CODE OF PRACTICE FOR ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE

Approved by Senate 1 June 2022

1   Introduction

1.1   Recommendation 25 of the 2021 Governance Effectiveness Review (GER) proposed that codes of practice for academic governance be developed to help achieve strong governance of subcommittees of Senate whose establishment was proposed by GER recommendation 24.

1.2   The code proposed in this paper aims to enhance governance of Senate's two Academic Quality and Standards Committees and builds upon the Academic Governance Protocol between the Board of Governors and Senate which was approved earlier in 2022. Its content and structure have been informed by equivalent codes or schemes of academic governance in the sector.

1.3   The code is designed to serve as a framework which summarises the key elements of the structure, processes and operation of academic governance at the University. It signposts to, rather than duplicates, existing detailed documentation such as the Governing Instruments, terms of reference for Senate committees, and academic assurance review processes.

1.4   The code should be regarded as a living document. It is envisaged that it will be hosted online beneath the Senate webpage. This will allow for regular updating of content, and signposting via hyperlinks to key documents or other pages on StaffNet.

1.5   With the exception of a small number of proposals regarding the operation of governance bodies (section 6 below), the proposed code collates and summarises existing structures, process and practices.

1.6   The code does not cover academic management and processes. These are the responsibility of the academic leadership of the University (President and Vice-Chancellor, Deputy-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, portfolio Vice-Presidents, and Faculty Deans), and through delegation to relevant Faculty Leadership Teams, and Heads of School. This activity is supported by Professional Services units, and in particular from the Directorate for the Student Experience (especially the Division of Student and Academic Services) and the Directorate for Research and Business Engagement.

2   Academic Governance - definition

The University of Manchester defines academic governance as the framework of structures, processes, and functions that collectively provide leadership to, and oversight of, the University's academic activities at an institutional level. These academic activities include teaching, learning, student support and co-curricular activities, and research (including postgraduate researcher training and development).

This framework provides assurance that the University complies with external academic regulatory requirements whilst also maintaining and enhancing quality. For education this encompasses consistent quality of access to education, delivery, awards and student outcomes across the University. For research this encompasses assuring standards of

research quality and, where relevant, noting parallel University assurance activities for compliance with regulatory frameworks.

3 Academic Governance Structures

3.1 Board of Governors
The Board of Governors is the University's governing body and carries the ultimate responsibility for the University's overall strategic direction.

3.2 Senate
Senate is responsible to the Board for monitoring and enhancing standards in teaching and in research. It acts as the University's principal academic authority. In accordance with the Office for Students regulatory framework and public interest governance principles, the Board of Governors receives assurance from Senate that arrangements for institutional academic governance are effective.

3.3 Senate Committees
Senate has established Academic Quality and Standards Committees for:
    a) Teaching, Learning and Students
    b) Research

These committees are responsible for assuring Senate regarding the maintenance of academic quality and standards in these two portfolio areas.

3.4 Audit and Risk Committee
The Audit and Risk Committee (of the Board) is responsible for expressing opinions and giving assurances to the Board relating to its review of the effectiveness of the University's arrangements for risk management, control, and governance, including academic risk and governance.

3.5 Faculty Committees
Faculty Committees are advisory bodies to the relevant Faculty Dean and wider Faculty Leadership Team, and an opportunity for School Boards to raise issues with the Faculty leadership or onwards to Senate. Faculty Committees may express opinions directly to Senate or to the Board of Governors.

3.6 School Boards
School Boards ensure academic staff have a voice in the governance of their areas within the University. Boards are able to discuss and express opinions on any matter impinging on the work of the School, and report this to the Head of School, the Dean of Faculty, Faculty Committee, and to Senate and/or the Board through the Registrar and Secretary.

4 Academic Governance Processes

    a) Teaching, Learning, and Students (TL&S)

The University's Academic Quality Framework sets out the processes by which academic quality and standards with regards to teaching, learning and students are managed and have been developed to promote good practice to achieve and continuously improve the quality of teaching, and ensure compliance with a range of statutory and regulatory requirements.

b) Research

The University's Research policies, procedures and guidance set out the requirements for good practice to achieve and continuously improve research quality and compliance.

c) Provision of assurance to the Board of Governors

March 2022 Senate approved, and recommended to the Board, the Board-Senate Academic Governance Protocol, which sets out what is meant by academic assurance from the Board's perspective and the various means of achieving that assurance. Senate also approved the Academic Assurance cycle for Teaching, Learning and Students.

An equivalent assurance cycle for Research is in development and will be presented to a future Senate meeting.

5   Operation

5.1   Senate
Senate will meet on at least four occasions during each academic year and will also hold a joint meeting with the Board of Governors. Additional meetings of Senate will be scheduled when required.

Standard business meetings of Senate will receive portfolio reports from the Vice-Presidents for Teaching, Learning and Students, and Research. These reports will update Senate on key matters regarding the portfolio area, and have a particular focus on academic quality and standards.

The Vice-Presidents' portfolio reports will also include reports from the Senate Academic Quality and Standards Committees. These reports may, when necessary, include proposals for approval by Senate, and will also report matters approved under delegation by the said committee.

A report of each Senate meeting will be included on the agenda of the following Board of Governors meeting. Such reports are a key element of providing assurance to the Board on the functioning of Senate, and the discharge of its responsibilities for matters of academic governance.

5.2   Senate Academic Quality and Standards Committees
Each Senate Academic Quality and Standards Committee will align its meetings with those of Senate, and submit a report to each meeting (which will be included in the relevant Vice-President's portfolio report to Senate).

Under their terms of reference, the two Senate Academic Quality and Standards Committees have responsibility for:
i.   scrutinising policy and supporting information related to assurance of quality and standards in their portfolio area, in order to provide Senate with assurance, and thereby enable Senate to endorse such assurance onwards to the Board of Governors;
ii.   reviewing relevant annual monitoring and evaluation reports in the portfolio area, and advising or making recommendations to Senate regarding the revision of policies and processes;

iii.   exercise delegated authority on behalf of Senate for:
- the approval of revisions to existing General Regulations of the University relating to the portfolio area;
- the approval of revisions to existing policies in the portfolio area for which Senate is the approval body

5.3   Faculty Committees

Faculty Committees should align their meetings with those of Senate, and provide a forum for consideration and discussion of:

i.   relevant strategic issues and developments (including learning and teaching, research and social responsibility) and in particular their implications for the work and activities of the Faculty;

ii.   information relating to the overall performance of the Faculty and its constituent Schools;

iii.   Faculty planning and resourcing issues;

iv.   relevant cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary issues;

v.   matters relating to the overall student experience within the Faculty;

vi.   matters raised through School Boards (notwithstanding the right of School Boards to declare an opinion to the Senate and/or the Board through the RSCOO).

5.4   School Boards

School Boards should align their meetings with those of Faculty Committees and Senate. Boards may discuss and declare an opinion on matters relating to or impinging on the work of the School, and report this to the Head of School, the Dean of Faculty, Faculty Committee, and to Senate and/or the Board through the Registrar and Secretary.

School Boards may also consider and advise the Head of School on:

i.   the research profile and activities of the School;

ii.   the content and operation of the programmes of study assigned in whole or in part to the School including the regulatory framework pertaining thereto;

iii.   the recruitment, selection, admission, welfare, academic progress and conduct of the students with whom it is concerned;

iv.   the allocation and management of the physical and financial resources assigned to the School;

v.   the allocation of duties and arrangements for leave of absence, amongst the academic and research staff assigned to the School;

vi.   the allocation of duties amongst the academic-related and other staff assigned to the School;

vii.   the strategic development of the School;

viii.   and to advise the Dean of the Faculty on the appointment of the Head of School.

6   Operating Practices

6.1   Academic Governance bodies should adopt standardised approaches for the recording and reporting of their activity. The Governance Handbook provides recommended templates for agendas, minutes and papers/reports, and associated guidance.

6.2   Records should be retained in line with the University's Records Retention Schedule.

6.3   It is good practice for the approved minutes of meetings to be made more widely available within the University.

6.4   All new members of Senate, its committees, Faculty Committees and School Boards should receive an appropriate induction to support them. Development and training needs of members should also be identified on a periodic basis.

6.5   It is good practice to conduct regular effectiveness reviews of academic governance bodies. Externally-facilitated governance reviews of Senate will take place on a periodic basis (most recently as an element of the 2021 Governance Effectiveness Review facilitated by Halpin Partnership).