



ACADEMIC BOARD

Confirmed

Minutes of the five hundred and nineteenth meeting of the Academic Board
held by Webinar and using Slido
on Wednesday 8 April 2020 at 9.30am.

- Present:** Professor Christine Bigby (Chair), Dr Hossam Aboel Naga, Dr Karen Anderson, Dr Sarah Anderson, Mrs Natasha Baker, Professor Joanna Barbousas, Professor Pauleen Bennett, Dr Fiona Bird, Professor Nick Bisley, Professor Irene Blackberry, Professor Nick Bond, Dr Narelle Brack, Dr Liz Branigan, Ms Stephanie Briese, Professor Lisa Brophy, Ms Elizabeth Capp, Professor Leeanne Carey, Professor Shaun Collin, Ms Megan Cook, Professor Richard Crosgrove, Professor Kay Crossley, Dr Suzanne Davies, Professor Clare D'Souza, Professor Louis De Koker, Professor John Dewar, Professor Amalia Di Iorio, Professor Susan Dodds, Professor Grant Drummond, Professor Christine East, Professor David Edvardsson, Professor Simon Evans, Dr Kelly Farrell, Dr Megan Fisher, Professor Ashley Franks, Professor Margarita Frederico, Dr Jennifer Frost, Professor Paul Gastin, Dr Anthony Gendall, Professor Richard Gray, Mr William Griffin, Professor Jane Hamilton, Professor Andrew Hill, Dr Emma Henderson, Dr Suzanne Hodgkin, Dr Conor Hogan, Ms Andrea Holman, Professor Katie Holmes, Professor Russell Hoyer, Dr Phillip Hughes, Professor Mark Hulett, Professor Patrick Humbert, Dr Lachlan James, Mr Greg Jamieson, Dr Markandeya Jois, Professor Petko Kalev, Professor Fiona Kelly, Dr Wade Kelly, Professor Amanda Kenny, Professor Stephen Kent, Professor Emmanuel Kuntsche, Professor Karl Landorf, Dr Lauren Lawson, Professor Helen Lee, Professor Nicki Lee, Professor Parshia Lee-Stecum, Dr James Leibold, Dr John Lesku, Professor Virginia Lewis, Professor George Liu, Professor Birgit Loch, Dr Clare McCausland, Professor Lisa McKenna, Dr Carol McKinstry, Professor Helen McLachlan, Dr Nicola McNeil, Professor Christopher Mackie, Ms Wendy Martinec, Professor James Maxwell, Dr Sarah Midford, Professor Robyn Murphy, Dr Deborah Neal, Dr Hien Nguyen, Professor Matthew Nicholson, Ms Olga Novak, Dr Jodi Oakman, Professor Jennifer Oates, Professor Suzanne O'Keefe, Dr Ross O'Shea, Dr Esin Ozdil, Professor Reinout Quispel, Professor Chris Pakes, Professor Paul Pigram, Professor Robert Pike, Professor Luke Prendergast, Professor Wenny Rahayu, Dr Sonia Reisenhofer, Professor Chris Roche, Dr Tania Romano Stasis, Ms Annabelle Romano, Ms Fiona Salisbury, Mr Abd Al Rahman Shehada, Professor Brian Smith, Ms Penny Smith, Professor Pamela Snow, Professor Richard Speed, Mr Robert Stephenson, Professor Gillian Sullivan Mort, Professor Marija Tabain, Professor Nicholas Taylor, Dr Guinever Threlkheld, Ms Tricia Van Der-Kuyp, Professor Jessica Vanderlelie, Dr Matthew Varley, Dr Suzane Vassallo, Dr Andrea Waling, Professor James Walker, Professor Bernadette Walker-Gibbs, Professor Yvonne Wells, Dr Laura Whitburn, Dr David Wilson, Professor Michael Woods, Professor Clare Wright, Professor Suzanne Young, and Professor Lawrie Zion.
- Secretariat:** Ms Sonia Nelson, Senior Executive Officer, Governance and Policy Services and Ms Julie Underwood, Executive Officer, Governance and Policy Services.
- In Attendance:** Ms Amanda Carr, Mr Alistair Duncan, Mr Mikee Elliott, Dr Richard Frampton, Ms Robyn Harris, Ms Natalie MacDonald, Mr Leon Morris, Ms Grace Sanna, Mr Mark Smith, Ms Bridget Soulsby, Dr Paul Ramage, Ms Fiona Reed, and Ms Anna Maria Schurmann.

Acknowledgement of Country: The Chair acknowledged and paid respects to the traditional custodians of the land upon which the La Trobe Campuses are situated. The Chair also acknowledged the loss of Professor Dennis McDermott, noting that Professor McDermott had had a significant impact on the University during his fourteen-month tenure with La Trobe.

PART A – PROCEDURAL MATTERS

ACTION

519.1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed members to the five hundred and nineteenth meeting of the Academic Board.

The Chair noted that given the number of members in attendance at the meeting (100+) it was not feasible to conduct the meeting interactively using Zoom. The meeting was conducted using Webinar, where only the panelists were visible and able to speak. Slido was used to take questions and comments from the floor.

Apologies were received from:

Professor Tony Bacic, Ms Vibi Bangaar, Dr Josephine Barbaro, Dr Melanie Bish, Professor Michael Clarke, Professor Jill Cook, Professor Simon Crowe, Dr Michael Dillon, Professor Cheryl Dissanayake, Professor Matthias Ernst, Mr Paul Farley, Dr Tracy Fortune, Professor Suzanne Fraser, Dr Emma Henderson, Professor Andy Herries, Mr Kaeden Jenkin, Professor Emi Kashima, Dr Marc Kvensakul, Professor Jo Lampert, Mr Fotios Lampropoulos, Professor Alex Maritz, Dr Rachel Martin, Professor Timothy Murray, Professor Mary Anne Noone, Professor Craig Patch, Dr Byron Perrin, Mr Peter Powell, Professor Jennie Pryce, Professor Axel Schulz, Professor Terri Seddon, Professor Jill Slay, Dr Rwth Stuckey, Professor Vijaya Sundararajan, Dr Terrie Waddell, Professor Karen Willis, and Ms Andrea Young.

519.2 Approval of the Agenda

The Board **resolved to approve** the agenda, as circulated (AB20/24(A)).

PART B – MATTERS FOR APPROVAL AND/OR DISCUSSION

519.3 Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Academic Board **confirmed** the minutes of the 518th meeting held on 11 March 2020 were a true and accurate record (AB20/23(M)).

519.4 Report of the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor John Dewar recapped the action the University has taken to date in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to follow Department of Health and Human Services advice.

The generosity of contributions to was highlighted. Contributions to the La Trobe Student Crisis Appeal have been generous. In one week of fundraising \$400,000 has been raised.

A number of issues were highlighted, including the complexity of student placements, particularly in health-related disciplines. The Provost of the College of Science, Health and Engineering will provide more information to the College on placements.

The Vice-Chancellor noted that of particular concern is the impact of the pandemic on the University's financial position. The Vice-Chancellor outlined the quantum of lost revenue and the range of options available to the University to address that. The Board was advised that it is estimated that the international student sector will take five years to recover and disruption to the pipeline of domestic students is also expected. Issues regarding year 12 results and admissions will need to be resolved and are currently being worked through by VTAC and the Department of Education.

A change in the University's marketing and branding to "The world is reshaping. So are we."

A Strategy Group has been formed to canvas options for semester 2, 2020. These include

- Reactivation of diploma level courses – short cycle industry relevant courses
- Redesign of the semester 2 calendar to support the above and maximise any potential for enrollments in the latter part of the semester.
- Reviewing pricing of postgraduate coursework and sub-bachelor courses together with how scholarships and fee discounts are used to attract students to these courses.

Members submitted questions and comments via Slido, responses from the Vice-Chancellor and Senior Executive Group clarified that:

- The approach to not recording fail grades for semester 1 or including those grades in WAM calculations applies to undergraduate *and* postgraduate coursework students. The aim of this approach is to mitigate the disruption to students' study by the pandemic situation generally, not just through the shift to online study.
- The University's reserves were discussed as well as possible options for adding to or maintaining those reserves (reducing expenditure, pausing capital expenditure, borrowing etc.). Significant cost savings will be needed for semester 2 as there will be no new enrolments from international students.
- It is difficult to quantify the nature of the University when the situation eases. It is likely to be smaller – with fewer students and staff.
- There will be further opportunities for staff to volunteer to stay in contact with students. Additional whole-of-student-population outreach campaigns will be required.
- There is no clear answer to how admissions will be undertaken for year 12 students with disrupted studies during this period. A VTAC Working Group is considering the issue. It is clear that there will need to be a sector wide approach to the issue.
- Work is being undertaken to gather university content to provide digital events in place of face to face events. Online events are included on the University's home page as are Ideas and Insights – care packages of stories from La Trobe to assist with isolation.

519.5 Suspension of Academic Board Meetings and Amendments to Membership – Academic Board Executive Committee

Academic Board **resolved to approve** the suspension of Academic Board meetings for a period of three months due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Academic Board **resolved to approve** the temporary expansion of the membership of Academic Board Executive Committee to include an additional eight members. The expanded membership to remain in place until meetings of Academic Board resume.

The Chair, Professor Christine Bigby, outlined the three key functions of Academic Board:

- To provide academic governance and quality assurance
- To act as a forum for discussion and debate
- To disseminate information.

The Chair indicated that while it may be possible to continue some of those functions through a webinar style meeting, for example disseminating information, discussion and debate cannot realistically be undertaken with over 100 participants electronically.

Accordingly, following discussion with the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor and by the Academic Board Executive Committee it is proposed that Academic Board meetings be suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions on gatherings and that Academic Board Executive Committee make decisions, under its delegation from Academic Board, during this time. To increase the representativeness of Academic Board Executive Committee, the membership will be increased by eight members.

The Chair advised that the Agenda and papers for Academic Board Executive Committee meetings would be shared in advance with Academic Board members to facilitate member input. At the time of the originally scheduled Academic Board meetings (i.e the second Wednesday of every month at 9.30 am), there will be an information session led by the Vice-Chancellor for members of Academic Board, using webinar format with Q&A via Slido.

Following comments and questions from members via Slido it was noted that the current meeting involves over 130 participants, in comparison to online tutorials which involve significantly less participants.

Additional comments and questions canvassed:

- The issue of accountability and whether accountability is reduced if the whole of Academic Board is not meeting. It was noted that papers will be made available to Academic Board members in advance and feedback and input on those papers could be provided to any member of the Academic Board Executive Committee prior to that Committee's meetings. Reports from Academic Board Executive Committee meetings will continue to be made to Academic Board members. Members would also be welcome to seek further information regarding those decisions.
- Clarification of whether Academic Board meetings would actually be suspended if meetings were held for updates from the Vice-Chancellor. The Chair advised that the Vice-Chancellor will utilise the scheduled meeting times, but the updates would not be Academic Board meetings. The Vice-Chancellor's updates will provide an opportunity for questions and answers.
- A suggestion and agreement that the Board suspend its meetings for a shorter timeframe with the possibility of extension.
- The possibility of Academic Board members viewing Academic Board Executive Committee meetings as observers where there was a specific issue of concern.
- The potential for internet disruptions following the commencement of online primary and secondary school learning after Easter.
- The process for selection additional Academic Board Executive Committee members.

The Chair outlined the expression of interest process for expanding the membership of the Academic Board Executive Committee. The Board was advised that Academic Board Executive Committee would consider the expressions of interest received and provide Academic Board with their nominations, which would give particular attention to

ensuring this included representation from regional campus members, student members and a more balanced representation from the two colleges. Academic Board to consider the nominations and approve by email circulation. The period for submitting an expression of interest in membership of Academic Board Executive Committee had already gone out twice on 26 March 2020 and 1 April 2020 but would be extended to close of business on Wednesday 8 April 2020.

519.6 Report of the Academic Board Executive Committee – March 2020

Academic Board **resolved to receive** and **note** the Reports of the Academic Board Executive Committee from the meetings held on 12 March, 19 March, 23 March, and 26 March 2020 and ratify the matter approved out of session on behalf of Academic Board at the meeting held on 23 March 2020:

- a) Request for Procedure Waiver: Course and Subject Management Procedure – Revisions, Suspensions and Closures.

519.7 Award of Degrees and Diplomas

Academic Board **resolved to approve** the award of degrees and diplomas, as detailed in the circulated papers.

AEGTO
GRS

The meeting closed at 11.00am.