

FACULTY OF NURSING

**ACADEMIC BOARD VISIT TO REVIEW
TEACHING AND LEARNING AND
RESEARCH TRAINING**

TUESDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2002

**FINAL REPORT AND
RECOMMENDATIONS**

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The following Academic Board Review Team visited the Faculty of Nursing on Tuesday 17 September 2002 as part of the review and evaluation of teaching, learning and research training in all faculties within the University.

Chair

Assoc Professor Tony Masters *Chair, Academic Forum and Academic Board Chair nominee*

Team members

Professor Leslie Field *Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research)*
Dr Tania Gerzina *Faculty of Dentistry*
Professor Paul Ramsden *Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning)*
David Roberts *Faculty of Rural Management*

Administrative Officer

Rachel Symons *Quality Assurance Officer (Teaching and Learning)*

Assisting the Chair

Elizabeth Hanna *Executive Officer (Quality Assurance)*

Observers

Lee Britton *Faculty of Rural Management*
Dr Shalinie Gonsalkorale *Faculty of Dentistry*

- 1.2 During the visit the Team interviewed the following groups of staff and students:

- The Dean, Professor Jocalyn Lawler
- The Dean and Senior Faculty staff:
 - Professor, Sue Armitage *Pro-Dean (Academic), Dept Clinical Nursing*
 - Professor Dirk Keyzer *Chair, Rural and Remote Nursing*
 - Barbara Murphy *Head of Dept of Family and Community Nursing*
 - Associate Professor Sandra West *Head of Dept of Clinical Nursing*
- Undergraduate students (4 pre-registration and 2 post-registration)
- Postgraduate coursework students (4 Master of Nursing students)
- Postgraduate research students (2)
- Faculty academic and general staff (9)
- No students or staff participated in the open session (individual appointments) available to staff and students

- 1.3 The documentation provided by the Faculty on its teaching, learning and research training activities to the Review Team prior to the visit is listed in Appendix 1.

- 1.4 The Report provides a record of the Review Team's findings in relation to the teaching and learning and research training activities of the Faculty, based on the documentation considered and discussions with Faculty staff and students. The Report addresses the Team's deliberations under eight main headings:

- Background, Achievements and Hallmarks of the Faculty
- Communication
- Implementation of Academic Board Policies and Guidelines
- Graduate attributes, aims and outcomes
- Teaching and Learning
- Research and Research Training
- Benchmarking and Quality Assurance Processes
- Student Progression

The *Areas of good practice* and *Areas for consideration for improvement* identified by the Panel are provided both at the end of each section and in the Conclusions at the end of the Report in sections 11 and 12. The conclusions are cross-referenced with the full text of the report.

Meetings with students

The numbers of students that met with the Review Team were lower than is normally experienced at Reviews, even of smaller Faculties, a consequence of the number of part-time candidatures. Accordingly, the Team endeavoured to ascertain during the discussions whether the views expressed were representative. It also considered the views expressed in relation to CEQ and SCEQ results.

2. BACKGROUND, ACHIEVEMENTS AND HALLMARKS OF THE FACULTY

- 2.1 Prior to 1983, Nursing education was conducted primarily in hospitals (directly or by contracting out of teaching to, for example, Sydney Teachers College) or within the TAFE sector (including a program at the then Cumberland College of Health Sciences. Following State (1983) and Federal (1984) decisions, nurse education was to be transferred into the higher education sector by 1993. Initial qualifications were Diplomas of Applied Science (Nursing), and of Health Sciences (Nursing), with a Bachelor of Nursing, leading to registration, introduced in 1992. In 1990, the Institute of Nursing (Sydney College of Advanced Education) and the School of Nursing (Cumberland College of Health Sciences) amalgamated with the University of Sydney as the Faculty of Nursing (from 1991) and the School of Nursing, Faculty of Health Sciences, Cumberland College, respectively. The two groups were combined as the Faculty of Nursing in 1994.
- 2.2 The Cumberland School of Nursing remained as two departments within the Faculty until last year, when operations at Cumberland ceased. Coinciding with this consolidation of all of the Faculty's activities at the Mallet Street site has been a restructuring of the Faculty into two Departments: the Department of Clinical Nursing and the Department of Family and Community Nursing (previously there were five departments, and before that seven).
- 2.3 The Faculty has made considerable advances in the academic program against a background of a combination of Voluntary Early Retirements in 2000 and Voluntary Redundancies in 2001.
- 2.4 In summary, the Faculty has undergone a major restructuring and consolidation over the past decade, amalgamating with the University, restructuring into a single Faculty, consolidating the Faculty on a single site, and converting 7 academic departments to 5, then finally to 2 in 2000.
- 2.5 The Faculty notes that the integration of the discipline of Nursing into the higher education system is a long-term matter involving the development of a portfolio of course offerings, cultural change and staff development. Developing a strong research ethos is a particular challenge in a discipline that, traditionally, has not been perceived as research based. The next strategic initiative for the Faculty is to be the development and refinement of its research agenda.
- 2.6 Since 1992, the Faculty has developed 12 award programmes, including two combined degrees and two programmes scheduled for introduction next year. Of Australia's 28 institutions offering nurse education, the Faculty has the widest range of options in nursing awards. These include:
 - Bachelor of Nursing (pre-registration) (3 year course) (redesigned for 2003)¹
 - Conversion Bachelor of Nursing (post-registration)
 - Bachelor of Nursing Honours (4 year course) (new, 1st intake planned 2003)
 - Bachelor of Nursing (Indigenous Australian Health) (new, 1st intake planned 2003)
 - Bachelor of Nursing/Bachelor of Arts
 - Bachelor of Nursing/Bachelor of Science
 - Graduate Diploma in Nursing

¹ The Review Team was advised that the new program had been approved, although it did not view any materials other than an extract from the Faculty's submission to the NSW Nurses Registration Board.

- Graduate Diploma in Midwifery
- Master of Nursing (coursework)
- Master of Midwifery (coursework)
- Master of Philosophy (Nursing)
- Doctor of Philosophy

- 2.7 According to the most recent DEST statistics (1998), the Faculty has the 4th largest cohort of local undergraduate students in Australia, and the 2nd largest in NSW (the University of Western Sydney has 1754 undergraduates studying Nursing).
- 2.8 The Faculty has gained final approval for a new undergraduate degree, the Bachelor of Nursing (Indigenous Australian Health) which will have its first intake in 2003. This degree, developed in consultation and collaboration with the University's Koori Centre and the Indigenous community, is the first of its kind in Australia, and possibly the world.
- 2.9. The Faculty has successfully introduced combined degrees with the Faculties of Arts and Science, the BN/BSc and BN/BA, now into their 2nd and 3rd years, respectively.
- 2.10 The Faculty has redesigned its flagship BN degree, gaining approval from the Nursing Registration Board for the maximum 7 years in late September 2002. The redesigned program incorporates a stronger focus on clinical experience and greater integration of teaching and research. The results of student feedback informed the design of the new program.
- 2.11 The Faculty has introduced self-directed learning into the undergraduate programme.
- 2.12 The Faculty has redesigned the delivery of its post-registration undergraduate and postgraduate programmes around a block-attendance mode in order to cater for the needs of nurses in the workplace.
- 2.13 The Faculty participates in the delivery, in Singapore, of the Bachelor of Health Sciences (Nursing) in conjunction with the Faculty of Health Sciences and the Singapore Institute of Management.
- 2.14 The Faculty delivers a range of Professional Development courses and conferences through its Alumni and Professional Relations Office.
- 2.15 The Faculty established a new research centre, The Nursing Research Centre for Adaptation in Health and Illness, in 1997.
- 2.16 The Faculty is affiliated with a range of professional bodies and organisations. In addition to the requirements of the University, awards offered by the Faculty must gain the approval of the Nursing Registration Board of NSW (NRB) and meet the competency standards of the Australian Nursing Council Incorporated. The Dean advised that the recent NRB accreditation processes for the new Bachelor of Nursing in Indigenous Australian Health and for the redesigned Bachelor of Nursing had gone remarkably smoothly, and that the seven year accreditation that had been granted for the latter could be read to suggest a high level of confidence in the program.
- 2.17 The Dean pointed out that there are different professional and accreditation practices in each state. In her view, the expectations of the profession in New South Wales in terms of the qualifications needed for promotion did not place NSW educational institutions in an advantageous position for postgraduate recruitment, in relation to, for example, South Australia and Victoria where a Masters degree is normally necessary for promotion (whereas it is not in NSW).

See Commendations 1 to 4

3. COMMUNICATION

The Team enquired into the communication between the Faculty and the University, the Faculty and the College of Health Sciences, within the Faculty, between the Faculty and students, between staff and students and between the library and students.

- 3.1 The Dean commented that, while there are many benefits arising from the Faculty's consolidation on a single site, the Faculty is somewhat isolated from the rest of the University. Furthermore, the layout of the Mallet Street building does not encourage staff interaction. Staff common rooms have recently been established to foster greater staff integration. She has signalled to the PVC Health Sciences her view that the Faculty would benefit from relocating to a site more integrated with the main University campus.
- 3.2 Although the Faculty's discipline is distinct in several ways from that of other Faculties within the College, the Faculty benefits from the informal interchanges of staff within the College, and found the biennial conference at Leura and the College teaching conference to be productive.
- 3.3 The Faculty has strong links with the University's Academic Board due to the involvement of senior staff in the activities of the Board. However, other staff rarely meet staff from other parts of the University. Indeed some staff indicated that they had never been to the main campus. Staff would welcome further integration into University life, for example, the opportunity to audit courses on the main campus.
- 3.4 Although students enjoyed being on a single site, they also felt isolated from the rest of the University (in particular from the Darlington and the Cumberland campuses). This was particularly acute in terms of access (e.g., travel and parking) to University libraries (given the opening hours of the Nursing library). Students commented on feeling "inspired" when on the main campus and that nursing students at times felt like second-class citizens of the University.
- 3.5 The Faculty has in place a number of formal (e.g., Faculty meetings, Faculty Forum) and informal mechanisms for communication with staff. The Review Team was impressed in some instances with the documentation developed by the Faculty to promulgate policies and decisions within the Faculty (for example, the Faculty's Unit of Study Materials: Policy and Style Manual). (see also s. 6.1 and Commendation 6)
- 3.6 Nevertheless, although staff were apparently not dissatisfied with communication within the Faculty, the Review Team found an apparent lack of ownership by staff of key documents such as Faculty plans, the Self-Evaluation Report, and the Faculty Teaching and Learning Plan. (see also ss. 6.15, 6.16 and Recommendation 9)
- 3.7 The Review Team found that communication between staff and students was variable. On the one hand, students expressed a rapport with some of their teachers, on the other, students felt some staff were unapproachable, and noted that the flexible learning mode resulted in little face-to-face contact with staff. The Team found that there was also variability in the effectiveness of the more formal lines of communication between staff and students on Faculty committees. These are addressed in more detail in ss 8.6 – 8.8 and Recommendations 12 - 14 below.
- 3.8 The Review Team found a mismatch between the views expressed by staff and students with respect to the student experiences. (see s. 8.4)
- 3.9 The postgraduate students commented that the course delivery mode did not allow much time for interactions between students.
- 3.10 Research students had little opportunity for interactions with each other.

- 3.11 Students regarded the library as an excellent resource, but expressed considerable frustration with the library opening hours, particularly the absence of weekend opening.

See Recommendation 1 and 2

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF ACADEMIC BOARD POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

- 4.1 The Academic Board has a variety of policies and guidelines that faculties are required to promulgate and implement. The Review Team was interested in ascertaining how the Faculty communicated information about policies and guidelines to staff and students. It was particularly interested in the Academic Honesty policy, the Intellectual Property rule and communication of improvements in courses relating to student evaluations.
- 4.2 The Review Team was advised that undergraduate students were aware of Academic Board policies, as they were printed in unit of study outlines and read to the students at the beginning of each semester. Postgraduate coursework students appeared to be less familiar with Academic Board policies. Research students were aware that policies were described in the *Postgraduate Studies Handbook*. However, the Review Team found that there were some shortcomings in the implementation of Academic Board policy in relation to research student candidatures. These are discussed in s. 7.9 below.
- 4.3 The Review Team found that students were often unaware of improvements in courses relating to the comments in student evaluations. Of particular concern was the students' lack of knowledge of the increased clinical content in the re-designed BN degree. Although it is the case that approval had only recently been granted, students were unaware that these changes were being contemplated, although the level of clinical work had been a major concern of students at the Staff Student Liaison Committee and in the SCEQ. (See s. 8.8 and Recommendation 14)

5. GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES, AIMS AND OUTCOMES

Graduate attributes in unit of study outlines

- 5.1. The Team was advised that the development of good unit of study outlines has been a recent point of focus in the Faculty. It has rigorous mechanisms in place to ensure high quality unit of study outlines with clearly articulated outcomes and assessment, and generic attributes as well as disciplinary competencies. Each Department has a Unit of Study review team which oversees all of the Department's Units of Study. Care is taken to ensure that the Faculty's competencies complement the stated University graduate attributes and that there is cross-checking across units to ensure a balanced approach. The Faculty has also established an Educational Development Support Unit which works specifically on enhancing unit of study design. The Faculty has a Unit of Study Style Guide to assist staff in the development of their unit of study outlines.
- 5.2 Another strategy which has been trialled was to send unit of study and teaching material out to three external specialists for: academic review; instructional design review; and layout and design review. Written reports were circulated to teaching teams and supported by staff seminars. The Dean reported that this exercise had reaped benefits and would be continued next year.
- 5.3 All new or amended units of study are approved by either the Faculty's Board of Undergraduate Studies or Board of Graduate Studies before being scrutinised by the Faculty. The students interviewed by the Review Team gave very positive feedback on the quality of the unit of study outlines which they received at the commencement of each unit. They found these to be helpful, informative and clear on assessment requirements. The Review Team considered the Faculty's procedures and outcomes in relation to unit of study outlines to be commendable, and an example of good practice that could usefully be adopted elsewhere in the University. In particular, the Team commended the mapping of generic attributes and the communication of these to students. (see Commendation 5)

Development of clinical skills

- 5.4 The Review Team had received results of CEQ and SCEQ surveys. It noted that the response rate for the 2001 SCEQ survey for Nursing was relatively high at 55%. Both CEQ and SCEQ results indicated that many students were dissatisfied with the amount of clinical work in the undergraduate programs. The Team also noted the acknowledgement by the Faculty in its Teaching and Learning Plan (s. 1.1(d)) that “there is continuing criticism (well informed or not) from employers about the ability of new graduates to take their place in the workforce”. The Review Team’s discussions with students confirmed the student views expressed via the CEQ and SCEQ results. The students voiced very serious concerns about the appropriateness of the amount of clinical experience they were gaining in their studies. They expressed the view that it was inadequate and did not prepare them well for entering the workforce. They expressed the view that their programs contained less clinical work than similar degrees at other institutions.
- 5.5 Review Team members noted that the *National Review of Nursing Education* carried out by the Department of Education, Science and Training corroborated the students’ views on the comparatively low level of clinical experience, listing the University of Sydney’s clinical experience hours as the lowest in Australia. The University of Sydney was represented as including approximately 550 hours compared with 660 at Charles Sturt, 720 at ACU, 750 at UTS, 1050 at Newcastle, and 1330 at UNE. At the same time, The University of Sydney had the highest number of hours in NSW of Laboratory Clinical Experience. If the combined figures for Clinical Experience and Laboratory Clinical Experience are compared, then Sydney compares more favourably with other NSW institutions: Charles Sturt 750 hours; UTS 970; USyd 1100; UNE 1350.² *NB all figures are approximate.*
- 5.6 The students interviewed believed that the issue of clinical experience was so fundamental that it had led to very serious dissatisfaction with the degree as a whole (the Review Team noted that, again, this corroborated the feedback from SCEQs which indicated a decrease in the overall level of satisfaction with the course between 1999-2001 from 65% to 51% agreement - this compares with the University average of 69% satisfaction)³. The students also expressed the view that their concerns about the inadequacy of the amount of clinical work and the relevance of theory components represented a majority view of the undergraduate student body (and not simply the views of those present) and that a significant number of current first and second year students were seriously considering the possibility of transferring elsewhere next year to complete their studies.
- 5.7 Staff advised the Review Team during the discussions that the design process of the new Bachelor of Nursing degree, due to commence in 2003, had included thorough consideration of CEQ and SCEQ results. The redesigned Bachelor of Nursing would include double the amount of clinical work in the program in comparison to the current degree. This included half as much again simulated practical work on campus, and double the amount of clinical experience working in hospitals with actual patients (students would have three hours clinical experience per week plus a five-day placement at the end of Semester 1 and a 10 day placement at the end of Semester 2). The Dean advised that the four-year Honours degree also would provide the opportunity for a stronger clinical component, which had been part of the impetus for introducing the four-year Honours program. A further development in supporting the effective operation of clinical work is the introduction of a Clinical Education Office, headed by a registered nurse.
- 5.8 Regarding the proportion of clinical work in the current degree, staff confirmed that there were no plans to increase the amount of clinical work for the remaining two cohorts (the current first and second years) who would complete their degrees under the current degree resolutions.
- 5.9 While the Review Team welcomed the Faculty’s responsiveness to student feedback in relation to clinical work in the design of the new programs, it remained very concerned at the level of

² Web address: http://www.dest.gov.au/highered/nursing/pubs/nursing_ed_part2/3_4-6.htm#3_5

³ The question referred to here is Q36: “Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of this degree course”. In 2001, 51% of students indicated their Agreement with this statement, compared with 65% in 1999.

dissatisfaction expressed by the current students in this regard (both during interviews and as revealed in CEQ and SCEQ results). Furthermore, the Review Team was concerned that the Faculty appeared (on the basis of discussions between the Team and staff and between the Team and students) to be either unaware of, or unresponsive to, the level of dissatisfaction in relation to this issue. The Team gained the impression that the students had not been consulted or involved regarding the design of the new program and that they felt that the Faculty was not responsive to their feedback. The students interviewed were unaware of the planning or introduction of the new BNursing program and of the changes that were being made. The Team noted that the Faculty had responded to student feedback to the extent of making substantial changes to the clinical component of the new degree, but that those changes would not significantly affect the current students' program. Accordingly, the Review Team *strongly recommends* that the Faculty give this matter its urgent attention, including initiating discussions with the current first and second year undergraduate students. It may wish to consider, for example, whether the current students would compare their program unfavourably with the new program and whether, therefore, the Faculty might wish to transfer the current students immediately onto the new program. (*see Recommendation 3*)

Balance between theory and practice

- 5.10 It was pointed out to the Review Team by staff that there is a general tendency in the discipline and profession of Nursing to view it as a predominantly practical activity. This tendency presents certain challenges to nursing educators in promoting a theoretical approach and a research culture within the discipline. Discussions with undergraduate students indicated a general view that the balance between theory and practice was overly skewed towards the theoretical. For example, some considered that there was too much emphasis on the history of nursing and issues associated with the social sciences and pharmaceuticals. There was a general view among the undergraduate students interviewed by the Team that they could not appreciate the relevance of much of the theory in the program to the practice of nursing. Postgraduate students, however, voiced no concerns about the balance between theory and practice. This suggested to the Review Team that there may be a point at which the balance becomes clearer to students. Staff indicated that the balance and integration of theory and practice was the subject of ongoing debate within the Faculty, and had been a particularly predominant issue in the re-design of the undergraduate programs, which, they believed, had benefited as a result. (*see Recommendation 3*)

Integration of theory and practice

- 5.11 The Review Team suggested to Faculty staff that the students' views about there being too much theory in the course may be the result of a lack of integration between theory and practice components. It was advised that the integration of theory and practice has always been monitored closely, but that the new course is more innovative in its approaches to achieving integration. Student feedback on this specific point was varied. Undergraduates said that, in general, there was not a good link between theory and practice and that some of their theoretical units seemed quite unrelated to professional practice, although they noted the units Nursing 2B and 3B, which use a problem-based learning mode, as examples where the integration between theory and practice works effectively within units. Postgraduate coursework students, on the other hand, commented positively on the relationship between theory and practice, noting that most of their assessments clearly connected theory to their nursing practice.

Writing skills of international students for whom English is a second language

- 5.12 Master of Nursing students indicated that they had felt the need of a more progressive and supportive approach to the development of postgraduate level skills in academic writing. A unit of study incorporating writing and research skills had been scheduled after the unit *History of Ideas in Nursing* and it was considered that they would have struggled less with the demands of the latter unit if it had been underpinned by the former.

English language proficiency

- 5.13 Undergraduate students indicated their understanding that some international graduates of the Faculty's undergraduate program had had their applications for professional registration in NSW rejected on the grounds of inadequate English language proficiency (although none of these students were present). While the Team was unable to explore this issue as there were no students present in this category, it conjectured that these rejections may be from candidates who had not initially planned to seek registration in NSW. Nevertheless, the team felt that the Faculty might consider the issue of the standards of English within its programs, enhance the awareness of international students (both on enquiry and during their course) regarding the English language requirements for registration in NSW, and indicate to international inquirers and/or enrollees the possible difficulties faced by international students who change plans and seek registration in NSW (if that is indeed the problem).
- 5.14 The Review Team was reassured by the advice from Faculty staff that the minimum entry scores for English proficiency tests for international students had recently been raised, and, that a significant number of the Faculty's students undertake courses with the University's Centre for English Teaching, at the Faculty's encouragement. However, the Faculty may wish to keep a watching brief on this issue.

See Commendation 5 and Recommendation 3

6. TEACHING AND LEARNING

Structures to support teaching and learning within the Faculty

- 6.1 The Faculty's Academic Practice Committee (APC) acts as the main vehicle for debate and dissemination of ideas on teaching and learning within the Faculty. The APC developed the Faculty's *Unit of study materials: policy and style manual* and a referencing guide to be released in Semester 2, 2002. Matters of current focus for the committee include postgraduate assessment and the assessment of group work. The Team considered that academic processes such as these were well enunciated and disseminated throughout the Faculty. (*see Commendation 6*)
- 6.2 The APC also acts as the forum for the discussion and implementation of University policies. Its membership includes representatives on University committees. Teaching and Learning within the Faculty is also supported by Departmental Unit of Study Outline Review Teams, the Faculty's Boards of Graduate Studies, and of Undergraduate Studies, and the recently established Educational Development Support Unit. The Review Team found that dissemination of University policy within the Faculty was working well in some respects. Staff conveyed familiarity with policies such as Academic Honesty and the Guidelines for Good Practice in Teaching and Learning, and students had received the Academic Honesty policy and the Postgraduate Coursework Studies Handbook. However, in other areas, such as policies on research and student feedback, implementation was less effective and it was felt that the Faculty needed to continue the development of its processes to ensure across the board implementation of Academic Board policy (*see Sections. 7.9 and 8.8*).

Good teaching within the Faculty

- 6.3 The Review Team received mixed views from students regarding the standards of teaching, both from the discussions during meetings and from the CEQ and SCEQ data. SCEQ data revealed significant decreases (between 4 and 7%) in the levels of student satisfaction in relation to teaching between 1999 and 2001. However, there were also comments about high standards of teaching. Postgraduate students, in particular, expressed a high overall level of satisfaction with the standards of teaching. The Review Team noted that the Faculty has not put forward any proposals in recent years for excellence in teaching awards. The Dean and Faculty staff suggested that there is a general reluctance within the discipline of Nursing towards any thing that might be perceived in any way as akin to self-aggrandisement. This, coupled with a sense of Nursing as a practical as opposed to a theoretical discipline, meant that it was not within the Nursing culture to apply for such awards.

Nevertheless, the Review Team felt that both the Faculty and the University would benefit if examples of excellent teaching in the Faculty were more widely recognised. The Review Team, while commending the positive aspects of student feedback on teaching standards in some areas, recommended that the Faculty consider ways to promote, recognise and reward excellence in teaching. (*See Commendation 7 and Recommendation 4*)

Flexible delivery

- 6.4 One of the key new developments in the Faculty in recent years has been the introduction of ‘flexible delivery’ for the Master of Nursing and the post-registration BN Conversion to Bachelor of Nursing programs. The third year units in the new Bachelor of Nursing degree will also be offered in flexible delivery mode. In the context of the Faculty, flexible delivery refers to a move away from a weekly mode of attendance to a block mode. The attendance pattern for units of study might involve attendance every other week, or, more commonly, one week in four. The Faculty considers that flexible delivery facilitates students combining work and study, combining clinical experience with the rest of the curriculum, and develops greater independence in learning. Students gave mixed feedback on this issue to the Team. International post-registration undergraduate students were particularly unreceptive to the flexible learning mode. They were critical of the pattern where they have a single intensive day (in which tutorials and lectures are merged) four times per semester for a unit of study. They found that this pattern was not conducive to good learning, particularly in relation to absorption or retention of information. The international postgraduate students would also have preferred weekly support as they found that the four days per unit per semester structure contributed to feelings of isolation and lack of involvement. The postgraduate students met by the Team considered, as a group, that there was still room for improvement in terms of achieving maximum benefit from the flexible delivery mode. Neither the undergraduate nor postgraduate international students had been aware of these modes before they commenced their programs.
- 6.5 In contrast, local postgraduate coursework students welcomed the flexible delivery mode. They found that it facilitated combining work and study, which was challenging since many students received only minimal study leave from their employers. They had found some of their unit of study outlines particularly helpful in providing week by week guidance on learning.
- 6.6 The Review Team formed both positive and negative views on the effectiveness of flexible delivery within the Faculty. While there were clearly benefits for local students in combining study with work-commitments, it was less clear how the block mode fulfilled the learning needs of international students. The Team considered that the Faculty and its students would benefit if more work was done in terms of initiatives to underpin flexible learning and support students in developing the independent learning skills needed to gain maximum benefit from it (the Faculty may wish to explore the resources available within the University to support such initiatives). Also, the Team felt that dialogue with students to develop a co-operative approach to improving the effectiveness of flexible delivery would be helpful. The Review Team was concerned that international students did not appear to have been made aware of the flexible mode of delivery during the program marketing, recruitment and admission activities. The Team was also concerned that these students may perceive that flexible delivery was not giving them value-for-money or the anticipated educational outcomes. Accordingly it identified a number of areas for improvement. (see Recommendation 5)

Self-directed learning in the undergraduate program and the reduction in undergraduate tutorials

- 6.7 A major concern voiced by undergraduate students (both international and local) was the reduction in tutorials which came into effect from 2001. Rather than being held weekly, tutorials are now held only fortnightly. This was a major point of dissatisfaction among students, evidenced both during the discussions with the Team and in the SCEQ results. Students advised that they had raised such concerns at the Staff/Student Liaison Committee but had been told of the benefits of developing self-direction and independence in learning. The view was expressed by undergraduate students that the perceived lack of support for student centred learning had been a major point of dissatisfaction in the

student body, and also that it had been a contributing factor for student colleagues who had considered withdrawing from their studies.

- 6.8 The Review Team considered that the Faculty and its students would benefit from the development of strategies for supporting students in acquiring the skills needed to benefit from more self-directed modes of learning, and also in illustrating to students the enhanced learning outcomes gained from the introduction of self-directed learning (notwithstanding the reduction in tutorials) . (*see Recommendations 5 and 6*)

Feedback to students on assessed work

- 6.9 The Faculty's stated timeframe for the return of assessable work is within 3-4 weeks of the submission date, six weeks at the outside. The Faculty is currently reconsidering these timeframes as it has been suggested that they are too long. Student views on the appropriateness of the amount and speed of feedback on assessment varied. Undergraduates commented that some staff provided useful feedback on coursework, particularly in relation to written coursework. They found the marking criteria included in unit of study outlines to be helpful. A unit of study involving assessment of a video was identified as an example of good practice. Less effective was the feedback they received on practical work. The NABS (Nursing Assessment by Simulation) was cited as an example where feedback was non-existent or inadequate, as was considered to be the case with much of their examination work. Students expressed the view that the lack of feedback was not conducive to their development and improvement and was a shortcoming of the program. Also, feedback that was received was sometimes too late to be of value. Staff appeared to be unaware of student dissatisfaction on this issue. Postgraduate students on the other hand seemed broadly satisfied with the amount of feedback they received. (*see Recommendation 7*)

Clarity of expectations in assessment

- 6.10 As stated elsewhere in this report, students had commented favourably on the information available in the unit of study outlines, particularly in relation to clarity of learning outcomes and assessment criteria. However, undergraduate students indicated that sometimes there was a marked absence of consensus between staff on the correct way to perform clinical procedures. On occasion, opposing advice had been given and students felt that they had been marked down in some practical work because the assessor and their tutor had held opposing views.

Learning resources: Library and WebCT

- 6.11 Before the Faculty was consolidated at the Mallet Street site, part of the Faculty's library collection had been at the Cumberland campus. Post-consolidation, some parts of the collection had remained at Cumberland: back issues of journals and texts used by other courses at Cumberland. The Mallet Street Librarian advised the Review Team that the Mallet Street library had the best Nursing collection in Australia and that this assertion is borne out by the library being a net exporter of inter-library loans. The library has undergone major change in the way it operates in recent years and now offers a vast amount of material on-line. The library has recently allocated a specific contact person to deal with distance learning students and this was thought by staff to be working well and providing these students with a high level of support. For example staff will fax contents lists and chapters from books to these students. Both during discussions, and via SCEQ results, the Review Team heard a number of complaints from students about access to the Mallet Street library. These related mainly to the closure on the weekend, and to limitations on the texts available. Research students found their borrowing arrangements to be very restrictive (books could not be taken out of the library before 5.00pm and had to be returned by 9.00am the following morning). Some students indicated that they still made significant use of the library at Cumberland particularly at weekends when the Mallet Street library is closed. Staff were aware of the students' desire for weekend opening of the library but regretted that the resource base could not accommodate it. However, students could use Fisher Library on the weekends and/or access material on-line. (*see Recommendation 8*)

- 6.12 Students commented positively on the Faculty's use of WebCT and the very valuable support that it provided to their learning. This was commended by the Review Team. (*see Commendation 8*)
- 6.13 Postgraduate research students advised that there was a Postgraduate computer room available to them. The Review Team was unable to establish how widely this was used.

Student support: staffing

- 6.14 Feedback from students in the 2001 SCEQ surveys contained many positive statements on the supportiveness and accessibility of the teaching staff. During discussions with students, the Review Team gained the impression that local postgraduate students viewed the staff as helpful and supportive. However, the discussions with undergraduate students and international postgraduates conveyed an impression that parts of the student body felt unsupported by staff, who were sometimes perceived as inaccessible and unreceptive to student views. The Review Team draws these comments to the Faculty's attention for its consideration - no specific recommendations were made, although it is suggested that the Faculty might explore strategies (perhaps involving email, the web and WebCT) to ensure that students are more aware of the support available to them.

Teaching and Learning Plan

- 6.15 The Team was advised that the Teaching and Learning Plan had been considered by the Academic Practice Committee, although it had not had any input to the Plan. The Team gained the impression that there was not a great sense of ownership of the document across the Faculty, and suggested that greater involvement of staff across the Faculty in the production of the next Plan would be of benefit. The Team was advised that the plan is now obsolete as the new plan will be developed soon. It will have a greater focus on research and research training. (*see Recommendation 9*)

Self-evaluation Report

- 6.16 The Team formed the view that there was not a sense of ownership across the Faculty staff of the Self-evaluation report. It also considered that the document would have benefited from being more self-critical. These comments are noted for future reference. (*See Recommendation 9*)

Cultural sensitivity in delivery

- 6.17 The Faculty's attention is drawn to the Review Team's anticipation that with increased emphasis on the recruitment of international students and the introduction of the Bachelor of Nursing (Indigenous Australian Health) there will be a greater need for cultural sensitivity among staff.

See Commendations 6 to 8 and Recommendations 4 to 9

7. RESEARCH AND RESEARCH TRAINING

Developing the Faculty's strength in research and research-based teaching

- 7.1 The Dean considered that good progress had been made towards developing a strong research base in the Faculty since its inception at the University in 1991, with postgraduate research student enrolments currently at 26. However, the development of a fully fledged research-active culture and research based teaching has been, and continues to be, one of the key challenges facing the Faculty. Most Nursing departments in universities around the world face this same challenge, in the Faculty's view. There are several factors that come into play. Traditionally, Nursing, both as an academic discipline and as a profession, has not had a strong research culture, being viewed, rather, as a practical discipline. This affects both the level of interest in postgraduate research, and the level of support that employers are prepared to give research students. Also, the Faculty is only now settling in to a period of consolidation after a period of change and reductions in staffing. The Dean reported that, currently, only approximately 2% of the Faculty's staff are research active (based on a definition of publishing an average of at least one paper per year over the last three years). The

Review Team recognises that the development of research is planned as the Faculty's next strategic agenda, the development of which would be expected to significantly transform the existing situation.

- 7.2 Undergraduate students indicated that they were not aware of a strong research culture of research-led teaching, other than in the unit Professional Development 2, which had a high research content. The Dean indicated that the Faculty's new Teaching and Learning Plan would reflect its planned strategic focus over the next few years on the development of a strong research base and research led teaching. The Review Team agreed with the Faculty that there is a need to strengthen the Faculty's research profile, and suggested that formal benchmarking with other institutions on research matters would be of benefit (for example The University of Melbourne's strength in research in midwifery may provide useful comparisons). (see Recommendation 15).

Research supervision and training

- 7.3 The Team welcomed the advice from Faculty staff that all members of staff involved in supervising research students had completed the Postgraduate Supervision Development Program run by the University's Institute for Teaching and Learning. (see Commendation 9)
- 7.4 The Review Team was disappointed that only two research students were available to attend the meeting as this made it difficult to get a good sense of the overall postgraduate research student experience in the Faculty. These students commented positively, on the whole, on the quality of their student experience and on the staff support available to them. However, they regretted that there were minimal structures or activities in place to facilitate networking between the students, or between the students and staff members other than their immediate supervisor. The only group meetings among students were the annual student seminar presentations. The students indicated that mechanisms to stimulate communication between students, and academic collegiality in general, would be very welcome as they often felt isolated. The absence of such arrangements was considered to be a negative aspect of their experience as research students in the Faculty.
- 7.5 Although one of the students met by the Team did have an office with a desk, computer and telephone, this was provided to her in her capacity as a postgraduate fellow. The Review Team was unable to establish whether PhD students were, in general, provided with such facilities. The students were not aware of any resource support available to them and both students bore their own costs for materials such as stationery and texts; one had access to free photocopying. They were aware that funds were available for attending conferences, but one student found that this covered only around 8% of her expenditure for presenting a paper at a conference.
- 7.6 The students considered that the Mallet Street library was not geared towards supporting doctoral research level work. The texts available in hard copy were very limited and the borrowing rights were restrictive (*see also s. 6.11 above*).
- 7.7 The Review Team noted that the Faculty's completion rates for research students were a source of concern. Thirty-two out of fifty-seven students had withdrawn since 1992 and the average length of candidature of the 25 completed PhDs was 11 semesters. Faculty staff explained that admissions requirements had progressively become more stringent over the years, resulting in stronger intakes, and it is anticipated that the progression and completion rates will improve (although of the 11 completions during 2000 – 2002, the average length of candidature is 12.3 semesters). Also, the tendency in nursing is for PhD students (both part-time and full-time) to have substantial work commitments, with many employed full-time. The Review Team encouraged the Faculty to investigate ways to reduce the completion times.
- 7.8 The Review Team considered that the long completion times may be linked to minimal scholarship awards. It noted that, since 1994 there appear to have been one University Postgraduate Award (UPA) and three Australian Postgraduate Awards (APA) awarded to Nursing students and that there is currently only one APA supported candidate. The Team therefore encouraged the Faculty to develop strategies to promote APAs and other scholarships within the student body and to support

students in making themselves more competitive in gaining scholarship awards. The Faculty may wish also to explore ways of offering more substantial scholarships within the Faculty.

- 7.9 The Review Team drew the Faculty's attention to divergence from University policy in a number of areas. University regulations for Postgraduate Research candidatures stipulate maximum numbers of hours that can be spent in employment and minimum numbers of hours that must be spent at the University. Also, minimum levels of support infrastructure are stipulated in terms of materials, equipment and space. It is expected that activities will be organised to create a rich research environment in which staff and students meet regularly and discuss ideas and research findings. The Team therefore recommended that the Faculty ensure that minimum University standards are complied with and that all students are made aware of the resources available to them, including APA awards. (*see Recommendation 10*)
- 7.10 Faculty may wish to liaise with Academic Board's Research Committee and with the Research & Scholarships Office to develop means of strengthening research. It might also look at encouraging collaborative research with established researchers and (perhaps with the help of the University's Business Liaison Office) seeking external research funding, for example from major health care providers and insurers.
- 7.11 The Dean acknowledged that increasing the number of Honours students had been identified as an area for improvement within the Faculty. It is anticipated that the introduction of the four-year Honours degree will make significant headway in this regard.
- 7.12 The Review Team anticipates that combined degree students completing Honours in other disciplines will help widen the Faculty's research base.

See Commendation 9 and Recommendation 10

8. BENCHMARKING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESSES

Student evaluation

- 8.1 The Team was advised that the Faculty currently tends to evaluate each unit of study every time it is taught. The Dean indicated that this was likely to reduce as the Faculty settles after its restructuring. Summaries of unit of study evaluations are made available to Heads of Department as part of the formal unit of study report submitted to the Head of Department at the completion of each unit. These reports, together with reports on the work of the unit by departmental review committees, are made available to the member of staff developing the unit for its next offering.
- 8.2 The Team acknowledged that there were examples of good practice in the Faculty (for example, an individual member of staff described a comprehensive and discursive system in which they provided students with an analysis of their feedback collected via the unit of study questionnaire, discussed the results with them, and then agreed modifications to the unit). However, in light of the views expressed by undergraduate students that they were not advised of changes resulting from their feedback, the Review Team considered that there was a need for greater consistency in practice across the Faculty.
- 8.3 While the Review Team welcomed the Faculty's thorough approach to gathering feedback on units of study, it noted that Academic Board policy requires a unit of study to be reviewed only once every three years. The Review Team supported the Dean's forecast on the frequency of evaluations and recommended to the Faculty that it consider reducing the frequency of unit of study evaluations in order to avoid questionnaire fatigue by students, which could compromise the effectiveness of SCEQs as well as unit of study evaluations. (*See Commendation 10 and Recommendation 11*)
- 8.4 In terms of the effectiveness of the processes in place to discuss, disseminate and respond to student feedback, the Review Team considered that there was room for improvement, both at the staff level and at the student level. The Team was advised that (S)CEQ results were considered by the

Academic Practice Committee and a report submitted to Faculty. (S)CEQ results had informed the design of the new programs, Bachelor of Nursing and Bachelor of Nursing (Indigenous Australian Health). These activities were in line with current University practices. However, comments from staff led the Team to the view that the mechanisms for wider dissemination and discussion of the results of student evaluation across the Faculty were not working effectively. The Team was not convinced that there was a high level of awareness generally among the staff regarding key issues emerging from SCEQ results. For example, during discussions with staff the Review Team was advised that the overall level of student satisfaction had increased in recent years, whereas SCEQ results from 2001 revealed a significant drop in student overall satisfaction between 1999 and 2001 (as described in s. 5.6 and footnote 3 above).

- 8.5 The Review Team gained the impression that undergraduate students felt that their feedback was neither taken seriously nor responded to. Students indicated that they very rarely were notified of any changes made as a result of their feedback. In particular, they felt that the Faculty was unresponsive to their complaints about the insufficiency of clinical practice in their programs and the lack of relevance of some theory components.
- 8.6 Undergraduate students advised the Team that they felt outnumbered at staff/student consultative committee (SSCC) meetings as only one course representative was included from each year of each program. This constitution could unintentionally be an intimidating environment. Students often found it difficult to express their views and they felt that matters were not properly followed up. Staff indicated that issues that were not resolved were included on the agenda of the next meeting. However, the Review Team did not get a sense that progress on such issues was updated at successive meetings. Overall, the undergraduate students indicated that they were not convinced of the effectiveness of the SSCC and felt that important issues they raised were not taken up by the Faculty. Postgraduate students indicated that, as far as they were aware, staff/student consultative committees for their courses were not operational and had petered out after the start of the year as students did not have sufficient issues that they wished to raise. (*see Recommendation 12*)
- 8.7 The Review Team was advised that there are no student representatives on Faculty Committees such as the Academic Practice Committee, the Faculty Boards of Graduate and Undergraduate Studies and the Faculty Meeting. It noted that this is contrary to Academic Board policy. (*see Recommendation 13*)
- 8.8 The evidence presented to the Team suggested that the processes for *collecting* student feedback were effective (although staff/student consultative committee operation could be improved and unit of study evaluations could be conducted less frequently) but that, overall, the feedback loop was not complete in terms of mechanisms to ensure that the outcomes of student evaluation were appropriately disseminated, discussed, and responded to within the Faculty, and, importantly, to ensure that students are informed of the outcomes of their feedback. The Review Team noted, for example, that students were unaware of the changes that the Faculty had made in the new Bachelor of Nursing degree in relation to student feedback about the amount of clinical work (from SSCC and SCEQs), and were unaware that the degree had been redesigned at all. In relation to the Staff Student Consultative Committees, the Review Team gained the impression that the decisions from, and the working of them were not well communicated to students; consequently, students appeared dissatisfied with the operation of the Committees, felt that they lacked a “voice” in the Faculty and that issues they raised were not taken seriously. In all of these respects, the Review Team considered that the Faculty was not sufficiently aware of or following Academic Board policy (for example, the Guidelines for Good Practice in Teaching and Learning, particularly Part 5, section 2) and made recommendations accordingly. (*see Recommendation 14*)

Benchmarking and opportunities for external input to programs

- 8.9 Discussions revealed that the Faculty participates in no formal benchmarking practices with Australian or international institutions. Some staff thought there may be some informal benchmarking activities with Flinders University in South Australia and a Nursing faculty in London. The Faculty has strong links with the profession through its relations with professional

bodies, and a representative from the NRB sits on Faculty. It has professional advisory groups for some of its postgraduate courses (such as Midwifery) and for the new Bachelor of Nursing (Indigenous Australian Health) but not, for example, for the Bachelor of Nursing. The Review Team considered that formal benchmarking with appropriate competitors in Australia and abroad would be of great benefit, as would the establishment of advisory committees for all programs or discipline areas. (see Commendation 11 and Recommendation 15)

Quality assurance of offshore activities

- 8.10 The Faculty collaborates with the Faculty of Health Sciences in running a program in Singapore in conjunction with the Singapore Institute of Management. The Faculty has a 40% stake in the program and the Faculty of Health Sciences has 60%. Staff indicated that quality assurance activities are run collaboratively between the two Faculties. These include the evaluation of every unit of study. The Dean, however, indicated the need to achieve the Faculty's greater involvement and control in the overall course content, management and quality assurance of the Singapore operations if the contract, soon due to expire, is renewed. The Review Team shared the Dean's concern in the need for watertight quality assurance arrangements in offshore activities. (*see Recommendation 16*)

Benchmarking in relation to the Faculty's perception of isolation from the rest of the University

- 8.11 Noting comments from both staff and students regarding a feeling of isolation from the rest of the University, the Team suggested that the Faculty might find it useful to hold discussions regarding isolation issues with Faculties such as Law and Dentistry, which are also located off the main campus.

See Commendation 10 to 11 and Recommendations 11 to 16

9. STUDENT PROGRESSION

Student support and identifying students at risk of failure

- 9.1 The Faculty has a First Year Experience Committee and representatives on the University's first year experience group. Barbeques and other welcome events are organised for new first year students. Also, a mentoring system whereby new students are mentored by more advanced students has been introduced (although students indicated a perception that the mentoring system did not work). The Faculty started using the University's diagnostic instrument for Measuring Academic Skills of University Students (MASUS) in 2001 and this provided useful feedback for both staff and students on student progress. Staff identified the end of semester assessments as the point at which students at risk of failure could be identified and advised in writing that they may be at risk of having to show cause. The Faculty does not have any forms of formative assessment, although students receive feedback where there are mid-semester coursework assessments. Clinical work could also provide opportunities for identifying students at risk of failure. The Team recommended that the Faculty should investigate ways of formalising methods of identifying students at risk during the semester (rather than at the end of the semester). (*see Recommendation 17*)

Support for International students

- 9.2 The feedback that the Review Team received from undergraduate and coursework postgraduate international students suggested that there was room for improvement in providing support specific to their needs, particularly in view of their receptiveness to flexible learning. The Team encouraged the Faculty to consider ways to foster a more supportive environment for international students, for example in relation to socialising, supporting them in acclimatising to flexible learning, assistance with English proficiency, and essay writing skills. (see also ss. 5.12, 6.4 and 6.6 and Recommendation 5).

Combined degrees

- 9.3 The Review Team was pleased to note that the Faculty had special arrangements to support combined degree students, including special events, a combined degree student society, and a dedicated Associate Dean (Combined degrees). These arrangements were commended as examples of good practice. The Review Team noted that a problem common to combined degrees is the difficulty of identifying students at risk in units of study offered by other Faculties. It was too early to establish whether this may be a problem in the Nursing combined degrees, but it is appropriate that the Faculty becomes aware of the possible problem and check that its procedures will identify such students. The Review Team noted the potential for combined degree students to undertake Honours by research and that this may bring an additional set of expectations to the Faculty. (*see Commendation 12*)

See Commendation 12 and Recommendation 17

10. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

- 10.1 The Review Team noted that considerable advances that had been made in the Faculty in a relatively short time, particularly in the context of the changes the Faculty has experienced in recent years. It also noted that the Faculty is now entering a period of consolidation in which it expects to reap the benefits of these changes. The Review Team commended a number of achievements and good practices listed in s. 10.2. Much valuable work has been done in redeveloping the Faculty's unit of study outlines, particularly in relation to the articulation of graduate attributes, and in redesigning the Bachelor of Nursing degree. The development of the new Bachelor of Nursing in Indigenous Australian Health was highlighted as a positive and innovative initiative. The Faculty's academic processes are well enunciated and disseminated throughout the Faculty. The stated commitment to developing the Faculty's research base was welcomed.
- 10.2 The Review Team also highlighted a number of areas where it was felt that attention would contribute to the Faculty's future progress and improvement. These are described in the Recommendations listed in s. 10.3. An area which was of much concern to the Review Team was the level of satisfaction of the current undergraduate pre-registration students. Negative views were expressed by these students in relation to the relevance of theory to practice, the inadequacy of clinical experience in the programs, and their overall dissatisfaction with the course. The Team welcomes the Faculty's advice that it has responded to these student concerns in the redesign of the new Bachelor of Nursing program, but strongly encourages the Faculty also to address the concerns in relation to the remaining two years of the current undergraduate program (*see Recommendation 3*).

11 AREAS OF GOOD PRACTICE (COMMENDATIONS)

Based on the Self-Evaluation Report, the Teaching and Learning Plan, other documentation provided by the Faculty, and the findings of the Review Team, the following areas of good practice have been identified within the Faculty of Nursing.

Commendation 1

It was apparent to the Review Team that the Faculty had made very considerable advances in many areas in a relatively short time. The process of change within the Faculty was and is a continuing one that had necessarily been incremental. The Review Team was also aware that the discipline itself was changing rapidly in an hierarchical system, perhaps somewhat insensitive to those changes. The Review Team commends the Faculty on the progress it has made, academically, philosophically and structurally, in what have clearly been difficult circumstances. (*see s. 2*)

Commendation 2

The Review Team commended the Faculty on the success of its recent accreditation outcomes. (*see s. 2*)

Commendation 3

The Review Team commended the Faculty on its leadership in introducing the new Bachelor of Nursing in Indigenous Australian Health. (*see s. 2*)

Commendation 4

The Faculty is commended on its work in substantially redesigning the undergraduate Bachelor of Nursing degree and in its responsiveness to student feedback by increasing the clinical components of the redesigned degree (due to commence in 2003). (*see s. 2*)

Commendation 5

The quality of the Faculty's unit of study outlines, the articulation of the Faculty's graduate attributes and the mapping of these to the University's graduate attributes, and the Unit of study materials: policy and style manual were all highlighted as commendable examples of good practice. (*see ss 5.1 – 5.3*)

Commendation 6

The Faculty's academic processes (such as unit of study and referencing guides) are well enunciated and disseminated within the Faculty. (*see s. 6.1*)

Commendation 7

The Faculty is commended on the positive feedback from students on excellence in some areas of teaching. (*see s. 6.3*)

Commendation 8

The Faculty is commended on its effective use of WebCT as learning support. (*see s. 6.12*)

Commendation 9

The Faculty is commended on its high level of commitment to supervisors completing the Postgraduate Supervision Development Program run by the University's Institute for Teaching and Learning. (*see s. 7.3*)

Commendation 10

The Team commended the Faculty's commitment to evaluating units of study. (*see ss. 6.12 and 8.3*)

Commendation 11

The Team commended the Faculty on the consultation process involved in the development of the Bachelor of Nursing (Indigenous Australian Health) program. (*see s. 8.9*)

Commendation 12

The Faculty is commended for its special arrangements to support students enrolled in combined degrees. (*see s. 9.3*)

12 AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION FOR IMPROVEMENT

The Review Team identified a number of areas of consideration for improvement, and makes the following recommendations to the Faculty.

Recommendation 1

The College and the University should endeavour to work collaboratively with the Faculty to achieve greater integration of the Faculty into the University. (*see s. 3*)

Recommendation 2

The Review Team recognised the progress that has been made so far by the Faculty in developing its research profile and welcomed the Faculty's stated commitment to further developing and refining its research agenda. It recognised that the Faculty's progress in research takes place in the context of a professional environment which is still in the process of adjusting to the significant changes occurring in nursing education. The Team therefore recommended that the Faculty seek to maximise the support available from the College and the University in strengthening its research activities, and in strengthening the collaboration and support of the profession. (*see s. 3*)

Recommendation 3

It is **strongly recommended** that the Faculty consider, as a matter of urgency, ways to respond to the current undergraduate student concerns regarding the amount of clinical work included in the undergraduate programs, the perceived lack of relevance of the theory components to the practice of Nursing, and the students' overall low level of satisfaction with the course. It is recommended that the Faculty enter into formal discussions with the current First and Second Year students with a view to addressing these issues. Again, it is recommended that this should be done as a matter of urgency. In accordance with Academic Board policy, students should be advised of the outcomes of their feedback. (*see ss. 5.4 – 5.10*)

Note: Strategies identified by the Faculty can be included in the Final Report.

Recommendation 4

While commending the positive feedback from students on excellence in some areas of the Faculty's teaching (*see Commendation 7*), the Review Team recommended that the Faculty consider ways to foster the recognition and reward of excellence in teaching within the Faculty, finding ways to encourage, for example, applications for excellence in teaching awards. (*see s. 6.3*)

Recommendation 5

The Faculty should continue to develop, monitor, and review the effectiveness of the flexible mode of delivery, including greater consultation with students. Faculty should consider ways to underpin both flexible delivery and self-directed learning to develop the independent learning skills needed for students to gain maximum benefit from current modes of delivery. Particular efforts should be made to ensure that marketing materials (including international marketing materials) explain the nature of the delivery mode and attendance pattern. The Faculty should also consider ways to provide further support to students who are experiencing difficulties in adapting to the flexible mode and more self-directed forms of learning. International students are likely to require the most support. (*see ss. 6.4 – 6.6*)

Recommendation 6

The Faculty should consider ways to respond to student dissatisfaction regarding the recent decrease in tutorial time. (*see ss. 6.7 – 6.8*)

Recommendation 7

It is recommended that the Faculty continue to review its policies and practices on providing students with feedback on assessed work, with a view to achieving greater consistency across the Faculty in providing timely and effective feedback. Student views identified feedback on practical work as a particular area for improvement. (*see s. 6.9*)

Recommendation 8

The Faculty is encouraged to consider ways to respond to student views on the need for the provision of weekend library support. (*see s. 6.11*)

Recommendation 9

The Faculty is encouraged to involve more staff from across the Faculty in the development of its next Teaching and Learning Plan, and to make arrangements to encourage the dissemination and discussion within the Faculty of this and other Faculty plans and key documents (such as the Self-evaluation Report) with a view to achieving a stronger sense of ownership among the Faculty's teaching staff. (*see ss. 6.15 – 6.16*)

Recommendation 10

As part of the Faculty's foreshadowed development of research, the Faculty should develop its policies and practices in relation to PhD candidatures to ensure compliance with University policies and procedures with a view to ensuring a more active research culture, greater interaction between staff and students, greater links with the research support activities available on the main University campus, and compliance with minimum standards of financial support to students. (*see ss. 7.3 – 7.10*)

Recommendation 11

Notwithstanding Commendation 10, The Faculty should consider reducing the frequency of evaluating units of study, noting that Academic Board policy requires each unit to be evaluated at least once every three years (see *The Management and Evaluation of Teaching*, Part 4, s.2. (2) (b)). (*see ss. 8.1 – 8.3*)

Recommendation 12

Efforts should be made to improve the effectiveness of the staff/student consultative committees at both postgraduate and undergraduate levels, particularly in relation to advising students of the outcomes of student feedback. Consideration should also be given to increasing the number of representatives from each student cohort. (*see s. 8.6*)

Recommendation 13

While noting the Faculty's advice that it has student representatives on some of its committees, the Team recommended that the Faculty should (i) implement strategies to raise awareness among students of their representation on committees; and (ii) involve students on *all* of its formal committees (in accordance with Academic Board policy (see *Management and Evaluation of Coursework Teaching* Part 4, s. 2 (1) (a) and (b))(with appropriate exclusions for considerations of individual student matters). (*see s. 8.7*)

Recommendation 14

While certain parts of the Faculty's processes for student evaluation are working well, particularly in relation to mechanisms for collecting feedback from questionnaires, the Faculty should consider ways to improve its processes for ensuring that the outcome of student evaluations (from CEQs, SCEQs, unit of study questionnaires and staff/student consultative committees) is appropriately analysed, disseminated, discussed and responded to within the Faculty, and, importantly, that students are informed of the outcomes of their feedback, in accordance with Academic Board policy. *(see ss. 8.4 – 8.8)*

Recommendation 15

The Faculty is encouraged to establish formal benchmarking practices with Australian and international Nursing faculties (including benchmarking research matters). Also, advisory committees including professional practitioners should be established for all of the Faculty's programs. *(see ss. 7.2 and 8.9)*

Recommendation 16

The Faculty is encouraged in its commitment to ensure that quality assurance arrangements are watertight in relation to its offshore activities in Singapore. *(see s. 8.10)*

Recommendation 17

The Faculty should investigate ways of formalising methods of identifying students at risk during the semester. *(see s. 9.1)*

Associate Professor Tony Masters
Chair, Academic Board Review Team

21 October 2002

1. Self-Evaluation Report with following appendices:
 - Unit of study materials: policy and style manual
 - Faculty referencing guide 2002
 - Teaching and Learning report 2000
 - Committees of the Faculty of Nursing
 - Extract from the Faculty's presentation to the NSW Nurses Registration Board
 - Organisational chart of committees
2. First Year Experience draft orientation and transition plan 2002
3. CEQ data 2001 analysis
4. The Faculty of Nursing's future strategic directions: a discussion paper of structural change (8.2.00)
5. A discussion paper of voluntary early retirement (2.3.00)
6. The Faculty of Nursing's possible departmental structures from 2001 (20.3.00)
7. A change proposal from the Faculty of Nursing, October 2001
8. Faculty Resolutions: Bachelor of Nursing
9. Unit of study outlines – Honours
10. Unit of study outlines – Year 3 (Indigenous Health)
11. Unit of study outlines – Year 1
12. ANCI competencies – Bachelor of Nursing 2003
13. ANCI Competencies – Bachelor of Nursing (Indigenous Australian Health) 2003
14. Bachelor of Nursing/ Bachelor of Nursing (Honours) Unit of study tables
15. Bachelor of Nursing/ Bachelor of Science Unit of study tables
16. Nurses Registration Board proposal – BN, BN (Hons), BN/B, BN/BSc, BN(IAH), August 2002
17. Academic Practice Committee Agendas and Notes from 2000 – 16.08.02
18. Spreadsheet of information about past and present PhD candidates
19. SCEQ results for 2000 and 2001

FACULTY OF NURSING
ACADEMIC BOARD REVIEW VISIT
TUESDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2002

BRIEF REPORT OF THE FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW TEAM

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Academic Board Review Team, chaired by Assoc. Professor Tony Masters, deputising for the Chair of the Academic Board, visited the Faculty of Nursing on Tuesday 17 September 2002 to review and evaluate academic planning and quality assurance systems within the Faculty.
- 1.2 The Review Team conducted interviews with the following:
- Prof. Jocalyn Lawler, Dean
 - The Dean and senior Faculty staff
 - Undergraduate students
 - Postgraduate coursework students
 - Postgraduate research students
 - Other academic and general staff

2. Areas of good practice

- 2.1 The progress that has been made in the Faculty, philosophically, academically and structurally, in a relatively short time.
- 2.2 The success of the recent accreditation visits for new programs to be introduced in 2003.
- 2.3 The Faculty's leadership in introducing the new Bachelor of Nursing (Indigenous Aboriginal Health).
- 2.4 The substantial redesign of the Bachelor of Nursing, particularly the Faculty's responsiveness to student feedback by increasing the clinical components of the degree.
- 2.5 The high quality of unit of study outlines, the articulation of graduate attributes and the mapping of these to the University's graduate attributes, and the unit of study policy and style manual.
- 2.6 Academic processes (such as the unit of study and referencing guides) are well enunciated and disseminated.
- 2.7 The positive feedback from students on excellence in some areas of teaching.
- 2.8 Effective use of WebCT as learning support.
- 2.9 High level of commitment to supervisors completing the Postgraduate Supervision Development Program run by the University's Institute for Teaching and Learning.
- 2.10 Commitment to evaluating units of study.

- 2.11 Consultation process involved in the development of the Bachelor of Nursing (indigenous Australian Health).
- 2.12 Special arrangements to support students enrolled in combined degrees.

3. Areas of consideration for improvement

- 3.1 Need for greater integration between Faculty and University.
- 3.2 In order to gain maximum benefit from the rapid changes in the nature of nurse education, there is a need for further consultation between the Faculty, the College and the University to facilitate their integration into professional practice.
- 3.3 It is *strongly recommended* that the Faculty should consider ways to respond to the current undergraduate student concerns regarding the inadequacy of the amount of clinical work in the undergraduate programs, the perceived lack of relevance of theory components to the practice of Nursing, and undergraduate students' overall low level of satisfaction with the course. This consideration should be also with a view to implementing changes in relation to these issues for the remaining years of study for the current first and second year students.
- 3.4 Should consider ways to foster the recognition and reward of excellence in teaching within the Faculty.
- 3.5 Continue to develop, monitor and review the effectiveness of the flexible mode of delivery and self-directed learning. Consider ways to underpin both flexible delivery and self-directed learning to develop the independent learning skills needed for students to gain maximum benefits from current modes of delivery.
- 3.6 Consider ways to respond to student dissatisfaction regarding the recent decrease in tutorial time.
- 3.7 Continue to review policies and practices on providing students with timely and effective feedback on work, taking note of student views that, in particular, more feedback would be welcome for practical work.
- 3.8 Consider ways to respond to student views on the need for weekend access to the resources of the Mallet Street library.
- 3.9 Need to create a stronger sense of ownership of key Faculty plans and documents, such as the Teaching and Learning Plan, Self-Evaluation Report, and other Faculty plans.
- 3.10 Ensure compliance with University policies and procedures relating to research student candidatures.
- 3.11 Consider reducing the frequency of unit of study evaluations.
- 3.12 Improve effectiveness of staff/student consultative committees.
- 3.13 Involve students on Faculty committees in accordance with Academic Board policy.
- 3.14 Improve dissemination and discussion of results of student feedback (from CEQs, SCEQs, unit of study questionnaires and staff/student consultative committees) throughout the Faculty, and, importantly, improve mechanisms for informing students of the outcomes of their feedback.
- 3.15 Benchmark with Australian and international nursing faculties. Also, establish advisory committees including professional practitioners for all programs.
- 3.16 Faculty's stated commitment to ensuring that quality assurance arrangements are watertight in relation to its offshore activities in Singapore, is encouraged.

- 3.17 Formalise methods of identifying students at risk early in each semester (as opposed to at the end of the semester) noting the particular importance of this process for students in their first semester of university study.

In addition, as isolation from the main campus was acknowledged as a problem for both staff and students, it is suggested that the Faculty might consider instigating discussions with Faculties such as Law and Dentistry regarding overcoming this problem.

Assoc Prof. Tony Masters
Chair, Review Team

October 2002

APPENDIX THREE FACULTY SELF EVALUATION REPORT

Separate PDF document

APPENDIX FOUR FACULTY TEACHING AND LEARNING PLAN

Separate PDF document