

SENATE NEWS

The Academic Senate Communiqué

25th November 2025 Meeting



Quality Assurance

Draft Artificial Intelligence (AI) Governance Framework (formerly Policy)

Noted update on the progress of the Framework to translate the agreed principles into a structured approach for the oversight, implementation, and continuous improvement of AI systems across the University.

Annual Academic Integrity Report (HDR) 2024

The report outlined current challenges and risks and recommended HDR academic integrity be included in the Research Integrity Annual Report.

Annual Cohort Reports 2024 – International including UNCIE and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The International cohort report outlined enrolment and load, attrition and retention, progress and success and completions for this cohort. Whereas the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion report provided an overview of the measured outcomes for undergraduate domestic student equity cohorts and demographic categories across 2020-2024.

QILT 2024 Sector Data Student Experience Survey (SES)

Report showed sector comparison data for the Student Experience Survey (SES) and Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS) and 2025 GOS institutional-only data following recent data releases and allows for benchmarking of performance across the sector.

What's New?

New Members to Academic Senate

College Board Representatives

Dr Michelle Stubbs CHMW
Dr Catherine Johnston CHMW

Mar Willis CESE
Justin Ellis CHSF

Student Representatives

Imogen Reid
Omotola Abimbola
Marie Ferguson
Cheryl Johanna Meeran
Thomas Tildsley
Ashutosh Chugh

New Student Members to College Boards!

CESE

Ella Feeney
Jessica Wilcox
Thomas Tildsley

CHMW

Omotola Abimbola
Gemma Jain

CHSF

Mitchel Tapera
Tia Lambert



All our outgoing 2025 members!

Forum Items

Anonymous Assignment Submission Pilot

The Academic Senate reviewed consultation and system testing outcomes regarding anonymous assignment submissions and confirmed that no policy amendments would be introduced at this time. Anonymous grading remaining optional at the discretion of Course Coordinators, and the development and dissemination of guidance for enabling anonymous grading in Canvas for courses involving politically sensitive content was approved by Senate. The limitations related to assessment security and academic misconduct processes were noted in discussion, as were the system restrictions of Canvas. Concerns were raised about assessment security and academic integrity under the HESF, particularly in relation to GenAI use and the need for Course Coordinators to compare student work with prior submissions. Consultation indicated minimal demand for change, with the Bachelor of Development Studies identified as the only program where this may be relevant. The Senate will monitor usage and revisit the approach should sector-wide changes or new regulatory guidance emerge.

University of Newcastle Assessment Framework

In response to the rapid uptake in the use of GenAI and requests from TEQSA for secure assessment processes, the Academic Senate discussed the *University of Newcastle Assessment Framework*, including its timeline to commence in Semester 1, 2026 and College Action Plans. It was noted that the *Framework* establishes minimum standards for secure assessment across courses and programs, and emphasised principles of validity, reliability, fairness, transparency, educational impact, relevance, future-proofing, and academic integrity. It was noted that complementary work will address solutions for online assessment.

Academic Risk Items

Academic Quality Risk – English Language Testing



The PAS advised Academic Senate of risks posed by the small number of students undertaking the online Academic English Screen Test (AEST) via Canvas. It was noted that the AEST allows for the identification of students struggling with English to be offered additional support from the Academic Learning Support team under the “Elevate English” activities through the Career Hub. However, the AEST is not compulsory for entry into UoN programs and traditionally has a low uptake amongst commencing students despite efforts to promote the completion of the AEST. Discussions are continuing with the SDVCA and the Academic Learning Support unit on the best way forward for these students with additional awareness raising avenues to be discussed.

Academic Quality and Integrity Risk - Potential Misuse of Reasonable Adjustment Plans

The risk to course and program quality and University reputation resulting from the misuse of Reasonable Adjustment Plans (RAPs) by selected students was advised along with use by non-genuine students to avoid classwork and assessments. The concern noted the increased workload to accommodate RAPs especially those relating to group work whilst ensuring the core learning outcomes and requirements for program accreditation were maintained. At the time of the meeting the PAS was liaising with groups in Accessibility, Student Advocates and Legal to assess the extent of this issue and to provide clear advice on the obligations of the University under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) and the Disability Standards for Education 2005.

Risk to Academic Quality - Too Many Projects Running Simultaneously

The PAS advised of a slight increase in Requests for Academic Decision (RAD's) where delays have been cited as the primary reason have been attributed to the concurrent implementation of several large University-wide projects. These have impacted the timely processing of student requests, such as credit and recognition of prior learning. As a result, decisions affecting students' program plans are not being finalised before key academic deadlines, including census dates.

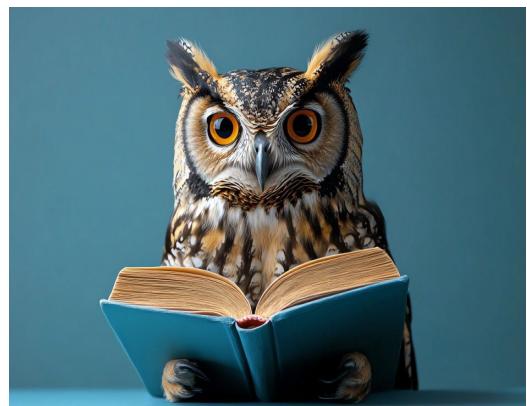
Risk to University Reputation – Incorrect Program Information on Social Media Pages

The PAS was advised of incidences where the program information provided on the University Facebook page was incorrect and advised that the issue had been raised with the Senior Manager Campaigns (Future Students Domestic) requesting that any program information is confirmed with the Program Convenor before being placed on University social media sites.

Reports from the Executive

PAS Report

The PAS updated members on topics of the recent student representative meetings included HDR swipe card access and laptop issue and lived experience affecting claims for adverse circumstances. The Elected Staff Member Forum highlighted increased risks of students using AI and staff workloads, requested input into the review of the Academic Work Allocation Policy and clarity over resourcing of non-priority area research; changes to the Open Foundation program and disconnection of Academic Senate, Executive and School-level issues. Several academic risks that had been brought to the attention of the PAS which were in various stages of confirmation and resolution including English language testing, potential misuse of RAPs, too many large projects running simultaneously, and incorrect program information on social media pages.



In sector news, the PAS advised of topics of discussion at the recent Universities Australia Student Governance Symposium had included the student voice in university governance, structural and cultural considerations for good governance and strategies for fostering inclusive and effective decision-making. Finally all members were encouraged to review the [Expert Council on University Governance – Final Report and Principles \(2025\)](#), which outlined the key priority areas for improving governance at Universities in leadership and culture; accountability; inclusion and engagement; transparency; and remuneration.

VC's Report

The VC briefed the Senate on key developments. Universities must submit an organisational plan under the *National Higher Education Code for Preventing and Responding to Gender-Based Violence* by 16 January, and results from the *Survey on Racism* are expected before year-end. The VC noted the formation of a University Governance Committee by the NSW Legislative Council, with no UoN representatives yet appointed. UoN's 2026 New Overseas Student Commencement (NOSC) places will rise to 2,425, and the VC emphasised addressing inadequate federal funding and administrative pressures from the Job-ready Graduates program.

The University's 60th Anniversary was celebrated at Parliament House, showcasing initiatives in community access, clean energy, and health sciences. Recent highlights included the Diwali Festival, hosting the International Indigenous Knowledges Institute, and a record-attended Singapore Graduation. Discussions with the Singapore government aim to enable domestic student work placements, while NAIHE Singapore seeks EduTrust provider status.

Global engagement featured talks with China's Shandong Education Bureau on a Joint Institute with Qufu Normal University, targeting 600 annual transfers. Twenty-three of 24 students advanced in New Colombo Plan scholarship interviews. The VC also announced new leadership appointments, strong 2026 enrolments, and reflected on the 2024 AFR Rankings.



Policy Changes

AMENDED

Adverse Circumstances Affecting Assessment Items Policy

Adverse Circumstances Affecting Assessment Items Procedure

Awards and Graduations Policy

Enrolment Manual

JMP – Student Support for Professional Practice (SSPP) Program Procedure

Joint Medical Program Manual

JMP Admission and Selection Policy - Bachelor of Medical Science and Doctor of Medicine NAME CHANGE

Program Design and Management Manual

Program Discontinuation and Suspension Procedure

Research Committee Terms of Reference

Teaching and Learning Committee Terms of Reference

External Program Review Terms of Reference

NEW – Nil

RESCINDED – Nil

Want More Information

Academic Senate Services: academicsenate@newcastle.edu.au or
the President of Academic Senate: PAS@newcastle.edu.au

Committee News

Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC) – 11th November 2025 Meeting

The SDVCA provided updates on the progress of the academic calendar, program accreditation reviews, NOSC developments, and near completion of the Education Plan. IT challenges in teaching spaces were noted, with a draft Service Level Agreement shared with ADE's for transition to business as usual. Concerns over declining CES response rates prompted discussion on improving engagement. Members reviewed Annual Cohort Performance Reviews and QILT 2024 survey findings. The Committee revised the University Assessment Framework timeline to Semester 1, 2026, discussed AI-related integrity issues, and considered results from the External Program Review Pilot.

Research Committee (RC) – 7th November 2025 Meeting

The Deputy President of Academic Senate (Research) reported on behalf of the DVC(RI) noting the Academic Research Achievements Framework will launch in 2026 following consultation and EBA alignment. Disruptions from relocations and the need for practical researcher support were highlighted. The SDVCA confirmed the Academic Workload Model review is pending. Strategies to boost Category 1 funding and collaborative grants were discussed, alongside concerns about unclear submission timelines, internal expectations, and loss of technical capability, with mention that other institutions offer project incentives. Finally, the EOI process for hosting research fellows is now open.

Program and Course Approval Committee (PCAC) – 15th October and 19th November 2025 Meetings

The SDVCA and PCAC Chair noted the number of discontinued and suspended programs over this period.

College Board Reports

Health Medicine and Wellbeing (CHMW) – 21st October 2025 Meeting

The PVC CHMW and College Board Chair advised of the relocation of the School of Medicine and Public Health to the CT Building and optimisation of HMRI space. Indigenous initiatives advanced through Miroma Bunbilla pathways and Thurru's engagement with 33 Year 4 students. Asia-Pacific efforts featured One Health Epidemiology Training in PNG. Other priorities were assessment security, 2026 calendar planning, Graduate Certificate in Pharmacy Prescribing, HMRI review, MRFF success, and philanthropic contributions. Collaboration opportunities with Singapore's LKC Med and AStar were noted. Triennial reviews and promotions are complete, the change paper will be finalised by year-end, and the Head of School for Health Sciences has been appointed.

Engineering Science and Environment (CESE) – 23rd October 2025 Meeting

The Deputy Head of College highlighted 161 grants totalling \$23.85 million and positive outcomes from ARC Discovery and Linkage Projects. Professional development workshops for Future Fellowships and DECRA were announced, along with strong results from Category 1 funding. Panel discussions emphasized strengthening partnerships. Outreach initiatives included HunterWise's event with 400 attendees, the Science and Engineering dinner, National Challenge for High Schools, SELS Expo, and Children's University ceremony. Recruitment for the Dean of Engineering is underway, and updates to Research Centres webpages have been completed.

Human and Social Futures (CHSF) – 23rd October 2025 Meeting

The PVC CHSF and Chair of the College Board provided an update and noted the written report included the annual list of articulation arrangements. The PVC CHSF noted the programmatic and course secure assessment projects and advised that the College was working with NAIHE to expand Bachelor of Media Communication in Singapore. The recent AICD agreement with NBS was noted, and members were advised of the recent Mock Retrial at Nihon University; the School of Education and Wollotuka Institute Aboriginal Numeracy Gala Day; Pat Conroy visit; and 60th Anniversary concert at the Conservatorium.

Next Meeting

Wednesday 25th March 2026

PALS and NAIHE Board Reports

Pathways and Academic Learning Support (PALS) – Update on the Open Foundation Program

The Director of PALS reported no recent Board meeting but provided an update on the 2026 Open Foundation program following concerns raised at the Academic Senate Forum. The program will feature high-quality on-campus learning with secure assessments for each unit, supported by enhanced LMS resources and smaller classes. Adjustments will cater to the growing number of students with disabilities, while flexible access will assist those unable to attend regularly. Additionally, specialised STEM courses under NuPrep will be introduced to support undergraduate students, ensuring a robust and inclusive learning experience.

Newcastle Australia Institute of Higher Education (NAIHE) Academic Board Report

As there had not been a meeting of the NAIHE Board, no update was given by the PVC and CEO of NAIHE Singapore.



nganggali ngara ngura (Darkinyung language for Talking Listening Place) Ourimbah Campus

Merry Christmas from Academic Senate!

