

University of Waterloo Senate Roles and Responsibilities

Role and Responsibilities of Senate

The Senate shares responsibility for governing the University of Waterloo together with the Board of Governors. The [University of Waterloo Act, 1972](#) (“the Act”), sets out the respective roles of the Senate and the Board, which are exercised in a spirit of shared responsibility, mutual respect, transparency, and collegial governance. The Senate's primary responsibility is to oversee the academic affairs of the University. The Board's primary responsibility is to oversee the University's business, administration and finances, however, the Senate may make recommendations on any matter related to the University's operations to the Board of Governors.

The Senate conducts its business through [committees](#) that bring forward recommendations at regularly scheduled meetings throughout the governance year.

Role and Responsibilities of Senators

The Senate is composed of faculty, students and ex-officio members from different parts of the University, and Senators are encouraged to bring perspective from their respective communities to inform decision making. Senators are also encouraged to be mindful of the statutory mandate of the Senate, which is to make decisions for the entire university.

In their service on the Senate, Senators are expected to:

Governance Principles

- (a) Exercise their best judgment in making decisions, having regard to the interests of the University as a whole.
- (b) Offer perspective from their own experience and from their respective communities at the University, to inform good decision making.
- (c) Uphold academic standards and program quality, including oversight of curriculum.
- (d) Uphold core principles expressed in University policies (such as academic freedom, freedom of expression, collegial governance, ethical behaviour, and the promotion of equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility) in Senate decision-making.
- (e) Consider the impact of decisions on student experience and success.

Conduct and Participation

- (f) Prepare diligently for meetings by reviewing materials in advance, seeking clarification where necessary, and contributing thoughtfully and respectfully to deliberations. While all perspectives merit consideration, consensus is not required, and decisions duly adopted by Senate represent the collective judgment of the body.

- (g) Participate constructively by engaging in respectful discussion of matters which are brought before Senate and its various bodies, including committees, councils, subcommittees, and working groups.
- (h) Maintain confidentiality of information discussed in confidential sessions.
- (i) Participate in orientations, trainings or reviews to develop greater understanding of the work of Senate and the roles and responsibilities of Senators.
- (j) Serve actively on committees and working groups as assigned.

Procedural Responsibilities

- (k) Provide advanced notice to the Secretary when unable to attend a meeting.
- (l) Declare any conflicts of interest.
- (m) Be familiar with the *Rules of Procedure of the University of Waterloo Senate*, including processes for questions, motions, and agenda items, and seek guidance from the Secretariat as needed.

Role Awareness

- (n) Recognize that Senate standing committees, councils, subcommittees, and working groups support Senate by developing recommendations and, where authorized, exercising delegated responsibilities in accordance with Senate bylaws.
- (o) Recognize that all Senators have the same duties, roles, and responsibilities in their capacity as Senators.

Role and Responsibilities of the Chair of Senate

- (a) In accordance with the Act, the President of the University serves as chair of the Senate, and the Vice-President, Academic, shall serve as vice-chair.
- (b) The Chair will guide Senate in fulfilling its academic governance responsibilities, ensuring that deliberations and decisions align with the University's mission, academic priorities, and long-term strategic goals.
- (c) The Chair is responsible for maintaining order and decorum during meetings as outlined in Senate Bylaws and Rules of Procedure and will do so with fairness and impartiality. In exercising this responsibility, the Chair is empowered to:
 - recognize speakers and control the order of participation;
 - rule on questions of procedure and order, subject to appeal to Senate as set forth in Senate Bylaws and Rules of Procedure;
 - invite members to make motions or to speak to points of debate;

- enforce time limits and ensure relevance of debate;
- call a member to order for disruptive conduct;
- suspend or adjourn a meeting in the event of disruption or loss of quorum; and
- take such other actions as necessary, consistent with the Senate Bylaws and Rules of Procedure, to ensure the effective conduct of business.

(d) The Chair will foster constructive, inclusive, and respectful debate, and ensure that all members have the opportunity to contribute while maintaining focus and efficiency.

(e) The Chair does not normally participate in debate, but may provide factual context to inform discussions.

(f) The Chair may temporarily delegate the chair in order to fully participate in debate and to vote on a motion.

(g) The Chair will support informed decision-making by ensuring clarity in motions, voting procedures, and outcomes. While consensus is not required, the Chair will, where appropriate, encourage it.

(h) The Chair will oversee the identification and management of conflicts of interest and promote ethical conduct among Senate members.

(i) The Chair will promote transparency by ensuring that Senate decisions, rationales, and key discussions are clearly communicated to the broader university community.