ACUR | Australasian Council for Undergraduate Research

Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 22 November 2023 at 3:30pm AEST

Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne

& via Zoom Meeting

Minutes

Present

Angela Brew	Macquarie University	Muhummad Naufal	
Guy c	Australian National University	Thanh Bao Ngoc (Sarah)	
Daniel Bonatti	Western Sydney University	Nguyen	Swinburne University of Technology
Carmine Buss	The University of the Sunshine Coast	Charles O'Neill	The Australian National University
Luke Costa	Australian Catholic University	Emerald Orr	The University of the Sunshine Coast
Jacob Davis	Swinburne University of Technology	Nardiena Pratama	The University of Queensland
Isabelle El-Azzi	Western Sydney University	Melanie Qin	The University of the Sunshine Coast
Rohan Ford	Swinburne University of Technology	Tabish Ali Ratter	Swinburne University of Technology
Veve Fry	The Australian National University	Hannah Sandison	Macquarie University
Natasha Grant	Swinburne University of Technology	Mohita Singh	The University of Queensland
Emma Henry	The University of Queensland	Ksenia Sofronova	UNSW, Sydney
Xavier Holly-Schwaerzler	Swinburne University of Technology	Fien Van den Steen	The University of the Sunshine Coast
Sai Hossain	The Australian National University	Alicia Stramand	Deakin University
Mitchell Jack	The University of Queensland	Minal Tanvir	Western Sydney University
Emily Kopp	Macquarie University	Hong Quan Trinh	Swinburne University of Technology
Moana Krause	The University of the Sunshine Coast	Sonali Varma	The Australian National University
Anthony Lai	Macquarie University	Vidya	
Yuqi Liu	University of Queensland	Anita Walker	The University of the Sunshine Coast
Galen MacFarlane	Swinburne University of Technology	Wilson Wang	The University of Queensland
Francois Malherbe	Swinburne University of Technology	Tallulah Waterson	Swinburne University of Technology
Hermas Mann		Joseph Wenck	The University of Queensland
Cian Luke Martin	The University of Queensland	Jessica Whyman	The University of the Sunshine Coast
Lucas Medcraft	The Australian National University	Yifei Wu	Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Foo
Alexandra Mruk	Macquarie University	Yee Hang (Josie) Yip	The University of Queensland

Online

Melissa Bellanta	Australian Catholic University	Seak Lin Ly	
Donna Bennett	Office Logistics	Asheem Shrestha	Deakin University
Agnes Bosanquet	Macquarie University	Sara Wardak	The University of Sydney
Denise Buiten	The University of Notre Dame	Denise Wood	The University of the Sunshine Coast
Graham Hardy	The University of Adelaide	Rune Chi Zhao	The Australian National University

Apologies

Zlatko Skrbiš	Australian Catholic University	Lilia Mantai (late)	The University of Sydney
Olivia Urbaniak	The University of Sydney		

1. **Welcome and introduction**

The annual general meeting of The Australasian Council for Undergraduate Research was called to order at 3:38pm by ACUR Chair Angela Brew who welcomed all present.

2. **Minutes of the Fifth Annual ACUR AGM held on Friday 30 September 2022**

The minutes of the previous meeting held at the University of Sydney Business School and via Zoom on 30 September 2022 were distributed to registrants before the meeting.

Motion: That the Minutes of the AGM held on 30 September 2022 be accepted
Moved by Angela Brew and seconded by Carmen Buss   *Carried*

3. **Business arising from the minutes** – Nil

4. **Financial Report**

An audit of the accounts had been carried out as required in the ACUR Constitution (17.1) and the audit report had been circulated. There was a small surplus of $539.

Motion: That the ACUR 2022-2023 Financial Report be accepted
Moved by Charlie O'Neil and seconded by Guy Archibald   *Carried*

4.2 **Membership fees: To approve the membership fees as stated in the Financial Report for the remainder of the 2023-24 financial year. These fees have remained unchanged since 2019.**

Motion: That these Membership Fees be approved
Moved by Galen MacFarlane and seconded by Xavier Holly-Schwaerzler   *Carried*

4.3 **Appointment of Auditor**

The auditor for 2022-2023 Mauricio Marrone has suggested rotating auditors to maintain the highest levels of transparency and objectivity. Australian Fund Services provides audit services at a reasonable fee, so on behalf of the Treasurer the following motion was put.

Motion: That Australian Fund Services Pty Ltd be appointed as auditor for the association for the 2023-2024 financial year.
Proposed by: Charles O'Neill, seconded by Moana Krause   *Carried*

5. **Report of the Chair**

Introduction

A key question arising from the strategic planning exercise the ACUR Executive carried out this year was: how can ACUR add value to universities, academics, and students in their efforts to engage students in research? We have been mindful that ACUR is not alone and needs to link more substantially with organisations with related agendas. Two ways we are working to add value to membership are through working to reward excellent practice through competitive schemes open to academics and to students to be launched in 2024. Over 1,200 students have presented research at ACUR conferences, and we are currently working to add value to those experiences through the provision of mentorship opportunities.

Links with other networks

A key rationale for the ACUR Exchange Colloquium held at Notre Dame University, on 1 February was the idea that new approaches to undergraduate education can come about through cross fertilisation of ideas and networks: linking with industry-based projects, work-integrated learning, and students as partners. Edited videos and colloquium resources are now available on the ACUR website. Plans for a student mentorship scheme is one example of how ACUR is following up industry links and partnerships.

Finally

The expanded Executive this year has been important in enabling us to meet a large agenda and to plan for sustained growth. The Chair extended her thanks to all the members of the ACUR Executive and Student Committees for everything they had done this year to make ACUR such a vibrant and dynamic organisation. She

thanked Donna Bennett for keeping our work on track, and acknowledged the leadership of François Malherbe in bringing this year's ACUR conference to Swinburne University of Technology.

Motion: That the Report of the Chair be accepted
Moved by Angela Brew and seconded by Natasha Grant   ***Carried***

6. Report of the Executive Committee

The Executive Committee has grown this year in line with its increased workload. In view of this, the Executive advised that the following change to the Constitution be put to the AGM.

"There shall be an Executive Committee (hereafter called "the Executive") comprising the Chair, the Vice-Chair, the Treasurer, the serving Conference Organiser, the New Zealand Representative, two Student Representatives, an Executive Officer, *and any other roles the Executive may define*."

Motion: That the AGM accept the suggested change to the ACUR Constitution.
Moved by Galen MacFarlane and seconded by Xavier Holly-Schwaerzler   ***Carried***

Executive meetings
Four Executive meetings took place by Zoom during the year as well as regular email communication.

Student committee
The ACUR Student Committee is a committee within the Executive Committee. Under the leadership of Charlie O'Neill, the student committee has introduced a Discord server as a centralised communication hub to integrate academic and student communities, serving as both a forum for dialogue and as a collaborative workspace. Students will receive further details about the Discord service via email.

The Student Committee has implemented a LastPass account to mitigate the risks associated with password losses and ensure smooth transitions when personnel change.

The Student Committee is in the initial stages of developing a workshop for 2024 in conjunction with the ANU Science Society to be held in conjunction with the Three Minute Thesis competition in order to showcase undergraduate research. It focuses on the relationship between research supervisors and undergraduate students. The Committee also hopes to work with similar student-run organisations from other universities to pave the way for a more fluid exchange of ideas and opportunities in undergraduate research.

Strategic plan
The Executive Committee is required by the Constitution to conduct a strategic planning review of its activities every two years. The May meeting this year reviewed and renewed the Strategic Plan agreed in February 2021. New initiatives within four Strategic Projects were developed.

Strategic Project 1 – Increase Membership
Increasing Membership continues to be a challenge as undergraduate research can sometimes fall between the gaps of the decision-makers - DVC (Research) and DVC (Teaching & Learning) – each thinking it lies with the other. We need to make it clear it's about undergraduate curriculum and research.

Strategic Project 2 – Gain Sponsorship
We have appointed a Sponsorship officer (Seak Lin Ly) who is now working to establish a student career mentorship program that will provide opportunities for companies to mentor students.

Strategic Project 3 – Enhance Profiles and Support Recognition.
We continue to work to develop case studies of good practice and are now working to establish competitive ACUR medals for demonstrated excellence in initiatives to advance undergraduate research. A staff and a student medal will be available annually starting early in 2024.

Having established profiles of ACUR members on the ACUR website, we are now working to acknowledge significant past contributions to the establishment and development of ACUR.

Strategic Project 4 – Research and evaluation
The ACUR Executive continued to work on research projects and have been successful in publishing. Articles are outlined in the Executive committee report.

Further achievements in 2022-2023

- ***The second Exchange Colloquium*** was held in February 2023 at Notre Dame University, Sydney.
- ACUR published two issues of ***Undergraduate Research News Australasia*** (URNA issue 22 (edited by Lilia Mantai), and issue 23 (edited by Rachel Spronken-Smith).
- ACUR Established a regular ***"NewsUpdate"*** to ensure members are informed of developments on an ongoing basis.

Motion: It was proposed that the report of the Executive Committee be accepted.
Moved by Carmine Buss, seconded by Xavier Holly-Schwaerzler.   ***Carried***

7. Student Chair Nominations

Members of the Executive were appointed last year and serve for two years. The exception is the Head of the Student Committee who serves one year in the Ascending Position and one year in the Descending position where they provide guidance and mentoring to the Ascending Head. This means that every year there is a new Ascending Head.

Following a call for nominations, in early November as required by the Constitution, one nomination was received for the new Head of the Student Committee: Sara Wardak, The University of Sydney.

It was proposed that Sara Wardak's nomination for the Student Representative be accepted.
Moved by Angela Brew and seconded by Charlie O'Neill.   ***Carried***

Lilia Mantai joined the meeting.

The Chair proposed a note of thanks to Charlie O'Neill as Student Committee Chair for the work he had done leading the Student Committee over the last year. Charlie continues as the descending head for 2024.
Moved by Angela Brew and seconded by Guy Archibald.   ***Carried***

Sara Wardak noted that she was looking forward to working together with other students to improve ACUR in the future. She will write to all students shortly asking for expressions of interest to join the student committee.

Some students shared their experience of the conference and were motivated by the depth of research shown.

8. Conference and Events

8.1 Conference 2023
The 2023 conference was deemed a success, after a lot of work in the background within a short period of time.
It was noted that the presenters took on the advice of their referees and presented well.
The Conference Convenor François Malherbe noted that a souvenir booklet will be produced and distributed at a later date.
Angela personally thanked François and his team for creating this amazing event.

8.2 Conference 2024
ACUR is yet to find a host for 2024 but is committed to having a conference in 2024.
Attendees were advised that If they would like to have the conference at their university, they should take a leaflet and give it to their supervisor, the Teaching and Learning Centre or PVC (Research or Teaching and Learning).

8.3 Colloquium 2023
The second ACUR Undergraduate Research Exchange Colloquium took place on 1st February at Notre Dame University Sydney as has been noted earlier.

8.4 Other Events
It has been 10 years since the last Posters in Parliament event. The Chair noted that it is hoped that it may be possible to run another event in 2024. This is under discussion and will be dependent upon person-power being available. This event is for member institutions only, attendees in non-member institutions should encourage their institution to join.

9. **Newsletter Report (URNA)**

Lilia reported that Rachel Spronken-Smith edited the last issue while she was away on sabbatical leave.

The next issue is scheduled to be released before Christmas with updates on conference prizes and presentations, stories from UGR and supervisors, and all about the great work happening in Australasia.

Lilia said that she will be writing to invite attendees to contribute to the first issue in 2024.

Motion: It was proposed that the report of the Newsletter Editor be accepted.
Moved by Angela Brew and seconded by Charles O'Neill   *Carried*

10. **Any other business**

No other business was raised, the Chair thanked members for their attendance and contribution.

The meeting was closed by the Chair at 4:26 pm.