

ACADEMIC SENATE COMMUNIQUE



11 NOVEMBER 2020 MEETING

President of Academic Senate Report

The President of Academic Senate (PAS) spoke to the report and provided an update on recent activities, including attendance at a recent Committee of Chairs of Academic Boards/Senates (CABS) meeting. The Members noted key themes discussed at the meeting including current challenges facing the sector; the leadership role of Senates in maintaining academic quality and engaging with the academic community; and the importance of swift but effective and thorough governance in the continually changing environment. It was noted that TEQSA are currently engaging with Academic Integrity and corruption, and the relevant strategies being employed by universities to mitigate these risks. The PAS provided an update on the External Review of Academic Governance, advising that the self-evaluation report has been completed. The PAS thanked those who provided a response to the open call for submissions.

Vice-Chancellor's Report

The Vice-Chancellor provided an update on university strategic initiatives, achievements and external engagement, including: a Health and Safety Performance update; Payroll Remediation update; Code for the Protection of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom update; Early Retirement scheme update; and a COVID-19 response update. A further update in relation to the Job Ready Graduates Package was provided and members were advised that the Bill has passed. It was noted that the legislation makes significant changes to the higher education sector. The Vice-Chancellor gave an update in relation to the faculty/college re-structure discussion paper, Course Optimisation project, and infrastructure changes, including the current two-stage decommissioning of the Hunter Building strategy due to health and safety risks.

Faculty Board Reports and Recent Activities in the Faculties

The chairs of each faculty board provided key highlights of work currently underway in their faculties and schools, including the Course Optimisation Project and the new proposed College structure for 2021.

Presentations

Members received presentations on Aligning Academic Performance Drivers with World University Ranking Requirements and the Cultural Capability Framework Update, which provides a clear guide for staff on how to increase their cultural understanding, as well as actions that contribute to creating a culturally responsive environment.

Student Representative Report

The Student representatives provided a verbal report and enquired about the blended teaching model proposed for 2021 courses. The DVCA outlined the intention to maintain teaching quality, providing both flexibility and personal engagement opportunities for students.

Chair's Report - Program and Course Approval Committee (PCAC)

The Chair of PCAC spoke to the report, outlining the extensive review and consultation work the Committee and Faculties have undertaken recently under the Course Optimisation Project. Academic Senate also approved the rescission of a number of schedules.

Chair's Report - Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC)

The Chair of TLC spoke to the report informing members of recent items discussed by the Committee. The DVCA highlighted the decision by the Committee to make it mandatory to upload all assessment marks that occur throughout the semester to the University's Learning Management System. The Members were informed that the early round offers for the Schools Recommendation Scheme improved this year.

Other items considered by Senate, from the recent TLC meeting, included: approval of the ELICOS approval of the Program Manual; endorsement of the 2021 Course Management and Assessment Procedure Manual and Approval of 2021 Program Management Procedure Manual; Transnational Education Initiative (Nurture HE) Update; Update on Academic Program Reviews and 2021 Schedule; approval of the Joint Medical Program (JMP) Policy Manual; approval of mandatory Recording Assessment Results in the Learning Management System; and approval of the Draft Viva Guidelines.

Chair's Report - Research Committee

The Chair of the Research Committee highlighted a number of new initiatives including: the Research Internal Investment portfolio suite of programs, with the first pilot of the program being a Summer Research Internship; the recent Engagement Priorities Working Group meeting; and the new BioResearch building nearing completion. Members discussed the changes to the ARC Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Policy, which was updated in September 2020.

The Members were advised that the new Industry Engaged PhD pathway provides end-user engagement, professional skills development, and career mentorship, in addition to the research thesis. The Members discussed the importance of framing and standardising the definitions of Industry for this Pathway and were informed this will form part of the consultation process in 2021. Academic Senate also approved the Responsible Conduct of Research Policy.

Contact

For more information, email Academic Senate Services: academicsenate@newcastle.edu.au; or the President of Academic Senate: PAS@newcastle.edu.au

Next meeting – 10 March 2021