

Queen's University Belfast

Senate: Role and Responsibilities of a Senate Member

1. Charter: Establishment of Senate

The University's Charter states, inter alia, that there shall be a Senate which shall:

- (i) be the Executive Governing Body of the University;
- (ii) be responsible for the management and administration of the revenue and property of the University;
- (iii) subject to the powers of the Academic Council, have general control over the conduct of the affairs of the University;
- (iv) have such other powers and duties as may be conferred on it by the Statutes.

2. Statutes: Powers of Senate

The Powers of Senate are set out in Statutes. Where necessary, Regulations give effect to these powers.

3. Responsibilities of Senate

3.1 Senate must adhere to the highest standards of corporate governance. This means that members must demonstrate integrity and objectivity in transacting business and must follow a policy of openness and transparency wherever possible, in the dissemination of decisions. In addition to adopting the Code of Governance published by the Committee of University Chairs, Senate has also endorsed the Seven Principles of Public Life as enunciated by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (Nolan Report).

3.2 Senate, in general, is responsible for ensuring that it conducts its affairs in accordance with the Charter and Statutes. As a result it has the following specific responsibilities along with others derived from the Financial Memorandum with the Department for the Economy and from its Charity registration:

- (i) the determination of the educational character and mission of the University and for oversight of its activities;
- (ii) the effective and efficient use of resources, the solvency of the University and for safeguarding its assets;
- (iii) approving annual estimates of income and expenditure;
- (iv) the appointment, assignment, grading, appraisal, suspension, dismissal and determination of the pay and conditions of service of the President and Vice-Chancellor, and the holders of such other senior posts as the Senate may determine;
- (v) setting a framework for the pay and conditions of all other staff;
- (vi) ensuring the existence and integrity of financial control systems and directing the arrangements for internal and external audit;
- (vii) ensuring that the Students' Union operates in a fair and democratic manner and is accountable for its finances;
- (viii) ensuring freedom of speech, within the law, on University premises for staff and students and for visitors;
- (ix) the health and safety of employees, students and others while on the University's premises;
- (x) ensuring that the property and income of the University are applied only in support of purposes which are charitable in law;
- (xi) monitoring institutional performance against planned strategic and operational targets set out in the Strategic Plan, Academic Plans and other relevant University documents.

- (xii) monitoring its own effectiveness in governing the University.

4. Performance of Duties by Members of Senate

4.1 Due Care and Diligence

- Members should perform their duties with due care and diligence and should bring to bear their relevant skills and expertise.
- Members should use their best endeavours to ensure that Senate fulfils its responsibilities and that decisions are taken only in accordance with the powers of Senate identified in Statutes.

4.2 Collective Responsibility

- Senate reaches its decisions generally by consensus or, on occasions, by a majority vote of those present at quorate meetings. The open expression of views at meetings is encouraged but members should accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by Senate. This collective responsibility holds whether or not a member of Senate is present when a decision is taken and regardless of whether or not they supported a recommendation originally.
- Members should recognise that the Vice-Chancellor has specific responsibilities as "Accounting Officer" under the terms of the Financial Memorandum between the University and the Department for the Economy.

4.3 Probity

Members of Senate owe a fiduciary duty to the University, which means that they are required to act in good faith at all times in their dealings with and on behalf of Senate. In particular, they must ensure that:

- the University's assets and resources are applied only for proper purposes
- they exercise their powers in the interests of the University, not for any ulterior purpose or to benefit themselves or anyone else at the University's expense
- at meetings of Senate and its committees, they are not bound in their speaking and voting by mandates given to them by other bodies or persons
- they avoid any conflict between their personal interests and their duties to the University, or any conflict which might interfere with the exercise of their independent judgement
- they declare all pecuniary, business, family or other personal interests in the Register of Interests and ensure that the Register entry is modified as soon as any changes to their circumstances occur
- they declare any pecuniary, business, family, or other interest in a contract, proposed contract or other matter to be determined by Senate or a University committee as soon as possible after commencement of the meeting; and that they take no part in the consideration or discussion of the contract or other matter, nor vote on it, and that they withdraw from the meeting for consideration of it
- they do not receive gifts, hospitality or benefits of any kind from a third party which might be seen to compromise their personal judgement or integrity; and that they report any offer of such gifts, hospitality or benefits to the Secretary to Senate .

5. Essential Criteria

- At least 5 years' Board / Senior level experience, within the last 10 years, in the management and governance of a public, private or community/voluntary sector organisation; and

- 5 years' relevant specialist experience, within the last 10 years, in, for example, audit and compliance; risk management; finance/accounting; digital transformation; human resources; law; public relations; public policy; information technology; management; science and engineering; health; communications; and civic responsibilities.

The Committee also reserves the right to apply the following desirable criteria, where appropriate:

- Knowledge/experience of issues facing the Higher Education sector.
- Evidence of strategic vision/policy formulation.
- Good interpersonal/communication skills.

6. Time Commitment

This is estimated to average 1.5 full time equivalent days per month, including both daytime and evening engagements.

7. Reimbursement of Expenses

This position does not attract remuneration, but expenses incurred, in respect of any activities carried out on behalf of the University, will be reimbursed.

8. Method of Appointment

By Senate, on the recommendation of a Special Committee established for this purpose and overseen by the Governance and Nominations Committee.

9. Declaration of Interests

All persons appointed as Pro-Chancellors shall be required, before any appointment is made, to disclose any information that may be of relevance to their position as Pro-Chancellor, if appointed. This shall include any interest, financial or otherwise, that is likely or could be perceived as likely to interfere with the individual independent judgement. Such information shall be made known to the Special Committee at the time of the appointment.

10. Good Standing

All applicants must be able to demonstrate that they are in good standing at the time of their appointment and for the duration of their term on Senate.

11. Induction

All appointees receive an induction which is tailored to their individual requirements to ensure that the individual appointed has a good understanding of the University's strategy, values, aims and objectives.

12. Reserve List

A reserve list for lay members of Senate will be created through this recruitment process, in order to potentially fill any vacancies on Senate on its sub-committees for a period of 12 months.