

UWS

ACADEMIC SENATE

INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS

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- Welcome to the University of Western Sydney Academic Senate. It is the peak academic body in the University. As a member of Senate you play an important role in the development and determination of academic policies. Together with your Senate colleagues, you will enable Senate to act as the primary custodian of academic values, quality and standards for the University.
- Senate and its committees and working parties:
 - review and develop policies,
 - debate academic issues,
 - promote quality in teaching, learning and research,
 - advise on the University's Academic Plan, and
 - encourage academic collaboration and approve academic aspects of courses and articulation arrangements.
- Your informed participation in Senate is vital. Considered and consistent participation will help ensure that Senate remains a relevant and respected body in University governance.
- This information resource is designed to support you in making timely, meaningful and effective contributions to Senate by better understanding its scope, functions, and related themes. It provides an overview of Senate issues and links you to relevant sites and UWS Senate web-pages.
- New members are invited to an orientation briefing conducted by the Chair. All members are also welcome to contact me, the Deputy Chair or Secretary at any time.

Associate Professor Paul Wormell
Chair of Academic Senate

Schedule of Meetings and Meeting Arrangements

- Academic Senate is required to meet at least four times each year. The meetings may be conducted face-to-face or by video-conference.
- The schedule of Academic Senate and Senate committee meetings can be found on the UWS Website at:
http://www.uws.edu.au/about_uws/uws/governance/academic_senate/committee_papers
- Members are expected to attend all meetings, since a quorum is essential.
- Meetings of Senate are usually held in Building AD at Werrington North Campus.
- Meetings are open and observers are welcome, subject to availability of space.
- Parking is available at all times.
- Coffee and tea are available at each meeting.

Academic Senate and UWS Governance Structure

Academic Senate is the peak academic body in the UWS Governance Structure.

It has specific functions delegated to it by the Board of Trustees that relate to academic matters. Details of those functions are contained in the Academic Governance Policy.

The Academic Senate reports to the Board of Trustees. The Board's web page can be located at:
http://www.uws.edu.au/about_uws/uws/governance/board_of_trustees

Formal written reports of Senate activities are prepared for the Board's meetings by the Chair and the Academic Secretariat. The Chair of Senate is a member of the Board of Trustees.

Details of the governance and management structure of UWS are attached.

Senate provides a useful vehicle for debate about a broad range of issues which affect the academic standards, values and quality assurance.

Academic Governance by Academic Senate and its Standing Committees

- The University's academic governance arrangements aim to facilitate academic decision making that empowers the academic community to discuss academic issues openly, and arrive at decisions by consensus. Academic governance reflects the values of collegiality, participation and ownership.
University academic governance is different from, but complementary to, University management which, through appropriate delegations of authority, is responsible for utilising the University's physical, financial and human resources to achieve the University's objectives in accordance with the Strategic Plans.
- The University's academic governing bodies comprise:-
 - Academic Senate, which has overarching responsibility for academic decision making, and the maintenance of academic standards and quality assurance;
 - Senate's specialist standing committees are Executive Committee, Education Committee, Academic Planning and Course Approvals Committee, Research Committee, Research Studies Committee and Academic Standards and Integrity Committee;
 - at College level are Education, Assessment and Progression Committees, Research and Higher Degree Committees and College Academic Standards and Integrity Committees;
 - at School (and Badanami Centre for Indigenous Education) level, School Academic Committees;
 - ad-hoc working parties which are convened by a committee from time to time, to focus on a particular issue or task.
- Each of these Committees has terms of reference, defined membership, meeting schedules and minutes of meetings.
- Each of these committees report to Academic Senate through minutes/reports of meetings. The chairs of the Specialist Standing Committees and College committees are members of Academic Senate. Each of these committees may provide comment and recommendations to Senate.
- The membership of Senate includes an elected Chair and Deputy Chair, senior University line managers (the Vice-Chancellor, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor [Academic & Enterprise], Pro-Vice Chancellors, and the Executive Deans of the Colleges, etc.), ex-officio members, elected student members, and members elected by the academic staff in the colleges and school level committees.

Responsibilities of Academic Senate Members

As a member of Academic Senate, you will participate in discussions of academic activities and policies and your contributions will be enhanced by your familiarity with the following resources.

- Information on the Academic Senate is detailed in the Academic Governance Policy which includes the functions of Academic Senate, membership, matters relating to election of members, terms of office, meetings, and committees of Senate. The policy is available at: <http://policies.uws.edu.au/view.current.php?id=00182>
- All members should be familiar with the Academic Governance Policy so that the scope, purpose and responsibilities of Senate can inform member contributions.
- As a member of Academic Senate, you should consult the DDS Policy Directory for information on academic policies, which are determined by Academic Senate under delegation from the Board of Trustees.
- Agenda papers relating to past and current meetings of Academic Senate will be available shortly at: http://www.uws.edu.au/about_uws/uws/governance/academic_senate/committee_papers
- From time to time, papers relating to topical issues in the higher education sector will be posted on the Academic Senate website at http://www.uws.edu.au/about_uws/uws/governance/academic_senate
- Academic Senate is referred to in the University of Western Sydney Act 1997 available at: http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/uowsa1997375/

Academic Senate Terms of Reference

Full details of Academic Senate functions, membership, terms of office and elections are detailed in the Academic Governance Policy at:

<http://policies.uws.edu.au/view.current.php?id=00182>

In summary, the Academic Senate, as specified in the University of Western Sydney Act 1997 is the peak forum of the University for academic debate and discourse, is the primary custodian of academic values and standards for the University and is responsible to the Board of Trustees for:

- a. monitoring academic standards, values and quality assurance;
- b. advising on the development of and performance against academic plans;
- c. monitoring academic collaborations and partnerships;
- d. promoting and monitoring academic quality, standards and values of the University's academic activities, advise on the University's academic plans and advise the Board and Vice-Chancellor as appropriate;
- e. deciding academic policy and approving related procedures;
- f. accrediting and approving courses, programs and units;
- g. promote the quality and development of research in the University.

Subject to the [By-law](#) and to any decision of the Board, the Academic Senate will decide the University's policies and procedures on:

- a. the monitoring and review of the key parameters and performance indicators for academic planning and academic quality improvement processes;
- b. courses and units;
- c. University academic scholarships and prizes;
- d. University academic awards, including minimum standards and credit points for units;
- e. admission, enrolment, assessment and examination of students;
- f. student progress;
- g. student academic discipline;
- h. course and program structures, titles and component names.

Subject to the [By-law](#) and to any decision of the Board, the Academic Senate will, at the request of the Board or at the discretion of Senate, advise the Board and the Vice-Chancellor on:

- a. the formulation and regular review of the University's academic plans and related academic development and evaluation strategies;
- b. reports on the University's academic activities, including those to outside agencies;
- c. issues relating to, and affecting, international academic collaboration and partnerships;
- d. establishment and disestablishment of academic organisational units, such as colleges, schools and research centres;
- e. the University's academic profile;

- f. development, maintenance and enhancement of high standards in learning and teaching, research, and community and industry outreach;
- g. principles and guidelines for the conduct and enhancement of academic activities;
- h. improvement of the student learning environment and opportunities, including postgraduate supervision;
- i. development and review of standards for the appointment and promotion of academic staff;
- j. academic priorities and policies for consideration in University planning for academic activities;
- k. development of quality and standards in the links and affiliations with other academic institutions or other organisations; and
- l. development of codes of academic conduct for students and staff of the University.

The Academic Senate must oversee and coordinate advice from its standing committees by:

- a. receiving, considering and responding to regular reports from the standing committees on their objectives and activities, and the implementation of academic policy and Academic Senate's decisions;
- b. referring to standing committees matters for their consideration and report;
- c. prescribing, where practicable, procedures for the standing committees' deliberations and reports; and
- d. facilitating, where appropriate, consultations among the standing committees.

Academic Senate Membership and Support

- Members of Academic Senate are listed at clauses 11 to 14 of the Academic Governance Policy.
- The names of Senate members are provided at the Senate website at: http://www.uws.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/90388/2009_as_@_10_Sept_Senate_Members.pdf
- The Vice Chancellor, Executive Deans, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Enterprise), PVCs, Academic Registrar, University Librarian, and other senior staff are ex-officio members.
- Ex officio members are included by virtue of the position they hold.
- Appointed members are included in accordance with clause 14 of the Academic Governance Policy, for the purposes of achieving gender balance and providing an informed perspective on matters under consideration.
- Elections - are conducted in accordance with the provisions of the University of Western Sydney By-law.
- Information on current elections can be found on the Academic website link at : http://www.uws.edu.au/about_uws/uws/governance/academic_senate
- The Chair and Deputy Chair of Senate are elected positions.
- There are two elected academic staff members from each College.
- The elected School (and Badanami Centre) Academic Committee members are elected school members of the Senate.
- There are elected student members from the undergraduate and postgraduate students' organisations.
- All elected members hold office for a two year term except for students who are in their final year of study (any elected student member holds office for one year).
- All appointed members hold office for a two year term.
- The Academic Senate is supported by a designated Senate Secretary from the Academic Secretariat.
- Committees of Senate are supported by Committee Officers of the Academic Secretariat.

Senate Executive Committee

Role

The role, terms of reference and membership of the Senate Executive Committee, as detailed in the Academic Senate Standing Committees Policy, is:

- determine urgent matters, on behalf of Senate between meetings of the full Senate, monitor the business of the Senate and all Senate committees,
- review Senate action sheets, to ensure that appropriate follow-up action has been undertaken,
- assist in the process of determining which matters should be referred to Senate for attention.

Terms of Reference

Identify issues requiring attention by the Academic Senate and ensure the preparation of appropriate draft proposals and recommendations, together with supporting documentation, for consideration by Senate.

Facilitate the flow of business among Senate and its other standing committees.

Determine urgent matters within the jurisdiction of Senate, which arise between meetings of Senate, and report action taken to the Senate.

Consider and determine any matters referred to it by Senate, or the Chair of Senate, or, where urgency is required, by Senate's other committees.

Membership

- Chair of Academic Senate (Chair)
- Deputy Chair, Academic Senate
- Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) or nominee
- Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) or nominee
- Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality) or nominee
- Pro Vice-Chancellor (University Engagement) or nominee
- One chair of a School Academic Committee (SAC) from each college, who is a member of Senate, elected by the Chairs of SACs within the respective College
- Academic Registrar
- Two of the elected members of Academic Senate, chosen by the Chair of Senate, to achieve gender balance and/or appropriate expertise.

Academic Senate Standing Orders

- Standing Orders for the conduct of Academic Senate meetings are available on the UWS DDS Policy Directory as Associated Information to the Academic Governance Policy at:
<http://policies.uws.edu.au/view.associated.php?id=00182>
- Academic Senate Standing Orders were initially approved in 2005 (revised in 2009) after an internal review of existing standing orders, benchmarking with other Australian universities, and feedback from Senate members, members of the Office of the Academic Registrar, and the former College Boards of Studies.
- Members should read and understand Standing Orders as they provide the framework within which Senate business is conducted. Standing Orders include the rules for the conduct of meetings of Senate and its committees, notice of meetings, preparation of agenda, receipt of items, preparation of reports and dissemination of papers.
- Attendance, apologies and termination of membership are covered in Part G of the Standing Orders. Elected members who miss three consecutive meetings without leave of absence will lose their membership.
- Senate is conducted in a collegial and welcoming manner, with decisions arrived at through consensus wherever possible. Occasionally, technical points which relate to Standing Orders may be raised, although this is rare.
- Any queries regarding Standing Orders should be addressed to the Chair or Secretary of Senate.

Academic Senate Quality Improvement

Academic Senate has strategies to enhance academic quality assurance in processes and decision making.

- A **work-plan** is developed annually. The plan identifies priority areas of activity in accordance with Senate's terms of reference. A report on progress and outcomes is provided at the final Senate meeting for the year.
- **External benchmarking** of Senate performance is undertaken, using resources such as:
 - AUQA Audit reports of governance from Australian Universities;
 - comparison with the processes of Griffith University, the University's benchmarking partner, and
 - collegial discussion and exchange through the NSW and National Committees of Chairs of Academic Boards/Senates.
- **Self assessments of performance** are conducted including: member perceptions of Senate function; 360 degree feedback of the Senate Chair; annual reports of measurable indicators of participation and contribution such as attendance, policy review outcomes etc.
- **Professional development** of members through orientation and induction for new members, member information resources, regular briefings on higher education sector developments as part of meeting business and AUQA audit related activity. Specific professional development for the Chair is supported by the Office of the Vice Chancellor in relation to governance, meeting procedure, and principles of administrative law.
- **Communication and reporting** of Senate processes and outcomes are provided through transparent and widely accessible information systems: The Senate website provides links to relevant related websites.
- **Cross functional University wide projects** on specific policy matters, to enhance quality, commissioned by Senate or its committees: e.g. the recent reviews during of Student Academic Misconduct Policy, Assessment Policy - Criteria and Standards-based Assessment, Unit Outlines and Learning Guides Policy and Academic Advising Policy.

Academic Senate and the Higher Education Sector

- Academic Senate members need to keep abreast of higher education sector developments so that debate and decisions are realistic, relevant and evidence-based.
- The Chair of Senate regularly invites higher education sector policy briefings by internal and external experts. Examples include briefings by AUQA auditors and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality). The implications of the Bradley Review of Higher Education for the University will be a topic for 2009.
- The Chair of Senate is a member of the National and State Committee of Chairs of Academic Boards/Senates of Universities. The State group meets quarterly and the National group meets annually. The Committee's significant focus of activity is the linkage between the Board of Studies NSW for secondary schools and universities, higher education policy and sector developments.
- <http://www.une.edu.au/coc/>
- Members are encouraged to seek out sector information to inform debate, particularly as Senate views are sought and action is required to inform university responses to agencies such as:
 - The Australian Universities Quality Agency
<http://www.auqa.edu.au/>
 - Universities Australia <http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/>
 - The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/>

Academic Senate and the University Community

- Academic Senate engages with the University community primarily through its individual members, committees and working parties.
- Individual members of Senate and its committees come from a wide range of backgrounds and include academic and administrative staff, and elected student representatives.
- Senate's Specialist Standing Committees activity has University wide application. These committees are the Research, Education, Research Studies and Academic Planning and Courses Approvals Committee.
- College Education, Assessment and Progression Committees report to the Senate, the Senate Education Committee and to the Academic Planning and Courses Approvals Committee.
- School and Badanami Centre Academic Committees were established following the 2008/2009 review of academic governance. The school academic committees report to the relevant College Education, Assessment and Progression Committee and the relevant College Higher Research Degrees Committee.
- Senate and its committees often convene specialist working parties to investigate particular issues and make appropriate recommendations. Such issues include the review of the Student Academic Misconduct Policy, Honours Policy, and Assessment Policy. Diverse membership on these working parties is encouraged, so that students and staff not normally on Senate committees are able to participate directly in governance.
- Individual University staff and students are able to keep abreast of Senate activity and developments either by accessing the Senate webpage, by contacting members of Senate or the Chair, or by attending Senate meetings as observers.

Academic Senate Annual Work-plan

- The Senate Work-plan provides a particular focus for strategic project-based work on an annual basis.
- The work-plan targets annual priority areas from the Senate terms of reference which are identified through a consultative process. The work-plan is developed by the Chair and is circulated for input prior to endorsement by the Senate.
- Regular progress reports are provided with a full-year report on outcomes achieved presented to the final Senate meeting of the year. The material is used to provide copy for submission for inclusion in the UWS Annual Report.
- The work-plan for 2009-2011, when completed, will be available on the Academic Senate webpage.

How to contribute an agenda item

- If you wish to contribute an item for the Senate agenda please contact the Senate Secretary **Mr Greg Wheatley** by phone (9678 7820) or email (g.wheatley@uws.edu.au). Greg can advise you on the relevant requirements of the Standing Orders.
- The Secretary can assist you in submitting notice of a motion and supporting information so that Academic Senate is able to be fully informed and can focus on the relevant substantive issue.
- Tabling of items is generally discouraged, because it does not provide an opportunity for members to be adequately informed about the issue or consult with colleagues on the implications of a particular issue.
- All material submitted for Senate consideration should be in a format suitable for electronic transmission as this is the method used to distribute agenda and associated papers to members and relevant groups.

Reminders

- Attendance: The schedule of all Senate meetings for the year is published in advance for members to plan their leave and activities so that they can attend. Members are requested to sign the attendance record at the meeting. Your attendance is publicly reported in the minutes of meeting and in Annual Senate Self Assessment performance reviews.
- Apologies: Members who are unable to attend a meeting should advise the Secretary prior to the meeting. This is particularly important for the Chair to ascertain the likelihood of a quorum in advance of the meeting.
- Ex-officio members: If you are resigning or changing your position in the University, you should advise the Secretary, as you hold membership by virtue of the position you hold.
- Going on leave? If you are expecting to take extended leave you should advise the Secretary prior to your leave. Regarding absent ex-officio members, the Standing Orders (Part G) specify that you may be represented by the acting incumbent of the position. Where alternates or replacements are used in accordance with the provisions of the Standing Orders, the position is considered “filled” for the purposes of performance indicator measures of attendance.
- Arranging alternates: This must be done in accordance with the provisions of Part G of the Standing Orders; the alternate should be fully briefed on procedural and substantive matters; and the Chair should be informed of the arrangement prior to the meeting.

Change of address: Members have a responsibility to advise the Secretary of any change of email or postal address well in advance of the dispatch of agenda papers. Only Senate members are provided with hard-copy agenda papers, posted the day after the electronic distribution. (Note: Academic Secretariat is investigating the practicality of provision of agenda papers on the Senate webpage to replace hard copy distribution – 2009/2010. This is consistent with the Board of Trustee’s Greening Initiative.)

- Feedback: Feedback on this “information resource for members” or any other matter regarding Senate functions is welcomed by the Chair.

Contacts

- Chair of Academic Senate: Associate Professor Paul Wormell
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- Deputy Chair of Academic Senate: Dr Elfriede Sangkuhl
9685 9619 e.sangkuhl@uws.edu.au
- Secretary, Academic Senate: Mr Greg Wheatley 9678 7820
g.wheatley@uws.edu.au
- Assistant Academic Registrar, Academic Secretariat (Head of Unit for secretarial support to Academic Senate, Education Committee, Academic Planning and Course Approvals Committees, College Education, Assessment and Progression Committees, College Research and Higher Degrees Committees, and College (Academic) Misconduct Committees): Mr Jeff Warnock 9678 7803
j.warnock@uws.edu.au (For matters relating to secretarial support for School Academic Committees, contact the relevant Head of School.)
- Director, Research Services (Head of Unit for secretarial support to the Research Committee and Research Studies Committee): Mr Gar Jones 4736 0631 g.jones@uws.edu.au