

GO BEYOND BOUNDARIES

Senate Induction & Senate's Role in Governance

2024-2025

Outline of Session

- Introduction
- University Governance – the “eco-system”
- What is Senate?
- Responsibilities of Senate Members
- How does Senate work?
- Role of Senate Assessors to Court

Elected Senate Members

- Key role representing the view of academics
- Opportunity to make a constructive contribution to academic governance
- Senate needs to make decisions based on a variety of views

University Governance – the “eco-system”

What is a University?

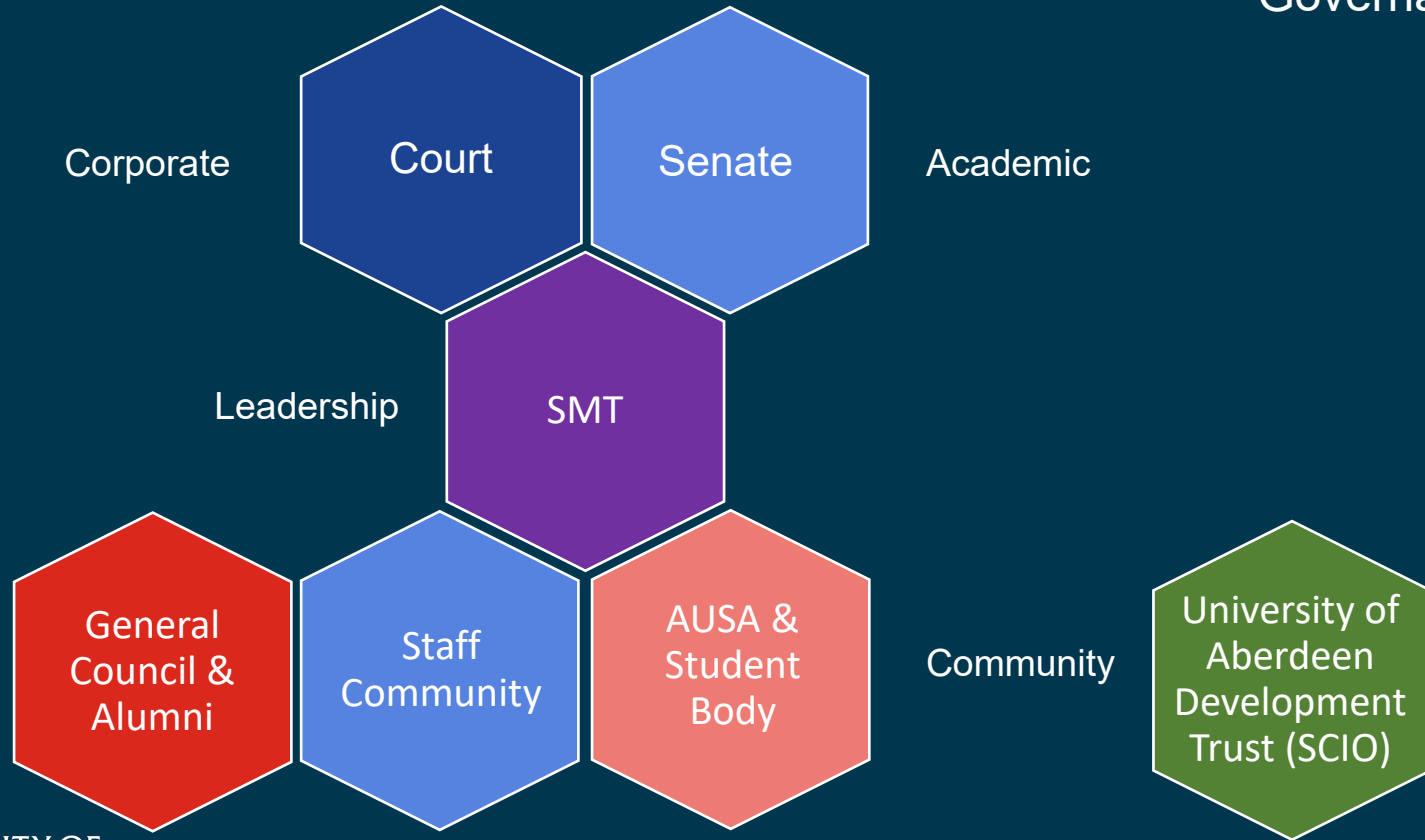
- Autonomous and Independent
- Registered Charity
- A place of Education & Research
- A Community

ONS Classification: “NPISH”

Not for Profit Institutions Serving Households

BUT

- A public authority delivering public duties and receiving public funds for some of what we do
- Governance in primary legislation from 1800s to 2016
- Refined through Ordinances (needs Privy Council approval) & Resolutions (approved by Court). Both need internal consultation with Senate and General Council
- Court is the body corporate – the legal embodiment of the University and responsible for all elements of its operation



Regulators – Scotland & UK



The Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba



QAA
Scotland



UK Research and Innovation



Department for
Energy Security
& Net Zero



Department for
Business & Trade



Department for
Science, Innovation
& Technology



HM Revenue
& Customs



Home Office

External HE Governance Frameworks

Higher Education
Audit Committees
Code of Practice

May 2020

CUC
Committee of University Chairs

the scottish code of
GOOD HE GOVERNANCE

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What is Senate?

Senate

- Established in statute – both Kings College and Marischal College had their own Senates
- The role of Senate is articulated in the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016 as:

“responsible for the overall planning, co-ordination, development and supervision of the academic work (this having been explicitly extended to include research in 1966) of the institution”

Senate (cont)

- “academic work” includes:
 - approving teaching and learning (& assessment) policies and practices,
 - regulations that govern students’ programmes of study, their progress and their awards, and admission requirements to the University’s various degrees (known as “Going Rates”); and
 - ensuring that appropriate and effective arrangements are in place for student support (academic and non-academic).

Degrees are conferred (by the Chancellor or Vice) on the authority of Senate.

Court must consult with Senate and General Council on any changes to Ordinances and Resolutions and “take account of representations”.

Structure of Senate

- Composition (137) is in three parts:
 - ex-officio (Principal, SVP, VPs, Deans, 4 from QAC, Heads of School – max 39),
 - elected academics (80), and
 - student representation (19)
- All senators have equal status and right to speak/vote
- Principal is the convenor of Senate
- Court requires assurance on education and research from Senate through the Principal
- The “development work” of Senate is delegated to its committees

Governance Support

- University Secretary is Secretary to Senate, advising Convenor of Senate (and Senate) on governance matters
- Governance team supports:
 - Court and its Committees,
 - Senate,
 - Senate Business Committee,
 - Honorary Degree Committee
- Organises meetings, supports flow of papers, acts as data owner, ensures effective election processes, and undertakes governance projects

Responsibilities of Senate members

Academic elected Senators

- Serve four-year terms and elected by “school constituency”
- Eligible for two consecutive terms
(if a Senate Assessor – term extended until 4-year term on Court ends)
- Must be a gap of 4 years if want to serve a third/fourth term
- To support continuity – appointments are offset by 2 years
(25%-50% turnover depending on how many serve a second term)
- Will also run elections at other times (will do in November) to try to fill the gaps created by churn/unfilled at main elections
- Primary responsibility is to contribute effectively to Senate oversight of education and research, engaging with their constituency to ensure debate reflects breadth of opinion across colleagues

Distribution of elected seats by School

Senate Assessor Constituencies

(a) University of Aberdeen Business School	10
(b) School of Divinity, History, Philosophy and Art History	5
(c) School of Education	5
(d) School of Language, Literature, Music & Visual Culture	5
(e) School of Law	6
(f) School of Social Science	4
(g) School of Biological Sciences	4
(h) School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition	21
(i) School of Psychology	4
(j) School of Engineering	5
(k) School of Geosciences	4
(l) School of Natural & Computing Sciences	7

Student Senators

- AUSA President
 - Education Officer
 - The School Conveners (14)
 - Three postgraduate representatives
- In addition, the Communities Officer & Vice-Chair of AUSA Education Committee are in attendance at the Senate.

The primary role of all student members of the Senate is to represent student opinion on matters that are discussed or debated at the Senate

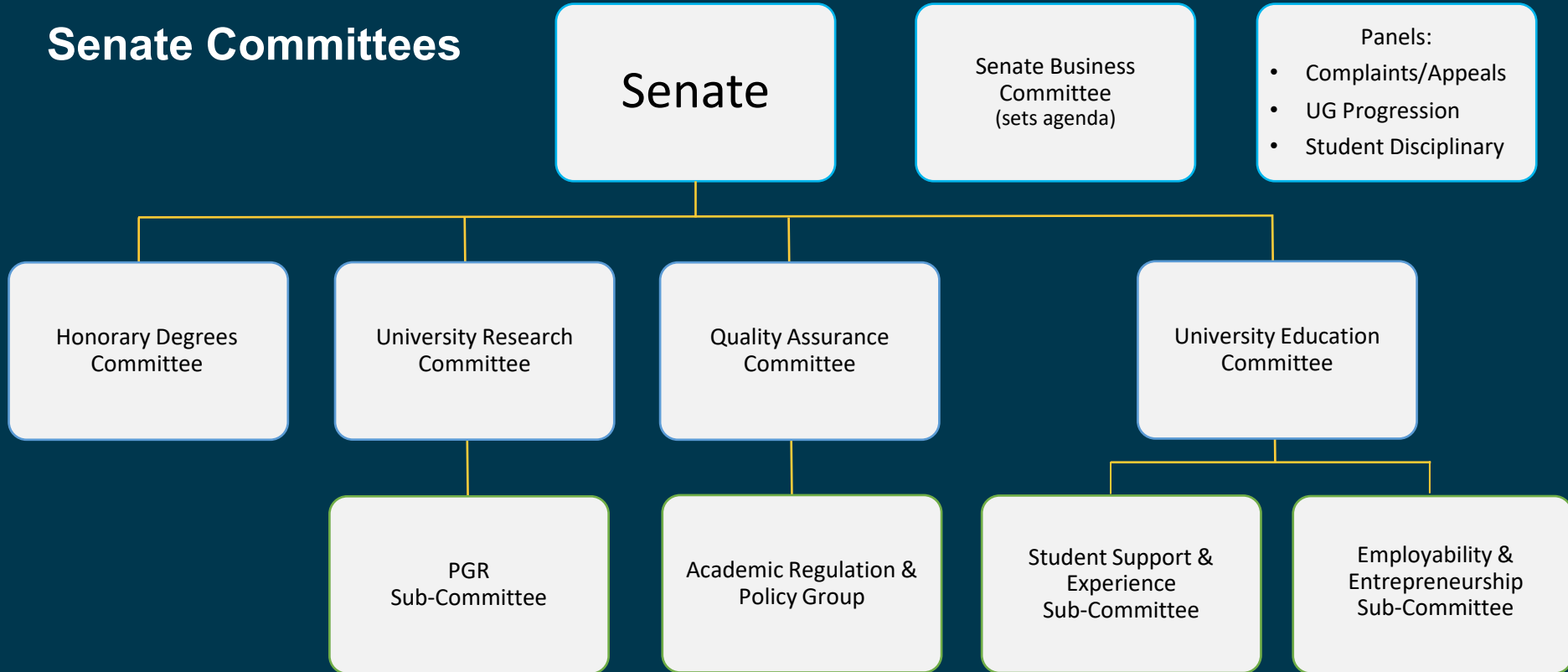
Students' Association decides how its representatives on Senate should iterate with the student body in general and the various student constituencies in regard to Senate business.

Ex-officio Senators

- Principal (Convenor)
- Senior Vice-Principal & the (4) Vice-Principals
- Deans – Global Recruitment, Sustainability, Regional Engagement, Research & Education (14)
- All Heads of School (12)
- Members of Quality Assurance Committee (4)
- Librarian

Primary responsibility is to contribute their understanding of strategic, academic management, academic quality and school perspectives to the issue under debate.

Senate Committees



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How does Senate work?

The Basics

- 5 meetings per year (at least one a year at Foresterhill)
- Rules outlined in Standing Orders
- Most business flows from Senate Committees but Senators (if seconded) can propose items for the agenda
- Papers to Senate Business Committee four weeks in advance
- Papers issued to Senate 2 weeks in advance
- Quorum = 1/3 of all members of Senate

Types of Business

- Items for Academic Input
 - Items for approval will first come for academic input
 - Work from the Directorates and Executive Committees may come for academic input
 - Draft Ordinances and Resolutions will come for input. Court will consider those inputs
- Items for Approval
 - Will have previously been to Senate for Academic Input
- Routine Business (consent agenda)
- Items for Approval may have an active vote or be approved by “consensus”

Making a Contribution

- Propose an item (seconded) to the Senate Business Committee
- Submit a question for written answer to the Principal (by Monday 5pm before Senate)
- Use the opportunity for informal Q&A in response to the Principal's update to Senate
- Engage with your constituency to understand views on the Senate papers
- Make a contribution to a debate on an item – all contributions are verbal (unless having technical problems in hybrid)
- Vote when we get to a Decision point
- Volunteer to serve as an Assessor on Senate Business Committee or Honorary Degrees Committee

Role of Senate Assessors on Court

Senate Assessors

- One of 4 members of Court who are elected by Senate
- Two constituencies – one male and one female Senate Assessor from each
- Become a “charity trustee” and have to act in the best interest of the University (and its beneficiaries) as a whole
- So – DO bring perspective from Senate to Court
- But - DO NOT represent Senate to Court

Senate Assessors (cont)



Neil Vargesson
MMSN



Diane Skåtun
MMSN



Joachim Schaper
DHPA



Illa Xypolia
Social Science

Where Senate Assessors fit into Court

- Court composition refreshed by Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act, 2016
- The only member of Court who also holds an Executive role is the Principal
- The Senior Governor and the Rector have specific roles – one to lead Court and the other to ensure that Court hears from all voices...

Where Senate Assessors fit into Court (cont)

- 25 members in total appointed / elected / nominated to ensure a range of perspectives from across the community:

Rector elected by students

Principal

4 elected by Senators

2 elected by staff

Senior Governor elected by staff & students

2 elected by students

12 independent members (4 have to be alumni)

2 nominated by TUs

- As charity trustees, all have same core duties and collective responsibility to act in the best interest of the University and its beneficiaries
- The 7 statutory duties on Directors also apply

Role of [Senate Assessor] Members of Court

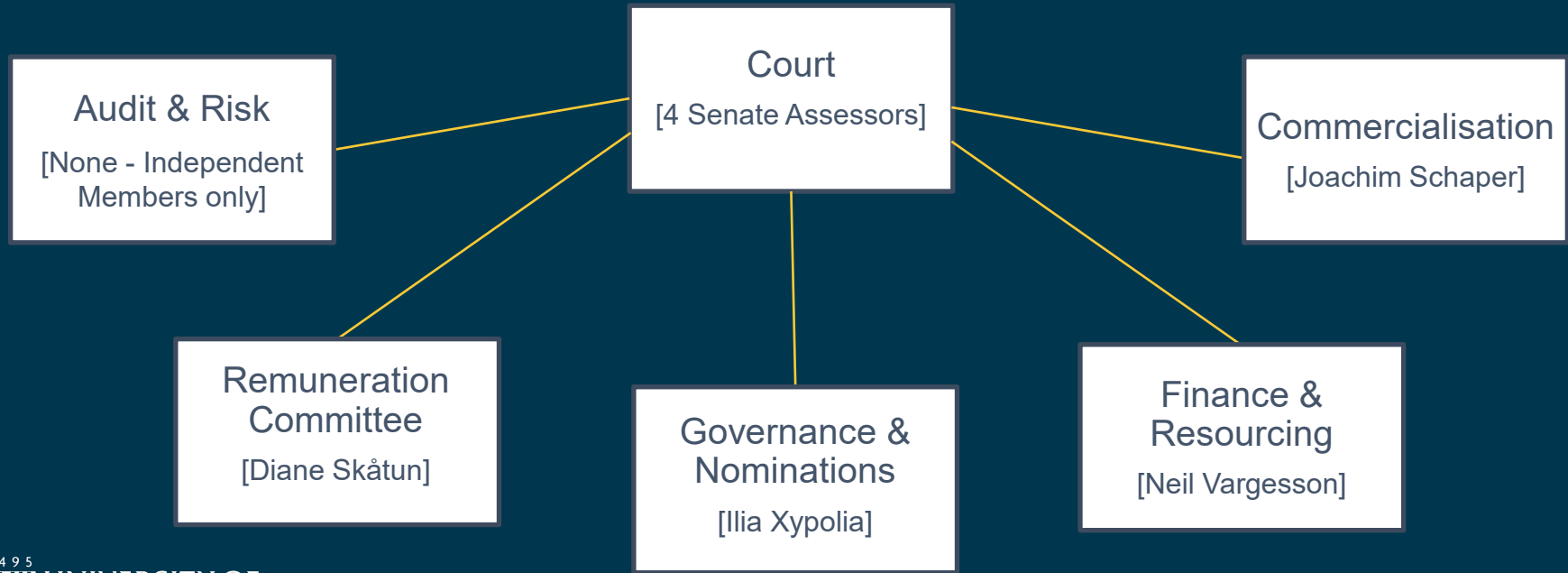
Each governor is responsible, collectively with all members of Court, for the strategic leadership and governance of the University. They do not represent the Senate on Court. Specifically they must:

- **Further** values of higher education and the **mission of the University of Aberdeen**;
- **Ensure** efficient and effective use of the resources of the University, safeguarding assets and financial viability and that proper financial controls/fraud prevention in place;
- **Oversee** the academic, corporate, financial, estate and human resource functions delegated to the authority of the Principal as chief executive and Convenor of Senate;...

Role of [Senate Assessor] Members of Court (cont)

- **Establish** constructive and supportive but challenging working relationships with the University executive whilst recognising the proper separation between governance and executive management;
- **Act** fairly and impartially **in the interests of the University as a whole** using independent judgement and maintaining confidentiality as appropriate

Senate Assessors also serve on Court Committees



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Thank you