Academic Senate Charter

Introduction

(1) In accordance with section 20 (1) (c) of the Western Sydney University Act 1997 (NSW) (the Act), the Academic Senate (Senate) is a standing committee of the Board of Trustees of Western Sydney University.

(2) The Academic Senate has distinct responsibilities as outlined in the Act. It serves as the peak forum of the University for academic debate and discourse and ifs the primary custodian of academic values and standards for the University.

(3) The role and functions of the Senate as set by the Board of Trustees in its Charter include:

a. monitoring academic standards, values and quality assurance
b. accrediting and approving programs and subjects
c. deciding academic policy and approving related procedures and
d. advising the Board and the Vice-Chancellor and President as appropriate.

Appointment and Composition

(4) Membership of the Academic Senate comprises ex-officio positions, senior discipline experts, and elected members as well as one external member, as follows. The term of office for senior discipline experts and elected members is two years.

(5) Ex-officio members (15):

a. Vice-Chancellor and President
b. Provost
c. Registrar
d. Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Education and Students
e. Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Leadership
f. Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research and Innovation
g. Executive Dean, Faculty of Social Science, Arts, Business, Education and Law
h. Executive Dean, Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Science
i. Executive Dean, Faculty of Health
j. Dean, Graduate Studies
k. Pro Vice-Chancellor, Global Partnerships and Transnational Education
l. Pro Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Education
m. Pro Vice-Chancellor, Learning and Teaching
n. Pro Vice-Chancellor, Student Success
o. Pro Vice-Chancellor, Quality and Integrity

(6) Following an Expression of Interest from academic staff, Faculties, and Research Institutes, the University shall nominate academic staff members who satisfy the relevant criteria set to act as senior discipline experts and be

appointed to Senate. Nominations should reflect a representative disciplinary spread across Faculties and Institutes. The Academic Senate sets appropriate selection criteria, which will be regularly reviewed, and approves the appointment of nominated staff as members of the Academic Senate.

(7) Senior Discipline Experts (11)

a. Four Senior Discipline Experts from the Faculty of Social Science, Arts, Business, Education and Law
b. Three Senior Discipline Experts from the Faculty of Health
c. Three Senior Discipline Experts from the Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Science
d. One Senior Discipline Expert from the Research Institutes of the University

(8) Elected members (14)

a. Chair, Academic Senate elected by the Academic Senate from eligible members of academic staff of the University
b. Two Deputy Chairs, Academic Senate elected by the Academic Senate from eligible members of academic staff of the University
c. One academic staff member at Levels A or B, elected by and from each of the Faculty of Health and Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Science
d. Two Academic staff members at Level A or B, elected by and from the Faculty of Social Science, Arts, Business, Education and Law
e. One academic staff member at Level A or B, elected by and from the Research Institutes of the University
f. One undergraduate student elected by and from the cohort of undergraduate; students of the University
g. One postgraduate coursework student elected by and from the cohort of postgraduate coursework students of the University
h. One (Higher Degree Research) HDR student elected by and from the HDR students of the University
i. One Indigenous Australian student elected by and from the Indigenous Australian students of the University
j. One student representing disability matters elected by and from the students of the University who have identified as having a disability or chronic health condition
k. One international student elected by and from the cohort of international students.

(9) An external, credentialled member with academic expertise, appointed by Academic Senate.

(10) The eligibility for candidacy and voting for elected members of the Senate and its committees, as well as the election procedures to be followed, are outlined in the Elections Policy approved by the Vice-Chancellor and President. The Senate has the authority to modify these provisions regarding their application to the Senate and its committees if it deems such changes reasonable or necessary.

(11) The members of the Academic Senate elect a Chair and two Deputy Chairs. Where possible, a casual vacancy will be filled by the person who, in the immediately preceding election, polled the next highest number of votes to the member to be replaced. Members of the academic staff, as defined in the Elections Policy of the University, are eligible for election, except if they hold a senior executive position.

(12) Subject to clause (10), the term of office of all elected and appointed members is two years. Members are eligible for reappointment for two further consecutive terms, which equates to a maximum of six years.

(13) A person ceases to be a member of the Academic Senate if that person:

a. resigns from the Academic Senate
b. ceases to be qualified to hold the position to which they have been elected or appointed or

c. is absent from three consecutive meetings of Senate, without submitting their apologies to the committee secretary and/or the Chair or
d. in the case of a student representative, has graduated from their program and/or ceases to be an enrolled student of the University or
e. dies.

(14) If a casual vacancy occurs, the following provisions apply:

a. In the case of an elected member, where possible, the casual vacancy will be filled by the person who, in the immediately preceding election, polled the next highest number of votes to the member to be replaced. If that person cannot fill that casual vacancy, the Chair of the Committee must:
    i. appoint an eligible member, as required, to fill the vacancy; or
    ii. request the Office of Governance Services to conduct another election;
b. in the case of an appointed member, another person may be appointed to the position; and
c. where a person is elected or appointed to fill a casual vacancy, they hold office for the remainder of the term of office of the original member.

Role of Committee

(15) The role and functions of the Academic Senate include:

Monitoring Academic Standards, Values and Quality Assurance

(16) To achieve this function, Academic Senate must:

a. foster excellence and ensure the growing standards of teaching, learning, research and research training
b. monitor academic standards and performance against institutional benchmarks/metrics for research and academic quality and outcomes
c. recommend action to improve performance against set institutional benchmarks
d. critically evaluate the quality and effectiveness of educational innovations or proposals for innovations
e. critically evaluate the effectiveness of institutional monitoring, review, and improvement of academic activities
f. maintain oversight of academic and research integrity, which includes monitoring potential risks and academic risk management.

Accrediting and Approving Programs and Subjects

(17) To achieve this function, Academic Senate must:

a. critically scrutinise and approve programs, fields of study, subjects and the associated qualifications
b. approve the conferral of academic awards of the University.

Deciding Academic Policy and Approving related Procedures

(18) To achieve this function, Academic Senate must:

a. Recommend for development, approve, monitor, review, and ensure the effectiveness of academic policies and relevant procedures including:
    i. the monitoring and review of the key parameters and performance indicators for academic planning and academic quality improvement processes;
    ii. programs, fields of study, and subjects;

iii. University academic scholarships and prizes;
iv. University academic awards, including minimum standards and credit points for subjects;
v. admission, enrolment, assessment, and examination of students;
vi. student progress;
vii. student academic discipline;
viii. program and fields of study structure, title, and component names.

Advising the Board of Trustees and the Vice-Chancellor and President as appropriate

(19) To achieve this function, Academic Senate must:

a. provide competent advice to the Board of Trustees and the Vice-Chancellor and President and senior management on academic matters, including advice on academic outcomes, policies, and practice
b. advise on the development of and performance against academic plans
c. confirm that delegations of academic authority are implemented
d. report to the Board of Trustees on a regular basis and as needed on the quality of teaching, learning, research, and research training, and advise on matters of concern and
e. provide the Board of Trustees with an annual report.

(20) Academic Senate also considers matters referred to it by the Board, the Vice-Chancellor and President and/or Senior Management.

(21) The Academic Senate has the power to:

a. obtain documents and any information it requires from an employee of the University or its controlled entities
b. discuss matters with external auditors of the University and its controlled entities and
c. obtain independent legal or other professional advice that it considers necessary.

Delegations of the Academic Senate

Approval to confer academic awards:

(22) Subject to directions from the Board of Trustees, the following delegations are made with respect to approving the conferral of academic awards of the University.

a. Academic Senate approves the conferral of an award of the University except for the higher doctorate degrees of Doctor of Letters and Doctor of Science.
b. the delegated authority approves the conferring of degrees, diplomas, and certificates for undergraduate, honours, and postgraduate coursework programs.
c. the Chair, Academic Senate, in exceptional circumstances, and where it is not practicable for the Senate to do so, approves the conferral of an academic award of the University.
d. the Dean, Graduate Studies may approve the conferral of a higher degree research award for the University.
    i. If the Dean, Graduate Studies has a conflict of interest that prevents the exercise of their conferral delegation, another suitable senior staff member will be appointed in their place for the purposes of cl22(d).

(23) These delegations cannot be further delegated. Any exercise of the delegations under sub-clause 22c, must be reported to the next appropriate meeting of the Academic Senate.

Approval of academic curricula:

(24) The Academic Senate approves academic programs, fields of study, and subjects for accreditation.

a. Senate can delegate the approval of changes to existing programs, fields of study and subjects, as well as the approval of subjects to appropriate subcommittees. This delegation must be specific in the subcommittee's Terms of Reference and cannot be further delegated.

(25) Except as set out in this Charter or as delegated by the Board, Academic Senate does not exercise executive power, delegated authority, or supervisory function in relation to operational matters.

Meetings and Procedures

(26) The Academic Senate will meet at least four times a year. Additional meetings might be held as required. The Chair is required to convene a meeting if requested to do so by the majority of Senate members or by the Board of Trustees.

(27) The quorum will be as specified generally by the Academic Senate's Standing Orders.

(28) Meetings of the Senate shall be conducted in accordance with the procedures stated in the Academic Senate's Standing Orders.

(29) The Chair, Academic Senate presides at the meetings of the Senate. If the Chair is absent from a meeting, then a Deputy Chair presides.

(30) If the Chair and both Deputy Chairs are absent from a meeting, the members of Senate must elect a Chair for that meeting.

Academic Senate Committees

(31) Academic Senate can establish such standing and other committees to execute its functions.

(32) The Academic Senate must oversee its standing committees by:

a. receiving, considering, and responding to regular reports from the standing committees on their objectives, activities, and delegated responsibilities;
b. referring to standing committee matters for their consideration and reporting;
c. prescribing, where practicable, procedures for the standing committees' deliberations and reporting; and
d. facilitating, where appropriate, consultations among the standing committees.

(33) Terms of Reference of Standing Committees of Academic Senate, including the role, function, responsibilities, and membership categories are to be approved, reviewed and/or amended by Academic Senate from time to time.

(34) The Vice-Chancellor and President and the Chair, Academic Senate are, by virtue of their office, members of all Senate committees.

Conflicts of Interest

(35) Senate members should register their interests and must declare a conflict of interest at the start of each meeting or before discussion of the relevant agenda item or topic. Details of a perceived conflict of interest should be appropriately minuted.

(36) Where members or observers at Academic Senate meeting are deemed to have a real or perceived conflict of interest in relation to a matter before the Senate, it might be appropriate to excuse them from Senate deliberations of

the matter.

Performance Reviews

(37) The Chair, Academic Senate, in consultation with the Vice-Chancellor and President, will initiate a review of the performance of the Academic Senate at least once every two years. The review will be conducted on a self-assessment basis, as well as in consultation with the internal and external auditors, the senior executive, and other relevant stakeholders, as determined by the Chair.

Review of the Charter

(38) The Academic Senate will review this Charter at two year intervals to ensure it remains relevant and effective and will advise the Board of Trustees on recommended changes for approval.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	22nd September 2026
Review Date	22nd September 2028
Approval Authority	Board of Trustees
Approval Date	22nd September 2026
Expiry Date	To Be Advised
Unit Head	Philip Maloney General Counsel and University Secretary p.maloney@westernsydney.edu.au
Author	Georgia Vasiliadis Senior Governance Officer 4570 1733
Enquiries Contact	Shubha Devadasen Associate Director, Secretariat 45701347