

## **Academic Board Self Assessment, 2009**

### **Summary of Results**

In May 2009, Academic Board endorsed an annual self-review of the Board. In November an anonymous self-assessment survey was circulated to all 87 Board members. 51 responses (59%) were received. Thirty-two respondents were new (had been Board members for less than 3 years), while 19 were more experienced.

The survey consisted of 20 structured evaluative questions which sought responses on a 6 point Likert scale (a 5 point grading scale going from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree', the sixth point recording 'don't know'). Very few 'don't knows' were recorded. Additional space was provided for several open-ended questions and comments.

Questions were grouped in five sections:

- **Discharge of responsibilities** (alignment with strategy; promoting teaching and learning and research; and developing and monitoring academic policy)
- **Organisation** (membership; meetings; papers; and reports)
- **Stakeholder relationships** (relationship to policy and sub-committees; communication to the broader academic community of staff and students)
- **Operational matters** (performance of Chair and secretariat; the operation of the Board as a group; discussion quality and participation)
- **Overall evaluation** (open-ended questions asking about the best and worst aspects of the Board, and seeking suggested changes)

Raw data is presented at the end. Key results include the following:

#### **1. Discharge of responsibilities**

Support was greatest for the propositions that the Board performs the functions in its Terms of Reference and that its activities align with the strategic plan. Support was weaker for the propositions that it promotes Teaching and Learning and Research satisfactorily and that it develops and monitors academic policies effectively.

While generally positive, these results indicate concerns about the Board's promotion of academic objectives and its ability to develop and monitor policy..

## **2. Organisational matters**

Between three quarters and four-fifths of respondents are happy with the representativeness of Board membership, frequency of meetings, agenda structure, and standard of submissions/papers. Best received is the Vice-Chancellor's report which 90% of respondents considered informative or useful.

Board members are broadly content with its organisation.

## **3. Stakeholder relationships**

While two-thirds of respondents agreed they understood the relationship between the Board and its committees, fewer agreed that these committees gave sufficient breadth and depth to academic governance. Worse still, a bare majority agreed that committee reports to the Board provided enough detail for informed discussion. Even more problematic is the Board's inability to communicate its decisions to staff and students as a whole. Less than a quarter of respondents consider it effective..

On balance, stakeholder relationships are seen to be poor.

## **4. Operational Matters**

Respondents were happy with the performance of the Chair and Secretariat (98% and 92% respectively agreeing or agreeing strongly that they discharged their duties appropriately). Yet only about half agreed that the Board worked well as a group and that there was appropriate discussion on each item. Fewer felt encouraged to contribute to discussion, or were happy with their own contributions at the Board.

There is concern over the Board's role as a debating forum.

## **Overall evaluation**

- **Best** aspects of the Board's operations (selected highlights)
  - Discussion panels
  - VC's report
  - Excellent Chair and secretarial support
- **Worst** aspects of the Board's operations (selected lowlights)
  - Most serious business passed without comment through committee reports
  - Lack of discussion on some items
  - Size of the Board (though few would like it smaller)
  - Travel time from Bendigo
  - Physical arrangement of room
  - Tracking policy implementation

- **What changes** would you like to see
  - More discussion and reduce 'rubber stamping'
  - Videoconferencing
  - Allocate each member a 'watching brief' for a portfolio
  - Full debates on every new policy
  - A major review of the Board which ensures the protection of quality assurance on academic affairs, but which dispenses with the need for Academic Board

While respondents were generally positive about the Board, attention is needed to improve:

- Quality and inclusivity of debate
- Monitoring policy
- Relations with policy committees and sub committees
- Communication of decisions to the general academic community
- Videoconferencing
- Room layout

Malcolm Rimmer

18 January 2010

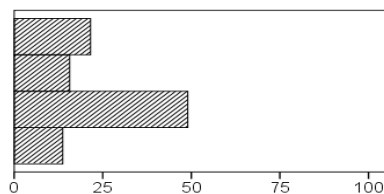
# La Trobe University

## Academic Board Self Assessment 2009

### MEMBERSHIP

*I have been on the Academic Board for:*

	Count	%
More than 5 years	11	21.6%
4-5 years	8	15.7%
1-3 years	25	49.0%
Less than 1 year	7	13.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	
<b>Average</b>	<b>2.45</b>	
<b>Stdev</b>	<b>0.986</b>	

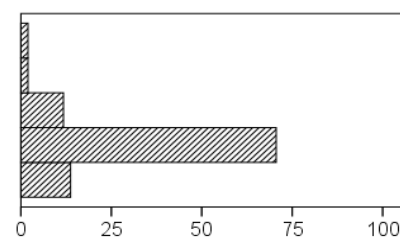


### RESPONSIBILITIES

**Please indicate your level of agreement to the following statements:**

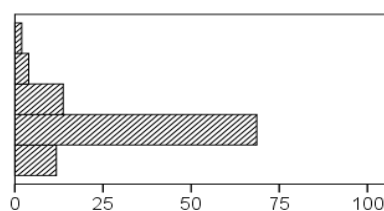
*During 2009, the Board performed its functions as set out in the Terms of Reference satisfactorily...*

	Count	%
Strongly Disagree	1	2.0%
Disagree	1	2.0%
Neutral	6	11.8%
Agree	36	70.6%
Strongly Agree	7	13.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	
<b>Average</b>	<b>2.10</b>	
<b>Stdev</b>	<b>0.806</b>	



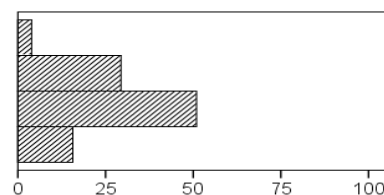
*During 2009, the Boards's activities aligned with the University Strategic Plan...*

	Count	%
Don't know	1	2.0%
Disagree	2	3.9%
Neutral	7	13.7%
Agree	35	68.6%
Strongly Agree	6	11.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	
<b>Average</b>	<b>2.18</b>	
<b>Stdev</b>	<b>0.842</b>	



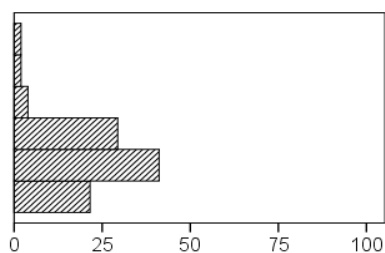
*During 2009, the Board promoted Teaching & Learning and Research satisfactorily...*

	Count	%
Disagree	2	3.9%
Neutral	15	29.4%
Agree	26	51.0%
Strongly Agree	8	15.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	
<b>Average</b>	<b>2.22</b>	
<b>Stdev</b>	<b>0.757</b>	



*During 2009, the Board developed and monitored academic policies effectively...*

	Count	%
Don't know	1	2.0%
Strongly disagree	1	2.0%
Disagree	2	3.9%
Neutral	15	29.4%
Agree	21	41.2%
Strongly Agree	11	21.6%
Total	51	
Average	2.29	
Stdev	1.045	

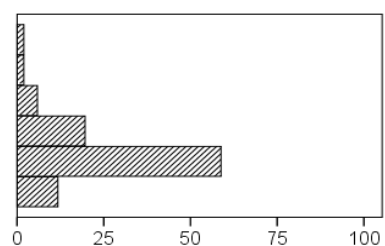


## ORGANISATIONAL MATTERS

**Please indicate your level of agreement to the following statements.**

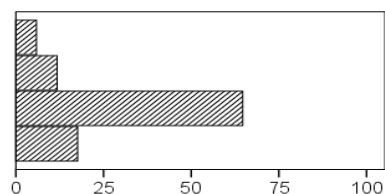
*Academic Board has served the University well...*

	Count	%
Don't know	1	2.0%
Strongly disagree	1	2.0%
Disagree	3	5.9%
Neutral	10	19.6%
Agree	30	58.8%
Strongly Agree	6	11.8%
Total	51	
Average	2.33	
Stdev	0.973	



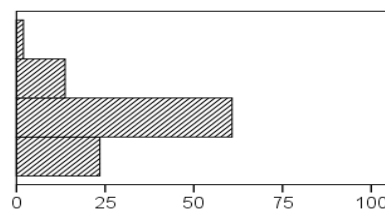
*The 2009 membership of the Board provided appropriate representation from across the University...*

	Count	%
Disagree	3	5.9%
Neutral	6	11.8%
Agree	33	64.7%
Strongly Agree	9	17.6%
Total	51	
Average	2.06	
Stdev	.732	

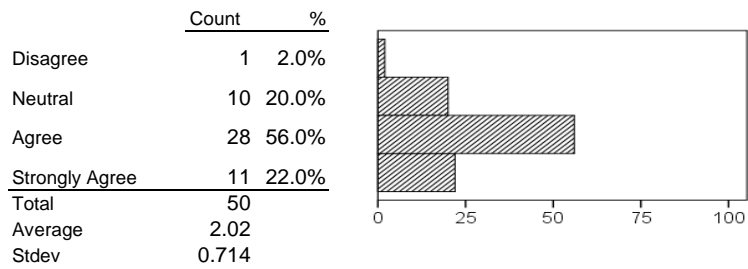


*The Board met frequently enough to perform its functions (it met 8 times during 2009)...*

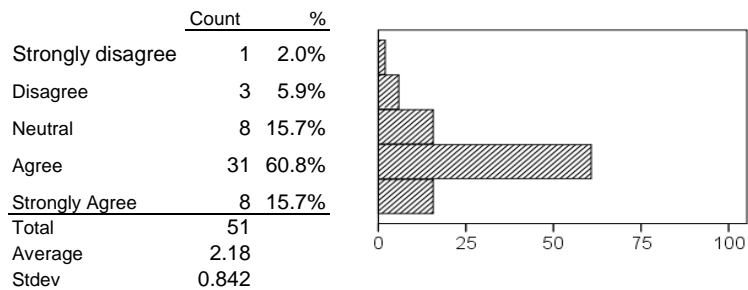
	Count	%
Disagree	1	2.0%
Neutral	7	13.7%
Agree	31	60.8%
Strongly Agree	12	23.5%
Total	51	
Average	1.94	
Stdev	0.676	



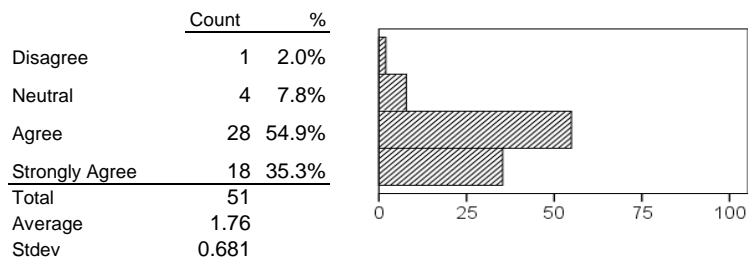
*The structure of the Board's agenda was satisfactory...*



*The standard of submissions/attached papers was satisfactory...*



*The Vice-Chancellor's report was informative and useful...*

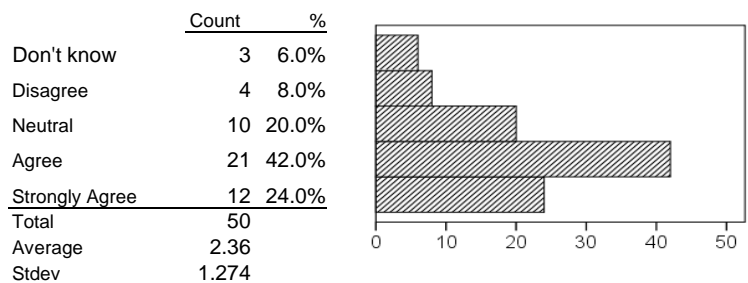


## STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

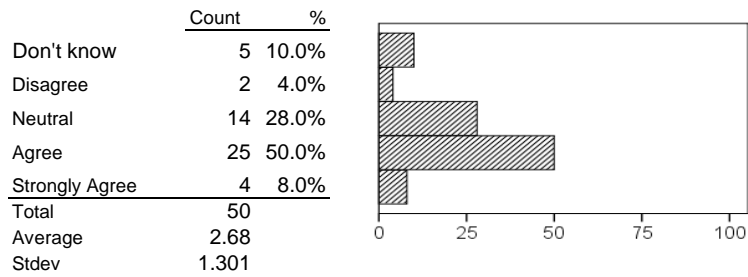
**Please reflect on how the Board operated during 2009, in addressing its broader stakeholder obligations.**

**Please indicate your level of agreement to the following statements.**

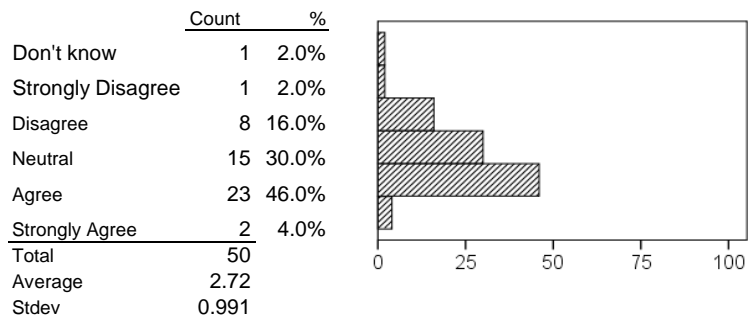
*I understand the relationship between Academic Board and its policy committee and sub-committees...*



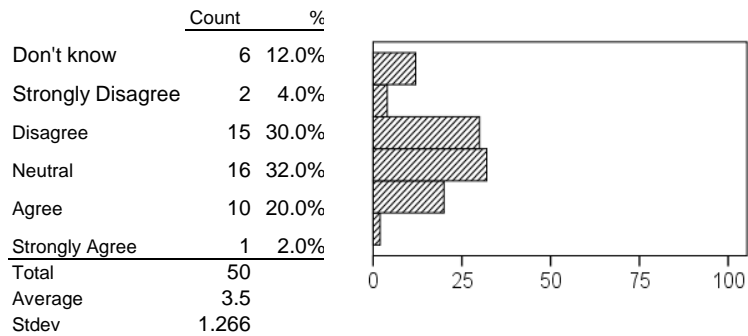
*The number and composition of policy committee and sub-committees provide sufficient breath and depth to academic governance...*



*The reports from policy committee and sub-committees of Academic Board provide enough details for informed discussion...*



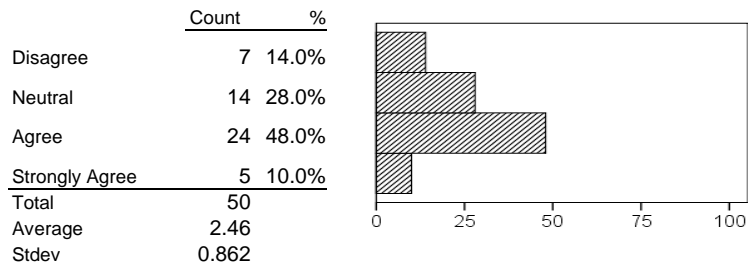
*The Board communicates its decisions effectively to staff and students...*



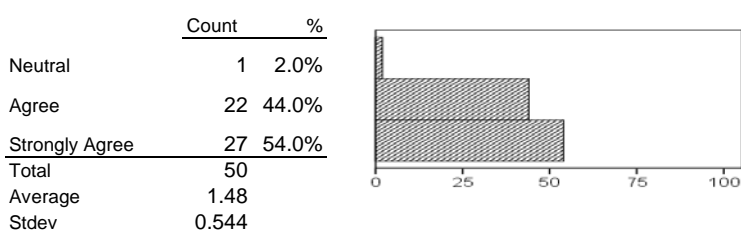
## OPERATIONAL MATTERS

**Please indicate your level of agreement to the following statements.**

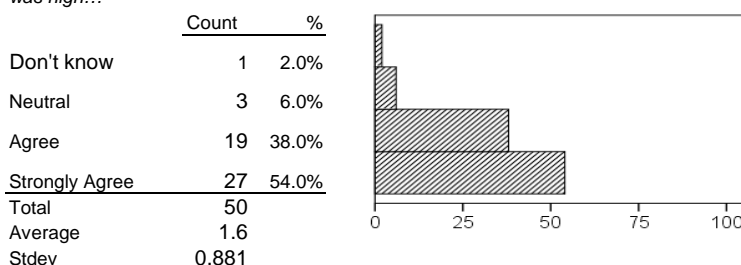
*During 2009, the Board worked well as a group...*



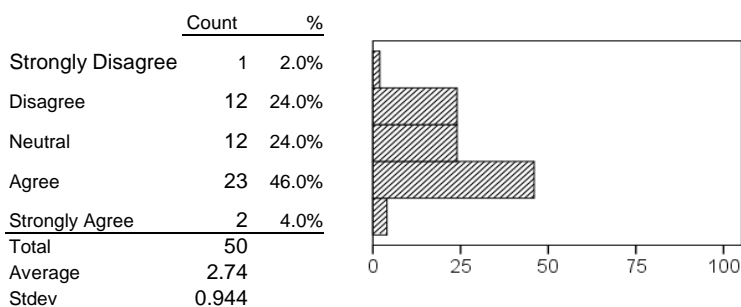
*During 2009, the roles and responsibilities of the Chair were discharged appropriately...*



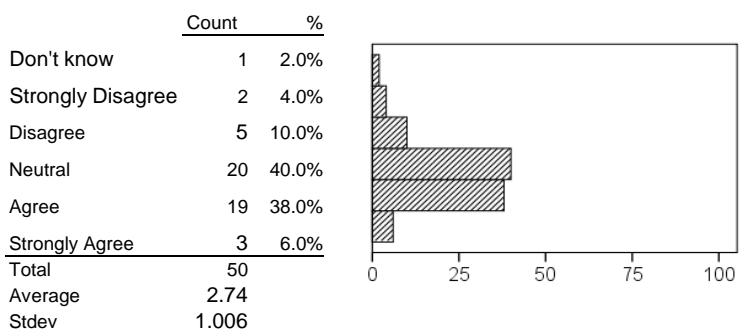
*The standard of Secretariat support to Academic Board and its policy committee was high...*



*During 2009, the level of discussion on each item was appropriate...*



*I felt encouraged to contribute to discussion during Board meetings...*



*I am satisfied with my own contributions at Board meetings...*

