

Studies Committee

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Establishment

- a) The Studies Committee is a standing sub-committee of the University Committee for Quality and Standards.
- b) The University Committee for Quality and Standards is responsible on behalf of the Senate for all aspects of academic quality assurance: progressing or engaging with institutional policy development; monitoring and review; oversight of the Quality Assurance Framework.
- c) With the approval of the Senate, the University Committee for Quality and Standards has established the Studies Committee as a standing sub-committee to undertake on its behalf consideration and approval of the academic conditions associated with the establishing, modifying, or withdrawing of undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses, programmes and disciplines.

2. Reporting

- a) After each meeting the Studies Committee will report to the University Committee for Quality and Standards. Decisions reached by the Studies Committee may be scrutinised by the Senate.

3. Purpose

- a) The purpose of the Studies Committee is to be responsible for (as delegated by the Senate and the University Committee for Quality and Standards) considering and approving the academic conditions associated with establishing, modifying, or withdrawing of undergraduate and postgraduate taught credit bearing courses, programmes and disciplines (as guided by the University's Guidelines on Approval of Disciplines, Programmes and Courses). The Studies Committee has a fundamental role in assuring the academic standards of the University's undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes of study.
- b) Academic matters are reserved for the Senate and resourcing matters reserved for the University Executive. The Studies Committee's role is limited to ensure that Schools have signed off proposals confirming that matters in relation to resources have been fully considered and University procedures followed.

4. Remit

With the approval of the Senate, the University Committee for Quality and Standards delegates authority to the Studies Committee to:

- a) approve the academic content, delivery and administrative arrangements for new and modified programmes and courses (as guided by the University's Guidelines on Approval of Disciplines, Programmes and Courses);
- b) maintain the University's academic standards, support a co-ordinated approach to quality assurance and enhancement, and advise the Senate (through reports submitted to the University Committee for Quality and Standards) on matters pertaining to the establishing, modifying, or withdrawing of courses, programmes and disciplines;
- c) recommend to the Senate (through reports submitted to the University Committee for Quality and Standards) modifications to the University's Ordinances and Regulations relating to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught programmes and courses of study.

5. Composition

Ex-officio members

Chair
Vice-Chair

Chair to University Committee for Quality and Standards

HWU Staff members¹

Members Appointed by the Senate

Six members of the Senate appointed by the Senate (of which at least one would normally be an Academic Dean of the University)

Representatives of Academic Unit

Three representatives from:

Energy, Geoscience, Infrastructure and Society (EGIS)

Engineering and Physical Sciences (EPS)

Mathematical and Computer Sciences (MACS)

Social Sciences (SoSS)

Two representatives from:

Global College (GC)²

School representatives should be able to represent all taught provision from their respective schools.

¹To avoid conflict of interest staff members of USC should not include SSC Chair.

² Global College membership will be reviewed as the school grows in size.

External Member

Appointed by the Senate from within the Scottish Higher Education

Student Representation

A Postgraduate Student Officer

An Undergraduate Student Officer

Two representatives, selected from any one of the five campuses.

In attendance

Colleagues from Schools and Professional Services with detailed knowledge of proposals may be invited, either on a regular basis, or from time to time to present proposals to the Studies Committee

6. Chair and Vice-Chair

- a) The Chair of the Studies Committee is nominated by the Chair of the University Committee for Quality and Standards (UCQS) and agreed by the UCQS. The Chair will be appointed from the existing membership of the Senate.
- b) The Vice-Chair of the Studies Committee, is nominated by the Chair of the UCQS and agreed by the UCQS.
- c) In the absence of both the Chair and the Vice-Chair from any given meeting, those members present shall appoint one of their number as Chair for that particular meeting.

7. Equality and Diversity in Membership

- a) The Studies Committee exercises its responsibility, as far as possible, to promote diversity of representation within its membership. The Studies Committee will also act, in carrying out the business of the Studies Committee, to promote equality of opportunity for all.

8. Quorum and Voting

- a) The quorum necessary to transact business is **five** members, at least two of whom shall be School representatives and at least two of whom must be members of the Senate. In accordance with Statute Five, paragraph 4(b), the quorum of any Committee of the Senate exercising delegated powers shall include at least two members of the Senate.
- b) Members who are participating in a meeting by means of audio-visual conferencing or other means enabling them to speak with and be heard by all members present at the meeting simultaneously shall be deemed to be present at the meeting and to count towards the quorum.
- c) Normal practice is that wherever possible decisions shall be reached through consensus.
- d) All members of the Studies Committee are entitled to vote in any vote of the Studies Committee except when the Studies Committee is required to vote on the exercising of delegated powers of the Senate, those persons present who are not Senators shall be invited to abstain from voting.
- e) The Chair shall rule on instances where a vote is required, and whether any matter under consideration pertains to the exercising of delegated powers of the Senate, or whether a matter is solely under the purview of the University Executive.
- f) A person invited to be 'in attendance' at one or more meetings of the Studies Committee is not entitled to vote.
- g) The Chair has a deliberative vote and a casting vote.

9. Attendance at meetings

- a) The Studies Committee may co-opt members as appropriate for a specified period of time, and report such co-options to the Senate via the University Committee for Quality and Standards at the earliest opportunity.
- b) In addition to the members, other colleagues may at the discretion of the Chair be invited to attend meetings on an ad-hoc basis for particular agenda items, and to contribute to discussions at the discretion of the Chair.
- c) The Studies Committee maintains a record of attendance at each of its meetings and reports this information in accordance with the Attendance Policy.

10. Forward Planning

- a) The Studies Committee maintains a list of Standing Agenda Items and an annual schedule of activities.
- b) The Studies Committee sets dates for its ordinary meetings two years in advance.
- c) As part of its annual year-end self-assessment, the Studies Committee reviews its performance in fulfilling its Remit, and considers possible modifications to its Terms of Reference. This also gives opportunity to review the Composition (including the gender balance of its membership, and the opportunity to receive contributions from the University's different campuses), and to submit recommendations as appropriate to the Senate via the University Committee for Quality and Standards.

11. Principles of Operation

In fulfilling its terms of reference, the Studies Committee shall follow the principles as agreed by the Senate to enhance academic governance seeking:

- a) closer alignment between the decision-making structure and the University's strategic objectives, to ensure that the decision making structures are fit for the delivery of the strategy;
- b) a more efficient approach to the decision making process, leading to clearer lines of reporting and accountability, a reduction in time taken to reach business-critical decisions, and high quality outcomes;
- c) main committees should focus on matters of strategy and policy, with operational matters being dealt with by the relevant colleagues in consultation with ad hoc working groups as required;
- d) minimisation of business considered by numerous different groups and with appropriate accountability for decisions taken;
- e) an assumption that decisions will be reached by consensus wherever possible;
- f) an assumption that each Committee will address business internationally;
- g) appropriate delineation between governance and management;
- h) the papers coming forward to committees should contain clear, evidence-based proposals for consideration;
- i) greater use should be made of IT facilities to reduce the amount of paper being circulated, with members of committees and others being able to access committee papers on a local intranet with appropriate access authorisation; and
- j) effective communication of decisions to all relevant parties throughout the University.

12. Frequency of meetings

- a) The Studies Committee normally has seven ordinary meetings each Academic Year.
- b) The Chair of the Studies Committee may choose to hold periodic development days consistent with the operational function of the Studies Committee.
- c) Additional meetings (including meetings held in conjunction with other bodies) may be required – with the approval by the Chair – for more detailed consideration of particular items.
- d) Changes to arrangements, such as cancellation, rescheduling or additional meetings will be notified to members by the Clerk as soon as possible, and normally within not less than five working days of the scheduled meeting date.

13. Lifespan and Effectiveness of the Studies Committee

This is an established sub-committee of the University Committee for Quality and Standards its lifespan is ongoing.

14. Actions that may be taken by the Studies Committee

The Studies Committee may:

- Approve
- Note
- Receive
- Consider
- Endorse
- Recommend
- Reject
- Ratify

15. Minutes

- a) Minutes of each meeting are distributed to members within two weeks of the meeting. The Chair approves the content of minutes before release.
- b) The minutes are presented to the next ordinary meeting of the Senate and the University Committee for Quality and Standards, with any matters for consideration and/or approval highlighted in a cover paper.
- c) The Studies Committee's agenda and minutes shall be made available on request.
- d) Agendas, minutes and papers are held electronically by the Clerk to the Studies Committee.
- e) The Studies Committee has traditional/formal minutes in accordance with internal University guidance on: style; and requirements regarding Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation.
- f) The agendas, papers and minutes for all meetings should be copied to the Head of Heritage and Information Governance for archiving purposes.

16. Resources

Clerk – Mrs Katrina Wallace, Quality Assurance Assistant Manager, Academic Quality, Registry and Academic Support Directorate

Meetings - Normally seven meetings per session