

Guidance for Participation in Senate

As a member of the Senate and Senate Committees, you hold a vital role in the academic governance of the university. Senate is entrusted with significant responsibilities, including recommending the establishment of new academic units and programs, approving admission requirements and other regulations that uphold the university's academic standards, and authorizing the granting of degrees and honorary degrees.

Given that Senate comprises more than 70 elected and ex officio members, along with its various committees, you may wonder how best to effectively contribute within such a large and diverse body. Thorough preparation in advance of all meetings will greatly enhance your ability to participate meaningfully and confidently.

This document outlines essential information about Senate's operations and offers practical guidance to support your effective engagement in this work.

Meetings of Senate - General

- Regular meetings of Senate are normally held on the first Friday of each month from October to May, beginning at 3:30 p.m. A meeting may be cancelled if there is insufficient business to warrant convening Senate.
- Unless otherwise noted, all Senate meetings are held in the Senate and Board Chambers, Jamie Cassels Centre, Room A180.
- The deadline for submitting items for inclusion on the Senate agenda is Wednesday, two and a half weeks prior to the Senate meeting. The Senate Committee on Agenda and Governance (SCAG), which is responsible for reviewing and preparing the agenda, normally meets on the Friday two weeks before the Senate meeting. Finalization of the agenda at that time allows the University Secretary's Office to prepare and post the agenda and supporting materials one week in advance of the meeting.
- Resources and materials for Senate are available on the UVic Senate SharePoint site. Senate members are granted access to SharePoint at the start of their term on July 1.
- Most Senate business is conducted in open session; however, items of a confidential nature are normally considered in closed session. All matters discussed in closed session must be treated as strictly confidential.
- The Chair of Senate can request approval of a minor item by email in advance of the next regular Senate meeting.

Attendance and Quorum

- Regular attendance at Senate meetings is essential. Please make every effort to be present and to participate actively in discussions.
- Upon arrival, pick up your name card before taking your seat.
- If you are unable to attend a meeting, please send your regrets in advance to Kathy MacDonald, Senate Coordinator, Office of the University Secretary, at usec2@uvic.ca or 721-8102.
- Attendance or voting by proxy is not permitted.
- Remote attendance is permitted when a member of Senate is unable to be physically present. Members attending remotely ensure their full names are visible and cameras are turned on during

the open and closed meetings of Senate. Please ensure your internet is sufficient for Senate engagement, as the business will continue regardless of any technical difficulties.

- The quorum of a regular meeting of Senate is 15 members, at least eight of whom must be elected members.
- Elected members of Senate are entitled to a leave of absence for up to three consecutive Senate meetings.

Senate Governance Documents

- The powers of Senate are set out in Part 7 of the [University Act](#). Additional provisions relevant to Senate appear in Part 4 (section 9), Part 5 (section 14), Part 6 (section 27), and Part 8 (section 40).
- The [Senate Rules and Procedures](#) govern the conduct of Senate and its meetings. They serve as the primary reference for all procedural matters.
- In 1978, the Senate considered whether to officially adopt the parliamentary procedures outlined in *Robert's Rules of Order* for the conduct of its meetings. The motion to adopt these procedures was defeated on March 1, 1978. At that time, it was noted that Senate experienced few procedural and could continue to “depend on the good sense of its members.” Procedural questions that arise are resolved through a ruling by the Chair, which may be challenged and subsequently sustained or overturned by Senate as a whole.

Participation in Senate Meetings

- Preparation is essential. Senate meetings proceed quickly, and there is no opportunity to read materials during the meeting. Members are expected to review all documents in advance.
- Members are encouraged to remain informed about the university's current academic initiatives and issues. Past Senate minutes are available on the [University Secretary's website](#). The Office of the University Secretary can also assist in locating information or materials related to Senate's activities or decisions.
- If you intend to speak to an agenda item, you may find it helpful to prepare your questions or comments in advance. It may also be beneficial to consult with fellow members of Senate, the Chair of the relevant committee, or committee members to gather background information prior to the meeting. Such consultation is intended to inform discussion, not to pre-determine decisions. Members of Senate are expected to keep an open mind and to consider the perspectives shared during the meeting before voting.
- Once a motion has been moved and seconded, the Chair will invite questions and discussion.
- If you wish to speak, raise your hand and ensure your name card is clearly visible.
- When multiple members of Senate wish to speak, the Chair will establish a speakers list. A member of Senate may speak a second time only after all others on the list have had the opportunity to speak once. The mover of a motion will be given the final opportunity to speak.
- When speaking, introduce yourself and ensure you speak clearly and audibly both for those in the room and those attending remotely.
- Voting on motions is normally conducted by a show of hands, unless a member of Senate moves that the vote be conducted by secret ballot.
- When a votes count is required, the Secretary will count the votes for and against and report the results to the Chair.
- The Chair has the same right to a single vote as all other members of Senate. In the event of a tie, the motion is declared defeated.
- The Chair will formally announce the result of each vote, and the outcome will be recorded in the minutes. A member of Senate may request that their individual vote or abstention be recorded.

- Agenda items are arranged in accordance with the [Senate's Rules and Procedures](#). A member of Senate may request that the Chair add an item to the agenda, provided the request is submitted by the deadline established in the schedule issued by the Office of the University Secretary.

Meetings of the Senate Standing Committees

- A significant portion of Senate's work is carried out through its standing committees. Active participation in these committees is one of the most effective ways for members of Senate to contribute meaningfully to Senate's mandate. Members are expected to make every effort to attend committee meetings. If scheduling or other challenges arise, please speak to the committee Chair.
- All elected members of Senate are expected to serve on one or two standing committees, alongside non-Senate members who contribute valuable expertise committee deliberations.
- Recommendations to Senate typically originate from the faculties and/or the Senate standing committees.
- Complex matters, such as the approval of a new academic program, may require review and approval by multiple committees and bodies before being presented to Senate for approval.
- The Senate Committee on Agenda and Governance recommends appointments to standing committees based on vacancies and the expressed interests of members of Senate.
- If a vacancy arises, members of Senate may notify the Office of the University Secretary of their interest in serving on a particular standing committee.
- Effective participation in committee meetings requires familiarity with the committee's past work, advance preparation, and active engagement during meetings, including asking questions and contributing to discussion.
- Meetings of Senate standing committees are confidential until a report or recommendation is brought forward to an open meeting of Senate. However, the committee Chair may request that members consult with colleagues and report back on specific matters under consideration.

Convocation

- One of Senate's most significant responsibilities is approval of the lists of students by the faculties to receive degrees at the university's convocation ceremonies. At its meeting of May 4, 2007, Senate delegated its authority to grant degrees to the Senate Committee on Academic Standards. Beginning in Fall 2007, the Senate Committee on Academic Standards has met with the Deans semi-annually to approve the convocation lists.
- Senate members are formally invited to the November and June convocation ceremonies and are seated on stage as part of the academic party.

Additional Reading

As a member of Senate, you are encouraged to familiarize yourself with the university's strategic priorities, academic plans, and institutional initiatives. This broader context will support your participation in Senate deliberations and committee work.

If you have any questions about Senate, its procedures or the standing committees, please do not hesitate to seek guidance. Your fellow Senate members can be an excellent source of insight as you navigate the academic governance environment. Questions related to a specific standing committee or its business may be directed to the Chair or Secretary of that committee. The [terms of reference and membership list](#) for all Senate committees are available on the University Secretary's website.