

**COMMITTEE OF CHAIRS OF ACADEMIC BOARDS/SENATES
OF UNIVERSITIES IN NSW AND THE ACT**

Minutes of the meeting (03/1) of the **Committee of Chairs** held at 9.30 am on
Wednesday, 26 March 2003 at the University of Western Sydney, Parramatta Campus.

PRESENT

Professor Kevin McConkey (UNSW), Chair
Associate Professor Peter Camilleri (ACU) to 1.00pm
Professor Malcolm Gillies (ANU)
Associate Professor John Rayner (Canberra)
Professor Bruce Kercher (Macquarie)
Professor Linda Connor (Newcastle)
Professor Ray Cooksey (UNE)
Professor Anthony Baker (UTS)
Professor Judyth Sachs (USyd)
Professor Lesley Wilkes (UWS)
Professor David Griffiths (Wollongong)

IN ATTENDANCE

Associate Professor Ronnie Harding, UNSW (Item 5)
Professor Gordon Stanley, NSW Board of Studies (Items 6 & 7)
Mr David Patterson, NSW Board of Studies (Items 6 & 7)
Professor George Cooney, Chair, Technical Scaling Committee (Items 6 & 7)
Ms Margot Lee (UNSW), Secretary

Items were considered out of agenda order

1. APOLOGIES/WELCOMES/FAREWELLS

Professor McConkey welcomed new members Professor Tony Baker (UTS), Associate Professor Peter Camilleri (ACU) and Professor Bruce Kercher (MU) and noted that new member, Associate Professor Roger Bronks (SCU) was unable to attend and had sent his apology.

Professor McConkey noted that items had been added to the agenda since the original mailout. Items would be considered out of order to accommodate guest commitments.

Professor McConkey advised that the Secretary to the Committee of Chairs, Ms Victoria Finlay, had moved to another role at UNSW and he introduced Ms Margot Lee who would be acting in the role for the meeting. Members requested that the Committee's appreciation be extended to Ms Finlay for her support as Secretary to the Committee and congratulations on her new role.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 29 AUGUST 2002

(See http://www.secretariat.unsw.edu.au/committee_chairs02.htm)

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed.

3. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There was no specific business raised under this item, however members agreed to monitor issues on the definition and character of honours years in Postgraduate diploma courses. Members were requested to gather information for discussion at the May 2003 meeting and Professor McConkey would distribute an email to assist in this process.

4. COMMITTEE ISSUES

- 4.1 New members were briefed on the Committee's role and activities, the source and allocation of its funding and its relationship with the NSW Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NSWVCC).
- 4.2 Subscriptions - Professor McConkey noted that all but one annual membership had been paid; he outlined for new members how the invoicing process is conducted and described how the subscription funds are put to use.

(See http://www.secretariat.unsw.edu.au/committee_chairs02.htm for details of financial procedures).

- 4.3 Professor McConkey advised that his two-year term as Chair of the Committee would conclude at the May 2003 meeting and that his term as UNSW's President of the Academic Board would end on 31 July 2004. He indicated that he would be prepared to continue in the Chair until mid-2004 or to relinquish the post at the May 2003 meeting.

Professor McConkey expressed appreciation to members for their support in submitting names of academic staff to represent universities on the Board of Studies Curriculum Committees (BCCs) and the Industry Curriculum Committees (ICCs). In response to a query on the method of selection, Professor McConkey advised that he reviewed geographic location, the suitability of the nominee and availability on meeting days. He advised that approximately 25 people were involved in the committees, that meetings were project-driven, had specific deadlines, that dates were scheduled a few months in advance and that each project had a life-cycle of four or five meetings.

5. NSW COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PLAN 2002-05: SELECT ACTIONS FOR NSW UNIVERSITIES

Professor McConkey welcomed Associate Professor Ronnie Harding who articulated her vision on new environmental education from Kindergarten to the Chief Executive Officer level. Associate Professor Harding indicated she would like to see all students have some exposure to this subject area, irrespective of their professional goals. She also expressed her hope that people who were keen to integrate sustainability into university programs would be provided with incentives.

Extensive discussion followed on the content of the booklets and pamphlets tabled as well as the practical implementation and integration into a university setting. The Committee agreed that this topic could be considered by individual Boards to: i) make aspects of sustainability part of core skills and ii) clarify for the NSW Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NSWVCC) the difference between focused programs on the environment and integrated issues on the environment built into other programs. The Committee noted that several universities already supported environmental strategies within the curriculum. The Committee noted that funding was a vital issue and lobbying the NSW Government in this regard had been suggested.

6. BOARD OF STUDIES

Report from the Board of Studies

Professor McConkey welcomed Professor Gordon Stanley and Mr David Patterson from the NSW Board of Studies (BOS) and introduced them to the new members of the Committee. Professor Stanley and Mr Patterson, along with Professor George Cooney, spoke to three reports on the 2002 HSC. Professor Stanley indicated that the 2002 HSC had been very well conducted and that the Standards Package supplied to schools had been of great benefit. The Committee concurred with

this evaluation.

The Committee agreed that the new subject, Stage 6 Entertainment Industry Curriculum Framework syllabus be assigned Category B. Professor Stanley commented that there was no overlap with Music and Drama. The syllabus related to topics such as event management and was focused on employment within the entertainment industry.

The Committee agreed to formulate a plan to review categorisation for all HSC courses (presently numbering 116), beginning in 2004 and to include VET-related issues and scaling methods. Professor McConkey indicated that this review could be conducted in stages, the first to review criteria in Categories A and B with a Category C reserved for criteria not matching A or B. The HSC course review could then proceed over a two to three year period. The Committee noted that a glossary of terms was available to assist in the review process and mention was made of a document prepared by Professor John Loxton in 1995.

7. TECHNICAL SCALING COMMITTEE

In response to a query on whether the Technical Committee on Scaling had already looked at potential problems in VET courses, Professor Cooney advised that some students doing VET courses received high UAIs and a paper on this topic was being prepared and would be distributed.

University Developed Board Endorsed Courses (UDBECs) Refer Agenda Item 14 - Access by Secondary Students to University Courses

Professor McConkey asked Professor Stanley and Mr Patterson for their comments on a request received from Professor Roger Holmes, Convenor of the NSWVCC, to discuss and provide feedback on university access by secondary school students to undergraduate courses (refer to Agenda Item 14). Professor Stanley outlined the history of UDBECs. During discussion, topics raised included funding, consistency, prerequisites, advanced standing, approval processes, monitoring, compliance, and promotional implications. The members indicated that although an UDBEC Guidelines document had been received, an appropriate plan to move forward was required. Professor Stanley noted that under law, government high school students could not be charged fees for HSC tuition. He advised that the BOS would welcome views of universities through the Committee of Chairs and the NSWVCC. In response to a query, Professor Stanley advised that he would ask John O'Brien to provide information to the Committee on the number of UDBECs approved/rejected and the number of students involved. Following discussion, Professor McConkey agreed to convene a group comprising himself, Professor Baker, Mr O'Brien and Associate Professor Gail Huon to review the issues surrounding UDBECs and provide a report to the May meeting.

UAI Bonuses

Professor McConkey raised "UAI bonuses" for discussion and several categories were mentioned. Several bonus offers were mentioned and included: Postcode, which was usually based on school attended and not home location, Early Entry, Direct Entry and Vice-Chancellor's Discretion. In response to a query on whether a common approach for all universities would be of benefit, the general consensus was in the negative. The Committee agreed that while the UAI provided a base for consideration, there were a number of other factors that could influence decisions. The Committee agreed that any bonus on offer should be transparent and well communicated to the students.

8. PERFORMANCE OF ACADEMIC BOARDS

The Committee commended Professor Ray Cooksey (UNE) for his documents on Performance of

Academic Boards and extensively discussed the opportunities afforded by: *Extract Report from the Self-Audit of the UNE Academic Board, Summary of Commendations and Recommendations in AUQA Audit Reports* and *Board Member Survey Instrument*. The value of these documents to individual Boards was acknowledged.

During discussion the following comments were made in relation to Professor Cooksey's audit documents and individual experiences:

- The response from stakeholders had been disappointing and would require greater encouragement.
- The International Committee (at some universities) did not have a link to the Academic Board,
- The Teaching and Learning Committee's activities and Research Plan had been discussed at Faculty level and at Academic Board.
- There was no single "ideal" route in relation to external or internal Board reviews,
- There was a need to look at a range of ways in which Boards can become more explicit about self-evaluation and self-improvement.
- Members of Boards were not always aware of what their role should be; it had been suggested a brochure could be distributed as part of the induction process for new staff members.

Professors McConkey and Sachs discussed their recent involvement in a review of the Board at Deakin University. They commented that their report contained 58 recommendations, had been delivered within a week of the review and, while not all of these recommendations would be easily implemented, anticipated that the report would be of benefit.

9. UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE CONFERENCE REPORTS

The Committee had been advised that papers from the AVCC Conference were located at <http://www.avcc.edu.au/search/search.htm>. The words "University Governance" could be typed into the search field to bring up a listing of papers for selection. Professor McConkey informed the Committee that an AVCC Working Party had been established to focus on university governance.

Professor McConkey reported on the positive benefits derived from the Conference on Governance Issues for Academic Board Senate and University Council Secretariat Personnel. This observation was endorsed by other Chairs of Universities that had staff in attendance. It had been noted that greater interaction and a worthwhile sharing of ideas among Secretariat staff had been evident. Professor McConkey undertook to convey to Rhona Fraser and Victoria Finlay the Committee's commitment to support future events of this type.

10. CHAIRS OF ACADEMIC BOARDS

Professor McConkey informed the Committee that a national meeting of Chairs of Academic Boards was held every 18-24 months. The last meeting was held in February 2002.

11. AUSTRALIAN SIMON UNIVERSITY

Professor McConkey spoke to the document that had been distributed for comment and withdrawn shortly thereafter. He provided a brief summary of the background and planning since the 1980s to establish the Australian Simon University. The Committee agreed to monitor the release of an updated document for comment.

12. CROSS-RECOGNITION TAFE AND UNIVERSITY UNITS OF STUDY

Professor Sachs had raised this topic and during discussion the following comments were noted:

- While universities appeared to support and recognise TAFE achievements, the reverse had not been evident.

- Newcastle University had a plan for cross-recognition with TAFE on national training packages.
- No clear guidelines had been established to support university and TAFE staff in addressing this issue.

In preparation for the May meeting, members of the Committee agreed to collect information on the processes at their institutions on cross-recognition with TAFE. Professor Sachs undertook to prepare a brief paper with Professors Baker and Connor on TAFE-related topics.

13. REVIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Professor McConkey advised that outcomes from the Higher Education Review would be released in the near future and would be discussed at the May 2003 meeting.

14. ACCESS BY SECONDARY STUDENTS TO UNIVERSITY COURSES

Refer to Agenda Item 7 - Technical Scaling Committee

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No issues were raised under this item.

16. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on **Thursday, 29 May 2003**, at Charles Sturt University.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 3.00 pm.