



Learning and Teaching Committee Agenda

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Notice of Meeting

A meeting of the **Learning and Teaching Committee** will be held at **10.00am** on **Wednesday 17 June 2009** in the **Senate Room**. The Senate Room is in the Quadrangle Building on the Camperdown Campus, above the Ante Room which adjoins the Great Hall.

Members who are unable to attend are asked to notify Louise Young at the above address. Enquiries concerning this meeting may also be directed to Ms Young.

Louise Young

for

Ms Megan Kemmis

Secretary to Academic Board

10 June 2009

Agenda

1. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies have been received from: Dr F Waugh (Ms A O'Hara attending in stead)

2. Minutes of previous meeting

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Recommendation

That the Learning and Teaching Committee adopt the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 May 2009 as a true record.

3. Business arising from Minutes (not dealt with elsewhere in the Agenda)

4. Report of the Acting Chair

Recommendation

That the Learning and Teaching Committee note the report of the Acting Chair.

5. Report of the Academic Board

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Recommendation

That the Learning and Teaching Committee note the report of the Academic Board meeting of 27 May 2009, as presented.

6. Report of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)

Recommendation

That the Learning and Teaching Committee note the report of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education), as presented.

7. Academic Board Faculty Reviews

7.1 Faculty of Arts

[\(Appendix 1\)](#)

The Academic Board Review Phase Three Report for the Faculty of Arts is attached as Attachment 1.

Recommendation

That the Learning and Teaching Committee note the Academic Board Phase 3 Review Reports for the Faculty of Arts, as presented.

8. Policy Updates and Reviews

8.1 Students at Risk Working Party

Recommendation

That the Learning and Teaching Committee note the update report of the Students At Risk Working Party.

9. General business

10. Next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled from 10am-12pm on Wednesday 12 August 2009.

Agenda Item 2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes of the Learning and Teaching Committee meeting held on Wednesday 13 May 2009

There were present: The Deputy Chair (Associate Professor S Barrie) presiding; Professor D Armstrong; Associate Professors C Collyer (from 10.50am), M Scoufis, T Ho and P McCallum; Drs S Cattle, M Edmund, C Groenlund, J Jones, H McKenzie, R Roubin, R Saunders and F Waugh; Ms J Gavan, Ms R Kumar; Mr B Meikle and Mr J Saurine. Mr M Charet and Ms L Young were in attendance.

1. **Welcome and Apologies**

The Deputy Chair welcomed new members Associate Professor Michele Scoufis (Economics and Business) and new Committee Secretary Louise Young, with thanks to those whom they are replacing.

Apologies were received from: Professor B Sutton; Drs I Koprinska, N Lusty, B Rooney and C Taylor; and Mr N White.

2. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 13 May 2009, were circulated and confirmed as a true record.

Resolution 16/09

That the Learning and Teaching Committee adopt the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 May 2009 as a true record.

3. **Business arising from Minutes (not dealt with elsewhere in the Agenda)**

Ms Kumar asked if there was an update of the activity of the Assessment Working Party. It was noted that Professor Bruce Sutton, Chair of this working party, was the best person to answer this question but that he was absent.

Professor Armstrong commented that he was aware of a very interesting discussion document focusing on national and international work around academic standards and their regulation ('Setting and Monitoring Academic Standards' from the Australian Universities Quality Audit [AUQA]). The development of national academic standards was likely to be a significant issue for the future, Professor Armstrong said. The Deputy Chair agreed with Professor Armstrong and added that the discussion paper included reports of relevant European research such as that from the Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO) project. He said he would circulate the discussion paper for comment to the Committee.

4. **Report of the Chair**

4.1 Responses to the review of the Academic Board

The Deputy Chair began by explaining that instead of a report he wished to facilitate an open discussion of what changes might be made to the structure and membership of the Academic Board's standing committees in the University's new operating environment. This discussion, the Deputy Chair said, would best take place at the end of the meeting. Following discussion of agenda Items 5-8, the Deputy Chair returned the meeting to this proposed discussion. He initially asked members to talk amongst themselves on the subject before calling the meeting back to order and inviting members to

present their responses. Ms Gavan said she saw the new role of the Academic Board as being to scrutinise the decision making process and development and implementation of policy by the Senior Executive Group (SEG). She also pointed out there was a substantial overlap between membership of the SEG Education Committee, the Learning and Teaching Committee (Learning and Teaching Committee) and the Institute for Teaching and Learning (ITL) Associate Deans Learning and Teaching Group. This was a point raised several times by Committee members in the discussion. Ms Gavan also questioned how the Learning and Teaching Committee would feed back their findings to SEG and the Academic Board in the new structure. She added that the ITL was a particularly good forum for discussion of teaching and learning issues.

Associate Professor McCallum agreed that cross-committee members did not want to “have the same meeting three times a month”. He said the current value of the Learning and Teaching Committee was information sharing and discussion of best practice. Dr Cattle agreed with this and pointed out that unlike other standing committees, there was no urgent decision making that came out of the Learning and Teaching Committee. Associate Professor McCallum suggested the function of the Learning and Teaching Committee could change to another role, such as ownership of follow through of the Academic Board Faculty Reviews. This could include making recommendations to the University about when resources were needed for implementation. He pointed out that if this shift in function were to take place the Learning and Teaching Committee would not necessarily need to meet every month but could be convened as necessary.

Associate Professor Scoufis and Dr Edmond told the Committee they had discussed the division between management and quality enhancement. Associate Professor Scoufis pointed out that there is a great deal of data about student experiences with learning and teaching that is not utilised properly. She suggested the Learning and Teaching Committee could become the body to own and examine this data. Dr Edmond discussed how the Academic Board had taken on a large management role and that relinquishing this to SEG would allow the Board to focus on strategic decision making. She said the Academic Board should relinquish management and focus on maintenance of academic standards while SEG looked after development and management of policy.

Associate Professor McCallum discussed the problem of how strategic planning at the University did not traditionally consult as widely as it should, raising the hypothetical issue of the uncapping of student numbers and the quality issues that would arise if there were suddenly 2000 more law students. A group like the Academic Board could scrutinise the implementation of University strategies developed by SEG to avoid such quality issues. The Deputy Chair agreed the Academic Board could have an important role in monitoring the participatory processes used by SEG.

Associate Professor Collyer asked which body at the University would practically develop new policy if this role was removed from the Academic Board, noting that the development of academic policy does not currently involve active involvement of senior University management. It was suggested that clear line management of any policy development would need to be established to actively involve both the Board and management in the development of policy to avoid duplication of effort and the development of parallel but not necessarily complementary policies.

The Deputy Chair proposed a notion whereby policy was developed by SEG and the Academic Board ensured it met academic standards in both the policy itself and its implementation. Dr Edmond suggested that while SEG could own the process of developing policy, the Academic Board would play a cooperative role in developing it, and Professor Armstrong agreed that collegiality was important and said that joint members across committees could help to prevent potential isolation of SEG from the rest of the University. He stressed it was important for it to be clear about how the Academic Board carried out its central role of maintaining, preserving and being responsible for academic standards.

Dr Cattle suggested that SEG could make the high-level policy and decision making processes, that the ITL and associate deans of faculties should be responsible for implementation of these policies, and that the Academic Board's role should be to ensure that quality is being maintained throughout development, implementation and operation. The Deputy Chair built on this by describing the Academic Board's potential role as being the maintenance of standards within the policy and its implementation.

Returning to the topic of joint committee membership, Associate Professors McCallum and Ho discussed how this could potentially create a conflict of interest. To avoid this issue, Dr Cumming suggested the Learning and Teaching Committee could be comprised of faculty representatives rather than the Associate Deans, to avoid possible strategic faculty interest. Associate Professor Ho added that it was important that the current reporting lines (with Academic Board reporting to Senate and SEG to the Vice-Chancellor) should be kept separate.

Returning to the subject of policy, Dr Edmond said that if policy was developed by SEG there would likely be more commitment from Deans to implement it at faculty level. The Deputy Chair agreed, saying such policy would be more closely linked to accountability and resources. Ms Kumar asked what the process would be for the Academic Board to challenge a SEG policy, specifically asking how the Board would propose and initiate changes? She also said that if more 'grassroot' academics, such as the heads of school rather than the associate deans, took a place on the Academic Board, there would be less danger of such academics losing their voice. Ms Kumar also commented that she was concerned with the small student representation in SEG.

Associate Professor McCallum said Ms Kumar's first point about how the Academic Board could question SEG policy raised the issue of whether SEG had the authority to establish policy without first consulting the Board. Professor Armstrong replied that anything involving an academic matter must go through the Academic Board and Senate and that the decision-making should be collegial. Associate Professor Collyer added that a body with a quality assurance role must have the power to initiate policy change. The Academic Board must have this role, he said, and SEG must notify the Board when there is planned policy change.

Associate Professor McCallum said it would be helpful to clearly show the different functions of the three learning and teaching-related committees. The Deputy Chair added that this could mean a potentially new reporting lines for the different committees. Dr McKenzie suggested that the Learning and Teaching Committee could re-evaluate its membership and include better representation of e-learning.

The Deputy Chair discussed the Learning and Teaching Committee's expertise function and asked the committee how best they thought to harness this expertise for quality assurance. Professor Armstrong raised the point that the Learning and Teaching Committee already overlapped with the expertise of the ITL Associate Deans Learning and Teaching Group. Dr Cumming observed that if the function of the Learning and Teaching Committee moved towards compliance and quality, the current composition of the Learning and Teaching Committee may not be appropriate as they are predominantly teaching and learning experts. There was general discussion about how the review was an excellent opportunity to explore better use of quality assurance expertise for academic standards, with Professor Armstrong noting that this expertise was currently scattered across the University with no central ownership.

It was further discussed by the Committee that although the report of the Learning and Teaching Committee was currently forwarded to the Academic Board, there was no mechanism for the dissemination of the report to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) or to the SEG committees. It was suggested that there needed to be a better process of communication, as there was also no means for the Academic Board to request the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) to report on how the University was responding to issues brought forward by the Board.

The Deputy Chair concluded the discussion by summarising some of the chief points raised:

- That there was a role for the Learning and Teaching Committee in terms of scrutinising and reflecting decision-making as well as participating in collegial decision-making about teaching and learning matters in the University
- That there was a particular role for the Learning and Teaching Committee in ensuring the maintenance of standards - both in teaching and learning policy formulation and its implementation
- That there could be an additional role for the Learning and Teaching Committee in informing future Academic Board quality assurance and enhancement processes - for instance in analysis and interpretation of teaching and learning quality data, and on subsequent follow-through of responses to teaching and learning quality processes across the University
- That the membership of the Learning and Teaching Committee might require review to reflect an enhanced quality assurance role
- That there was a need for a clear delineation of functions between SEG (Education) subcommittee and Learning and Teaching Committee – while recognising that some processes, eg policy formulation might originate in either
- That there should be separate reporting lines for the Learning and Teaching Committee and the SEG (Education) subcommittee however there was a need for close communication between the two to ensure neither operated in isolation

He added that the Academic Board quality assurance function would also be shaped by the requirements of the as-yet unknown body which would replace AUQA.

Resolution 17/09

That the Learning and Teaching Committee note the report of the Chair.

5. Report of the Academic Board

Associate Professor McCallum noted that a thorough written report had been circulated and had nothing to add to the information presented in the report. He did open discussion of an effort being made to combine the University's two joint plagiarism policies, one of which had been developed by the Senate and the other owned by the Vice-Chancellor. Associate Professor McCallum also said there was an issue around use of electronic detection of plagiarism, noting that as there is no policy covering this practice, some faculties are reluctant to use it. Associate Professor McCallum said he hoped to provide some preliminary documentation concerning this to discuss at a future meeting.

Associate Professor Ho raised the issue of student privacy where electronic retention of information occurred. She gave the example of feedback from North American students in the Faculty of Medicine about concerns on how evidence of plagiarism retained from such software could be obtained under the Freedom of Information act, noting that uncovering such information could lead to them being rejected for a visa. She offered to send a copy of the feedback report to Associate Professor McCallum, who agreed it would be helpful for preparing the preliminary documentation.

The Deputy Chair asked Associate Professor McCallum if he could give some background to the Committee on the review of Academic Board. Associate Professor McCallum discussed the need for the review arising from the question of how the Academic Board worked in relation to the newly created Senior Executive Group (SEG). He discussed how the Vice-Chancellor was interested in having ex officio roles for heads of disciplines on the Academic Board, which would be very valuable as they "are at the coalface of implementation". The Vice-Chancellor, Associate Professor McCallum said, felt the Academic Board could be fine tuned and expanded. He added it was no secret that elected representatives in faculties were often not the most enthusiastic Board members, and that replacing them with more interested representatives would be more positive for the Board.

The Deputy Chair invited Professor Armstrong to talk about SEG. Professor Armstrong explained that SEG had been established in response to the extensive nature of University management. There was too much work for one committee and a broad range of management staff was needed. The SEG committees – Education, Research, Research Training, External Relations, Operating Resources and International – were therefore set up to manage implementation but also to become informed decision-making committees. Professor Armstrong explained that he looked after the Education and Research Training committees, as they covered the area of student experience. He said representatives of each faculty, nominated by their Dean, were included in the relevant SEG committees. Student representatives had also been included, for example in the Education Committee, where their input would be valuable for development of the University's new Learning and Teaching strategy.

The aim of SEG, Professor Armstrong said, is to create a system whereby decision-making is transparent and accountability, planning and strategic and operational management are enhanced. A chief difficulty is working out what management structure SEG will replace. Professor Armstrong said the development of SEG needs to focus on two questions: how management, policy and strategy are defined and who looks after them; and how to manage participation in decision making processes by other groups in the University. The creation of SEG provides an opportunity for the Academic Board to redefine and strengthen its role, with Professor Armstrong noting that it raised the issue of how much the Board has been involved in creation and implementation of management policies, and whether this was an appropriate role for the Board. He concluded by saying the creation of SEG provided an opportunity for the Academic Board to take on a role of providing rigorous scrutiny of management policies and decision making.

The Deputy Chair commented that the review was also an opportunity for the Learning and Teaching Committee to consider redefining its role, noting that as the SEG Education Committee was focussed on policy and decision making and the Institute for Teaching and Learning's Associate Deans Group has the specific role of supporting associate deans in implementing best practice and policies within their faculties, the position of the Learning and Teaching Committee was unclear. The Deputy Chair then asked the Committee to break into small groups for five minutes and discuss ideas for how changes to the structure and membership of the Academic Board's standing committees could contribute to the Board's role in the University's new operating environment (reported as part of Item 4.1).

Resolution 18/09

That the Learning and Teaching Committee note the reports of the Academic Board meetings of 10 March and 15 April 2009, including the 2008 Annual Report, as presented.

6. Report of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)

Professor Armstrong began by discussing the implications of the 2009 Federal Budget for the University and for higher education in general. A chief factor was the dissolution of the Australian Universities Quality Audit (AUQA) which will be replaced by an as-yet undetermined body, which it was anticipated would create new performance indicators. The University of Sydney's next scheduled AUQA review was recently pushed back from 2011 to 2012, making it likely that the new auditing structure will be in place by then.

Other significant factors of the Budget for higher education include that universities will be required to negotiate compacts with the Commonwealth (including a Research compact and a Learning and Teaching compact), but that the details of how this will be implemented are yet to emerge. The Budget also raises the cap on student enrolments, meaning there will be no penalties attached to deviations from enrolment projections from 2010.

A large boost in social inclusion funding was another stand-out feature of the Budget. This led to Committee discussion about the University's own initiatives on social inclusion. Professor Armstrong talked about the \$3 million funded social inclusion project the University has been awarded by the (recently abolished) Structural Adjustment and Diversity Fund, to be launched by Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard in June. This project, in partnership with the Department of Education and Training, is to strengthen pathways into universities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Initiatives include working with schools on curriculum development issues, professional development for teachers and community engagement. Academics and student groups from across the University are involved in the project and Professor Armstrong stressed they were keen to involve any part of the University that wanted to participate. He said the big picture was not just about recruiting students specifically for the University of Sydney, observing that a planned workshop to be jointly hosted by the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) would invite Deputy Vice-Chancellors from all universities in the Sydney region to discuss social inclusion issues. Professor Armstrong added that the University of Sydney should also look at its own admissions process in regards to social inclusion, as bringing in disadvantaged students on lower UAls could create tensions as implementing an allocation of places specifically for purposes of social inclusion must impact on the overall level of admission.

Other features of the Budget included a substantial increase in Commonwealth postgraduate scholarships, and that from 2010 administration of Commonwealth undergraduate scholarships would be taken over by Centrelink. In summing up,

Professor Armstrong said he thought it was a positive budget for higher education and that the chief disappointment for the University of Sydney was that they hadn't attracted additional funding for infrastructure projects.

The Deputy Chair asked Professor Armstrong if he had any views on the review of the Academic Board to share before the Committee moved on to discussing this issue. Professor Armstrong replied that he was very interested in the views of the Committee and that the review raised issues to him about how his portfolio related to the Committee.

Resolution 19/09

That the Learning and Teaching Committee note the report of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education), as presented.

7. Academic Board Faculty Reviews

7.1 Sydney College of the Arts

Ms Jane Gavan responded on behalf of the Sydney College of the Arts (SCA) to the Academic Board Phase 3 Faculty Review. She began by saying that several staff members had questioned the composition of the review panel, which due to the illness of Professor Penny Gay on the day of the review was an all male team (Associate Professor McCallum, who was on the review panel, also commented that this was regrettable). Ms Gavan went on to note that the timing of the review was good, as the SCA had just completed a full review of the undergraduate program (Bachelor of Visual Arts) and a review of their PhD program. An updated strategic operating plan had also been completed prior to the review.

In regards to the review team's finding, Ms Gavan said they had appropriately recognised that resourcing and infrastructure issues were impacting staff and students across the Faculty. She gave as an example that undergraduate students were required to attend a compulsory weekly theory unit and were unable to fit adequately into any of the teaching spaces. Occupational Health and Safety issues were pressing, Ms Gavan said, and were once again one of the top three learning and teaching issues for the SCA.

The other chief issue raised by the review team was communication. Ms Gavan described effective people management and communication between staff and students and management as "always a challenge". To meet this, the faculty has developed a workshop plan with Human Resources around mentoring staff and improving communication. Ms Gavan observed that the SCA was about to launch this workshop plan and had already completed a survey on how staff and students were feeling.

Associate Professor Scoufis questioned to what extent casual staff were involved in teaching at the SCA and if there were any communication issues with casual staff. Professor Gavan replied that the SCA had a number of strategies in place to tackle this challenging issue, including providing staff email addresses for casual staff, establishing a solid induction process and distributing a newsletter for all staff. Associate Professor McCallum asked how the SCA was following up the review findings about disagreement between technical and academic staff on how much the former was involved in teaching. Ms Gavan replied that technical staff were valuable and that their demonstrations did make up a part of many lectures. A clear model, transparent for staff and students, had been developed to track and show the roles of – and subsequent hours worked by – technical staff in demonstrations. The Faculty had also developed a committee for technical staff to contribute learning and teaching issues to academic staff.

Ms Kumar asked if plans for development of an SCA graduate school included dedicated space for a student common room. Ms Gavan answered that it was a possibility but not until a new lecture theatre space had been developed. She explained that the SCA had a 100-year lease on their buildings with the NSW Government and this included some buildings that had not yet been developed. There was already a cafeteria and several student gathering places, but she agreed with Ms Kumar that there was no dedicated student common room.

Ms Kumar also asked about the numbers of indigenous students, engagement with the indigenous community and the proposed exhibition to be organised in conjunction with the Koori Centre. Professor Gavan said she did not have the details of student numbers to hand, but that it was low. She was also not clear on the details of the proposed exhibition but said the SCA already worked with the Koori Centre and with local high schools on indigenous community engagement.

Resolution 20/09

That the Teaching and Learning Committee note the Academic Board Phase 3 Review Report for the Sydney College of the Arts.

8. Policy Updates and Reviews

8.1 Students at Risk Working Party

The Deputy Chair noted that Professor Bruce Sutton, Deputy Chair of this working party, was absent and asked if any Committee members had feedback on the latest Students at Risk Working Party meeting. Drs Cattle and Edmond told the Committee that good progress had been made, with interesting discussion at the most recent meeting on the identification of practices which had developed outside the requirements of policy.

Ms Kumar said that Professor Sutton has mentioned a draft review report and asked if this report would come to the Learning and Teaching Committee for discussion. Professor Armstrong said he had no objections to report being distributed, noting that it had been jointly commissioned by the Academic Board and the Registrar. Dr Cattle said Professor Sutton had not released the document yet as there were some inaccuracies in its statistics that needed to be corrected. The Deputy Chair concluded the discussion by saying the Committee would put the request through to Professor Sutton for the completed paper to be disseminated to the Committee for discussion.

10. General Business

Dr Janet Jones announced that this was her final Learning and Teaching Committee meeting due to her imminent replacement as director for the Learning Centre and thanked all members for their valuable discussions. The Deputy Chair thanked Dr Jones for her contribution on behalf of the Committee and the Committee expressed thanks by acclamation.

11. Next meeting

The Committee noted that the next meeting was scheduled from 10am to 12pm on Wednesday 17 June 2009, in the Science Meeting Room (Carlsaw Building, Room 450).

Agenda Item 5

Report of the Academic Board

5.1 Report of the Academic Board meeting held on 27 May 2009

The agenda for the meeting of the Academic Board on 27 May 2009 may be accessed on the web: <http://www.usyd.edu.au/su/ab/>

5.1.1 Academic Board Phase Three Faculty Reviews

The Academic Board noted the Academic Board Review Phase Three Report for the Sydney College of the Arts.

5.1.2 Proceedings of the Committee

The Academic Board noted the proceedings of the Learning and Teaching Committee meeting held on 13 May 2009.

5.1.3 Other matters

The Academic Board also:

- discussed the development of the University's new Strategic Plan;
- noted the need to develop a framework for the development and approval of coursework doctorates;
- received a report from the Chair on developments regarding the review of the Academic Board;
- approved the appointment of a new academic staff member to the Academic Board to fill a casual vacancy;
- noted the report of the representative of the Vice-Chancellor on the definition of 'student' and the development of the University Economic Model; and
- approved the membership of the Central Promotions Committees for 2009.