



Academic Board Agenda

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SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

for the meeting on Wednesday 21 September 2005

Pages

- ★ 1. **Apologies**
Apologies have been received from:
Professors M Jackson, R McCallum, G Moore and P Parkinson, Associate Professors B Buckley, C Peck, A Welch, S West and P Windsor, Drs K Bosward, R Dixon, A Elias, J Hughes, P Knight, A Poulos and A Van Schaik, Ms M Hopwood, Mr J Shipp, Ms T Thornley and Ms J Vaughan.

- ★ 5. **Report of the Chair**
 - 5.2 **General report**
 - 5.2.3 **Election of Academic Staff Members from Faculties to the Academic Board** 3

Recommendation
That the Academic Board note the report on the election of academic staff members from faculties to the Academic Board, as set out in the report presented.

- 12. **Report of the Research Committee**
(Professor John Carter)

- ★ 12.1 **Oral report of the Chair**

Recommendation
That the Academic Board note the report of the Chair of the Research Committee.

- 12.2 **Report of the meeting held on 31 August 2005** 4
 - 12.2.1 **Receipt of report**

Recommendation
That the Academic Board receive and note the report of the Research Committee meeting held on 31 August 2005.

 - 12.2.3 **Proceedings of the Committee** 4-7

Recommendation
That the Academic Board note the proceedings of the Research Committee meeting held on 31 August 2005, as set out in the report presented.

13. Report of the Academic Staffing Committee
(Professor Chris Murphy)

The report of the Committee meeting of 24 August 2005 will be held over until the Academic Board meeting of 2 November 2005.

AGENDA ITEM 5
Report of the Chair

5.2 General Report

5.2.3 Election of Academic Staff Members from Faculties to the Academic Board

In addition to the advice outlined in the main agenda, faculties have provided the following advice:

Architecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Vacancy</i>• <i>Vacancy</i>• <i>Vacancy</i>
Dentistry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Associate Professor Wendell Evans• Professor Gregory Murray• Dr Tania Gerzina
Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professor Penny Gay• Dr Richard Stanton• Associate Professor Catharine Lumby• Associate Professor Alison Bashford• Dr Ian Maxwell
Economics and Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Vacancy</i>• <i>Vacancy</i>• <i>Vacancy</i>• <i>Vacancy</i>• <i>Vacancy</i>

Recommendation

That the Academic Board note the report on the election of academic staff members from faculties to the Academic Board, as set out in the report presented.

AGENDA ITEM 12
Report of the Research Committee

12.2 Report of the Research Committee meeting held on 31 August 2005

The Committee met on 31 August 2005 when there were present: The Chair (Professor J Carter) presiding, Professors M Behnia, D Burke, D Cook, Merlin Crossley, M Harris, B Haynes, T Hirst, C Pollock, S Simpson, K White, Associate Professor A Masters, Drs A Black, J Mackey, R O'Connor, and Mr W Dawson.

12.2.1 Receipt of Report

The Committee **recommends** that the Academic Board receive and note the following report of the meeting held on 31 August 2005.

12.2.2 Proceedings of the Committee

(1) Principles informing research training

Associate Professor Masters presented the concept of the “Magnificent Seven” research student attributes – the acquisition of research skills; an appreciation and understanding of the research environment; an understanding of the management of research; enhanced personal effectiveness; a range of effective communication skills; team working and leadership skills; planning, career development skills, introspection – as a starting point for discussion. There was consensus that the Research Committee and the Graduate Studies Committee would need to work together in agreeing on these principles. The Chair requested feedback on these points; discussion would continue at the next meeting.

With regard to the place of academic freedom and the exposition of ideas in these principles, it was noted that the points themselves have the idea of “academic freedom” embedded within them. The suggestion then was that perhaps there could be some overarching values such as academic freedom etc. upon which the specific attributes were predicated.

(2) Definition of research active staff

This item was considered in light of the correspondence from Professor Patrick Parkinson (Item 4.1 of the agenda). Of particular concern to Professor Parkinson is how to assess newly appointed staff (less than three years), early career researchers and those on maternity leave or leave without pay.

Those present agreed that these were indeed significant and relevant problems for other areas of the University. It was pointed out that (in agreement with one of the proposed solutions in the letter) this year those appointed within the last three years have been excluded from the calculation for funding allocation. Also that the assessment was restricted to Level B academics and above. Another solution suggested by Professor Parkinson was that research activity be assessed pro rata for those that had been on some form of leave. This suggestion was seen as having some merit. The assessment of activity is currently also at the discretion of the Deans as they have to be able to provide an accurate number of RA staff. However, it might be perceived that the Deans, could have a conflict between acting in the interests of the University and in the interests of their Faculties. The discussion highlighted the number of potential exceptions to the criteria including outstanding Level A postdocs and clinicians involved in large multi-centre activities, who were not necessarily recognized for their inputs and might therefore fail the definition, even though they are active. Perhaps the strongest agreement was on the fact that there will always be exceptions, though this fact might be better thought of as accommodating different circumstances.

Concern was expressed that there may be three year (short) appointments to get around the definition, but it was also pointed out that although the University reports a percentage of research active staff (to DEST), internal funding is allocated on the basis of absolute numbers – counting of individuals. In the end only 30% of funding is allocated on this basis.

The final piece of the discussion was that the RQF would certainly recognise all these issues and the strategy of the University is to align itself where possible with the RQF. In any case, the University should continue to encourage the appointment of research active staff (“everyone has to bat”).

On behalf of the Committee the Chair will reply to Professor Parkinson indicating that his suggestions are appreciated, but that no change will be made to the definition at this time. Any changes that may occur would only be in order to align the definition with the RQF.

(3) Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery, Report of the Director of Research – Professor Kate White

Professor White circulated a detailed presentation and highlighted the following key points: Research performance has fluctuated and there has been much change in the Faculty. This lack of continuity has been a challenge to growing research activity. There has also been a focus this year on three new curricula, moving to become a graduate faculty, and higher degree completions.

The new strategic plan for the Faculty has the following key objective: establish the Faculty as a leader in nursing and healthcare research at national and international levels. This will be achieved through a number of strategies focusing on (i) increasing capacity, and (ii) create a better research environment. Other goals of the Faculty are to: grow research across all areas, including teaching; increase research income; and increase external partnerships and collaborations.

In order to meet these objectives and goals the Faculty: will make key appointments to increase capacity; has created the Research Development and Support Unit; establish three new courses in 2006; build the confidence of researchers; make a specific push for ARC linkage grants; introduce a faculty scheme for collaborative grants; encourage research as a focus; map career planning and research activity; establish MOUs and Clinical Chairs; initiate and support other internal activities to foster interaction and showcasing of their own work; and, improve data management and storage.

Some of the key challenges for the Faculty are: how to support students doing research; how to improve the overall research environment; how would the Faculty deal with the RQF; and, the staff profile in the Faculty.

Professor White acknowledged the strong support the faculty has been receiving from across the University in this process.

In the discussion that followed several points were raised:

- That there was limited opportunity for a nursing CRC (on the health care workforce) but there is some push at present for a national nursing initiative. The context is that there are vastly differing opinions on what roles should be for doctors and nurses and what the optimal health care worker looks like.
- It was pointed out the College of Health Sciences receives significant support from the NSW Government with regard to appointments in other Faculties
- The Faculty is working to foster increased mobility of staff and interaction between those in the faculty and hospitals.
- The fundamental challenge for Nursing and Midwifery is building the confidence of the staff and creating a strong research focused environment.

The Chair and Professor Hirst both thanked Professor White and acknowledged the vibrant and positive work she was doing.

(4) Faculty of Engineering, Research Committee Report – Professor Brian Haynes

Professor Haynes presented the following achievements for the Faculty of Engineering: 18 new ARC DP’s for 2005; new research partnership with DSTO; 40% of overall funding from research; significant industry research; >90% research active staff; 2 Federation Fellows; and almost 10% of University strategic research.

Specific research areas that have been successful are robotics, geotechnics, materials, steel structures, and fluid mechanics.

The Strategic Plan for the Faculty focuses on: increasing numbers of postgraduate students and postdoctoral candidates, particularly from overseas; encouraging interdisciplinary research and collaboration; bioengineering (where they were recently unable to fill a Chair and in general struggle to attract good people); and targeting ARC linkage. The Faculty is already considering the possible incorporation of the School of IT should that proceed.

The issue of recruiting and growing the numbers of students attracted much discussion. A general feeling was that growth is limited by the ability to attract top quality postgraduate students (and also postdocs to some extent). One part of the picture is certainly financial but top-ups are standard practice in Engineering. The main factor is the supply of suitably qualified candidates - Engineering for example has APAIs but can not fill them with good candidates. The Faculty is seeking to address the supply through the establishment of a summer internship program for high-performing students about to enter their final undergraduate year.

The situation with international students is somewhat different. There is generally a good supply of these but they generally need funds to enable them to study here. Even if they can obtain a stipend scholarship, there remains the tuition fee. In Engineering, scholarships paid from industry contract or consulting funds are offered to cover these and there is usually an arrangement for the Faculty and School to allow the corresponding international student fee income that filters down to be remitted to the scholarship provider. This arrangement works because there is recognition that the income forgone by the Faculty and Schools is more than offset by the value of the research income (directly through contracts or indirectly through funding formulae) that these students contribute to. This approach was discussed by the Committee – in some areas, the balance of the cost of students vs. generated income is apparently seen as zero gain and income forgone is equated to a loss.

There would need to be a groundswell of support to significantly change the current system for funding students, but in any case there should be an aggressive campaign to increase external support for local and international students.

The discussion concluded with a request to Professor Behnia (Dean of Graduate Studies) to provide some strategy points with regard to how to move forward at a University level on recruiting and funding international students. Some key issues to consider would be: how to grow the international cohort (double); how might a central model for funding scholarships work; articulation from coursework to research; and, potential ideas for generating sustainable, extra income for research training.

(5) Reports

Professor Hirst reported that the Innovation Challenge was proving very successful. With regard to the RQF, the Expert Advisory Group had met to consider the framework for the program and that draft metrics/guidelines would be available shortly. Once those details were announced, the University would be able to move forward on several relevant matters.

Professor Hirst presented a memorandum to the Committee describing the new Fellowships Initiative. There would be funding for ~50 fellowships, the two key schemes being comparable to Federation Fellowships and QEII Fellowships. The Fellowships will be heavily advertised (from early October) both internationally and locally in order to attract outstanding researchers.

Professor Behnia reported that the Vice Chancellor had made three awards for excellence in higher degree supervision, including awards to Professors Merlin Crossley and Tony Masters (whose achievements were duly recognized by the Committee). Professor Behnia also reported on the successful student induction program for Semester 2, 2005.

Mr Dawson communicated the upcoming presentation by the ARC/NHMRC on Thinking Systems as part of the ARC's Special Research Initiatives Program. Mr Dawson also reported on a workshop due to be held on September 26 focussed on EU funding schemes and how academics might access them – further advertising of this workshop will follow.