

SENATE DIGEST FOR MEETING OF 19 JUNE 2025

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chancellor noted it was the first meeting for the following newly appointed Senators:

- Anne Kirwan (Chapter Nominee ACT);
- Damian Murphy (Chapter Nominee VIC);
- Marita Corbett (Panel Nominee QLD);
- Róisín Annesley KC (Panel Nominee VIC);
- Associate Professor Monica Wong (elected Academic Staff member); and
- Professor Michael Champion (elected Academic Staff member).

The Chancellor also welcomed back the following re-appointed Senators:

- Dr Peter Steer (Chapter Nominee QLD); and
- Francine Pirola (Panel Nominee NSW).

Senate noted that Pope Leo XIV appointed Bishop Shane Mackinlay as the next Archbishop of Brisbane with an installation date scheduled for 11 September 2025.

The Chancellor formally acknowledged Archbishop Mark Coleridge, outgoing Archbishop of Brisbane, for his many years of dedicated service to the Church and the wider community.

2. Business Arising

Ella Birt, Student Member provided an update on the Public Roundtable for Student Unions and Student Council Members, hosted by The Expert Council on University Governance. Ms Birt reported on the key themes discussed at the roundtable, and Senators discussed the themes.

3. Report from Chancellor

The Chancellor provided an update on meetings and events attended since the last meeting of Senate.

4. Report from Vice-Chancellor and President

The Vice-Chancellor and President welcomed the newly appointed Senators and provided an overview of the structure and purpose of the Vice-Chancellor's Reports.

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

- The return of the Labor Government is significant for the higher education sector and the University. The Vice-Chancellor extended congratulations to several ministers who have resumed their previous portfolios and emphasised the University's commitment to maintaining proactive non-partisan engagement with political representatives, particularly those connected to local campuses.
- The Vice-Chancellor continues to serve as a member of the Board of Universities Australia which has engaged extensively with the Hon. Jason Clare MP, who has resumed his role as Minister for Education.

- International education remains a key policy focus. Ministerial Direction 111, which governs the processing of international student visas, will stay. Under this directive, visa processing continues at a regular rate until institutions reach 80% of their allocated quota (1,700 students in ACU's case), after which processing is expected to slow.
- ACU is operating in excess of the 2024 enrolment numbers and it is expected that 2025 enrolment numbers will exceed the Enrolment Plan target.
- The current full year financial forecast anticipates a net result of \$15.6 million (+2.3%), representing a +\$2.1 million improvement to budget.
- ACU has, for the first time in its history, participated as a Tier 1 Partner in a national Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) bid proposal: the AI for Learning Innovation and Future Education CRC (AI for LIFE). Through close collaboration, ACU and its Catholic education partner network have collectively pledged \$7.4 million cash over 10 years.
- The Faculty of Education and Arts has been awarded \$249,920 in funding for 'Online professional learning for teachers in mathematics in Victoria.'
- The University has received a number of philanthropic donations, including \$250,000 from Emerge Foundation for educational opportunities in East Timor, an endowed scholarship donation of \$150,000 from the Darcy Brennan Foundation. The Trustees of the Fund for Jewish Higher Education have contributed \$138,795 towards a Classical Hebrew position at ACU.
- ACU achieved unprecedented media impact surrounding the death of Pope Francis and the election of Pope Leo XIV, with over 4,500 media mentions, an editorial reach of 2.09B and an estimated advertising value equivalent of \$33M. The Vice-Chancellor expressed his appreciation to the academic leaders that played a part, and to the capable media team.

Senators discussed:

- Commendation of staff for their coverage and engagement during the recent papal events.
- The University's growth strategy, including questions around optimal institutional size and the balance between quantity and quality.
- Government protocol and caps on international student enrolment.
- ACU's role in expanding access to higher education, particularly for underrepresented groups.
- The importance of aligning international student recruitment with ACU's mission.

5. ESOS / CRICOS Registration

Senate endorsed a proposal outlining the approach and program of work to support ACU's CRICOS registration renewal.

6. Mission and Identity

The Chancellor and Senate acknowledged Fr Anthony Casamento's service to ACU.

The Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor Catholic Mission provided an update the Thematic Review of Identity and Mission.

7. Report from Corporation Secretary

The Corporation Secretary presented updates in relation to:

- Annual General Meeting of Corporation;
- Deeds of Access, Indemnity and Insurance;

- Delegations of Authority and Policy Register; and
- Contract Execution Register.

8. Staff and Student Complaints

Senate discussed and noted the 2024 Staff and Student Complaints Reports.

9. Report of the Academic Board

The Chair of Academic Board provided an update of the Academic Board meeting and highlighted the following:

- The Academic Board is transitioning from its previous Academic Board specific register to a more comprehensive academic risk register. This initiative aligns with insights from the recent TEQSA conference, where the regulator expressed interest in institutions adopting a holistic approach to academic risk oversight.
- The Academic Board's work follows a seasonal rhythm, with the mid-year period focused on the review, updating and preparation of academic materials for market readiness in 2026.
- Strengthening the nexus between teaching and research is an emerging thematic focus expanding Higher Degree Research (HDR) offerings and developing academic programs that foster HDR pathways.

10. Report of the Finance and Resources Committee

Senators discussed the report which included a summary of items discussed at the 19 May meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee. Senators engaged in a wide-ranging discussion covering strategic investment, digital infrastructure, financial management, and organisational resilience.

Senate noted the Sustainability Report and approved the Modern Slavery Statement 2025.

11. Report of the Audit and Risk Committee

Senators discussed the report which included a summary of items discussed at the 9 May meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee.

The Director, LAG referred to anticipated regulatory activity across the sector prompted by the commencement of ATEC, potential adjustments to TEQSA's powers, and the deliberations of the Expert Council. In response to the anticipated increase in sector regulation, the Director, LAG emphasised the importance of developing a coordinated Compliance Framework to foster engagement with staff across ACU, enhance the efficiency of assurance processes and ensure obligations are met through integrated risk management practices.

Senators discussed the internal audit schedule and discussed and noted the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Report.

12. Reports from State Chapters

Senate noted the following Reports from State Chapters:

- Report of the ACT State Chapter meeting of 22 May 2025.

- Report of the NSW State Chapter meeting of 26 May 2025.
- Report of the Victorian State Chapter meeting 02/2025 of 21 May 2025.
- Report of VMAC to the 20 May 2025 meeting of the Victorian Chapter.

13. Senate Annual Workplan

The Corporation Secretary presented the Workplan to Senate in the tabled format for the first time. Developed by Governance and Assurance, the Secretary noted that its purpose was to clarify the rationale for the timing and presentation of reports to Senate throughout the year.

Senate noted the Senate Annual Plan.