Academic Policy at the University of Melbourne
The Board

• The entire professoriate
  – 480 members, meets monthly, about 85-110 attend each meeting.

• 3 elected officers
  – typically nominated by previous board officers.

• President, Vice President and Deputy Vice President
  – Elected annually for a maximum of two years.
• Academic Board comprises professoriate and reports to Council
  – not to VC, Provost or management.

• Board operates through 8 major committees
  – all with both appointed and elected members.

• Board Officers participate in executive processes.
4.1.2 (1) a. The Board is responsible to Council for the supervision and development of all academic activities of the University, including the maintenance of high standards in teaching and research;
b. determination of all matters related to courses and subjects, admission and enrolment of students, and assessment and admission to degrees, save for those matters expressly reserved by legislation as requiring Council decision
c. development and maintenance of policies and rules governing academic matters;
d. approving the terms of and awarding prizes, scholarships and other forms of recognition governing academic matters and
e. communication with the academic community through the faculties and other academic units

(2) a. Consistent with the generality of sub-section (1), and having regard in particular to the responsibilities vested in the Board as reflected therein and in other University statutes, the Board must provide Council with any information or reports required by Council, including - reporting systematically to Council on all matters for which the Board is responsible to Council as set out in subsection (1), and otherwise on the Board’s contribution towards the achievement by the University of any strategic plans approved by Council from time to time; and
b. supplying Council with adequate, appropriate and timely information on matters within the responsibility of the Board which then enables Council and its committees to conduct inquiries, to make assessments and judgments, and to gain assurance that the decisions and actions of the Board are appropriate to the achievement by the University of any strategic plans approved by Council from time to time, and otherwise to the objects and values of the University;

(3) a. Consistent with the generality of sub-section (1), the Board must also - unless otherwise provided in a statute, act as the final appeal body within the University in all matters relating to students and their grievances against decisions made by University bodies or by individual officers, or in such matters relating to persons who have ceased to be students because of the decision complained of;
b. consider any reports submitted to it by any faculty or other body;
c. exercise the powers and perform the duties of a faculty for all courses not pertaining to or assigned for administrative purposes to any faculty; and
d. exercise any other powers or perform any other duties conferred or imposed on the Board by any other statute or regulation or by any resolution of Council.
Principal Academic Board Committees 2012

- **Selection Procedures Committee**
  - Entry criteria and entry pathways.

- **Academic Programs Committee**
  - Course and subject approvals, academic policy.

- **Teaching and Learning Quality Assurance Committee**
  - Key audit role, course reviews, management and monitoring of institutional student academic surveys.

- **Teaching and Learning Development Committee**
  - Innovation in curricular development and delivery.

- **Coursework Scholarships and Awards Committee**
  - Policy and approvals for scholarships and prizes.

- **Library and Academic Resources Committee**
  - Policy and quality assurance for academic information resources.

- **Research Higher Degrees Committee**
  - Policy relating to RHD students (including course changes).

- **IT Committee**
  - Evaluates the impact of IT infrastructure and services on the academy
• Based around the student cycle
  – Selection to graduation/alumnus (cradle to grave)

• Broad based sources of unfiltered truth

• Critical in policy development
  – Consultation during development
  – Logical link between policy and procedure
  – Road testing prior to implementation
Origin of policy changes

- External: TEQSA, AQF, ESOS etc
- Top down: Dependencies on enterprise systems, major structural reforms
- Bottom up: Policy improvements, removing ambiguities and rectifying failures
Purpose of Academic Board Policies

- To serve University council
- To influence academic behaviour
- To uphold and advance high standards of quality and equity
- To minimise complaints
- To deal with complaints fairly and transparently
- To satisfy external auditors
- To provide a framework for implementation of academic programs through procedures
• **Collegial and consultative by nature**
  - Highly geared around Academic Board committees
  - Time consuming
  - Resource intensive (staff time and energy)

• **Critical in good governance**
  - Facilitates communication, understanding and compliance
  - Preserves institutional trust that these changes are for the right reasons, not just corporate financial health.
  - Avoids extremes in unintended outcomes
    - Too restrictive leads to deliberate noncompliance and loss of trust
    - Too flexible leads to confusion and indefensible variations in outcome
What is good policy?

- Relevant to those it affects
- Guides actions and also inactions
- Is clear on where outcomes are prescriptive and/or where judgment is expected to be exercised
- Leads to sensible, reasonable and just outcomes
- Accommodates institutional diversity

- Indicators
  - High level of compliance
  - Dissent has been noted and reasonably accommodated
  - Minimal grievances and appeals
  - Ombudsman is happy
  - Not on the front page of tabloid press
Students who arrive late to exams
• Excluded from examination
  – Inconsistent outcomes for students
  – Some outcomes seem inherently uncharitable
  – Need to preserve examination integrity
  – Based on a premise about disturbance to students
  – Negative outcomes for both students and staff

• Need some flexibility in an area that has high risk if prescribed conditions are also degraded
Managing University-wide undergraduate courses

• No longer a single faculty responsibility
• Undergraduate courses designated to custodial faculties
• Management of subject availability, prerequisites and breadth
• Course advice has to be University-wide, and expert.
• Management of student subject load is now much more difficult.
  – Policy changes can induce major shifts in load (e.g., changing prerequisites, imposition of quotas, timetabling and access programs)
  – Student experiences matter and these are no longer controlled by a single faculty
  – Cultural/discipline differences in the way students are treated are now impossible to hide, or to tolerate, when this leads to inconsistent treatment of students
Concurrent study and graduate coursework pathways for NGD students completing in 2010-11

Width of lines reflects (log-transformed) volume of concurrent study and graduate flows; lateral transfer and enabling studies excluded; qualifications coloured by type
Graduations 2006-2012

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Month/Year</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2011</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>3268</td>
<td>1447</td>
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<td>May</td>
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<td>August</td>
<td>1463</td>
<td>3468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>3679</td>
<td>8459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>8629</td>
<td>14,214</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Currently excluded 2538 diploma and certificate recipients.
- 40+ graduation ceremonies planned for 2012.
• Board sets calendar dates, subject quotas

• Implementation under management of Provost, Academic Registrar:
  – 1300 subjects per semester.
  – 13,000 scheduling items per semester.
  – 3-400 clash sets to resolve out of a potential approaching 36,000.

• Timetabling a key issue for students and it affects subject loads and students satisfaction
“New” but imperfect policy instruments

breadth, concurrent diplomas, subject approval processes, undergraduate course management, academic advising, special consideration, on-line student surveys, acceptance of electronic versions of documents for admission.

Policy vacuums

proliferation of graduate schools, confusion of Honours versus Masters pathways, standardization of GPA calculations, interdisciplinary programs development, countering risk-adverse student choices for subjects, guaranteed pathways for incoming students, cross-crediting and student transfers between undergraduate courses, inflexibility of undergraduate student choices, progression rules for postgraduate coursework and RHD students.