

SENATE DIGEST FOR MEETING OF 12 FEBRUARY 2026

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chancellor welcomed Senators and attendees to the meeting and noted the recorded apologies. Senate welcomed Lincoln Trainor as the new Student Senator and acknowledged the final Senate meeting of Professor Tim McKenry, recognising his significant contribution to Senate, Academic Board leadership, academic assurance, AI governance, and ACU's TEQSA re-registration activities. Senate formally thanked Professor McKenry for his service and leadership.

2. Report from Vice-Chancellor and President

The Vice-Chancellor presented the Report and highlighted the following:

- Results of the 2025 MyVoice Survey, with staff wellbeing and engagement remaining stable since 2022, while progress measures reflected the impact of organisational change initiatives.
- Research successes, including the Origin Digital mental health project.
- Progress of legislation to establish the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC).
- Recent discussions with the Minister for Education regarding ATEC and broader sector issues.
- Completion of ACU's TEQSA compliance assessment, with confirmation that TEQSA had agreed to close the matter and revised timing for the external governance review.

Senators discussed sector concerns regarding the independence of ATEC and noted ACU's continued engagement with government and regulators.

3. State of Play 2026

The Vice-Chancellor presented the sixth State of Play report and highlighted the following:

- ACU delivered strong performance across the majority of Senate metrics during 2025.
- Student enrolment decline had been arrested, with enrolments of approximately 35,000 students representing 27,000 EFTSL.
- ACU ranked first nationally for employer overall satisfaction and second among publicly funded universities for student experience.
- Industry partnerships continue to expand, supported by initiatives such as Human and Digital Futures.
- ACU Online remains the University's fastest-growing campus, while transnational education opportunities continue to increase.
- Higher Degree by Research enrolments have increased by more than 50% since 2021.
- Vision 2033 remains in its stabilisation and foundation-building phase.
- Revenue diversification efforts continue.
- Significant sector challenges include international student caps, declining domestic growth across the sector, escalating compliance requirements, and an anticipated international enrolment revenue decline forecast from 2027.

The Chief Financial Officer also provided an overview of preliminary 2025 financial results, noting stronger-than-budgeted revenue and disciplined expenditure management. Senators congratulated management on the result and emphasised the importance of maintaining financial discipline.

4. Mission and Identity

The Vice-Chancellor advised that Mission-related staff and student activities would increase with the commencement of Semester 1.

5. Report from Corporation Secretary

The Corporation Secretary:

- Acknowledged the contribution of Tarryn Tyres following her departure from ACU and thanked her for her service to governance.
- Presented an update on Senate membership and upcoming membership renewals.
- Advised that declarations relating to gender-based violence for new Senators would be monitored by the Senate Standing Committee.
- Presented the Annual Senate Report 2025 (Acquittal of Responsibilities), which Senate discussed as an important governance assurance mechanism aligned with TEQSA requirements.
- Provided an update on the implementation of amendments to Statute 2.5 – The Academic Board.

Senators discussed opportunities to strengthen future Senate acquittal reporting, including more explicit assessments of Senate performance, opportunities and challenges. Senate requested a revised report for consideration at the April meeting.

6. Deputy Corporation Secretary

Senate approved the appointment of a Deputy Corporation Secretary and noted that the responsibilities of the role would be assigned to the proposed Associate Director, Governance position within the Legal, Assurance and Governance Directorate.

7. Delegations of Authority

The Corporation Secretary presented proposed amendments to the Delegations of Authority.

Senators discussed:

- Senate's role in approving strategic plans and related strategies.
- The distinction between strategic and operational plans.
- Transparency and oversight implications arising from delegation changes.
- The potential development of a materiality framework to support future decision-making.

Senate approved amendments relating to academic responsibilities and deferred consideration of amendments relating to strategic planning for further refinement.

8. Report of the Academic Board

The Chair of Academic Board presented the Annual Academic Board Report for 2025 and highlighted the following:

- Academic Board's workplan-driven approach to oversight and academic quality.
- Preparation for the upcoming external review of academic governance.
- Continued emphasis on academic risk identification, monitoring and remediation.
- The importance of embedding academic risk management into routine practice across the University.

Senators were encouraged to attend Academic Board meetings and continue supporting academic governance initiatives.

9. Report of the Finance and Resources Committee

Senators discussed the report of the 27 January 2026 meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee.

Key matters included:

- Strong University liquidity.
- Strategic technology investment requirements and development of a master technology plan.
- Debt management strategies ahead of refinancing requirements associated with the Saint Teresa of Kolkata Building.
- Consideration of sustainability financing options.
- Review of existing financial covenants and future capital planning priorities.
- Upcoming internal audit work relating to risk management and organisational culture.

10. Reports from State Chapters

Senate noted the following reports:

- Report of the Queensland State Chapter meeting of 18 November 2025.
- Report of the Victorian State Chapter meeting of 25 November 2025.

11. Technology and Cybersecurity Presentation

The Chief Information and Digital Officer presented an overview of the cyber incident experienced by another institution and highlighted lessons relevant to ACU.

Discussion included:

- The strategic nature of cyber security risk.
- ACU's comparatively strong cyber maturity and existing controls.
- The importance of system modernisation, cyber simulations, incident preparedness and governance oversight.
- Ongoing investment required to strengthen cyber resilience.

Senators discussed cyber incident readiness, governance responsibilities, penetration testing outcomes and sector-wide cyber security risks.

12. Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF)

Senate received the 2025 Student Services and Amenities Fee Annual Report.

Discussion focused on:

- Implementation of the approved transition plan for new SSAF requirements.
- Governance arrangements supporting increasing levels of student control over SSAF allocations.
- Support and training arrangements for ACUNSA representatives.
- The establishment of an SSAF Committee and associated governance measures.
- Managing institutional risk while maintaining appropriate student independence.