

**Committee of Chairs of Academic
Boards/Senates
of Universities in NSW and the ACT**

Minutes of the meeting (01/2) of the Committee of Chairs of Academic Boards/Senates of
Universities in NSW and the ACT held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 31 May 2001
in the Committee Room, University of Newcastle.

PRESENT	Professor Kevin McConkey (UNSW), (Chair) Professor Rob Cowdroy (Newcastle) Professor Ray Cooksey (UNE) Professor Joan Cooper (Wollongong) Professor Judyth Sachs (Sydney) Professor Alf van der Poorten (Macquarie) Professor Lesley Wilkes (Western Sydney) Associate Professor Rosemary Wickert (UTS, for Professor Alan Johnson)
IN ATTENDANCE	Professor George Cooney, Chair of the Technical Committee on Scaling (TCS), (Macquarie) Ms Victoria Finlay (Secretary to the Committee)

Professor McConkey extended the Committee's thanks to the University of Newcastle for hosting the meeting and to staff for facilitating the visit. He welcomed Professor Wilkes to the Committee, and congratulated Professor Cooper on her appointment as Dean of Infomatics, noting that she would be replaced as Chair of the Academic Board due to her new role.

Professor McConkey advised that the agenda had been restructured, following a number of comments that had been received, to allow the Committee to refocus and have time for discussion. It had been agreed that the Board of Studies representatives would report at the August meeting.

1. APOLOGIES

Professor Marie Carroll (University of Canberra), Professor Martin Hayden (Southern Cross University), Professor Ric Pashley (Australian National University), Professor David Green (Charles Sturt University), Professor Alan Johnson (University of Technology, Sydney), Professor Gordon Stanley and Mr David Patterson (Board of Studies).

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 1ST MARCH 2001

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed. Professor Sachs advised that she was now Chair of the Academic Board, University of Sydney.

3. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

Professor McConkey reported that he had met with Professor Tony Blake, Chair of the New South Wales Vice-Chancellors' Conference (NSWVCC) to discuss ways in which the two bodies could best interact. Membership, legal issues, terms of reference, and financial arrangements had been discussed.

The membership of the Committee of Chairs matched that for the NSWVCC, which had delegated

consideration of HSC and UAI matters to the Committee. All NSWVCC member universities were members of the Committee of Chairs. It was agreed that Professor McConkey would contact Professor John Coll, Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the Australian Catholic University, so that arrangements could be made for an ACU representative to attend future meetings.

Professor John Mack's formal role on the Committee had been discussed. Members noted that Professor Mack had contributed much over his years as Chair of the Committee and late attended "by invitation" to ensure his extensive knowledge was available during a time of considerable change to the HSC.

Legal advice had been that it needed to be clarified what legal protection existed for the Chair and other members if they made public comments, and that it would be advisable if public comments were made only by the Chair of the NSWVCC, the Chair of the Committee of Chairs and the Chair of the Technical Committee on Scaling.

4. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

5. COMMITTEE ISSUES

5.1 Terms of Reference

Professor McConkey referred to the circulated Terms of Reference of the Committee of Chairs, which had been approved by the NSWVCC in 1992. The Terms of Reference showed that the Committee is a standing committee of the NSWVCC, and that the Technical Committee on Scaling is a subcommittee of the Committee of Chairs.

Professor McConkey advised that the Committee could recommend to confirm or vary the terms of reference, and he would inform Professor Blake of the outcome.

Members reviewed the major functions outlined in the Terms of Reference. It was noted that the NSWVCC had formally delegated HSC/UAI matters to the Committee, and the Chair is the NSWVCC representative on the NSW Board of Studies.

During discussion, the following comments were noted:

- The Committee's role was advisory, excepting in matters relating to categorisation of HSC subjects and scaling of the HSC, on which it made recommendations to the NSWVCC following advice from the Technical Committee on Scaling.
- The Terms of Reference had not been modified to formally incorporate the delegation of HSC/UAI matters.
- Members agreed that the Technical Committee on Scaling should remain a sub-committee of the Committee of Chairs, to which it would make recommendations. The Committee of Chairs would then make recommendations to the NSWVCC. It was also agreed that the Terms of Reference of the TCS and the way in which the membership was constituted required review. The Terms of Reference would be circulated to members for comment prior to the Committee's August meeting.
- The Committee made recommendations on appointments to various Committees of the Board of Studies.
- The Committee provided an important forum for sharing best practice and addressing matters of common concern, such as plagiarism policy and quality assurance.

Professor Cooney agreed to convey the Terms of Reference and membership of the TCS to the Chair. He noted that each University had one member on the Committee, most of whom were

from Mathematics, although it was useful to have representatives from different disciplines with experience in psychometrics. He suggested that a three-year term with the opportunity for re-nomination by the Chair of the Academic Board of the member's university was appropriate. The Committee recommended some amendments to its Terms of Reference, and Professor McConkey undertook to ensure that a summary document would be prepared and circulated by the next meeting to clarify the legal and insurance situation in relation to Professors McConkey and Cooney's roles on the Committee. He would seek advice from UTS, UNSW and Macquarie University solicitors and liaise with Professors Blake and Cooney.

Professor Cooney raised the issue of where the legal ownership of the UAI resided. He believed that the NSWVCC owned it and that it was exempt from Freedom of Information legislation. The UAI had been archived for a decade on a stand-alone computer at the University of Sydney. He wished to clarify the legal aspects of ownership and liability. He advised that the data processing procedures followed to obtain the UAI incorporated a risk management system.

RESOLVED COC01/03

That the Chair of the Committee of Chairs of Academic Boards/Senates in NSW/ACT, Professor Kevin McConkey, liaise with Professor Tony Blake, Chair of the New South Wales Vice-Chancellors' Conference, to update the Terms of Reference of the Committee of Chairs, and presented them to the NSWVCC for consideration and endorsement.

5.2 Financial Arrangements

Professor McConkey advised that the financial arrangements for the Committee of Chairs required review to ensure efficient operation. Presently, member Universities contributed \$1,800 per annum to the Committee's account to cover administrative costs including Secretariat support, costs incurred by the Chair on behalf of the Committee and travel costs of Professors Cooney and Mack on behalf of the Committee of Chairs. This amount had been set 5-6 years ago. The Committee needed to determine whether the annual contribution should be increased and specify a method of collection. An annual financial report could then be presented. Professor McConkey undertook to provide a one-page summary of the financial procedures to be followed.

The Committee

RESOLVED COC01/04

That the annual contribution from member Universities to the Committee of Chairs account will be \$2,100 (excluding GST) from the new financial year (1/7/01).

5.3 Communication among members

Professor McConkey advised that members had commented that communication between and at meetings could be improved to ensure that matters of interest were addressed. The Committee discussed ways in which communication could be improved. It was agreed that an explode email list and a simple website with links to members' Academic Board websites and policies would be useful.

6. HSC/UAI/VET ISSUES

6.1 Report from the Board of Studies

Professor McConkey reported on activities of the Board of Studies in which he had been involved

and tabled the following documents:

- A list of Board of Studies HSC Curriculum Committees (Appendix A).
- A list of University members of HSC examination committees (Appendix B).
- A letter from the Board of Studies regarding Consultation on Board of Studies Draft Curriculum Documents (Appendix C).
- A document entitled "Recognition by Universities of VET in Schools Briefing Notes" tabled at the BVET and BOS meeting of 8 May 2001 (Appendix D).
- A document entitled "Assessment and Reporting of VET Courses within Senior Secondary Certificates" (Appendix E).
- A document entitled "University Developed Board Endorsed Courses in the New HSC - *proposed guidelines* - " (Appendix F).

Professor McConkey asked members to make any recommendations for membership of the examination committees to him.

Professor McConkey referred to Appendix C, noting that four draft curriculum framework/writing briefs had been circulated by the Board of Studies for consultation with various groups, including all schools, universities and certain community groups and professional associations. He advised that members could obtain the writing briefs from the Board of Studies website (<http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/>).

Professor McConkey reported that he had attended a meeting of the Board of Studies on 15 May 2001 at which the procedures to be followed to consider material (when available) and responses had been discussed. He referred to the "University Developed Board Endorsed Courses in the New HSC - *proposed guidelines*" which had been approved at the meeting, subject to minor amendments, noting that the courses were not distinction courses and could not be counted in the UAI. He referred members to the document's back page for examples. Professor Cooney noted that the courses usually came about due to a close relationship between particular schools and particular universities, and might provide advanced standing in some university courses. It was noted that the question of funding of distinction courses had not been resolved.

Professor Cooksey advised that Professor Gordon Stanley had spoken at UNE on the development of pilot courses that could be counted in the UAI and also towards advanced standing. He had tabled guidelines and a form for universities that wished to develop such courses. Professor Cooksey undertook to send a copy to the Chair.

Professor McConkey noted that the Ramsay Report had been discussed briefly at the Board of Studies. Members noted that deadline for responses was in early June.

Professor McConkey referred to the "Recognition by Universities of VET in Schools Briefing Notes" (Appendix D) which had been discussed at the inaugural meeting between the Board of Studies and the VET Board on 8 May 2001. The briefing notes had been prepared by VET officers as an indication of the direction they desired and had no formal status. In reference to *Issues for Discussion* Point 1 *New Assessment Model* (page 4 of Appendix D), Professor Stanley and Professor McConkey had agreed that a graded assessment rather than a competency approach, was necessary.

At this point in the meeting, the Committee adjourned for lunch (12.00 midday - 1.45 pm) with the Professor Roger Holmes, Vice-Chancellor, University of Newcastle.

6.2 Report from the Technical Committee on Scaling

Professor Cooney tabled a paper entitled "Eligibility for the Universities Admission Index (UAI) (Appendix G). He advised that eligibility for the UAI had to be revised to ensure that some Board

developed VET courses without graded assessment were excluded. Eligibility had been revised to comprise 10 units of courses with formal examinations (Board-developed courses), including two units of English, which would be built into the eligibility check conducted by the Board of Studies for the Committee. A second issue of HSC eligibility existed if students were allowed a wider choice.

Professor Cooney clarified the definitions of Board-endorsed and Board-developed courses. Board-developed courses had a syllabus defined by the Board and a formal examination conducted by it (excepting VET courses) and Board-endorsed courses had a Board endorsed syllabus, but assessment was conducted from within the school. Board-endorsed courses were not counted in the UAI. He referred to the HSC eligibility requirements (Appendix G).

Professor McConkey pointed out that the Committee needed to confirm the manner in which the UAI eligibility had been amended, and choose from the options presented ((i) - (iii), page 2, Appendix G) regarding whether Board developed courses that do not have formal examinations can be used to satisfy the secondary conditions about courses and subjects.

Members discussed the options presented. Concern was expressed that the option chosen should ensure that a student met *both* the UAI and the HSC requirements and that a certain breadth of study be maintained. The Committee

RESOLVED COC01/05

- i. That to be eligible for a UAI, a student must satisfactorily complete at least ten units (including at least two units of English) of Board Developed Courses for which there are formal examinations conducted by the Board of Studies. A student's pattern of study must include at least three Board Developed Courses of two units or greater, and at least four subjects of Board Developed Courses.
- ii. That the UAI will be based on an aggregate of scaled marks in ten units of Board Developed Courses for which there are formal examinations conducted by the Board comprising:
 - the best two units of English and
 - the best eight units from the remaining units, subject to the provision that no more than two units of Category B courses be included.

Professor Cooney reported careful negotiation had occurred between the Board of Studies and the Technical Committee on Scaling regarding the data required for the calculation of the UAI. Members discussed the manner in which data was transferred from the Board of Studies to Professor Cooney for calculation of the UAI.

The Committee thanked Professor Cooney for his report.

6.3 Report from the VET Advisory Committee

There was no report made under this item. Please refer to *Appendices D* and *E* for VET matters.

7. THE ROLE AND PURPOSE OF ACADEMIC BOARDS AND SENATES

Governance issues of NSW/ACT Boards/Senates

Members had been referred to the AVCC information on university governance at: http://www.avcc.edu.au/australias_unis/individual_unis/index.htm. Professor McConkey reported that the information showed mixed governance structures and highlighted a range of issues

regarding the roles, responsibilities, and reporting relationships of Boards.

A focus on Chairs' roles and methods to ensure efficient functioning of Boards was considered a useful approach. Members noted that the University of Sydney would be reviewing its Academic Board and Academic Forum shortly. The engagement of academic staff in the work of Academic Boards/Senates was an issue that needed to be addressed, and a challenge for all Chairs was how to generate informed debate and participation in the Board's/Senate's activities.

Members discussed the role of their Boards/Senates, and compared sizes, attendance rates and participation in meetings, and the following comments were noted:

- Standing Committees carried out the majority of a Board's work.
- Reports by Vice-Chancellors and Chairs could encourage attendance.
- The University of Wollongong's Senate had been restructured and reduced in size. The addition of an agenda item "Members' Business" had improved participation.
- The University of Western Sydney Senate had been restructured and its inaugural meeting was scheduled for July.
- The University of New England had been streamlining committee functioning. Issues raised from the floor following reports from the Vice-Chancellor and Chair had included the entrepreneurial activities of the faculties.
- The University of Technology, Sydney had reviewed the Board's committees and now had four, which had reduced paper production and reporting. The Board's agenda had been restructured and elections were no longer held during meetings. Two focus areas were being examined by working parties – international academic matters and work-based learning.
- The University of Newcastle was being restructured and was examining the issue of representation.
- The University of New South Wales' Academic Board Standing Committee structure had been reviewed in 1998 and required some "fine-tuning". The President reported to the Board and invited the Vice-Chancellor to comment when appropriate. The Academic Board sponsored forums, on issues such as Intellectual Property, which had encouraged wider debate.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

8.1 Foreshadowed Agenda Items

The Committee discussed particular aspects of governance it wished to discuss at the next meeting. The following items were suggested as possibilities:

- Methodology of reviewing academic structures (USyd)
- Representation and enfranchisement (Newcastle)
- Balance between management and Board (UNSW)
- How Quality Assurance issues were being addressed (UNE)
- Appeals Systems (UWS)
- Plagiarism (AVCC position paper) (UNE)
- Academic Honesty Policy (USYD)
- Teaching courses in foreign languages (UNE)

The Chair suggested that a meeting of Executive Officers to Academic Boards at the November meeting could be helpful in opening up lines of communication and sharing information on practices and procedures.

9. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, 23 August 2001, at the University of Technology, Sydney.

[Secretariat Note: Members are reminded that they will need to make their own travel arrangements. Flight and hotel information will be provided, as will morning tea and lunch.]

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