

Final Internal Audit Report on Senate Effectiveness

Summary

The attached paper provides an overview of the Final Internal Audit Report on Senate Effectiveness. The report was considered by AGC on 2nd October 2018.

Senate is asked to receive the report.

One action required.

Recommended Action

Senate is asked to **receive** the report.

Publication: Open

FINAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2017/18

Corporate Governance – Academic Governance – Senate Effectiveness review

Opinion and Recommendation Classification

A **Substantial** level of assurance can be given to the adequacy and effectiveness of systems of internal control over the Academic Governance Committee at the time of our audit and limited to the scope. Substantial assurance is defined as, “While there is a basically a sound system, there are weaknesses which put some of the system objectives at risk, and/or there is evidence that the level of non-compliance with some of the controls may put some of the system objectives at risk”.

As a result of our audit, the following recommendations have been raised.

Recommendation Type	Number
Priority One	-
Priority Two	1
Priority Three	1

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 City's Charter provides that there shall be a Senate of City which shall have delegated authority from the Council for the enhancement of academic quality and assurance of academic standards. For the avoidance of doubt this includes authority over student appeals and discipline.
- 1.2 Senate has the composition, powers and functions conferred on it through this Ordinance. This includes the power to make Regulations in accordance with its delegated authority.
- 1.3 Senate has the following primary responsibilities:
- a) To regulate the academic work of the institution in both education and research.
 - b) To approve related policies and procedures.
 - c) To be responsible for assuring academic quality and standards.
 - d) To assure itself that student satisfaction is appropriately monitored.
 - e) To ensure that processes are in place to ensure that learning is continually enhanced.
 - f) To regulate the approval of all educational programmes and collaborative provision.
 - g) To regulate the integrity of academic qualifications.
 - h) To regulate validation and other academic partnerships with other third parties.
 - i) To approve the academic calendar.
 - j) To approve regulations for student discipline.
 - k) To provide assurance to Council, through an annual report, about the enhancement of academic quality and the assurance of academic standards at City.
- 1.4 Senate has a responsibility to ensure that it first spends adequate time on its primary responsibilities.
- 1.5 The work of Senate will have the predominant role in enabling Council to provide its annual assurance about academic quality and standards, although Council will also draw on other sources of data in giving that assurance.
- 1.6 The Composition of Senate includes the following Ex-Officio members:
- a) President (Chair)
 - b) Chairs of the following Standing Committees of Senate:
 - Boards of Studies
 - Academic Governance Committee
 - Educational Quality Committee
 - Research Ethics Committee
 - Collaborative Provision Committee
 - c) Vice President (Research & Enterprise)
 - d) Dean of City Graduate School
 - e) Director of Student and Academic Services
- 1.7 Senate also includes Non-Ex-Officio members who are elected members of Category A staff (Staff on full time and fractional academic staff contracts but excluding research assistants and research fellows), the numbers should be equal to the number of ex-officio staff posts and to include at least two from each of the academic discipline Board of Studies areas (i.e. excluding the Board of Studies in Learning Development). All are elected for a period of three years, renewable. Category A staff comprise the entire electorate for this election.

- 1.8 A maximum of five students including the three sabbaticals and up to two other students nominated by the Trustee Board, ensuring that the student members include at least one undergraduate, one postgraduate taught and one postgraduate research student.
- 1.9 Other officials will attend Senate to present papers or take part in discussion when invited to do so. The Director of Library Services will always be invited to attend.
- 1.10 Senate is required to meet at least three times, a year. The quorum for Senate shall be fifty per cent of the members. The chairs of committees of Council, including Senate, have the authority to act on behalf of their Committee in matters of urgency, if this power has been delegated to them by their committee. The exercise of this power will be reported to the following meeting of the committee.

AUDIT SCOPE AND APPROACH

- 2.1 The audit approach was to develop an assessment of risks and management controls operating within each area of the scope.
- 2.2 The audit included the following areas:
- Delegated powers;
 - Composition;
 - Officers;
 - Agendas; and
 - Frequency and quoracy of meetings.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3.1 Key controls Identified

- **Senate Terms of Reference defined and agreed:** The Terms of Reference and Governance Regulations were presented to Senate on the 11th October 2017 and noted.
- **Senate Calendar:** The Senate is asked to note the Senate calendar at each of its meetings. The calendar includes the reports expected on an annual basis. In addition, the calendar has been updated to reflect the on-going streamlining of student monitoring reports and Council's responsibilities for reporting on academic quality and standards matters to the OfS (previously HEFCE).
- **Terms of Reference defines the Ex-Officio composition:** All of the following were members of Senate during 2017/18 - President (Chair), Deputy President, Chairs of the Boards of Studies (6), Chair of Academic Governance Committee, Chair of Research Ethics Committee, Chair of Collaborative Provision Committee, VP Research and Enterprise, Dean of the City Graduate School and the Director of Student and Academic Services (14 in total).
- **Non Ex-Officio Staff:** Elected members of academic staff to equal the number of ex-officio staff posts and to include at least two from each Board of Studies area. There are currently 15 non ex-officio staff, with at least two from each Board of Studies area.
- **Quoracy:** All meetings for 2017/18 have been quorate, with the exception of the meeting on the 7th March 2018. The meeting of Senate took place with 14 elected Senators and 4 student Senators absent as they had indicated they would not attend due to industrial action that was underway. It was agreed that this meeting would be regarded as an informal meeting and not as an inquorate meeting of Senate.
- **Papers and Agendas set out clear actions:** Meeting agendas for October 2017, December 2017, March 2018 and May 2018 clearly identified the items of discussion with a star, this was also confirmed at the start of each meetings as Senate agreed the highlighted items as the main items of business for discussion at the meeting.

Additionally, the agendas of the meetings provided clear instructions as to what Senate members were expected to do with the paper. For example, 'to **consider** the report and **approve** the Chairs of Assessment Boards' and 'to **receive** the report', 'to **note** the report', 'to **discuss** the paper'.

3.2 Key Issues Identified

- **Numbers of Non Ex-officio members:** Due to the re-configuration of the Ordinances, there were too many Non Ex-officio members (15) for the 16th May 2018 meeting, as there were only 14 Ex-officio members.

This was corrected by the 11th July meeting following the Senate Elections and therefore no recommendation has been raised as part of this review.

- **Range of issues and items discussed:** Due to the very broad nature of the Senate Terms of Reference, which includes (a) To regulate the academic work of the institution in both education and research, this results in a large number of items that can be brought to Senate for discussion.
- **Identifying where previous discussions have occurred:** Papers arrive at Senate for them to either note, discuss, consider or approve without Senators being clear on the pathway the paper has taken to Senate.

4 Detailed Recommendations

4.1	Inclusion of Items outside of Senate Terms of Reference		
Rationale			
<p>Senate has the following primary responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To regulate the academic work of the institution in both education and research. b) To approve related policies and procedures. c) To be responsible for assuring academic quality and standards. d) To assure itself that student satisfaction is appropriately monitored. e) To ensure that processes are in place to ensure that learning is continually enhanced. f) To regulate the approval of all educational programmes and collaborative provision. g) To regulate the integrity of academic qualifications. h) To regulate validation and other academic partnerships with other third parties. i) To approve the academic calendar. j) To approve regulations for student discipline. k) To provide assurance to Council, through an annual report, about the enhancement of academic quality and the assurance of academic standards at City. <p>During the review of minutes and agendas for the 2017/18 meetings that took place in October 2017, December 2017, March 2018 and May 2018; there were items that could not be clearly mapped to Senate's Primary responsibilities as per the terms of reference. These items included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unistats, admissions and enrolment data. • Office for Students (OfS) Consultation. • External Examiner appointments (this is for BOS to recommend to the President for approval with no reporting to Senate as per the Scheme of Delegation) • Student Union Standing Report. • Societies Report. <p>Additionally, Senate did not receive any papers relating to new educational programmes or collaborative provision for 2018/19.</p> <p>There is the increased risk that Senate spends its limited time on matters that do not actually enable it to deliver against its terms of reference.</p>			
Recommendation		Priority	
As part of Senate agenda planning, items being proposed for the agenda should be mapped to the Senate TOR to help ensure that papers that support the effectiveness of Senate are tabled.		Two	
Management Response			
Agreed. If mapping of proposed papers to the Senate TOR suggests that they fall outwith the Senate TOR, informal meetings of Senators will be arranged, as appropriate to discuss such papers. This approach has been adopted in recent years to enable Senators to consider fully the Equality & Diversity Agenda at City.			
Target Date	<i>December 2018</i>	Responsibility	<i>College Secretary</i>

4.2	Route to Senate of Papers		
Rationale			
<p>Senate has delegated authority from the Council in the Charter for the enhancement of academic quality and assurance of academic standards. Senate's role is vital in ensuring that the University's academic reputation is maintained and that the University continuously seeks to improve the quality of its education and research by reviewing best practice and innovating.</p> <p>Senators have a responsibility to ensure that adequate and sufficient discuss has occurred when agreeing policies and decisions resulting from papers being submitted.</p> <p>During the audit, through discussions it was identified that papers arrive for Senators to either note, discuss, consider or approve without Senators being clear on the pathway the paper has taken to Senate.</p> <p>In some instances, papers received by Senate have has considerable prior discussion at other executive committees or sub-committees of Senate but in some cases the paper is only being discussed at Senate for the first time.</p> <p>There is the increased risk that items are discussed in greater detail that necessary as discussion has already taken place at a sub-committee of Senate or at a committee with significant Senator presence. Due to the heavy nature of Senate agendas, items may not receive sufficient air time if items are discussed when not necessary.</p>			
Recommendation		Priority	
<p>To enable Senators to determine the appropriate level of discussion the cover sheets of papers should include the pathway the paper has taken to reach Senate e.g. Received and discussed/approved/considered by Academic Governance Committee/Research Ethics Committee/Educational Quality Committee.</p>		Three	
Management Response			
<p>Agreed. The Governance Team will in future supply details to Senate of previous consideration of papers by the Academic Governance Committee; and will seek the inclusion in cover sheets of information about previous discussions of issues at the Senate Research Ethics Committee and Educational Quality Committee from their Secretariats.</p>			
Target Date	<i>December 2018</i>	Responsibility	<i>College Secretary</i>

Assurance Definitions and Priority Levels

In order to assist management in using our reports:

a) We categorise our **opinions** according to our assessment of the controls in place and the level of compliance with these controls.

Full Assurance	There is a sound system of control designed to achieve the system objectives and the controls are being consistently applied.
Substantial Assurance	While there is a basically sound system, there are weaknesses which put some of the system objectives at risk, and/or there is evidence that the level of non-compliance with some of the controls may put some of the system objectives at risk.
Limited Assurance	Weaknesses in the system of controls are such as to put the system objectives at risk, and/or the level of non-compliance puts the system objectives at risk.
No Assurance	Control is generally weak, leaving the system open to significant error or abuse, and/or significant non-compliance with basic controls leaves the system open to error or abuse.

b) We categorise our **recommendations** according to their level of priority.

Priority 1	Critical business risk not being adequately addressed; weaknesses in key business control; substantial non-conformance with regulations and accepted standards.
Priority 2	Important business issues to be addressed; improvement area; inadequate risk identification or reduction; non-conformance with regulations.
Priority 3	Minor non-conformances with the business management system; other business issues to be addressed, good working practices.