

SENATE DIGEST FOR MEETING OF 15 AUGUST 2025

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chancellor welcomed all Senators and attendees to the meeting and noted the apologies.

2. Report from Vice-Chancellor and President

The Vice-Chancellor presented the Report, noting that key elements were shared with Senate during the Planning Day held on 14 August. The Vice-Chancellor highlighted the following:

- The government-imposed visa processing restrictions for international students remain in place pending a new directive with public universities eligible for a 9% increase in international enrolments.
- The interim Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) is operational and is actively exploring its purpose, including possible changes to the Job-Ready Graduate Scheme.
- ACU's rapid growth in Higher Degree Research (HDR) student enrolments, with numbers increasing by over 12% in 2024 and the target for 2025 having already been met. The Vice-Chancellor acknowledged the contributions of the Graduate Research School and faculties in achieving this outcome.
- Category 3 earnings increased by nearly 25% year-on-year and have risen by approximately 72% since 2022, reflecting ACU's collaborative research efforts.
- The Vice-Chancellor attended the SACRU Governing Board Meeting in Guadalajara, where leadership transitioned to Professor Isabel Capeloa Gil. This was followed by participation in the 28th International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU) General Assembly, which brought together global Catholic university leaders to discuss shared academic priorities. During the visit, the Vice-Chancellor also met with senior officials at the Australian Embassy to Mexico and participated in a roundtable on education collaboration. A key outcome was the signing of a formal Collaboration Agreement between ACU and The Fund for the Development of Human Resources (FIDERH), enabling financial support for Mexican postgraduate students at ACU.
- Increased enrolment figures per the Provost Report.

Senators discussed the following:

- Universities Australia (of which the Vice-Chancellor is a board member), sought guidance from TEQSA regarding the inclusion of a formal definition of antisemitism in the Higher Education Standards. TEQSA advised that defining specific forms of discrimination is not within the regulator's remit, given the broader context of equity and inclusion. The Vice-Chancellor noted that although the Government is awaiting the report from the Special Envoy on Islamophobia, ACU has developed a plan of approach, led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education). The University will approach this collaboratively, aligning with sector-wide efforts while drawing on its Catholic identity and foundational documents.
- Senate discussed the potential impact of international funding volatility on research. The Vice-Chancellor noted that while some projects have been indirectly affected by funding withdrawals, the impact on ACU has been marginal to date. The University continues to monitor sector-wide developments, particularly those related to US funding dependencies. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) is actively engaged in national-level discussions on this issue.
- Senate discussed the need to expand capacity for PhD enrolments. Senate noted that supervisor availability, research track record, and regular engagement with students are critical factors in supporting growth.

3. Appointment of Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Catholic Mission)

The Vice-Chancellor provided an update regarding the appointment of a Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Catholic Mission)

4. Revision Senior Executive Titles

The Vice-Chancellor provided an update on the proposed revision of senior executive titles, specifically the change from Chief Operating Officer (COO) to Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Corporate), aligning with sector-wide nomenclature. The Vice-Chancellor noted that this change would create consistency across the University's executive structure, with five Deputy Vice-Chancellors reporting directly to the Vice-Chancellor.

Senators confirmed that the revised title represented a title change only, with no structural implications, and was designed to align with sector norms, where professional (non-academic) leadership is commonly designated as a Deputy Vice-Chancellor role.

The Vice-Chancellor used the discussion of senior roles to advise that the process to appoint a new Dean of the Faculty of Education and Arts was nearing completion. The Vice-Chancellor foreshadowed a circular resolution in the coming week to expedite the appointment, given the extended period between selection and commencement.

Senate approved the retitling of the Chief Operating Officer to Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Corporate) and the discontinuation of the Vice President title, following the appointment of a Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Catholic Mission), and approved the necessary adjustments to relevant Delegations of Authority to reflect these changes.

5. Mission and Identity

The Chancellor acknowledged Rev Dr Gerald Gleeson's appointment as the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Catholic Mission).

Rev Dr Gleeson provided Senators with an update on the Thematic Review of Identity and Mission. Senators discussed the update and noted the Report.

6. Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) Report

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) presented an update on the Education Portfolio and highlighted the following:

- Higher Education in Australia and globally is undergoing profound transformation. The Universities Accord is driving major reforms, including establishment of the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) and setting a tertiary attainment target of 80% by 2050. Lifelong learning is increasingly important, and AI is having a profound and long-lasting impact in the sector.
- The Education Portfolio is exploring mechanisms to achieve the ambitious targets set for 2033, with a focus on developing a holistic approach to the student experience at ACU. A substantial consultation process is underway to gather insights and data to inform future planning.
- Efforts are being made to unify the Education Portfolio, with a view to identifying opportunities for integration within the Portfolio and also across other areas, including the Provost and Mission Portfolios.
- Legislative changes have introduced reforms to the management of Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF) revenue. ACU has a government-approved Transition Plan in

place to gradually increase the percentage allocation to student led organisations. Historically ACU allocated 8% of SSAF revenue to student led organisations. As part of the Transition Plan, this will increase from 20% in 2025, to 30% in 2026 and 40% in 2027.

- The Education Portfolio is currently developing the ACU Education and Student Success Plan.
- The National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence was established in 2024 and sets significant requirements across seven standards to establish a whole-of-institution approach to address gender-based violence. Key priorities for ACU include developing a Whole-of-Institution Prevention and Response Plan, a new organisation wide policy on gender-based violence and ensuring appropriate experts conduct risk assessments and investigations in response to disclosures of gender-based violence.
- New gender information reporting requirements for the Tertiary Collection of Student Information (TCSI) system came into effect in 2025 to align with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)'s statistical standard for gender. The allowable values for the E315: Gender code are now F (Female/Woman), M (Male/Man), N (Non-Binary), D (Different Term), and P (Prefer not to answer). This change will impact student and HR systems.
- The AI Council was established in 2024 to implement ACU's GenAI Action Plan, 2024-2026. The AI Council developed a Principles for Use of Artificial Intelligence in Teaching, Research and Research Training Policy.
- The AI Council also established an AI Incubator in 2025 to facilitate funding requests and early-stage conceptualisation and development or progression of a range of AI initiatives to the point where they can be rolled out, scaled, and operationalised.

Senators discussed the reallocation of SSAF funding and its impact on service delivery, the establishment of governance and compliance structures for AI, the composition and purpose of the AI Council, and the challenges of aligning the University's conservative risk appetite with diverse teaching practices.

7. Report from Corporation Secretary

The Corporation Secretary presented updates in relation to:

- Rome Campus – Special Power of Attorney to the Chief Operating Officer; and
- Contract Execution Register.

8. Report of the Academic Board

The Chair of the Academic Board presented the Report of the 9 July Meeting and 2 July circular resolution of Academic Board and highlighted two key matters:

- The Courses and Academic Quality Committee reviewed the impact of the Grade Point Average (GPA) threshold for end-on Honours Courses.
- The 2024 TEQSA Conference prompted institutions to assess their academic risk profiles. The Chair explained that threats to academic programs are addressed within a policy framework supported by appropriate controls. The Academic Board will continue monitoring this dynamic process and will review outcomes at its November meeting.

9. Report of the Senate Standing Committee

Senate:

- noted the Report of the 7 July meeting of the Senate Standing Committee.

- noted the increase in remuneration for members of Senate, as set out in the amendment to the Senate and Senate Sub-Committee Remuneration Policy. The Chancellor noted that the increase is consistent with the percentage salary increase staff will receive under the Enterprise Agreement.
- approved the amendment of Statute 2.5 - The Academic Board.
- approved the removal of the 'Governing Bodies' title from:
 - Statute 2.2 - Governing Bodies: The Finance and Resources Committee,
 - Statute 2.3 - Governing Bodies: The Audit and Risk Committee,
 - Statute 2.6 - Governing Bodies: The Faculties,
 - Statute 2.7 - Governing Bodies: The Centres, Academies and Research Institutes,
 - Statute 2.8 - Governing Bodies: The National Schools, and
 - Statute 2.9 - Governing Bodies: The Honorary Awards Committee.
- approved the amendment of Statute 8.3 - Elections to the Academic Board
- approved the rescission of Statute 8.4 - Elections to the Committees of Academic Board.

10. Report of the Finance and Resources Committee

Senate:

- discussed and noted the report of the 21 July meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee.
- noted the Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI) report, Quarter 1 2025.

11. Report of the Audit and Risk Committee

Senators discussed and noted the report of the 21 July meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee.

Senate discussed wage compliance, risk appetite and internal audit and approved minor changes to the Risk Appetite Statement.

12. Reports from State Chapters

Senate noted the following Reports from State Chapters:

- Report of the Queensland State Chapter meeting of 10 June 2025.