

A guide to OU Committees



Open SU
Student Voice Team
June 2025

Committee Descriptions - Academic

These committees welcome all students subject to them meeting the individual eligibility requirements.

Academic Committees (Learning and Teaching)

There is an Academic Committee for each faculty area. They meet quarterly and the meeting can require attendance for up to 1 full day. These are generally held online or offer hybrid options of attendance.

The membership of the Academic Teaching Committee is made up of academics, support staff and generally 3 student representatives. Two Student Representatives are appointed by the Appointments Committee, they apply via an application form; their term is usually 2 years and one Faculty Representative who is elected by the student body for a term of 2 years. There are only 5 of these committees.

Student Representatives and Faculty Representatives are full members of the Academic Committees, which means they are responsible for raising items, where appropriate and speaking about issues impacting students from within their area of study. The items discussed are usually highly confidential.

Some examples of matters that may be discussed by the Academic Committee:

- Reports provided by the Board of Studies about the quality of their qualifications
- Partnership arrangements between the Open University and other organisations
- Qualification specifications for new ways of teaching

The purpose of the Academic Committee is to:

- Ensure that the standard of education offered is of the highest quality
- They develop strategy, policy and standards that impact learning, teaching and assessment
- Ensuring that each area within a faculty is facilitating an excellent student experience
- Ensure that appropriate actions and innovations take place by monitoring the activities of Boards of Studies.

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“This is an ideal place for me to learn more about strategic management within the university. It is interesting to see how my feedback informs strategies and improves the student experience”.

Committee Descriptions - Academic

Board of Studies (BoS)

There is one Board of Studies for each school within each faculty. They meet at least three times a year and the meeting can require attendance for up to one full day. Most of the Boards of Studies hold meetings remotely to allow for its members to attend from wherever they are. Normally a Board of Studies will hold an annual Workshop for its members.

The membership of the Board of Studies is made up of academics; Deans, Associate Lecturers, Student Support Staff Leads, Student Service areas such as the Library and Careers. Generally, three Student Representatives dependent upon the area of study. All Student Representatives are appointed by the Appointments Committee. They apply via an application form; their term is usually two years. There are 18 of these committees.

Student Representatives are full members of the Board of Studies, which means they are responsible for raising items, where appropriate and speaking about issues impacting students from within their area of study.

Board of Studies use action plans to monitor the development of initiatives and innovations, which provides you with information about the status of matters impacting students at the highest level within the faculty.

Some examples of matters impacting students that may be discussed at the Board of Studies:

Flexible study options
Availability of resources
Suitability of module materials
Employability skills offered
Curriculum development

The purpose of a BoS

- Oversee the creation and implementation of modules
- Monitor the effectiveness of modules and qualifications
- Ensure that appropriate actions and innovations take place.
- Produce an annual report to the Academic Committee
- Create and maintain curriculums and is concerned with the quality and reports directly to the Faculty Academic Committee
- Make recommendations to the Faculty Academic Committee areas for improvement and enhancement.

The Board of Studies welcomed me, introduced me to all the members of the committee and I feel comfortable and confident to talk at the meeting. Everyone is very welcoming”

I get to learn more about the internal workings of my area of study, I did not know how much goes into the development of a module and how many people are involved. I share student views to those who can make change. This has helped me develop my public speaking skills too”.

Committee Descriptions - Mid Tier

These committees are referred to as Mid-Tier committees which means they sit higher up in the structure and have oversight of all OU academic governance. These committees welcome all students subject to them meeting the eligibility requirements.

Curriculum Partnerships Committee (CuPC)

This committee have oversight of the many OU teaching partnerships with external organisations. This committee can meet more than 4 times per year. A student rep can expect attendance to be up to one day and there will be meeting papers to read in advance. Curriculum partnerships are developed and managed in faculties, supported by teams in the nation offices where appropriate. Modules and qualifications delivered through curriculum partnerships are subject to standard OU quality assurance processes.

Each year, the Curriculum Partnerships Committee (CuPC) convenes to provide a detailed evaluation of the annual review reports submitted by each of the Faculties which are prepared to send to Senate, the academic authority of the Open University.

The membership of this committee is made up of senior management staff across the university and two appointed Student Representatives appointed by the Appointments Committee. They apply via an application form; their term is usually two years.

Qualifications and Assessments Committee (QAC)

The Qualifications and Assessment Committee is responsible to the Senate for recommending strategy, and approving policy and regulations relating to modules, qualifications, assessment and the classification of qualifications (excluding research degrees and higher doctorates) within the University. The work of the Qualifications and Assessment Committee was formerly undertaken by the Qualifications Committee, Vocational Qualifications Committee and Assessment Policy Committee.

They meet at least four times a year and the meeting can require attendance for up to 5 hours.

The membership of the QAC is made up of academics and student support as well as Student Representatives with one elected (VP Student Voice) and one appointed by the Appointments Committee. They apply via an application form; their term is usually two years.

Student Experience Committee

The Student Experience Committee is responsible to the Senate for recommending strategy, and approving policy and regulations relating to the quality of the student experience including that delivered in collaboration with other parties and globally. This includes learning and teaching, service provision, and support for registered students in accordance with the Student Charter.

The membership of the Student Experience Committee includes staff over 20 members of staff from the university, the Associate Dean, Student Experience or equivalent from each faculty, Student Voice Manager, Head of Careers and the President of Open SU (elected) and there is one position available for a Student Representative and they are appointed by the Appointments Committee. They apply via an application form; their term is usually two years.

Committee Descriptions - Mid Tier

This committee is slightly different to all of the other committees - the Student Representative remains anonymous and consider highly confidential and sensitive information.

Central Disciplinary Committee (CDC)

The Central Disciplinary Committee (CDC) is The Open University's senior disciplinary authority. There are only 13 Student Representative positions, and it is of the highest importance that membership remains confidential. Student committee members will be called upon to attend the Central Disciplinary Committee monthly meeting usually midweek for 4 hours, for example 10am–2pm on Tuesdays.

Central Disciplinary Committee has 13 places for Student Representatives. The committee meetings are held on a monthly basis. The meeting schedule is available in advance and you will be asked to sign up to a meeting time that you are available once you have completed your training. Students are not expected to attend all meetings, but should expect to attend at least 2 of the meetings within the academic year each year. This is to ensure that the committee hear from a diverse pool of students and receive a mixture of views.

The membership of this committee is made up of senior management staff across the university and appointed Student Representatives. All Student Representatives are appointed by the Appointments Committee. They apply via an application form; their term is usually two years.

Some examples of matters impacting students that may be discussed at a faculty assembly:

- You may be required to review case files that include subjects such as;
 - Repeated breaches of the plagiarism policy
 - Exam misconduct (e.g., accessing a phone within the exam).
 - Unacceptable behaviour by students
 - The student is in breach of the Code of Practice for Student Discipline.

At times the student members are called upon to assist with Open SU's complaints and disciplinary process. The President and Deputy President may appoint student members from this committee to consider complaints or disciplinary matters related to the SU.

As student member of this committee, students act as a member of the student body in upholding the values – academic and otherwise – of the OU and the SU.

The purpose of the Central Disciplinary Committee

- Committee members will consider information on individual cases relating to academic offences and will hear appeals from students to determine the outcome of an alleged offence as specified under section SD1 of the Code of Practice for Student Discipline.

The Central Disciplinary Committee has allowed me to prepare myself for a career after university. The case work, meetings and collaborative decision making are all transferable skills....".

Committee Descriptions - Research

These committees are referred to as Research Committees within OU academic governance structure. A registered student that is a post-graduate research student, studying a PhD, EdD, DHSC, or MPhil would be appointed to these committees.

Research Committee

This committee is responsible for the OU's strategy and policy relating to research, the research environment and culture, the delivery and impact from research, Knowledge Exchange and Enterprise.

This committee meets 3 times per year and a meeting may last 3 hours. Meetings are generally in person but also offer hybrid options of attendance. With papers to read in advance, a Student Representative should allow time to read these and synthesise the information within.

The membership of the committee includes senior academics and staff from within the university as well as two Student Representatives who are post-graduate research students studying PhD, EdD, DHSC or MPhil. There is one position available for a part-time research student. Student Representatives are appointed by the Appointments Committee. They apply via an application form; their term is usually two years.

Research Degrees Committee (RDC)

The Research Degrees Committee regulates all policy, regulation and procedures relating to research degrees.

They meet at least 3 times each year and a meeting may last 3 hours. With papers to read in advance, a Student Representative should allow time to read these and synthesise the information within. Research Degrees Committee review regulations annually to ensure continued compliance with external requirements, to promote consistency, best practice, and to reflect changes in policy.

The membership of the committee includes senior academics and staff from within the university as well as Student Representatives who are post-graduate research students studying PhD, EdD, DHSC, MPhil or equivalent. There are 3 positions available for Student Representatives and they are appointed by the Appointments Committee. They apply via an application form; their term is usually two years.

Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)

This committee advises the University on ethical considerations relating to Open University research involving humans, including granting or withholding favourable opinion on the ethical aspects of research proposals. The purpose of this committee is to ensure that the highest ethical and professional standards are upheld effectively. It meets formally twice a year for up to 3 hours. With papers to read in advance, a Student Representative should allow time to read these and synthesise the information within. There is one additional two hour training workshop each year. Much of the committee's work is carried out between meetings by sub-panels considering individual ethics applications. A student representative should expect to receive approximately two applications for review per month and allow up to two hours to review each.

The membership of the committee includes over 30 people from within and outside the university as well as a Student Representative who is a post-graduate research student studying PhD, EdD, DHSC or MPhil or equivalent. There is one position available for a Student Representative and they are appointed by the Appointments Committee. They apply via an application form; their term is usually two years.

Committee Descriptions - Research

Academic Committees (Research)

There is an Academic Committee (Research) for each faculty. These committees are responsible for assuring the quality of the postgraduate researcher experience within the faculty, and the implementation of strategy, policy and standards relating to research, its delivery and impact, Knowledge Exchange, Enterprise. Each committee meets 3 times per year and a meeting lasts 2 hours. Meetings are generally online but where they are in person hybrid options of attendance are offered. With papers to read in advance, a Student Representative should allow time to read these and synthesise the information within.

The membership of these committees includes senior academics from the faculty with responsibility for research as well at least one and up to three Student Representatives who are post-graduate research students studying PhD, EdD, DHSC or MPhil. There are positions available for Student Representatives and they are appointed by the Appointments Committee. They apply via an application form; their term is usually two years.

Committee Descriptions - Governance

These committees are the highest academic authority of the Open University, with oversight of all matters related to teaching, learning and research. These opportunities are open to all students subject to eligibility.

Senate

This committee is the academic authority of the Open University, with oversight of all matters related to teaching, learning. It meets four times each year to consider business that relates to the academic work of the University both in teaching and research. There are currently over 100 members of Senate including six student members who are decided by the Association:

- President
- Vice-President Student Representation
- Student Member of Council
- Three Student Representatives, appointed by Appointments Committee

The student members of Senate have the benefit of a student forums in which they can draw on the diversity of circumstances, views and opinions of other student representatives.

Council

Council is the University's executive governing body exercising control of University affairs including strategic planning, monitoring effectiveness and performance, finance, audit, estate management and human resource management.

The membership of Council is made up of the mostly senior members of the university management and an elected Student Member of Council. The Student Member of Council is a full member of Council and may also be required to take part in working parties/groups that are established. They have the opportunity to ensure that the Student Voice is heard by Council on any matter of concern to students and are a full voting member will produce regular reports informing the Student Leadership Team at the Students Association of matters under discussion at Council meetings (except for matters deemed confidential). Elections are held every 2 years.

Being a part of discussions, working groups meetings at the highest level of the University is not only interesting, it is one of the most extraordinary things I have done!