

Role of Academic Council

1. Legislative Context for Academic Councils in the Irish University sector

Under the Irish Universities Act 1997, governance arrangements for Irish universities follow a bicameral model, with Governing Authorities exercising overall governance responsibility for Universities and Academic Councils having a particular responsibility for the governance of the academic affairs of universities. Specifically, section 27 of the Irish Universities Act 1997 provides that *'each University shall have an Academic Council which shall control the academic affairs of the University, including the curriculum of, and instruction and education provided by, the University'*.

2. Responsibilities of Academic Council

The Act sets out the following responsibilities of Academic Council:

- (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 exclusion of students generally,*
- (e) to propose the form and contents of statutes to be 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.*

3. What role does Academic Council play?

Academic Council plays a critical role in setting the academic direction of the University. Following a change to the University Statute, the membership of Academic Council has been broadened. The revised composition is effective from October 2018 and includes membership on a College basis, with representatives across all the academic grades, including researcher, Lecturer, Senior Lecturer and Professorial grades, as well as Heads of School and students, totaling 100 members, together with an *ex officio* membership which includes, Vice-Presidents, Directors of Academic Support Units and Deans. Chaired by the President, Council conducts its business through a number of sub Committees including the Academic Management Team and the Academic Standing Committee. Academic Council meets regularly to consider reports from all of the core academic and academic support units, and make decisions on matters of academic policy, procedures and planning.

Academic Council also provides advice to Údarás na hOllscoile in respect of academic matters,

through regular formal reports to the Governing Authority.

In addition to the academic responsibilities set out in point 2 above, Academic Council performs a number of important functions:

- The provision of advice to Údarás na hOllscoile on all Statutes and Regulations, including those which determine the academic governance and management structures of the University
- Academic direction with regard to various strategic opportunities including the University’s response to sector-led Higher Education initiatives, Strategic Planning, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion activities, etc.
- Academic Council is the final decision-making body for key Committees including Standing Committee, Academic Management Team, various Committees providing oversight to the Student Experience, etc.
- Academic policy with regard to all aspects of the University’s research and teaching & learning agendas
- Academic Council advises the Governing Authority on the details of various academic promotion and progression schemes and academic grade structures

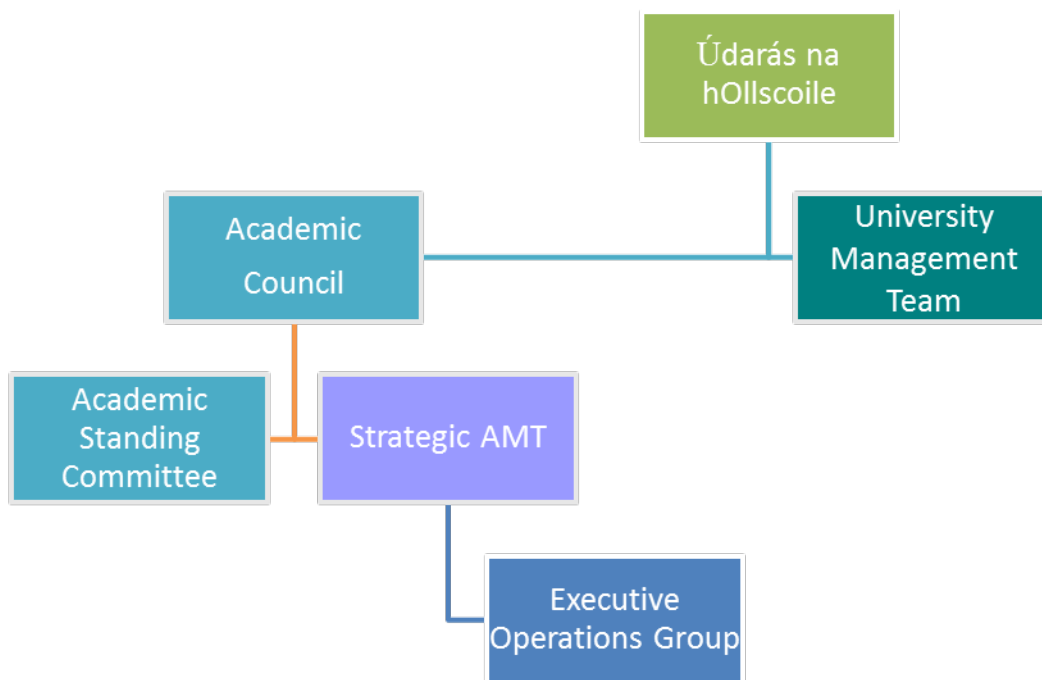


Figure 1: Organisational structure for core Academic Committees