

# SENATE NEWS

The Academic Senate Communiqué

7th October 2026 Meeting



## What's New

### Welcome

Professor Bill Lyons - PVC Industry and Engagement

### Elections Update

#### Closed

Academic staff representatives to College Boards.  
Students representatives for Academic Senate and College Boards.

#### Pending

College Board representatives on Academic Senate.



## Quality Assurance

### Amendments to Academic Delegations

Members endorsed for Council approval proposed changes to the academic delegations to reflect the appointment of the University Registrar.

### College Board Annual Articulation Arrangements Reports for 2026

Members noted the annual reports from each College outlining the oversight of articulation pathways and compliance with Credit and Recognition Prior Learning Policy and regulatory requirements. Members noted the limitations with current reporting processes and supported future institutional reporting and system development initiatives that would enable more consistent monitoring, benchmarking and reporting of these student cohorts, helping the University fully meet policy reporting requirements.

### Annual Course and Programs Report 2025

Senate noted the report which reviewed the implementation and success of support and action plans reported through the Annual Course and Programs Review process.

### Coursework Admissions Report 2026 - UG S1

Senate noted the report which detailed undergraduate students admitted via admission waivers for Semester 1 2026.

## Proposals Reviewed

### 2027 External Review of Academic Senate and Committees

Academic Senate endorsed the proposed terms of reference for the 2027 External Review of Academic Senate and Committees for HESF compliance.

### Special Admissions Scheme with JNTUK

Senate approved the special admission pathway between UoN and Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Kakinada (JNTUK), India, for entry into the Master of Data Science and Artificial Intelligence or Master of Cyber Security programs. Students will need to meet admission requirements and reviews of the first cohort will be conducted.

### QILT SES Engagement Plan

Senate discussed the proposed plan to improve QILT SES engagement across the University.

### AI Summaries - Beyond Scores: Understanding Student Experience Through Story

Senate noted the availability of AI generated summaries and discussed the potential application to maintain our commitment to a strong and valuable feedback culture.

# Forum Item

## Central Coast Student Experience Update



An update was provided on progress in addressing matters raised at the August Academic Senate meeting. Members noted that while many student support services are available at the Gosford campus, it was noted that awareness of these services can sometimes be limited. Efforts have been undertaken to improve the visibility of support services at the Gosford campus, and the Communications Team has been asked to enhance staff awareness of student communications.

Discussions focused on opportunities to further strengthen the student experience across the Central Coast through clearer communication, greater visibility of available services, improved campus navigation and safety, and stronger engagement with students and staff. Positive progress has been made, particularly at Gosford, with further initiatives planned to enhance targeted communications, expand digital signage, and support local engagement activities.

## Policies



### Amended

Awards and Graduations Policy  
Course Assessment and Grading Manual  
CourseDesign and Management Manual

### New

Nil

### Rescinded

Nil

# Academic Risk Items



## Annual Academic Integrity Report

As part of the regular review of academic risk, Academic Senate discussed the annual academic integrity report. The report outlined academic misconduct investigations and appeals during 2025, identifying trends and opportunities to strengthen student support, assessment practices and institutional processes.

Unauthorised use of artificial intelligence continued to be the most common form of misconduct although the continuation of cases involving collusion and contract cheating highlighted the evolving nature of academic integrity challenges.

The report identified the importance of continued staff and student education, noting that assessment design, student preparedness and the appropriate use of generative AI remain key challenges across the higher education sector. Members observed that improving students' understanding of ethical AI use, strengthening academic integrity education and reviewing assessment approaches would be important priorities moving forward.

Discussion further highlighted the need for a better understanding of the factors contributing to misconduct, including differences across learning environments and assessment types. A series of recommendations was endorsed to support ongoing improvement and members emphasised the importance of timely resolution of cases to reduce uncertainty for students.

## Academic Senate Reviews Functions to Strengthen Academic Governance

To ensure Academic Senate remains compliant with recent changes the Higher Education Standards Framework, a series of proposed amendments to the Functions of Academic Senate was considered by Senate. Members provided feedback on the amendments before proceeding for legal review and subsequent consideration by Council before the 1st January 2027 deadline for compliance.

The amendments strengthen compliance, improve clarity and accountability, and more clearly demonstrate how Academic Senate fulfils its academic governance responsibilities. The proposed amendments place a stronger emphasis on Senate's oversight of academic quality, course and award approval processes, academic governance arrangements, and the monitoring of academic outcomes. Particular attention has been given to ensuring appropriate oversight of quality assurance activities, continuous improvement processes, benchmarking requirements, and actions arising from reviews, audits and accreditation activities.

The importance of maintaining the independence of Academic Senate and a stronger focus on critical scrutiny was highlighted amongst the amendments to the Functions, along with significant revisions to reflect responsibilities for approval of new courses and awards, monitoring academic quality and outcomes, and oversight of academic governance arrangements. The amendments also introduce additional provisions supporting the promotion of a safe, respectful and inclusive academic culture.

A number of other functions, were proposed to be updated to improve wording, clarify intent, modernise terminology and strengthen accountability.



## Academic Risk Updates

### *Update - Non-Compliance Risk - Third Party Education Providers*

Ongoing work with the University Registrar to strengthen oversight of Third-Party Education Arrangements.

### *Update - Quality Assurance Framework Development*

The University Quality Assurance Framework is in the final stages of development and will progress to the TLC accordingly.

# Executive Reports

## PAS Report

Academic Senate received updates on membership, engagement, governance, quality assurance and broader university developments. Members welcomed incoming PVC International and Engagement, Dr William (Bill) Lyons, and congratulated Mr Nathan Towney on the formalisation of the DVC Engagement and Equity role. Student and staff forums highlighted a range of matters including HDR student feedback, grading and timetabling concerns, campus facilities, student representation, leadership initiatives, the Digital First program and progress of the AWAM Working Group.



The Senate noted continued improvements to governance and assurance arrangements for third-party education partnerships, progress towards finalisation of the University's Quality Assurance Framework, alignment of Academic Senate Functions with amendments to the Higher Education Standards Framework, and preparations for the 2027 External Review.

University updates included recent Senate communications, the University's success in securing more than \$6.6 million in ARC Future Fellowship funding, and planned changes to student-led services from 2027 that will increase student influence over SSAF-funded services while retaining UNSA as the representative body. Members were also encouraged to promote participation in the QILT Student Experience Survey.

Sector updates from the September CoCABS meeting covered the 2026 sector scan, the use of artificial intelligence in analysing governance papers, amendments to the HESF, regulatory expectations regarding antisemitism, and academic risks associated with AI. Senate noted that no significant approvals had occurred since the previous meeting, reviewed academic decision requests, and encouraged participation in the 2026 Academic Senate Member Survey.

## VC's Report

The VC provided an update on key activities from the 23rd July to 22nd September 2026, highlighting strong student satisfaction results, with overall satisfaction exceeding 80 per cent across most SFUN Survey measures. Notable improvements were recorded in the management of adverse circumstances and complaints, while enrolment processes, food services and placement support were identified as areas for further attention.

Members noted the success of the University's recent Gifting Day, which raised more than \$300,000 and funded 62 new scholarships, as well as the September graduation ceremonies that enabled timely graduation for international Trimester 2 students. Research student engagement remained strong through the HDR Student Festival, with the University's Three-Minute Thesis winner progressing to international finals.

The VC reported ongoing progress in international engagement and student recruitment, including strengthened discussions with Qufu Normal University. Positive feedback was received on the University's Mission Based

Compact, with recognition of its impact on equity and student success. The University also secured an additional \$25 million in funding and 900 Commonwealth-Supported Places.

Members discussed several higher education policy developments, including concerns regarding new federal ministerial powers, international student policy settings, visa arrangements, and amendments to the Australia's Foreign Relations Act requiring researchers to document interactions with overseas counterparts.

Updates were also provided on TEQSA requirements relating to definitions of discrimination, the NSW University Governance Review, the success of the Female Leadership Innovation Program, ongoing Middle East travel restrictions, and support for staff and students affected by flooding in Nepal.





# Committee News

## Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC) – 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2026 Meeting

The DPAS reported on outcomes from the TLC meeting noting the progress on the Tertiary Harmonisation and Governance Model Project and initiatives to boost participation in the 2026 QILT Student Experience Survey. The Committee reviewed and discussed a proposal to integrate Canvas assessment due dates into the myUni app but determined that concerns relating to academic quality, student experience, equity, and limited stakeholder consultation outweighed its potential benefits. The Committee recommended further consideration of the proposal and endorsed exploring the use of artificial intelligence to generate summaries of qualitative student feedback.

## Research Committee (RC) – 17<sup>th</sup> September 2026 Meeting

The DVCRI and Chair reported that the RC approved the Research Plan, which outlines a vision for impactful research and focuses on HDR growth, research quality, income, reputation, researcher development, collaboration, translation, and research infrastructure. Members noted ongoing risks associated with sector-wide declines in HDR enrolments and welcomed increased scholarship capacity to support growth. The Committee reviewed the 2025 HERDC submission, discussed the proposed reforms to the Academic Work Allocation Model and the importance of strengthening and more effectively promoting the University's research reputation and unified research brand.

## Program and Course Approval Committee (PCAC) – 19<sup>th</sup> August and 16<sup>th</sup> September Meetings

The PVCEI provided an update on behalf of the SDVCAG and Chair of the PCAC on the meetings and advised of the continuation of the program portfolio renewal project, curriculum enhancements, the Indigenous Allied Health Scheme and articulation arrangements and credit transfer arrangements had been approved by the Committee.

## College, PALS and NAIHE Board Reports

### *Health Medicine and Wellbeing (CHMW) – 15<sup>th</sup> September 2026 Meeting*

The PVC CHMW and Chair of the College Board reported key outcomes from the meeting, including recognition of Tamworth as a UoN campus, plans for direct entry Bachelor of Nursing and Bachelor of Midwifery programs from 2027, and progress on the Centre for Regional Dental Education and new dentistry programs, subject to accreditation. The Board also noted feedback from the Professional Staff Listening Tour, research and fundraising successes, approved the Indigenous Allied Health Pathway, and received an update on the Education Equity and Engagement Officer position.

### *Engineering, Science and Environment (CESE) – 6<sup>th</sup> August 2026 Meeting*

The proxy for the PVC CESE and Chair of the College Board reported on improvements to Career Ready Placements staffing, placement agreements, and actions arising from a recent audit. The Board considered research and industry engagement initiatives, including ARC College of Experts nominations, National Industry PhD Program partnerships, and planning for the College Industry Engagement Summit. Members noted the establishment of a Digital Technology Taskforce, significant grant successes, and ongoing work to strengthen processes in response to recommendations from the SFUN and EY audits.

### *Human and Social Futures (CHSF) – 27<sup>th</sup> August 2026 Meeting*

The Acting PVC CHSF and Chair of the College Board gave an update on the meeting which advised members of the recent College Planning Day; the number of new enrolments for Semester 2 and encouraged members to read the College Achievements Report. Members further noted that Dr Bin Li had been appointed AD Student Experience and that Professor Elena Prieto-Rodriguez had been AD Education.

### *PALS Board Report - 4<sup>th</sup> August 2026 Meeting*

The DVCEE advised positive outcomes across widening participation initiatives, including strong academic results achieved through the High Performing Students Pathway program. Improvements to online timetabling for Diplomas was advised with increases in Semester 2 enrolments. Finally, members were advised of planning underway to develop a tailored version of the NUPrep program in Singapore.

### *NAIHE Academic Board Report - 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2026 Meeting*

The report highlighted strong progress in growth, academic development and student outcomes. Key achievements included EduTrust certification, approval of a new Strategic Plan, expanded academic offerings, increased research activity and collaboration, and significant enrolment growth. Positive student and graduate outcomes were reported, including high satisfaction levels, teaching quality and employment results. Continued investment in student support, hybrid learning, industry engagement, research development and international partnerships was also noted.

### 2026 Academic Senate Membership and Attendance

**President** Associate Professor Marcus Rodriqs

**Deputy President** Associate Professor Geoffry De luliis

#### Ex Officio Membership

|                                        |                                                           |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Vice Chancellor                        | Professor Alex Zelinsky AO                                |
| DVC (Engagement & Equity))             | Mr Nathan Towney (Interim)                                |
| SDVC (Academic)                        | Professor Belinda Tynan - APOLOGY                         |
| DVC (Research & Innovation)            | Professor Craig Simmons                                   |
| CHSF PVC                               | Professor Belinda Bennett (Acting)                        |
| CESE PVC                               | Professor Thayaparan Gajendran (Proxy) for                |
|                                        | Professor Juanita Todd (Interim)                          |
| CHMW PVC                               | Professor Bronwyn Hemsley (Proxy) for Professor Lisa Wood |
| PVC (Student Experience)               | Professor Jennifer McDonnel - APOLOGY                     |
| University Registrar                   | Professor Rachel Buchanan (Acting)                        |
| PVC (Education Innovation)             | Professor Karen Blackmore (Acting)                        |
| PVC (Research)                         | Professor Rohan Walker (Acting)                           |
| PVC (Industry & Engagement)            | Professor Bill Lyons                                      |
| PVC (Indigenous Strategy & Leadership) | Ms Loren Collyer (Acting)                                 |
| PVC (Global)                           | Dr Gurpreet Singh (Proxy) for Professor Alek Vonninski    |
| Director PALS                          | A/Professor Anna Bennett - APOLOGY                        |
| Dean of Graduate Research              | Professor Rohan Walker (Acting)                           |
| PVC and CEO NAIHE (Singapore)          | Professor Abhisek Bhati                                   |

#### Elected Staff Membership

##### CHSF

Dr Kate Ferguson-Patrick

Dr Tim Connor

A/Professor Bin Li

Professor Marianna Sigala -  
APOLOGY

Professor Jesper Gulddal

A/Professor Nancy Cushing

Dr Justin Ellis

Dr Angela Page

##### PALS

Dr Michelle Mansfield

##### CESE

Dr Kyle Harrison

Dr Joseph Pegler - APOLOGY

Dr Gabriel Rau (Alternate) -  
APOLOGY

A/Professor Terrence Summers

A/Professor Geoffry Deluliis

A/Professor Michelle Kelly

Dr Boyang Li  
(Proxy Dr Ziao Zhang)

Dr Mark Wallis

##### Non-Newcastle Campus

Professor Troy Gaston

Dr Joyleen Christensen

##### CHMW

Dr Shep Chidarikire

A/Professor Vanessa Murphy-  
APOLOGY

A/Professor Adam Collison

Professor Allison Cummins

Dr Michelle Stubbs - APOLOGY

Dr Catherine Johnston -  
APOLOGY

#### Elected Student Representatives

##### Undergraduate

Imogen Reid

Omotola Abimbola

Marie Ferguson - APOLOGY

##### Postgraduate Coursework

Cheryl Johanna Meeran

##### International

Ashutosh Chugh

##### Postgraduate HDR

Thomas Tildsley

##### Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

Jodan Perry

*Vacant and disestablished positions removed.*



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