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Academic Council 2024-2028

DRAFT STANDING ORDERS

Version 1.2

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Standing Orders: Academic Council 2024-2028

Contents

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.

1.1 Statutory Requirements

There are two legal instruments, namely the Universities Act, 1997 and University of Galway Statute CCCLVI 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 exclusionof students generally,
e) to propose the form and contents of statutes tobe 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, University of Galway Statute CCCLXXXI provides additional details on membership of the Academic Council.

1.2 Delegation of Authority

Section 29(3) of the 1997 Universities Act allows Academic Council to establish committees to assist in the performance of its functions. Section 27(2)(h) of the Act requires the Academic Council to perform any functions which may be delegated by the Governing Authority, so long as they do not conflict with the specifications of the Act. For example, functions of the Governing Authority that may be delegated to the Chief Officer, could not instead be delegated to Academic Council.

1.3 Schedules of Reserved Powers and Delegated Decision-Making Authority

For clarity and transparency, a Schedule of Reserved Powers and Delegated Decision-Making Authority outlining decisions that can only be taken by Academic Council and articulating the specific delegations to Sub-Committees of Academic Council is also circulated to members of the Academic Council and published on the University website.

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 University of Galway's Governing Authority.

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 must 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 members elected shall consist of a minimum of 40% male and 40% female members to be drawn, via election, from the range of academic grades. Where it is not practicable to achieve a 40:40 male-female balance due to the gender profile of Ex Officio members at any given time, the said balance shall otherwise be achieved flexibly via individual College electoral membership and/or trans-College electoral membership.

2.1.4 Academic Council should, where possible, ensure the appropriate mix of skills, knowledge and experience amongst its members and make provisions to ensure Academic Council is diverse, in both membership profile and perspective.

2.1.5 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 four years. In line with best practice in Board membership, elected members are eligible for re-election to serve a maximum of two terms in total, subject to the exceptional circumstance of a short-term [1]casual vacancy. Ex Officio membership continues for the period of the ex-officio role held by the individual.

2.2.2 Student members of the Academic Council shall hold office for a period not exceeding one year but may be re-appointed for further period(s) if re-elected as relevant officers of the Students' Union.

2.2.3 The Term of Office of the committees of Academic Council is normally co-terminous with the term of office of Academic Council. Ex Officio membership continues for the period of the ex-officio role held by the individual.

2.3 Members

2.3.1 Members of the Academic Council and its committees will be appointed in accordance with

[1] Casual vacancies served by a member for a period of less than one year shall not be counted for that member, whilst casual vacancies served by a member of longer than one year shall count as a full term of office for that member. A break of one full term of Academic Council is required before a member who has served consecutive terms is eligible for re-election.

their Terms of Reference.

2.3.2 Procedures for appointing non ex-officio members to the Academic Council must be approved by both the Academic Council and the Governing Authority.

2.3.3 Members of the Academic Council and its committees may not nominate others to attend meetings on their behalf.

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, they will nominate a member of the Academic Council to chair the meeting.

2.4.3 Chairs of committees will be appointed by the Academic Council. Members may act in their capacity as Chair once nominated by the Chair 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 fordecision;
- Promote openness and debate among members and facilitate the contribution of all members;
- Reach decisions by achieving consensus of the members where possible;
- Ensuring that decisions are accurately captured for the purpose of minuting the meeting.

2.5 The Secretary

2.5.1 The Secretary for Governance and Academic Affairs will act as Secretary to the Academic Council. The Secretary shall be responsible for the meetings of the Academic Council, shall prepare and issue the notice for its meetings, and shall be responsible for its business, records and correspondence.

2.5.2 An administrative unit will be nominated 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 and its Committees
- 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 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 in the position.

2.7.2 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.

2.7.3 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.

2.7.4 In the event that an existing member's status changes over the course of the term (through promotion, resignation, retirement), the casual vacancy will be filled by the next highest ranked candidate, provided grade and gender quotas have been met.

2.7.5 In circumstances where no eligible candidates remain, the relevant College Office will conduct a local election 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, in October, December, February, April and June. 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 Secretary of the Committee in accordance with the requirements specified in the committee Terms of Reference.

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 a committee of the Academic Council may only be called in exceptional circumstances by the Chair of the committee in consultation with the Secretary to Academic Council. In such instances, no less than seven days' notice of the Special Meeting must be given to members.

3.1.5 Meetings of the Academic Council and its committees must be organised in compliance with the University of Galway Core Meetings Hours Policy and the normal duration for these meetings will be not more than two hours.

3.2 Conduct of Meetings

3.2.1 The Chair will open the meeting at the appointed time, or as soon as the meeting is quorate. ‘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.

3.2.2 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.

3.2.3 Those ‘in attendance’ or observing the meeting must be clearly identified and must follow any procedures for that committee.

3.3 Conflicts of Interest

3.3.1 Members will be required to comply with the Conflict of Interest Policy.

(i) A member shall be considered to have a real conflict of interest when s/he holds a personal interest, whether direct or indirect, of which s/he is aware and which in the opinion of a reasonably informed and well-advised person is sufficient to put into question the independence, impartiality, and objectiveness that the said member is obliged to exercise in the performance of his/her duties.

(ii) A member shall be considered to have a perceived conflict of interest when s/he appears to have, in the opinion of a reasonably informed and well-advised person, a personal interest, whether direct or indirect, that is sufficient to put into question the independence, impartiality, and objectiveness that the said member is obliged to exercise in the performance of his/her duties.

(iii) Where a conflict of interest arises, a member shall make a full disclosure in advance of a meeting, on receipt of the agenda, by notifying the Secretary; or at the beginning of the meeting by notifying the Chair.

(iv) Conflicts of interest declared in advance will be shared with members and all conflicts of interest will be documented in the minutes of the meeting.

(v) 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.

(vi) Where a member has left the meeting due to a declared conflict of interest, this will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting

3.4 Confidentiality

3.4.1 The University is committed to providing access to general information relating to its activities in a way that is open and enhances its accountability. However, in the course of their duties, members will have access, in written form and in the course of deliberations, to sensitive information such as personal information, information received in confidence by the University, and commercially sensitive information. Members are required to respect the confidentiality of such information, and shall:

(i) ensure that appropriate care is taken to guarantee the security of sensitive Academic Council and other documents, whether in paper or electronic form;

(ii) respect the confidentiality of information received in the performance of their duties, as well as the confidentiality of the deliberations of the Academic Council;

(iii) ensure that confidential records are subject to appropriate access procedures;

(iv) observe any restrictions agreed by the Academic Council on the use or dissemination of information (subject to Freedom of Information Act or Data Protection Act requirements); and

(v) respect the privacy of individuals.

3.5 Quorum

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

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

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

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

3.6 Agenda and Documentation

3.6.1 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 normally communicated to each member of the Academic Council and its committees 10 days in advance of the meeting.

3.6.2 A draft Agenda will normally be sent to members 3 weeks prior to the meeting, with members given 5 days to add items of business. At this point, members can request that an item be moved from the Formal Approval or Noting section to the Discussion/Decision section of the Agenda.

3.6.3 Documents, including Draft Minutes of the previous meeting, will normally be circulated with the agenda 10 days in advance of the Academic Council meeting.

3.6.4 Save in exception circumstances where the Chair agrees that an item is particularly time-sensitive, the minimum period for circulation of documents for committees of the Academic Council is one week prior to the meeting.

3.6.5 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 Executive Dean, on behalf of the College Executive.

3.6.6 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.

3.7 Tabled Documents

3.7.1 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.

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

3.8 Minutes & Summary Notes

3.8.1 The Chair will approve the draft minutes for circulation to the Academic Council or its committees.

3.8.2 Draft minutes will be circulated to all members (in accordance with 3.4: Agenda and Documentation).

3.8.3 At each meeting the minutes of the preceding meeting will be confirmed or confirmed as amended.

3.8.4 The minutes of meetings will record decisions made by the Committee. All resolutions will be recorded. 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.

3.8.5 Minutes of the Academic Council meetings will be circulated to the Governing Authority.

3.8.6 Minutes of the Academic Council meetings will be published, following their approval at the next meeting of the Academic Council.

3.8.7 The committees of Council, including Academic Council Standing Committee, should submit to the Academic Council all approved minutes of meetings held since the previous meeting of the Academic Council.

3.9 Decisions/Voting

3.9.1 Debate and discussion on matters are encouraged. 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.

3.9.2 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.

4. Committees of Academic Council and Delegated Authority

4.1 The Academic Council will establish and approve the membership and terms of reference of a Standing Committee. The Deputy President and Registrar shall Chair the Academic Council Standing Committee. The Secretary of the Academic Council will also be Secretary to the Academic Council Standing Committee

4.2 The Academic Council may, from time to time, establish other committees in accordance with 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 Academic Council Standing Committee or to any other committee established in accordance with Section 29 of the Universities Act 1997 any function ascribed to it by 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 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.

4.6 The Academic Council and its committees may establish working groups or sub-committees with the approval of the Academic Council. The Academic Council Standing 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. Sub-committees established in University policies are not subject to this approval.

4.7 A committee of the Academic Council can be disbanded by the Academic Council at any time.

5. Reporting and Communication

5.1 The Academic Council will submit reports to the Governing Authority and where appropriate make recommendations.

6. Standing Orders Revision and Approval

6.1 Standing Orders will be reviewed once every four years at the beginning of a new Council term

6.2 Some provisions of these Standing Orders will be subject to approval by Governing Authority.

Version History

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