UNCONFIRMED MINUTES

1 WELCOME & APOLOGIES
The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and read out the apologies received.

Resolution AB ASPC 2019/4-1
The AB Academic Standards and Policy Committee resolved to note the apologies received as detailed above.

2 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

2.1 Minutes of Previous Meeting (7 May 2019)
The Chair noted that subsequent to the meeting, Item 4.2 was modified, and then withdrawn before it was due for submission to Academic Board.

Resolution AB ASPC 2019/4-2
The AB Academic Standards and Policy Committee resolved to approve the Minutes of Previous Meeting (7 May 2019).

2.2 Minutes of Meeting by Circulation (14 May 2019)

Resolution AB ASPC 2019/4-3
The AB Academic Standards and Policy Committee resolved to approve the Minutes of the Meeting held by Circulation (14 May 2019).

2.2.1 2019 Research Code of Conduct Feedback
Resolution AB ASPC 2019/4-4
The AB Academic Standards and Policy Committee resolved to note the feedback provided on the 2019 Research Code of Conduct.

2.2.2 New powers of the Research Integrity Office designated officer: in need of oversight by the committee?

The Chair observed that with respect to a matter arising from the minutes of the previous meeting (held by circulation) concerning the revised Research Code of Conduct, which was considered by the Academic Board at its meeting on 4 June, the related matter raised by Professor Graeber needs resolution by 1 July. Professor Graeber outlined his concerns that 1), complaints of breach of the Code of Conduct can be dismissed by a single designated officer if shown to be made in bad faith, and 2), that this has the capacity to silence a complaint that could be important and should be heard. He also raised concerns about the potential breaches of privacy and the potential risk to the reputations of individuals and the University related to these matters.

Kerrie Henderson drew the meeting’s attention to two legal points related to the matter:

1. It is not accurate to say that there is any legal waiver of privacy just because there is an allegation of impropriety. If anything, the right to privacy really does come into play when someone is accused of doing the wrong thing.

2. With respect to the body of Law relating to bad faith and vexatiousness, cases of this nature are rare due to the high standards applied to them.

During discussion the following points were clarified:

• It is not within the capacity of the University’s Research and Integrity Office to label a complainant as vexatious.

• The ability to dismiss a complaint is new to this Code of Conduct; the University will treat a complaint as confidential unless there is the potential for harm to someone.

• For a complaint to be dismissed a reason must be given and there is a requirement for reporting of these matters; complaints cannot be dismissed arbitrarily, and in addition the reason for dismissal of a complaint is given to the complainant in writing.

Professor Graeber emphasized the need for the Committee to be informed of dismissal of complaints. Associate Professor Masters observed that before such a report is submitted to the Academic Quality Committee after being reported to the Research Committee, the data must be de-identified in a way taking cognizance that the AQC’s proceedings are public.

Professor Graeber expressed his agreement with the Chair’s suggestion that the next version of the Research Code of Conduct contain a reporting requirement.

Kerrie Henderson can have a look at where and how, to de-identify. Kerrie Henderson and Rebecca Halligan agreed to meet to discuss the nature of the reporting of such cases, and how far such reporting can be taken before there is risk of breach of privacy.

Associate Professor Masters recommended that the Committee receive an outline of the nature of the reporting process.

Resolution AB ASPC 2019/4-5
The AB Academic Standards and Policy Committee resolved to endorse the decision that the Academic Quality Committee have oversight of and receive reports on complaints relating to research integrity.

2.3 Action Schedule

Resolution AB ASPC 2019/4-6
The AB Academic Standards and Policy Committee resolved to note that no discussion took place under this item.

3 STANDING ITEMS
3.1 Report of the Chair

Resolution AB ASPC 2019/4-7
The AB Academic Standards and Policy Committee resolved to note that the Chair had nothing to report.

3.2 Report of Academic Board

With reference to an item concerning the Hult Prize, noted under ‘Other matters’ in the written report, Associate Professor Masters (Chair, Academic Board) noted that ‘the University's entry for the Hult Prize’ should read ‘the entry of the University of Sydney students’.

Resolution AB ASPC 2019/4-8
The AB Academic Standards and Policy Committee resolved to note the Report of Academic Board for its meeting held on 4 June 2019.

3.2.1 Academic Board Standing Orders

Associate Professor Masters (Chair, Academic Board) presented the draft Academic Board Standing Orders to the Committee, noting that the University has had a long-standing set of Academic Board processes, in need of documentation for transmission of knowledge of the work of the Academic Board to new Board members. He began consultation with the Academic Board committee chairs last year, but progress was delayed by the TEQSA re-registration review and the French review. The draft Standing Orders are intended as a record of how and why the work of the Board is conducted, and as such are not intended to be a guide rather than stringently applied. Feedback has been provided by Professor Twomey from Law and Professor Baird from Business. An ‘opt-in’ provision has been made that if the Standing Orders are approved by the Academic Board, its committees can decide whether to operate under these orders, to continue as is, or decide to adopt them ‘with waivers’.

During discussion the following points were raised:

- The Chair read out feedback from Professor Fekete who expressed support for the principle that the Academic Board should have the right to adjust its Standing Orders.
- In light of the point above, Section 9, Changes to Standing Orders, needs some rephrasing to enable the Board to change its own Standing Orders.
- Kerrie Henderson, observing that under Law the Chair can put procedural motions only, and not substantive ones, to the meeting, suggested that the Committee consider recommending the addition of this to the Standing Orders. The Chair, Academic Board, agreed, provided additions to the draft Standing Orders were in agreement with current practice.
- Although these Standing Orders will not be formally be presented to faculty boards as guidelines for the conduct of their own business, they will be at liberty to adopt them if they choose to.

The draft Academic Board Standing Orders were endorsed for submission to Academic Board.

Resolution AB ASPC 2019/4-9
The AB Academic Standards and Policy Committee:
1. discussed and provided feedback on the proposed draft Academic Board Standing Orders, as presented to the meeting; and
2. resolved to endorse the proposed Standing Orders for submission to Academic Board for approval.

3.2.2 Academic Board Emerging Risk Discussion
Lynn Ko made a presentation to the Committee on the trends in emerging risks associated with the work of the Academic Board. Defining risk as anything that might affect the achievement of an organisation’s outcomes, and specifically the possibility of an adverse outcome, she drew attention to the need to understand how and why risk might emerge in relation to the responsibilities of the Academic Board. The Committee agreed that such risk should be monitored.

The Committee was asked to rate each of the six emerging risk trends in the Emerging Risk Trend Table on p. 42 of the agenda pack, using a rating scale of green (diminishing risk), amber (stationary/stable) and red (increasing risk).

Risk 1: Third-party Teaching Agreements, and Failure to Provide Services Expected by an External Provider
There was considered to be a general lack of awareness of third-party agreements and their inherent risks. Although 20 or 30 years ago, contract teaching did not exist, this is seen as an increasing risk with the increase in the amount of contract teaching, effectively third-party teaching. Lack of awareness of the process of, failure to obtain right advice concerning engaging third-party teachers, and failure to notify the Academic Board of new arrangements were seen as sources of increasing risk. Kerrie Henderson and Lyn Ko outlined the University's controls for such risk, including its policies and documentation in the University’s risk register. Risk was seen as high for non-award teaching, but mitigating steps have been put in place. Risk will be reduced by putting controls in place via the work of the Sydney Operating Model (SOM) and a curriculum management system.
Risk trend rating: Green.

Risk 2: Inability to Realise Expected Learning and Graduate Outcomes
Sources of risk were held to be drift in expected Learning and Graduate outcomes with changes to units in a course without appropriate monitoring of the changes, and similarly changes to assessment regimes.
Risk trend rating: Amber.

Risk 3: Inconsistent Application of Assessment Standards by Academic Units
Professor Pattison considered the work currently being undertaken on assessment rubrics and the work conducted by the Academic Board on grade distribution to be effective mitigating strategies for this risk. Interdisciplinary project work and Table O were suggested as areas needing more oversight. These areas can be taught by staff from more than one faculty, and as the mean WAM can vary considerably between faculties, more verification of standards was recommended. Lyn Ko suggested an amber rating because more can be done to mitigate the risk.
Risk trend rating: Amber.

Risk 4: Inability to Comply with the Academic Board Rule 2017
The risk of noncompliance with the Academic Board Rule has arisen because of the large number of areas of Academic Board responsibility and the need for adequate resourcing to ensure compliance. Kerrie Henderson saw the transition period at Westmead as a critical source of risk for the Board and suggested adding more inductions and controls for new Board members, and the monitoring of both Board activities and production of Board minutes.
Risk 4 was viewed as a constantly changing risk and also as an improving trend because with the changing environment, the Board’s decision-making function was increasing.
Risk trend rating: Green.

Risks 5 and 6:
Unacceptable Number of Unaddressed Cheating Cases and Number of Contract Cheating Cases Exceeds Our Ability to Address Them

These two risk trends were treated as interrelated. It was noted that the number of cases of academic dishonesty has risen dramatically recently. It was suggested that the increase could be affected by the increase in student population, although better detection processes were being used. Associate Professor McCallum, noting that the number of units reporting breaches is small, considered that more reporting activity was needed.

Risk trends 5 and 6 were considered high and increasing, and in need of more effective mitigation strategies. Students can pay for essays/assignments online; impersonation in examinations is also a problem. Associate Professor McCallum reported that work is being conducted on developing mitigation strategies, some of which are ongoing and active, and not captured in this discussion.

Risk trend rating: Red.

The Chair, ASPC and the Chair, Academic Board, thanked Lynn Ko for her presentation and for the background work she had undertaken.

Resolution AB ASPC 2019/4-10
The AB Academic Standards and Policy Committee resolved to provide input into the mitigation status and trends in emerging risks to the work of the Academic Board.

3.3 Report of the Admissions Subcommittee

Resolution AB ASPC 2019/4-11
The AB Academic Standards and Policy Committee resolved to note the Report of the Admissions Subcommittee.

3.3.1 Changes to English Language Proficiency Requirements

Associate Professor McCallum presented the proposal to the Committee, outlining the two types of proposed change to the English Language Proficiency Standards: those pertaining to tertiary studies which further specify requirements based on the location of study, and those relating to faculty-specific requirements. With respect to the first, there are subtleties around duration and location. For where instruction is in English in a non-English speaking country, the aim is to standardize across all areas.

The Chair conveyed feedback from Professor Fekete, who suggested 1), that the use of the Pearson test for English was problematic in that it promoted gaming for learning the test rather than learning English, and 2), that instead of the Centre for English teaching conducting both the teaching and the testing, that it conduct the teaching and another means of testing is employed, for instance IELTS. Professor Pattison confirmed that the Centre for English Teaching has undergone a careful benchmarking study. When compared with IELTS the Centre for English Teaching was seen to do a good job.

During discussion the following suggestions were made:

Even though an international student might have studied for a year in an English-speaking country, the University might still wish to test their English proficiency. However, the University could simply test these students rather than have the requirement of study in an English-speaking institution.

The University is implementing some good support practices such as the Student Transition Policy which will run units in Semester 1 and provide a good momentum at the beginning of the degree. The University needs to find ways of extending this throughout the degree.

Several committee members suggested that existing data be re-analysed and that new data be generated concerning methods of English-proficiency testing.
Resolution AB ASPC 2019/4-12

The AB ASPC resolved to endorse the proposed amendments to the Admissions Standards – English Language Proficiency, for submission to Academic Board.

4 ITEMS FOR ACTION

4.1 Improving HDR Supervision at the University of Sydney

Professor Ross Coleman (Director, Graduate Research) presented the paper to the Committee, which had arisen from a long-standing consideration of the University’s practices and the requirements of the Policy Review Rule. The review of the Policy was undertaken with the view to articulating desired outcomes and integrating best practice into the outcomes of the SOM HDR support model.

Arising from previous discussion was the view that best practice would be to have a supervisory team, which is contrary to current practice. Professor Coleman suggested that a supervisory panel structure include a role for a staff member to look after the student’s interest such as a mentor, and that this be someone not embedded in research activities. Professor Peat’s observation that although PhD supervision is an educational activity, it is not acknowledged as such in the wider community, elicited the suggestion that a cultural shift in investing in the research and the student would be beneficial.

Associate Professor Coleman, observing that the School of Psychology have instituted a supervision contract, signed by the supervisor and the student, noted that students are not aware of the expectations of them when they begin their higher research degree. He expressed his agreement for the document to be shared among colleagues, and for any feedback to be sent to him directly.

Associate Professor Wilkinson noted the similarity of the open comments between those of PhD students and regular coursework students, namely that lack of empathy from supervisors seems to be a main concern. The training needs to be more general, and to facilitate improvement in several areas, such as managing people, and interacting with students more effectively and respectfully in general. Associate Professor Coleman reported that SOM is concerned with better management of candidature.

During discussion, the following feedback was offered:

- The variability between supervisors in terms of engagement of supervisor with student was noted.
- Some students and staff have a tendency to see The Annual Progress Review (APR) as a box-ticking exercise only.
- Academics’ perception of their not being recognized for their efforts might be a contributing factor to the lack of engagement with supervisory duties; perhaps University recognition of academic effort in this area would be beneficial.
- Ongoing training in HDR supervision might be beneficial. Many Universities require a three-year re-accreditation mechanism, and it was suggested that the University consider implementing something comparable.

The subject of ‘other’ training for PhD students to prepare them for non-academic employment was raised, and OLE was suggested as a means of providing this.

Resolution AB ASPC 2019/4-13

The AB Academic Standards and Policy Committee discussed the paper “Improving HDR Supervision at the University of Sydney”, and endorsed the proposal of the DVC Education Portfolio to review the Supervision of Higher Degree by Research Students Policy 2013.

4.2 Report on Changes to Assessment Procedures 2011

Associate Professor Masters (Chair, Academic Board) had requested a review of the Assessment Procedures following the Examinations Process audit. A number of matters needing action were identified, for instance, procedures for managing interrupted examinations and emergencies. Associate Professor Masters considered that immediate action was required with respect to those problems identified and consulted with the committee chairs and student representatives. All were in
agreement about the need to act. The purpose of this report is to inform stakeholders about the executive action taken.

Kerrie Henderson informed the Committee that the Procedures need some redrafting and to be registered, since policies are not binding until registered. The re-draft will be re-submitted to the Committee. Members were encouraged to provide feedback.

Resolution AB ASPC 2019/4-14
The AB Academic Standards and Policy Committee note the action of the Chair of the Academic Board in approving amendments to the Assessment Procedures at the request of the Executive Director of Student Administration and consider the revised Assessment Procedures.

4.3 Report of the Dual and Joint Degrees Working Group
Professor Pattison (Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)) presented the report to the Committee, noting that the paper proposes a new framework for the University's dual and joint degrees, and proposes some safeguards for their management. The report also proposes a joint PhD model rather than a Cotutelle or dual model.

Professor Pattison also noted that the University's partners in this regard will depend on tiered collaboration. Without any detriment to strong existing relationships, a third tier would serve ad-hoc arrangements. The University will also use existing approval structures for these degrees, although additional resourcing might be needed. A new policy will need to be developed for the administration of these degrees and the Cotutelle Policy will need to be rescinded.

The Committee endorsed the recommendations of the Report.

Resolution AB ASPC 2019/4-15
The AB Academic Standards and Policy Committee resolved to review and endorse the recommendations of the report of the Dual and Joint Degrees Working Party.

5 ITEMS FOR NOTING

5.1 Proposed legislation for prohibiting the provision and advertisement of commercial cheating services

Resolution AB ASPC 2019/4-16
The AB Academic Standards and Policy Committee noted the University’s draft submission on the proposed legislation for prohibiting the provision and advertisement of commercial cheating services.

5.2 Addendum to 2018 Student Misconduct Annual Report

Resolution AB ASPC 2019/4-17
The AB Academic Standards and Policy Committee noted the addendum to the report for submission to Academic Board and the University Senate as fulfillment of the reporting requirement of clause 8.4 of the University of Sydney (Student Discipline) Rule 2016.

6 OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Any Other Business

Resolution AB ASPC 2019/4-18
The AB Academic Standards and Policy Committee resolved to note there was no other business.

With there being no other business, the Meeting closed at 4.02 pm.
Meeting dates for 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda deadline</th>
<th>Meeting Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 11 June 2019</td>
<td>Tuesday 25 June 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday 30 July 2019</td>
<td>Tuesday 13 August 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday 1 October 2019</td>
<td>Tuesday 15 October 2019</td>
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