

SENATE SPOTLIGHT

#5 -2026



President's Welcome

Welcome to the fifth edition of the Senate Spotlight, the newsletter of Academic Senate. Senate Spotlight and Senate News allow Academic Senate members to communicate the important work they do as a Senate member to all the University community. We are always seeking ways to communicate the work of Academic Senate, and I hope you find this publication of use in communicating the issues of interest at Academic Senate as well as getting to know some of our members.

As always we have included a Focus Article in this edition which centres on one particular issue in depth and provides members, staff and students with information that can be shared broadly within the University. For our Focus Article in this edition, we have invited our Chief Digital and Information Officer, Mr Anthony Molinia, to outline the important work our DTS colleagues are undertaking to improve our academic systems. I highly value the contribution by Anthony to our newsletter and to inform us of all the great work underway behind the scenes to make our academic lives easier and thank Anthony for the time taken to write this article for us.

This issue, in our "Meet a Member" segment, we meet Academic Senate member and our Deputy President of Academic Senate (DPAS) Associate Professor Geoffry De Iuliis from the School of Science at the College of Engineering, Science and Environment. It is my hope that this will help put a face to the name of our new DPAS as well as provide students and staff with alternate avenues to seek guidance and raise issues that may be of relevance to Academic Senate and its Committees. Thank you, Geoffry for letting us get to know you a bit better in this issue.

Finally, I would like to remind all members of our additional avenues to discuss issues with me via the "PAS Open Offices". These follow each meeting of Academic Senate for members at Callaghan, NuSpace and Ourimbah and Singapore. Please drop by or Zoom and have a chat with no appointment necessary. Further details will be provided coming up to our next meeting.

I hope you find this newsletter meaningful and engaging. As always, we are committed to learning and improving, and we warmly welcome any feedback or suggestions you may have. Please email PAS@newcastle.edu.au with your suggestions.

Thanks and regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marcus Rodrigs".

Associate Professor Marcus Rodrigs
President of Academic Senate

Focus Article – Technology Update

By Chief Digital & Information Officer, Anthony Molinia



Balancing digital ambition with sector challenges

Higher Education is operating in one of the most complex digital environments the sector has faced. Universities globally are responding to escalating cyber security risks, rapid advances in AI, ageing technology platforms and ongoing financial pressures. For regional universities, the challenge is particularly acute to provide secure, reliable and contemporary digital services while carefully prioritising investment and managing institutional risk.

Digital investment must do more than replace technology. It must strengthen the foundations that support teaching, learning, research and administration.

The 2021-2025 Digital Excellence Strategy was focussed on reducing fragmentation and providing a more personalised and seamless experience across our digital environment, strengthening cyber resilience, and improving data and research capabilities. While each initiative within the program had its own purpose, the broader intent was consistent: to move away from disconnected or heavily customised approaches and toward systems that are more reliable, secure, supportable and easier to integrate.

As we develop the next Digital Strategy to support the new Enabling Strategies, academic input will be essential to ensure future investment aligns with institutional priorities and the needs of our community. When it is ready for consultation, I encourage Academic colleagues to participate and provide feedback.

Work in progress, what you can expect to see

Our current phase of work is focused on strengthening the foundations academic colleagues rely on, while preparing the University for the opportunities and obligations that come with new technologies.

A major priority is the Future Student Management System program. The current student management system has served the University for many years, but it is ageing, highly customised and difficult to evolve. The program is focused on defining a modern, modular and integrated student ecosystem that can better support the full student lifecycle with improved data integrity, reduced operational complexity and enabling more consistent services for students and staff.

The Research Enablement program remains a key area of focus. We are continuing to work with the Research and Innovation Division to improve the systems that support researchers, Higher Degree by Research candidates and Research support teams.

We are also building AI capability at both an individual and institutional level. Our role is to help the University adopt AI in a way that is secure, ethical, practical and aligned to purpose.

In this context, the pilot of an enterprise AI platform, ZoomMate has now commenced, and will be implemented via a phased approach to allow feedback to be captured from staff as we proceed.

Our AI Capability Uplift workstream is delivering training modules and working with individual teams to build staff capability and confidence. We are also working alongside the Legal team to provide greater guidance for staff on the safe use of AI.

Our First Draft initiative and Emerging Tech Practice have worked to pilot and test priority use cases to ensure meaningful investment.

Rapid Application Delivery (RAD) is using agentic AI to deliver discrete business solutions in a significantly shorter time frame than traditional approaches. It has been used to deliver more 26 quick wins across the University and is on target to deliver 50 in 2026.

DTS remains committed to working with the academic community to support the University's goals. The strongest digital strategy will be one aligned to the enabling strategies of the University's Looking Ahead 2030 Strategic Plan – we look forward to shaping our plans in line with those when they become available.

Meet a Member



Associate Professor Geoffrey De Iuliis

School of Science College of Engineering, Science and Environment

Elected Member

Why did you become a member of Academic Senate?

For me, interest started because of another fork in my career path. Trying to make a decision about which path I would like to follow at my career stage was still a daunting one. So, a portion of motivation came from wanting to gain exposure to processes and opportunities at our University. The other half of the motivation came squarely from the encouragement of colleagues and mentors, who gave me the confidence to throw my hat in the ring.

What would you like to achieve in this role?

To start with my goal was simply to become more familiar with the operations of the University, understand how decisions are made and if there were any areas I could contribute to in the future, so kind of an information gathering exercise. I am starting to see how I might be able to contribute further as I move deeper into my term, but I'm sure new goals will evolve the more I learn and experience.

What do you wish the academic community at the University knew more about in relation to academic governance?

During my short time with the Senate, it has become clear that there is a drive to change the perception that the Senate is largely a rubber-stamping entity. We are actively promoting that we are a strong voice for academics that will contribute to upholding the academic standards we all expect. The other thing that is clear is that, all members are passionate about the University its place and its responsibilities to our region and beyond.

What is your favourite part of being an academic?

So far I am really enjoying listening and learning how things operate. Getting to know the fellow members and their backgrounds has also been great fun.



Discussion at Senate

What Items Have Been Discussed at Senate in 2026?

Major Issue Discussions

- University Response to Psychosocial Risk
- TEQSA Risk Indicators – Graduate Risk Indicators
- Treloar Review – UoN Review of Current TEQSA Obligations
- Annual Animal and Human Ethics Committees Reports 2025
- Education, Research and Engagement Strategic Plans
- Special Admission Scheme Review: CESE and SIMTS Partnership
- AWAM Policy Review and Terms of Reference
- Critical Thinking Presentation
- University Strategy
- TEQSA Draft Regulatory Risk Framework (RRF) and University Response
- AccessAbility Update: RAP Support Resources and Staff Guidance
- Central Coast Feedback



Policy Discussion and Approvals

Governance Rule

Code of Practice for Higher Degree by Research Candidature

Doctor of Philosophy (Research) by Prior Publication Admission Assessment Panel Procedure

Collaborative Research Procedure

Research Data and Primary Materials Management Procedure

Research Authorship Procedure

English Language Proficiency Procedure

Course Assessment and Grading Manual

Defence Export Controls Policy and Procedure

Defence Research Governance Management Group

Policy Framework

Research Integrity Support and Evaluation (RISE) Policy

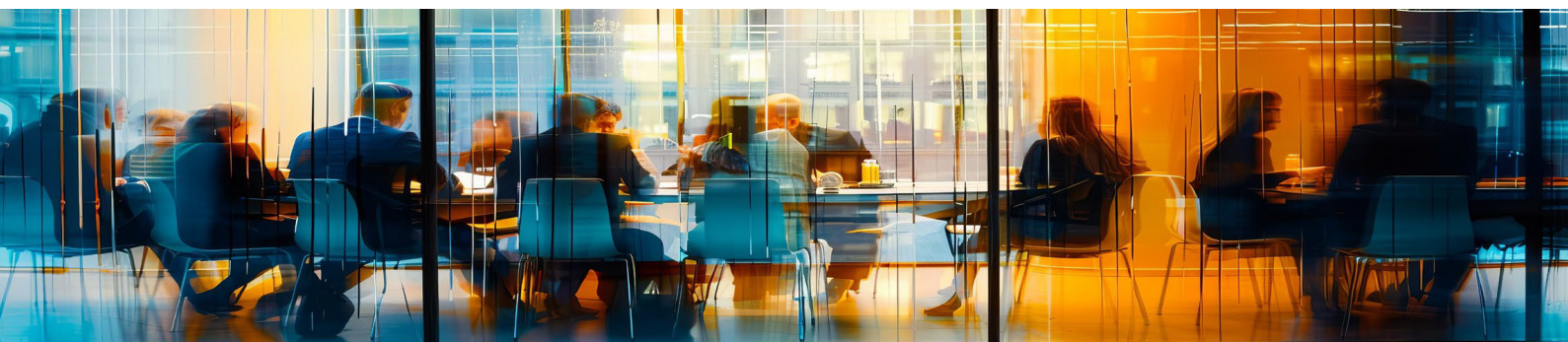
Research Integrity Support Procedure

Animal Ethics Committee Procedure Manual

Animal Regulatory Manual

Support for Students Policy Proposal to Establish a Governance Framework for International Pathway Admission Arrangements

Awards and Programs Schedule



2026 Academic Senate Membership



Ex—Officio

Professor Alex Zelinsky AO
Professor Belinda Tynan
Professor Craig Simmons
Mr Nathan Towney
Professor Robert Greenberg
Professor Lisa Wood
Professor Juanita Todd
Professor Jennifer McDonell
Professor Karen Blackmore (Acting)
Dr Alek Voninski
Professor Abhishek Bhati
Professor Rohan Walker (Acting)
Professor Alan Broadfoot (Acting)
Ms Loren Collyer (Interim)
Professor Rachel Buchanan
A/Professor Anna Bennett

Elected Students

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

Elected Staff

Professor Marcus Rodrigs (PAS)
A/Professor Geoffrey De Iuliis* (DPAS until 31 Dec)
Dr Tim Connor
Dr Kate FergusonPatrick
A/Professor Bin Li
Dr Gabriel Rau (until May 2027)
Dr Kyle Harrison
Dr Joseph Pegler
Dr Shep Chidarikire
A/Professor Nancy Cushing
Professor Jesper Gulddal
Professor Marianna Sigala
A/Professor Michelle Kelly
A/Professor Terrence Summers
A/Professor Adam Collison
Professor Allison Cummins
Professor Vanessa Murphy
Dr Justin Ellis
A/Professor Angela Page
Dr Boyang Li
Dr Mark Wallis
Dr Catherine Johnston
Dr Michelle Stubbs
Dr Michelle Mansfield
Dr Annika Westrenius
Professor Troy Gaston
Dr Joyleen Christensen