

## **COMMITTEE OF CHAIRS OF ACADEMIC BOARDS/SENATES OF UNIVERSITIES IN NSW AND THE ACT**

---

Minutes of meeting (07/1) of the Committee of Chairs held at 9.30 am on Thursday 19 April 2007 in the Chancellery at the University of Technology, Sydney, Broadway Campus.

---

**PRESENT:** Tony Baker (UTS)(Chair), Linda Connor (Newcastle), Tony Dooley (UNSW), Denis Goodrum (Canberra), David Griffiths (UOW), Jim Jackson (SCU), Michael Johnson (Macquarie), Eilis Magner (UNE) and Bruce Sutton (USYD).

**BY STANDING INVITATION:** George Cooney (Chair, Technical Committee on Scaling) and Gordon Stanley (President, Board of Studies).

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Des Petersen (UTS). The following Academic Board support staff attended as observers: Krystine Avery (Newcastle), Martin Derby (UWS), Kylie Ebert (Newcastle), Caroline Girvin (UNE), Stephen Harding (Canberra), Lynda Ho (UNSW), Ms Megan Kemmis (USYD) and Colleen O'Brien (SCU).

**APPRECIATION:** The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, expressed gratitude for the contribution of Bruce Kercher to the Committee of Chairs over recent years. His thoughtful input to discussions had been widely appreciated, as was his contribution to promoting the spirit of goodwill and cooperation amongst members. The Committee wished him well for the future and an enjoyable retirement.

### **1. APOLOGIES and WELCOMES**

Apologies were received from Lawrence Cram (ANU), Anne Cusick (UWS), Kevin Robards (CSU) and Peter Wilson (ACU).

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

### **2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 18 AUGUST 2006**

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed.

### **3. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

All known matters were listed on the agenda.

### **4. CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS**

The Chair reported that he had not yet been able to confirm the details of the next national meeting of Chairs, to be held later this year in Western Australia.

### **VARIATION TO ORDER OF BUSINESS**

To accommodate speakers visiting for a number of items, the order in which agenda items were discussed was varied. The minutes are recorded in the order of the agenda.

### **5. UAI ISSUES**

#### **5.1 Report of the Technical Committee on Scaling 2006**

George Cooney presented his report. In discussion it was noted that there was a move towards a national name for the UAI, in line with the general move to greater national consistency. It was agreed to approve in principle the recommendation that the highest UAI be 99.95 rather than 100.00, but for the implementation to be held over, pending further changes that are likely to emerge, so that they can be handled and communicated broadly as a package of changes.

### **Review of IB/UAI relativities**

The revised IB/UAI relativities take effect for the first time in 2007, the effect of which is to lower the UAI equivalent of the students who just pass the IB. When the research for this re-calibration was carried out three years ago, there was agreement that further research would be carried out in 2007.

### **Scaling of General Mathematics and Mathematics**

Some mathematics teachers have expressed concern about the scaling of Mathematics and whether the current procedures advantage students who complete General Mathematics. The results of current research will be presented to the next meeting of the Technical Committee on Scaling.

## **5.2 UAI Issues**

There was a wide ranging discussion about the confusion among HSC school leavers regarding current procedures and the lack of specific published information about alternative ways into university for school leavers, the predictive validity of such schemes and the number of applicants admitted through these pathways. It was agreed that this information should be placed in the public domain. Currently, it is possible for universities to hold their UAI cut-off at a specific level, but admit students with a lower UAI by utilising additional screening methods, such as interviews. As such methods are not always published, students can be disadvantaged by assuming that the cut-off is the only admission criterion. Members agreed that transparency and openness of admission processes and standards is desirable.

## **6. OTHER BUSINESS**

### **6.1 Board of Studies Decisions**

The summary of decisions of the 12 December 2006 Board of Studies meetings was noted.

Gordon Stanley outlined developments in the National Consistency in Curriculum Outcomes Project and other outcomes of the recent MCEETYA conference in Darwin. In particular he pointed out the differences from State to State in relation to the actual workload required to complete a set of units. The Years 11 and 12 workloads in NSW and Victoria are 22 units and 16 units respectively. Nevertheless, it appeared that the common scale methodology is feasible, and States will be asked to comment on descriptors for English, Maths, Chemistry, French and Drama.

### **6.2 National Body**

It was noted that the details of the 2007 national meeting were not yet available. In general discussion, it was agreed that the NSW Committee of Chairs as it is currently established is able to operate effectively and usefully.

### **6.3 Board of Studies Issues – Maths Review**

The Chair outlined a range of changes being proposed for the revised Maths curriculum. He encouraged members to ensure that interested parties from their universities provide feedback during the consultation phase.

### **6.4 Adjunct Appointments**

The report was noted. Eilis Magner thanked members for providing the material incorporated into the report. She would provide a UNE policy statement on adjunct appointments for information at a later meeting of the Committee.

## **6.5 International Issues**

Stephanie Donald attended for this item. She raised a number of issues, including:

- the disconnect between the official rhetoric of wanting Australians to be citizens of a global community and the lack of funding for language teaching
- the need for language training for a global work force, an educated public service and intelligent national leadership
- the pattern of languages actually being learned by students versus international links and emerging international issues (eg. the extremely low numbers of students enrolling in Indonesian, Hindi and Arabic versus relatively high numbers enrolling in German and French)
- the need to re-think the meaning and description of ‘regional links’ in relation to the need for language expertise.

In general discussion, members noted the importance of bi-lingualism as a communal resource, and the connection between student interest in language learning and regional events (such as a suggested link between the Indonesian invasion of East Timor and the decline in numbers of students enrolling in Indonesian). It was also noted that it takes considerable resources to maintain the wide number of languages available at the HSC. Reference to the MCEETYA Language Action Plan was noted.

## **6.6 Report on an Investigation and Systems Review of Corruption Risks Associated With HSC Take-home Assessment Tasks**

Gordon Stanley outlined the background and the particular circumstances leading to this report. The report raised serious questions needing to be considered by the universities, viz:

- how explicit current guidelines are in relation to how much and what kinds of help students can get with their work
- the extent to which current descriptions of getting help could lead to problems.

It was noted that a key emphasis in the report is the emphasis on clear, explicit and unambiguous definitions in relation to any aspect of student work that could lead to the possibility of allegations of plagiarism.

It was agreed that it might be useful to discuss this issue further at a later meeting.

## **6.7 Student Involvement in Academic Governance**

The Committee agreed that this matter be listed on the agenda for the next meeting. In particular, members were asked to supply such details as:

- patterns of student membership in various committees and governance bodies
- the means of recruiting students to such bodies (whether by way of election, nomination, appointment or other means)
- details of any specific roles applying to students
- suggestions for facilitating student participation.

It was also noted that, in light of the changes under VSU, it might be timely to re-think the best way to gain a good level of student participation.

## **6.8 Report of the Consultation on Future Directions for Public Education and Training (NSW DET)**

Christine Ewan (General Manager, Planning and Innovation, DET) attended for this item. She outlined details from the NSW State Plan relating to secondary education, including:

- the move to strengthen the ‘VET in schools’ program and the opening of new trade schools to allow students to start an apprenticeship at school
- conducting an annual destination survey for Year 12 school leavers
- the need to have plans in place to replace the generation of retiring post-war baby boom teachers
- moves towards a common Year 12 curriculum
- better partnerships with parents, to enable parents to engage with their children’s learning
- the positioning of TAFE to provide more training, and issues of better articulation between TAFE and university, notwithstanding the different cultures of each.

### **6.9 Report from Support Staff Workshop**

The Secretary reported that the support staff workshop had included discussion of the following:

- the role of the Academic Board/Senate vis-à-vis Senior Executives and Senior portfolio holders, and more closely co-ordinating the work of both
- communication between Academic Boards/Senates and Faculty Boards, including whether Faculty Boards are Academic Board/Senate committees
- elections, including options for electronic voting
- the range of approaches to what constitutes a quorum for an Academic Board/Senate meeting
- the role of Boards of assessors and any Academic Board/Senate role in results processing and approval
- induction of Academic Board/Senate members
- various options for pre-meeting briefings, including the option of a special briefing for elected members
- evaluations and reviews of Academic Boards/Senates
- annual work plans and their role in helping to co-ordinate the work of the Board/Senate.

The Committee supported the possibility of the group meeting again during 2007 to continue their work.

## **GENERAL**

### **Student Charters**

Eilis Magner tabled for information a draft document *Assuring rights and responsibilities and clarifying expectations in the new millennium: grounding student charters in diverse higher education contexts (Application, Grants Scheme 2007, Carrick Institute)*. She outlined the background to this application, and sought input from members by way of examples of student charters from their universities.

### **Student Discipline and Appeals**

Jim Jackson reported that he had applied for funding from the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education of a major project looking into student discipline and appeals issues across the sector.

## **CLOSURE**

The meeting closed at 4:00 pm.