

Scan of Terms of Reference and Business Processes of Australian University Academic Boards and Senates, 2018 (Final Report)

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A sector scan of the terms of reference and business and meeting processes of 28 participating Australian universities was undertaken in 2018, similar to earlier scans conducted in 2015 and 2018 for the NSW & ACT Committee of Chairs of Academic Boards and Senates (COCABS). The latest COCABS report suggests that NSW & ACT academic governing bodies are moving quickly to institutionalise new responsibilities under the Higher Education Standards. This final OZCABS report provides a benchmarking comparator for academic governance monitoring and review purposes and provides a basis for further participation by remaining Australian universities that did not contribute.

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AUSTRALIAN CHAIRS OF ACADEMIC BOARDS AND SENATES (OZCABS)

BOARD/SENATE BUSINESS PROCESSES COMPARISON REPORT 2018

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Introduction

A business scan of the constitution, terms of reference and meeting procedures of the academic boards or academic senates¹ of 28 Australian universities was conducted in 2018 and early 2019. The following universities have contributed to the survey to this point: (1) Australian Catholic University, (2) Australian National University, (3) Charles Darwin University, (4) Charles Sturt University, (5) Curtin University, (6) Deakin University, (7) Flinders University, (8) James Cook University, (9) La Trobe University, (10) Macquarie University, (11) Murdoch University, (12) Notre Dame University, (13) RMIT University, (14) Southern Cross University, (15) Swinburne University, (16) University of Canberra, (17) University of New England, (18) University of New South Wales, (19) University of Newcastle, (20) University of Queensland, (21) University of South Australia, (22) University of Sydney, (23) University of the Sunshine Coast, (24) University of Tasmania, (25) University of Wollongong, (26) University Technology Sydney, (27) Western Sydney University and (28) Victoria University.

Methods

A spreadsheet template was developed to record comparative information concerning the academic governance and business processes of each board. The template was based on an earlier sector scan of NSW and ACT academic boards (St. John-Brown & Reid 2016),² and amended and updated through discussion and feedback at meetings of the Australian Chairs of Academic Boards and Senates (OZCABS) in Newcastle and Canberra in 2017–18. The variables entered into the spreadsheet are recorded in Table 1. The template was completed by the chair or their delegates in the respective universities

¹ The term *academic board* or *board* is used hereafter in the text for the university academic governing body, and the term *council* is used for the university corporate governing body.

² St. John-Brown A. & N. Reid (2016) Scan of terms of reference and business processes of NSW and ACT academic boards and senates. University of New England, Armidale.

and ASJB compiled the data into a master spreadsheet. A draft report was presented to the national OZCABS conference in October 2018 at Glenelg, S.A., for consideration by the national chairs and secretaries, and a further five universities contributed to this final version.

The format of this report varies between the three sections (A. Constitution, B. Terms of Reference and C. Conduct of Meetings). Where appropriate, some narrative interpretation has been provided. Where responses are mostly Yes/No or similar, these sections do not usually contain additional narrative. The sections in blue are from the 2015 survey responses of the NSW/ACT Committee of Chairs of Academic Boards/Senates (COCABS), reported by St. John-Brown and Reid (2016).

Table 1. Variables relating to academic governance, quality assurance and operational matters, which were compared across the NSW and ACT university academic boards and senates in 2018. Acronyms: ABS = academic board/senate; ADR = academic delegations register; AOU = academic organisational unit; ARR = academic risk register; CAB = chair of academic board/senate; DCAB = deputy chair of academic board/senate; DVC = deputy vice-chancellor; EFT = equivalent full-time; HDR = higher degree research student; PVC = pro vice-chancellor; SO = standing orders; T&L = teaching and learning; TORs = terms of reference.

Data field	What was asked?
Elected or Appointed Chair?	Is chair of academic board/senate (CAB) elected, appointed or otherwise selected?
Number of Deputy Chairs	Self-evident
Size of Membership	Number of members as set out in terms of reference (TORs) or constitution of academic board/senate (ABS)
Chair Tenure (years)	Length of one term as CAB in years (Length of maximum no. of terms permissible as CAB in years)
Elected Members' Tenure (years)	Length of one term as elected member in years (Length of maximum number of terms permissible as elected member in years)
No. Elected/ <i>Ex Officio</i> Members	Number of elected members (including elected student members) and number of <i>ex officio</i> members (from TORs)
No. Student Members	Total number of student members on ABS, and breakdown into number of undergraduates, coursework postgraduates and higher degree research (HDR) student members
How Students Selected	Number appointed, number elected, number <i>ex officio</i>
Number of Ordinary Meeting	Number of scheduled ordinary meetings per year
Length of Ordinary Meeting (hours)	Scheduled length of business of ordinary meeting of ABS (in hours)
Number of Committees Reporting	Number of committees (not working parties) providing regular reports to ABS; number reporting to ABS as defined in TOR
Conflict of Interest Declaration Required	Is membership asked to declare any conflicts of interest at commencement of each meeting?
Filling Casual Vacancies	Does CAB or ABS executive have ability to fill casual vacancies without election; if so, for a maximum of how many months?
Temporary Replacements	Is there facility to appoint a temporary replacement for an elected or appointed member who seeks leave of absence (and, if so, is replacement appointed or nominated by member)?
Election Procedures in TORs/SO	Are procedures for election of members defined in TORs of ABS, standing orders (SO), or neither?
No. of Co-opted Appointees	Maximum permissible number of co-opted appointees

Reason for Co-opted Appointees	If co-opted appointees to ABS are permitted under TORs/constitution, for what reason: gender, expertise, both of these, neither, or other
CAB on Council/Snr Exec.	Is CAB a member of university governing body (council/senate) or a member of (or invited to regular meetings of) senior executive?
CAB EFT% Relief Paid by Centre	What percentage of an equivalent full-time (EFT) position does CAB role entail, and is CAB's academic organisational unit (AOU) reimbursed by centre for this time commitment?
DCAB EFT% Relief Paid by Centre	What percentage of an EFT position does deputy chair of academic board/senate (DCAB) role entail, and is DCAB's AOU reimbursed by centre for this time commitment?
CAB Reports to Council	Does CAB regularly report to university council/senate and, if so, is report written or oral?
CAB Hears Academic/Discipline Appeals	Does CAB chair an appeals committee for student academic or behavioural misconduct?
Quality and Standards	What functions does ABS have with respect to academic quality and standards?
Establishment of AOU's	What functions does ABS have with respect to establishment/dis-establishment of AOU's?
Academic Integrity	What functions does ABS have with respect to rules/policies/procedures for academic integrity?
Academic Risk	What functions does ABS have with respect to academic risk?
Academic Partnerships/Credit Agreements	What functions does ABS have with respect to formal academic partnerships and credit assessment agreements with third-party providers?
Academic Rules, Policies and Procedures	What functions does ABS have with respect to academic rules/policies/procedures?
Academic Merit Policies/Awards	What functions does ABS have with respect to prizes, medals or merit scholarships (including policies for same)?
HDR Supervision and Training	What functions does ABS have with respect to HDR student supervision and training (including policies for same)?
T&L/Education/Curriculum Plan	What functions does ABS have with respect to university's strategic planning around teaching, learning and curriculum?
Research and Research Training Plan	What functions does ABS have with respect to university's academic planning around research and research training?
Approval of Graduation Lists	What functions does ABS have with respect to approval of graduation lists?
Academic Staff Professional Development	What functions does ABS have with respect to professional development of academic staff?
Academic Staff Promotions	What functions does ABS have with respect to academic staff promotions?
Academic Staff Study Leave	What functions does ABS have with respect to academic staff study leave/sabbaticals?
Academic Management Matters	What functions does ABS have with respect to academic administration matters managed by DVCs, PVCS or Deans?
Resources	What functions does ABS have with respect to management of resources (if any, what resources)?
Student Support Services	What functions does ABS have with respect to student administration and support?
Course Approval	What functions does ABS have with respect to establishment, dis-establishment and major amendment of academic courses (i.e. awards or degrees)
Course Reviews	What functions does ABS have with respect to periodic review of academic courses (i.e. awards or degrees)
Unit (Subject) Approval	What functions does ABS have with respect to establishment, dis-establishment and major amendment of units (i.e. subjects) that comprise courses (i.e. awards or degrees)
ABS Annual Budget (AU\$)	What is annual budget managed by or on behalf of ABS?
Academic Delegations Register	What functions does ABS have with respect to university's academic delegations register (ADR)
ADR Review Frequency	If there is an ADR, with what frequency is it reviewed by ABS, if at all?

Academic Risk Register

What functions does ABS have with respect to university's academic risk register (ARR)?

ARR Risk Frequency

If there is an ARR, with what frequency is it reviewed by ABS, if at all?

Results

A. BOARD CONSTITUTIONS

1. Election or appointment of chair

Elected: 20

Appointed: 8

2. Number of deputy chairs

One: 21

Two: 6

Nil: 1

3. Size of membership

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Smallest:	15	28	28
Largest:	230	161	123
Average:	57	56	55
Median:	41	47	49
25–39 members:	12	5	5
40–60 members:	11	5	5
60+ members:	5	3	3

4. Tenure of chair

Term	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
One year:	1	0	0
Two years:	18	10	9
Three years:	8	3	4
No limit:	1	0	0

The maximum period of tenure (where reported) was most commonly six years (either three 2-year terms or two 3-year terms). The one-year term was limited to a three-year tenure in total.

5. Percentage membership elected/*ex officio*

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Smallest ratio of elected members:	44%	44%	44%
Largest ratio of elected members:	82%	79%	75%
Smallest ratio of <i>ex officio</i> members:	18%	21%	25%
Largest ratio of <i>ex officio</i> members:	61%	60%	56%

*The most frequent ratios of elected to *ex officio* members were 65:35 or 60:40 (found among eight universities).*

6. Elected student members

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Nil student members:	1	0	0
One student member:	2	2	1
Two student members:	7	3	3
Three student members:	2	0	0
Four student members:	7	4	3
Five to eight members:	6	1	3
More than eight student members:	3	2	1

Universities had varied representation of undergraduate, postgraduate and higher degree research students and gender balance among student representatives. The student association or guild president was the member in at least one case where there was a single student representative.

7. How student representatives are selected/appointed

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	No COCABS 2015 data
Elected:	17	10	—
Appointed:	2	0	—
<i>Ex officio</i> :	3	1	—
Elected and <i>ex officio</i> mix:	5	2	—
Not applicable:	1	0	—

8. Typical or scheduled length of ordinary meetings

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	No COCABS 2015 data
One to two hours	16	9	—
Two to three hours	8	2	—
Three to four hours	3	1	—
More than four hours	1	1	—

9. Number of ordinary meetings

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Five meetings:	6	3	3
Six meetings:	12	9	9
Seven to eight meetings:	8	1	1
More than eight meetings:	2	0	0

10. Number of subordinate committees

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Two committees:	1	0	1
Three committees	4	1	0
Four committees:	8	6	2
Five committees	3	0	0
Six to seven committees:	6	3	5
Eight to ten committees:	3	2	3
More than ten committees:	3	1	2

Care is required in interpreting these data as some subordinate committees included faculty boards whose role may have functions similar to subordinate committees in other universities.

11. Conflict of interest (COI) requirement

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Yes:	19	8	9
No:	9	5	4

Discussion with NSW and ACT colleagues suggest that where COI was part of a generic university rule or policy, an additional COI declaration for meetings was unnecessary. The variation may be due to different legal interpretations by university in-house counsel and their guidance to chairs and secretaries.

12. Filling of casual (out-of-cycle) vacancies

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Yes:	22	10	9
No:	6	3	4

The filling of casual vacancies was commonly dictated by the remaining length of tenure for the emerging vacancy. A remaining length of tenure of less than one year was typical for the filling of a casual vacancy without requiring a by-election.

13. Temporary replacements (short-term vacancies where the original member is able to return)

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Yes:	18	8	9
No:	9	5	4
Nil response:	1	0	0

Filling typically varied between the member finding an alternate or the chair exercising discretion to fill from the absent member's constituency. Some universities either applied the casual vacancy procedure to a temporary vacancy or disallowed temporary replacements.

14. Number of co-options

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	No COCABS 2015 data
Yes (average):	15 (4)	7 (5)	—
No:	13	6	—

One university had unlimited co-options and one had 17. When these universities were excluded from the sample, the national average was four co-options.

15. Purpose of co-options

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	No COCABS 2015 data
Expertise:	11	7	—
Gender representation:	3	3	—
Indigenous representation:	2	2	—
Other:	3	0	—
No specific purpose cited:	1	0	—

Because some universities cited more than one purpose for co-option, the totals for this question exceed the numbers of universities listed as Yes at Q. 14.

16. Location of the election procedures in statutes, terms of reference (ToR), standing orders (SO) or university-wide rules/policies

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Statutes, ToR or SO:	17	9	11
University rule or policy:	9	4	—
Indefinite response:	2	0	—

17. Chair attends the university council or senior executive committee

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Council:	26	9	6
No:	2	4	7
Senior Executive:	10	3	3
No:	18	10	7

18. Chair's time release

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Yes:	19	12	12
No:	6	0	0
Data unavailable (confidential):	1	1	1
Nil response:	2	0	0
Time release of 20%:	1	0	0
Time release of 35-40%:	3	2	0
Time release of 50%:	5	4	5
Time release of 60%:	2	1	1
Time release of 70%:	1	1	1
Time release of 80%:	2	1	3
Time release of 100%:	5	3	2
Nil response:	0	1	0

19. Deputy chair's time release

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Yes:	10	7	9
No:	13	5*	3
Data unavailable (confidential):	1	1	1
Nil response:	3	0	0
Not applicable:	1	0	0
Time release of 0%:	0	5*	0
Time release of 10%:	0	0	1
Time release of 20%:	6	4	2
Time release of 25%:	1	2	1
Time release of 30%:	1	0	3
Time release of 40%:	0	0	2
Time release of 50%:	1	0	1
Time release of 60%:	1	1	0
Nil response:	3	1	0

**One university indicated the 0% relief was under review.*

20. Chair makes regular reports to the university council

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Yes:	27	12	10
Annual:	1	1	1
No:	0	0	2

21. Chair hears academic or disciplinary appeals

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Yes:	9	3	3
No:	17	10	10
Nil response:	2	0	0

B. TERMS OF REFERENCE

A number of contributors indicated that their boards/senates had multiple roles in its terms of reference (e.g. both approval and monitoring roles). Accordingly, the tallies below reflect the responses for each role and do not necessarily sum to the sample size for each column (e.g. $n = 28$ for OZCABS).

22. Quality and standards role

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Approval role:	14	7	6
Advisory role:	17	9	7
Delegated role:*	11	4	2
Endorsement role:	9	4	1
Monitor role:	20	10	9
Note role:	7	2	0
Promote role:	8	6	1
Nil answer:	1	1	0
Indeterminate answer ('Yes'):	1	0	0

* to subordinate committee

All boards had a role in academic quality and standards, as expected under the Higher Education Standards Framework (HESF).

23. Academic organisation unit (AOU) establishment (new institutes, centres, schools, etc.)

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Approval role:	3	1	0
Advisory role:	3	1	4
Delegated role:*	1	0	0
Endorsement role:	5	2	0
Monitor role:	4	2	0
Note role:	4	0	2
Promote role:	2	0	0
No role:	15	9	7
Nil answer:	1	1	1
Indeterminate answer ('Yes'):	1	0	0

* to subordinate committee

Most boards had no role in establishing AOU; a few had an oversight (e.g. endorsing, monitoring or noting) role.

24. Academic integrity

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Approval role:	16	10	10
Advisory role:	17	11	6
Delegated role:*	8	3	2
Endorsement role:	10	5	2
Monitor role:	18	10	6
Note role:	7	2	0
Promote role:	7	5	0
Under development:	2	0	0
No role:	0	0	0
Indeterminate answer ('Yes'):	1	0	0

* to subordinate committee

All boards had an approval or oversight role in quality and standards. This accords with statutory governance obligations under the HESF.

25. Partnerships and credit agreements

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Approval role:	8	4	4
Advisory role:	8	4	2
Delegated role:*	8	5	1
Endorsement role:	4	2	1
Monitor role:	6	3	4
Note role:	8	4	0
Promote role:	2	1	0
No role:	3	2	5
Indeterminate answer ('Yes'):	2	0	0

* to subordinate committee

Some boards had an approval role in partnerships and credit agreements and most had an oversight (e.g. advisory, delegated, monitoring or noting) role.

26. Rules, policies and procedures

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Approval role:	20	11	11
Advisory role:	9	5	5
Delegated role:*	6	2	0
Endorsement role:	12	8	3
Monitor role:	13	6	3
Note role:	9	3	0
Promote role:	5	3	0
No role:	0	0	0
Indeterminate answer ('Yes'):	1	0	0

* to subordinate committee

Most boards had an approval role and the remainder had an oversight (particularly an endorsement and monitoring) role in the governance of academic rules, policies and procedures.

27. Academic merit policies and awards

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Approval role:	15	6	7
Advisory role:	1	6	3
Delegated role:*	5	2	0
Endorsement role:	8	4	1
Monitor role:	6	4	0
Note role:	10	3	0
Promote role:	4	2	0
No role:	1	1	2
Indeterminate answer ('Yes'):	1	0	0

* to subordinate committee

About half of boards had an approval role in the governance of academic merit policies and awards, while most others had an oversight (e.g. endorsement, monitoring or noting) role.

28. Approval of graduation lists

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Approval role:	11	4	4
Advisory role:	3	3	1
Delegated role:*	1	0	1
Endorsement role:	4	3	3
Monitor role:	1	1	1
Note role:	4	1	1
Promote role:	1	1	0
No role:	11	5	3

* to subordinate committee

A large minority of boards had an approval role regarding graduation lists, but half had no role or an oversight (e.g. endorsement) role only.

29. Teaching and learning planning

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	No COCABS 2015 data
Approval role:	9	5	—
Advisory role:	15	9	—
Delegated role:*	6	2	—
Endorsement role:	10	6	—
Monitor role:	7	5	—
Note role:	13	6	—
Promote role:	2	1	—
No role:	0	0	—
Indeterminate answer ('Yes'):	1	0	-

* to subordinate committee

All boards had an approval or advisory role in the design and development of university teaching and learning plans.

30. Research and research training planning

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	No COCABS 2015 data
Approval role:	4	3	—
Advisory role:	14	8	—
Delegated role:*	6	2	—
Endorsement role:	12	7	—
Monitor role:	6	4	—
Note role:	14	6	—
Promote role:	2	1	—
No role:	0	0	—
Indeterminate answer ('Yes'):	1	0	-

* to subordinate committee

All boards had at least oversight (e.g. an advisory, endorsement or noting role) of university research and research training plans; a few had an approval role.

31. Academic staff development

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015 (+ Promotions)
Approval role:	3	1	0
Advisory role:	11	7	5
Delegated role:*	3	0	1
Endorsement role:	3	1	0
Monitor role:	5	1	2
Note role:	15	7	1
Promote role:	1	0	0
No role:	7	3	5
Indeterminate answer ('Yes'):	1	0	0

* to subordinate committee

Three-quarters of boards had a role in the governance of academic staff development plans and policies, mainly an oversight rather than an approval role.

32. Academic staff promotions

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015 (+ Promotions)
Approval role:	3	2	0
Advisory role:	7	5	5
Delegated role:*	0	0	1
Endorsement role:	3	2	0
Monitor role:	2	2	2
Note role:	8	4	1
Promote role:	0	0	0
No role:	10	3	5
Indeterminate answer ('Yes'):	1	0	0

* to subordinate committee

There was some divergence among boards between an advisory or oversight (and occasionally an approval) role in academic staff promotions and no role at all. Commonly, the former derived from the board chair attending promotion committees in either a deliberative or observer/advisor capacity.

33. Study leave

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Approval role:	1	1	1
Advisory role:	1	1	3
Delegated role:*	0	0	0
Endorsement role:	2	2	0
Monitor role:	0	0	1
Note role:	5	0	2
Promote role:	0	0	0
No role:	20	10	5
Indeterminate answer ('Yes'):	1	0	0

* to subordinate committee

The large majority of boards had no role in study leave (typically this was under HR rather than academic policies) but a few endorsed or noted reports.

34. Academic management matters

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Approval role:	2	2	1
Advisory role:	16	10	10
Delegated role:*	0	0	0
Endorsement role:	5	4	0
Monitor role:	2	2	1
Note role:	10	5	1
Promote role:	0	0	0
No role:	6	2	2
Indeterminate answer ('Yes'):	1	0	0

* to subordinate committee

While an approval role was rare among boards, three-quarters had some form of oversight of academic management issues.

35. Higher degree research (HDR) supervision and training

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Approval role:	15	9	7
Advisory role:	18	7	5
Delegated role:*	12	5	0
Endorsement role:	6	4	1
Monitor role:	13	9	3
Note role:	5	1	0
Promote role:	4	2	0
No role:	0	0	1
Indeterminate answer ('Yes'):	1	0	0

* to subordinate committee

All boards had a role in HDR supervision and training. This accords with statutory governance obligations under the HESF.

36. Resources

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Approval role:	1	0	0
Advisory role:	10	6	4
Delegated role:*	0	0	0
Endorsement role:	1	0	0
Monitor role:	0	0	0
Note role:	3	2	1
Promote role:	0	0	0
No role:	15	5	8
Under development:	1	1	0

* to subordinate committee

A half of boards had no role in resource matters. The advisory role of many of the remaining boards was typically related just to academic infrastructure.

37. Student support services

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Approval role:	0	0	0
Advisory role:	8	3	5
Delegated role:*	2	2	1
Endorsement role:	1	1	1
Monitor role:	3	1	1
Note role:	8	2	1
Promote role:	0	0	0
No role:	13	7	6
Indeterminate answer ('Yes'):	1	0	0

* to subordinate committee

Half of boards had no role in the governance of student support services while the remainder had some form of oversight (e.g. an advisory or noting role).

38. Course approvals

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Approval role:	27	9	9
Advisory role:	4	3	1
Delegated role:*	6	3	2
Endorsement role:	4	3	0
Monitor role:	5	3	0
Note role:	5	2	0
Promote role:	4	2	0
No role:	0	1	1
Indeterminate answer ('Yes'):	1	0	0

* to subordinate committee

Almost all boards approved courses. This accords with the statutory obligations under the HESF

39. Course reviews

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	No COCABS 2015 data
Approval role:	20	7	—
Advisory role:	4	2	—
Delegated role:*	7	4	—
Endorsement role:	3	0	—
Monitor role:	8	8	—
Note role:	5	2	—
Promote role:	4	1	—
No role:	0	0	—
Indeterminate answer ('Yes'):	1	0	-

* to subordinate committee

Most boards approved course reviews while the remainder had an oversight (e.g. monitoring) role. This accords with statutory obligations under the HESF.

40. Unit/subject approval

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	No COCABS 2015 data
Approval role:	7	4	—
Advisory role:	3	2	—
Delegated role:*	14	8	—
Endorsement role:	2	1	—
Monitor role:	4	3	—
Note role:	5	4	—
Promote role:	2	2	—
No role:	10	3	—

* to subordinate committee

A quarter of boards approved units or subjects (the component parts of courses) while a half delegated the role to subordinate committees, perhaps in faculties or schools. A third of boards had no role at all.

41. Annual budget

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	No COCABS 2015 data
<\$50K	5	1	—
\$50K-\$200K	4	3	—
\$200K-\$500	3	2	—
>\$500K	2	1	—
No response	14	6	—
Average of 11 (OZCABS) and 7 (COCABS)	\$436K	\$277K	—

The OZCABS average was distorted by large budgets at two universities; otherwise reported board budgets were relatively modest.

42. Academic delegations register

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	No COCABS 2015 data
Approval role:	3	3	—
Advisory role:	7	6	—
Delegated role:*	0	0	—
Endorsement role:	4	2	—
Monitor role:	5	3	—
Note role:	6	4	—
Promote role:	2	1	—
No role:	9	1	—
Under development:	5	2	—
To be determined:	1	1	—
Indeterminate answers:	2	0	—

* to subordinate committee

The governance of academic delegation registers varied widely, perhaps reflecting a recent trend for boards to oversight the development of formal registers of academic delegations.

43. Academic delegations register review frequency

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	No COCABS 2015 data
Annual:	11	7	—
Biennial:	1	0	—
Triennial:	2	1	—
To be determined:	5	2	—
Nil response or no role:	5	3	—

A half of boards undertook a periodic review of their academic delegations register; the remainder did not have a register or had yet to determine their approach.

44. Academic risk

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Approval role:	5	3	2
Advisory role:	14	7	3
Delegated role:*	7	7	3
Endorsement role:	4	2	0
Monitor role:	16	7	3
Note role:	3	1	0
Promote role:	5	3	0
No role:	3	0	5
Under development:	4	2	0
To be determined:	3	2	0

** to subordinate committee*

A large majority of boards and senates had an oversight if not an approval role with regards to the governance of academic risk. Evidence from the COCABS 2015 survey suggests this may be a growing area of board attention across OZCABS.

45. Academic risk register

	OZCABS 2018	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Approval role:	2	3	2
Advisory role:	2	7	3
Delegated role:*	0	7	3
Endorsement role:	3	2	0
Monitor role:	4	7	3
Note role:	2	1	0
Promote role:	1	3	0
No role:	9	0	5
Under development:	9	2	0
To be determined:	2	2	0
Indeterminate answers:	2	0	0

* to subordinate committee

A third of universities professed no role in the governance of an academic risk register. As formal oversight of the governance of academic risk is a new responsibility for boards, the approach to managing academic risk may not yet be decided at some universities.

46. Academic risk register review frequency

	OZCABS	COCABS 2018	No COCABS 2015 data
Monthly:	1	0	—
Six-monthly:	1	0	—
Annual:	6	3	—
To be determined:	5	5	—
Under development:	3	2	—
Nil role:	7	1	—
Nil response:	2	2	—
No scheduled review period:	1	0	—

Similar to the introduction of academic risk registers, the frequency of their review was another area yet to be determined by some universities.

C. CONDUCT OF MEETINGS

47. Acknowledgment of country

	OZCABS	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Yes:	23	11	8
Yes (annual):	2	1	2
No:	3	1	3

48. Minutes with agenda or predistributed

	OZCABS	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
With:	10	6	10
Predistributed:	12	6	3
Both:	6	1	0

49. Apologies

	OZCABS	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Yes:	28	13	13

50. List of attendees

	OZCABS	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Yes:	28	13	13

51. Chair's report

	OZCABS	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Yes:	25	13	13
No:	3	0	0
Oral:	9	5	0
Written:	8	6	0
Both:	8	2	0

52. Vice-Chancellor's report

	OZCABS	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Yes:	27	13	13
No:	1	0	0
Oral:	6	4	0
Written:	12	6	0
Both:	9	3	0

53. 'Questions on Notice' standing item on agenda

	OZCABS	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Yes:	9	5	3
No:	19	8	7
Open Q&A:	1	0	3

54. 'Student Representatives Report' standing item on agenda

	OZCABS	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Yes:	6	3	3
Oral:	3	1	0
Written:	3	2	0
No:	21	9	10
To be determined:	1	1	0

55. Other or 'General Business' standing item on agenda (business not specified on the agenda)

	OZCABS	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Yes:	25	13	12
No:	3	0	1

56. 'Priority Business' standing item of agenda (first priority for discussion/decision)

	OZCABS	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Yes:	13	8	6
No:	15	5	7

57. 'Confidential Business' standing item on agenda (separate agenda item or some members required to leave for these items)

	OZCABS	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Yes:	13	6	8
No:	13	6	5
As required:	2	1	0

58. Notice of agenda

	OZCABS	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Up to 3 days:	2	0	0
Upto 5 days:	1	1	0
Up to 7 days:	24	12	9
Up to 14 days:	0	0	1
Up to 28 days:	0	0	1
Insufficient data:	0	0	2

59. Right of attendance by observers

	OZCABS	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Yes:	20	12	12
No:	8	1	1

60. Notice of motions

	OZCABS	COCABS 2018	COCABS 2015
Upto 3 days:	3	0	0
Up to 7 days:	7	3	1
Up to 10 days:	1*	0*	2*
Up to 14/15 days:	15*	9*	4*
Up to 21 days:	1	1	1
No notice required:	0	0	3
Insufficient data:	1	0	3

** may be the same: 10 working days = 14 calendar days*

Discussion

Academic governance responsibilities and business processes among the 28 participating universities in the 2018 national sector scan show some areas of universal or near-universal commonality (e.g. the academic governance of course approvals, course reviews and teaching and learning plans), and other areas of considerable divergence among universities. Examples of the latter include the role of boards in the governance of academic delegations, academic risk, subject/unit approvals and academic management matters (such as graduation, promotions and study leave). Despite the homogenising effect of the release of the Higher Education Standards Framework (Thresholds Standards) 2011 by the Australian Government and the subsequent refresh by the Australian Chairs of Academic Boards and Senates of *The Purpose and Function of Academic Boards and Senates in Australian Universities*, it is interesting that considerable diversity of approach is evident among this sample of 28 universities. There is greater homogeneity among the NSW/ACT universities (St. John-Brown A. & Reid N. 2018, *Scan of Terms of Reference and Business Processes of NSW and ACT Academic Boards and Senates, 2018*, UNE, Armidale), suggesting that legislative norms in different jurisdictions may underlie some of the divergence of approach. The release of the Higher Education Standards Framework (Thresholds Standards) 2015 and the subtle changes in governance direction and emphasis compared to the 2011 Standards may also be responsible for some of the diversity, with universities with lengthy academic governance review cycles (perhaps up to seven years) responding to the new standards in different timeframes.

The data in this national sector scan should be useful for benchmarking and external reference purposes as universities review the purpose, roles and operations of their academic boards, as part of each institution's quality assurance commitment to monitoring, review and improvement of academic governance arrangements under the HESF. The scan will be more valuable if every university can be persuaded to contribute their data to the national survey.

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