
ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND POLICY COMMITTEE

2:00pm – 4:00pm, Tuesday 8 August 2017

Senate Room, Quadrangle (A14)

Members Present: Professor Jane Hanrahan (Chair); Helen Agus (Science) (from 3:15pm); Associate Professor Tim Allender (Education & Social Work); Andrew Barnes (Conservatorium); Dr Vasiliki Betihavas (Nursing); Isabella Brook (President, SRC); Associate Professor Alex Chaves (Veterinary Science); Dr Frances Di Lauro (Arts & Social Sciences); Kerrie Henderson (Office of General Counsel); Associate Professor Glen Hill (Architecture, Design & Planning); Associate Professor Veysel Kayser (Pharmacy); Dr Peter Knight (Medicine); Associate Professor Tony Masters (Chair of the Academic Board); Associate Professor Peter McCallum (Director, Educational Strategy) (for Professor Pip Pattison); Kiriti Mortha (Co-President, SUPRA); Associate Professor John O'Byrne (Science) (until 3:20pm); Associate Professor Maurice Peat (Medicine); Professor Anne Twomey (Law); Amy Wenham (Undergraduate Student).

Attendees: Dr Matthew Charet (Secretary); Myrophora Koureas (former Policy Analyst, Office of the DVC (Education)).

Apologies: Associate Professor Geoff Frost (Business); Associate Professor Vincent Gomes (Engineering & IT); Professor Manuel Graeber (Medicine); Associate Professor Mark Melatos (Arts and Social Sciences); Professor Pip Pattison (Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)) (Associate Professor McCallum attending instead);

6/2017

UNCONFIRMED MINUTES

1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed new members Andrew Barnes (from the Sydney College of the Arts) and Associate Professor Vincent Gomes (from the Faculty of Engineering & Information Technologies), and extended apologies as recorded above.

2 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

2.1 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 July 2017 were approved as a true record of that meeting.

Resolution ASPC17/6-1

That the Academic Standards and Policy Committee resolve that the minutes of meeting 5/2017, held on 11 July 2017, be confirmed as a true record.

2.2 Business Arising

There was no business arising from the previous meeting.

3 STANDING ITEMS

3.1 Report of the Chair

The Chair advised the meeting that she had nothing to report.

Resolution ASPC17/6-2

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

3.2 Report of Academic Board

Further to the written report circulated with the agenda, Associate Professor Masters informed the committee that at its 25 July 2017 meeting, the Academic Board passed a motion to amend the proposed *University of Sydney (Academic Board) Rule 2017* to extend the electorate for election of the Chair to include *ex officio* members of the Academic Board. Ordinarily, such a change would have been referred back to the committee for discussion, but in this instance timing necessitates the presentation of the amended Rule to Senate at its next meeting. This is to enable the conduct

of elections later this year for the 2018 term of office.

Resolution ASPC17/6-3

That the Academic Standards and Policy Committee note the report of the Academic Board meeting held on 25 July 2017.

4 ITEMS FOR ACTION

4.1 **Election Candidates' Conduct Procedures 2017**

In discussion, a number of wording changes and clarifications were recommended to clauses 4(2), 5(2)(b) and 7, which the University Policy Manager undertook to update before promulgation.

Resolution ASPC17/6-4

That the Academic Standards and Policy Committee discuss the Election Candidates' Conduct Procedures 2017, as presented.

4.2 **Assessment Procedures 2011 – Amendments**

Ms Koureas provided an overview of the proposed amendments to the *Assessment Procedures 2011*, advising that the amendments have arisen from a student-led working group on Special Consideration relating to replacement examinations, as well as feedback received around Disability Services and from the centralisation of examinations administration.

In discussion, concern was expressed at the specific wording of clause 14(13)(a)(v) mandating the provision of a second replacement examination within three weeks of the initial replacement examination. It was observed that this may not always be in the best interests of the student, and that timing of placements or the University's Summer closedown period may also interfere with such scheduling. Members were informed that the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Registrar) has suggested that professional faculties will have some flexibility regarding timing to accommodate placements, and to enable this it was suggested that this clause be reworded to read "~~will~~should be held within three weeks of the date of the first replacement assessment where practicable." The impact of the new semester dates model was also flagged for future consideration.

A question was raised as to how many attempts at an examination are permitted by clause 14(13)(a)(vi), and Associate Professor Masters advised that it was the intent of the working group to prevent infinite replacement assessment opportunities. The challenge of writing multiple examination papers that equally assess the course content was also discussed, and members were informed that in some faculties, the need for multiple written papers was addressed by making the second replacement examination an oral one. This enables the same content to be tested as a written exam while allowing greater flexibility. The University Policy Manager undertook to reword clause 14(13)(a)(vi) to clarify its intent. She would also renumber the reference in clause 14(13)(a)(i) before presentation of the proposal to the Academic Board.

Resolution ASPC17/6-5

That the Academic Standards and Policy Committee recommend that Academic Board:

(a) approve the amendment of the Assessment Procedures 2011, as amended; and

(b) approve the adoption of the amended policy with effect from 12 September 2017 (for Semester 2 examinations).

4.3 **Higher Education Standards Framework and University Policy**

Associate Professor McCallum informed members that following an audit earlier this year, gaps have been identified in the University's compliance with the Higher Education Standards Framework (HESF), especially relating to third party agreements and the qualifications of teaching staff. He advised that the HESF assigns the University responsibility for the educational standards of external providers with whom we have teaching agreements, and also requires all teachers to have a qualification at least one AQF level higher than the level of award course into which they are teaching (with the exception of the PhD, which is the highest level of the AQF). As the University is being visited by TEQSA in 2018, it is highly desirable to enact a number of policy changes to address these compliance issues and a suite of proposed changes was circulated for consideration.

The introduction of a *Collaborative Education and Research Training Agreements Policy 2017* was proposed, and the University Policy Manager suggested that rather than establishing another

policy, the incorporation of the necessary requirements into related existing policies. It was agreed that this should be explored and the proposed policy was withdrawn from consideration at the present time.

Amendments were proposed to the *Learning and Teaching Policy 2015*, in particular the addition of section 24A relating to the qualifications and skills of staff. This section reflects the requirements outlined under the HESF and provides flexibility to recognise professional experience or demonstrated attainment, so long as these are appropriately documented (by provision of a CV, for example). In discussion, it was proposed to amend the section relating to unit of study coordination to enable oversight by staff who have an appropriate qualification, and this was supported. It was observed that the amendment as drafted enables students who are undertaking teaching development training to teach components of units of study, provided they are supervised by a staff member with an appropriate qualification. The definition of “teacher” was also explored, and it was agreed that it would be helpful for a definition to be added to the policy. Guest lecturers are not formally members of the academic staff of the University and so fall outside the scope of the policy.

Amendments were also proposed to the *Student Placement Policy 2015* to expand the definition of “placement” to include projects involving external parties. In discussion, the definition of what constitutes a ‘project’ was identified as problematic as it potentially covers every assessment activity, not only those that involve an experiential learning component. Projects within a unit of study, for example, do not involve an external partnership and are not intended to be captured by the amended policy. Associate Professor McCallum welcomed further feedback on this. The possibility of including a requirement to inform students of placements “in a timely manner” was raised, to better enable students to make appropriate arrangements to meet placement requirements (such as securing time off work or arranging travel and accommodation). In discussion, it was agreed that timing and location of placements is often outside the control of the University, and that while every effort is made to communicate changed requirements in a timely fashion, a policy establishing rigid timeframes would be unworkable and unachievable. Faculties are, however, welcome to register local provisions in this regard where they feel that such would be achievable. Acknowledging that the draft as presented required further refinement, it was agreed that a revised version of the *Student Placement Policy 2015* be presented to a future meeting.

The proposed rescission of the *Guidelines for Inter-Institutional Agreements 1997* was identified as necessary as they do not reflect current University structures and expose the University to risk.

In summary, it was agreed that the *Collaborative Education and Research Training Agreements Policy 2017* and the *Student Placement Policy 2015* would be reworked for presentation to a future meeting; that the amendments to the *Learning and Teaching Policy 2015* be endorsed for presentation to the Academic Board; and that the Academic Board be asked to recommend to the Vice-Chancellor the rescission of the *Guidelines for Inter-Institutional Agreements 1997*.

Resolution ASPC17/6-6

That the Academic Standards and Policy Committee recommend that the Academic Board:

- a) *approve amendments to the Learning and Teaching Policy 2015, as amended; and*
- b) *recommend to the Vice-Chancellor the rescission of the Guidelines for Inter-Institutional Agreements 1997, as presented.*

4.4 Towards a University-wide Approach to Assessing the Graduate Qualities

Associate Professor McCallum informed members that a series of fora are proposed over August and September to initiate discussion of the measurement of graduate qualities, use of assessment plans to reduce the volume of summative assessment tasks, improve formative feedback, and work towards pan-unit of study mechanisms of assessment. These fora have emerged from discussion at the Assessment Working Party. The papers circulated with the agenda provide a series of questions with which faculties are asked to engage, and also present a rubrics-based approach to each of the graduate qualities. This is to be implemented University-wide, but interpreted at a disciplinary level. It is intended for assessment plans to move assessment from individual units of study to a broader view (for example, across a major or a degree) and assess against the graduate qualities. Project units of study will be used strategically and capture (as largely as possible) the graduate qualities, with a text-based statement of achievement of the graduate qualities to be provided for each student. This paper seeks to initiate an ongoing discussion, with the development of concrete policy development relating to assessment to take

place through 2018.

Resolution ASPC17/6-7

That the Academic Standards and Policy Committee:

- (a) provide feedback on the discussion paper of the Assessment Working Group;*
- (b) promote staff attendance at the relevant faculty assessment fora; and*
- (c) circulate the attached discussion paper among their colleagues and direct staff to the online form or other options for feedback.*

4.5 Charter of Academic Freedom

Associate Professor Masters informed members that it has been ten years since the *Charter of Academic Freedom* was endorsed by the Academic Board and Senate, and in light of recent bullying and death threats directed at several members of staff arising from their academic activities, it is timely to reaffirm the Academic Board's commitment to academic freedom. If the Academic Board is comfortable to confirm its ongoing commitment to the *Charter*, Associate Professor Masters undertook to communicate that commitment to Senate at a future meeting. It is not currently proposed to revise the *Charter*, although this could be undertaken at a future juncture.

With the observation that the *Charter* has served its purpose well, the committee agreed that the Academic Board be asked to reaffirm its commitment to academic freedom and the University's values of courage and creativity, respect and integrity, inclusion and diversity and openness and engagement.

Resolution ASPC17/6-8

That the Academic Standards and Policy Committee recommend that the Academic Board reaffirm its approval and endorsement of the Charter of Academic Freedom and its commitment to the University's values of courage and creativity, respect and integrity, inclusion and diversity and openness and engagement.

5 ITEMS FOR NOTING

5.1 2016 Consolidated Summary of the Student Experience and Graduate Outcomes

Speaking to the report as circulated with the agenda, Associate Professor McCallum advised that the University has met KPI 2 but has not reached KPIs 1 and 3. It is of ongoing concern that considerable challenges remain in student support and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Registrar) intend to convene a group to investigate this. Challenges are also identified regarding learning resources and teaching quality, and although employability of undergraduate students is positive, international postgraduate students report dissatisfaction in this regard. An International Student Taskforce, chaired by Professor Greg Whitwell (Dean of the University of Sydney Business School), has been set up to further explore this. Positive feedback has been provided regarding clarity of assessment, and indicators confirm that there is a correlation between the assessment of graduate qualities and learning outcomes, which will continue to be further refined.

Acknowledging that the topic of assessment is a work in progress, the committee was assured that steps are being taken across the institution to meet the required standards, and were asked to provide any further comment arising from the report either via the Chair or directly to Associate Professor McCallum.

Resolution ASPC17/6-9

That the Academic Standards and Policy Committee note the 2016 Consolidated Summary of the Student Experience and Graduate Outcomes report.

6 OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Any Other Business

There being no other business, the meeting concluded at 3:47pm.

Next meeting: 2:00pm – 4:00pm, **Tuesday 26 September 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/2017/20170808-ASPC-Agenda-Pack.pdf.