

The University of Sydney Association of Professors

The Council of the University of Sydney Association of Professors submits the following comments, which were drafted by Emeritus Professors R.G.H. Prince and H.C. Freeman.

Once upon a time there was a Professorial Board.....

1. The Professorial Board comprised a group of individuals, who were responsible for their academic discipline, and who were therefore responsible for carrying out the Board's decisions so far as they applied to that discipline. This gave them a personal commitment to the Board and to the Board's decisions, which were in effect the University's academic policies. The members of the Board were not making policies that would have to be carried out by others.
2. The Senate recognised that the members of the Board were also the persons who translated academic policies into action and who had to wear the consequences. The effective academic standards of the University were thus in the hands of the Board's members, and the Board could be seen by the Senate as the ultimate authority on academic matters.
3. The ex officio membership of Professors on the Board and the relatively low turnover rate guaranteed a long-term view of the Board's responsibilities, as well as a collective memory of the origin, development and logic of academic policies.
4. It was correctly predicted at the time that the two important attributes mentioned above - the long-term view and the collective memory - would be lost when the Board was converted into a body with a rotating membership.
5. It would be idle to pretend that the Professorial Board had only strengths. It also had weaknesses. Most of these were tied to particular weaknesses of individual professorial appointments.
6. The preceding comments are offered in the hope that the positive qualities of the Professorial Board, which served the University well over a long period, can be recaptured in any restructuring of the Academic Board.