



Australian  
National  
University

# Academic Board Members Handbook

## 2019 Edition

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## Welcome from the Chair

Congratulations on your appointment to the Academic Board of the Australian National University. Our Board has a unique history, having been re-established in 2012 with a goal of providing the highest quality academic governance to the University. In combination with these very practical responsibilities, the Board is also tasked with protecting the values of the University, and guiding strategically significant conversations on academic issues.

In welcoming members both new and returning, we have the opportunity to define common goals and aspirations for the two year membership term that many of you will serve. The physical changes to our campus are unmissable, with cranes dominating the skyline in multiple directions. Some of these changes will have tangible impacts on the delivery of our curriculum, and the well-being of our students and colleagues. These are issues we as a Board will engage with.

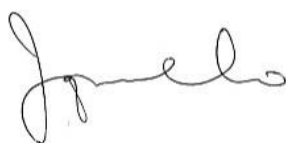
There are also a plethora of issues less visibly obvious, but equally important. The Board remains at the forefront of the Australian tertiary sector in engaging with the conversation surrounding Academic Freedom. In September last year we delivered a Student Partnership Agreement, and alongside representatives of PARSA and ANUSA, are developing metrics to implement, and where necessary refine, this valuable tool.

But what about the challenges we are yet to even define. What does tertiary education look like in the year 2050 and beyond? How will we ensure that we continue to attract and retain the best researchers and encourage research innovation? In the broadest possible sense, what is the ANU of the future?

As the Academic Board of Australia's premier University, we have a responsibility to lead the discourse on these, and other, matters of national and international significance. That is a responsibility best fulfilled when every member is prepared to make a contribution. That is not to say we must all agree. But it is imperative we utilise the breadth of our membership to explore issues from every conceivable vantage point.

I implore each of you to reflect upon what your enduring contribution to the Board will be. Some of you will be called upon to deliver a 'hot topic' presentation. Others may be asked to participate in a sub-committee, or assist with the reporting for the University's reregistration with TEQSA. Don't miss the opportunity to volunteer your skill-set, or even pro-actively participate in an area outside your field of expertise.

In closing, let me thank you for the not insignificant commitment you have chosen to make in joining Academic Board. I look forward to working with you in the years to come as we optimise the academic governance of the ANU.



Jacqueline Lo  
Professor  
Chair Academic Board

01 May 2018

# Governance at the Australian National University

## Legislation

The ANU is governed under the auspices of the [Australian National University Act 1991](#). It is unique as the only institution in Australia governed by an Act of the Commonwealth Parliament.

## 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 and Training.

The specific functions of the Council are as follows:

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

## Committees of Council

There are six 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.

- a. [Audit and Risk Management.](#)
- b. [Campus Planning.](#)
- c. [Finance.](#)
- d. [Honorary Degrees.](#)
- e. [Nominations.](#)
- f. [Remuneration.](#)

## Academic Committees

Academic Board is the premier academic governance body within the University. Details of the role and function of the Board are contained in this handbook.

The work of the Board is supported by four subordinate committees as detailed below. Additional information about each Committee is available by clicking on its name.

- a. [Academic Quality Assurance Committee.](#)
- b. [Student Experience Committee.](#)
- c. [Teaching and Learning Development Committee.](#)
- d. [University Research Committee.](#)

# Academic Board overview

## Authority

The operation of Academic Board is governed by the [ANU Academic Board Rule 2017](#). This Rule is made by the ANU Council, with the current version coming into effect in December 2017. It establishes the overarching structure and parameters of the Board, including defining its reporting relationship with Council.

Drawn from the broad guidance of the Rule, is the [Academic Board Charter](#). The purpose of the Charter is to provide operational level guidance on the workings of the Board. The current Charter was adopted by resolution of Academic Board in December 2017.

## Objective

The objective of Academic Board is to ensure the University maintains the highest standards in teaching, scholarship, and research.

## Roles and responsibilities

The Board is limited to the exercising of roles and responsibilities delegated to it by the *ANU Academic Board Rule 2017*. At its discretion, Council may choose to delegate additional powers to the Board.

The standing responsibilities of the Board are as follows:

- a. accrediting and reaccrediting academic programs and changes to existing academic programs;
- b. ensuring the maintenance of the highest standards in teaching, scholarship and research within the University;
- c. approving degrees and other awards;
- d. discussing and developing policy recommendations in relation to academic matters;
- e. maintaining an effective overview of the academic activities of the University, and advising on them and assisting in their coordination;
- f. advising on the academic aspects and content of the University's strategic plan;
- g. providing 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;
- h. reporting to the Council on the exercise of its functions, at the times, and in the way, required by the Council; and
- i. undertaking any other functions given to it by this instrument or that the Vice-Chancellor from time to time directs.

# Meetings of Academic Board

## Meeting schedule

Academic Board is scheduled to meet six times annually, on a bi-monthly basis. The current schedule of meetings is available on the [Academic Board website](#). In recent years, the Board has also introduced a planning day, generally held in February, to assist in defining its key agenda items for the year ahead.

Another recent innovation are coffee sessions with the Chair. These are held around campus, and provide members with the opportunity to gather in a relatively informal setting with no fixed agenda, and no item considered off-limits. Dates and locations for coffee sessions will be promulgated by the Secretary Academic Board.

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

## Pre-meeting

The submission date for items to be placed on the agenda for a meeting is 14 days prior. Late items may be accepted at the discretion of the Chair. The Secretary will ensure an electronic version of the Agenda is available on Alliance seven days prior to each meeting, with all members notified via email when it is published.

All members will receive an email from the online platform 'Survey Monkey' approximately three weeks prior to the meeting date. You will be asked to rank topics of interest for discussion by the Board. This is your opportunity to raise issues with the University executive.

## During 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 Board allocates time at each meeting to invite general questions. In the spirit of collegiality, questions are welcome of any Board member, including the University Executive.

Historically, Academic Board 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.

Academic Board has a unique capacity to examine issues from the perspective of research, education, and access and equity, as well as bringing cross-College viewpoints to bear.

To facilitate such discussions, each meeting the Board discusses a 'hot topic'. These are additional to the Board's program accreditation role and its oversight of academic standards and quality, and associated policy development.

Hot topics can be suggested by any Board Member. Their success relies on finding a champion of the issue, who is willing to prepare a short paper and to lead collegiate discussion. A list of previous hot topics is [available online](#).

On occasion, the Board will deal with confidential items. Members will be notified in advance of these, with the Secretary responsible for distributing the information via appropriate channels.

## **Post-meeting**

Unconfirmed Minutes of Academic Board meetings will be published on the Alliance site no later than seven days after the conclusion of a meeting, with members notified via email.

Members will be asked to vote on the Unconfirmed Minutes during the preliminary phase of the subsequent meeting.

## Responsibilities of members

The *Academic Board 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. contribute the time needed to study and understand the papers provided; and
- d. apply good analytical skills, objectivity and good judgment.

The simplified version, is that as members of Academic Board you are asked to prepare by reading the material, attend the meetings, and contribute frankly and respectfully to discussions.

Critical to fulfilling these responsibilities, is for members to have a strong working knowledge of the Higher Education Standards Framework. A link to the current version is included in the additional reading section of this handbook.

A member of the Board who is unable to attend a meeting of the Board may nominate an alternate if permitted and as provided for in the Academic Board Rule 2017. If an elected staff member representing a College is not able to attend consecutive meetings, the Dean can be asked to nominate an alternate from the College.

As stated in Academic Board Rule 2017, if an elected or appointed member of the academic board is absent from 3 meetings of the board without the written approval of the chair, or an elected or appointed member ceases to be eligible for election or appointment, the chair may:

- a. by written notice given to the member, remove the member from the board; and
- b. in writing, appoint a person who is eligible for election or appointment to the position to complete the remainder of the former member's term.

The final step, particularly for members drawn for 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 Board.

Visitors are welcome at Board 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 visitors.



## Additional reading

The following links will provide additional context to assist you in understanding the work of Academic Board:

- a. [Academic Board Charter](#)
- b. [Academic Board Rule 2017](#)
- c. [ANU Academic Board Website](#)
- d. [Academic Board Working Party: Roles and Functions of Academic Board at ANU Discussion Paper](#). This document was prepared in 2012 during the re-establishment of the board at ANU. Its observations remain relevant to our work today.
- e. [Higher Education Standards Framework \(Threshold Standards\) 2015](#)
- f. [TEQSA Guidance Note: Academic Governance](#)