

SENATE DIGEST FOR MEETING OF 6 AUGUST 2026

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chancellor welcomed new Senators Gregory Eddy and Thomas Coles, acknowledged the successful Senate Dinner held the previous evening and thanked Senators for their contribution to Planning Day. Apologies were noted from Francine Pirola and Professor Michael Champion.

2. Report from Chancellor

Senate approved the proposed membership of the Mission Committee, comprising nominated Senators and ex-officio members, and supported approaching a proposed nominee regarding potential co-opted external membership. Meeting frequency and administrative support will be determined before the October 2026 meeting.

Committee membership changes were confirmed, with Gregory Eddy joining the Finance and Resources Committee and Róisín Annesley replacing Marita Corbett on the Honorary Awards Committee. Senate also received an update on ACU's strong relationships with the Holy See and the value of maintaining positive diplomatic relationships.

3. Report from Vice-Chancellor and President

Higher Education Standards Framework amendments place increased emphasis on governance, transparency, risk oversight and alignment with the Expert Council on University Governance Principles. A governance gap analysis is underway ahead of implementation from 1 January 2027, alongside work concerning new requirements relating to racism prevention.

Expanded Commonwealth-supported placement funding now extends to a broader range of disciplines, particularly allied health.

Senators were informed of recent funding success and that Advancement income is approaching the 2026 target. A five-year Deed of Gift will support a lecturer position in Classical Hebrew, while donations have increased the value of the University Art Collection.

An external review of the Centre for Education and Innovation identified opportunities to streamline ACU's education and innovation ecosystem and strengthen leadership. A reconfigured senior leadership structure is being considered.

ACU continues to strengthen its relationship with the University of Notre Dame Australia through open communication and collaboration.

Senate supported development of a strategic partnership map to clarify key stakeholder relationships, accountability and outcomes. Social cohesion and interreligious dialogue were identified as areas of growing strategic importance. The next phase of Vision 2033 will focus on growth and expansion, with particular attention to mission and enterprise.

4. Provost Report

The Provost reported improved enrolment load and revenue performance, including increased nursing enrolments and additional placement capacity approved by ANMAC. Senate discussed international student allocations and visa settings, the reduction of Commonwealth Supported Places for ACU in 2027, and the effect of allocation uncertainty on planning and budgeting.

Senate noted exploration of offshore education partnerships with Catholic institutions, opportunities to leverage ACU's position in teacher education and the STEM Centre of Excellence, and continuing risks to professional placements arising from workforce shortages and reduced supervisor availability.

The Provost reported continued action to reduce workforce casualisation. Senate also discussed the Long-term Business Plan, including a staged approach to further exploration of the Brisbane campus; gender balance across the University; education enrolment trends; student retention in Law and Business; and changing student behaviour concerning early offers for admission. The next spotlight report will focus on the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy.

Enterprise Bargaining Update

Senate noted that bargaining was nearing completion and that the proposed Enterprise Agreement was with the unions for holistic review before a staff vote and referral to the Fair Work Commission. If approved, the agreed pay increase will be backdated to 1 June for staff employed at that date. The collaborative approach of management and the unions, and the Provost's leadership through the negotiations, were acknowledged.

5. Finance Report

The Chief Financial Officer reported an operating position stronger than budget at the half-year mark, with research income and investment returns also exceeding expectations. Declining international student fee revenue was partly offset by growth in domestic enrolments.

Operating expenses are expected to increase in the second half of 2026 due to Enterprise Agreement salary increases, clinical placement salary costs and delayed project expenditure, partly offset by vacancy savings and reductions in staff leave liability. The University is expected to conclude 2026 broadly in line with budget, with potential for a modest positive result. Senate also discussed deferred IT and cyber expenditure and increased academic casual staffing costs.

6. Mission and Identity Update

Senate noted the forthcoming *Ex Corde* formation program, commencing with the Senior Executive in September before national rollout; the Centre for Liturgy's contribution to the local Church; community engagement in Timor-Leste; and a Brisbane pilot with NET Ministries focused on peer-to-peer student formation.

7. Report from Corporation Secretary

Senate Membership and Meeting Arrangements

Senate noted current membership and committee allocations. The Secretary will review the Senate agenda structure and meeting timings before the October meeting, following discussion about prioritising key reports and allowing sufficient time for increasingly complex business.

Governance Update

Senate considered progress on the Constitution Review, the Governance Principles gap analysis, amended Threshold Standards and external reviews of corporate and academic governing bodies. Senate supported development of a Statement of Principles to communicate its views to Corporation Members regarding the Constitution Review, drawing on and updating the position developed by Senate during the previous Constitution Review.

Senate emphasised the need to balance civil, canonical and mission considerations; resolve fundamental issues concerning membership, composition, reserve powers and State Chapters; and maintain continuous compliance through refreshed workplans and reporting cycles. Emerging obligations include a five-year external governance review cycle, internal reviews between external reviews, and strengthened expectations for racism prevention, complaints management, accountability and assurance.

Delegations of Authority

Senate approved revised payroll-related delegations to address historical exclusion of payroll tax and other expenses from delegation limits. Standard authority under clauses 3.29 and 3.30 were increased, with specified office holders authorised to exercise the delegations. Extraordinary authority beyond standard payment amounts was also approved, subject to appropriate advice. Senate also approved miscellaneous consequential amendments to the Delegations of Authority.

Registers

Senate noted the Contract Execution Register for 4 June to 20 July 2026 and the July 2026 Regulatory Register.

8. Report of the Academic Board

Senate noted the digest of the Academic Board meeting held on 24 June 2026. The Chair highlighted the implications of amended Threshold Standards for academic governance, including consultation, student participation, contestability and academic risk reporting. Senate discussed staff development responsibilities, proposed English language proficiency changes and the transition of the online mental health offering to the Online Program Manager.

9. Report of the Senate Standing Committee

Senate noted the report of the Senate Standing Committee meeting held on 16 July 2026.

10. Report of the Finance and Resources Committee

Senate noted the Committee's consideration of year-to-date financial results, the Rome Campus, gender equity reporting, cash management, procurement exemptions and the Long-term Business Plan.

Enterprise Systems Update

Enterprise Resource Planning: preferred vendors have been selected for a new human resources system, finance system upgrade or replacement, and payroll system replacement.

Student Management System: an upgrade is being considered as more cost-effective and efficient than replacement, with a decision required by the end of August.

Network as a Service: market testing is underway to assess whether an outsourced model would improve operational effectiveness.

Controlled Entity: Rome Campus

Senate approved establishment of ACU Roma SRL as a wholly owned controlled entity to support ACU's operations in Italy and broaden opportunities for facility use, Catholic study tours, local engagement, European partnerships and funding. Initial arrangements provide for a three-director board, with implementation details to be finalised before incorporation.

Senate discussed board composition, appointment processes, reporting lines, Senate oversight and delegations. The Vice-Chancellor was authorised to approve non-material implementation changes and delegated reserved authority over directors, constitutional documents, annual plans and budgets, financial statements, material transactions and commitments, material changes to the entity's scope, and governance arrangements.

Gender, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Senate noted organisational development initiatives to expand career and development opportunities for academic and professional staff, acknowledging staff concerns about perceived limitations in advancement opportunities. Senate also discussed staff belonging

and connection and noted positive trends in gender equity, including increased participation and success of women in promotion processes.

11. Report of the Audit and Risk Committee

Senate noted the report of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 14 July 2026.

Gender-Based Violence

Senate noted ACU's response to the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence, support mechanisms for staff and students, confidentiality and triage arrangements, and work to build sustainable case-management capacity. Management's response was commended, and the importance of supporting staff exposed to complaints and gender-based violence matters was emphasised.

Wage Compliance

Senate noted that the wage compliance program is progressing according to plan and that centralisation of pay claim processing is nearing completion.

CRICOS Review

Senate noted that most rectification recommendations have been implemented, with the remaining actions expected to be completed by the October submission date.

Compliance, Audit and Risk

Senate noted ongoing work to address audit findings and delayed actions, quarterly updates to the CARM Risk Register, and review of the Risk Appetite Statement by an Audit and Risk Committee working group. Risk management will remain a standing Senate agenda item.

12. Reports from State Chapters

Senate received and noted reports from:

- ACT State Chapter meeting of 28 May 2026.
- NSW State Chapter meeting of 25 May 2026.
- Queensland State Chapter meeting of 23 June 2026.
- Victorian State Chapter meeting of 19 May 2026.