

SENATE DIGEST FOR MEETING OF 17 APRIL 2026

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chancellor welcomed Senators and attendees to the meeting and noted apologies from Professor Tim McKenry and Francine Pirola. Senate again acknowledged Professor Tim McKenry's service, noting the formal farewell provided at the February meeting. Senators also recognised the final Senate meeting of Sarah Beltrame, whose term as elected professional staff Senator was concluding on 30 April, and thanked her for her contribution to Senate and the Audit and Risk Committee. Senate also noted that Lincoln Trainor would step down as Student Senator following the meeting, having accepted a staff position as Student Veterans Liaison Officer.

2. Report from Chancellor

The Chancellor noted the commencement of graduation season in Sydney, with other cities to follow, and encouraged Senators to attend local ceremonies as an opportunity to connect with the work and impact of Senate. Senate was also informed of ACU's annual dinner with the heads of the Founding Orders, recognising their contribution to ACU's foundation and the continuing influence of their charisms on ACU's Mission. [20260417 S...R SIGNING] | Word]

3. Report from Vice-Chancellor and President

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

- Revenue diversification, research performance, institutional rankings, resources and sector conditions.
- ACU's increasingly competitive research grant performance.
- Mission-aligned research growth, with a focus on sustainably developing local talent rather than relying primarily on overseas recruitment.
- Strong QS results, including top 20 globally and number one nationally in theology, as well as strong outcomes in divinity, nursing, education and psychology.
- ACU being ranked for the first time in philosophy and medicine.
- The passing of Professor Ray Hart and recognition of his significant bequest to the University.
- The myVoice staff survey results, with discussion to focus on change management, career progression and leadership.
- An uncertain external environment, including national policy development, ATEC, national security issues, international student visa refusals, funding arrangements and market volatility.
- ACU's continued diversification of international student markets and partnerships.
- Progressing discussions for ACU to join Alliance 2050, to be launched on 27 May 2026 by the Hon. Jason Clare MP.

Senators discussed the Data for a Safer Church project, international student recruitment dependencies, Catholic partnerships in Nepal and India, engagement with potential partners, links with Catholic education, teacher education placement constraints, and ACU's role as a major educator of teachers in Australia.

4. Provost Report, including Retention Report

The Provost reported on enrolment and retention performance across the University. Senate discussed the strategic consolidation of business education delivery to Sydney, Melbourne and online, retention improvement initiatives within the Faculty of Law and Business, international student recruitment challenges arising from visa refusals, and ongoing market diversification. Senate also discussed nursing and paramedicine enrolments, digital learning infrastructure, workforce challenges and strong graduate employment outcomes.

5. 2025 Financial Statements and Directors' Report

Senate reviewed the audited 2025 Financial Statements and Directors' Report. KPMG advised that the audit was complete and an unqualified audit opinion would be issued. The Chief Financial Officer reported a net result of \$60.1 million, reflecting stronger revenue, research performance and cost control. Senators discussed financial sustainability, wage remediation, government funding dependency, compliance obligations and consultancy expenditure.

6. Financial Performance

The Chief Financial Officer provided a verbal update on year-to-date financial performance. Senate noted softness in international student revenue, underspend against cost estimates, development of a preliminary four-year forecast, current revenue and leave settings, casual and sessional staffing costs, lower international recruitment agency costs, project phasing adjustments, and the positive impact of higher interest rates.

7. Mission and Identity

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Catholic Mission) provided an update on Mission and Identity, including progress on the Mission Review and the establishment of a Mission Committee to support Senate oversight of the Mission implementation plan. Senate was advised that an Australian Catholic Bishops Conference nominee is required for the Mission Committee and that the Committee will be activated once a nominee is confirmed.

Senate also noted planning for an Ex Corde formation program, preparatory work for the Eucharistic Congress in 2028, Community Engaged Learning, Community Engaged Research, the Clemente Program, staff participation in online prayer sessions, and Campus Ministry engagement with new students. Senators discussed reporting cadence and opportunities for wider participation in formation activities.

8. Report from Corporation Secretary

The Corporation Secretary presented updates in relation to:

- Senate membership and terms of office.
- The revised Annual Senate Report 2025 – Acquittal of Responsibilities under Statute 2.1.
- The proposed Constitution Review and Governance Principles gap analysis.
- External governance reviews and the appointment of independent reviewers.
- The Annual Protected Disclosures Report.
- The Contract Execution Register.
- The Regulatory Register.

Senate endorsed the re-nomination of Róisín Annesley KC and Julian Widdup for submission to the 2026 AGM for election to a further three-year term and noted current Senate membership and terms of office as at 9 April 2026.

9. Annual Senate Report – Acquittal of Responsibilities

The Corporation Secretary advised that the governance self-assessment report had been revised since its February presentation and resubmitted using RAG reporting with a deliberately self-critical approach. Senators discussed areas requiring further development, including breach reporting, freedom of speech and academic freedom processes, First Peoples engagement reporting, access to independent advice, risk oversight, the forthcoming internal audit of risk management, and the planned review of the Risk Appetite Statement.

10. ACU Annual General Meeting, Constitution Review and Governance Principles

The Corporation Secretary advised that the Corporation President had sought to revive the Constitution Review in the context of the Governance Principles released in 2025 by the Expert Council on University Governance. Senate noted that a proposal would proceed to the Corporation AGM on 22 May.

11. External Governance Reviews

The Corporation Secretary advised that ACU intends to undertake external reviews of corporate and academic governance during 2026. Potential academic reviewers had been identified, with the corporate governance review process still being finalised. Senators discussed the importance of reviewers understanding ACU's Catholic governance context and supported an extraordinary Senate session, rather than a circular resolution, to provide Senate input into reviewer appointments.

12. Report of the Academic Board

Senate noted the digest of Academic Board meeting 01/2026, held on 20 February 2026.

13. Report of the Senate Standing Committee

Senate noted the report of the Senate Standing Committee meeting of 2 March 2026.

14. Report of the Finance and Resources Committee

The Pro-Chancellor highlighted discussion regarding the sustainability bond and Senate noted the report of Meeting 02/2026 of the Finance and Resources Committee, held on 20 March 2026.

15. Gender, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Report

The Chief People Officer presented the fourth quarter 2025 Gender, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Report. Senate noted increased survey response rates, positive feedback regarding dignity and respect, fair allocation of work irrespective of gender, and equitable access to flexible work arrangements. Areas for improvement included sense of belonging, learning and development, recruitment and promotion, professional staff career progression, and performance against Athena SWAN commitments.

Senate requested that the next GEDI Report consider key risks identified through the staff inclusion survey and include an action plan addressing staff respect and belonging, academic promotion, professional staff career progression and training, and Athena SWAN commitments.

16. STEM Centre

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Corporate) presented a proposal for the establishment of a STEM Centre of Education Excellence at the Strathfield Campus. Senate noted that substantial government funding had been secured, with an additional ACU allocation proposed to enhance functionality and activation of the building.

Senate discussed cost risks, construction price escalation, technology requirements, staged fit-out options, opportunity costs and campus capacity pressures. Senate approved the establishment of the STEM Centre of Education Excellence and delegated authority to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Corporate) to approve project budgets, expenses and execution of contracts.

17. Report of the Audit and Risk Committee

Senate noted the Cyber Security Report March 2026, the Safety and Wellbeing Q4 2025 Report, and the Wage Compliance Report March 2026. The Chief People Officer advised that wage compliance work continued to track on schedule and that ACU was consulting with the Fair Work Ombudsman.

18. Report of the Honorary Awards Committee

Senate noted the report of the Honorary Awards Committee meeting of 3 March 2026. Senate approved the awarding of the Honorary Degree of Doctor of the University to three nominees.

19. Reports from State Chapters

Senate noted the following reports:

- ACT State Chapter meetings of 14 October 2025 and 19 March 2026.
- NSW State Chapter meeting of 23 February 2026.
- Queensland State Chapter meeting of 18 November 2025.
- Victorian State Chapter meetings of 25 November 2025 and 3 March 2026.

20. General Business

The Vice-Chancellor invited Senate to acknowledge the conferral on the Chancellor of the Papal Order of St Gregory the Great.