Report purpose:-

• The purpose of this report is to:
  – Provide a high-level summary of the broad consultations undertaken prior to the first academic governance workshop on November 13, 2014
  – Make the issues raised transparent to participants
• The purpose of the consultations were three-fold
  – To provide opportunities for University staff to reflect on the current and future direction of academic governance at the University
  – To provide opportunities for University staff to input into the agenda for the Workshop and subsequent follow up processes
  – Brief the consultant on the issues and challenges
• The views expressed are those of the interviewees
Consultation list:-

- DV-C Students and Registrar
- Deputy Registrar
- Chair, Academic Senate
- V-C and Chief of Staff
- A/Deans (Research)
- A/Deans (Learning and Teaching)
- A/Deans (Quality and Curriculum)
- A/Deans (Higher Degree Research)
- PV-C Learning and Teaching
- 2 x Executive Deans

- DV-C (Academic)
- General Council
- Director, Strategic Planning
- DV-C (Research)
- Head, Risk and Compliance
- Student representatives
- Head, Governance Services

Feedback on the perceived broad role of Academic Senate:-

I. Setting and monitoring the achievement of academic policy and standards in a collegiate manner
II. Peak body for oversight of the development, implementation and review of academic programs and maintenance of academic standards
III. Monitoring and managing academic risk
IV. Setting/contributing to academic vision, culture and values
V. “Counterweight” to Executive authority
VI. Two-way engagement with academic community including students
What is academic governance:-

As might be expected, a broad range of views were expressed:-

- “Academic governance is everything from the ‘vibe’ academics get about how the University runs through to the details of course approvals, academic policy and student progression”
- The way we set and monitor academic standards
- Encompasses the values we uphold including academic freedom
- The processes, structures and cultures whereby academics, students and other stakeholders get a say in the way academic vision, policy and standards are set and maintained
- “A historical throw back to the days when the professoriate ran Universities. Academic governance is important but is heading for irrelevance if it does not modernise”
- A valuable counter-balance to Council and Executive authority; potentially, a valuable contributor to a successful University
- As per the rules. Advise the Council and V-C on: a. academic matters and related activities of the University; b. safeguard academic freedom; c. on academic standards and quality + teaching effectiveness; d. Academic priorities etc

Key issues and challenges:-

There was a general view that the processes and focus of Academic Senate had improved during 2014 but the following issues were frequently raised:

- The agenda is not consistently strategic enough: the focus is on detail
- There is still a certain lack of clarity in roles, processes, reporting and accountability within Academic Senate and its Committees and in relation to Executive roles and authorities
- At times, matters addressed appropriately and effectively in Committees are then re-examined in full Senate meetings without adding any real value
- Perception of overlaps and lack of clarity with A/Dean and DV-C roles at times
- Unless one understands how to get things done, approval processes can be repetitive and slow
- Not clear what Senate’s role is in regard to research policy and direction
- Can struggle to attract the “right” people with the “right skills” on to Senate including senior members of the professorate from some discipline areas
- The University has lacked strong Faculty Boards which has meant issues “drift” to Academic Senate that should be dealt with locally; need strong, clear linkages between Faculty Boards and Senate
- There has been a lack of standardisation in reporting, data-collection and KPI tracking
- Appropriate, professional secretariat support has not been available at times for key committees
- High burden of pre-reading and papers for meetings
- The expertise of senior professional staff has not always been accessed to develop high quality inputs to Senate debates
- A perception that at times it is easier to avoid Senate when matters are complex or urgent
- Not clear to some how academic risk and quality compliance is managed effectively institutionally
- Not enough is done to support student engagement and contribution
Why change? Why not stay the same?

• “Faced with the choice between changing one’s mind and proving that there is not a need to do so, almost everybody gets busy on the proof.”
  – John Kenneth Galbraith

Support for change:-

• Fortunately, there is widespread support across all those consulted for reforming and re-positioning academic governance at the University
• Strong support for the current Chair’s leadership on this issue
• A general sense that academic governance needs to be updated for the 21st century, but also streamlined and professionalised
• Getting academic governance “right” will make a major contribution to the success of the University but also to the ongoing propagation of a culture that attracts and engages high quality academic and professional staff
In Summary, four stages of change:-

- What gets in the way?
- Where are we now?
- How do we get there?
- Where do we want to go?

Obstacles

Awareness

Strategy & action

Vision