MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY REPORT OF ACADEMIC SENATE ACTIVITIES
3 September 2013 Meeting

This report is provided to assist members in communicating Academic Senate discussions and decisions to their respective faculties and offices.

Due to the weight of urgent business to be completed before the end of 2013, the scheduled special meeting of Academic Senate on the topic of Academic Freedom has been postponed to the first half of 2014.

MEETING DISCUSSIONS AND DECISIONS

Chair’s Report

I reported on a number of items of interest to Academic Senate, including:

- Ongoing discussions in relation to a number of key aspects of the University’s academic interaction with the Open Universities Australia (OUA). These include the introduction of an OUA mandated Quality Assurance Framework and of new OUA standards in regard to the use of collaborative and interactive digital technologies.
- The recently released review of TEQSA’s regulatory processes, which had made recommendations to the Minister strongly endorsing the need for a reduction in red tape and a concomitant decrease in the reporting burdens placed upon Universities.
- The Unit approvals “task-and-finish” group, which has made significant progress in developing a framework under which Faculties could be authorized to undertake the approval of new and revised Units of Study.
- The process that is underway to establish Quality Assurance protocols to regulate the ratification of Unit results at Faulty level. The University’s new delegations framework, should it be approved by University Council at its December meeting, will see all Unit results approvals will be made at Faculty level from Session 3 2013. However, Academic Senate will retain responsibility for establishing appropriate review and approval processes and for monitoring their implementation.

Student Code of Conduct

General Counsel was invited to speak to the development of the Student Code of Conduct and Academic Senate was provided with a draft of this document. The meeting debated a number of important aspects of this proposed code, including those relating to group responsibility, social media, drugs and alcohol, behaviour in residential colleges and jurisdictional scope.

The General Counsel agreed to make some amendments to the draft code to clarify issues identified in the areas of group responsibility and jurisdictional scope.

I indicated that, subject to these amendments and the assent of the meeting, I would be speaking in favour of the Student Code of Conduct at the 17 October 2013 Council
meeting. The meeting supported this course of action. The Student Code of Conduct is proposed to come into effect at the start of 2014.

**Review of Academic Rules**

External consultant Emeritus Professor Jane Morrison is currently leading a major review of the University’s Rules. As very many of these rules establish frameworks for the Academic activities of the University, Academic Senate has been intimately involved in the conduct of this crucially important project.

The University has 26 sets of rules covering a wide range of governance, academic and administrative functions. These currently involve a great deal of repetition and inconsistency, many have become quite dated and some even address external legislative requirements that are no longer in operation. The mandate of this project is to update and rationalize this rule set, eliminate repetition, ensure consistency and address contemporary regulatory requirements. It has also been tasked with transporting as much content as possible from the rules framework and into University policy.

The current plan is to replace the existing rules with a suite of Academic rules comprising 5 primary rule sets in the areas of Student Misconduct and Discipline, Academic Senate, Faculty Governance, Coursework Degrees, Higher Degree Research Degrees and Higher Doctoral Degrees. It also envisaged that other rule sets in the areas of Academic Costume and Fees would be deleted and replaced by policy whereas rule sets in the areas of Courses and Degrees, Macquarie University Foundation Program and Enrolment of Students would be deleted entirely, as these are either redundant or outdated.

The complete suite of draft Academic rules will be discussed at the Academic Senate meeting of 1 October 2013. Final rule sets will be considered at the 12 November 2013 Academic Senate meeting for recommendation to University Council at its December meeting.

**Review of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Rules**

The current rules framework includes separate rule sets governing various classes of Undergraduate and Postgraduate degrees. These comprise largely common content but suffer from significant issues of inconsistency from one degree to the next. To address this latter issue, the rules review is working to combine all of the rules relating to coursework degrees into a single Coursework Rule and to construct a single rule set to govern HDR degrees. These would be supplemented by a rule set governing the award of Higher Doctoral Degrees.

The meeting debated some outstanding issues in regard to the formulation of the Coursework Rule. In particular, the primary topic discussed was the suggestion that the “third time Unit failure” rule might be strengthened to prevent enrolment after the third unsuccessful attempt at a Unit of Study. Under current arrangements this rule is interpreted simply as mandating that students must seek Academic approval for every enrolment from the third onwards. The consensus of the meeting was that it would be better to ensure that appropriate services were put in place to support students who had made multiple attempts at a Unit of Study rather than penalizing them by preventing them from progressing. Ultimately the meeting concluded that Academic Senate should revisit the question of a “Students at Academic Risk” policy. This would
provide a much clearer governance framework to encourage, support and regulate interventions designed to support students who experience academic difficulties.

**Review of Academic Senate Rules**

Senate was provided with a draft of the revised Academic Senate Rules for consideration and comment.

I outlined the key proposals for amendment in the areas of electoral processes and electorates, eligibility requirements, Chair and Deputy Chair elections, co-option provisions and term limits for elected members. I also drew the meeting’s attention to the fact that this draft rule includes specific clauses detailing Academic Senate’s authority in regard to the approval of academic policy (in research and teaching), the establishment and disestablishment of degree programs and on its powers to ask for and take action on reports on academic matters from Faculties and the MGSIM. I also highlighted those proposed clauses that spoke to Academic Senate’s advisory role in regard to the Vice-Chancellor and the University Council. These provisions are in themselves a major innovation, as a clear statement of Academic Senate’s powers and responsibilities in these areas had not been included in previous versions of the Academic Senate rule.

The meeting discussed the proposed changes to the electoral processes and recommended two amendments to the draft. The first of these maintains the limit on the number of consecutive two-year terms that an elected member could serve, but expands that limit to three terms. The second reinstates the requirement for Faculty representation to be drawn from different departments.

I encouraged members to forward any further comment on these proposed rules to me for consideration. Furthermore, there will be opportunities to discuss the details of these rule sets at the 1 October 2013 and 12 November 2013 meetings of Academic Senate.

**Calendar of Governance 2014**

The draft version of the Calendar of Governance for 2014 considered at the 22 August 2013 Council meeting was noted.

**Reports from Committees**

At the 3 September 2013, Academic Senate received reports from the following Committees:

- Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC)
- Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (SLTC)

Recommendations contained within the reports were approved – the details of these are contained in the full minutes of Academic Senate.

Professor Janet Greeley provided an oral update regarding the current status of the CRIT II transition in line with AQF requirements. Professor Greeley indicated that a Wiki page and draft documents including templates were currently in development.

I foreshadowed that noting the large quantity of Academic Senate items that require finalisation by the end of 2013 the 1 October meeting of Academic Senate would have a lengthy agenda.

Professor D Verity
Chair