

WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY



ACADEMIC SENATE OUTCOMES Meeting 26/03

Meeting 26/03 of the Academic Senate, Western Sydney University was held on Friday 3 July 2026 at 9:30 am, at Parramatta South and via zoom.

INTRODUCTION

Academic Senate is the peak academic body of the University, and a forum for academic debate, policy development and decision-making. It is a standing committee of the Board of Trustees and reports to and advises the Executive and the Board on academic matters. It monitors academic standards, values, academic risk management and quality assurance as well as collaborations and partnerships. Senate also accredits and approves courses, programs and subjects and approves the conferral of academic awards. **For more information, agendas and minutes of Senate meetings:**

https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/about_uws/leadership/academic_senate.

Following is a list of outcomes and key topics for information and discussion within your organisational unit.

STRATEGIC ITEMS

Research Strategy

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) advised that the Research Strategy has been designed as an internally focused framework to achieve the University's strategic plan, Western 2020. Professor Anderson highlighted the 40:40:20 model as the University's key investment in research during the next 3-4 years on which the strategy was built. The strategy was designed to recalibrate and develop the University's research by building the foundations of research support, activating researchers and research culture and shaping future research foci. The strategy would be implemented through annual operational planning and targeted investment decisions. Senate highlighted the necessity to protect the 40% research workload, given its fundamental role in the strategy, and suggested a regular review of workloads with a view to ensure that academic staff were able to spend two days a week on research and that other activities would not curtail that time. Senate was advised that the University was firmly committed to the 40:40:20 model and that after the 2026 transition year, workload policies should reflect this new model. In response to a question about the role of commercialisation in the strategy, Senate was told that while commercialisation of research was ongoing, it was not formally part of the strategy, as the creation of the necessary systems needed to be prioritised. Senate also asked how the strategy represented a paradigm shift capable of achieving the University's ambitious goals. The advice was that building the new systems and focusing on the basics was a crucial paradigm shift for the University.

Shorter-Form Learning: A New Approach Replacing Microcredentials

Academic Senate was advised that the University earlier this year had decided to pause the creation of microcredentials after a review found that the anticipated level of engagement had not been achieved. A revised strategic direction was being developed, in which The College was to play a more central role, and where AI-assisted development was being enacted. Senate expressed concerns about the lack of wider communication of this decision and consultation within the academic community and wondered whether there was a need to consider transition arrangements, and whether it had been considered that some microcredentials were essential curriculum components, e.g. in Education. In response, it was stated that there would not be any new intakes but provisions for enrolled participants, that there was a lack of interest from the community, but that cases of essential microcredentials would be exempted. Senate also considered lessons from the review, including challenges relating to marketing, student demand and sector-wide declines in enrolments, and noted that ongoing market analysis and consultation with industry and businesses across Western Sydney would inform the future direction of the University's approach to microcredentials. It was also emphasised that AI-assisted development would require expert academic and industry oversight, and governance.

REPORTS AND UPDATES:

Research quality (Scorecard)

The scorecard contained information about currently held and submitted research grants, showing that the number of Discovery Projects submitted to the Australian Research Council (ARC) in 2026 had increased by about 50%. The card also showed a notable drop in Field Weighted Citation Impact (FWCI) across a number of universities with Western experiencing a more pronounced downturn that was linked to the number of publications submitted, and possibly an artefact of a more frequent reporting and also because 2026 is still ongoing. The discussion also acknowledged that HASS disciplines are disadvantaged by FWCI as a measure and the creation of discipline-based measures over the next three years was proposed as a task for disciplines across the University. The data also showed that the number of apportioned publications has not varied significantly since 2020. The scorecard also reported on HDR data, showing a total HDR load of 1152 EFTSL, which was the highest in five years. Data for HDR completions was limited to 2024 as the most recent with 245, with completion figures varying significantly across a 5-year period. HDR retention levels between 2020 and 2024 fluctuated considerably across academic units. The discussion noted a shift in the University's HDR strategy aiming at a reduced HDR target headcount of 820 for 2027 with only a modest increase to 830 in 2030. In response, it was noted that this was submitted as part of the University's mission-based compact submitted to the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC), reflecting a shift towards higher quality supervision and HDR projects with more investment. It was also acknowledged that the research quality reporting needs further refinement in terms of currency of data, interpretation and analysis as well as in data presentation, while at the same time underscoring that this level reporting was a significant step forward for the University.

Student Report

Academic Senate received an update on challenges relating to student placements in the Master of Social Work program and noted that a discussion paper was being developed to provide a broader institutional perspective on placement availability across placement-based disciplines. Senate acknowledged the significant impact of placement delays on students, particularly international students, and recognised the efforts of placement teams in substantially reducing the number of students awaiting placements. Discussion highlighted the systemic nature of placement shortages across the sector and the need to strengthen external partnerships, strategic engagement with placement providers, and institution-wide approaches to placement management while maintaining appropriate governance and quality assurance arrangements. Senate also received updates from the Western Sydney University

Student Union and the Student Representative Council on student engagement activities and emerging student concerns, including placements, communication, accommodation, campus facilities and wellbeing.

Transnational Academic Governance

Academic Senate was advised that the discussion initially arose from a review of academic governance arrangements for transnational education (TNE) and was subsequently expanded to encompass third-party providers and educational delivery partners. Following broader governance and organisational reviews, the University established a TNE governance framework, revised reporting arrangements, and updated the terms of reference for the Third-Party Provider Committee as a subcommittee of the Senate Education Committee. In discussion, members sought clarification on support for scholarly activity among staff engaged by third-party providers and were advised that providers report on scholarly activity to meet regulatory and accreditation requirements, with opportunities for collaboration facilitated through academic schools and faculties. Academic Senate also noted the distinct oversight responsibilities of the TNE Steering Committee, which oversees financial, commercial and performance matters, and the Third-Party Provider Committee, which focuses on academic quality and governance. Senate noted the report and the established governance and reporting arrangements.

Questions on Notice: Program Review Cycle, Academic Oversight and Compliance

Academic Senate considered a Question on Notice regarding the pause in the program review cycle and its implications for compliance with the Higher Education Standards Framework. Members expressed concern about the University's ability to demonstrate ongoing compliance with requirements for course review, monitoring and academic quality assurance, particularly given the absence of review processes overseen through established academic governance mechanisms, and noted that Academic Senate had not previously considered the decision to pause the review cycle. Senate was advised of the Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education and Students' commitment to strengthening academic governance and aligning review processes with the Higher Education Standards Framework, supported by ongoing policy and systems development. While detailed responses were not available at the meeting, Academic Senate requested a comprehensive report for the next meeting addressing compliance during the paused review period, the rationale for the pause, consultation and oversight arrangements, and a roadmap for resuming regular program reviews, including consideration of the proposed move from a five-year to a seven-year review cycle and its implications for academic assurance and compliance monitoring.

APPROVALS:

Proposal-20347 Suspension and Discontinuation of School of Engineering, Design and Built Environment Programs

It was resolved (AS 26/02:03):

That the Academic Senate Committee considered proposal 20347 and:

- a) noted the programs for Suspension and Discontinuation, and*
- b) approved the transition arrangements.*

- 3703 Master of Building Surveying
- 3708 Master of Bushfire Protection
- 3730 Bachelor of Industrial Design
- 3782 Bachelor of Construction Management Advanced (Honours)
- 3801 Bachelor of Building Design Management (Honours)

Proposal-21342 2826 Juris Doctor & New Subjects**It was resolved (AS 26/03:04):**

That the Academic Senate Committee considered proposal 21342 and approved the addition of the program offering.

Proposal-21532 3762 Bachelor of Construction Management (Honours) & Related Programs, Foss and Subjects**It was resolved (AS 26/04:05):**

That the Academic Senate Committee considered proposal 21532, and;

- a) approved the new program, and;*
- b) noted the program discontinuation, and;*
- c) approved the transition arrangements.*

3762 Bachelor of Construction Management (Honours)
3806 Bachelor of Construction Management (exit only)
3692 Bachelor of Construction Technology

Proposal-19813 Master of Creative Music Therapy**It was resolved (AS 26/03:06):**

That the Academic Senate Committee considered proposal 19813, and;

- a) approved the new program, and;*
- b) noted the program discontinuation, and;*
- c) approved the transition arrangements.*

1953 Master of Creative Music Therapy
1650 Master of Creative Music Therapy

Proposal-19417 Master of Education**It was resolved (AS 26/03:07):**

That the Academic Senate Committee considered proposal 19417 and approves the new program and discontinuation of programs.

Scholarships**It was resolved (AS 26/03:08):**

The Academic Senate reviewed and approved the proposed new scholarships, the amendment to the Scholarship Continuing Eligibility Requirements to Existing Scholarships, amendments to existing scholarships, new donor funded prizes and amendments to existing donor funded prizes for immediate execution.

New Scholarships

- Wilma Legacy Scholarship for Women

Amendments to Existing Scholarships

- Aunty Kerrie Doyle Scholarship in Medicine and Nursing & Midwifery
- Elizabeth Dibbs Law & Social Justice Scholarship
- Elizabeth Dibbs Performing Arts Scholarship
- AirTrunk STEM Scholarships

New Donor Funded Prizes

- Leo Cussen Prize for Professional Responsibility and Legal Ethics
- MistryFallahi Moot Cup

Amendments to Existing Prizes

- APA Physiotherapy prize
- Oxford University Press Award for Legal Analysis and Critique

Update to Standing Orders

Academic Senate considered and approved the revised Academic Senate Standing Orders, noting that the document had not been comprehensively updated since 2018. The review modernised the Standing Orders through plain English drafting, improved structure and the inclusion of an index. Academic Senate discussed and endorsed amendments to the provisions governing e-meetings, including aligning voting requirements with those applying at face-to-face meetings and clarifying circumstances in which matters are referred to a subsequent meeting. Additional amendments were approved to require reporting by the Chair when e-meeting voting periods are shortened or extended and to confirm anonymous (blind) voting as the standard approach for Academic Senate decisions. Members noted that the review was overdue and represented an important update to Academic Senate governance arrangements.

It was resolved (AS 26/03:09):

That Academic Senate approved the revised Academic Senate - Standing Orders to become effective as on the date of its approval, subject to the following changes:

- *Clause 2.3d – inclusion of clarification that where there has been a shortening of the e-meeting's duration, the Chair needs to provide the reason for this at the next Academic Senate meeting.*
- *Clause 2.3f – inclusion of clarification that where there has been an extension of the e-meeting's duration, the Chair needs to provide the reason for this at the next Academic Senate meeting.*
- *Clause 2.3g– Where a resolution cannot be determined due to quorum or voting requirements not being met, the matter will be referred to a subsequent Academic Senate meeting.*
- *Clause 2.8 All voting be anonymous.*

Prepared by: Professor Robert Mailhammer, Chair, Academic Senate, and Ms Georgia Vasiliadis, Senior Governance Officer

Date: 9 July 2026

If you require any further information on any of these items, including relevant papers, or if you would like to attend a meeting of Academic Senate as an observer, please contact the Chair of Academic Senate, Professor Robert Mailhammer

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