Review of Academic Rules

Background
In April 2013, the University Council approved a project proposed by the Vice-Chancellor to develop a framework for the University that specifies delegations of authority. As the delegations policy and framework neared conclusion in July 2013, a review of policies and rules commenced, in the context of the delegations framework, so that adjustments could be made to bring delegations, rules and policies into alignment.

The delegations project has triggered a far more extensive review of the rules than had originally been envisaged for calendar year 2013. This has taken a holistic and systematic approach to the review of the rules and, as such, it stands in contrast to the somewhat piecemeal approach that has characterised most previous reviews. These have generally sought only to respond to and reflect more minor institutional changes and, as a result, the current rule-set has not adapted well to some of the more major environmental, administrative, academic and executive changes of the past decade.

In July 2013 a project was established, under the leadership of Emeritus Professor Jane Morrison, to benchmark the current rule-set against those of comparable institutions, to identify any common trends and to re-draft Macquarie’s rules accordingly. This benchmarking has revealed that many Australian universities have substantially revised their rules in recent years and that, in many cases, this has resulted in a reduction in the number of rules and in the replacement of rules with policies where this is practical.

Revised Rule Structure
The University currently has 26 sets of rules covering a wide range of governance, academic and administrative functions. Some of these provide a source of authority while others serve a broader informative purpose. Advice from the Office of General Counsel has confirmed that only low levels of apparent risk attached to moving some of the content that is currently treated in the rules out of the legislative framework and into policy. There are some matters, however, that the University would ad must retain within this regulatory framework. In moving some matters out of the category of rule, it is not intended that the meaningful content of the rule be discarded. Rather, in most cases, where a rule is proving a source of information and continues to remain relevant, the content of the rule would be preserved but would not be bound by a requirement for the approval of Council.

Consultation is progressing with key internal stakeholders and governance structures to progress the proposed changes for implementation in 2014. Outlined below are the proposed arrangements to streamline the current rules and deliver a consistent and coherent framework.

Academic Costume
Description: This rule provides a schedule of styles and colours for robes, gowns, caps and hoods associated with each degree, diploma or fellowship of the University.

Consideration: Delete and replace with policy and schedule
The University should create a policy on academic costume to replace the current rule. The policy would provide information on approval, continuity and the appropriate situation in which academic costumes may be worn. The policy would also address the circumstances under which a choice of costume applied. A schedule to the policy would list the descriptions in relation to each category of award.

Academic Senate
Description: These rules contain functions, composition and procedures of Academic Senate. There is also a By-law that further describes advisory functions of Academic Senate.
Consideration: Revise and retain this rule
A revised rule should retain the composition and procedures of Academic Senate but, in line with most other Australian universities, this rule should be expanded to describe the general and specific functions of Academic Senate. In revising these rules, some inconsistencies would be addressed and other amendments proposed.

Courses and Degree
Description: These rules provide a partial description of the powers of Council in relation to courses of study, enrolment of students and academic structures. They also contain a partial listing of degrees of the University.
Consideration: Delete as redundant
These rules repeat powers of Council set out in the Act or identified by Council as reserved powers, or in some cases, as delegations of the Vice-Chancellor. The partial listing of awards in this rule may be misleading.

Fees
Description: This rule describes the types of fees set by the University, including continuing education, student services, non-award, late fees and charges for international and domestic students. The rule also deals with extensions for payment and failure to meet liabilities.
Consideration: Delete and replace with policy
This is an area that many universities across the sector have moved from a rule to a policy. The policy would describe the University’s obligations in relation to fees and in all cases would clarify the basis on which fees are charged and the purpose and approval process for the fee.

Macquarie University Foundation Program
Description: This rule provides a partial statement of matters relevant to this foundation program.
Consideration: Delete
It is not necessary for there to be a rule for the establishment of this, or any program. The conditions for the award of qualifications and agreement about the direct admission to MQU of students with such qualifications are embodied in contracts with the third party providers of the programs.

Enrolment of Students
Description: This rule deals with the determination of quotas for the entry of students to awards, courses, groups of courses and units of study and the basis on which candidates are to be selected.
Consideration: Delete
This rule addressed the enrolment planning and reporting processes of the Commonwealth government that are not longer in operation.

Student Misconduct and Discipline
Description: These rules deal with all aspects of student misconduct and discipline, including definitions, decision processes, responsibilities of the University, responsibilities of students, establishment of a Discipline Committee and its procedures, and the appeal process.
Consideration: Revise and retain this rule
This rule is currently under revision by the Legal Office of the University. Student misconduct and discipline are retained within the legislative framework in nearly all universities in Australia.

Undergraduate and Postgraduate Degree Rules
Description: There is currently a separate rule for each undergraduate and postgraduate award offered by the University. The rules refer to admissions, enrolment, duration of study, programs of study and their requirements, course transfer and recognition of credit, conferral of awards, withdrawal, exclusion and termination.
Consideration: Revise and retain these rules
There is much commonality among the degree rules, particularly among the coursework degrees, and also among the higher degree research degrees. The rules for the higher doctorates are a separate category. There is much sense in combining the rules for awards where there is a great amount of duplication, creating a General Coursework Rule and a Higher Degree Research Rule. There would also be a Higher Doctorate Rule. In the process of combining these rules, many existing errors and inconsistencies would be addressed.

RECOMMENDATION
For discussion at the 3 September Academic Senate meeting. The final revised Academic rule set will be presented to the 1 October Academic Senate meeting for recommendation to Council.

Proposed by
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