



VERSION 1.4

# Standing Orders: Academic Council and Committees

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## 1. Introduction

As set out in Section 27 of the Universities Act 1997, subject to the financial constraints determined by the Governing Authority and review by that authority, the Academic Council (AC) controls the academic affairs of the University including the curriculum of, and instruction and education provided by the University.

### Statutory Requirements

There are two legal instruments, namely the Universities Act, 1997 and UCD Statute 32 (Governing Statute) which define the role and function of Academic Council.

Section 27 (2) of the Universities Act establishes the requirement for an Academic Council and specifies the following functions.

- a) to design and develop programmes of study,
- b) to establish structures to implement those programmes,
- c) to make recommendations on programmes for the development of research,
- d) to make recommendations relating to the selection, admission, retention and exclusion of students generally,
- e) to propose the form and contents of statutes to be made relating to the academic affairs of the university, including the conduct of examinations, the determination of examination results, the procedures for appeals by students relating to the results of such examinations and the evaluation of academic progress,
- f) to make recommendations for the awarding of fellowships, scholarships, bursaries, prizes or other awards,
- g) to make general arrangements for tutorial or other academic counselling,
- h) to perform any other functions, not in conflict with this Act, which may be delegated to it by the governing authority, and
- i) to implement any statutes and regulations made by the governing authority relating to any of the matters referred to in this subsection.

Further, UCD Statute 32 (Chapter 6) provides additional details on membership, functions, operations and role of the Academic Council.

The following **Standing Orders** set out the rules by which the proceedings of the Academic Council, and its committees (where relevant) are operated. These rules remain in effect until such time as they are repealed or amended by the Academic Council and relevant sections are approved by UCD's Governing Authority.

UCD Statute 32 (Chapter 6, Section 3) confers the power of delegation to the Academic Council as follows:

“The Academic Council may delegate any function ascribed to it by this Statute to the Registrar, an officer, or to a committee established in accordance with the Act and Academic Council or its relevant committees shall review the function, operation and decisions of such committees or officers on a regular basis.”

UCD Statute 32 (Chapter 19, section 8) defines an officer of the university as Faculty of the University.

## **2. Membership of Academic Council and its committees**

### **2.1 Composition**

- 2.1.1 Composition of the Academic Council and its committees will be detailed in each individual committee Terms of Reference and comply with University policies but specifically those which relate to equality, diversity and inclusion, where possible. Academic Council membership is subject to review and approval by the Governing Authority while sub-committee membership is subject to review and approval by the Academic Council.
- 2.1.2 The composition of the Academic Council must be compliant with the provisions of the Universities Act 1997 and any statutes approved by the Governing Authority.
- 2.1.3 The membership of each committee will be published.

### **2.2 Term of Office**

- 2.2.1 The Term of Office of nominated and elected members of Academic Council is three years. Members may not serve more than two consecutive terms. Ex Officio membership continues for the period of the ex-officio role held by the individual.
- 2.2.2 The Term of Office of the committees of Academic Council is three years. Members may not serve more than two consecutive terms as members. Chairs may not serve more than two consecutive terms as Chair. Ex Officio membership continues for the period of the ex-officio role held by the individual.
- 2.2.3 The Term of Office of members of Academic Council and of its committees should align, where possible.

### **2.3 Members**

Members of the Academic Council and its committees will be appointed in accordance with their Terms of Reference.

- 2.3.1 Procedures for appointing non ex-officio members to the Academic Council must be approved by both the Academic Council and the Governing Authority.
- 2.3.2 Members of the Academic Council and its committees may not nominate others to attend meetings on their behalf.
- 2.3.3 The Academic Council or its committees may decide to co-opt a member of the faculty or staff, or a student of the University for a specified period, on the nomination of the Chair with the assent of the majority of those members present at a meeting.
- 2.3.4 Co-opted members are not given voting rights.
- 2.3.5 Co-opted members may not chair a meeting of the Academic Council or its committees.
- 2.3.6 Faculty, Administrative and Technical staff may attend a meeting of the Academic Council or of its committees in order to provide professional advice or to observe the meeting. Any such attendance should be approved in advance by the Chair.

### **2.4 Chair**

- 2.4.1 The President will be the Chair of the Academic Council.
- 2.4.2 Where the Chair is unable to chair a meeting of the Academic Council, The President reserves the right to appoint the Secretary to Chair the Academic Council in their absence,

however, if possible, a person other than the Secretary should be nominated to Chair the Council.

2.4.3 Chairs of AC committees will be members of Faculty and will be appointed by the Academic Council. Members may act in their capacity as Chair once nominated by the Secretary of the Council, pending approval by the Academic Council.

2.4.4 In so far as possible, Committees of Academic Council should appoint a Deputy Chair with a view to succession planning.

2.4.5 The Chair has a key role in the leadership and governance of the committee and the conduct of its business. The role of the Chair is separate and distinct from the role in which the Chair is employed by the University, or elsewhere.

The Chair's responsibilities include:

- Effectively managing the Agenda, ensuring that adequate time is available for discussion on agenda items, and particularly, strategic issues/items for Decision;
- Promote openness and debate among members and facilitate the contribution of all members;
- Ensuring that decisions are accurately captured for the purpose of minuting the meeting.

## 2.5 The Secretary

2.5.1 The Registrar will, in accordance with the Statutes of University College Dublin, act as Secretary to the Academic Council. Statute 32, Chapter 10, section 4(a) specifies that "the Registrar shall be responsible for the meetings of the Academic Council, shall prepare and issue the summons for its meetings, shall be responsible for its business, records and correspondence, shall act as secretary to the Academic Council and shall act as Chair when requested to do so by the President."

2.5.2 An administrative unit will be appointed to act as Secretary to an Academic Council committee.

## 2.6 Conduct of Members

2.6.1 All members of the Academic Council and its committees are expected to:

- be collegial and constructive in approach.
- participate fully in the work of the Academic Council or Committee.
- take collective responsibility and individual ownership for the issues under the Committee remit and for the discussion and resolution of relevant issues.
- be committed to communicating the work of the Committee to the wider University community.

## 2.7 Removal/Resignation

2.7.1 A member may be removed from the Academic Council or one of its committees for the following reasons:

- failure to attend three successive meetings. Permission to be absent from three or more successive meetings should be sought from the Chair of the Academic Council or the relevant committee.
- Failure to attend at least 50% of meetings in a given academic session. Permission to be absent from more than 50% of meetings in a given academic session should be sought from the Chair of the Academic Council or the relevant committee

- for breach of any University policy including (but not limited to) *UCD Dignity and Respect Policy* and *UCD Conflict of Interest Policy*.
  - for breach of any of the provisions of these standing orders.
- 2.7.2 Removal of a member of Academic Council or one of its committees is the responsibility of the Secretary to Academic Council and will only be enacted following consultation with the relevant member.
- 2.7.3 Ex-Officio members may only resign from Academic Council or one of its committees with the express written permission of the Chair of Academic Council, regardless of the committee from which they are resigning.
- 2.7.4 Where a vacancy for an ex-officio role arises through resignation or removal, the Secretary of the Academic Council may appoint another member of faculty to that role.
- 2.7.5 Where an ex-officio member ceases to hold the office from which their membership is derived, membership of the relevant Committee will be transferred to the incumbent.
- 2.7.6 Non-ex-officio members may resign from the Academic Council or one of its committees by providing a letter of resignation to the relevant Chair.
- 2.7.7 Where a vacancy arises for a non-ex-officio role through resignation or removal, it will be treated as a casual vacancy. A casual vacancy is when a seat becomes vacant during the term of office of a deliberative body.
- 2.7.8 Casual vacancies on Academic Council will be filled by recommendation from the Secretary and approval of the Academic Council. Casual vacancies on committees will be filled by appointment by the Secretary of Academic Council, in consultation with the Chair of the relevant committee.
- 2.7.9 In a case where a member was elected or appointed to Academic Council or one of its committees by virtue of satisfying certain criteria, and where that member ceases to fulfil those criteria, they may continue for the remainder of the term of the committee with the agreement of the Chair. For example, if a member is elected as a representative of the Heads of School but their term of office as Head of School expires during the term of the committee, they may continue for the remainder of the term regardless.
- 2.7.10 In the instance that there are unfilled seats following an election to the Academic Council, Colleges will conduct a local process to nominate and elect members to fill the vacant seats.

### **3. Conduct of Business**

#### **3.1 Scheduling of Meetings**

- 3.1.1 Ordinary Meetings of the Academic Council will be convened by the Secretary, on the instruction of the Chair, at least two times in each academic session. Normally, one such meeting will be held in each of the Autumn and Spring trimesters. Provisional dates for such meetings will be published by the Secretary at the beginning of each academic session, along with submission dates for receipt of papers/documentation.
- 3.1.2 Ordinary meetings of committees of the Academic Council will be convened by the Chair of the Committee in accordance with the requirements specified in the committee Terms of Reference. All committees are required to meet at least twice per academic session.
- 3.1.3 The Secretary will arrange to notify members of the Academic Council of the date, time and venue of each ordinary meeting of the Academic Council at least two weeks in advance of the meeting. Chairs of committees should ensure members are notified of the date, time and venue of committee meetings at least two weeks in advance of the meeting.

- 3.1.4 A Special meeting of the Academic Council may be called at any time by the Chair, with no less than seven days' notice to members.
- 3.1.5 A Special meeting of the Academic Council must be called by the Chair of the Academic Council upon a requisition addressed to the Chair by not less than one sixth of the members of the Academic Council, stating the object for which the meeting is to be called.
- 3.1.6 A Special meeting of a committee of the Academic Council may only be called in exceptional circumstances by the Chair of the committee with the agreement of the Secretary to Academic Council. In such instances, no less than seven days' notice of the Special Meeting must be given to members.
- 3.1.7 Meetings of the Academic Council and its committees must be organized in compliance with the *UCD Core Meetings Hours Policy* and the normal duration for these meetings will be not more than two hours. Meetings should not be scheduled during lunch hour, where possible. A motion to extend a meeting beyond this duration must be agreed by at least two thirds of the members present. If the motion is not passed, any remaining items will be deferred to the next meeting.
- 3.1.8 As far as practicable, committees should limit the number of meetings held outside defined teaching periods, including the field work period specified in the Spring trimester.

### 3.2 Electronic Consultations

- 3.2.1 When required, the Chair may request the Academic Council to conduct business electronically. Any decisions will normally be taken by exception. No quorum will apply.
- 3.2.2 When required, the Chair of a committee of the Academic Council may request that committee to conduct business electronically. A third of sitting members of the committee must respond positively for the motion to pass, with no dissenting views expressed / received. The expression of any dissenting views by one or more members will require the item to be discussed at the next scheduled meeting of the committee, or if necessary, a Special Meeting may be called to consider the item. Notice of the Electronic Consultation will be considered as notice for a Special meeting called in this instance.
- 3.2.3 The Academic Council and its committees will be notified at their next ordinary meeting of any decisions made by that committee by Electronic Consultation.
- 3.2.4 No period of notice shall apply for an Electronic Consultation. time

### 3.3 Conduct of Meetings

- 3.3.1 The Chair will open the meeting at the appointed time, or as soon as the meeting is quorate.
- 3.3.2 Members will be expected to treat sensitive information, commercial or otherwise, with due confidentiality. The submission sheet should be clearly marked 'commercially sensitive'.
- 3.3.3 Members will be required to comply with the Conflict of Interest Policy. Conflicts of interest should be declared in advance of the meeting, on receipt of the agenda, by notifying the Secretary; or at the beginning of the meeting by notifying the Chair. Conflicts of interest declared in advance will be shared with members and all conflicts of interest will be documented in the minute of the meeting. The Chair may determine that the member should leave the meeting during the relevant discussion to safeguard against any real or perceived conflict. That member will thereby take no part in the discussion, decision or action. Where a member has left the meeting due to a declared conflict of interest, this will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
- 3.3.4 'Other Business' will be used only to inform the meeting of agenda items which are proposed for the next following meeting or to convey briefly other items of information of a factual nature. Other business should not be used to introduce matters that require discussion

and/or decision. Other business should be conveyed to the Secretary at least 3 working days in advance of the meeting and will only be included on the express permission of the Chair.

3.3.5 The order of items for consideration may be changed on commencement of the meeting by the Chair with the approval of the Academic Council or its committees, and consideration of items on the agenda may be deferred on the agreement of the majority of those present. Alternatively, if the time allocated to the meeting expires, the provisions of 3.1.7 will apply.

3.3.6 Those 'in attendance' or observing the meeting must be clearly identified and must follow any procedures for that committee.

### 3.4 Quorum

3.4.1 No quorum will be required for an Ordinary Meeting of the Academic Council or for business conducted electronically.

3.4.2 The quorum for a Special Meeting of the Academic Council will be not less than one third of the members of the Council.

3.4.3 The quorum for meetings of the committees of Academic Council will be published in the relevant committees' approved terms of reference.

3.4.4 Attendance at meetings of the Academic Council and its committees will be recorded and published in the Annual Report of the Academic Council.

### 3.5 Agenda and Documentation

3.5.1 The deadline for submission of documents for the agenda of Academic Council will be four weeks before the meeting date, unless otherwise specified.

3.5.2 The agenda for each meeting of the Academic Council and its committees will be prepared by the Secretary under the direction of the Chair and will be communicated to each member of the Academic Council and its committees two weeks in advance of the meeting.

3.5.3 Documents, including Draft Minutes of the previous meeting, will be circulated with the agenda two weeks in advance of the Academic Council meeting.

3.5.4 The minimum period for circulation of documents for committees of the Academic Council is one week prior to the meeting.

3.5.5 The Secretary will include on the agenda for each meeting any item referred to the Academic Council by the Governing Authority or any College, via the College Principal on behalf of the College Executive.

3.5.6 The Secretary will also include on the agenda for each meeting any item requested by a minimum of twenty members of the Academic Council provided that, in the opinion of the Chair, such item relates to a function of the Academic Council, as set out in Statute 32.

3.5.7 The agenda for each meeting of the Academic Council and its committees will distinguish between items for Discussion/Decision, Formal Approval and for Noting by the Academic Council.

3.5.8 Members can request that an item be moved from Formal Approval or Noting to Discussion/Decision. They should indicate this to the Secretary not less than three days in advance of the meeting, the Chair will decide the item's agenda position. The Chair may refuse a request for an item to be moved for Discussion/Decision if requested at the meeting.

3.5.9 Specific detailed feedback on any agenda item may be provided in writing to the Secretary at least three days in advance of the meeting and is encouraged from members unable to attend the meeting.



### 3.6 Tabled Documents

This facility will be used only under exceptional circumstances and those circumstances will be clearly explained in writing on any such documentation thus tabled. Tabled documents should be supported by a brief presentation which may include a short summary of no longer than 2 pages. A document may be tabled at a meeting provided it meets the following criteria:

- it relates to one of the Agenda items for the meeting
- it has been submitted to the Secretary in advance of the meeting
- it is approved in principle by the Chair
- the members present agree to it being tabled
- copies of the document are available for the attendees.

A majority of committee members may decide to accept or defer Tabled documents if there is insufficient time for informed consideration.

### 3.7 Minutes & Summary Notes

- 3.7.1 The Chair will approve the draft minutes for circulation to the Academic Council or its committees.
- 3.7.2 Draft minutes will be circulated to all members (in accordance with 3.5: Agenda and Documentation).
- 3.7.3 At each meeting the minutes of the preceding meeting will be confirmed or confirmed as amended.
- 3.7.4 The minutes of meetings will record attendance, apologies and decisions made by the Committee. All resolutions will be recorded and, if the resolution was reached by way of vote, the result of the vote. A member's dissent will be recorded on request. The minutes will also, as far as is practicable, in respect of each agenda item, include a synopsis of the debate. Contributions to the debate will not normally be attributed but any member's contribution will be attributed if requested at the time of the discussion. Where applicable, resolutions of the committee will indicate what further action is envisaged, by whom it considers that this action should be taken and what form of report back the committee desires. This will be reflected in the minutes.
- 3.7.5 Minutes of the Academic Council meetings will be circulated to the Governing Authority.
- 3.7.6 Minutes of the Academic Council meetings will be published, following their approval at the next meeting of the Academic Council.
- 3.7.7 The committees of Academic Council, including Academic Council Executive Committee, should submit to the Academic Council all approved minutes of meetings held since the previous meeting of the Academic Council. The Executive Committee of the Council may not receive these minutes instead.
- 3.7.8 A summary note of the key points of each Academic Council meeting will be published within 3 weeks of the meeting with the approval of the Secretary. Committees of the Academic Council should publish summary notes of meetings within an appropriate time period. These summary notes will be identified as informal records of the meeting.

### 3.8 Decisions/Voting

- 3.8.1 Every issue at a meeting of the Academic Council and its committees will, as far as possible, be determined by consensus, but where in the opinion of the Chair consensus is not possible, the issue will be decided by a majority of the votes of members present and voting on the issue.

- 3.8.2 At meetings of the Academic Council and its committees, the Chair will have a casting as well as a deliberative vote. A member of the Academic Council and its committees nominated by the Chair to chair a meeting of Academic Council will have a deliberative, but will not have a casting, vote.
- 3.8.3 Voting will be conducted by a show of hands. If a result of a vote is inconclusive, or if one third of members request it, a ballot will be held.
- 3.8.4 Debate and discussion are encouraged.

#### **4. Committees of Academic Council and Delegated Authority**

- 4.1 The Academic Council will establish and approve the membership and terms of reference of an Executive Committee. The Executive Committee may be chaired by the Chair of Academic Council or their nominee. The President reserves the right to appoint the Secretary to Chair the Academic Council in their absence, however, if possible, a person other than the Secretary should be nominated to Chair the Executive Committee. The Secretary of the Academic Council will also be Secretary to the Executive Committee
- 4.2 The Academic Council may, from time to time, establish other committees in accordance with Statute 32, of University College Dublin and Section 29 of the Universities Act 1997. When establishing such a committee, the Academic Council will specify the membership, terms of reference and reporting arrangements of the committee.
- 4.3 The Academic Council may delegate to the Executive Committee or to any other committee established in accordance with Section 29 of the Universities Act 1997 and statute of University College Dublin any function ascribed to it by Statute 32 and the Universities Act 1997.
- 4.4 The Academic Council will maintain a Schedule of Delegated Authority which will be reviewed and noted at the first meeting of the Academic Council each year.
- 4.5 Both the Chair and Secretary of Academic Council will retain the right to attend a committee meeting, with voting rights, without being specified as members in the committee's terms of reference.
- 4.6 Amendments to Terms of Reference of committees of the Academic Council will be conducted in consultation with the Secretary and will be approved by Academic Council.
- 4.7 Committees may grant authority to a sub-committee of at least three people, convened by the Chair, to act on its behalf in order to expedite routine business in the period between scheduled meetings. This sub-committee may include the Chair, but it is not mandatory. Actions taken by this sub-committee must be reported to the next meeting of the committee, listing the reason for this action. The outcome should be included in the minute.
- 4.8 The Academic Council and its committees may establish working groups or sub-committees with the approval of the Academic Council. The Executive Committee may approve the establishment of working groups or sub-committees of the committees of Council. Members may be recruited from all staff and student cohorts. Subcommittees established in University policies are not subject to this approval.
- 4.9 A committee of the Academic Council can be disbanded by the Academic Council at any time.

## 5. Reporting and Communication

- 5.1 For planning purposes, the Academic Council should publish a high-level workplan at the last meeting of the preceding academic year for the next academic session, detailing, as far as possible, significant projects relating to academic affairs.
- 5.2 A register should be established of any working groups or sub-committees formed to conduct specific projects. Regular status updates must be provided from a working group or sub-committee to the relevant committee of Academic Council and onto the Academic Council.
- 5.3 The Academic Council will submit reports to the Governing Authority and where appropriate make recommendations.
- 5.4 Committees of Academic Council will provide an Annual Report to the Academic Council.

## 6. Effectiveness Review of Academic Council and Committees

- 6.1 Academic Council will conduct a self-assessment of its effectiveness and the effectiveness of its committees at least once per three-year term.
- 6.2 The Chair may request an external effectiveness review of the Academic Council and its committees if deemed necessary.
- 6.3 The Chair will be required to facilitate an external effectiveness review of the Academic Council and its committees if requested by two-thirds of the members of the Academic Council but only after the completion of the self-assessment exercise.

## 7. Standing Orders Revision and Approval

- 7.1 As and when the Academic Council deem it necessary, Standing Orders may be re-examined and revised.
- 7.2 Some provisions of these Standing Orders will be subject to approval by Governing Authority.

### Version History

<b>Version 1.0</b>	<b>Approved AC November 2019</b>
<b>Version 1.1</b>	<b>Approved ACEC 18 May 2020</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Minor amendments to reflect statute in relation to AC membership</li><li>• Wording clarification in 2.3.6</li><li>• Inclusion of notice period for Special Meetings of committees' of AC</li><li>• Inclusion that no notice period applies to Electronic Consultation</li><li>• Confirmation that subcommittees established by University policies do not require AC approval.</li></ul>
<b>Version 1.2</b>	<b>Approved ACEC 12 August 2020 (EC)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Wording adjustment to 2.2.2 permitting members to serve two terms <u>as members</u> and chairs to serve two terms <u>as Chair</u>. This will allow for succession planning/continuity of experience.</b></li></ul>
<b>Version 1.3</b>	<b>Approved by the Academic Council on 26 November 2021 and the Governing Authority on 16 December 2021</b>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addition of 2.7.10 “In the instance that there are unfilled seats following an election to the Academic Council, Colleges will conduct a local process to nominate and elect members to fill the vacant seats.”</li> <li>• Editorial amendment (not requiring approval) to include reference to Statute 29 in “Section 1. Introduction.”</li> </ul>
<b>Version 1.4</b>	<p><b>Approved by Academic Council on 23 October 2024</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor edits to all references to UCD Statutes</li> </ul>