CHAIR OF ACADEMIC SENATE – 2007 ANNUAL REPORT

Academic Senate is the peak body for advising the University Council and the Vice Chancellor on academic matters and broad issues which affect the academic excellence of the University.

1. Introduction

In my 5th Annual Report to Council in 2006, there was a shift in focus from matters that are now reported as part of the University’s ‘Core Function Reports’ towards other matters that have come before Senate. Although further shifts in reporting will arise through the adoption of the new UOW Strategic Plan, the same focus is used in this report.

2. Overview of New Degrees, Programs and Subjects

At its meeting of 6 July 2007, Council approved amendments to the course approval management process. The amended process delegates to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & International) the authority to approve minor course proposals without requiring them to also be approved by Senate Standing Committee. Delegation of authority to approve proposals for new courses and major amendments remains with Senate, although substantially improved processes have been adopted to provide oversight and guidance to proposals from Faculties before they are presented to Senate.

Under the previous course approval management process, Senate approved the introduction of 10 new courses, major amendments to 19 courses and minor amendments to 40 courses, the details of which were submitted to Council for noting throughout the year.

Following the introduction of the new process on 1 September 2007, Senate has approved major amendments to three courses. Fourteen proposals for minor amendments to courses have been approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & International). Under the new process, details of delegated course approvals will continue to be presented to Council.

3. Self Review

As with 2006, Senate continued the implementation of recommendations from the 2005 Academic Senate Self-Review Working Party. The majority of Senate’s agenda for the 7 November 2007 meeting was set aside for member-driven business. The wider University community was invited to raise items for discussion with several items being debated, including:

- The role of Teaching Intensive academics: A Senate Working Party was set up to report to Senate on this issue early in 2008.

- The role of Senate in Reviews: The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & International) referred members to AUQA Recommendation 3 and the University’s response. He explained that UOW conducts regular academic reviews at a range of levels, including subject reviews and course reviews. Additionally, the Vice-Chancellor has the power to initiate a major review if it is deemed necessary. All reviews and their outcomes will continue to be reported to the Vice-Chancellor and presented to Academic Senate for noting.

- Consultation and approval processes in policy development: Healthy discussion of this item led to agreement that ideally committee members would provide feedback during the consultation phase of policy development and that when possible, members should avoid deferring their consideration until the policy is submitted to committee for approval.

- Inconsistent practice in the release of Senate election counts: I will report back to Senate on this issue in early 2008 as part of a more general review of election processes.
Another issue related to Senate’s oversight of assessment and academic standards; I referred members to new policies introduced this year, to forthcoming events including the Academic Integrity Symposium and the training workshop for Primary Investigation Officers, and to the discussion of risk management that occurred at the April 2007 Council meeting. I undertook to further report to Senate on this issue in 2008.

4. Policy Development

Key areas of policy development and implementation during the year have included:

- In response to changes in the National Code 2007, endorsement of revisions to the General Course Rules, Appeals against Higher Degree Research Thesis Examination Outcomes Policy, Academic Grievance Policy (Coursework and Honours Students), General Course Rules (Grades) and Academic Grievance Policy (Higher Degree Research Students), and recommendation to Council for approval.

- Endorsement of revisions to the University Learning and Teaching Policy, the General Course Rules Higher Degree Research Grades, Student Conduct Rules, Code of Practice-Honours, Student Academic Consideration Policy, Code of Practice Teaching and Assessment, Use of the University Name in Public Statements Policy, Code of Practice-Research and International Linkages Policy, and recommendation to Council for approval.

- Endorsement of the new Fellow, Volunteer and Visiting Student Policy, new UOW Graduate Qualities Policy, new Course Progress Policy and new Research Misconduct Policy, and recommendation to Council for approval.

5. Other Activities and Initiatives

Other activities and initiatives during the year included:


- Approval of revised Terms of Reference for the University Internationalisation Committee, for introduction in May 2007.

- Approval of revised Assessment Committee Standards, for introduction in Spring Session 2007.

- Endorsement of revisions to the Course Approval Management Process, and recommendation to Council for approval.

- Endorsement of revised Academic Senate Standing Orders and recommendation to Council for approval.

- Noting of the University of Wollongong Strategic Plan 2008-10.

- Approval of student awards and prizes across all Faculties.

The Meet the Chancellor Reception was held in August 2007, again sponsored by Senate. Over 40 staff members and students attended. I am pleased to acknowledge the continued enthusiastic support of the Chancellor and Deputy Chancellor in using this function as a vehicle for raising the profile of governance and recognition of staff and students’ roles in governance at all levels in the University.


Other policy and process matters scheduled for resolution by Senate in 2008 include:

- Awarding of University Prizes, including off-shore prizes

- Implementation and oversight of the new Student Academic Consideration Policy
• Implementation by Faculties of the new UOW Graduate Qualities Policy

Senate will continue to assist the University and student bodies in addressing student representation following the introduction of Voluntary Student Unionism legislation.

7. External representation

Through the Chair and other nominees, Senate is also involved in various external bodies including state and national Committees of Chairs of Academic Boards/Senates. Through the State committee, several Wollongong academics have key roles in overseeing the Higher School Certificate examination, making contributions as members of curriculum and examination committees and of the Technical Committee on Scaling which oversees the calculation of the UAI. The University and the wider education community are indebted to those who have contributed expertise and time.

8. Acknowledgement

Administrative support for Senate and most of its committees continues to be provided by the Policy & Governance Unit. During the year, the role of Executive Officer was filled by Nerida Margrie and I thank her, especially, for her continued outstanding support.

My thanks are extended to Theresa Hoynes, Manager of the Policy & Governance Unit until July 2007, and to David Christie, both as Academic Registrar and in his role as Interim Manager of the Policy & Governance Unit. I am particularly grateful to all of the staff members of the Policy & Governance Unit who have supported Senate and its sub-committees throughout a difficult period during which they have lost several key staff members. As in previous years, numerous staff members from the Academic Registrar’s Division and from Faculties have assisted in the smooth running of Senate and its committees.

I also thank all members of Senate, especially the Deputy Chair, Damien Considine, members of the Senior Executive and Council, and the many other members of the University community with whom I have worked during the year.

David Griffiths
November 2007