

Committee Members Training Session

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Aim of session

“To introduce members to the purpose, structure and operation of Academic Board, its committees and sub-committees with a specific emphasis on representation, participation and preparation.”

University Consultation and the Deliberative Process

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Universities are:

- **Businesses**
 - but they are also collectives
- **They have two or three simple purposes**
 - but they have an incredibly diverse nature and a high level of devolved expertise

Universities:

- Deal with some universal timeless issues (L&T, R, E, KT, Civics etc)
 - but they need to be fast moving, agile and competitive
- They used to exist in a stable environment
 - but they don't any more

Universities:

- Need to set academic standards for their students
- but they also treat those students like customers/ consumers
- and this need will continue and intensify

We deduce:

- The tensions are what makes universities “interesting” places to work in and to manage
- They are present across the sector and they have been in place for years but are intensifying (especially over the last 15 years)
- How do these tensions manifest themselves?

‘Helpful’ caricatures?

The Academic’s view:

- *"Managers don't understand the challenges of doing the day job"*
- *"Have they any understanding of the impact of their actions?"*

The Manager's view:

- *“Academics have no interest in or idea of how to run a business”*
- *“Do they think it is the money pixie that puts the entry in their bank account at the end of each month?”*
- *“What are this lot doing most of the year?”*
- *“Why does Law always think it is so special?”*

The Service Provider's view:

- *"Managers don't give me the resources to do my job"*
- *"Academics moan all the time about the quality of what we do without having the first clue about our constraints"*
- *"We did not invent Government policy, we just have to implement it"*

The Student's view

- *"No-one listens"*
- *"Even when they do listen, nothing happens"*
- *"I am paying a lot of money for this experience – why don't they listen?"*

But things are not quite this bad

- This is of course a caricature of reality but has enough relevance to be of some value
- So how do we bridge gaps? How do we improve our mutual understanding? How do we get to understand a diverse and highly specialised organisation...

... by Talking: five + routes

- Informal
- Focus groups
- Planning process
- Formal – ‘managerial’
- Committee Structures

and

- Subscribing to a culture of ‘listening as well as hearing’ and ‘responding as well as acting’ (Dialogic Accountability)

Academic Board and its Committees

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Academic Governance

The AQDU is responsible for overseeing the operation of academic governance, including:

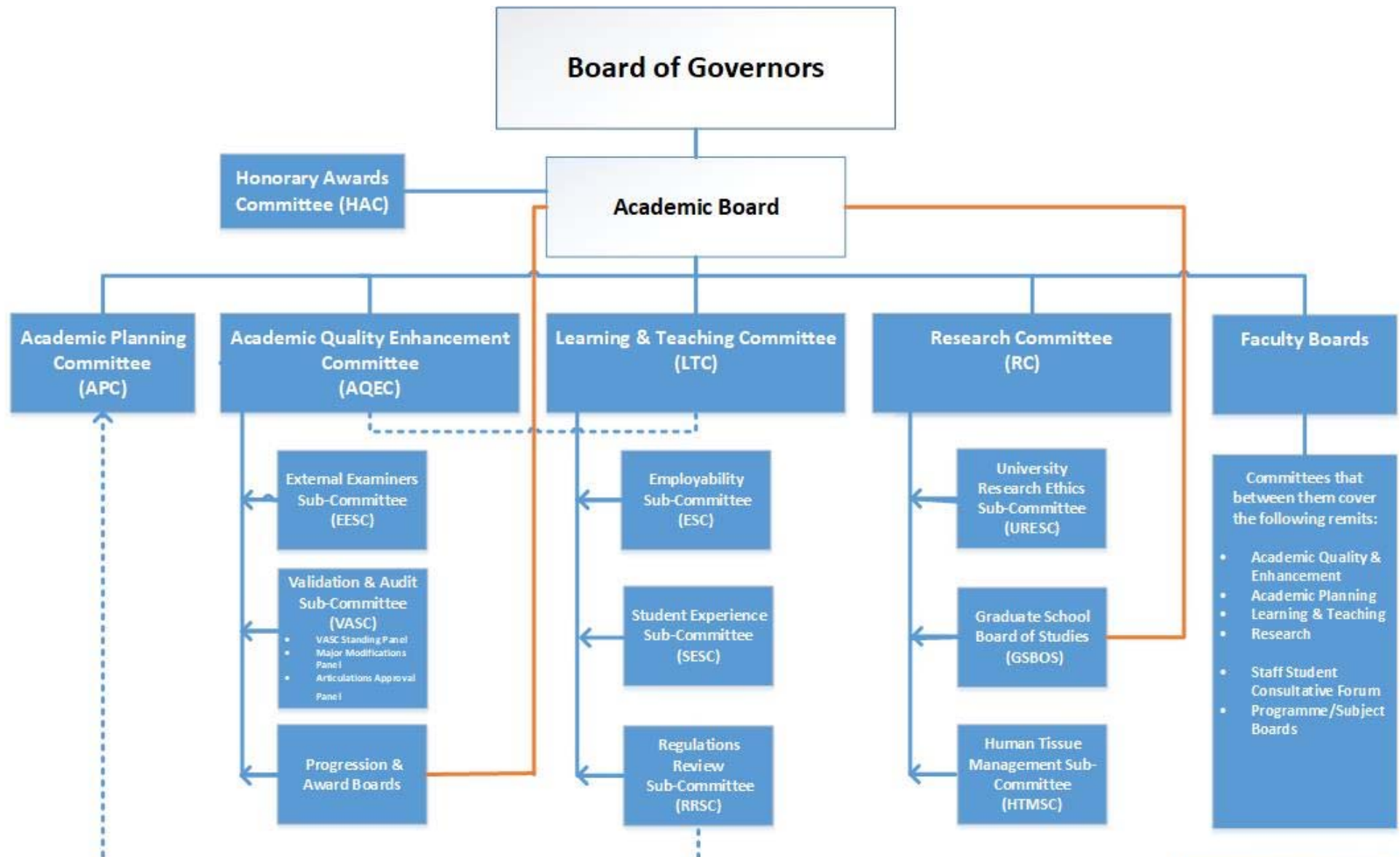
- Scheduling
- Committee effectiveness
- Elections and appointments of Members

Most of the committees in the Academic Board structure are serviced by the AQDU, however some are supported directly by the Research Office, Faculties or Academic Registry.

Committees

The purpose of Committees is to:

- Facilitate decisions and approvals
- Providing a clear audit trail of key documents and decisions
- Listening to viewpoints of colleagues across the University
- Contribute to the 'checks and balances' for the University



Key:

- = conferment of awards
- = direct relationship
- - - = indirect relationship

Academic Board

The most senior committee which all academic matters of the university feed into.

Reports to the Board of Governors and chaired by the Vice-Chancellor.

Reviews and approves institutional policies and responds to any national policies.

Oversees the academic development and governance of the institution.

The Board formally delegates some of its functions to constituted sub-committees in the structure.

Terms of Reference

- Each committee has a defined purpose and list of responsibilities delegated from Academic Board or determined by the University; these are detailed in Chapter 8 (Academic Governance) of the Quality Management Handbook
- They are reviewed annually and any amendments are subject to approval by Academic Board
- The current Terms of Reference for each Academic Board committee are available on the Academic Board WIKI

Committee Roles

There are several roles on each committee:

- **Chair:** Confirms the annual business plan and individual meeting agendas, manages the meeting and approves the minutes
- **Secretary:** Drafts the annual business plan and individual meeting agendas, books rooms and hospitality, advises on matters of regulation and protocol (e.g. quoracy and voting rights), takes notes at the meetings, drafts the minutes

Committee Roles

- **Appointed:** This is the largest proportion of membership and is individuals *appointed* through nomination by an area of the University, e.g. a Faculty or the Students' Union. Appointments are normally for a period of 3 years but this may change.
- **Elected:** These are individuals who are elected from a defined constituency e.g. academic staff of a Faculty. They are mainly *delegates* speaking individually as a typical member of their community rather than canvassing their constituents directly on every issue. Elections are held annually and run by the AQDU; positions are held for 3 years.

Committee Roles

- **Ex-officio:** These are individuals who are on the constitution 'by virtue of their office', for example, the Pro-Vice Chancellor (External Relations). These positions are permanent on the committee.
- **External Representatives:** Some committees (e.g. Academic Quality Enhancement Committee) have an external representative on their constitution, these are usually from a partner organisation or expert consultant.

Committee Roles

Student Representatives: Most committees have at least one student representative in their constitution, usually a Students' Union officer.

All committees may have other colleagues in attendance at meetings and this is upon arrangement with the Chair and Secretary.

All constituted members have equal status on Committees, including voting powers where required.

Expectations of Members

Broadly speaking, all members of institutional committees are expected to:

- Attend all meetings where possible. Alternates may be sent in most instances or apologies should be given
- Suggest items of business and engage with discussions at the meeting
- Read the documentation and prepare any questions or comments (bearing in mind their position on the committee e.g. as an elected representative of a particular constituency)
- Presenting any designated agenda items
- Maintaining strict confidentiality at closed committees or on items of closed business
- Inform the secretary of any changes to contact details (including office location)

Timeline

Each Committee operates on a similar approximate timeline for each meeting:

- 4 weeks before the meeting – agenda setting completed and circulated to members of the committee.
- 2 weeks before the meeting– deadline for submission of the papers detailed on the agenda; these must be accompanied with a committee coversheet (template provided), which serves as an executive summary.
- 1 week before the meeting – hard copy and electronic papers circulated to all committee members (done so securely to comply with GDPR).
- 2 weeks after the meeting – minutes and actions circulated to Members.

Meetings

- Usually on a Wednesday at 2-5pm (depends on the committee)
- All meetings follow a similar format and share the same templates
- Coversheets and agendas indicate what is required e.g. approval, discussion or noting (sections A, B and C).
- Items on the agenda are designated as **open** unless specified as **closed** on the coversheet; where closed, these items are not for further dissemination due to their sensitive contents

Organisation

- The Academic Board Committees calendar is set annually by the AQDU and approved at Academic Board in July.
- E-appointments are generally issues by the Committee Secretaries to all Committee members (the AQDU do these from a central committees mailbox)
- Committees are governed by Standing Orders which details the rules of operation, quorum and voting protocols. These are on the Academic Board WIKI
- An annual review of the committee structure and its operations are undertaken to ensure that they remain effective

Effective Committees (1)

- Committees only work if there is discussion
- Papers **do** need to be read, especially 'section A' papers
 - Discussion is generally the last opportunity for a University-level 'reality check'!
 - Highlight, marginal notes, title page notes, post-its, separate notes
- Discussion
 - Be prepared to contribute
 - Formality of working/ speaking through the Chair ('committee etiquette')
 - Do not be offended if cut off - chair has to *manage* the timings
 - Chair will generally summarise the conclusions
 - If you wish to ensure that the Secretary has captured your input, give him/her your notes afterwards

Effective Committees (2)

- Writing committee papers
 - Write for your audience
 - Not an academic essay – however, references and footnotes will root the discussion in reality
 - Main text is for key points; appendices and footnotes are for detail
 - Draw out recommendations and conclusions
 - these will be the starting point for the subsequent discussion

Brevity is good!

Any questions?

Thank you for attending.

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