

SENATE DIGEST FOR MEETING OF 17 JUNE 2026

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chancellor welcomed newly appointed Senators Diana Brcic and Professor Andrew O'Neil, Chair of Academic Board, to their first Senate meeting and welcomed back Senators re-elected at the recent Corporation Annual General Meeting. The Chancellor also welcomed Dr Ann-Maree Moodie, who is undertaking the external review of corporate governance.

The Chancellor acknowledged the resignation of Dr Peter Steer and thanked him for his service to Senate and the Finance and Resources Committee. Consultation would shortly commence regarding appointment of a replacement Queensland Chapter nominee.

2. Business Arising

Senate received an update on sector developments concerning antisemitism. The Corporation Secretary advised that ACU had complied with a Notice to Produce issued by the Royal Commission concerning submissions made as part of the University Report Card Sectoral Assessment process and noted that there was no indication that ACU had been identified by exception. Senate noted that the matter continues to be monitored by the Senate Standing Committee.

3. Report from Chancellor

The Chancellor reported on recent University engagements, including graduation ceremonies, meetings in Rome and international activities involving Catholic education institutions and the Vatican. Senate noted engagement with senior Vatican officials and activities including the launch of *Maps of Hope: A Collection of the Holy Father's Reflections on Education and Artificial Intelligence* and the presentation of an honorary doctorate to Sr Nathalie Becquart.

4. Report from Vice-Chancellor and President

The Vice-Chancellor and President highlighted:

- Ongoing government and regulatory developments, including ACU's participation in the 2050 Alliance, engagement with the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) and Mission-Based Compacts.
- Reappointment as a Director of Universities Australia and President of the Australian Higher Education Industrial Association (AHEIA).
- ACU ranking number one nationally in employer satisfaction for the second consecutive year.
- Continued growth in research performance, Higher Degree Research enrolments and research block grant funding.
- Launch of the Research and Enterprise vision focused on "Flourishing Humanity".
- Progress on strategic initiatives including work towards the Indonesia-Australia Human Flourishing Centre and Jessie Technology commercialisation activities.
- Strong institutional reputation indicators, including positive gender pay equity outcomes.

Senators discussed research commercialisation, sector positioning, capacity constraints, government engagement, ATEC developments and emerging policy challenges.

5. Provost Report

The Provost advised that overall student load targets remain on track to be achieved, including through Online Program Management arrangements, despite continued uncertainty

in international student markets and visa processing. Senate discussed sector-wide challenges affecting international commencements, positive performance in key disciplines including nursing, research performance and emerging partnerships within the Catholic health sector.

Senate agreed that future “spotlight” reports should focus on strategic priority areas and that the next report would focus on Education. Senate also discussed developments at the University of Notre Dame Australia and reaffirmed the value of a strong relationship between ACU and UNDA.

6. Finance Report – 2026 Q1 Forecast

The Chief Financial Officer reported that the University’s financial performance remains ahead of budget, with a forecast net surplus exceeding expectations. Variances included lower-than-expected international student commencements offset by strong Commonwealth-supported place performance, overall student load growth and increased external research funding.

The Senate also discussed:

- Improved revenue performance.
- Favourable depreciation and investment return outcomes.
- Workforce and leave liabilities.
- Financial reporting transparency.
- Potential work health and safety impacts arising from recruitment delays.
- External audit and whistleblowing arrangements involving KPMG.

Senate requested that management seek assurance regarding KPMG’s external audit and whistleblower service arrangements and report back through the Audit and Risk Committee.

7. Mission and Identity

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Catholic Mission) provided an update on Mission and Identity activities, including upcoming student retreats and implementation of recommendations arising from the Mission Review. Senate noted a pilot Mission team project underway in Brisbane and the continuing rollout of Ex Corde staff formation programs.

8. Report from Corporation Secretary

The Corporation Secretary presented updates regarding:

- Senate membership following the 2026 Annual General Meeting.
- The Governance Principles gap analysis and Constitution Review.
- The Chancellor Roles and Responsibilities Statement.
- Internal audit of the Risk Management Framework and Culture.
- CRICOS registration renewal preparations.
- Extraordinary Delegations activated during a Code White Critical Incident.
- The Contract Execution Register.
- TEQSA Regulatory Register.

Senate congratulated re-elected Senators and noted the reappointment of the Chancellor for a further five-year term.

9. Report of the Academic Board

The Chair of Academic Board provided an update on stakeholder engagement since commencing as Chair and outlined a focus on strengthening academic governance, enhancing visibility of academic activities and exploring opportunities for engagement with regulators and sector bodies. Senate noted the digest of the Academic Board meeting held on 29 April 2026.

10. Student and Public Complaints Report

Senate considered the 2025 Student and Public Complaints Report and noted that reported matters represent a relatively small proportion of overall student activity. Discussion focused on complaint themes, assessment-related concerns, local resolution processes and opportunities to improve reporting, trend analysis and visibility of complaint resolution timeframes.

11. Report of the Finance and Resources Committee

Senate noted discussions held by the Finance and Resources Committee regarding investment performance, ethical investments and major strategic projects, including the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and Student Management System (SMS) projects. Significant business cases for these initiatives will return to Senate in due course.

12. Modern Slavery Statement 2025

Senate approved the 2025 Modern Slavery Statement and noted continuing improvements to reporting, risk assessment and presentation. Senators discussed assurance mechanisms supporting the Statement and recommended greater visibility of governance assurance processes in future reports.

13. Report of the Audit and Risk Committee

Senate noted the report of the Audit and Risk Committee and discussed:

- Compliance with the Guidelines to Counter Foreign Interference in the Australian University Sector.
- Health, Safety and Wellbeing.
- Wage Compliance.
- Staff Complaints.
- Workplace Gender Equality Agency reporting.
- Cyber Security.

Foreign Interference Compliance

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) reported on increasing national scrutiny of foreign interference risks within higher education and research. Senate noted enhanced regulatory requirements, implementation of the updated University Foreign Interference Taskforce framework, recruitment of specialist capability and strengthened controls for research collaborations and partnerships.

Health, Safety and Wellbeing

The Chief People Officer reported improved safety reporting structures and increasing sector-wide awareness of psychosocial risk. Senate discussed Employee Assistance Program utilisation, psychosocial hazards, safety culture and development of more sophisticated risk management capabilities.

Wage Compliance

Senate noted continued progress under the wage remediation program, including advancement of superannuation and long service leave remediation activities. Management advised that the program remains on schedule and budget, with ongoing engagement with the Fair Work Ombudsman.

Staff Complaints Report

Senate reviewed the 2025 Staff Complaints Report and noted a decline in complaints compared to previous years. Discussion focused on manager capability, complaint resolution processes, staff support services and complaint trend monitoring across organisational units.

Workplace Gender Equality Agency Report

The Chief People Officer highlighted ACU's strong pay equity outcomes for comparable work, with gender pay gaps below two per cent. Senate discussed future gender equality targets, workforce composition, leadership representation and reporting requirements. Further analysis and reporting will be provided to Senate.

14. Report of the Honorary Awards Committee

Senate approved the awarding of the Honorary Degree of Doctor of the University to one nominee.

15. Reports from State Chapters

Senate noted the following reports:

- ACT State Chapter meeting of 28 May 2026.
- NSW State Chapter meeting of 25 May 2026.
- Victorian State Chapter meeting of 19 May 2026.
- Queensland Chapter had not met since the previous Senate meeting.