University governance and the Regent House

The Regent House is the University’s principal governing body, made up of around 5,000 members of the academic and senior administrative staff of the University and Colleges.

The Regent House is charged with approving the acts or decisions of the University, including, for example, making changes to University legislation, approving major building projects, establishing senior academic posts, and approving the University’s financial and budget reports. The Regent House plays a crucial role in the University’s decision-making process, with its membership empowered to accept, reject or request amendment to the recommendations proposed. The Regent House also elects members to the University Council and the Board of Scrutiny.

Effective governance

The Regent House is the embodiment of the University as a democratic institution, and its effectiveness is contingent upon its members maintaining awareness of and engagement with the issues at hand. Members of the Regent House are encouraged to take an active interest in the proposals put to the Regent House and may, when appropriate, choose to exercise the powers granted to them under the University’s Statutes and Ordinances (see p. 4).
Membership makeup

Membership of the Regent House is largely comprised of academic and senior administrative staff of the University and Colleges. Membership includes:

- The Chancellor, the High Steward, the Deputy High Steward, the Commissary, and the external members of the University Council (class (e))
- Heads of Colleges
- Fellows of the Colleges who conform to certain residence conditions
- University officers and persons treated as such under Statute J 7 (qualifying staff at Cambridge University Press)
- Other University and College staff who qualify under Statute A III 10(e)

Most members cease to be eligible for the Roll of the Regent House at the next promulgation after they reach the age of 70. However, holders of certain senior positions, like the Chancellor, High Steward, and Heads of Colleges, continue to qualify regardless of age.

The Roll of the Regent House

A preliminary list of the names to be placed on the Roll of the Regent House is published as a Special issue of the Reporter on the first weekday of October each year to enable those who are eligible, or who think they should be eligible, to check their entries are correct and if necessary apply to the Registrary for amendment.

The definitive Roll of the Regent House is published as a Reporter Special on the fifth weekday in November each year (the promulgated Roll). Once promulgated, the Roll is fixed and membership of the Regent House cannot be altered until promulgation the following November.

New members of the Regent House

The list of members of the Regent House is initially generated with the help of personnel records. New and existing members should check the preliminary Roll (as above) but are otherwise not required to take action to ‘join’ the Regent House. Items, such as fly-sheets and ballot papers, are sent to members on the Roll via their registered University email or postal address as and when necessary.

Regardless of seniority, new members of staff or individuals appointed to qualifying posts after the Roll has been promulgated have to wait until the following November for inclusion and are unable until that time to, for example, vote in ballots or sign fly-sheets.

The Roll is maintained by the Clerk of the Roll of the Regent House and queries should be addressed by email to roll.enquiries@admin.cam.ac.uk.
REGENT HOUSE MEMBERS’ RIGHTS AND POWERS

Members of the Regent House can have an input into University matters in a variety of ways and are empowered to do the following:

Individual rights

- **Vote in Regent House ballots**, including the election of members of the Council and the Board of Scrutiny (certain classes only)
- **Vote in elections of the Senate**
- **Attend and participate in Discussions**
- **Attend congregations**
- **Use the University Combination Room** (see http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/combinationroom/)

Collective actions

- **Ten members may request a topic of concern** be brought forward for Discussion
- **Fifty members may initiate a Grace** for submission to the Regent House
- **Twenty-five members** may request the **amendment of a Grace** already submitted but not yet approved
- **Twenty-five members** may request that a **vote be taken on a Grace by ballot**
- **Ten members** can make known their views on questions which are to be the subject of a ballot by issuing a statement as a **fly-sheet** for circulation

HOW IT WORKS

Various bodies of the University report to the Regent House (Reports or Notices) or submit recommendations and proposals (in the form of Graces) for approval. The **University Council** (as the principal executive and policy-making body of the University), and the **General Board of the Faculties** (responsible for the academic and educational policy of the University) produce the majority of these but certain other bodies, for example some of the **Boards and Syndicates**, also have the right to report directly to the Regent House.

The Regent House then considers the proposals and any comments made in Discussion and members effectively choose whether to accept the proposals as drafted or otherwise use their powers to seek a ballot, withdrawal, or amendment.

The timescale for getting business through the approval processes varies depending on the complexity and/or controversy of the proposed changes and the stages involved. Below are some examples of how the process works, from proposal submission to Regent House approval.
Example 1: A standard Report

Report > Discussion > Response > Grace > Approval

A Report of the General Board is published in the *Reporter* and included on the list for Discussion roughly two weeks later. At the Discussion (which is usually chaired by a Deputy Vice-Chancellor and attended by the Proctors) Regent House members and others comment on the Report and its proposals. The remarks are published in the *Reporter* the following week. The General Board reviews the remarks made and chooses whether to formally respond by way of a Notice published in the *Reporter*. A Grace seeking approval of the Report’s recommendations is submitted to the Regent House. The Grace is automatically approved at 4 pm on the Friday next but one following publication, unless a minimum of twenty-five Regent House members request an amendment or a ballot on the proposals.

Example 2: Straightforward items

Grace or Notice and Grace

Requests for the approval of straightforward items of business, such as new regulations for funds or trusts, may be made simply by the submission of a Grace, or if some explanation or context is required, by Notice and Grace. Both are published in the relevant sections of the *Reporter*, with the Grace subject to the usual approval process (i.e. 4 pm on the Friday of the week following publication).

Example 3: Business requiring a ballot

Report > Discussion > Response > Ballot information and Grace > Fly-sheets and voting > Ballot result > Outcome implemented

Topic of Concern raised > Notice > Discussion > Response > Ballot/Grace etc if required

For items of particular significance, complexity, controversy, or importance, Regent House approval may be sought by ballot. The usual process of Report, Discussion and Notice precede the ballot process as a way of communicating and debating the issues at hand. Ballots are conducted in accordance with the relevant Ordinances, including the Single Transferable Vote regulations. When a ballot is called, a Notice is published in the *Reporter* providing information on the ballot process and timetable, including the criteria and deadline for the submission of fly-sheets. The outcome of a ballot of the Regent House is definitive and the Grace affected accordingly.

The Ballot Process

- Ballot called and timetable published
- Vote takes place
- Ballot result and fly-sheets published
- Ballot result implemented
- Grace approved (unless at least 25 RH members request an amendment or ballot by 4 pm on the Friday of the week following the Grace’s publication)
- Grace submitted to the Regent House (seeking approval of the [revised] proposals)
- Response to remarks by issuing body (optional – can also revise/withdraw proposals or Council may call a ballot)
- Discussion remarks published (audio recording also available)
- Discussion held (forum for RH members and others to state their views)
- Report published (including recommendations)
**Channels of Communication**

**Cambridge University Reporter**

http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/

The *Reporter* is the University’s journal of official business and the primary means through which official information and governance-related matters are conveyed by the University to the Regent House and beyond. Ordinary issues of the *Reporter* are published weekly in term time and carry items of importance to the Regent House, such as:

- **Notices** – issued by the Vice-Chancellor, University Council, Registrary, or other authorized bodies. Used for a variety of purposes, from the announcement of a ballot or University-wide consultation, to the arrangements for the Honorary Degree congregation or the closure of the University Combination Room.

- **Reports** – usually published by the University Council and/or the General Board, but other bodies, such as Syndicates and Boards, may also publish. Substantive items requiring the approval of the Regent House (by Statute/Ordinance, custom, or substance) are published as Reports, and therefore are subject to Discussion by the Regent House.

- **Graces** – i.e. proposals put to the Regent House for approval.

- **Acta** – confirmation of official approval. Confirmed Graces, congregation lists and ballot results are published here.

- **Discussion information** – including discussion reports (unofficial section), timetable (Notices), and responses (Notices).

- **Election notices, timetables and information** – for election to University bodies such as the University Council, General Board, or Board of Scrutiny.

- **Ballot and fly-sheet information** – ballot information and timetables are usually published as Notices; ballot results are published in Acta; and fly-sheets are reprinted in the unofficial section in the same issue as the ballot result.

Special issues of the *Reporter*, including the preliminary and promulgated Rolls of the Regent House, the list of University officers, members of the Faculties, Fellows of the Colleges, and members of University bodies (committees, boards, syndicates, etc.), are also published during the academical year.
The Statutes and Ordinances

http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/so

The University's Statutes and Ordinances provide the constitutional framework that allows the University to govern its affairs. Regent House members don’t need to be experts in the S&O but knowledge of the core provisions is useful in understanding the workings of the University and the sphere in which it operates.

Useful S&O provisions:

Statute A III  Main provisions on the Regent House, including powers, role, and membership

Special Ordinance A (i)  Submission of Graces/conduct of business by the Regent House

Statute J 7  Staff of the University Press who qualify for membership

Ordinance Chapter I  Most of this Chapter is relevant, especially:

Roll of the Regent House, including the categories of membership under Statute A III 10(e)

Conduct of Business, including:

– Discussions

– Graces and Congregations of the Regent House

– Graces of the Senate

– Notice by the Council (re. Discussions and Fly-sheets)

The Council – Election of Members of the Council

The University governance hub

http://www.governance.cam.ac.uk

A central resource focusing on governance information, the site provides information on the University’s governance structure, decision-making processes, instruments of governance, and key personnel. It also facilitates access to the work of the University Council and central committees, providing a central access point for committee information, papers and resources. Explanation on the role of the Regent House, Graces, Discussions, and ballots can also be found there.

University committee Google calendars

http://www.cam.ac.uk/about-the-university/term-dates-and-calendars

Meeting dates for the central University committees and governance bodies are available to download as Google calendars.

Promulgated Roll:  Fifth weekday in November

(Preliminary Roll:  First weekday in October)

Current Roll of the Regent House  Published on the Reporter website at:

www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/regent_house_roll/

Clerk of the Roll of the Regent House  Ms Julia Roebuck

roll.enquiries@admin.cam.ac.uk

c/o Registrary's Office, The Old Schools, CB2 1TN