



The University of Sydney

Academic Board

Meeting held on Wednesday 13 August 1997

Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Board held at 2.15 pm on Wednesday 13 August 1997 in the Professorial Board Room.

There were present: the Chair (Professor R Pesman) presiding, the Deputy Chairs (Professors D J H Cockayne, J Lawler, J R Lawrence and R McPhedran), the Vice-Chancellor and Principal (Professor G Brown), Associate Professor M Allars, Professor D Anderson, Associate Professors R Arnold and R Atherton, Ms S Baker, Dr A E Brew, Professor K K Campbell, Associate Professors L J Copeland, E Cornell and D Dragovich, Professor R Dunn, Associate Professor C J Durrant, Professors K Eltis, L D Field, D R Fraser and G Gill, Associate Professor C B Gillies, Professors M A Harris and R Hewitt, Ms C Hyde, Associate Professor P Jones, Professors J F Kinnear and I J Klineberg, Associate Professor A F Masters, Messrs K Oliver and M G Partridge, Dr M Peat, Professor J Raper, Dr A Reynolds, Professors B D Roufogalis, R L Russell, W Schworm and G P Steven, Associate Professor G M Stone, Professor T Walter and Mr R Wilson.

Present as observers were: Dr W Adams (Secretary to the Academic Board), Professors L M Koder and D Napper, Mr J Shipp, and Professors D Weisbrot and J A Young.

Present by invitation were: Ms R Dever, Ms L Maral and Mr T Robinson.

In attendance: Miss E R Ring.

P 82/97 Starring

Members of the Board were invited to star any unstarred item which they wished to have discussed. All other items were dealt with as recommended in the agenda.

*** The Board resolved as recommended with respect to all unstarred items.

83/97 Minutes

1. **Minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 1997**

*** The Board confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 16 July 1997 as a correct record.

2. **Business arising out of the minutes**

None.

84/97 Report of the Chair

The following reports had been circulated and tabled:

(see agenda and supplementary agenda item A4.)

Part I

1. **Report on Senate Matters**

*** The Board noted the report.

2. **Alternative Chair**

*** The Board approved the Chair's nomination of Professor J R Lawrence as Alternative Chair of the Board until 31 December 1997.

3. 1998 Academic Board meeting dates

*** The Board adopted the proposed schedule of 1998 meetings.

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4. Postgraduate Awards

The Chair reported that, subsequent to the distribution of the agenda, she had learned that Professor Cockayne and Associate Professor Gatens would not be available to serve on the proposed Working Party and she recommended that they be replaced by Associate Professor Brian James and Dr Russell Ross.

Professor Hewitt said that he had grave reservations about the proposed committee structure. He commended the proposal to establish a working party to consider the rankings as there had been many changes in the University since the present system had been established but considered that the proposed structure was unworkable. The present system worked because two representative committees produced lists, each of which was normalised to deciles in one of the very large honours candidatures in the Faculties of Arts and Science. Under the proposed scheme the sciences-based list would be divided into two separate lists and that for the College of Health Sciences would be relatively small and would not be normalised as in the present system. He also felt that the final committee would not have confidence in ranking undertaken by staff from the Scholarships Office because the process would require academic input. He suggested that the *status quo* be maintained; those issues which had caused contention should be looked at by the science-based faculties which could report to the working party.

Professor Young said that he held a view diametrically opposite to that of Professor Hewitt. The proposed scheme recognised the cohesion of the faculties within the new college structure, was supported by the three Pro-Vice-Chancellors (College) and should be adopted by the Board. There would be goodwill during the trial period, and the Board could review the scheme for the future. He did agree, however, that it would be inappropriate for a clerk in the Scholarships Office to do the ranking; this should be undertaken by a working party of the Board.

The Chair reported that she intended to chair the Working Party.

During the ensuing discussion, various members spoke both in support of and against the proposal.

Members speaking in support of the proposal re-iterated the argument that scholarships ranking should take account of the changed structure of the University and they proffered additional reasons for change:

- under the present ranking system, it was difficult to give due recognition to students with clinical components in their courses, such as Health Sciences and Nursing students, and
- there was a need for resolution of the disagreement between Medicine and the other science-based faculties.

Members speaking in support of the retention of the present scheme for another year suggested *inter alia*

- that it would be inefficient to introduce an interim scheme and then to amend it for following years,
- that there was little difference for the humanities-based faculties between the current and proposed schemes until the last stage of the ranking procedure, when the decile system was of great advantage,
- that disagreement between faculties was not restricted just to Medicine and Science, but to Medicine and all the other science-based faculties, and
- that there was a need for more strict compliance with Academic Board guidelines, for the award of merit grades in the undergraduate years.

Another issue raised was the need to make provision for the offer of mid-year APAs and other such awards.

*** It was moved and seconded that the Board adopt the Chair's recommendations, as revised in respect of the membership of the Working Party. The motion was put and carried on a show of hands.

The Chair reported that she would refer the comments made during discussion to the Working Party and that she would appreciate any written submissions on the issue. Professor Young said that he would be happy to meet with Professor Hewitt in order to discuss the adoption of a decile ranking system at College level.

5. Membership of the Board

*** The Board noted the report and welcomed Associate Professor Dragovich to membership of the Board.

6. National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education in the UK (Dearing Committee)

*** The Board noted the report.

7. Membership of faculties and academic colleges by pro-vice-chancellors (college)

*** The Board noted the report.

8. Student appeals against academic decisions

*** The Board noted the report.

9. Action under delegated authority and reports from the Academic Groups

*** The Board noted the report.

10. Work in progress

*** The Board noted the report.

11. Questions on notice

*** The Board noted that there were no questions.

P Part II

At the meeting the Chair reported on the following matters:

1. Welcome to the new University Librarian

The Chair welcomed Mr John Shipp, the new University Librarian, to his first Board meeting.

2. Nominations for honorary degrees

In accordance with the decision of the Senate Advisory Committee for the Selection of Candidates for the Award of Honorary degrees, the Chair asked for nominations for honorary degrees to be forwarded to the Senate Office by August 31. Those eligible to make nominations were Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Deans, College Principals, Chairpersons of Boards of Studies and Professors. Submissions should be made in strict confidence. Detailed procedures and guidelines are available from the Senate Office.

3. Pro-Vice-Chancellors (College) and promotions

The Chair reported that she had agreed with the proposal of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Staffing) that College PVCs be invited to attend the meetings of the central promotions committees for associate professors and personal chairs as observers. The PVCs would be present as observers only and would not participate in the process.

4. The Board and communication

The Chair reported that, as much of the work of the Board was now done by its Committees, she had starred the Committee reports to give the Committee Chairs the opportunity to make very brief statements about the current work and priorities of each Committee. As Professor Ann Sefton was overseas there would be no report from the Teaching and Learning Committee.

She also hoped to organise soon an open Forum for Heads of Department and others where the Chairs of Board Committees would discuss the work of the Committees and where they would have an opportunity to discuss the activities and current priorities of the Board.

The agenda for Board meetings could now be found on the web but not yet in an easily accessible form. She hoped that within the next few weeks a more user-friendly way of access would be available for all members of the University community.

*** The Board noted the Chair's report.

85/97 Statement by the Vice-Chancellor and Principal

The following report was tabled:

(see supplementary agenda item A5.)

Part I

1. Report on Senate Matters

*** The Board noted the report.

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Part II

At the meeting, the Vice-Chancellor reported on the following matter:

UAC Preferences

The Vice-Chancellor reported that discussions had been held with the University of New South Wales and the Universities Admissions Centre about the processing of student applications for 1998, and that New South Wales was insisting on a process of four rounds of offers, rather than two, with offers for HECS-liable places, fees-liable places, HECS-liable places and fees-liable places. Sydney believed it could work within the system by having a designator on fees-liable courses and giving a "Sydney guarantee", viz, that if a student qualified for a HECS-liable place, the student could change to that in the second round. While this could lead to over-enrolments and less fee-paying students, it was considered to address equity issues with the least disturbance to other institutions. UAC had been unwilling increase the number of preferences from six.

Professor Eltis reported that the brochures for Courses and Careers Day would contain the "Sydney guarantee".

*** The Board noted the report.

86/97 Report of the Faculty of Medicine

The following report had been circulated:

(see agenda item B11.)

1998 Term and Semester dates for the Graduate and the Undergraduate Medical Programs

*** The Board approved the term and semester dates as recommended.

87/97 Report of the Undergraduate Studies Committee

The following report had been circulated:

(see agenda item C1.)

Part I

1. Faculty of Science

Bachelor of Science (Advanced Mathematics)

*** The Board recommended that Senate approve in principle the proposal for the introduction of the new award program, the Bachelor of Science (Advanced Mathematics).

2. Proceedings of the Committee

(1) Membership

(2) Admission and selection into fee-paying undergraduate courses in 1998

(3) Overseas Qualifications Sub-Committee

(4) Terms of Reference

(5) Credit point values and nomenclature

(6) Working Party: Approval mechanisms for new courses and major changes to existing courses

(7) Working Party: Admissions

(8) Student appeals against academic decisions

*** The Board noted the report.

P Part II: Report by the Chair of the Committee

Professor Lawler reported that the Undergraduate Studies Committee had been considering a large number of proposals for new undergraduate programs and that it was streamlining the procedures for this process. The Committee was addressing academic policy matters including credit points, student appeals, admissions and advanced standing.

88/97 Report of the Graduate Studies Committee

The following report had been circulated:

(see agenda item C2.)

Part I**1. Amendment of the Resolutions of the Senate****(1) Faculty of Nursing**

*** The Board recommended that Senate approve:

- the restructuring of the Master of Nursing degree and the introduction of the new speciality areas of Critical Care and Education;
 - the introduction of the new Master of Philosophy (Nursing) degree; and
 - the introduction of the new Master of Midwifery degree;
- and amend its Resolutions to effect this.

(2) Faculty of Science**(a) Master of Science (Environmental Science)**

*** The Board recommended the introduction of the new Master of Science (Environmental Science) degree and the amendment of the Resolutions of the Senate to effect this.

(b) Master of Science (Microscopy and Microanalysis)

Professor Hewitt drew attention to the fact that the duration of the proposed MSc (Microscopy and Microanalysis) was at variance with that of other master's degrees in the Faculty of Science.

Professor Lawrence reported that this matter had been discussed at the Graduate Studies' Working Party, and Professor Cockayne reported also that detailed discussions had been held on this issue.

*** The Board adopted the Chair's recommendation that the proposal for the introduction of the Master of Science (Microscopy and Microanalysis) degree be referred back to the Graduate Studies Committee.

2. Guidelines on the distinction between Major and Minor changes at postgraduate level

*** The Board endorsed the Guidelines on the distinction between Major and Minor changes at postgraduate level.

3. Electronic submission of theses

*** The Board noted the report.

4. Proceedings of the Committee**(1) Report of the PhD Award Sub-Committee****(2) Report of the Coursework Sub-Committee****(3) Mid-year offers of APAs****(4) Proposal for the introduction of a new Master of Occupational Therapy program****(5) Appointment of Working Parties to consider new and amended award programs****(6) Work in progress**

*** The Board noted the report.

P Part II: Report by the Chair of the Committee

Professor Lawrence reported that the Committee was responsible for the review of all aspects of postgraduate award programs including supervision and, with the assistance of its PhD Award Sub-

Committee and Coursework Sub-Committee, was addressing policy issues such as expediting the PhD examining process, including provision for electronic submission of theses, improving the guidelines for proposals for new and amended courses and taking an overview of the proliferating coursework programs across the University. In recent months the Committee had been considering a vast number of proposals for new courses for introduction in 1998. Its third Sub-Committee, the Postgraduate Awards Selection Committee, would commence work following the Board's determination about postgraduate awards.

P 89/97 Report of the Teaching and Learning Committee

The Chair reported that while there was no written report from the Committee, the item had been included in the agenda as a starred item to allow a brief oral report by the Committee's Chair. Professor Sefton was overseas, however, and no report would therefore be presented.

90/97 Report of the Research Committee

The following report had been circulated:

(see agenda item C4.)

Part I

1. **Revised Proposal for Use of University Research Grant Scheme Funds (URGS)**
2. **Research Infrastructure Block Grant (RIBG)**
3. **Research Committee Membership**
4. **Association of the Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee with the Research Committee**
5. **Report from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research)**
6. **Report from the Director, Research Development**
7. **Report from the Director, Research and Scholarships Office**

*** The Board noted the report.

P Part II: Report by the Chair of the Committee

Professor Cockayne reported that the Committee's reports to the Board highlighted areas of interest. At present the main issues being addressed by the Committee were conditions for Research Fellows, URGS guidelines, the Committee's membership and benchmarking.

P 91/97 Report of the Library and Information Technology Committee

There had been no written report from the Committee, but the Committee's Chair, Professor McPhedran, reported in the following terms on some of the issues of importance being addressed by the Library and Information Technology Committee and by its two Reference Groups:

- the development of the Library collection;
- the development of Library infrastructure (for example, the proposed Science Library building);
- the balance between electronic and paper information storage in the Library's collection;
- policies for student and staff access to information technology and codes of conduct for use of IT;
- policies ensuring equity of access to appropriate IT facilities for all parts of the University and all individuals within the University; and
- appropriate charging mechanisms for Internet usage.

92/97 Report of the Academic Staffing Committee

The following report had been circulated:

(see agenda item C6.)

Part I

- 1. Promotion of Academic Research-Only Staff to Levels B, C and D**
- 2. Draft Policy Document - Promotion of Academic Staff to Levels B, C and D**

*** The Board noted the report.

P Part II: Report by the Chair of the Committee

The Chair, as Chair of the Academic Staffing Committee, reported that the Committee was working on its policy document on “Academic Progression”, which, when finalised, would cover all aspects of academic employment from recruitment to retirement/resignation. The Committee would present recommendations on Promotions to Levels B to D to the September Board meeting. It was now considering promotion to Level E and personal chairs. Future policy matters to be addressed included clinical and other titles and the status of research-only staff.

Professor Young expressed his concerns regarding the criteria for promotion to a personal chair. The award of a personal chair is described by the University as an extraordinary step, with consideration only given to the most exceptionally distinguished members of the academic staff. Professor Young argued that there was a mismatch between this rhetoric and the number of staff who were actually promoted to personal chairs each year. He suggested there should be a clear distinction between a promotional chair and a personal chair, and questioned whether the University would then really need the latter.

P 93/97 Nominations for membership of the Appointments Board

The following report had been circulated:

(see agenda item C7.)

The Chair called for nominations to supplement the two that she had suggested.

*** The Board agreed to delegate to the Chair authority to determine the Academic Board nominations on its behalf.