
ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND POLICY COMMITTEE

2:00pm – 4:00pm, Tuesday 10 April 2018

Senate Room, Quadrangle (A14)

Members Present: Professor Jane Hanrahan (Chair); Helen Agus (Science); Dr Bret Church (Pharmacy); Professor Alan Fekete (Academic Board); Associate Professor Vincent Gomes (Engineering & IT); Professor Manuel Graeber (co-opted, Medicine); Imogen Grant (President, SRC); Kerrie Henderson (co-opted, Office of General Counsel); Nanda Jorsz (nominee of the President, SUPRA); Patty Kamvounias (Academic Board); Dr Adrienne Keane (Architecture, Design & Planning); Associate Professor Tony Masters (Chair of the Academic Board); Associate Professor Alison Purcell (Health Sciences); Associate Professor Jennifer Rowley (Conservatorium); Professor John Shields (Business).

Attendees: Dr Matthew Charet (Secretary); Associate Professor Peter McCallum (Director, Educational Strategy) (for Items 5.1 and 5.2).

Apologies: Associate Professor Salvatore Babones (Academic Board); Dr Vasiliki Betihavas (Nursing); Dr Peter Knight (Medicine); Professor Greg Murray (Dentistry); Professor Pip Pattison (Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)); Associate Professor Maurice Peat (co-opted, Business); Pavithra Rajan (AB Postgraduate Student); Associate Professor Rita Shackel (Law).

2/2018

MINUTES

1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed new members and conveyed apologies as recorded above.

2 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

2.1 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 February 2018 were approved as a true record.

Resolution ASPC18/2-1

The Academic Standards and Policy Committee resolved that the minutes of meeting 1/2018, held on 13 February 2018, be confirmed as a true record.

2.2 Business Arising

Regarding Item 5.1 (Implementation of Anonymous Marking), the Director, Educational Strategy, advised that this issue had been discussed at the University Executive Education Committee and a range of further issues have been identified and worked through. Members were informed that the Exams Office is comfortable that examinations will be able to be managed appropriately, and that a new cover sheet for exam papers has been developed that identifies papers only by room name, Student ID and seat number; these will be correlated against seating plans for each venue. Issues with group assessment have also been worked through.

Members were reminded that the intention of anonymising the marking of assessment is to reduce bias as far as possible, but that there remain situations in which anonymity is impossible (in clinical work, performances, providing scaffolding for learning development, and when processing Special Consideration, for example). A communications plan is in development for all students and Unit of Study Coordinators regarding implementation, and it has been agreed that there will be no sanctions against students who mistakenly identify themselves while the process is being rolled out. Issues that are identified during implementation will be worked through as they emerge.

2.3 Terms of Reference

The Chair advised that the Terms of Reference which were endorsed at the previous meeting were approved at the 6 March meeting of the Academic Board, as circulated with the agenda. The Secretary advised that the inclusion of a postgraduate student member of the Academic Board (as agreed at the previous meeting) had been omitted from the version that was submitted to the

Academic Board and the Committee agreed that this should be amended at the next opportunity. To better align with the other committees, it was also agreed to make the Chair of the Admissions Sub-Committee an *ex officio* member of the Committee.

Resolution ASPC18/2-2

The Academic Standards & Policy Committee noted the approval of Terms of Reference by the Academic Board at its meeting of 6 March 2018, as presented. The Committee also endorsed further amendment of the Terms of Reference to include a postgraduate student member and to make the Chair of the Admissions Sub-Committee an ex officio member, to be presented for approval to the next meeting of the Academic Board.

3 STANDING ITEMS

3.1 Report of the Chair

The Chair advised that she had nothing to report.

Resolution ASPC18/2-3

The Academic Standards and Policy Committee noted the report of the Chair.

3.2 Report of Academic Board

The Chair of Academic Board advised that he had nothing to add to the written report.

Resolution ASPC18/2-4

The Academic Standards and Policy Committee noted the report of the Academic Board meeting held on 6 March 2018.

3.3 Report of the Admissions Sub-Committee

Further to the written report, the Chair of Academic Board advised that the Admissions Sub-Committee is establishing a working party and representation is sought from the Committee. Part of the scope of this group will be to separate current admissions-related policy and procedures into separate documents, to allow better visibility and ensure that admissions are dealt with more appropriately.

Resolution ASPC18/2-5

The Academic Standards & Policy Committee noted the report of the meeting of the Admissions Sub-Committee held on 19 March 2018;

(1) endorsed the Terms of Reference for the Admissions Sub-Committee, with immediate effect; and

(2) endorsed:

- *the in-principle amendment of the Coursework Policy 2014 to clarify the role of the Academic Board in overseeing admissions prerequisites;*
- *the update of mathematics admissions standards;*
- *changing the policy framework for admissions, including the introduction of admissions procedures; and*
- *the convening of an Admissions Sub-Committee Working Party to consider whether policy changes are required to address the differences between:*
 - *undergraduate and graduate English language requirements;*
 - *recent and non-recent school leaver admissions requirements; and*
 - *domestic and international student entry requirements.*

4 ITEMS FOR ACTION

4.1 Late Penalties – Common Submission Time

The Chair of Academic Board informed members that a working group had been initiated by the University Executive Education Committee to explore the presence and implementation of late penalties across the institution. A preliminary survey of current practice identified a plethora of approaches and penalties, and in this context it was agreed that common penalties and submission times would be very helpful to ensure consistency of approach across the University.

The document circulated with the agenda outlines a common approach to the submission of written assessment, and allows for faculty variation where required for accreditation, compliance

or pedagogical purposes. Members were reminded that if a Unit of Study will apply late submission penalties, the *Learning & Teaching Policy 2015* currently requires that such penalties be published in the Unit of Study outline. There is no intention to make late penalties applicable to all written assessment, but only to ensure that where penalties are to be applied, they are applied consistently across the institution and are appropriately communicated.

The University Executive Education Committee has agreed that a common penalty of five per cent per calendar day is appropriate. Likewise, the deadline for online submission of written assessment is to be set at 23:59 on the due date, with ICT and Turnitin both confirming that systems will be able to accommodate traffic increases accompanying a common institutional cut-off.

In discussion, The University Policy Manager advised that an amendment will be prepared to the *Assessment Procedures 2011* to enact these changes and that this amendment will be presented to a future meeting for discussion and endorsement. The Chair of Academic Board informed members that it is intended that the Procedures will replace current provisions in Faculty Resolutions, and Faculty and School Managers will be contacted with advice to seek approval for appropriate amendments to their resolutions. The allowance of a two week window for assessment feedback was identified as a concern in some disciplines (in that it may allow submission after feedback has been provided to on-time students), and it was agreed that this would constitute a sufficient pedagogical reason for not permitting late submission for such pieces of assessment, provided that this is published in the Unit of Study outline.

Clarification was sought as to the definition of 'written assessment', and the Chair of Academic Board advised that late penalties would apply to all assessment to which it currently applies, predominantly text-based prose submitted via Turnitin. It was recommended that when they are drafted, the amended Procedures reflect that "where there are late penalties, they will be..." to make clear that not all assessment tasks are required to permit late submission. Inconsistency between reference to 'calendar days' and 'working days' was also discussed, with comparison drawn to the simple extension process that measures 'working days'. Mrs Agus – who led the working party that developed the simple extensions process – advised that student feedback on this process advocated retention of 'working days', and that there is sufficient delineation between the two processes to permit different measurement periods. Members agreed that clarification will be needed in the Procedures as to how the penalty is intended to be applied (whether of total possible mark or a percentage of the mark that would have been awarded). It was also agreed that the common Unit of Study outline template (which is currently in development) include text relating to late penalties and submission deadlines, and that this should also be included in the new curriculum management system, Akari.

Resolution ASPC18/2-6

The Academic Standards & Policy Committee endorsed the recommendation of the UE Education Committee that a common system of Late Penalties and a common submission time of 23:59 for written assessments be adopted, with effect from Semester 1 2019.

5 ITEMS FOR NOTING

5.1 Education Portfolio: Update on Implementation of Strategic Initiatives Relating to Assessment

The Director, Educational Strategy, reminded members that the Academic Board endorsed the report and recommendations of the Assessment Working Party in late 2017, and the current paper outlines work that will be undertaken in 2018 to enable those recommendations. In brief, faculties will be asked to revisit the learning outcomes for all courses by mid-year, to embed and articulate the graduate qualities. Faculties will also be asked to develop high-level assessment plans by the end of 2018, with a focus on demonstrating how the graduate qualities will be developed and measured via key assessment activities rather than including every assessment task. The Education Portfolio is currently developing assessment rubrics to assess the graduate qualities, and it is intended that these will be adapted to meet disciplinary needs. Members were also informed that this process will be facilitated by the appointment of coordinators for each major, many of whom have already been appointed. The draft rubrics are anticipated to be available in mid-April and will need testing and validation.

In discussion, the inclusion of a statement on graduate qualities in the graduation pack was raised, and the Director, Educational Strategy advised that students are supportive of this but that the format of this statement is still being developed. It is not anticipated to be available before 2020 to ensure that there is evidence that the rubrics are valid and demonstrate the attainment of the graduate qualities.

Discomfort was expressed at the ambitious timeframe for the completion of these tasks, especially given that the new curriculum is still in development through to third year level (and the accompanying capstone experience). Members were reminded that in 2016, all majors had their learning outcomes approved so it should largely be a matter of revisiting these in light of the current graduate qualities, then ensuring that these are assessed and measured to ensure we are delivering as intended. Publication of the names of coordinators for majors was also suggested to enable an avenue for student and peer feedback; this was supported in principle.

Resolution ASPC18/2-7

The Academic Standards and Policy Committee:

- (1) noted the 2017 report of the Assessment Working Group whose recommendations were fully endorsed by the Academic Board on 28 November 2017;*
- (2) noted that the Academic Board has agreed that for all undergraduate degrees, there should be a coordinator for each degree, stream, specialisation, program or major;*
- (3) noted that the Academic Board has agreed faculties should review learning outcomes for all degrees, streams, programs and majors to give expression to the graduate qualities by July 2018;*
- (4) noted that the Academic Board has agreed that assessment plans be developed for degrees, streams, programs and majors by December 2018;*
- (5) noted the interim definitions for the graduate qualities developed by the Assessment Working Group;*
- (6) noted the timeline for faculties to meet obligations to the Academic Board to implement strategic initiatives relating to assessment in 2018; and*
- (7) noted that undergraduate course and curriculum component coordinators will be invited to attend a series of Educational Innovation professional development workshops to assist with the completion of faculty tasks resulting from the Board's recommendations..*

5.2 Streamlining Administration to Support Outbound Student Mobility

The Director, Educational Strategy, advised members that there has been considerable discussion on this matter since the paper (prepared by the then-Registrar) was originally circulated in other fora in 2017. The paper broadly recommends the expansion of the criteria for determining who can participate in the exchange program, enabled by lowering the academic performance threshold from the current WAM of 65 to 50 (provided the student is not included on the Progression Register). Where partner institutions have a higher participation threshold, these will continue to be honoured. There has also been discussion as to the recognition of credit once students return from exchange. A *Student Mobility Policy* and accompanying *Procedures* are also being developed.

In discussion, Mrs Agus advised that this is the first occasion on which Science has been asked to provide academic feedback, and she expressed concern that under the current process, the existing published requirements are not being applied consistently by Faculty Services and the Outbound Mobility office. She also suggested that the key driver for such activities needs to be the student experience, rather than Education Portfolio KPIs. Any changes need to first be embedded in policy and procedures, and only then be reflected in practice and in the information available on the mobility website; this was strongly supported by the University Policy Manager.

Professor Fekete observed that a discussion between the prospective exchange student and degree coordinator is vital to ensure that the intended program fits into degree requirements (including accreditation where appropriate). It was observed that at present, faculties have a two-tier approval process, at both the unit of study level (where equivalence is determined) and the degree level (which considers academic fit) and that this should be retained in some form.

The question was raised as to whether data is available to determine whether lowering the participation threshold will affect student performance while overseas, whether lowering the standard may have a reputational impact on the University (with less able students potentially reflecting poorly on the institution), and how students will be monitored and supported while away.

The need for pre-departure work with the students was highlighted, in order to allow students to maximise their opportunity and foster a positive experience. A post-return debrief would also be useful.

Members observed that further detail about funding support and other resourcing to enable students to undertake these opportunities, would be helpful. The Director, Educational Strategy, advised that pre-departure sessions are currently held and will need to be upscaled, and that growth targets and scholarships are also currently being modelled. The importance of ensuring that such opportunities are available to all students (especially Indigenous and low-SES students) was flagged for particular attention. It was also suggested that differentiation may be useful between semester-length opportunities and in-country short course modules, with students with lower WAMs possibly given access only to the short courses until we have data that confirms their academic readiness for such study.

6 OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Any Other Business

The Chair provided a heads-up that the Strategic Collaborations and Partnerships Office will be circulating an online survey to members between 7-25 May as part of the consultation process accompanying the development of a Clinics Policy; members from health-related disciplines were especially asked to look out for further communication on this.

Professor Graeber asked whether plagiarism detection software or other tools are available to staff, so that they can check draft student work or material such as funding applications. Members were informed that all staff with HDR supervisory responsibility have access to a Blackboard site through which such material can be checked. Professor Graeber also expressed discomfort with the University's sole reliance on third party providers for such tools, and recommended the exploration of utilising non-commercial expertise already within the University as a possible additional approach (such as staff working in the area of machine learning). The Director, Educational Strategy also informed members that one of the current focuses of the Educational Integrity Unit is detection of ghost-writing and paraphrasing, with tools currently being explored to enable this.

There being no other business, the meeting concluded at 3:33pm.

Next meeting: 2:00pm – 4:00pm, **Tuesday 22 May 2018**
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/2018/20180410-ASPC-Agenda-Pack.pdf