MINUTES

1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Board noted apologies as recorded above and welcomed new members.

Resolution AB Adm 2016/2-1
The Admissions Committee resolved to note that apologies have been received from the members above and that they be excused for their absence.

2 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

2.1 Minutes of Previous Meeting

Resolution AB Adm 2016/2-2
The Admissions Committee resolved that the minutes of the meeting of 9 March 2016 be confirmed as a true record.

2.1 Actions Arising

Resolution AB Adm 2016/3-3
The Admissions Committee noted that there are no outstanding actions.

3 STANDING ITEMS

3.1 Report of the Chair

The Chair advised that he had nothing to report in addition to items on the agenda.

Resolution AB Adm 2016/2-4
The Admissions Committee noted the report of the Chair.

3.2 Report of the Academic Board meeting of 30 March 2016

Associate Professor Masters had nothing to report in addition to the circulated paper.

Resolution AB Adm 2016/2-5
The Admissions Committee noted the report of the Academic Board meeting of 30 March 2016.

3.3 Report of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Registrar)
Professor Carlin provided a verbal update on the Semester 1 2016 admission round and advised that a confidential written report would be circulated to the Committee shortly after the meeting. Members were advised that the median ATAR for 2016 Sydney offers was 91.45, an increase from 2015, and only 23% of offers were made to applicants with an ATAR below the published cut-off, a reduction from 29% in 2015. These represent approximately 10.6% of all offers, with two thirds of these offers made to applicants no more than five points below the cut-off. Performance was generally strong across the University, with an increase in international applications for undergraduate and postgraduate coursework. Several under-performing areas have been identified for future review.

Questions were invited for discussion at the next meeting once members have received the detailed written report.

**Resolution AB Adm 2016/2-6**
The Admissions Committee noted the report of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Registrar).

**4 ITEMS FOR ACTION**

**4.1 Minor Course Amendment Proposal: Faculty of Science**
The Faculty of Science proposed to amend the English language requirements for admission to the Master of Clinical Psychology (MCP) and the Master of Clinical Psychology / Doctor of Philosophy (MCP/PhD) degrees to align with the registration requirements of the Psychology Board of Australia (PsyBA) regulated through the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).

Dr Newsome spoke to the written proposal and advised that changes to the language requirements for admission to these degrees was necessitated by the requirement that students provisionally register with the accrediting body in order to complete mandatory components of the course. In discussion, the complexity of AHPRA’s requirements was noted as well as a mismatch between the testing conversion protocols utilised by the University and AHPRA. Two options for the emendation of language requirements were presented, the first outlining in detail AHPRA’s requirements in a format similar to that already adopted by the Academic Board for other degrees, and the second, a more simple formulation advising that applicants must meet AHPRA requirements in addition to the standard of language proficiency set by the Academic Board. The Committee supported in principle the latter option, with precise wording to be refined in consultation with the Admissions Unit.

The Committee was advised that interpreting the eligibility of an applicant for registration based on the criteria published by AHPRA is problematic, with instances of students admitted by the University base on interpretation of the criteria who were subsequently rejected by AHPRA. Affected faculties are in liaison with AHPRA in hope of refining language standards.

The impact of AHPRA’s requirements on other clinical programs (such as in Pharmacy and Health Sciences) was also raised and the Committee was advised that these faculties are currently in discussion with the Admissions Unit to review their language requirements. Ms Kiernan undertook to follow up with these faculties to resolve the matter.

**Action 1/2016**: Follow up with Faculties of Health Science and Pharmacy regarding possible changes to language criteria for admission to the University necessitated by AHPRA requirements. 
Responsible: Felicity Kiernan. Timing: June.

**Resolution AB Adm 2016/2-7**
The Admissions Committee approved the proposal to recommend that the Academic Board:

1. approve the proposal from the Faculty of Science to amend the English language requirements for admission to the Master of Clinical Psychology and the Master of Clinical Psychology / Doctor of Philosophy; and
2. approve the amendment of the schedule of Postgraduate English Language Requirements arising from this proposal, with immediate effect, as set out in the report presented.

**4.2 Public Consultation on Transparency in Higher Education Admissions – Higher Education Standards Panel (HESP)**
The Chair advised the Committee that this discussion paper had arisen because of recent public and governmental interest in transparency of university entry standards and especially the relationship of published ATAR with the actual ATAR of applicants offered a university place.
Clarification of the purpose of the ATAR was suggested, with Associate Professor Masters observing that the ATAR is more appropriately defined as a guide to selection of academically-capable students rather than a rationing device as suggested in the discussion paper. The perception of the ATAR as a ‘game’ to be played by strategic subject selection to maximise chances of admission should be addressed through better education of students and other stakeholders as to the purpose of the ATAR and how it is calculated. Student use of the published prior-year ATAR as a guide to preference selection was also noted, with the observation made that other states publish additional information to inform preference selection (such as raw and adjusted results where courses have additional or flexible criteria for admission).

It was agreed that the ATAR should be consistently applied by all institutions and that a ‘tailored ATAR’ approach allowing individual institutions to adjust the ATAR on a non-transparent basis should not be supported. Standards for each institution should be clear and easily-accessible, and institutions should be able and willing to provide data on the basis for admission of every student, with mandatory reporting of any students admitted under a flexible or alternative pathway scheme. It was noted that the primary challenge is transparency, with many institutions publishing an ATAR for a course but admitting students with results below this standard (sometimes substantially) on a non-transparent basis. In summary, the University is strongly supportive of transparency in sector-wide publication of admissions standards, flexible entry or alternative pathways, adjusted ATAR cut-offs and related data, including early- and late-round offers.

The value of the ATAR as an evidentiary predictor of tertiary academic performance was supported, with acknowledgement that other criteria can also demonstrate academic potential. Flexible- and alternative-entry pathways are therefore supported, but criteria for these should be publicised and readily available.

The date of effect of any possible changes to the Higher Education Standards (flagged in the discussion paper as 1 January 2017) is problematic as 2017 applications are already being received from international students currently completing the HSC.

It was agreed that the Chair would formulate a response to this discussion paper in coordination with the Director of Higher Education Policy and Projects and that this response would be presented to the Academic Board for endorsement.

**Action 2/2016**: Response to the HESP paper to be prepared in coordination with the Director of Higher Education Policy and Projects, for consideration by the Academic Board. Responsible: Chair. Timing: May.

**Resolution AB Adm 2016/2-8**

The Admissions Committee discussed the Public Consultation on Transparency in Higher Education Admissions paper from the Higher Education Standards Panel. It was agreed that the Chair would formulate a response in coordination with the Director of Higher Education Policy and Projects and that this response would be presented to the Academic Board for endorsement.

5  ITEMS FOR NOTING

6  OTHER BUSINESS

6.1  Any Other Business

    There was no other business.

**Next meeting**: 10:00am – 12:00pm, Wednesday 8 June 2016
Western Tower Boardroom, Quadrangle