



Australian  
National  
University

# Academic Quality Assurance Committee (AQAC) Members Handbook

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## Welcome from the Chair

Congratulations on your appointment to AQAC at the Australian National University.

As you can see from reading this handbook AQAC plays a crucial role in the governance of the University's education offerings. It is particularly concerned with the requirements and standards that surround the accreditation of our programs, our collective responsibility to comply with our own policies and procedures, and to ensure the robustness and transparency of our admissions framework. AQAC works to the satisfaction of Academic Board, and monitors, advises, and assures the University regarding the quality of education here at the ANU.

Members of AQAC are drawn from across our academic colleges and professional staff teams. Increasingly the work AQAC undertakes is data-driven and technical, and we are lucky as an institution and as a committee, to have so many highly skilled and dedicated individuals contributing to our collective work.

AQAC is a place of discussion, debate, and sometimes disagreement. These are, when handled with collegiality and the shared goal of quality improvement, to be welcomed and are signs of a healthy culture and institution. It is, of course, also the case that we should always strive for informed consensus and shared understandings.

Your role as a member of AQAC is to actively share the knowledge and expertise that you bring to the matters we discuss, whatever your background at ANU. It is also to listen and learn from others around the table. My role as Chair is to shepherd the expertise that all members of AQAC bring to these discussions and ensure that perspectives from across our university and our colleges and teams are surfaced as we work towards our compliance and quality goals. No one, me included, is an expert in all things - but collectively we have a unique opportunity to help our educators, academics, and professional staff be empowered, confident, and secure in their work.

I am always available to discuss any of the working of AQAC or any matter that you may see on a future agenda.

I look forwards to working with you and thank you for your willingness to contribute to the University through membership of AQAC.

Matt

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Associate Professor Mathew Davies  
Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor Academic Quality

# Governance at the Australian National University

## Legislation

The Australian National University is established under the [Australian National University Act 1991](#) and is unique as the only Australian university created by an Act of the Commonwealth Parliament.

Because of this, ANU is a Commonwealth entity and is subject to a range of Commonwealth laws and accountability requirements that do not apply to other universities. This includes the [Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013](#) (PGPA Act), as well as oversight arrangements such as audit by the *Australian National Audit Office* and scrutiny by parliamentary committees, including *Senate Estimates*.

Under the ANU Act, the University Council makes the Statutes and Rules that govern how the University operates. These include instruments such as the [Academic Integrity Rule](#) and the [Coursework Awards Rule](#). These Statutes and Rules are made under Commonwealth law, are subject to parliamentary scrutiny, and must be complied with by staff and members of the University.

### *Why this matters to you...*

As a member of the University or a University committee, your role forms part of ANU's formal governance framework. This means that:

- your actions and decisions may be subject to Commonwealth legal and accountability requirements.
- you are expected to act in accordance with the University's Statutes and Rules, as these have legal force.
- failures to comply with these obligations can have consequences not only for the University, but also for individuals involved.

Understanding this framework helps ensure that decisions are made appropriately, transparently, and in line with ANU's legal and governance obligations.

## Policy

ANU policies, procedures and guidelines operate within the University's Policy Governance Framework and set out how the University manages its day-to-day operations and decision-making. Unlike the University's Statutes and Rules, policies, procedures and guidelines are internal instruments and are not themselves legislation. However, they are designed to support and give effect to the requirements of the *Australian National University Act 1991* and the University's Statutes and Rules. While policies, procedures and guidelines do not have the same legal status as Statutes and Rules, members of the University are expected to comply with them, and all policies, procedures and guidelines must be consistent with, and cannot override, the University's legislative obligations.

## Council

Practical governance of the University is undertaken by a 15 member [Council](#). Membership of the Council can be found on its website, and includes members of the University executive, elected members, and members appointed by the Federal Minister for Education.

The specific functions of the Council are as follows:

- Strategic oversight of the University.
- Ensuring effective overall governance and management of the University.
- Ensuring responsible financial and risk management of the University.

## Committees of Council

There are nine direct reporting Committees of Council. Each has a unique responsibility to assist in its decision making. These are listed below. Additional information is available by clicking on the Committee name.

- [Audit, Finance and Risk](#)
- [Campus Planning](#)
- [Council Standing Committee](#)
- [Honorary](#)
- [Investment](#)
- [Nominations](#)
- [Remuneration](#)
- [Safety and Wellbeing Committee](#)
- [Special Governance Committee](#)

## Academic Committees

The [Academic Board](#) of the Australian National University was formally re-established by Council in February 2012 under the ANU Academic Board Statute.

Academic Board is tasked with ensuring the University maintains the highest standards in teaching, scholarship and research. The Board approves academic policy recommendations and approves the creation, amendment, and disestablishment of degrees and other awards. Moreover, it provides a forum to facilitate information flow and debate within the University and between the senior executive officers of the University and the wider academic community.

The following Committees advise Academic Board on matters within their remit.

- [Academic Quality Assurance Committee](#)
- [Learning and Teaching Committee](#)
- [University Research Committee](#)

## Academic Quality Assurance Committee overview

The Academic Board of the Australian National University has established the Academic Quality Assurance Committee (AQAC) in accordance with Section 48 of the [Academic Board Charter](#).

### Objective

The objective of AQAC is to monitor, advise and provide assurance to Academic Board on the quality of the educational programs and activities of the University.

The standing responsibilities of the Committee are as follows:

- a. makes recommendations to the Academic Board on accrediting and reaccrediting programs and subplans (majors, minors, and specialisations).
- b. develops, monitor and coordinate University policies, procedures and guidelines on load planning, admissions, pathways, credit, programs and courses.
- c. develops, monitor and coordinate policies, procedures, guidelines and strategies to enhance and promote academic integrity and address academic misconduct.
- d. monitors best practice initiatives and evidence-based research to drive innovation through an accreditation and standards framework.
- e. monitors and coordinate the University's entry standards for onshore and offshore applicants, including recommendations to the Academic Board on English-language proficiency and articulation and entry agreements.
- f. advises the Academic Board and the University Executive on the higher education standards environment; and
- g. considers and report on any matter referred to it by the Academic Board or the University Executive.

### Conduct of Members

Members of AQAC are treated as “officials” under the [Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 \(PGPA Act\)](#). This definition also applies to all members of the ANU Council, as well as University officers, employees, and members.

Sections 25–29 of the PGPA Act describe the general duties that apply to all officials. AQAC members must comply with these duties. A member may be removed from the Committee if they fail to meet these obligations.

All AQAC members are required to read the relevant sections of the PGPA Act as soon as possible after joining the Committee.

### Duty of Care & Diligence

A member of AQAC must exercise their powers, perform their functions and discharge their duties with the degree of care and diligence that a reasonable person would exercise if they:

- were a member of AQAC in the University's circumstances; and
- occupied the position held by, and had the same responsibilities within the University as, the member of AQAC.

### Duty to Act in Good Faith and for Proper Purpose

A member of AQAC must exercise their powers, perform their functions, and discharge their duties in good faith and for a proper purpose.

### Duty in Relation to Use of Position

A member of AQAC must not improperly use their position to gain an advantage for themselves or for any other person; or to cause detriment to the University, the Commonwealth or to any other person.

### Duty in Relation to Use of Information

A member of AQAC who obtains information because of that position, must not improperly use that information to gain an advantage for themselves or for any other person; or to cause detriment to the University, the Commonwealth, or any other person.

### Disclosure of Material Personal Interest

In accordance with the PGPA Act, members of AQAC are required to declare any direct or indirect material personal interest in matters on the agenda.

## Responsibilities of members

The [AQAC Charter](#) provides the following specific guidance on the responsibilities of members:

- a. to understand and observe the legal requirements of the Australian National University Act 1991, the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 and University legislation.
- b. act in the interests of the University as a whole.
- c. contributes the time needed to study and understand the papers provided; and
- d. applies good analytical skills, objectivity and good judgment.

The simplified version, is that as members of AQAC you are asked to prepare by reading the material, discuss non-confidential items with the appropriate stakeholder group, attend the meetings, contribute frankly and respectfully to discussions, and ensure that requests for feedback are actioned.

Critical to fulfilling these responsibilities is for members to have a strong working knowledge of the [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2021](#).

An appointed or elected member of the Committee who is unable to attend a meeting, may nominate an alternate, as permitted and provided for in the Charter. The member may nominate an alternate from the same category of membership to attend the meeting on their behalf. An alternate must be a person who would otherwise be eligible to be chosen as a member of the Committee.

An ex officio member of the Committee who is unable to attend a meeting of the Committee may nominate an alternate to attend the meeting on their behalf. The nominated alternate must be a senior member of staff from the same organisational unit as the member.

The final step, particularly for members drawn from the Colleges and the student population, is to ensure you solicit opinions and viewpoints from your colleagues and pass back information and decisions from the Committee.

Observers are welcome at Committee meetings, and you are all encouraged to invite members of your work area to attend with you. Due to physical seating limitations, the Secretary must be notified in advance of any planned observers.

## Meetings of Academic Quality Assurance Committee

### Meeting Schedule

AQAC is scheduled to meet six times annually. The current schedule of meetings is available on the [AQAC website](#). In recent years, the Committee has also scheduled an extraordinary meeting to consider Program Reviews only. From 2026, all meetings are held in-person, normally in the Mills Room on the fourth floor of Chancelry.

The Charter also mandates the conduct of an additional meeting in the event it is requested by more than 50% of the Committee.

### Pre-meeting

The submission date for items to be placed on the agenda for a meeting is 28 days prior. Late items are not generally accepted however an exception can be made at the discretion of the Chair, which is typically for urgent matters that have only recently become known. The Secretary will ensure an electronic version of the agenda is available on *Convene* two weeks days prior to each meeting, with all members notified via email when it is published. A non-confidential pack will be uploaded to the [AQAC SharePoint Site](#) for observers.

All members will receive an email from the online platform *Convene* approximately two weeks prior to the meeting date notifying them that the papers are available.

If an alternate member is attending on behalf of a member, they will not have access to the *Convene* platform and the AQAC Secretary will provide a PDF copy of the agenda and all the confidential material via email.

If members have questions of a technical nature relating to one or more of the papers, they are requested to notify either the Chair or the Approver of the paper so that an answer can be prepared before the meeting.

### During the meeting

Items appearing on the agenda will either be starred for discussion, or 'un-starred,' and thus not slated for discussion. Members will be invited to nominate un-starred items for discussion at each meeting. Likewise, the Committee allocates time at each meeting to invite general questions. In the spirit of collegiality, questions are welcome from any Committee member.

Historically, AQAC has dealt with a very significant volume of papers. In many ways, this is a function of its mandate. Accrediting programs for example, is a paperwork intensive task. Nevertheless, it remains imperative that we balance the requirement for informed decision making, with brevity and clarity at every opportunity.

AQAC has a unique capacity to examine issues from the perspective of tertiary education, and equity and diversity, as well as bringing cross-College viewpoints to bear.

On occasion, the Committee will deal with confidential items. These typically involve third parties external to the university where it is not feasible to de-identify the third party. Members will be notified in advance of these. No further distribution of the confidential material is allowed.

## Post-meeting

Unconfirmed Minutes of AQAC meetings will be published on the SharePoint site within approximately 10 working days after the conclusion of a meeting, with members notified via email. All endeavours are made to provide the Committee and Stakeholders with a Notice of Resolutions within 24 hours of the completion of the meeting.

Members will also receive an email from the Secretary if any item from the meeting has requested feedback.