

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

Minutes of the meeting (03/2) of the **Committee of Chairs** held at 9.00 am on
Thursday, 29 May 2003 at Charles Sturt University, Bathurst Campus.

PRESENT Professor Kevin McConkey (UNSW), Chair
Associate Professor Sally Ruston (CSU)
Professor Bruce Kercher (Macquarie)
Professor Linda Connor (Newcastle)
Professor Ray Cooksey (UNE)
Professor Judyth Sachs (USyd)
Professor David Griffiths (Wollongong)

IN ATTENDANCE Professor Gordon Stanley, NSW Board of Studies (Items 7 and 8)
Mr John O'Brien, NSW Board of Studies (Items 7 and 8)
Mr Andrew Goodyer, NSW Board of Studies (Items 7 and 8)
Ms Margot Lee (UNSW), Secretary

Items were considered out of agenda order.

1. APOLOGIES/WELCOMES/FAREWELLS

Apologies had been received from Associate Professor Peter Camilleri (ACU), Professors David Green (CSU), Malcolm Gillies (ANU), Tony Baker (UTS), Lesley Wilkes (UWS) and Associate Professors Roger Bronks (SCU) and John Rayner (Canberra).

Professor McConkey expressed appreciation to Associate Professor Sally Ruston, Deputy Chair, Academic Board, CSU, for hosting the Committee and for representing Professor David Green.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 27 MARCH 2003

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed.
(See http://www.secretariat.unsw.edu.au/committee_chairs03.htm)

3. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Professor McConkey advised that Associate Professor Ronnie Harding from UNSW would be prepared to visit individual universities to discuss "NSW Council on Environmental Education Environmental Education Plan 2002-05: Select Actions for NSW Universities."

Several propositions were considered to hold another seminar for Academic Board personnel. One suggestion involved an early 2004 meeting where half the day could be dedicated to a joint meeting of Board/Senate staff and Chairs and the other half being set aside for separate, parallel meetings.

Members would continue to monitor issues relating to honours years in postgraduate diploma courses.

4. SUBSCRIPTIONS

One subscription remained outstanding; Professor Griffiths, University of Wollongong, undertook to expedite payment.

5. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Professor McConkey's two-year term as Chair of the Committee concluded at this meeting. He was re-elected Chair until 31 July 2004 when his role as President, Academic Board, UNSW ceases.

6. OUR UNIVERSITIES: BACKING AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE

Members discussed *Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future* (Appendix A) and noted implications for governance, the nexus between Commonwealth and State governments, contingent funding factors, the learning entitlement and its relationship to graduate entry, combined degrees, and changing career paths or university attended. The Committee discussed management issues associated with the Higher Education Information Management System (HEIMS). It noted that separate legislation existed for ACT and NT governance, and that the Voluntary Student Union (VSU) Bill appeared to be "detachable" from the package.

The Committee would re-examine the package at the August 2003 meeting, at which time refinements would be known and a formal position taken by the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC).

[Secretariat Note: Refer to the website <http://www.backingaustraliasfuture.gov.au> for further details.]

7. UNIVERSITY DEVELOPED BOARD ENDORSED COURSES (UDBECs) FOR THE HSC

Professor McConkey welcomed Professor Gordon Stanley, Mr John O'Brien and Mr Andrew Goodyer from the NSW Board of Studies (BOS) who spoke to the document prepared by the UDBEC Working Group (Appendix B). Items were reviewed by the Committee and appropriate actions discussed and agreed. The final version of this document would be distributed to the NSWVCC.

Professor Stanley and Mr O'Brien spoke to Item 1.4 of the UDBEC document. They described the differences between Board Developed and Board Endorsed courses. The former attract an HSC mark and are used for the calculation of the UAI. Board Endorsed Courses have three categories: (a) content endorsed courses that are centrally developed by the BOS and include some VET courses, (b) school developed courses, and (c) university developed courses. Professor Stanley noted that any course of study for the HSC, where the student is enrolled through a government school, could not be subject to tuition fees. Mr Goodyer drew attention to a commitment by the Labor Party in its Election 2003 Policy; the wording of the implementation plan from the Department of Education and Training is:

"To break down barriers between schools, TAFEs and universities to maximise cooperation across the public education sector. This will include: approaching the Vice Chancellors' Committee to help draw up a statewide plan for cooperation between schools and universities so local memoranda of understanding can be based on agreed protocols; and exploring successful local models of cooperation that are operating between schools and TAFEs, such as the Griffith Day Link Program with a view to expanding them to other locations."

In response to a comment on the significant effort involved in developing UDBECs, Professor Stanley agreed that it would be useful to monitor the take-up rate of these courses. He indicated that, in some cases, university-developed courses were perceived as a marketing tool while the focus of school-developed courses tended to be on entry to the workforce.

8. DISTINCTION COURSES - UNIVERSITY RECOGNITION

Professor McConkey drew attention to the Board of Studies document (Appendix C) and noted that a person at each university should sign off on these courses. At UNSW, that person is the President, Academic Board. Professor Stanley commented that it was intended to phase out

Distinction Courses and that while the Board provided the courses, it did not fund them. Only about 100 students were participating in Distinction courses.

9. CREDIT TRANSFER

Members of the Committee had collected information on processes relating to cross-recognition with TAFE at their universities and a paper had been prepared. (Appendix D).

Professor Connor noted that Newcastle, in conjunction with the Hunter Institute of TAFE, had identified 64 subjects for cross-recognition. The Committee thought that the Newcastle model could pave the way for wider application across all universities. However other areas needing review included undergraduate to postgraduate courses, financial balance, and issues of equity and diversity. It had been noted that a consistent set of principles would be beneficial across all universities. Professor Connor and Professor Baker would seek to access relevant TAFE documents on policies or procedures and distribute these to the Committee. An invitation would be extended to TAFE representatives to attend the August 2003 meeting.

Members were referred to the HSC/TAFE website www.det.nsw.edu.au/hsctafe which provides information on credit transfer across high schools and TAFE.

10. NSWVCC - QUESTIONS

Professor McConkey noted that Professor Roger Holmes, Chair of the NSWVCC, had sought responses to questions relating to access by secondary school students to university courses. The document (Appendix E) would be finalised and distributed to the NSWVCC in time for its next meeting on 24 June 2003.

11. AHISA LETTER TO UAC

In response to a request from UAC, Professor McConkey tabled for noting a letter from Ms Jenny Allum, Chair, Academic Committee, Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA) (NSW) in relation to release of UAI information to Schools, (Appendix F).

12. NEW ZEALAND TERTIARY GOVERNANCE REPORT

The report *Review of New Zealand and Tertiary Education Institution Governance* by Professor Meredith Edwards had been distributed prior to the meeting (Appendix G), with particular emphasis placed on the section relating to Academic Boards. Professor McConkey advised that plans were in progress for a "National Higher Education Governance Conference" to be held in Melbourne on 15-17 November 2003.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

AUQA Audits

Professor Cooksey reported on the AUQA Audit at the University of New England. Views were shared on differing methodologies used in order to achieve a balanced result. Comments noted during discussion included:

- There was a perception of variability in the panels conducting the reviews in terms of level of experience, breadth of vision and awareness of the issues involved.
- Some panel members appeared to have had a pre-conceived "right way of doing things" attitude.
- The audit process was valuable in stimulating self-reflection.

PhD Issues and Professional Doctorates

Professor Cooksey commented that there had been pressure to modify PhD programs through the inclusion of coursework. During discussion the following points were noted:

- Formal assessment in the preliminary phases of research had been useful in identifying students capable of research.
- Difficulties had been encountered in modifying current PhD offerings while, at the same time, preserving their status.
- A Higher Degree Research Committee could be seen as an institutional response to the pressures being raised.
- Entry requirements could include a 1st class honours degree ensuring research ability.

14. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on **Thursday, 28 August 2003**, at Macquarie University.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 2.45 pm.