



The University of Sydney

Academic Board

Meeting held on Wednesday 16 April 1997

Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Board held at 2.15 pm on Wednesday 16 April 1997 in the Professorial Board Room.

There were present: the Chair (Professor J M Mack) presiding, the Deputy Chairs (Professors D J H Cockayne, J Lawler and R Pesman), the Acting Deputy Chair (Professor A Sefton), the Vice-Chancellor and Principal (Professor G Brown), Professors C Adam and D Anderson, Associate Professors R Arnold and R Atherton, Ms S Baker, Ms K Beattie, Associate Professor H C Beh, Dr R Bohringer, Professors L W Burgess, K K Campbell, J P Carter, B Cass and R E Collins, Associate Professors L J Copeland and E Cornell, Ms K Curry, Associate Professor C J Durrant, Professors K Eltis, L D Field, D R Fraser and G Gill, Associate Professors C B Gillies and J Gordon, Professor M A Harris, Ms C Hyde, Associate Professor P Jones, Professors J F Kinnear and I J Klineberg, Associate Professor A F Masters, Professor R McPhedran, Dr R A Mitchell, Mr K Oliver, Mr M G Partridge, Dr M Peat, Emeritus Professor N Quarry, Dr A Reynolds, Professor S M Salsbury, Associate Professor M Sankey, Professor W Schworm, Associate Professor G M Stone and Mr R Wilson.

Present as observers were: Mrs S Chapman (Secretary to the Academic Board), Professor L M Koder, Mrs J Campbell, and Professors D Weisbrot and J A Young.

Present by invitation were: Ms L Maral, Mr A Potter, Mr T Robinson and Professor G E Sherington.

In attendance: Miss E R Ring.

P This symbol denotes items which were starred for discussion at the meeting. All other items were dealt with as recommended in the agenda.

27/97 Minutes

*** It was agreed that the minutes of the meeting of the Academic Board held on Wednesday 12 March 1997 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

28/97 Business arising out of the minutes

None.

29/97 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 agreed to note the report

2. Election of Chair of the Academic Board

*** The Board agreed to congratulate Professor Pesman on her election.

3. Admission of Local Fee-paying Undergraduate Students

*** The Board agreed to note the report.

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4. West Review of Higher Education

In speaking to the additional report that he had provided in the Supplementary agenda for the meeting, the Chair said that the Working Party had agreed that there were several areas in the working draft of the University's submission that it would like to see addressed differently. Little was known about the voucher system and what it entailed, and the Working Party had agreed that this issue should be considered. Those members who had attended the visit by the West Committee had advised that the support for students might be limited to three years. The Working Party had agreed that it should not necessarily be limited to three years, and not necessarily even just to first degrees, if recognition were to be given to flexible learning and career adaptability; there was a growing trend towards generalist education followed by professional degrees, such as the combined degree programs and programs restricted to graduate entry. The Working Party had also had concerns about the National Competition Policy and felt that the University should make a stronger statement about the need to quarantine the public sector teaching and research activities of higher education from sensible structural readjustments that could be prohibited by attempts to apply this Policy strictly within the sector. The Working Party had also been concerned about the necessity for there being a substantial continuing public commitment to the university sector and the possible lack of awareness that even the best private universities (such as Harvard) received half their operating funds from the public sector.

The Chair said that, in view of the imminent closing date for submissions, he sought authority from the Board to act in its best interest in respect of the preparation of a submission.

During the ensuing discussion, the Chair said that the Working Party would like the University's submission to have a much more positive conclusion rather than one that conceded that certain outcomes were inevitable.

The Vice-Chancellor said that he would be happy to receive additional suggestions and comments about the draft submission and that he too would prefer a single University submission to be made.

The Vice-Chancellor said that while the Board was focussed on the issue of the West Review, he would make the comments at this juncture that he had intended to make under item 3 of his report in respect of the visit by the West Committee. Three members of the Committee had visited the University mid-way through their round of visits. He had gained no sense of the Committee having developed firm ideas on any particular issues, and it had been difficult to distinguish between the members' personal views on matters as opposed to a Committee view and the recommendations it might be formulating. Following the visit he had received a friendly note in which Mr West had stressed the notion of diversity; this issue should therefore be incorporated into the University's submission, and he would pass the information on to the group working on the submission. The comments about diversity had indicated that the University should focus on the particular role of the University of Sydney within the wider, diverse educational system. The draft submission focussed initially on the University and then became more general; it should be more customised.

The Chair added that the terms of reference of the Review and the guidelines for submissions were difficult to reconcile, which made the preparation of a submission more difficult.

*** The Board agreed to note the report and to authorise the Chair to act on its behalf in respect of the preparation of a submission.

5. McGaw Review of the HSC

*** The Board agreed to note the report.

6. Semesterisation and nomenclature relating to academic programs and the academic year

*** The Board agreed to endorse the principles, as requested.

7. Student membership of the Academic Board

*** The Board agreed to appoint Mr Jesse McNicoll to the casual vacancy.

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8. Membership of Faculties by Pro-Vice-Chancellors (Colleges)

Mr Oliver expressed a number of concerns about the principle of provision being made for the Pro-Vice-Chancellors (College) to become members *ex officio* of faculties, as recommended by the Faculties of Dentistry, Health Sciences and Medicine. He made the following points:

- Pro-Vice-Chancellors are senior executive officers with administrative responsibility for co-ordinating the activities of the several faculties in ways that may, from time to time, satisfy some or none of them. Their *ex officio* membership of faculties (as opposed to regular administrative liaison with them) would consequently create the potential for confusion about the proper role of the Dean, who is formally the chief officer of the Faculty.
- Since membership of a Faculty carries with it, at least in a formal sense, amenability to the discipline of that Faculty, *ex officio* membership of multiple Faculties would render it possible for PVCs to be censured by Faculties in their official capacity. Since the exercise of faculty disciplinary powers over their own members is, in a formal sense, entirely legitimate, simultaneous amenability to the discipline of more than one faculty could, in future, be a source of embarrassment to PVCs.

In the ensuing discussion that addressed these concerns, Professor Young made the following points in support of the principle:

- There was precedent for the membership of faculties by the University's Executive/Senior Management as exemplified by the provisions for the Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor to be members *ex officio* of all faculties and boards of studies as well as of most other University committees.
- In respect of Board membership, the Vice-Chancellor reported to the Board through its Chair and in that context was open to censure by the Board. This provided a parallel in respect of provision for PVCs to be members of faculties, and in any event they would be open to faculty censure whether or not they were voting members of faculty.
- Pro-Vice-Chancellors were academics and were chosen, as were Deans and Deputy-Vice-Chancellors, to provide academic leadership as well as for management expertise. They were therefore best placed to work with faculties as one of their members.
- On a personal level, he was a Professor of Physiology and continued to work in that role. By virtue of holding that Chair, he was a member of both the Faculties of Medicine and Science and would not be resigning from faculty membership in that capacity.

Professor Weisbrot indicated that he did not wish formally to be a member of all of the constituent faculties in his College. Rather, he would prefer to receive the papers for all faculty meetings, would attend meetings from time to time to inform himself about local issues and concerns, and would always attend a meeting if specifically invited to do so. Professor Weisbrot suggested that formal membership and regular attendance by PVCs could have the effect of undermining the authority, or perceived authority, of Deans within their faculties.

The Chair observed that there appeared to be support for the notion of flexibility between how the various faculties and colleges addressed this matter, and that, at Mr Oliver's request, he would ask the Board to vote on each of the recommendations from the faculties in the College of Health Sciences.

*** The Board agreed to note the report.

9. Selection Committee for the Deanship of Medicine

*** The Board agreed to note the report.

10. Introduction of a “summer session”

*** The Board agreed to note the report.

11. Student Proctorial Panel: student members

*** The Board agreed to note the report.

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

*** The Board agreed to note the report.

13. Work in progress

*** The Board agreed to note the report.

14. Question Time

*** The Board agreed to note the report

P**Part II**

At the meeting the Chair reported on the following matter:

Board of Studies and the McGaw Report

The Chair reported that the Board of Studies was continuing to meet to consider issues emanating from the McGaw Report. The key recommendation for the Board of Studies was the structure of the curriculum in the senior years, this having significant implications for the school system. Recommendation 12 in the Review Report sought to produce consistency with a basic structure of two 2-unit courses being available in most subjects, with some overlap in material leading to assessment on a common scale. This would have an enormous impact on schools, given that at present their offerings depended in most part on their size. It would be of great concern not only to the tertiary sector in terms of university preparation but also in respect of equity if all schools were not able to offer the 2 plus 2 structure in Mathematics and Languages other than English (LOTE). More information was needed, however, before statements about this were made more public.

Many areas for concern were being discussed further by the parties concerned. The provision in Recommendation 25 that universities only receive university applicants' TERs had proved unworkable when the 1996 HSC results had been re-run on that basis: the relative scaled means of those subjects that traditionally go up were brought down, and vice versa, so that there was an overall movement closer to the original mean. It was believed, however, that a solution would be able to be provided to the Minister that would satisfy Freedom of Information and Privacy concerns but still allow the tertiary sector use of data allowing it to operate in a fair and equitable way in its selection processes. If the curriculum question could be resolved then the matter of assessment would require more work than the McGaw time-frame allowed: it needed a more gradual approach.

Professor McPhedran expressed concern that the Sciences would be disadvantaged in this change to scaling procedures, and that the McGaw Review was failing to recognise the importance of scientific literary education. The Chair said that it was appropriate for these sorts of concerns to be relayed to the Minister. He added that another area of concern was that the Review abolished the subject spread requirement in the HSC; the Board of Studies had been advised of survey results which indicated that some students would take only Mathematics and Science subjects for the HSC, together with English but no humanities subjects at all. He hoped that the spread requirement would be given further consideration.

Professor Eltis said that he had attended a DTEC briefing at which the two 2-unit courses issue had generated the most interest; schools were being asked to see if this structure could be time-tabled. There had also been discussion about the number of units required for the TER and the possibility of a larger number of vocational subjects being included. The universities would be asked for comment on how they would select students. The issue of membership of the Board of Studies being based on expertise rather than on constituency groups had also been discussed. The time-line for the implementation of the changes was currently seen as impossible.

The Vice-Chancellor reported that Professor Niland and he had been to see the Minister regarding the McGaw Report. They had raised the on-flow affects of the abolition of the 3-unit course in Mathematics for tertiary studies in areas such as engineering; as difficulties were perceived in making an exception for one subject, this cast doubts over the wider proposal. They had also made

the point about using the full cohort for determining TERs, especially in subjects with small candidatures.

*** The Board noted the report.

30/97 Statement by the Vice-Chancellor and Principal

The following reports had been circulated and tabled:

(see agenda and supplementary agenda item A5.)

Part I

1. Report on Senate Matters

*** The Board agreed to note the report.

P

2. Admission of Local Fee-paying Undergraduate Students

The Vice-Chancellor said that the paper presented to Senate had also been presented to the Board as it was one of the various groups which he wished to consult on the implementation of this initiative. Many of the issues and concerns which had been raised in respect of the initiative were based on a concern by some that any contact with privatisation inevitably corrupted, and the view was therefore expressed by some that tertiary education should be based totally on government funding. There was also a more moderate view, to which he personally ascribed, which recognised a balance between the external demand for higher education and the capacity of an institution to provide this given the public funding available at a given time, and which sought to find a reasonable compromise between the two.

In response to questions and comments, the Vice-Chancellor advised that every conceivable means of income generation, other than the introduction of places for local fee-paying undergraduate students, had been considered and continued to be considered. There were many issues associated with this initiative which needed to be discussed broadly within the University and he encouraged debate which would provide constructive comment.

The Chair said that areas of particular interest to the Board were the policies in respect of the admission and progression of students and the development and approval of courses. As indicated in his written report, he and the Chair of the Undergraduate Studies Committee had written to Deans seeking their advice on the admission procedures they wished to adopt for those courses which would be available to fee-paying students.

Concern was expressed about the potential for students to sue the University under the Trade Practices Act for failure to deliver what it advertised, and attention was drawn to the importance of the establishment of grievance resolution procedures. Concern was also expressed that policies and procedures which were adopted by the Board were not necessarily always implemented, and that there needed to be some form of executive/central action to ensure that faculties and departments implemented central policy.

The Vice-Chancellor said that the issue of fees highlighted what were areas of real concern. Recent events obliged the University to look carefully at the relations between faculties and the central management of the University. This was a sensitive area, but one that needed to be addressed. The Chair said that while the Board determined many policy matters, which were sensible and could be implemented, it could not assume or take responsibility for their implementation. This was a matter for the Chief Executive Officer to address through the Pro-Vice-Chancellors (Colleges) and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research).

In the ensuing discussion about what appeared to be false advertising by another tertiary institution and about the danger of misleading advertisement, there was general agreement on the importance of publicity material being checked thoroughly by faculties for its accuracy.

In response to questions about why only deans had been asked for advice on the selection procedures for fee-paying students, rather than the Board or even a wider spectrum of the University, the Chair said that the responses from the deans would be considered by the Undergraduate Studies Committee, which in turn reported to the Board. There was no

reason to suppose that any faculty would recommend procedures in variance with the current policies and practices of the Board. Once fee-paying students were admitted, their candidatures would be administered under the same rules and procedures as those of all other students. Associate Professor Atherton also pointed out that the request for advice from deans was only the beginning of the consultative process; the faculties were broadly representative sections of the University and their memberships comprised, *inter alia*, student and external members. Initial consultation through deans was a sensible way to begin.

In respect of questions about how equity and access issues were to be addressed, the Chair said that the memorandum to deans reminded them that once the level of income distribution from fees was known, faculties would be expected to provide advice on how the provisions for increased access and equity would be addressed. He said that he would provide a copy of the memorandum to deans for inclusion in the May Board agenda papers. He would welcome advice on the process of making offers, which would be the next step of the process.

In response to a question about how consultation with students would be structured, the Vice-Chancellor responded in the following terms: There was no one single consultative mechanism, but rather an ongoing, evolving process, progressing from Senate's agreement in principle based on the background discussion paper to actual implementation. He envisaged a number of discussion papers being circulated for comment as each stage of the process was developed. He encouraged broad consultation, and was happy for the discussion papers to be referred formally to the student associations for comment.

*** The Board noted the report.

P **3. Review of Higher Education Financing and Policy**

*** The Board noted that the Vice-Chancellor had reported on this matter under the Chair's report.

P **Part II**

*** The Board noted that the Vice-Chancellor's oral report had been given under the Chair's report and under Part I of his report.

31/97 Report by the Vice-Chancellor and Principal on proctorial matters

*** The Board noted that the Vice-Chancellor tabled a report.

32/97 Report of the Academic Forum

The following report had been circulated:

(see agenda item A12.)

1. **Forum focus: Semesterisation and the University**
2. **Report from the Chair of the Academic Forum**
3. **Report from the Vice-Chancellor**
4. **Report from the Chair of the Academic Board**

*** The Board agreed to note the report.

P **33/97 Report of the Faculty of Dentistry**

The following report had been circulated:

(see agenda item B5.)

Amendment of the Resolutions of the Senate: Constitution of the Faculty of Dentistry

The item had been starred and the request had been made that the Board vote on the Faculty's recommendation.

*** The Board agreed, on the voices, to recommend the amendment of the Resolutions of the Senate, as recommended. Mr Oliver requested that his dissent be recorded.

34/97 Report of the Faculty of Education

The following report had been circulated:

(see agenda item B7.)

Amendment of the Resolutions of the Senate: Constitution of the Faculty of Education

*** The Board agreed to recommend the amendment of the Resolutions of the Senate, as recommended.

P 35/97 Report of the Faculty of Health Sciences

The following report had been circulated:

(see agenda item B9.)

Amendment of the Resolutions of the Senate: Constitution of the Faculty of Health Sciences

The item had been starred and the request had been made that the Board vote on the Faculty's recommendation.

*** The Board agreed, on the voices, to recommend the amendment of the Resolutions of the Senate, as recommended. Mr Oliver requested that his dissent be recorded.

P 36/97 Report of the Faculty of Medicine

The following report had been circulated:

(see agenda item B11.)

A. First report of the Faculty of Medicine

Amendment of the Resolutions of the Senate: Constitution of the Faculty of Medicine

The item had been starred and the request had been made that the Board vote on the Faculty's recommendation.

*** The Board agreed, on the voices, to recommend the amendment of the Resolutions of the Senate, as recommended. Mr Oliver requested that his dissent be recorded.

B. Second report of the Faculty of Medicine

Amendment of the Resolutions of the Senate: Constitution of the Faculty of Medicine

*** The Board agreed to recommend the amendment of the Resolutions of the Senate, as recommended.

37/97 Report of the Undergraduate Studies Committee

The following report had been circulated:

(see agenda item C1.)

Proceedings of the Committee

1. Committee membership

2. Priority areas for the Committee

(1) **New nomenclature and credit point values**

(2) **Approval mechanisms for new courses and major changes to existing courses**

(3) **Admissions**

(4) **Evaluation of the Committee's performance**

(5) **Terms of Reference of the USC**

(6) **Reference from the Teaching and Learning Committee: Academic Policies**

3. New award programs

(1) **Bachelor of Science and Technology/Bachelor of Laws**

(2) **Liberal Studies/Liberal Arts course**

*** The Board agreed to note the report.

38/97 Report of the Graduate Studies Committee

The following report had been circulated:

(see agenda item C2.)

1. **Amendment and rescission of Resolutions of the Academic Board**
Rescission of Resolutions of the Academic Board:
 - Electron Microscopy For Higher Degree Candidates
 - Postgraduate Students: Faculty In Which Candidature Should Normally Proceed
 - Research Students In The Scientific Laboratories**Amendment of Resolutions of the Academic Board:**
 - Form and binding of the thesis
- *** The Board agreed to rescind and amend its resolutions, as recommended.
2. **Levels of award and nomenclature for Master's degrees and grading systems for postgraduate award programs**
- *** The Board agreed to adopt the report and its recommendations.
3. **Proceedings of the Committee**
 - (1) Administration of graduate candidatures
 - (2) Postgraduate Awards Selection Sub-Committee
 - (3) Medium or form in which theses are presented
 - (4) Meeting of Departmental Postgraduate Co-ordinators
 - (5) Graduate Studies Coursework Sub-Committee
 - (6) Seminars for Supervisors of Postgraduate Students
 - (7) Faculty reports on postgraduate teaching and reviews of postgraduate coursework
 - (8) Postgraduate Studies Handbook
 - (9) 1997 postgraduate enrolments
 - (10) Work in progress
- *** The Board agreed to note the report.

39/97 Report of the Teaching and Learning Committee

The following report had been circulated:

(see agenda item C3.)

1. **Priority Areas**
 - High Priority**
 - (1) Review of Generic Attributes of Graduates
 - (2) Graduate Students' Teaching Loads
 - (3) Upgrading of Qualifications of Secondary School Teachers
 - (4) Distance Education/Flexible Learning
 - (5) Intellectual Property
 - (6) Brokering Role
 - Areas considered Important but Deferred at this Stage**
 2. **Policy Review**
 - (1) Examinations and Assessment
 - (2) Communication Skills of Students
 - (3) Statement on the Management of Teaching Activities
 3. **Other Issues**
 - (1) WAMs and the Honours Year
 - (2) Size of the Committee
- *** The Board agreed to note the report.

40/97 Report of the Research Committee

The following report had been circulated:

(see agenda item C4.)

1. **Report of the Australian Research Council Visit to The University of Sydney on 1 October 1996**
- *** The Board agreed to note the report.

2. Teaching and Learning Committee - Review of Academic Policies in the Area of Teaching and Learning

*** The Board agreed to note the report.

3. Review of the Paper Entitled "Key Issues in Australian Electronic Publishing"

*** The Board agreed to note the report.

P

4. Conditions to be Provided to ARC and NHMRC Research Fellows

In response to a number of questions about the recommendations, Professor Cockayne responded in the following terms. The ARC had pointed out the differences across the University in the conditions offered fellows, and a great deal of consultation had been undertaken in arriving at the recommendations. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) had thought that about \$5000 would be adequate for each fellow, which would amount to some \$1500 to \$2000 per annum, and was a relatively small amount. While some fellows such as the U2000 Fellows were already supported, it had been considered that all fellows should be provided with this assistance. The issue of whether there were sufficient funds available was a matter for the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) and the Vice-Chancellor. Any changes to the list of fellows in section (d) of the recommendations would be reported to the Board.

*** The Board agreed to adopt in principle the recommendations in respect of the conditions to be provided to the categories of research fellow listed and to commend to the Vice-Chancellor for his endorsement those recommendations with resource implications.

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5. Report from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research)

In response to a question about the source of funding for termination payments, the Chair said that the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) was discussing this with Industrial Relations staff.

Professor Young said that in most cases termination payments were small, unless the person was relatively senior and had been employed for a long time.

*** After a brief discussion, the Board agreed to note the report.

6. Report from the Director, Business Liaison Office.

*** The Board agreed to note the report.

7. Report of the Director, Research Development

*** The Board agreed to note the report.

8. Report of the Director, Research and Scholarships Office

*** The Board agreed to note the report.

9. Research Forum

*** The Board agreed to note the report.

41/97 Report of the Library and Information Technology Committee

The following report had been circulated:

(see agenda item C5.)

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1. **Chair of the IT Reference Group**
2. **Joint ITC/LITC Working Party on Student access to dedicated student Laboratories**
3. **Paper on ITC and its Sub-Committees**
4. **Proposed membership of Reference Groups**
Library Reference Group
Information Technology Reference Group
5. **Library Issues for Referral to Library References Groups**
6. **IT Issues for Referral to IT References Groups**

The Chair reported that Ms Curry, who had had to leave the meeting, had starred Item 3. in the report with a view to asking about further developments, and about the composition of the proposed International Relations Committee and provision on it for student membership. He reported that a meeting had been held with Professor Kinnear to produce draft terms of reference for the Committee and said that he would look into the proposed membership provisions in respect of student membership. It was hoped that recommendations could be presented to the May Board meeting and that the Committee could be set up in June.

*** The Board agreed to note the report.

42/97 Report of the Academic Staffing Committee

The following reports had been circulated:

(see agenda item C6.)

A. First report of the Academic Staffing Committee

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3. Matters referred to Committee - Promotion appeals

In response to a request for clarification of the proposed procedures relating to promotions, Professor Pesman said that where the Central Committee did not endorse the FPAC recommendation, the Chair of the Central Committee would prepare a separate report on each candidate, outlining the reasons for its decision, and that that report could then be made available to the unsuccessful applicant.

*** The Board agreed to approve the recommendations, subject to the amendment set out in the preamble to the report.

B. Second report of the Academic Staffing Committee

1. Title of Emeritus Professor

*** The Board agreed to endorse the recommendation and recommend its adoption by Senate.

2. Promotions appeals

*** The Board agreed to note the report.

3. "Policy Document - Support and Progression of Academic Staff"

*** The Board agreed to note the report.

4. Research only positions

*** The Board agreed to note the report.

5. Information sessions on selection committee techniques for Academic Board nominees

*** The Board agreed to note the report.

6. Committee membership

*** The Board agreed to approve the recommendation.

P

43/97 Nomination of members of the Advisory Committee for the Centre for Continuing Education

The following report had been circulated:

(see agenda item C7.)

*** The Board agreed to nominate the following persons for reappointment to the Advisory Committee for the Centre for Continuing Education, subject to their availability:

Dr S MacAlister

Professor T Underwood.