Working Groups/Programme and Project Boards	These terms should normally be reserved for short term bodies established to deal with specific tasks. A working group is a group of people with knowledge and expertise who work together to achieve specified goals.	Tier 4
Task and Finish Groups	A task and finish group is set up as part of a larger project group to look at one specific item that needs to be delivered. There should be a defined time for this group to complete its work, report and then be disestablished.	Tier 4

4. Academic Governance Membership Typology

The following typology defines the role and route to membership of each member of academic governance body within the University's Academic Governance Framework.

Committee Role	Role description	Method of Appointment	Voting rights/ decision-making authority
Membership			
Chair	Chairs meetings. Details of the formal role of a chair can be found here: Information for Committee Chairs and Members (warwick.ac.uk)	Can be ex officio (see below) for senior committees, e.g. <i>Education Committee: PVC Education (Chair)</i> , or elected by the members. This is defined in the committee Terms of Reference.	May have a casting vote, however, in practice at Warwick Chairs don't usually vote.
Secretary	Supports and guides the committee; has a role in maintaining good governance practice. Secretariat information and resources can be found here: Information for Committee Secretariats (warwick.ac.uk)	An individual's substantive role may be linked to the remit of the committee, or the Secretary may be appointed. This is defined in the committee Terms of Reference.	Not usually for the more formal committees, however in certain cases a member within another category and with voting rights can also take on the Secretary role.
Independent/ External member	Not a member of the University. They are appointed (no election usually) to a committee because of their skills and expertise. All external members are asked to fill in a register of interest form, including SU members who are technically non-university staff.	They are appointed (no election usually) to a committee because of their skills and expertise. For Council and its sub-committees this happens through a formal process and the Nominations Committee (of Council). The process can be less formal for other committees and groups.	Yes
Appointed/Elected/ 'Representative member of' or Co-opted Member	A member of the committee that represents a department, Faculty, area of expertise or a designated part of the wider University community.	A committee member may be <i>Ex officio</i> (from the office). They may be appointed by a person (e.g. the VC), a Faculty or Department, or a group (e.g. Senate Nominations Panel, Assembly to Senate). In some cases, there is a call for nominations	Yes

		and election process. There may be combinations of ex officio, nominated or elected members on a single committee. The method of appointment and number of committee members is defined in each committee's terms of reference.	
Ex Officio member	A member of the University due to the role or office held. A member of the committee as a representative of a department, Faculty, area of expertise or a representative of a designated part of the wider University community.	A member by virtue of holding another role / office which has a link to the remit of the committee. In some cases, an ex officio role can nominate someone else usually from within their team/area e.g. <i>PVC Education or nominee</i>.	
Student member	A student or Full-Time Officer of the Students' Union that acts as a representative of collective student interests or as a representative of a defined part of the wider student community (department, protected characteristic, lived experience).	This is usually one or more of the core elected Students' Union Full-Time Officers on formal University committees. Student representation is drawn on more widely for sub committees, often from other SU roles/ SSLCs/taskforces/interest groups, etc.	Yes
In attendance			
Regular Attendee	Attends all meetings, usually by invitation from the Chair or members by virtue of their substantive role, skills and/or expertise but is not a formal, decision-making member.	Attends all meetings. Usually by invitation from the Chair or existing members by virtue of their substantive role, skills and/or expertise but is not a formal, decision-making member.	No
Attendee for one or more items at a meeting/ Presenter	Attends parts of meetings to present/co-present an item or provide advice as part of an item's discussion.	By invitation of the Chair or nominee.	No
Observer	Attends one or more meetings for the purposes of development and succession planning.	By invitation of the Chair or nominee.	No

5. Academic Governance Committees - Template Terms of Reference

To ensure a simplified and consistent approach to Terms of Reference, the following template shall be used with Terms of Reference to be stated in plain English.

Purpose: [high level statement of the group's reason for existing; how it links to the University Strategy]
To approve: 1. [Items that the group has authority to approve or can make decisions on. Linked to the Scheme of Delegation if appropriate. Linked to any relevant strategic goals, regulatory obligations e.g. OfS conditions of registration, or financial approvals.] 2. ...
To recommend to <i>[insert other group/committee name]</i> [usually the "parent"/higher committee but can be another group, with final approval power or financial responsibility, as per the Scheme]: 3. [Items that the group can discuss and give recommendations on to a parent/ higher/ different group. Items are within the group's wider general remit, but it doesn't have final approval authority] 4. E.g. Proposals on ...
To receive: 5. [Items within the group's wider remit and/or authority. Reports are provided for information and/ or assurance. Items may have been delegated by the group to a sub-group and the sub-group is reporting and providing assurance on this.] 6. Report on XXX e.g. KPIs 7. Progress updates on...
To report: 8. To provide regular reports to <i>[insert other group's name, usually the "parent" body but can be another group perhaps with financial responsibility]</i>, including progress updates on all XXX related strategies/policies.

Change Log

10/08/2026 - minor amendments to wording to reflect current practice. Removed wording struck through, additions in bold in text below.

4 Academic Governance Membership Typology

Appointed/Elected/ 'Representative member of' or Co opted Member	A committee member may be Ex officio (from the office). They may be appointed by a person (e.g. the VC), a Faculty or Department, or a group (e.g. Academic Governance Senate Nominations Panel, Assembly to Senate, Faculty Board to Senate). In some cases, there is a call for nominations and election process. There may be combinations of ex officio, nominated or elected members on a single committee. The method of appointment and number of committee members is defined in each committee's terms of reference.
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