

Frequently Asked Questions: Academic Board

What is the Academic Board?

The Academic Board is one of the three Boards of the Governing Council.

What are the responsibilities of the Academic Board?

The Board's responsibilities are stated in its terms of reference available online:

<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Boards+and+Committees/Academic+Board/abtor.pdf>

In general terms, the Board is responsible for matters affecting the teaching, learning, and research functions of the University, the establishment of University objectives and priorities, the development of long-term and short-term plans and the effective use of resources in the course of these pursuits.

What are the Standing Committees of the Academic Board?

The Academic Board has four Standing Committees:

- *Academic Appeals Committee*
- *Agenda Committee*
- *Committee on Academic Policy and Programs*
- *Planning and Budget Committee*

MEMBERSHIP

Who are the members of the Academic Board?

The Board has 123 voting members:

- *88 teaching staff:*
 - *6 teaching staff members of the Governing Council*
 - *51 teaching staff elected to the Academic Board*
 - *31 ex officio members, including the Vice-President and Provost, all Principals and Deans, the Director of the Transitional Year Program, the Master of Massey College, the Director of the School of Continuing Studies, and the Chief Librarian;*
- *2 elected librarians;*
- *4 administrative staff:*
 - *one administrative staff member of the Governing Council*
 - *three administrative staff who are not members of the Governing Council;*
- *6 lay members (alumni or government appointees to the Governing Council);*
- *16 students:*
 - *4 student members of the Governing Council*
 - *12 students who are not members of the Governing Council;*
- *4 voting assessors selected by the President;*
- *Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Council, Chancellor, President ¹.*

How are members of the Academic Board chosen?

Members of the Governing Council are appointed to the Academic Board by the Governing Council on the recommendation of the Executive Committee.

¹ The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Council, the Chancellor, and the President are *ex officio* members of all Governing Council Boards and Committees.

How are members of the Academic Board chosen? (cont'd)

Teaching Staff members are elected to the Academic Board from each faculty and from the University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM) and the University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC). There are 14 teaching staff members elected from the Faculty of Arts and Science, 11 teaching staff members elected from the Faculty of Medicine, 3 teaching staff members elected from each of the following faculties/divisions: Applied Science and Engineering, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), UTM and UTSC, and 1 teaching staff member elected from each of the remaining Faculties.

Two teaching staff members are elected from the School of Graduate Studies.

Two librarians are elected by, and from among, the librarians.

Administrative staff, alumni, and student members of the Academic Board who are not members of the Governing Council (co-opted members) are appointed by the Academic Board on the recommendation of its Striking Committee.

The Vice-President and Provost, Principals and Deans, the Chief Librarian, the Director of the Transitional Year Program, the Director of the School of Continuing Studies, and the Master of Massey College are members of the Board by virtue of their position (ex officio).

How long do members serve on the Board?

Members of the Governing Council and co-opted student and alumni members are appointed to the Academic Board for a one-year term, from July 1 to June 30. Teaching staff and librarian members of the Academic Board are elected for three-year terms. Terms of the co-opted administrative staff members range from one year to three years.

All members are eligible for reappointment. There is no maximum term for membership on the Academic Board.

How are the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Academic Board appointed?

Section 29 (e) of By-Law Number 2 of the Governing Council requires that the Chair and Vice-Chair of each of the three Boards be appointed by the Governing Council from among the members of the Board who are members of the Governing Council.

ROLE OF MEMBERS**What is the role of members of the Academic Board?**

The University of Toronto Act, 1971, requires that members of the Governing Council, and, by extension, members of its Boards and Committees, must ‘act with diligence, honestly and with good faith in the best interests of the University and University College’. Although members come from various constituencies, they must put the interests of the University first, rather than the interests of the constituency to which they belong.

Members are expected to assess with great care the proposals that come to the Board. An effective member:

- *asks searching questions and contributes thoughtfully to the debate,*
- *listens to other members and, always,*
- *considers, when voting, what is in the best interests of the entire University.*

What is the role of the Board's Chair and Vice-Chair?

The Chair of the Board is the Presiding Officer and is responsible for maintaining order and decorum at the meeting. During the meeting, the Chair rules on all points of order. The Chair of the Board is also the Chair of the Agenda Committee.

The Chair presents recommendations from the Board to the Executive Committee and to the Governing Council. The Chair also serves as an ex officio member of the Committee for Honorary Degrees.

The Vice-Chair of the Board acts for the Chair in his/her absence, and carries out such duties as the Chair requests.

What is the role of the Board's Assessors?

Assessors are members of the University's administration who bring items for the Board's consideration and provide recommendations for action on those items.

*The Board has **four voting assessors**,*

- *the Vice-President and Provost, who is the senior Assessor,*
- *the Vice-President, Research and Innovation*
- *the Vice-President, University Operations,*
- *the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs.*

*There are **eight non-voting assessors** appointed to the Board:*

- *the Vice-President, Advancement,*
- *the Vice-President, Human Resources and Equity,*
- *the Vice-President, University Relations,*
- *the Vice-President and Principal, University of Toronto Mississauga,*
- *the Vice-President and Principal, University of Toronto Scarborough,*
- *the Vice-Provost, Faculty and Academic Life,*
- *the Director, Campus and Facilities Planning, and*
- *the Executive Director, Planning and Budget.*

The non-voting assessors may choose to attend or not attend each meeting, depending on the business on the agenda.

MEETINGS

How often does the Academic Board meet?

*The Academic Board normally meets **6 times** per year – once in every 4 to 6 week governance cycle.*

When does the Academic Board meet?

*Meetings are usually scheduled on **Thursday at 4:10 p.m.***

Where does the Academic Board meet?

*Meetings are held in the **Council Chamber at Simcoe Hall**, room 214, 27 King's College Circle, St. George Campus.*

MEETINGS (cont'd)**How long are the Academic Board meetings?**

The meetings are usually completed within 2 to 2.5 hours of the starting time. If there is insufficient time to discuss some of the 'for information' items that appear at the end of an agenda, they can be discussed at the next meeting.

Can anyone attend meetings of the Academic Board?

Yes. Meetings are normally held in open session. If the meetings move in camera, non-member will be asked to leave the room at that point.

MEETING AGENDA AND DOCUMENTATION**Who sets the agenda of the Board?**

The Agenda Committee sets the agenda for the Academic Board. Members of the group include the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Board, the Vice-President and Provost, the Chair and Senior Assessor of the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs, the Chair and Senior Assessor of the Planning and Budget Committee, two teaching staff members, and one student member of the Board appointed on the recommendation of the Academic Board Striking Committee, and the Secretary of the Board.

This group reviews business to come forward, makes decisions about which matters are ready to be considered by the Board, and determines the order of the agenda. The group may also provide advice about the documentation for the various items.

When is meeting documentation available to members?

One week prior to meetings, documentation is made available to members on the governance portal. Publicly available meeting documentation is also posted on the Governing Council website one week prior to each meeting.

What should members do if they have questions about the documentation or items on the agenda?

If members find the documentation inadequate or if there is substantial information missing that a member feels would be helpful in making a decision about any of the items, they can inform the Board Secretary, who will alert the Board Chair and the appropriate assessor to prepare a response. Members may also contact the appropriate assessor directly.

The Secretary can also facilitate access to policies, Board reports, or public documents that Governing Council has on file or on the Governing Council website (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/home.htm>).

MEETING PROCEDURES**What are the rules of order for meetings of the Academic Board?**

Because of its size, the Board uses the procedures set out for meetings of the Governing Council in By-Law Number 2 of the Governing Council

(<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/bylaw2.pdf>)

Who may speak at meetings of the Academic Board?

Only members of the Board may speak during meetings, once they have been recognized by the Chair. The Chair may also recognize members of the Governing Council who are in attendance, and invite them to speak. Such members are guests and are asked to sit in the section reserved for guests and not at the table.

Members should always feel free to discuss any item in the detail that they feel is appropriate. The discussion should be through the Chair. Cross-talk is not useful in carrying out the business of the Board. Members are encouraged to prepare for meetings by reviewing the background documentation in order to ensure that discussion at Board meetings is focused and productive.

Is there an opportunity for non-members to address the Board?

*Non-members may request to speak to the Board in accordance with **Procedures for Non-members to Address Governing Council, its Boards and Committees***

(<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/procedureaddgcmr91995.pdf>). A non-member may make a request to the Chair by contacting the Board Secretary prior to the meeting.

Alternatively, a member may make a motion to permit a non-member to address the Board. To carry, such a motion must be supported by 2/3 of the members present and voting. In all cases, speaking time for non-members is limited to at most five minutes.

How are items for approval brought forward and dealt with by the Board?

Normally items are recommended to the Board for approval by one of its Standing Committees. The assessor prepares a cover memo that includes jurisdictional information, highlights of the proposal, and the required action.

Some items go directly to the Academic Board for consideration. These include divisional constitutions, policies on the nature of academic employment, policies and procedures with respect to academic discipline, name changes of academic units, and agreements with certain affiliated or federated institutions.

Can a member propose a matter for consideration by the Board?

There are four ways in which a matter may be added to the agenda of a meeting:

- A member may give **notice of motion** to be presented at the next meeting of the Board. The Agenda Committee will consider the motion and may:
 - place it on the agenda of a subsequent meeting;
 - decline to place it on the agenda of a subsequent meeting.

The action taken with respect to the motion must be reported at the next meeting of the Board.

- A member may make a **motion to add an item to the agenda** of any given meeting. Such a motion requires the support of two-thirds of the members present and voting. As a courtesy to the Chair, such a request should be made to the Board Secretary prior to the meeting.
- The **Board may vote in favour of placing an issue on the agenda** at a specific future meeting. This requires a simple majority of the members present and voting.
- Upon **written request**, signed by at least 10 percent of the voting members of the Board (12 members) and submitted at a meeting of the Board, a stated matter or motion shall be included on the agenda of the Board's next regular meeting.

What choices of action does the Board have when considering a proposal?

The Board will normally exercise one of three options when considering a proposal:

- **recommend the proposal for approval;**
- **refer the proposal back** to the administration for further study and amendment; or
- **reject the proposal.** This is done very rarely.

*Following the Governing Council's approval of the **Balfour Report** in 1988, the Academic Board does have the right to amend proposals that come directly to the Board and not from a Standing Committee or a Divisional Council. Given the responsibility of the Board's assessors for developing proposals, that right has not been exercised. Doing so would be a very serious step, after only a brief discussion by the Board, when the original proposal has been the outcome of very careful work by experts in the operating units and the senior administration of the University. However, motions to amend proposals that come directly to the Board would not be ruled out of order.*

In some cases, the assessors have accepted a minor change that does not contravene the sense of the original motion.

Who is entitled to vote on a proposal at the Board meeting?

Only members of the Board may vote on items for approval.

Are the number of votes in favour and opposed to the motion recorded in the minutes?

Votes are not recorded unless three members request a recorded vote before the vote is called. Names of members are never recorded.

How are items for information dealt with by the Board?

Some items come before the Board for information. Such reports can often be very important. They provide the key means for the Board to monitor the work of the administration. Other reports are intended to keep the Board informed of current issues and developments.

Members may always ask questions or ask for discussion on an aspect of the report, as well as offer advice to the appropriate assessor. If there are concerns, the Board may request a follow-up report. Other than that, no formal action is required from the Board.

Some of the more routine “for information” reports may simply be distributed with the agenda package or made available to members electronically, and at the meeting, no review or introduction will be given by the assessor. That would not, however, preclude questions or discussions.

On what matters does the Academic Board have final approval?

*The **University of Toronto Act, 1971** permits the Governing Council to delegate authority to committees that are not composed of a majority of Governing Council members in the following areas: examinations; the award of fellowships, scholarships, medals, prizes and other awards for academic achievement; standards for admission; contents and curricula of all programs and courses of study; and the requirements for graduation. Apart from those areas, the **Act** permits the Governing Council to delegate final approval authority only to bodies composed of a majority of Governing Council members.*

The Academic Board was created to provide an academic voice in governance, and its composition deliberately does not have a majority of Governing Council members. Therefore, decisions of the Board in other than the purely academic matters above must either be approved by the Governing Council (where required by the Board’s terms of reference) or must be confirmed by the Executive Committee.

However, with respect to matters requiring only Executive Committee confirmation, “it is expected that, normally, confirmation will be forthcoming. If the Executive Committee is of the opinion that a matter requires reconsideration it might refer the matter back to the Academic Board with an explanation. Alternatively, the Executive Committee might decide that a matter within its authority is sufficiently important to warrant consideration by the Governing Council itself. The Executive Committee would not reject Academic Board recommendations.”²

SUPPORT TO THE BOARD

Who provides support to the Academic Board and its members?

The Board is supported by staff from the Office of the Governing Council. The Board Secretary is Mr. David Walders (david.walders@utoronto.ca / 416-978-8794). He is available to answer questions about the Board and its work, and to provide additional information about governance at the University.

*The Office of the Governing Council may also be contacted by **phone** at 416-978-6576 or by **email** at governing.council@utoronto.ca.*

Information about the Academic Board is available at http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Governing_Council/bac/ab.htm.

² Report of the Chairman’s Advisory Committee on Governance (the Balfour Committee) approved by the Governing Council in May 1988.