MINUTES

1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1.1 Welcomes and Apologies

The Chair welcomed members and advised of apologies as recorded above.

2 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

2.1 Minutes of Previous Meeting

Resolution ASPC19/2-1

The Academic Standards and Policy Committee resolved that the minutes of meeting 1/2019, held on 12 February 2019, 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 did not have anything to report outside the items included in the written Report.

3.2 Report of Academic Board

The Chair of the Academic Board advised that presentations had been given to the Board regarding non-AQF micro-credentialing courses at its 5 March meeting. A formal course proposal is currently under development with the intent of introducing a Sydney Professional Certificate as the University’s first official post-Bachelor micro-credential; this will be submitted for consideration and approval via the University’s standard course approval process.

Resolution ASPC19/2-2

The Academic Standards & Policy Committee noted the report of the Academic Board meeting held on 5 March 2019.
3.3 Report of the Admissions Sub-Committee

**Resolution ASPC19/2-3**

The Academic Standards & Policy Committee noted the report of the meeting of the Admissions Sub-Committee held by circulation on 26 February 2019.

4 ITEMS FOR ACTION

4.1 Academic Promotions Policy 2015

The Acting Associate Director (Operations) attended the meeting to speak to this item. In overview, the proposed amendments reflected in the Academic Promotions Policy (the ‘Policy’) reflect the recent amalgamated faculty and school structures.

*Schedule 2* of the Policy stipulates Local Promotion Committee (LPC) constitution and compliance. The schedule has been amended to the effect that Faculties shall form single Faculty LPCs, while University Schools will continue to be combined. Committee composition will remain the same at Levels B and C, however at Levels D and E the proposed changes affect core committee composition.

The following detailed feedback on the Policy was offered by members, with discussion following:

- There are minor typographical errors in the Policy, requiring correction. Additionally, members submitted that the wording of Section 7, Clause 1(a) be changed to read “gender”.

- The proposed changes result in the stipulation that LPCs are not permitted to have two people from the same School discipline. In practice, most faculties now have a sufficient number of disciplines that this should not be an issue, however, for a smaller faculty, this may be difficult to comply with.

The Chair noted here that Schedule 2 of the Policy provides for the Provost to approve exceptions to address this issue on a case by case basis (see Constitution).

- Regarding the timeline and structure of making an application and being assessed for promotion, Clauses 13b (i) & (ii), and 14b (i) & (ii), do not allow for applicants to see a copy of the Head’s report, and to have an opportunity to respond in writing to its contents, until they are advised that their application for promotion has been unsuccessful. In the interest of procedural fairness, it was suggested that applicants should be privy to the Head’s report earlier, whilst their application is still under review, and be afforded the opportunity to enclose a written response for consideration of the LPC – prior to the recourse of an appeal.

The Acting Associate Director (Operations) noted that the Appeals process provides an opportunity to apply for a thorough review of a decision on a promotions application. She further noted that the Policy has provision for a HoS report to be written by a nominee, where appointed. She observed that in experience, LPCs are very capable in discerning anomalies between applications and reports, and this is well supported by the checks and balances set out in the Policy.

The Chair of Academic Board noted the work being undertaken by the Vice-Provost (Academic Performance) in liaising with and supporting the HoS cohort to support and encourage academic staff potential. Some of the issues identified above have a large underlying ‘cultural’ component, which falls outside the remit of the Policy.

A member observed that many HoS may not have not sat on LPCs regularly, or recently, or may be recent external hires to the University, and as a result they may not be overly familiar with the promotions process. They suggested that improved HoS mentoring is needed. The Chair suggested that it may be productive for HoS or other senior staff to alternate year to year between being appointed to Committees and being available to act as mentors for staff considering applying for promotion.

A member drew attention to the success rates for promotion for Level D & E academic staff, observing that there is room for improvement in actively identifying and supporting staff who are good candidates for promotion. The Acting Associate Director (Operations) advised that the Provost runs a briefing session on this, which could be expanded further.
The Chair also noted that engaging a mentor should be part of the AP&D process for all staff.

- The proposed process for the appointment of assessors only allows for applicants to object on the basis of a belief that there exists a conflict of interest.

A member observed that the standard practice at U.S. universities is for the applicant and their academic department to work together to produce a long shortlist of assessors for the promotions panel and from there, both the applicant and the department choose three respectively from that agreed pool.

The Acting Associate Director (Operations) noted that the process for the appointment of assessors in the Policy is consistent with the policies of Go8 comparators.

**Secretary’s note:** Section 10, Clause 8(a) & (b) and Section 14, Clause 5 make clear that applicants will be notified of their assessors, but these are not selected in consultation with the applicant. The Policy makes provision for an applicant to object to the appointment of an assessor / assessors under Section 10, Clauses 12 & 13).

- The Policy appears to prevent academics from applying for promotion if they have not yet completed their annual AP&D and applicants, if unsuccessful in their application for promotion, must wait another year before being permitted to reapply.

The Acting Associate Director (Operations) clarified that the AP&D requirement is that an applicant must have completed AP&D or performance management and development review in the previous fifteen 15 months.

- The overall tone of the Policy is very declarative, with some Clauses reading as overly restrictive: ‘an applicant cannot apply unless…’ A member suggested that wording of such declarative clauses be made more flexible: ‘it would assist you in your application to discuss with your HoS/ Dean…’

- Where there are strict criterion for academic promotion, staff are in a position where they must consciously align their activities to conform with the system, which can be a disincentive to initiative and creativity – both qualities being core to the pursuit of research excellence.

The Chair noted that diversity in activities recognised for promotion has been considerably and concertedly broadened over the past two years in terms of promotion criteria to better recognise and facilitate this.

The Acting Associate Director (Operations) advised the Committee that she would relay the above feedback to the Vice-Provost and the Provost after the meeting. She noted that the Policy is due for a more comprehensive review in 2020, which will provide the opportunity to consult further and to convene an academic working party prior to flesh it out in thorough detail.

**Resolution ASPC19/2-4**

The Academic Standards and Policy Committee reviewed and endorsed the proposed changes to the Academic Promotions Policy 2015.

### 4.2 Code of Conduct for Students

Associate Professor Peter McCallum, Acting Registrar and Academic Director, Education Policy and Quality, attended the meeting to speak to this item.

He advised that the *Code of Conduct for Students 2005* (the ‘Code’), included in the agenda pack, has been recommended for revision in accordance with the general principles of the new Student Experience Strategy. As the existing version of the Code dates back to 2005, it requires an update to bring it into line with changes in behaviour and environment (for example, with the proliferation of activity in the social media space). Revision to the Code is an initiative driven by Professor Wei Fong Chua AM as the new Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Life) and the DVC Education portfolio. The UE Student Life Committee is the main reporting body for this revision, which will provide opportunity for student consultation and input via its student membership, in addition to broader planned consultation. The Director of Educational Strategy noted that the Code will return to Academic Board in June 2019, as the approving body and owner of the existing Code, and will then progress to Senate for endorsement.
The Acting Registrar and Academic Director, Education Policy and Quality noted that the intent and form of a revised Code is to be student-centric, outcomes focussed, and fair and equitable. It will set out to improve upon the tone of the overall existing document - to shift from declarative expectations of student conduct to better capture the fundamental principle that students and teachers are colleagues in a mutually supportive learning environment. He noted that the existing Code needs further refinement, which may extract some existing features of the Code into an accompanying set of procedures. The Code could also benefit from greater clarity around the role students assume in their ambassadorial role for the University, particularly in the context of undertaking student mobility experiences. He further noted that the Code could be improved with clearer concentration on the imperative for students to act lawfully, ethically and respectfully towards others.

Comments and feedback on the Code was invited from Committee members, summarised as follows:

- Members noted that the existing Code, although it refers to other University policies, does not explicitly include any provision regarding remedial action to address failures by students to comply. A member suggested that the Code should have a section outlining the University’s procedures for addressing misconduct.

The Acting Registrar and Academic Director, Education Policy and Quality noted that the Code is vague on the issue of the escalation of matters – particularly with reference to designating a threshold for determining where ‘low level’ conflicts tip over into being instances of misconduct.

- A member suggested that it may be useful to reframe the Code in the same terms as the University’s graduate qualities. Members agreed that this would supply consistency of principle, but noted caution that the document is fundamentally a policy, which will need to be reflected in its language.

The Acting Registrar and Academic Director, Education Policy and Quality took this on notice, also observing that the graduate qualities currently do not cover the entirety of the student cohort.

- Professor Fekete noted that p.43 of the agenda pack re: ‘Reputational Risk’ indicates a joint obligation for students to uphold the University's reputation and academic standing. He submitted that this is an unreasonable and inappropriate expectation to place on students, running the risk that it could then be used to suppress public criticism of the University and its practices and could limit peaceful student protests and demonstrations. Additionally, Professor Fekete noted that the emphasis on ‘acting lawfully’ is an overreach in the context of the Code – all citizens have obligations to the law, however this falls outside the remit of the University.

- The University Policy Manager noted that the University does have a formal, written set of institutional values and suggested that the Code for staff and students should be anchored by these and should make explicit reference to them. This will provide consistency and will translate those values into a set of expectations. She further cautioned against deploying ‘right-based’ language in the Code, as this can have complex legal implications. She noted that the developers of the revised Code should work closely with the Culture Strategy team to ensure that it is resonant with both staff and student cultures and efforts underway in that space.

- Professor Fekete urged the need for ongoing discussion with the student cohort during the revision process, noting that the one day of planning consultation indicated in the paper accompanying this item is insufficient to render meaningful feedback. The Acting Registrar and Academic Director, Education Policy and Quality advised the Committee that the DVC Education portfolio will be holding a lengthier engagement period via an online forum, where scenario-based ‘problems’ will be workshopped with students to flesh out conversation on what is considered ‘reasonable’ and what is not in a behavioural context.

- Members recommended that alongside a revised Code for Students should be revision of the equally dated Code of Conduct for staff, which should also align with the Culture
Strategy. Members noted that a shared Code for staff and students is impracticable as any staff Code will involve industrial matters that do not pertain to students.

- Associate Professor Helen Agus noted on the subject of incorporating behavioural prescriptions around students’ use of social media is complicated and in many ways, falls outside the remit of the University to monitor and apply enforceable principles.

The Acting Registrar and Academic Director, Education Policy and Quality noted that the same issue underlies the University’s policy addressing sexual harassment and sexual assault, however the latter nonetheless is not restricted to dealing with matters that exclusively occur on campus; as such, it may offer a useful case-study.

- The Chair of Academic Board noted that there are other contemporaneous policies that are due for review, such as the Charter of Academic Freedom, which are as old as the current Code and could also benefit from review.

Resolution ASPC19/2-5
The Academic Standards and Policy Committee:
(1) provided feedback on the current Code of Conduct for Students; and
(2) discussed issues to be considered in the review.

4.3 Academic Board Annual Report 2018

The Chair of Academic Board expressed his congratulations and thanks to the committees that had generated the content for the Academic Board Annual Report 2018, noting the significant effort involved. He asked Committee members to forward any suggested revisions to either himself or the Executive Officer to the Academic Board, as soon as possible.

Resolution ASPC19/2-6
The Academic Standards & Policy Committee recommended that the Academic Board approve the Academic Board Annual Report 2018 and present it to Senate.

5 ITEMS FOR NOTING

5.1 Curriculum Timetabling Policy 2019

The DVC (Education) advised the Committee that a working group has been active in developing a novel Curriculum Timetabling Policy (the ‘Policy’) for the past twelve months. The working group reports to a Steering Committee nested within the Office of the Provost & Deputy Vice-Chancellor, as part of the Sydney Operating Model (SOM). The Steering Committee has endorsed the draft for noting by the Academic Standards Policy Committee (attached to this item), as have several other committees. Curriculum Timetabling Procedures (the ‘Procedures’) are currently under development and will be separately submitted to the ASPC in due course. Subsequently, both the Policy and the Procedures will be considered together for consultation at the Academic Board, for final approval by the Vice-Chancellor. It is proposed that the Policy will apply approximately 6 – 12 months before the Procedures. The intention is for the new timetabling process to be in place for 2021.

The DVC (Education) advised that the Policy and Procedures cover all coursework programs, but do not currently extend to non-award teaching. They are intended to provide equitable and efficient timetabling across the institution; to foster teaching excellence; to optimise faculty and school teaching resources; and to try to minimise cross-campus travel time for both staff and students. A Timetabling Committee will be responsible for the production of timetables. The overall aim of the Policy is to produce a timetable that keeps class clashes to a minimum, with the flexibility for students to switch classes where possible.

With reference to the membership of the Timetabling Committee (per Schedule 1 of the Policy), the Chair suggested that it would be beneficial to include a number of teaching academics. The DVC (Education) took the suggestion on notice.

Members provided feedback on the following points:

- There are a substantial number of international students receiving late offers for programs, which often do not mesh well with existing timetabling cut-off dates. Faculties
and schools attempt to anticipate the number of incoming students and this often leads to the overbooking of classrooms, which then go unused.

- The DVC (Education) acknowledged that within the Sydney Student system, students often do not have thorough information on their classes until after they have enrolled. Future practice will attempt to remedy this.

- A member flagged that because of the current practice of permitting lectures to clash, students interpret this as an indication that attending lectures is optional and prioritise tutorials and labs. This is pedagogically unsound and the double-booking of lectures should be eliminated as far as possible by the future system.

The President, SRC agreed with the above, but noted that clashes were often unavoidable for double-degree students. Of issue to the latter is clashes that occur between compulsory units.

The nominee of the President, SUPRA noted that the Policy makes provision for resolution of clashes, however she expressed the utility for postgraduate students to be able to switch classes by preference in order to better consolidate their timetable to fit in internships, which are also integral to their overall study and employability outcomes. The DVC (Education) advised that this will be an active area of consideration in the drafting of the accompanying Procedures, where a mechanism of applying to be on a waiting list to switch classes is planned.

- A member noted that under Part 5, Section 15, Clause 1, timetabling staff are enabled to manage staff lists, which is difficult in many instances as they are not ‘on the ground’ in the classroom.

- A member noted that under Part 4, Section 12, Clause 2 re: the provision of the timetable to ‘relevant university systems’, currently, the timetable is not integrated with Canvas, which is a significant drawback.

- The University Policy Manager noted the risk posed by overcrowding in teaching spaces as a significant WHS issue.

- A member raised the issue of growing class sizes; the DVC (Education) advised that this is a consideration that falls outside the project scope of the Policy and Procedures.

- A member raised the issue of the efficiency of room allocation within the new system per Part 2, Section 7, Clause 3 (b)(i): ‘optimising – the match of teaching spaces to scheduled class requirements (such as size of class, type of class, teaching facilities needed)’. The DVC (Education) noted that the system will be able to capture the characteristics of all teaching spaces on campus (for example, whether they are purpose-built laboratories), and will be able to automatically allocate them to units as appropriate.

- A member enquired whether there will be trouble-shooting experts permanently active and available behind the timetabling system. The DVC (Education) advised that the University was purchasing a vendor packaged system, which is intended to automate the timetabling process. The system will allow manual inputs, where necessary.

The DVC (Education) invited members to provide further feedback to her directly.

Resolution ASPC19/2-7
The Academic Standards and Policy Committee noted the draft Curriculum Timetabling Policy 2019 from the Provost Steering Committee of the Sydney Operating Model Program.

6 OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Any Other Business

There being no other business, the meeting concluded at 3:50pm.

Next meeting: 2:00pm – 4:00pm, Tuesday 7 May 2019

Level 5 Function Room, F23 Administration Building