

**ELECTION OF ONE ACADEMIC STAFF MEMBER (LEVEL D or E) FROM THE COLLEGE OF HEALTH, MEDICINE AND WELLBEING
TO THE ACADEMIC SENATE FOR TERM 1 JANUARY 2027 TO 31 DECEMBER 2028
(4 NOMINATIONS RECEIVED)**

CANDIDATE STATEMENTS



PROFESSOR LESLEY MACDONALD-WICKS

Associate Professor Lesley MacDonald-Wicks is an academic leader in the School of Health Sciences as Head of Discipline Nutrition and Dietetics and is Assistant Dean Research Development with the College of Health, Medicine and Wellbeing. In my leadership roles I support high performing teams at all stages to achieve excellence. I am focussed on the role of governance and systems to drive change and develop excellence in practice. This is not only an academically important part of my teaching in the discipline but is also an important driver of my dietetic practice. I engage regularly with a wide range of communities – whether they are my professional dietetics community and or the UON student community. I recognise the role of diverse contributions, collaboration and data-driven decision making. I am passionate about all voices being represented and making decisions at the table to ensure the best future for all.

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ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR GINGER CHU

I am an Associate Professor with a sustained record of service on external governance and advisory bodies, much concerning teaching quality and continuous improvement. I was invited by the Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery ANZ to advise an expert group on national preceptorship and clinical-facilitator training, and represented the University on the National Placement Evaluation Centre, where I helped standardise how placement quality is measured and led its local implementation. I was appointed to the Australia and New Zealand Society of Nephrology Quality Improvement Committee, where I mentor colleagues to translate evidence into better practice, and selected to the Renal Society of Australasia Scientific Committee, chairing its research and quality-improvement learning lab. As a multicultural academic fluent in three languages, I am well positioned to understand and support a diverse student and staff community. I would bring rigour, independence, and a collaborative temperament to Academic Senate.

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PROFESSOR KAREN CHARLTON

Professor Karen Charlton is a research dietitian with >30 years' experience in academia, recognised nationally and internationally for research that translates into policy and practice benefiting diverse communities. She holds an ARC Future Fellowship and has recently joined the School of Health Sciences. She is committed to academic excellence grounded in fairness, diligence, ethical accountability, and transparent governance. In her previous role at another university, she served two terms on the Senate, where she strengthened communication by implementing rapid, transparent reporting back to College staff. Karen is passionate about improving health outcomes and her research includes addressing food insecurity, particularly among university students. She is also committed to educating graduates to be critical and innovative thinkers. At a time of significant change in higher education, she seeks to contribute a strong, experienced voice on Senate, representing the CHMW and supporting UON as an inclusive, respected institution for staff and students.

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ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR LOUISE THORNTON

I am a research-focused academic who has worked within university settings for over 20 years (including 12 years at the University of Newcastle).

Through my experience working within multiple Australian and international universities, I bring a broad understanding of different approaches to academic governance, culture and innovation. I also bring a perspective shaped by multiple career disruptions and balancing caring responsibilities with the demands of an academic role. This has strengthened my commitment to inclusive, equitable academic environments that enable diverse career pathways to thrive.

View University Staff Profile [here](#).