

Charles Sturt University

Academic Senate

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1. Background¹

All Australian universities are currently addressing the same governance and related issues that are being faced at CSU². The driving force has been an engagement with good practice that has been sharpened by increasing government intervention that, in turn, has been a response to a changing higher education environment – including:

- increasing competition among universities and private providers for students and resources;
- an increased emphasis on higher education to provide skilled graduates and technological advances to underpin national competitiveness and changed expectations of higher education providers;
- heightened concerns around efficiency and probity in the use of public funding;
- changing expectations of private stakeholders as they increasingly contribute to full cost of educational services;
- an increasingly global education system that facilitates student choice on the basis of price, in addition to course and institutional quality; and
- continuing changes in teaching pedagogy and information technology.

These changes continuously drive strategic and operational decisions of Universities which, in turn, impact upon academic processes and the governance and management of academic activities. Not surprisingly, these changes have been reflected in the activities and interrelationships between University Councils, Academic Boards, University management, and indeed all stakeholders.

The starting point for any discussion of *Academic Senate*³ is the fundamental issue of what constitutes or defines a university set within the historical context of the university system.

There is a long and varied history of what constitutes a university. If we confine our notion of a university to an institution with the ability to grant degrees then the oldest institutions satisfying our current notions were either European or Near Eastern. On this basis most scholars now credit University of Bologna (est. 1088) as the first University although there is some rivalry with University of Paris. The latter institution was organized by faculty who then solicited students while University of Bologna was a university organized by students who then sought tutors. However, if we broaden our definition to an institution of higher learning with fewer but still some of the characteristics we now associate with a university such as research and teaching, self-administration, and academic independence then the University of Constantinople (est. 425) is probably the first such institution. The transformation of universities that eventually resulted in the modern research university began at the end of the mediaeval period. Thus, whatever our concept universities do have a long tradition. Moreover, they are clearly enduring institutions that have undergone substantial change in response to both internal and external processes. Indeed, one might profitably argue that their endurance has been a result of the process of renewal.

¹ Authorship of this report is attributed collectively to members of Academic Senate

² The work of the Committee of Chairs of Academic Boards/Senates and, in particular, that of Tony Baker (UTS), Bruce Sutton (SU), Jim Jackson (SCU) and David Griffiths (UoW) is noted.

³ Academic Senate when used in this document refers specifically to the 21-member Committee; Senate is used to refer to Academic Senate plus its Standing Committees. Senate is also used as a generic term.

The [revised protocols for approval](#) of Australian higher education providers give a local and contemporary perspective. These state, *inter alia*:

“Additional criteria for all Australian universities

4. In addition to meeting the nationally agreed general criteria for higher education delivery in Protocol A, an Australian university will meet the following criteria:
 - D1. demonstrates a culture of sustained scholarship which informs teaching and learning in all fields in which courses are offered
 - D2. undertakes research that leads to the creation of new knowledge and original creative endeavour at least in those fields in which Research Masters and PhDs or equivalent Research Doctorates are offered
 - D3. demonstrates commitment of teachers, researchers, course designers and assessors to free inquiry and the systematic advancement of knowledge
 - D4. demonstrates governance, procedural rules, organisational structure, admission policies, financial arrangements and quality assurance processes which are underpinned by the values and goals of universities and which ensure the integrity of the institution’s academic programs.”

Keywords relevant in the current context are *sustained scholarship, new knowledge, creative endeavour, commitment to systematic advancement, and governance and processes which ensure academic integrity*. These are terms that we associate with the modern concept of a university.

Some challenges and the governance solution

With the decline in Church and/or State support, modern universities have assumed a duality that was not seen in earlier times. Thus, universities retain their position as collegial academic institutions having a high level of autonomy. On the other hand, there is a judicial concept of a university as a trading corporation covered by relevant legislation with a high level of external accountabilities. There can be no doubt that a modern university is a business enterprise in which academic standards and/or values provide the basis for business success. However, efficient management of the business ensures supply of resources that underpin the ability to maintain high academic standards⁴. There is and should be a creative tension between the various notions of a university as an institution that pursues and communicates knowledge, that equips people for a productive contribution to society, and that creates a liberal culture for the welfare of mankind.

The question arises as to how best to balance the duality and the various notions of a university? This dilemma was addressed by Ward (2007)⁵:

“Changes in higher education worldwide do seem to confront shared issues as well as those specific to distinctive national arrangements. The expansion of public expenditures in higher education has been associated with demands for enhanced accountability and effectiveness. These demands have required a more active managerial approach to the administration of universities and increased pressures for universities to seek revenues beyond those provided by public funding. These

⁴ Professor Bruce Sutton, University of Sydney

⁵ Ward, D. (2007). Academic values, institutional management and public policies. *Higher Education Management and Policy*, 19:1-13.

pressures sometimes conflict with the academic values that have inspired and sustained the university throughout its history. These values include academic freedom, intellectual integrity, moral and ethical probity as well as a commitment to ensure fairness in access and a commitment to respond to social concerns. Although universities have not always been true to these values and commitments, they remain the bedrock of higher education's identity and institutions need to be alert to any pressures that diminish their influence. In addition, demands for narrowly construed outcomes combined with the market-related basis of new revenues may create incentives that distort the core missions of higher education institutions as purely utilitarian motives drive both curricula and research. “

The unique system of governance within a university involving as it does two separate and variously termed entities plus a Vice-Chancellor has evolved to cope with this complexity. Thus, enabling legislation in the form of the [Charles Sturt University Act 1989](#) (the Act) prescribes that Charles Sturt University will have a Council that will be the governing authority of the University which “acts for and on behalf of the University in the exercise of its functions” and which assigns to University the “control and management of the affairs of the University”. The Act also requires that the University have an Academic Senate, consisting of the Vice-Chancellor and such other members as the Council may appoint.

The Senate model is founded on principles of “consultation, collegiality and broad-based representation with free and open debate. Senate provides an important venue for staff and student involvement in academic decision-making and upholds the voice and the interests of the Academy in a tripartite relationship of Senate and Council; the Vice-Chancellor and Senior Executive; and the academic community.”⁶

Any system of governance must progress a culture in which these ideals can be realized. This mandates a governance system and processes by which Academic Senate can encompass its various roles. Before looking at the roles or functions of Academic Senate we need to explore the governance and associated processes.

2. University Governance

It is ironic that the very solution, that of dual governance bodies, that has developed as an answer to the complexity of the modern university and as a balance to ensure academic integrity also raises many of the issues currently confronting the system. Before looking at these issues and their solutions we need to establish some clear definitions. A confusing language is one of the problems that confront the achievement of successful outcomes. In some instances, all that is needed is to achieve clarity around the governance and processes that already exist.

Practical Definitions

Rather than debate the notion of shared governance in an abstract way, the [paper on academic governance](#) that went to the February 2008 meeting of Academic Senate attempted to provide a fairly concrete way of distinguishing between governance, management and operational activity. In summary:

⁶ Dooley, A.H. (2005). The purpose and function of Academic Boards and Senates, A Policy Paper for the Committee of Chairs of Academic Boards and Senates.

Governance – the way an organisation determines *how* it will reach its decisions, *who* will be the responsible parties at each stage of these decision-making processes, and what broader (strategic or otherwise) standards and outcomes will guide the activity of the organisation.

Management – those members of an organisation with responsibility and authority within the wider governance framework to determine *what* decisions will be made.

Operational – the everyday activity of the wider organisation, directed by both the overarching governance framework and decisions of management within this framework.

By giving Academic Senate specific responsibility for many of the academic affairs of the University, the University Council has clearly delegated a *governance* role. This extends to the power to make policy to enact the decisions of the Academic Senate. These are powers that are legally those of the Council, which have again been formally *delegated* to the Academic Senate in the [By-Law](#) and relevant Rules. They are therefore governance powers and responsibilities, flowing directly from the enabling legislation and University Council.

Corporate Governance

The University Council is the governing body of Charles Sturt University and is invested with all the authorities, functions and powers of the University. The Council is accountable to the University's stakeholders, and under the law, for ensuring that the University manages its resources in a manner that is best designed to fulfil the objects of the University set out in the [Act](#).

In a complex and rapidly changing educational environment, the [University Council](#) believes that:

- management must be empowered with the authority and flexibility to drive the University towards the achievement of its strategic objectives, and
- management should be exercised within a framework of effective accountability.

The Council is responsible to the University's stakeholders for setting the strategic direction of the University, ensuring accountability from the management of the University and maintaining and extending free academic inquiry and discourse.

Council performs its functions with the assistance of several Committees as shown [here](#). This committee chart also illustrates the unique position of Academic Senate within this framework.

Academic Governance

The Academic Senate is established in accordance with the [CSU Act \(at clause 16\)](#). The same legislation that establishes Academic Senate specifies the Vice-Chancellor as the only required member of Academic Senate. The CSU Council has the authority to determine additional Senate members and the functions of Academic Senate. These can be enshrined in a By-law or a Rule of Council. Currently the composition, procedural requirements and functions of Academic Senate are established in accordance with the [By-Law](#) (clauses 101-107), an instrument of the University Council. The [Governance \(Academic Senate\) Rule 2006 No. 6](#) (which is a Rule of the Council and has the authority of a By-law) defines in more detail the membership and role or functions of Senate within the boundaries set by the [Act](#) and [By-law](#).

Academic Senate is established in this way as “the principal academic governing body” of CSU. In the same manner as the Council has the power to establish any other committee to assist it in the exercise of its governance function, the requirement to have an Academic Senate does not legally confer on that body any role or authority than would otherwise be authorised by the Council. It does, however, indicate that the legislature viewed that such a body was an important part of the governance of the institution. While the University could not dispense with the Senate under current legislation, the University Council has the sole authority to determine both its membership and the functions it will perform on behalf of the University Council.

As a consequence:

- a. the *existence* of an Academic Senate is a statutory requirement, and outside the authority of the Council to alter; and
- b. the *functions* and *membership* of the Academic Senate are delegations from University Council, and are thus determined wholly by its authority.

Thus, there is a legal requirement to have an Academic Senate but the Act does nothing more than say that the University must have a Senate constituted by at least the Vice-Chancellor and it can give it fairly limited functions or none at all. So ultimately the Academic Senate is a committee of the Council however, the fact that its existence is prescribed by the [Act](#) implies that it should have a significant role in the governance of the institution and that its relationship with the Council is not only as a subordinate committee of the Council. This confirms governance as a tripartite arrangement involving Council, Academic Senate and the Vice-Chancellor (or Senior Executive). Further, in assigning the principal functions of the Academic Senate in the [By-law](#), the Council has assigned them to Academic Senate “as the principal academic body of the University”.

More importantly, there is a compelling rationale for having an Academic Senate that goes beyond the legal requirement to do so and finds a basis both in the traditions of a University, as a self-governing academic community (academic freedom, free inquiry, independence from State direction) and contemporary corporate governance. The former is well established, however, the latter needs some clarification. Under corporate law, the board is vested with the control and management of an institution on the behalf of its members (in the case of the

University, its members are its staff, students and graduates). In order to effectively govern, a contemporary board must ensure that they have the skills, experience and qualifications necessary for the proper stewardship and control of the institution. The board achieves this by looking at the core functions of the institution, and its strategic context, and determining the types of capabilities required of members. In turn, contemporary boards recognise that special expertise is needed for specialist functions (eg. Audit and Risk) and that this is best achieved through committees acting for and on behalf of the board. The principles of this argument also apply to academic governance.

In order to govern effectively, the Council needs committees constituted by experts to oversight particular activities (e.g. investment, capital works, communications, academic programs, research etc). Accordingly, the Council must have an Academic Senate because the core function of a University is education and research. It must be staffed by academicians because a prudent board would ensure that the people who oversight a specialist function are competent to do so and therefore assure the board that this function is being performed appropriately.

The need for the Academic Senate to have a high degree of independence in decision making can also be argued from the mission of the University. The mission, among other things, is the promotion of “free inquiry”. The meaning of this is informed by history, reinforced by legal decisions that provide legal substance to the role of academic freedom in universities. The board is legally responsible for the achievement of this mission, therefore, it must ensure that ‘academic independence’ is promoted in the governance arrangements. Because the board has multiple functions that sometimes may be viewed as conflicting with academic independence (e.g. financial management, balanced budgets, limitation of liability, Government funding), the only way to ensure that its broader functions do not impede the core mission of the University is by segmentation of ‘academic’ quality assurance from corporate governance. In effect, good corporate governance in a University requires the Council (legally) to devolve academic quality control to the Senate. In other words, effective and independent academic quality assurance is a legal obligation arising from the duty of members of the Council to ensure effective corporate governance, informed by the historical traditions of universities. As such, the obligation of the Council is to vest real independent authority in the Senate because it is obligated to do so to fulfil its fiduciary duties.

The Academic Senate of CSU with 21 members is the smallest academic board in Australia. It has an elected Presiding Officer, and thus maintains independence from senior management, a feature it shares with all such boards in New South Wales. It balances representative elected members with operational *ex officio* members. This relationship is further explored in Section 4. The relatively small size of the board means that it can be convened without difficulty in reaching a quorum. It also encourages focused debate on key issues based on effective roundtable-style discussion. However, effective engagement of the wider academy via effective stakeholder consultation mechanisms is essential. This relates particularly to student involvement but also to staff. Moreover, generation of the desired level of debate will require a more proactive style. These issues will be explored during 2008/2009.

3. Intersection of Corporate and Academic Governance

AUQA has commissioned a paper specifically on the role of Academic Senates in university governance⁷. Moreover, there is now an extensive literature⁸ and set of discussions worldwide on the role of academic governing bodies in university governance, and there is clearly a widely held view that these bodies have a governance role. In the US, for example, there is a long-standing statement of ‘shared governance’ between academic boards and university councils that is both highly influential and extensively implemented within institutions. The concept of shared governance in universities is also well developed in the governance literature. That the Academic Senate is established in the [Act](#), alongside the University Council and Vice-Chancellor, also confirms that its role is not solely operational. Indeed, as discussed in Section 2, this tripartite arrangement is fundamental to achieving the core values of a university.

The crux of this shared governance model is the intersection of the three bodies at the highest level in determining the long-term direction, principles, core values and key standards of CSU. There is an inclusion and engagement with Academic Senate that relies on a culture of working in partnership, each party concentrating on their particular responsibilities.

In this tripartite arrangement it is important to affirm the role of Academic Senate as the principal governing academic body, with final determinative responsibility for all academic matters. Thus, Council has delegated very significant authority to Academic Senate. Some key academic processes for which Senate is responsible, include:

- student progress from admission to graduation;
- assessment and academic standards;
- curriculum;
- academic integrity.

This system of delegation requires Council to be appropriately informed of the University’s level of academic risk and that there are appropriate quality assurance mechanisms to mitigate this risk. Thus, the relationship of Academic Senate to Council is one of accountability for core academic values. The highest level accountabilities of Academic Senate from the [By-Law \(Clause 105\)](#) relate to “ensuring the high quality of teaching and learning within the University by developing and implementing appropriate policies”, and “advising the Council and the Vice-Chancellor on all matters relating to teaching, scholarship and research conducted at or in connection with the University.”

⁷ Insert reference

⁸ Restricted to local content: Dooley, A.H. (2007) The role of Academic Boards in university governance. AUQA Occasional Publication.

Markwell, D. (2007). What makes an effective Academic Board?. Available [online](#)

Winchester, H.P.M. (2007). Academic Board and the Academy: Seizing the moment. Australian University Quality Forum, Tasmania. Available [online](#)

Woodhouse, D. and Baird, J. (2007). Academic Boards’ role in quality and standards. *Campus Review*, 23 April 2007, p. 10

Woodhouse, D. and Baird, J. Insert link to their AUQA paper. This is a somewhat dismissive view with the possible exception of the final section of the text.

Dooley, A.H. (2007). Thematic Analysis: The role of Academic Boards in University governance. Available online at http://www.auqa.edu.au/files/publications/academic%20boards_%20final_website.pdf. In this paper Dooley responds to Woodhouse and Baird.

Specifically, the functions of Academic Senate defined under [Governance \(Academic Senate\) Rule 2006 No. 6](#) can be classified as relating to policy (1 and 2), quality assurance and gate-keeping actions (3) and acting as the voice of the Academy (4) as follows:

1. Governance – providing a framework for carrying out the functions of the Academic Senate (Functions a, c, e, g, and k);
2. Management and Maintenance of Academic Regulations – the authority to develop, implement, monitor and review the administration of academic processes in the University (Functions d and f);
3. Maintenance of Academic Standards – responsibility for assuring the quality of academic activities (Functions b, h, i and l); and
4. Communication within the Institution – it is the body that is responsible for facilitating debate of academic issues within the University (Function j).

4. Intersection of Academic Governance and Management

It is important to recognize that while Senior Management has a separate identity, it also overlaps with Academic Senate and with the Standing Committees of Academic Senate. Thus, Senior Management with its own responsibilities and authority must exercise a dual role on Academic Senate which has a separate but complementary role. This duality of Senior Management, balanced by members with an academic focus, provides Academic Senate with two distinct perspectives from which issues can be scrutinized. The link between these two arms of governance in the tripartite arrangement is fundamental to the successful governing and administration of CSU. As noted by Markwell⁹: “The Board 'is independent of, but shares membership with, senior executive, senior management and Council'.”

To borrow further from Markwell the role of Senior Management is to “*initiate* new activities; the role of the Academic Senate is to ensure that these initiatives are undertaken within an *appropriate framework of academic standards, policies, and processes*, and to test these initiatives against them. Academic standards must be considered in an appropriate context of universities needing to generate revenue and to promoting equity, access, and diversity.” Thus, the Academic Senate must be conscious of the strategic imperatives of CSU as defined in the University Strategy 2007-2011.

In meeting these objectives, and apart from any informal arrangements, the Presiding Officer, Academic Senate has open access to the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor and meets regularly with the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) to appraise each other of current developments. The Presiding Officer, Academic Senate attends meetings of the Administrative Services Executive Committee chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Administration) and the Vice Chancellor’s Forum. Other formal arrangements that link Academic Senate and management processes are:

⁹ Markwell, D. (2007). What makes an effective Academic Board? Available [online](#)

(i) the University's most senior academic staff concurrently holding senior management responsibilities. This is not always the case in universities. For instance, some Deans are chairs of Faculty Board but have no management responsibilities.

(ii) the presence of senior academics with management responsibilities on Academic Senate and on key Senate committees, including chairing the Learning & Teaching Committee; Academic Programs Committee; Research Management Committee; and Board of Graduate Studies.

(iii) the presence of the Presiding Officer, Academic Senate on key Planning Committees: University Course Planning Committee; Information and Learning Systems Committee; Research Planning Committee.

Finally, the Presiding Officer or Deputy Presiding Officer Academic Senate or nominee is engaged in the selection process for all appointments at the level of Dean and above. This includes involvement in the appointment process including membership of the appointment panel. The Presiding Officer, as a member of Council, is normally involved in the selection process for all other senior appointments.

5. Issues of Academic Governance

What Are The Issues?

Some issues that highlighted the need for review are listed below.

1. In some cases, Academic Senate policy is highly prescriptive and detailed, involving itself in operational activity at even the most intimate level. This has been largely an historical development, as the Senate policy was used at a time when the University was forming from disparate campuses as a way of unifying or making 'transparent' operations across these different campuses.

However, there are an enormous range of other processes that the University is involved with which require the same consistency and transparency across its various locations and cohorts, that have no input from a governing body such as the Senate or Council at all. In fact in these other processes it would be seen as highly inappropriate for these bodies to be involved.

It is therefore likely that this sort of unification at the operational and management level of academic affairs, which in all other areas is a responsibility of management, is solely a legacy of CSU's development and is not at all necessary. Further it places the Senate in direct 'competition' with academic and divisional managers at the operational level. It is also possible that a transparency and consistency deriving from standards and outcomes has been confused with a transparency and consistency of process.

2. The Academic Senate has a broad remit to advise and determine on 'academic' affairs at CSU. However it is impossible to circumscribe an issue as academic. For example, a new online learning system or Faculty structure are profound academic issues, but are

also intimately tied up with questions of resources and management. Alternatively, problems with the admissions system are inevitably and at the same time problems with policy and with the management of these processes, which includes budget and other operational realities.

3. Many issues do not come to the Academic Senate for the sort of rigorous, agenda-setting debate that AUQA searched for in its first audit of CSU, or they come to the Senate and its committees for response only, with the end result already largely in place. While AUQA may have missed the fact that much of the cutting-edge debate occurs in the sub-committees of Senate, there is still the question whether this debate is agenda-setting in the wider University rather than merely responsive to decisions already made.
4. The Academic Senate and its sub-committees have an important audit role, and staff and sections can be held to account by the Senate in its areas of responsibility. However, this is a high-level compliance activity, which needs to be matched by detailed accountability mechanisms at the management and operational level.

For example, while a Dean or Divisional Head may be accountable to Academic Senate in the broad sense for implementing Senate decisions and policy, in what way is this then translated down to the operational level in terms of individual members of Faculties and Divisions? Is there accountability (e.g. in performance management) for compliance with the policies of the Senate in the design and carrying out of operations? Because Senate does not act at this operational level, it is essential that there be a management-type accountability to ensure that decisions and policy are actually flowing through to the detailed operations of the University.

Put another way, senior staff should not be responsible for the Senate regulation areas such as admission, credit, progress etc. But this is a separate question to their own staff being accountable to them for embedding these policies within operations. It's possible that the common complaint that staff 'don't know' about Senate policy, and this is why they aren't implementing it, is largely the result of an absence of this more detailed operational accountability. Much of the feedback given to AUQA by CSU staff for the first audit, about Senate, was along the lines of there being a lack of communication – Senate needed to do more to make people aware of its decisions. This is fundamentally not a communication issue, it's a management issue. If decisions are being actively implemented within sections, then people automatically know what the decisions are.

5. Because academic governing boards were historically the sole governing boards for universities, and a collegial model was usually the basis for decision-making, over time with the development of more business-like boards to sit alongside academic boards (such as the University Council) confusion has often arisen as to the actual role of collegiality in the decisions of a university. Both AUQA and many others who study the role of academic boards are interested in the way in which free-flowing collegial

debate amongst academic staff can inform the operation of a modern university, with often pressing timelines and significant amounts of resources at stake.

This can be reconciled by separating the collegial nature of Senate processes from the idea of authority or jurisdiction. So that the Senate can easily be a party to any decision a university makes, whether strictly 'academic' or not (see 2), without there being any necessary sense of it having jurisdiction over the matter being discussed. It becomes just another seat at the table in all decisions of the University, albeit a seat made up of the collective viewpoint of all academic staff.

Doing this immediately expands the scope of discussion at Senate and its sub-committees to encompass every current issue of the University. This then reinforces its sense of relevance to staff, who see that it is engaging with all of the hot issues of the day, not simply those to do with enrolment, admission, credit, etc.

A Model for academic governance and processes

The following model for the operation of Academic Senate at CSU was approved by Academic Senate at its July 2008 meeting.

- Firstly, operational, process-level detail will be removed from Academic Senate policy as much as possible. These details will be included in associated procedures and guidelines, which is already the practice for administrative policy of the University. The Senate need not necessarily have any jurisdiction over the procedures and guidelines, which could be altered by Faculties and Divisions as the need arose. Senate would continue to audit against its high-level standards and policies and will clearly identify over which procedures and guidelines it wishes to retain jurisdiction.

In accordance with this process, Academic Regulations will be revised to distinguish:

- History
 - Policy,
 - Process or procedures,
 - Guidelines, and
 - Reporting requirements.
- Secondly, accountability for implementation of Academic Senate policy has been introduced within the management framework, as part of performance management. Senate will continue to have overall responsibility for processes such as admission, enrolment and courses, but individual staff in sections and faculties are accountable to their managers for embedding Senate decisions and policy within operations.
 - Thirdly, the full range of issues at CSU could come to the Academic Senate for debate, *including at the earliest, formative stages of any proposed change*. The contribution of the Senate to debates that are not seen as strictly 'academic' would be as a collective voice, without any necessary authority over the outcomes.

In this model, management retains the responsibility for leading in institutional strategy and operational issues, while Academic Senate provides constructive criticism, development support and quality assurance.

This model reflects Academic Senate as a governance body “rather than a procedural decision-making body which risks intersecting with management decisions. In this model Academic Senate would:

- be more strongly and directly involved in discussion of strategic issues,
- be active in mapping the long term academic direction of the University,
- be active in initiating and developing academic policy for the University,
- be more explicit in setting standards (after taking appropriate expert advice from committees and portfolio holders) and monitoring adherence to those standards,
- not be captive to the work and agendas of its committees and, while having oversight of their detailed quality assurance activities, would maintain a higher level focus on the wider strategic issues,
- have a clearer sense of purpose in focusing on strategic issues and their potential impact, including any related risks, while involving the input of the academic community (including receiving of advice from Faculty Boards),
- initiate higher level discussions at Academic Senate level, with relevant Senate committees to do the follow-up, including detailed consideration of operational issues in consultation with relevant areas of the University.

To operate effectively under this model Academic Senate will need to consider how to proactively generate agenda, and modes of dealing with these agenda, which direct the focus of business to this level. Rather than mainly dealing with business posted by committees or management, Academic Senate will need to plan ahead, identify its information needs (internally and externally) and apply a meeting structure which supports discussion and debate.”¹⁰

In this model it is imperative that Academic Senate is engaged with major issues at their inception. Although this model is designed to minimize the overlap of management and academic governance some overlap is still inevitable.

6. Role of Academic Senate

In summary, Academic Senate at Charles Sturt University is the peak academic decision making and quality assurance body of the University. It is a governance body rather than a procedural body. It is the custodian of the traditions of scholarship, academic discourse, collegiality and scholarly debate; most importantly, it must be involved in the formulation and maintenance of the University’s core institutional academic values. In a practical sense, it is also “custodian of policy, process, quality control and institutional memory. It is a key place where issues affecting academic life can be discussed, and, if necessary, challenged”.¹¹

¹⁰ UTS, Academic Board Review 2008 (Note: references to Academic Board in the quotation have been changed to Academic Senate).

¹¹ Dooley, A.H. (2007). A Thematic Analysis, The role of Academic Boards in University Governance, AUQA Occasional paper.

The functions of Academic Senate derive from this model. In addition to the functions detailed in the [By-law](#), the role and functions of Academic Senate are further defined in the [Governance \(Academic Senate\) Rule 2006 No.6](#). These functions are listed below with examples of the ways in which they operate within the University. These are given as examples only and the operation of the functions should not be seen as being limited in any way by the examples listed.

(a) To advise the Council and the Vice-Chancellor on all matters relating to teaching, scholarship and research conducted at or in connection with the University

The type of advice provided for this function would be the provision of a considered view in relation to teaching, scholarship and research. The advice could be provided as a consequence of a request to the Academic Senate from the Council or the Vice-Chancellor or it could be advice initiated by the Academic Senate and provided to the Council or Vice-Chancellor.

Examples include;

- where advice is requested by the Council – Council might query the Academic Senate regarding how ethical understanding and behavior is acquired by students during the course of their studies at CSU,
- where advice is requested by the Vice-Chancellor – the Vice-Chancellor might seek advice about the academic implications of any proposed re-structure, such as, the possible impact of a restructure on the future viability of a course or CSU discipline,
- where Academic Senate determines that it should provide advice to Council – Academic Senate may advise Council that the risk management framework for the University is difficult to apply in academic programs, and
- where Academic Senate determines that it should provide advice to the Vice-Chancellor - Academic Senate may advise the Vice-Chancellor on budgetary implications in relation to the implementation of the online learning strategy formulated by the Academic Senate.

(b) To ensure the high quality of teaching and learning within the University by developing and implementing appropriate policies

The Academic Senate's responsibility in this function is to make certain that teaching and learning activities in the University are of a high quality.

Examples include;

- the establishment of course accreditation policy and academic regulations (such as Assessment Regulations and Admission Regulations),
- the establishment of policy for the use of forums

(c) To determine lists of graduands of the University specifying the award and the level of award that each of the graduands is to receive

In accordance with this function, Academic Senate is responsible for determining the list of all students who are deemed to have completed the requirements for the conferral of an award of the University. Academic Senate has delegated to the Deans of Faculty the responsibility for the compilation of the graduand list (following their approval that the graduands have completed all course requirements and are eligible to graduate).

(d) To advise the Vice-Chancellor on the teaching and research activities of the University and on the allocation of teaching and research responsibilities within the University's faculties

The type of advice provided for this function would be the provision of a considered view in relation to teaching and research activities. The advice could be provided as a consequence of a request to the Academic Senate from the Vice-Chancellor or it could be advice initiated by the Academic Senate and provided to the Vice-Chancellor.

Examples include:

- advice in relation to the allocation of funding to faculties in accordance with the performance based funding (PBF) model. (The PBF model itself was approved by the Vice-Chancellor but the criteria on which funding is based relate to academic standards and hence are approved by Academic Senate),
- issues associated with the impact of organisational changes in faculties on academic activities.

(e) To consider and report on all matters referred to it by the Council or the Vice-Chancellor

The Academic Senate's responsibility in this function is to investigate any academic matters that may be referred to it.

Examples include:

- the provision of advice and/or a report to the Council on the inclusion of ethics in course curriculum
- the consideration and possible arbitration of questions of academic freedom in particular cases,
- consideration of sector-wide policy or discussion papers, to provide an academic perspective for the University.

(f) To make recommendations to the Council or the Vice-Chancellor about academic standards or facilities at the University

As the principal academic body of the University, the Academic Senate is responsible for assuring academic standards and ensuring that academic facilities meet course requirements.

Examples include:

- recommendations in relation to future infrastructure needs of identified courses (eg: laboratory facilities for Science courses),
- provision of an assessment of learning and teaching implications for major changes in organisational structure or infrastructure, such as Faculty restructuring or the introduction of major learning and teaching platforms,
- assessment of offshore operations for compliance with Senate quality requirements.

Further information on how the functions of Academic Senate are achieved and the relevant timings can be found [here](#).

7. Legislation

The University is influenced by various instruments of legislation that include:

- Social Legislation
- Equal Opportunity
- Discrimination and Harassment Policy
- Freedom of Information
- Occupational Health and Safety

However, the most significant for Academic Senate is the Institutional enabling legislation that establishes Charles Sturt University in law and describes its purposes. As seen from the foregoing discussion there is related legislation:

- [University Act](#)
- [University By-Law](#)
- Rules of Council

The [National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes](#) (MCEETYA, 2000, 2006); provide a further external reference point. These are reflected in our course accreditation policies.

An internal reference point is provided by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), [Institutional Assessment Framework Portfolio](#).

Another important element of the context in which CSU operates is the [Australian Qualifications Framework](#). The AQF guidelines for each award type have been a requirement of our course accreditation procedures since inception of the University. The relevant Dean attests that these have been followed for all course approvals, and the APC and Faculty Courses Committee audit specific approvals against these guidelines.

The requirements of professional bodies for accreditation and/or registration of graduates are also relevant particularly for CSU given its emphasis on training for the professions. However, this is difficult to examine collectively and must be left to the relevant groups within CSU. Academic Senate monitors accreditation processes via Course reviews and approvals.

The various guidelines and codes of practice plus legislation to which CSU has made a commitment are as follows:

- AVCC (now Universities Australia) 2001, Policy Guidelines on Cross-sector Qualification Linkages.
- AVCC (now Universities Australia) 2005, Provision of Education to International Students: Code of Practice and Guidelines for Australian Universities.
- AVCC (now Universities Australia) 2005, Universities and their Students: Principles for the Provision of Education by Australian Universities.
- DEST 2007, National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students (the National Code 2007).
- DEST 2007, Handbook for Audits of Higher Education Providers. Available from DEST.
- Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (Cwlth) (ESOS Act) and associated and subordinate legislation and regulations, including the National Code.
 - This legislation was reviewed by Student Administration and CSU International in 2007.
- European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education 2005, Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. Part 5: Appendices AUQA Audit Manual, Version 4.1 Page 92 © Australian Universities Quality Agency 2007
- Higher Education Support Act 2003 (Cwlth) and associated schedules and regulations.
 - This legislation was reviewed by Student Administration.
- MCEETYA 2005, Good Practice Principles for Credit Transfer and Articulation from VET to Higher Education.
 - Credit-related issues identified in benchmarking documentation as a result of the study by PhillipsKPA and commissioned by DEST/MCEETYA on existing credit guidelines in the sector have been considered in the institutional self-assessment of credit practices conducted in 2007. This was undertaken by Academic Programs Committee on behalf of Academic Senate and the report is located [here](#). This report made nine specific recommendations that have been implemented.
- MCEETYA 2006, National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes (revised 7 July 2006).
- UNESCO/OECD 2005, Guidelines on Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education.

The specific legislation relevant to Senate or where there is shared Senate/management responsibility as, for example, in the ESOS Act has been identified. The results of an analysis of compliance with the various legislation and codes of practice may be located [here](#).

Academic regulations that have been developed and promulgated by Academic Senate are discussed separately.

8. Academic Senate membership and method of appointment

Membership of the Academic Senate is specified in [Governance \(Academic Senate\) Rule 2006 No 6](#). It comprises the:

- (a) Vice-Chancellor; and
- (b) Official Members; and
- (c) Nominated Members; and
- (d) Appointed Members; and
- (e) Elected Members.

The method of appointment and term of office of members is also specified in the above Governance Rule. The Vice-Chancellor and Official Members occupy a dual role as that of Senior Managers and as academic members of the Academy.

The role and responsibilities of members of Academic Senate is elaborated [here](#).

A list of current members of Academic Senate is found [here](#).

9. Office of Academic Governance

The Office of Academic Governance is responsible for coordinating the academic organisation of the University and provides executive secretariat and administrative services to senior academic committees, including the Academic Senate, Faculty Boards and their committees, and expert ethics committees that the University is required to convene in accordance with national guidelines.

The shift in emphasis of Academic Senate to a governance body with increased emphasis on being pro-active, agenda-setting and strategic has significant implications for the work flow and profile of the Office of Academic Governance. The latter will require more time to research issues, set agendas based on that research, write position papers and provide advice to Academic Senate as occurs with Corporate Governance and Council. The process would normally be initiated by the Presiding Officer of Academic Senate, Office of Academic Governance itself or indeed Academic Senate.

The Academic Secretary is the official delegated Secretary of Academic Senate. However, the Manager, Academic Senate fills this role in practice and the role of both positions is to provide high level governance advice and administrative support to the Academic Senate.

10. Meetings of Academic Senate

The agenda for meetings of the Academic Senate is circulated to members at least one week before each meeting and is published on the web [here](#).

Members of staff and students can contribute items of business for consideration by Academic Senate. Anyone wishing to have an item included on an agenda should contact the Manager, Academic Senate or Presiding Officer of Academic Senate in the first instance.

Meetings of Academic Senate are structured in a way that allows time to consider various aspects relating to the roles of Academic Senate. The annual calendar of business for Academic Senate specifies the relevant meetings to consider planning information, emerging academic issues, quality management reports, academic risk assessments is currently being developed.

Details relating to conduct of meetings including quorum and starring of items can be found [here](#).

Following meetings of Academic Senate, the Manager, in liaison with the Presiding Officer, produces an Action Sheet which is circulated, together with the minutes of the meeting, to those members of Academic Senate and officers of the University that are required to undertake action arising from the meeting.

11. Academic Senate Committee Structure

A model of distributed participation is used to implement the functions of Senate. In other words, much of the procedural work of Academic Senate occurs outside the formal Academic Senate meetings via its Sub-Committees. However, Academic Senate has a diverse membership that brings unique talents and insights. The challenge is to recognise what matters can be handled at sub-committee level versus those issues that require further debate at the level of Academic Senate.

Under the authority of the [CSU By-Law](#), the Academic Senate may establish one or more [committees](#) to which it may assign all or any of its functions. The Committees currently approved under this Rule are:

- [Standing Committee of Academic Senate](#)
- [Audit Committee](#) (ASAC)
- [Academic Programs Committee](#) (APC),
- [Learning and Teaching Committee](#) (LTC),
- [Research Management Committee](#) (RMC),
- [Board of Graduate Studies](#) (BoGS),
- [Faculty Boards](#), and
- Faculty Assessment Committees

The specified links provide access to the Membership and Terms of Reference of each Committee.

An organisational chart which depicts the relationship of the Academic Senate and its Committees can be found [here](#).

In addition, Working Parties are established on an *ad hoc* basis to examine more complex issues which cannot practically be explored within the formal Academic Senate meeting environment. Representation on these groups normally comprises both academic and administrative staff of the University, and recommendations can be very wide-ranging, with impacts across both the Faculties and Divisions of the University. In many ways these working parties pioneered the use of a type of project management methodology at CSU, and have been a way that Senate has been able to integrate both academic, administrative and management viewpoints with issues that cross all of those domains.

12. Academic Delegations

There are two main ways that delegation may be carried out – either expressly or as an implied delegation. Express delegation is where legislation provides a statutory procedure for the delegation of a specified person to exercise a power. Implied delegation or the ‘Carltona’ principle allows delegation of (normally) routine administrative tasks that are required in order for the delegating person or body to be able to carry out their/its role. In law, under express delegation the act of a delegate is not considered to be the act of the delegating authority. For implied delegation the act of the delegate is considered in law to be an act of the delegating authority. In accordance with administrative law you cannot delegate a delegation.

Academic Senate currently operates via a model of distributed participation in which it delegates many of its functions. For example, Academic Senate delegates authority to award grades to Faculty Assessment Committees; accountability for ensuring that the process is implemented in accord with policy follows from this. Delegations related to Academic Senate are based on a relationship between Senate and Council which is distinct from the management system. A University register of delegations and authorities, which will detail all approved delegations and authorities, is currently being established within the University.

Thus, academic accountabilities are assigned to staff by decisions of Academic Senate relating to delegations. This means that the accountabilities are not established within CSU’s management structure and yet they are central to the roles and performance of academic staff. Policy relating to academic delegations has been established as follows:

Duty statements and the annual performance and compliance reports for Deans and Heads of Schools (and Associate Deans and Associate Heads of Schools) include a requirement that they are responsible for upholding and implementing CSU’s academic regulations and a report that they have ensured compliance with the academic regulations;

The Academic Secretary prepares, maintains and promulgates a listing of [academic delegations](#) under the Academic Regulations for the following positions:

- Dean (and Associate Dean)
- Head of School (Associate Head of School)
- Course Coordinator
- Subject Coordinator

Letters of appointment for all teaching academics clearly refer to accountabilities under the Academic Regulations and the duty to uphold the latter. Moreover, the standard letter of appointment for Course Coordinators, issued by Deans sets out clearly the accountabilities of the role.

13. Academic Policy

Academic Senate sets, approves and reviews the policy and rules for the academic administration of students relating to matters such as Admissions, Subject and Course Approval, Enrolment, Credit, Assessment, Academic Misconduct (including plagiarism), Academic Progress (including Exclusion), Appeals, Graduation, and Higher Degrees.

These policies and rules are known as the Academic Regulations.

In such matters, Academic Senate is regarded as definitive.

The academic regulations are published in the [Academic Manual](#) which is updated by the Academic Senate following each Academic Senate meeting.

Several of the Committees of Academic Senate have been delegated authority, by the Academic Senate, to consider matters relating to the academic regulations and to recommend to Academic Senate any changes to current regulations or any new regulations that they believe are necessary.

Anyone who wishes to recommend any [changes to existing academic regulations](#) or who has an enquiry about regulations should contact the [Manager, Academic Senate](#) or [Academic Secretary](#) in the first instance.

The academic regulations in the Academic Manual have been listed below under their individual headings as follows:

- [Academic Progress \(also known as Exclusion\)](#)
- [Admissions](#)
- [Assessment \(including examinations\)](#)
- [Credit](#)
- [Enrolment](#)
- [Graduation](#)
- [Higher Doctorate Regulations](#)
- [Progress, Supervision and Assessment – Theses and Examinable Research Works](#)

Other academic policy can be located in the Academic Manual under the following headings:

- [Academic Misconduct \(students\)](#)
- [Access to Student Records \[.RTF\]](#)
- [Awards, Courses and Subjects](#)
- [Prizes](#)
- [Research](#)
- [Teaching and Learning](#)
- [Principal Dates](#)

- [Referencing](#)

In any future review of the By-law, Academic Senate and Council should entertain the possibility of recasting the functions of Academic Senate so that some of these functions (such as the authority to establish academic regulations for admissions, etc.) are established by the Senate as Rules of Senate. This would require these functions to be removed from the Governance Rule, and Senate to be assigned, in the By-law, authority to make Rules about these functions.

This would fundamentally change the nature of academic policy, which would have the force of actual law. (Rules have the same legal status as government legislation.) Academic regulation and standards would become prominent in peoples' thinking, because while current academic policy also has authority in that it is made on behalf of the University Council, which itself has such law-making powers and responsibilities, providing a direct legislative foundation to academic policy should focus minds even more strongly on the function of academic policy making. Academic policy would then also have the same communication requirements as other government legislation i.e. the onus would be on those covered by the Rules to make themselves aware of them, with 'ignorance of the law' not being a legitimate reason for non-compliance.

Academic Senate also establishes and reviews policy relating to standards and academic quality systems. Thus, processes involving subject and academic aspects of course approval are regulated by Academic Senate. Other aspects of course approval such as location of offering are handled via UCPC but the Presiding Officer, Academic Senate is a member of this Committee and, together with other members, ensures that location of offering of courses is consistent with approved academic policy (e.g. International Education Strategy which is approved by Senate).

Summary of Course and Subject Approval Delegations

Approvals are all via Senate pro forma documents, now embedded within CASIMS (Course and Subject Information Management System). All approval pathways described below are also hard-wired in CASIMS. The CSU course accreditation policy may be found at section L1.1 of the Academic Manual – this policy governs the procedures described below.

Glossary

AS	Academic Senate
APC	Academic Programs Committee. Committee of the Academic Senate.
BOGS	Board of Graduate Studies. Committee of the Academic Senate.
FCC	Faculty Courses Committee. Committee of the Academic Senate.
FB	Faculty Board. Committee of the Academic Senate.
SB	School Board. Committee of the Academic Senate.
UCPC	University Course Planning Committee. Committee of the Vice-Chancellor.

Course Document Types

Planning
Approval
Modification
Review
Phase Out

Subject Document Types
New Subject Profile
Revised Subject Profile

Subjects

All new and revised subjects are approved in the following sequence:

SB-FCC-FB

Some subjects go to other committees instead of the School Board, for example discipline-based committees in the Faculty of Science and Agriculture. These aren't official Senate committees, but have been allowed because the final approval point remains the Faculty Board.

Courses

CSU Course Profile and Course Profile Reviews

Determination of the entire profile of courses of CSU is made by the UCPC. The UCPC determines whether a course is to be added to or removed from this profile. There are also sub-set approvals, for example the addition of a location of offering for an existing course, which the UCPC approves as well – see the section below on course modification.

The UCPC has an annual course profile review. (In practice this doesn't occur annually, but when the UCPC believes such a review is warranted. For example, a year is not always a sufficient lapse of time after a review has taken place to make a further assessment of the performance of the overall profile.) This involves examining CSU courses and their performance against a set of indicators, and determining which may as a result be phased out i.e. removed from the profile. Faculties may also submit requests to this process to have courses removed from the profile. See also course phase outs below.

Courses may be phased out in a given year, even if a course profile review has not taken place within that year. The Faculty in that case will submit a request to the UCPC.

New courses

A proposal to introduce a new course at CSU must come via a Course Scoping Document to the UCPC. If the UCPC feels the proposal is complex or significant in terms of resources, strategy etc. it will request a full business case. The UCPC will approve or not the introduction of the course, at a specified date. It will also attest that resources are available for this course, or will refer the proposal to the Budget Committee if resource implications are significant. It also approves the allocation of load to courses.

After UCPC approval the Faculty prepares a Course Approval Document. This is used to carry out the 'academic' approval of the course, such as the course curriculum. This approval is carried out via committees of the Academic Senate, as follows:

FCC-FB-APC

A proposal for a research higher degree course has the following approval pathway, after UCPC approval of the Planning component (i.e. the APC is the final approval point only for coursework courses):

FCC-FB-BOGS-AS

Modifications to courses

An existing course may be modified in many different ways. These modifications are all carried out via a Course Modification Document. The type(s) of modifications will then determine the approval pathway for the proposal. For example, a change only to the course structure can be approved by the Faculty Board, whereas the addition of a location of offering will require UCPC approval. Modifications that may be approved by the Faculty Board have the following approval pathway:

FCC-FB

Variation to this pathway, for example to include the UCPC or APC, will simply involve adding an extra step.

The approved delegations for modification approvals are contained in the table below.

Modification	Final Approval by
Change of nomenclature	APC or Senate
Change of duration and/or point value	APC or Senate, and UCPC if any resource issues
Creation or removal of an exit point only course	APC
Change or addition of a location	UCPC
Change or addition of a funding source	UCPC
Change or addition of a mode	UCPC, and APC if adding DE mode with new subjects
Change of Faculty ownership	UCPC
Addition of a major or minor or phase-out of a minor	APC, and UCPC if any resource issues
Addition or phase-out of a joint study in Bachelor of Business	APC, and UCPC if any resource issues
Modification	Final Approval by
Addition of a specialisation	APC or Senate, and UCPC if any resource issues
Course variant	APC, and UCPC if any resource issues
Change of session type/pattern e.g. from session-based to trimester-based	UCPC
Addition of a specialisation to a shell course	APC, and UCPC if any resource issues
Change to admission requirements	Faculty Board
Changes to structure and/or subject content of course, including changes to structure/content of existing elective sequences	Faculty Board

Course reviews

Universities are required to regularly review their course offerings, from the academic quality assurance standpoint i.e. this is a separate process to the course profile review described above, and is regulated by the Academic Senate.

The review is currently documented and approved via a Course Review Document. The approval pathway for such a document is:

FCC-FB-APC

A Faculty may now also make certain modifications to courses as the result of a course review, for example adding an articulated course, or removing an articulated course, or phasing out the entire course. In such situations there may be a variation to the approval pathway to include the UCPC as well, where appropriate (e.g for phasing out, or when a review proposes a change to the course which has resource implications for the University).

In future the Course Review process will be complemented by a Course Design and Development process that includes a mapping of course characteristics, is evolutionary and iterative and may lead to the ultimate replacement of Course Reviews by prudential regulation.

Phasing out of courses

Courses are phased out or removed from the CSU course profile as a result of the course profile review undertaken by the UCPC. As above, Faculties may also individually request that courses be phased out.

Once the UCPC has approved the phasing out of a course, a Course Phase Out Document is used to administer this phasing out. The approval pathway for this document is:

FCC-FB-APC

As above, courses are also sometimes phased out as a result of a course review, in which case the Review Document plays the same role as a Phase Out Document, with the same approval pathway.

Suspension of intake to courses

Sometimes a Faculty or the University may wish to continue offering a course, but not in a particular year. In this situation a suspension of intakes to the course may be approved. Suspensions of intake are approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), who may also refer such a request to the UCPC if desired.

Executive action

In each of the approval processes above, executive action may replace the standard approval pathway. Most commonly a Faculty will have prepared a subject or course document, and wishes to have it approved quickly. In this case, the Dean is authorised to override the Faculty-based committee approvals. Presiding Officers of higher committees, such as the UCPC and APC, also have authority to executively approve proposals before these committees.

Timelines

Because the University has various administrative functions surrounding course and subject offering, each of the approval pathways above is associated with an approval timeline. For example, new courses must be approved by a certain date to allow marketing materials to be produced, and learning materials to be created and distributed. Courses to be phased out must

follow the phase out timeline, to allow sufficient time for consultation with affected parties. Etc.

Advertising of courses

The advertising of courses requires specific approvals. For example, publication of course details in the UAC or VTAC guides requires that a course be fully approved according to the pathways described above. The UCPC has the authority to override some of these steps if it believes a course should be in these guides, but all relevant documentation has not yet been completed (in every case however the documentation must then be completed before the course or subject can be offered). Similarly course or subject details contained in the University Handbook must have followed the approval pathways above.

Nomenclature

Course nomenclature is determined within guidelines set by Academic Senate policy. Approved nomenclatures are kept in a Register, maintained by the Office of Academic Governance and published in the Academic Manual.

Shared courses (within CSU)

Where a course is shared by more than one Faculty, a 'host' Faculty is determined by the Faculties, or by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) when Faculties cannot resolve this issue.

Courses involving partners

Where a partner is involved in the development and/or delivery of a course, the same approval mechanisms apply as for a standalone CSU course. In other words, a Faculty cannot simply present a business case and contract for such an arrangement without also undertaking the approval documentation and processes described above. The UCPC oversees and approves all course partnership arrangements, including those with offshore partners. There may be the additional requirement of approval by the partnership institution.

The main partnership types recognised by the Academic Senate are:

Licensed program – the partner delivers the CSU course. The award is a CSU award, and the partner need not be an award-conferring institution.

Cooperative program – the partner contributes significant intellectual content to a CSU course, and may also be involved in its delivery OR the award is that of the partner, and CSU contributes to the intellectual content and/or delivery of that course.

Integrated program – CSU and an award-conferring partner each contribute to the content of the course. The student receives both the CSU and partner award upon completion.

Joint program – CSU and an award-conferring partner each contribute part of the content of a single course. The award is a joint award of the two institutions i.e. the testamur is a joint testamur, containing the seal of both institutions.

Two key initiatives are relevant in the context of course and subject design and approval processes. These represent major new quality enhancement activities. The first, the CSU Degree Initiative aims to fulfil the various generic commitments made about undergraduate degrees in CSU's plans for the period 2007-2011. Through the planning process conducted

over the years 2005-2006, widespread consultation within the university produced a set of plans that enshrined commitments to ensure that CSU graduates would be people who:

- have been prepared for citizenship,
- understand the culture and history of Indigenous communities,
- are culturally competent,
- have been taught about sustainability in financial, social and environmental senses by an
 - internationalised curriculum
 - that is strong in the teaching of ethics,
 - has an enhanced clinical/practicum strand
 - and provides opportunities for international experience.

Alongside these desiderata is the need to ensure CSU graduates have “employability skills”: effective communication; analytical skills and critical and reflective judgement; problem solving; team work; work planning.

One way of understanding the Degree Initiative is as a new approach to what were formerly called “Graduate Attributes”. Rather than Graduate Attributes being competencies that Course Reviews ‘find’ in CSU’s courses, the degree Initiative will institute a more reflexive process of curriculum discussion that guides a more deliberative and better-resourced process of course design and development. This will mean that the capabilities we have decided should typify CSU graduates are prospectively built into courses (where they do not already exist) over time.

During 2008 and 2009, a method for implementing these commitments will be worked out in consultation with the CSU community. The success of the Degree Initiative will depend on developing over time a general understanding and widespread acceptance of its goals, processes and concepts by CSU staff and students.

The second, the CSU subject initiative seeks to define a CSU subject. This initiative is currently being developed by a Working Party of the Academic Senate and will be included when it is finalised.

Process for Revision of Academic Policy

Academic Senate policy is subject to regular, ongoing review and amendment as required and, from time to time, Academic Senate identifies specific academic policies to be subjected to major review to ensure their currency and compliance with legislative requirements.

In accordance with the “Model for academic governance and processes” (Section 5), Academic Senate policy documents (including the academic regulations) are currently being revised to remove operational, process-level detail from them as much as possible. The Office of Academic Governance has now made arrangements for this process to commence and it is anticipated that the revision of the academic regulations and Academic Senate policies will be completed by the end of 2009.

The framework for the revision of the regulations and policies is as follows;

- the current regulation/policy will be separated into policy, procedures, guidelines etc and any issues or inconsistencies in the regulation/policy identified at this time will be noted,
- the revised regulation/policy will be submitted to the APC for checking and consideration of the issues or inconsistencies identified and recommendation to the Academic Senate,
- the final draft of the revised regulation/policy will be submitted to Academic Senate for approval.

14. Academic Risk, Standards and Benchmarking

The concept of ‘academic risk’, and its management, has entered the quality lexicon and a definition of ‘academic risk’ has been advanced by Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA), viz. academic risk is ‘the chance of something happening that will have an impact on the achievement of academic objectives’.

AUQA has developed a [Framework for Risk Assessment](#). The generic framework identifies indicative risks for the broad areas of academic activity such as learning and teaching and research. AUQA and good practice require that each institution has its own risk assessment framework, specific to its context and that addresses risks and mitigating strategies. Some examples of academic risk that have been cited by AUQA are:

1. Curriculum is not up to date
2. Assessment tasks do not measure relevant learning
3. Inconsistent levels of quality and academic standards across campuses and locations
4. Provision of inadequate levels of support and service for teachers and students offshore
5. New course proposals driven by opportunity rather than strategic direction
6. Lack of professional development for sessional staff
7. Inadequate space for research students to permit academic interaction
8. Greater attention to administration and facilities than to teaching capacity
9. Competition for students – university’s distinctive features (‘brand’)

AUQA has a clear focus on both ‘academic standards’ and ‘external benchmarking’ of institutional outcomes and has defined a standard as “an agreed specification or other criterion used as a rule, guideline, or definition of a level of performance or achievement. The specification and use of standards helps to increase the reliability and the effectiveness of an application or service, and also assists in its evaluation or measurement”.¹²

Good practice and AUQA require that we are able to explain

- how we set standards;
- whether we have appropriate policies and processes in place;
- how we monitor the processes through appropriate (qualitative and quantitative) outcome measures; and

¹² Framework, for Standards, Evidence and Outcomes, AUQA document, http://www.auqa.edu.au/qualityaudit/auditmanuals/auditmanual_v5/?pageid=appendix_e

- what standards we achieve.

AUQA has developed a generic [Framework for Standards, Evidence and Outcomes](#) to assist institutions in this process.

The University Strategy 2007-2011 has as its primary aim the improvement of learning and teaching and research in the context of its mission to be a national university *for the professions*. The implementation of this strategy has seen a number of continuous improvements in learning and teaching, research and professional engagement. Clarity around the standards CSU wants and must achieve in order to succeed in its primary goal are currently being defined within the University. These standards are based on CSU's distinctive mission. They represent what CSU as a university wants to be in order to serve its communities, inland, professional, scholarly and international.

How we set and monitor standards varies according to the regulation area. Most regulations have standards included (amount and types of credit allowed, standards of assessment, standards for determining eligibility for admission, etc.). It is also important to recognise that the major sub-committees of Academic Senate (Academic Programs Committee, Learning and Teaching Committee, Research Management Committee, Board of Graduate Studies, Faculty Boards and Assessment Committees) also evaluate the matters before them according to standards explicit in the regulations and also using some more implied standards.

It is with external comparison and benchmarking where CSU and all Australian institutions were deemed to be lacking by AUQA Cycle 1. Australia does not have the tradition of benchmarking that has occurred in the UK. There are reasons for this but lack of funding provision and, historically, distance between institutions have been issues. Nevertheless, we do benchmark against legislation such as AQF and various guidelines. These provide external reference points that preclude a culture that is not venturing beyond its own environment. In relation to benchmarking we share the concerns expressed by Stella and Woodhouse that many of the statements by Australian universities about their benchmarking strategies “are aspirational, ad hoc and very new. A clear picture of why institutions have initiated certain benchmarking strategies does not emerge. Many initiatives seem to have an emphasis on demonstrating reputation rather than learning and improving from those initiatives. The audit reports comment that many benchmarking activities appear not to extend beyond quoting performance indicators, in particular, without any interpretation and adaptation. Aside from monitoring of CEQ, GDS and Rodski data, some universities make very little use of external points of reference in monitoring their performance and there is a lack of qualitative monitoring in some areas.”

It appears that benchmarking is now a part of the higher education landscape for, as expressed by Stella and Woodhouse “when benchmarking is carefully used to help institutions improve their processes and systems in order to better achieve their educational mission, institutions are equipped to defend against external goals and standards that could be dysfunctional and even destructive to an institution. Acknowledging this point of view, this analysis considers benchmarking as one of the tools for demonstrating achievement of appropriate standards against external reference points and for making further improvements.”

A number of universities within Australia have now adopted some version of the typology of Stella and Woodhouse ([A Stella & D Woodhouse Benchmarking in Australian Higher Education A Thematic Analysis of AUQA Audit Reports Oct 2007](#)) that incorporates:

- sector benchmarking, in which a benchmarking partner(s) in the same sector is selected and the comparison extends to information known only within the organisations; the benchmarking may be ‘whole-of-organisation’ or focus on some function or aspect
- generic benchmarking, which involves comparisons of processes and practices regardless of the industry or field of the partner (e.g. comparing the processes for turning round assignments for distance education students with an analogous process in a totally different industry)
- best practice benchmarking, where the interested party selects a comparator believed to be best in the area to be benchmarked.

There is potential concern that benchmarking will become the “gold standard” for performance and impair creativity, innovation and distinctiveness.

Reports and compliance data

From the above analysis, it is clear that Academic Senate must fulfil several roles. At the highest level it must function as a governance body and provide a framework for setting academic policy. In order to achieve its QA role, Academic Senate must set standards and monitor adherence to the standards. To achieve these objectives Academic Senate must have an effective reporting process involving provision of reports and compliance data to Senate on an annual reporting basis.

A detailed list of reports and compliance data to be provided to Senate is currently being developed. When finalised, these reports will be included in the annual calendar of business for the Academic Senate.

15. Academic Freedom

Academic freedom is topical and the Australian Senate¹³ has moved to establish a standing committee to measure the “level of academic freedom in school and higher education”. By November 2008 the committee is to report on “ideological, political and cultural prejudice in the teaching senior secondary education and of courses at Australian universities”. At the same time the Committee of Chairs of Academic Boards/Senates has considered the need/desirability of a national protocol covering academic freedom. The importance of academic freedom was recognized by South Africa when it was enshrined in its constitution. New Zealand, England and Ireland have academic freedom statements in their national education legislation.

The responsibility of Charles Sturt University to maintain and extend academic inquiry or academic freedom is a fundamental responsibility established under the University statute. The right to freedom of intellectual inquiry and associated responsibilities are referred to in:

¹³ The Australian 25 June 2008

- the CSU [Code of Conduct](#) for Staff (Section 3)
- the Generic Responsibilities of CSU Staff (Section 4)
- the Policy on Standards, Expectations and Qualifications of Academic Staff (Section 3)
- the CSU policy on the governance and management of media relations within the University

Awareness of policies on freedom of intellectual inquiry is supported by the CSU Induction and Development Program, the Academic Staff Probation Policy and Academic Staff Probation Procedures.

The CSU Enterprise Agreement 2005-2008 (Section 10 and availability of agreement covered in Section 11) also refers to academic freedom and associated rights and duties. A proposed policy on academic freedom will be considered by Academic Senate and Council and will be included here when it is approved.

16. Student Charter

The CSU Student Charter has been developed to help students understand what it means to be a student member of the CSU community, including the expectations students and the University may have of each other.

The Student Charter can be accessed [here](#).

17. Review Process

As part of its commitment to good governance and using the principles established under PIRI (Planning, Implement, Review, Improve), the Audit Committee of Academic Senate conducts a review every five years. Whilst there are many reasons for such a review, including external factors such as audits by AUQA, the main purpose is to ensure that the Senate is providing high quality academic leadership to CSU. The first of the formal reviews occurred in 2007; it was conducted by the whole of Academic Senate and was summarised in a paper presented to and approved by Academic Senate at its December 2007 meeting. This paper, “Role and Functions of Academic Senate in a Changing Environment” identified a number of specific actions and a timeline for their implementation that can be accessed [here](#). The process has continued through 2008 and will conclude in early 2009. Full implementation will be achieved by the beginning of 2010.

This document is the culmination of the 2007 review. An important aspect of the review was to raise the profile of Senate and awareness of its role as the key academic body responsible for “fostering collegial discussion and debate and in leading academic policy development and monitoring.”¹⁴ In furtherance of this goal, Academic Senate has produced a number of [brochures for display](#) on university noticeboards and the Presiding Officer is now actively engaged in the induction of new University Council members, speaks regularly at various University Fora (VCF, Professorial, Heads of School, Course Coordinators) and School assemblies. The next review will be conducted in 2013 by the Audit Committee of Academic Senate. In preparation for this review, it will be timely for Academic Senate to review the

¹⁴ AUQA Cycle 1 recommendation 4.

membership, chair, terms of reference, and reporting criteria for each Committee to ensure that current arrangements remain best practice.

In addition to its self-review process, Academic Senate is involved as a central player in the regular reviews conducted by Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA). The AUQA Cycle 1 review of Charles Sturt University was conducted in 2004 and Cycle 2 visits to the institution are scheduled for October 2007. The documentation associated with Cycle 1 is located [here](#). The university received a number of commendations, recommendations and affirmations that were included in the Audit Report located here. CSU has addressed the issues in the Cycle 1 Audit Report in its Progress Report.

In preparation for the Cycle 2 Audit CSU completed and submitted a [desk top review](#) of its operations against criteria in the National Protocols A and D. This link also includes CSU's most recent Institutional Assessment Framework Portfolio and a copy of the current University Strategy 2007-2011. Although the Cycle 2 audit will be similar to the Audit CSU experienced in 2004, there will be some key differences, these being:

- An assessment of the progress made in addressing a sample of Recommendations and Affirmations from Cycle 1;
- Review of significant changes to quality assurance and enhancement processes since Cycle 1;
- Explicit assessment of the extent that institutional outcomes and standards are being achieved;
- Explicit consideration of the extent to which requirements of external reference points are being met; and
- Greater depth in the analysis of two themes, one of these being "Internationalisation".

18. Significant Quality Enhancement activities

Significant activities undertaken by Academic Senate since 2004 are identified as follows:

2005

- Introduced new Academic Progress Regulations following an extensive review of student academic progress and exclusion at CSU (conducted in 2004)
- Approved changes to the course approval policy which delegate to the Faculties authority for the approval of course documentation (with final approval for courses remaining with the Academic Senate , through the Academic Programs Committee)
- Conducted a review of generic skills and graduate attributes which enhanced CSU's understanding of graduate attributes and established a framework for the embedding of graduate attributes in course and subject design and delivery.

2006

- Approved the revised policy for residential schools;
- Approved the policy for coursework graduate and postgraduate awards and subject outlines which defines such programs at CSU, including how they

articulate with coursework Masters programs and clarifies the subject levels to apply to such courses;

- Approved a policy for variants to existing courses;
- Established a register of course reviews conducted in accordance with the schedule of course reviews;
- Reviewed the membership and terms of reference of the Academic Senate and recommended, for approval by the Council, the [Governance \(Academic Senate\) Rule 2006](#).

2007

- Established an indigenous education working group to develop and recommend a CSU Indigenous Education Strategy and then endorsed the recommendations of the working group which included a reconciliation statement and key objectives for indigenous education at CSU;
- Approved the integration of the CSU subject outline into CSU Interact in order to provide an opportunity for dynamic engagement between students and the University & the provision of highly accessible information in relation to subjects and courses;
- Approved the discussion paper “Role and Functions of Academic Senate in a Changing Environment” which contains recommendations about the practices and operation of the Academic Senate;
- Established the CSU Institutional Repository Policy;
- Reviewed subject coding at CSU;
- Endorsed the establishment of the CSU Degree initiative which will review CSU’s current curriculum structure for undergraduate degrees.

2008

[Further information about these significant activities is available here.](#)