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## ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND POLICY COMMITTEE

2:00pm – 4:00pm, Tuesday 30 May 2017

Senate Room, Quadrangle (A14)

**Members Present:** Professor Jane Hanrahan (Chair); Helen Agus (Science); Dr Vasiliki Betihavas (Nursing); Isabella Brook (President, SRC); Karen Cochrane (Nominee of the President, SUPRA); Dr Frances Di Lauro (Arts & Social Sciences); Associate Professor Geoff Frost (Business); Associate Professor Peter Gibbens (Engineering & IT); Professor Manuel Graeber (Medicine); Kerrie Henderson (Office of General Counsel); Associate Professor Glen Hill (Architecture, Design & Planning); Associate Professor Tony Masters (Chair of the Academic Board); Associate Professor Peter McCallum (for Professor Pip Pattison (Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education))); Associate Professor Maurice Peat (Business); Associate Professor Jennifer Rowley (Conservatorium); Dr Debra Shirley (Health Sciences); Professor Anne Twomey (Law).

**Attendees:** Dr Matthew Charet (Secretary); Associate Professor Ross Coleman (Director, Graduate Research) (for Items 5.1 and 5.2).

**Apologies:** Associate Professor Tim Allender (Education & Social Work); Associate Professor Alex Chaves (Veterinary Science); Associate Professor Veysel Kayser (Pharmacy); Georgia Mantle (Student, Arts & Social Sciences); Professor Pip Pattison (Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)) (Associate Professor Peter McCallum attending instead); Amy Wenham (Student, Nursing).

4/2017

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## MINUTES

### 1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Apologies were noted as recorded above.

### 2 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

#### 2.1 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a true record.

**Resolution ASPC17/4-1**

*That the Academic Standards and Policy Committee resolve that the minutes of meeting 3/2017, held on 18 April 2017, be confirmed as a true record.*

#### 2.2 Business Arising

There was no business arising.

### 3 STANDING ITEMS

#### 3.1 Report of the Chair

The Chair advised that she had nothing to report.

**Resolution ASPC17/4-2**

*That the Academic Standards and Policy Committee note the report of the Chair.*

#### 3.2 Report of Academic Board

In addition to the written report circulated with the agenda, Associate Professor Masters advised that at its 17 May meeting, Senate was provided with a verbal report on the proposed *University of Sydney (Academic Board) Rule 2017*, which is intended to replace the current *University of Sydney (Academic Governance) Rule 2003 (as amended)*. As the Academic Board was advised on 2 May, it is also proposed to separate election procedures from the Rule, and a set of draft Procedures is currently in development. This will allow more agile adoption of electronic election management without requiring the change to be approved by Senate.

Several recommendations were made in the Report of the Review of the Academic Board, as received earlier in the year, to free up Academic Board meeting time to discuss strategic matters,

and several possible mechanisms to enable this were also advised to Senate. These include starring items presented as part of the reports of the Standing Committees only in advance of the meeting (rather than from the floor), and of possibly restructuring committees to include membership directly from the members of the Academic Board as well as retaining representation from faculties and PSUs as currently. Ms Henderson reminded members that any proposals that require the Academic Board to exercise its delegated authority will still need to be approved by the Academic Board and not by a committee. Committee structures are slated for review as the next substantial part of the implementation of the Review's recommendations, and members were advised that the Rule is intended to allow the Board to determine its own committee structures.

The Committee noted the written report circulated with the agenda.

**Resolution ASPC17/4-3**

*That the Academic Standards and Policy Committee note the report of the Academic Board meeting held on 2 May 2017.*

## 4 ITEMS FOR ACTION

### 4.1 University of Sydney (Academic Board) Rule 2017

The Committee was provided with the version of the Rule that was submitted to the University Executive as part of the consultation process, which incorporates amendments identified after discussion of an earlier draft at the 2 May meeting of the Academic Board.

Prior to the meeting, Professor Graeber had circulated comments on the amendment of clause 2.2(1), which sets out the Academic Board's role in determining standards and policy. He observed that in his opinion, the wording as presented "will emasculate the Academic Board". In discussion, this opinion was reported as emerging from a perception of organisational hierarchy which places the powers of the Academic Board below that of the University Executive, because the Academic Board is only able to determine policy in consultation with management and not under its own recognisance. Professor Graeber expressed a preference for retaining the original wording relating to the authority of the Academic Board as formulated in the *Academic Governance Rule*; Ms Cochrane confirmed SUPRA's support for retention of this wording as well.

Associate Professor Masters advised that the revised wording clearly reflects the basis of the Academic Board's authority, which derives from the Act, By-Law and Rules of Senate, and that the formulation in the current *Academic Governance Rule* is ambiguous and more restrictive than the proposed formulation. He also advised that Senate requires policy approval to be a consultative process regardless of who the 'owner' of the policy is, and that the Academic Board and University Executive are therefore required to mutually consult when relevant to the policy under development. Further, because the Academic Board is the controlling entity for policy in specific areas as detailed in the Rule, the Academic Board has the controlling decision in any relevant policy, and can act contrary to advice received from the University Executive if it identifies a need to do so; the University Executive therefore does not have a veto and cannot block relevant policies from coming to the Academic Board, but is a valued contributor to the policy development process. Associate Professor Masters also confirmed that 'consultation' does not mean 'agreement'. Ms Henderson further advised that as defined in the Rule, reference to the University Executive refers specifically to the committee of that name, and not to the members of the executive of the University. Associate Professor Peat expressed concern with endorsing the proposal to the Academic Board before agreement has been reached on the wording of clause 2.2(1) and Associate Professor Masters indicated his comfort with putting the matter to a vote at the Academic Board if required.

The Committee was advised that based on feedback received to date, clause 4.3 has been amended to enable the appointment of chairs of Standing Committees by the Chair of Academic Board rather than by the Academic Board itself. This will enable the appointment of chairs before the first committee meeting following the election of new members (which will otherwise not occur until the second meeting). The Chair of Academic Board is empowered to chair any meeting of a Standing Committee, and the term of office for the Deputy Chair will also be extended until a new appointment is made following the election of new members. Professor Twomey requested the update of the schedule to accurately reflect the names of University schools, and Ms Cochrane asked that clause 3.4(4)(a) be reworded to include a requirement that fifty per cent of student representatives be drawn from each of the undergraduate and postgraduate cohorts. Mrs Agus

advised that this matter had been raised and discussed at the Composition Working Group (which had been attended by the SUPRA Co-Presidents) and it had been agreed that a fifty per cent representation requirement was problematic as not all faculties have an equally-sized student population (Medicine, for example, is heavily post-graduate in its course offerings). The proposed wording reflects this and allows for guaranteed representation from both cohorts. Clarification of the definition of 'student' was also suggested.

The committee endorsed this proposal for presentation to the Academic Board for approval.

**Resolution ASPC17/4-4**

*That the Academic Standards and Policy Committee recommend that the Academic Board endorse the adoption of the University of Sydney (Academic Board) Rule 2017, as presented.*

## **5 ITEMS FOR NOTING**

### **5.1 Identifying, embedding and reporting graduate qualities for the Sydney PhD**

Associate Professor Coleman spoke to this paper, which emerges from a long-term discussion regarding the purpose and student outcomes of PhD study at the University. He advised members that the majority of PhD graduates are no longer seeking careers in academia and so it is desirable to highlight to potential employers the benefits imparted by the PhD experience, as well as ensuring that HDR training is equipping graduates for careers outside academia. Consideration of this matter forms part of the Strategic Plan 2016-2020, with a focus on what distinguishes a Sydney education from that of our competitors. This paper represents the first phase of discussion by proposing a set of graduate qualities on which feedback is invited. Phase Two will entail the development of mechanisms to ensure delivery and measurement of achievement against these qualities, and is not the focus of the current paper.

In discussion, Ms Cochrane confirmed that SUPRA has solicited responses to the proposal and will communicate this feedback directly to Associate Professor Coleman. The challenge of moving from our current 'one-size-fits-all' approach to PhD training was highlighted, with observation that students enter the PhD with different prior experience, different expectations and different needs, which are also likely to change throughout candidature. Determining what students and employers want is also challenging. Associate Professor Coleman noted that we currently examine the thesis, and not the candidate, and that this may also need to change (thought the adoption of a compulsory *viva*, for example).

Professor Twomey recommended that whatever framework is developed, it should not be too onerous for the student as there may be negative consequences to requiring completion of compulsory activities as part of candidature. Associate Professor Coleman observed that it is also undesirable to adopt a 'tick-the-box' approach or divert from the research process and the intellectual rigour that this should bring. Responsiveness to discipline specifics is necessary, with acknowledgement of the different needs of performance-based disciplines particularly noted (although it was also observed that these disciplines are often ahead in this area because they already 'examine the candidate' rather than being solely based on the examination of a text-based thesis).

Associate Professor Coleman advised that a number of fora have been set up to explore nuances of the proposal with students and academic and professional staff. The importance of ensuring that qualities are not contradictory (for example, needing to balance deep expertise with inter-disciplinarity) was also emphasised. It was observed that most research supervisors are already imparting non-research-specific qualities with varied emphases and levels of effect, and that mechanisms to articulate and measure what we are already doing would be valuable. It was also observed that the process of thinking more deeply about these aspects of research training is valuable in itself. Associate Professor Frost asked when graduate qualities for postgraduate coursework courses will be available and was advised that this is on the radar, along with vertically integrated undergraduate/postgraduate programs, and that postgraduate coursework is also on the Federal Government's radar, along with discussion of making such courses Commonwealth Supported.

Members were requested to disseminate the paper to their colleagues and students inviting feedback, with any comments to be returned directly to Associate Professor Coleman. A 'what happens next' paper including a work slate is anticipated to be presented to the Academic Board

later in the year.

The committee noted this proposal, which will be presented to the Academic Board with the endorsement of the Graduate Studies Committee.

**Resolution ASPC17/4-5**

*That the Academic Standards and Policy Committee note the proposed draft graduate qualities for the University of Sydney PhD, as presented, for broader consultation with the University community; and note this preliminary report on the issues to be addressed and next steps to be taken in finalising, embedding and reporting on graduate qualities for the University of Sydney PhD.*

**5.2 Providing Extra Advice to Associate Deans (RE) with Respect to Theses containing Potential Issues of Academic Dishonesty**

Associate Professor Coleman spoke to this paper and advised that it has emerged from an inconsistent approach to handling cases of suspected academic dishonesty arising during the thesis submission process. It is proposed that an academic be appointed to conduct a risk assessment for all cases across the University, which will be forwarded to the relevant Associate Dean prior to an academic decision being made. The merits of the case can then be assessed on a consistent basis institution-wide. Ms Henderson requested that the Office of General Counsel be consulted in the formulation of a risk assessment to ensure that process risk is minimalised. Ms Cochrane confirmed SUPRA's support of the proposal and asked for further opportunity for consultation with HDR students prior to full implementation.

The committee noted the paper as presented.

**Resolution ASPC17/4-6**

*That the Academic Standards and Policy Committee note the changes in the process of considering theses with potential academic honesty issues.*

**6 OTHER BUSINESS**

**6.1 Any Other Business**

There was no business arising.

There being no other business, the meeting concluded at 3:32pm.

**Next meeting:** 2:00pm – 4:00pm, **Tuesday 11 July 2017**  
Senate Room, Quadrangle

A full copy of the Academic Standards and Policy Committee papers is available at:  
[sydney.edu.au/secretariat/pdfs/academic-board-committees/academic-standards/2017/20170530-ASPC-Agenda-Pack.pdf](http://sydney.edu.au/secretariat/pdfs/academic-board-committees/academic-standards/2017/20170530-ASPC-Agenda-Pack.pdf).