

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

Minutes of the meeting (01/3) of the **Committee of Chairs** held at **10.00 am on Thursday, 23 August 2001** in the Council Room, Level 4, The Chancellery Building (Bldg 1), at the University of Technology, Sydney.

PRESENT

Professor Kevin McConkey (UNSW), Chair
Professor John Coll (ACU)
Professor Ray Cooksey (UNE)
Professor Rob Cowdroy (Newcastle)
Professor David Green (Charles Sturt)
Professor David Griffiths (Wollongong)
Professor Martin Hayden (Southern Cross)
Professor Alan Johnson (UTS)
Professor Ric Pashley (ANU)
Associate Professor John Rayner (Canberra)
Professor Judyth Sachs (Sydney)
Professor Alf van der Poorten (Macquarie)
Professor Lesley Wilkes (Western Sydney)

IN ATTENDANCE

Professor George Cooney, Chair of the Technical Committee on Scaling (TCS), (Macquarie)
Professor Gordon Stanley, President, NSW Board of Studies
Mr David Patterson, Board of Studies
Ms Victoria Finlay (UNSW), Secretary to the Committee

1. APOLOGIES AND WELCOME

We welcomed new and returning members, and we noted that all member Universities were in attendance for the first time for some years.

Associate Professor John Rayner, University of Canberra, replacing Marie Carroll.
Professor David Griffiths, University of Wollongong, replacing Joan Cooper.
Professor John Coll, Australian Catholic University, rejoining the Committee.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 31 MAY 2001

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed, subject to "UNE" being removed from next to *teaching courses in foreign languages* (final dot point, Item 8.1, page 6 refers).

3. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There was no business raised under this item other than those items appearing separately below.

4. COMMITTEE ISSUES

Membership

The membership list was circulated so that details could be updated. The list is available on the website (http://www.secretariat.unsw.edu.au/committee_chairs.htm).

Terms of Reference

The revised Terms of Reference (TOR) were tabled (Appendix A). The Chair advised that he had discussed aspects of the TOR with Jane Morrison, who is reviewing the standing committee structures and lines of reporting for the NSWVCC. The Chair suggested that the TOR be submitted to the NSWVCC on 18 September to be confirmed, following liaison with Professor Tony Blake, Chair of the NSWVCC.

The Committee discussed the status of the Technical Committee on Scaling, which had been variously described as a sub-committee of the Committee of Chairs reporting to the NSWVCC through the Committee and also as a standing committee of the NSWVCC reporting directly to the NSWVCC. The Committee recommended that the TCS be confirmed as a subcommittee of the Committee of Chairs reporting to the NSWVCC through the Committee. The Committee agreed that it would need to review the TCS's membership.

The Committee expressed the view that only the Chair should make public comment on behalf of the Committee of Chairs. Other members could make public comment as Chairs of Academic Boards, not as members of the Committee of Chairs.

The Committee noted that Standing Orders would be developed for the Committee of Chairs.

Financial Procedures

Members noted that financial procedures had been clarified. Ms Finlay undertook to investigate some apparent irregularities in some invoices that had been sent by UNSW.

Communication

Members noted that minutes, membership and other information can be accessed on the new Committee of Chairs website at: http://www.secretariat.unsw.edu.au/committee_chairs.htm

Members noted that an "explode" email list had been set up which included all *members* of the Committee.

Members requested that a one-page "Summary Points" of each meeting be prepared as soon as possible following the meeting so that members could report to their Academic Boards on matters considered (Appendix B).

Members were encouraged to attend meeting of Academic Boards at other member universities.

5. ROLE OF ACADEMIC BOARDS AND SENATES

Members were advised of recent changes to the Academic Boards/committee structures of ANU, USyd, UNE and Newcastle. Members undertook to provide information on the structure of their Academic Boards to Professor Johnson to assist with the current review of the Academic Board at UTS (Appendix C).

Members noted two upcoming conferences on university governance, at Macquarie University, 26-28 August and in the United States from 30 September - 9 October 2001.

6. BOARD OF STUDIES/UAI

BOARD OF STUDIES

- HSC training for new exam process/other HSC issues

Professor Gordon Stanley reported that the three year cycle of membership of the Board of Studies had rolled over and the new membership would be confirmed by Cabinet shortly. He noted the value of having the Chair of the Committee of Chairs on the Board of Studies, and the recent assistance in nominating academics to serve on examination committees.

Professor Stanley reported that 7,000 examination staff with contemporary classroom experience had been trained, that a small working group had ensured that examinations were consistent across all subject areas, and that they conformed to the style and structure outlined by the Board of Studies.

Media issues & the HSC

Professor Stanley commented that recent media reports regarding accessibility of resources and student preparation were inaccurate. He advised that syllabi had been developed and were available well before the current HSC cohort commenced. Statements in the media about "prescribed" texts had led to the confusion. Explicit instructions had been given on how the new HSC could be taught with the resources available and a strong suggestion had been made that teaching should not be reliant on a single textbook.

The Board of Studies was preparing media guidelines to explain the change in how the HSC would be reported. Normative referenced reporting had been changed to standards referenced reporting. Information on distribution of performance in relation to achievement performance bands would be provided and the media would be encouraged to think differently about performance. During further discussion of standards referencing, it was noted that standards were developed by aligning student performance with syllabus outcomes. Content examination and the characteristics of the performance achieved at varying levels had been determined and performance descriptors developed. The need to point out the distinction between the UAI, an index to rank school leavers and not standards referenced, and the HSC was noted. The media guidelines would be provided to members of the Committee as well.

There was discussion about the possible results in English and whether gender performance would be affected. The enrolment pattern had also changed due to the removal of the breadth of study requirement. This had led to more specialized study; there had been an increase in enrolments in Advanced Mathematics. Fewer students were doing more than the minimum number of 11 units but there were still many students undertaking more.

The Committee discussed the difficulties involved with Language Other Than English (LOTE) courses with small and declining enrolments, including evaluating the significance of achievement and noted that the Board had a technical group investigating standards setting. An increase in candidature in French probably reflected a reduction in the choice of languages available in a number of schools. The Board was trying to improve the standing of LOTE in consultation on the Year 7-10 Curriculum Framework.

It was thought that the issues that would be focused upon following the HSC would probably be:

- the variable top mark in different courses;
- community languages;
- whether the inclusion of 2 units of English had made a difference to boys' and girls' marks;
- the effect on students from non-English speaking backgrounds of the inclusion of English;
- whether there had been a shift in the pattern of enrolments due to the variable top mark.

VET courses

The Committee noted the circulated paper by Patrick Griffin of the University of Melbourne entitled "Using Indicators of Quality to Infer Competence" on possible grading procedures for VET. The Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) was considering graded assessment and had funded study to examine the standards referenced model.

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON SCALING - School Student Access to University Studies

Professor Cooney tabled a document dealing with two issues (Appendix D):

UAI Advice Notice

The Committee noted the information that would be contained on the UAI Advice Notice issued to students. It was agreed that an explanation should be included that only 10 units were counted for the UAI and that when 11 units had been undertaken, the lowest scaled unit would not be counted. Some minor amendments were made, and members were asked to email any other comments on the notice to Professor Cooney. Professor Cooney agreed to send the revised document to Professor McConkey before it was finalised.

University (Faculty) Handbooks

Professor Cooney explained that University Handbooks could not convert prerequisites or assumed knowledge information expressed as percentiles based on 2000 HSC results into 2001 figures, as the 2000 and 2001 HSCs were reported on different scales. Professor Cooney undertook to provide information on the equivalence between percentiles and marks to Universities before Christmas.

Following consideration of the two options presented, the Committee

RESOLVED COC01/06

That it be recommended that Universities express assumed knowledge requirements and prerequisites by the use of a performance band rather than a mark – this will involve making a decision in light of the performance band descriptors for the appropriate HSC course.

VET Grading Procedures

This item was discussed under the Board of Studies report above.

TCS Terms of Reference and Membership

The Chair advised Professor Cooney that the Committee had discussed the reporting relationship of the Technical Committee on Scaling to the Committee of Chairs and would recommend that the TCS report through it to the NSWVCC. He noted the Committee wished to review the membership of the TCS.

7. OTHER ISSUES

Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA)

The Committee noted that UNSW and the Northern Territory University were undergoing trial audits by AUQA in October, the results of which would be confidential. UNSW was compiling a performance portfolio to be submitted by the end of August. It was possible that UNSW might hold a seminar later in the year to reflect upon the audit experience. The University of Newcastle and Macquarie University would be audited in 2002.

Academic Honesty/Plagiarism

The Committee noted that the University of Sydney policy would be made available following review.

Teaching in a Foreign Language

The Committee discussed teaching courses in foreign languages and noted that a number of member universities were moving in this direction. Southern Cross University would be teaching the MBA in China in Modern Standard Chinese and the University of Canberra was in the first year of teaching the MBA in China. Issues that had emerged included the use of normative referencing as grades and grade descriptors were not commonly used, and the difficulty in specifying the size of assessment tasks to ensure a comparable intellectual effort. The University of Technology, Sydney, had been teaching the MBA on campus for 18 months in Chinese and planned introduction of a law degree in China. The issues of quality assessment and control had been considered by the VCAC and the Academic Board and it had been suggested that the Chair of Academic Board become a member of the management committee. The Faculty of Education was interested in teaching courses in Cambodian.

The University of Wollongong had decided not to follow this path and the University of New South Wales held that English should be the language of instruction and assessment in its overseas programs. The issue of assessment in English was suggested as an agenda item for a future meeting. Members noted that it was common in Europe for courses to be taught and assessed in a range of languages. It was noted in the case of courses taught in Chinese, that testamurs indicated the language of instruction and assessment.

Members noted the issues associated with these ventures including maintaining academic control, particularly in relation to assessment standards, and ensuring academic auditing. In SCU's case, 25% of all assessment would be translated and audited.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no business raised under this item.

9. NEXT MEETING

A draft schedule of meeting dates for November 2002- November 2004 was tabled and amended (Appendix E). It was noted that the schedule could change if the NSWVCC meeting dates were changed.

Members discussed the focus of the Committee and agreed that in order to fulfill the term of reference to "make recommendations to the NSWVCC on matters of academic policy and procedure", more time for in depth discussion was required by starting the meeting earlier and breaking less often.

Possible future agenda topics suggested included:

- policy controls for teaching in foreign languages (also assessment in English);
- discussion of who teaches what in NSW – focus on discipline areas;

- development of advice in the area of the decline in teaching of foreign languages;
- assessment policy;
- whether the UAI is the most appropriate method of selection?
- consistency in approach to academic programs and quality issues;
- the relationship of Academic Boards to other university committees and structures;
- discussion of the tension between entrepreneurial activities and academic integrity.

The Committee agreed to meet in early November (date to be canvassed) to focus on a small number of agenda items, particularly the place of the Academic Board within the University, for which the updated material collected by Professor Johnson would be used as a starting point for discussion.

[Secretariat Note: The next meeting will be held on Thursday, 1 November 2001 from 9 am - 3 pm at Southern Cross University.]

It was noted that the National Committee of Chairs would meet 8-9 February 2002 at the University of Canberra.

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