

ACADEMIC BOARD REVIEW

PHASE TWO

FACULTY OF RURAL MANAGEMENT

20 OCTOBER 2003

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Note: This report draws on the information provided in the documentation considered by the Review Team as well as discussion with staff and students. In some places, text from the Self-Evaluation Report has been incorporated directly into the text.

1. MEMBERSHIP

1.1 Review Team

Assoc. Professor Peter McCallum (Chair)	Deputy Chair of the Academic Board
Professor Tim Hirst	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)
Assoc. Professor Rosanne Taylor	Faculty of Veterinary Science
Dr David Livesey	Assoc. Dean (Undergraduate Matters) Faculty of Science

Review Team Secretary

Ms Barb McLean	Executive Officer (Quality Assurance)
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1.2 Senior Faculty representatives

1.2.1 The Review Team met the following Senior Faculty representatives during the first interview:

Professor Kevin Parton	Dean and Campus Director
Mr Ross Wilson	Pro-Dean
Mr Chris Morgan	Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning)
Assoc. Professor Geoff Gurr	Associate Dean (Research)
Ms Zelma Bone	Acting Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning)
Mr Bernie Duffy	Manager Client Services
Mr Paul Dowler	Manager Finance and Facilities

1.3 Students

1.3.1 The Review Team met with three groups of students: thirteen undergraduate students (four by teleconference); nine postgraduate research students; and four postgraduate coursework students (by teleconference).

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 The Academic Board Phase Two review of the Faculty of Rural Management took place on 20 October 2003. The current Phase Two process complements the Phase One review, following up on its recommendations and also considering the Faculty's activities and quality assurance arrangements in relation to the seven goals of the University's Strategic Plan. As part of the Phase Two process the Faculty submitted a Self-Evaluation Report. The Faculty's Self-Evaluation Report documents policy change, staff development, new appointments and grant applications in addition to the commitment of funds to undertake change. The Faculty is commended for its active response to the Phase One Review of the Faculty. (*See Commendation One*)

2.2 The Academic Board Phase One report of the visit in May 2002 recorded that the Faculty was about to undergo major change. The Second Phase Review found the Faculty in the midst of significant change in the socio-cultural demographic of its student body, and in its evolution from an institution largely focussed on teaching towards one which put a significant emphasis

on research. In 2003 the Orange Campus moved from a single faculty on campus to one of several due to the establishment of the Centre of Regional Education at Orange (CREO). CREO has meant that the Faculties of Arts, Pharmacy and Science have commenced teaching on the Orange Campus; and in 2004 the Faculty of Nursing will be offering two undergraduate degrees in block release mode. Staff and students were positive about the increase in facilities and the broadening of the disciplinary, staff and student base brought about by CREO.

- 2.3 Another change the Faculty is facing is the pressure to further develop its research culture. The Faculty has established the Rural Management Research Institute; which when fully developed will combine with the Asian Agribusiness Research Centre and the Centre for Rural Sustainability to form a research base for the Faculty. (*See Goal 3: Excellence in Research*)
- 2.3 Change was further evidenced by the move of the Faculty away from offering all courses in distance and on-campus mode. In 2003 the Faculty of Rural Management commenced its first fully online course – the Master of Sustainable Management. The Self Evaluation Report mentions that in order to remain economically viable staff have been asked to rationalise their current teaching in undergraduate programs to free up resources for this new full fee-paying program in addition to making time for research. The Review Panel was impressed with the information that this new program will break even in two years. The Review Team commends the Faculty on this new initiative, which has been well received by the first intake of students and encourages the Dean to continue this change in Faculty profile and strategic approach to resource allocation. (*See Commendation Two*)
- 2.4 The Review Team observed a strong sense of collegiality between staff and students which augers well for a successful adaptation to the changes facing the Faculty.

3. OVERVIEW OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

3.1 Self-Evaluation Report

- 3.1.1 The Faculty is commended for its active response to the Phase One Review of the Faculty. The Self-Evaluation Report documents policy change, staff development, new appointments and grant applications in addition to the commitment of funds to undertake change.

3.2 Change Management

- 3.2.1 As outlined in the Introduction, the Faculty is in the midst of multi-faceted change. This is occurring at a time when the Faculty is in deficit and hence stretched for resources. The Review Team observed pockets of resistance within both staff and students to the espoused strategic direction towards a dual focus on both teaching and research. The move to recruit research performing staff has been misinterpreted as University policy requiring PhD qualifications. Staff mentioned heavy teaching loads as a disincentive to the undertaking of further research and research-based qualifications (*See Section 4.2.1 and Section 6.1*).
- 3.2.2 In spite of these constraints the Faculty is using key strategies such as the Teaching and Learning Operational Plan, Staff Development Days, strategic staff appointments and publications such as “Research Matters” to manage change strategically. The development of CREO has meant that the Faculty is developing a staff and student profile which welcomes diversity.
- 3.2.3 The Review Team notes the intention of the Faculty to review its Research Management Plan. The Review Team recommends that the Plan include both new initiatives for early adopters of

change and resourced mechanisms for more gradual forms of change, to provide current staff with pathways to becoming research active. (*See Recommendation One*)

3.3 Quality Assurance Processes

- 3.3.1 The University promotes a view of quality assurance as an integral part of the academic enterprise. This approach was apparent in the Self-Evaluation Report where an outline of quality assurance processes in the areas of curriculum content, evaluation of teaching, postgraduate research progression rates, Client Services evaluation, and Library evaluation was provided.
- 3.3.2 The Faculty has benefited from its strengths in distance education – having workflow processes in place to track assignment turnaround. Against this, the tendency to over assess is negatively impacting on this process, sometimes causing delays in feedback and raising issues for staff and student workloads. (*See Section 4.3.5*)
- 3.3.3 The Review Team was supplied with a copy of the Faculty's Teaching and Learning Operational Plan for 2003 and an Evaluation of the 2002 Plan. These plans are integrated with the University's Teaching and Learning Plan and provide relevant local objectives and strategies with targets that have timeframes and nominated responsibility to carry them out. The Panel noted that this Plan responded to student evaluation provided in the Sydney Undergraduate Students' Experience survey – particularly in the area of measures to monitor and improve the Faculty's Teaching Performance Indicators.
- 3.3.4 The Phase One Review recommended that the Faculty consider ways of making research a focal point of the Teaching and Learning Plan and strategies. The Review Team noted and endorsed the strategies and targets recorded in the Teaching and Learning Plan under Major Objective 6: Attract, develop & reward well qualified staff with a strong commitment to teaching informed by research.
- 3.3.5 In spite of this demonstration that quality assurance was an integral part of faculty culture some staff expressed the view that the frequency of the Academic Board Reviews and the time spent in quality assurance did misdirect scarce resources.

3.4 Benchmarking

- 3.4.1 Benchmarking was the subject of Recommendation 1 of the Phase One Review. The Review Team commends the Faculty on its successful application for a TIF grant to enable benchmarking nationally and internationally for the Farm Management, Horticultural Management and Equine Business Management programs. The Review Team noted the difficulty in identifying benchmarking partners due to the management focus of the Faculty; but endorsed the move to identify external and international benchmarking partners (e.g. the University of Guelph and the Muresk Institute of the Curtin University of Technology). (*See Commendation Three*)
- 3.4.2 In addition to benchmarking courses, units of study and graduate outcomes (the subject of the Phase 1 recommendation) benchmarking was seen by the Review Team as a mechanism for providing a valuable external influence to an isolated faculty of the University. Postgraduate students remarked on the lack of a sense of cross-faculty input. Benchmarking also has the potential to provide models for research strategies and the opportunity to develop partnerships in the areas of research and the establishment of student exchange links.

4. GOAL ONE: QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING

4.1 Response to Phase One Review

4.1.1 Many issues of concern in the Phase One Review have been dealt with by the Faculty. Parallel teaching of undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students and the anonymity of student evaluation have disappeared as matters of concern to the student body. The plan to adopt the Institute for Teaching and Learning Unit of Study Evaluation (USE) in 2004 and adopt a 3-year cycle of evaluation is endorsed. The Faculty's Policy on the Evaluation of Units of Study (Appendix 1.1 in the Self-Evaluation Report) required evaluation to be undertaken each time the Unit of Study is offered. The Review Team felt that this resulted in over-evaluation.

4.1.2 The Faculty is commended on work done since the first round review on ensuring the confidentiality of student evaluation of coursework, and on bringing postgraduate coursework programs into line with the Academic Board policy on parallel teaching of undergraduate and postgraduate coursework programs. (*See Commendation Four*)

4.2 Capability Program

4.2.1 Although substantial Faculty effort has gone into embedding the Capability Program into all years of undergraduate and postgraduate coursework programs, reports on its effectiveness remain mixed. Some staff and students felt that the value of the Program was not apparent until it was completed. Only one-third of the students attended the tutorial on how to develop the portfolio. The Review Team sensed that students used to self-directed, problem-based learning were better equipped to exploit the opportunities offered by the Capability Program.

4.2.2 Organisational aspects of the Capability Program were also mentioned by students. In spite of a Staff Development Day, students claimed that lecturers never mentioned it. Students also mentioned inadequate notification time for the interview and issues around timing. The timing of the final interviews was seen as too late to be useful for many of the students, who were already employed.

4.2.3 The Review Team noted that, since the program had no credit points attached to it, it was not formally resourced through the University funding formula, and was therefore reliant on resources drawn from funded units of study.

4.2.3 The inclusion of "relevant" industry representatives in the interview process was appreciated by students (however, they had to be "relevant"). Staff reported that industry representatives were supportive of the Program and there was no difficulty in getting them to attend. The Review Team thought that this was an excellent means of engaging with the industry and the professions. (*See Goal Five*)

4.2.4 The Review Team welcomed the evaluation currently underway following the third iteration of the Capability Program; including the review of the nine capabilities and their alignment with the University's Graduate Attributes and with individual Units of Study and assessment.

4.2.5 The Review Team recommends that the current review of the Capability Program include issues such as timing, communication of the Program's aims and rationale, its voluntary/assessable nature, resources, and the extent to which the curriculum is structured to manage the capabilities. (*See Recommendation Two*)

4.3 Assessment Load

- 4.3.1 Student satisfaction in the “Appropriate Workload Scale” of the Sydney Undergraduate Students’ Experience shows a steady decline for the Faculty.
- 4.3.2 Both staff and students commented on the high assessment load with some units requiring as many as eight assessment tasks. The Faculty is referred to the Academic Board Resolution on Assessment and Examination of Coursework, specifically Section (2) on Efficient Assessment. The Review Team felt there was a danger of the Faculty over-assessing, which could impact negatively on the quality of student work, staff and student workload, and the capacity of staff to develop new strengths in research (*See Section 3.2.1*).
- 4.3.3 Negative consequences of this high assessment level were reported by students who commented that they were marked “easy” and that assignments were returned in varying periods of time, sometimes fortnightly sometimes monthly. This became a problem when assignments built on one another.
- 4.3.4 Staff also reported that the heavy assessment load resulted in students either not picking up marked assignments or not reading feedback and hence failing to correct errors.
- 4.3.5 It is recommended that the faculty develop a more strategic approach to assessment, including both summative and formative assessment. The development of a Student Workload Policy which uses the credit point as a regulator of expected student workload, may be of assistance in this area. Frequent assessments may be necessary in early years but could be tapered to a more research focus in later years. (*See Recommendation Three*)

4.4 Online Teaching and Learning

- 4.4.1 In response to Recommendation 5 of the Phase 1 Review, the Self-Evaluation Report noted the appointment of an Online Learning Coordinator and the subsequent establishment of quality processes around the design and support of online learning.
- 4.4.2 Postgraduate Coursework students commented that once the technical problems had been overcome, they valued online learning highly, in some cases ahead of face-to-face learning. The online discussions allowed time for a thoughtful response and provided a rich source of cumulated work experiences. The ability to see the questions of others was seen to be useful. The support provided by WebCT Library online was appreciated. The Faculty is commended for its achievement in offering quality teaching using online resources and for acting on issues which emerged in the last review. Feedback from staff and students suggest that work in this area is a model of good practice. (*See Commendation Five*)
- 4.4.3 Staff raised the frustration of not being able to use the online evaluation tool in WebCT because of the perceived lack of anonymity. The Review Team have since determined that anonymity can be achieved in online unit evaluation through WebCT if a link is provided in WebCT to an ITL evaluation tool rather than using the internal WebCT evaluation tool. Dr Simon Barrie at ITL can arrange this link.
- 4.4.4 Undergraduate students commented that residential schools could be better exploited by the Faculty. Students travelled great distances to attend a one-day residential. There was a suggestion that the Faculty might investigate decentralising residential schools.

4.5 Enrolment and Retention Rates

- 4.5.1 The Self-Evaluation Report provided information on the Student Profile. This showed that the Faculty was sustaining decreasing enrolment rates and increasing drop-out rates between Years 1 and 2. Staff were aware of these trends, suggesting that the high drop out rate may result from a number of causes. These include the high percentage of distance education students who are combining work and study; the rural depression; and the nature of the students themselves – a low UAI and an interest in taking certain units of study seen as of practical value and then exiting with a certificate rather than the full undergraduate qualification and fulfilling a need to develop lifelong learning skills.
- 4.5.2 The Review Team noted the introduction of an Intensive Studies Skills Week and the use of Program Leaders to provide academic and individual support to students as a response to the high drop out rates between first and second year. Students reported on the excellent support provided by the Distance Education Liaison Officer, who personally rings and speaks with students at risk. In spite of an initial email alerting students to this support mechanism, they had forgotten about the service and only received assistance after they were in difficulties, rather than proactively ensuring that they did not get into difficulties in the first place. This indicates that this service is currently under stress and alternative support mechanisms need to be developed to cope with any increase in student numbers.
- 4.5.3 The Review Team congratulates the Faculty on its successful \$65,000 TIF Grant to develop an online study skills (Orange Aid) to increase the success of students transition from school/work to University. The Review Team also endorsed the strategy in the Teaching and Learning Plan to improve TPI 2 (retention rates into second year) by instituting exit surveys with non-returning students to ascertain the causes of student dropout, and recommends the Faculty liaise with the Faculty of Arts on the effects on retention rates of raising the entry UAI. (*See Recommendation Four*)
- 4.5.4 In addition to the high drop out rates, the Review Team noted the drop in Faculty enrolment rates. They noted that the Faculty was aware and responding to this information in several entrepreneurial ways. It was looking to develop non-traditional sources of students, by providing management training and professional development for groups such as Agricultural Reserves Australia and Rangelands Australia. The Review Team also commends the entrepreneurial action in providing a home for the Charles Sturt Environmental Science Unit team and hence providing another area of disciplinary strength for the Faculty. (*See Commendation Six*)
- 4.5.5 The commencement in 2004 of the Bachelor of Nursing (Indigenous Australian Health) may provide the Faculty with another opportunity to address alternative markets for the Faculty. The Review Team noted that local Aboriginal Land Councils are now responsible for large tracts of land. There may be opportunities to attract funding from alternative sources to develop specialised courses in the sustainable management of indigenous land. The Faculty could investigate an application for a sesqui lectureship to resource this. The Review Team commends the Faculty on its openness to seeking non-traditional sources of students and recommends that it exploit the opportunities offered by CREO to develop new strategic partnerships. (*See Recommendation Five*)

4.6 Research led teaching

- 4.6.1 Despite the presence of the Faculty Working Party on Research-led teaching and clear evidence of a growing research culture in the faculty, undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students reported little awareness of research being carried out in the faculty and little experience of a research culture. Upon being pressed some did recall Field Days and

Field Trips to centres of innovative practice but they were not aware of the research interests of staff.

- 4.6.2 This issue is being addressed by the Faculty, both through its Teaching and Learning Plan (Objective 6.1 To further the adoption of 'research-led' teaching) and the Associate Dean (Research) who runs a Research Day (focussing on three disciplinary areas and the general issue of research-led teaching) as part of the newly established Rural Management Research Institute. It is recommended that the Faculty explore models used in other faculties (such as the Faculty of Science) for enhancing awareness of faculty research among undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students. (*See Recommendation Six*)

5. GOAL TWO: DIVERSITY, ACCESS AND EQUITY

5.1 Diversity

- 5.1.1 As mentioned in the Introduction, the advent of CREO will diversify both the range of learning options at the Orange campus as well as diversifying the disciplinary nature of both staff and students. A necessary corollary of this change is cultural diversity. Diversity will impact on teaching, student support, and social activities. Already student groups have noticed the different demands placed on them for social activities, and the recent Student Services Review revealed the need for training in cultural differences. Staff reported that some students from Sydney suffer culture shock similar to that experienced by International students. They also have practical support problems such as accommodation and transport. In 2004 a bus service between the campus and town will commence.

- 5.1.2 Diversity will be further increased by the Faculty's ambitious targets for International students; from 9 in 2003 to 120 in 2006. Anticipating a need to support ESL teaching, the Faculty has outsourced tuition to the local TAFE college, in addition to training the Learning Skills Advisor in ESL and providing video conferencing access to the CET on the main campus.

- 5.1.3 The Review Team recommends that the Faculty monitor staff and student profiles and support services and continue to develop initiatives that facilitate the move to diversity. (*See Recommendation Seven*)

5.2 Indigenous Students

- 5.2.1 A decade ago the Faculty put a great deal of effort into an unsuccessful program to attract indigenous students into their courses. The failure of this exercise has stifled further attempts at pro-active measures in this area. The presence in 2004 of the Bachelor of Nursing (Indigenous Australian Health) may provide the needed critical mass for another attempt (See Section 4.5.5).

- 5.2.2 The Faculty is planning to mount a new entrance sign "Learning in Wiradjuri Country" to mark this change in direction. Current activities in this area include visits to local high schools which include connecting with local indigenous students, and hosting a Koori Centre Induction Program. Contact is also made with Rural and Remote Counsellors.

6. GOAL 3: EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

6.1 Developing a Research Culture

- 6.1.1 The Faculty is commended on its movement towards the establishment of a culture which supports and values research. The list of International Collaborative Research Initiatives, the

publishing output listed in “The Year in Review 2002” and the growth in postgraduate student numbers indicates a growing participation rate in research (albeit from a low base).

- 6.1.2 The Dean is not complacent about these figures, mentioning that the research output of the Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources is twenty times as large. The Review Team were impressed with the many mechanisms used by the Faculty to engender a stronger research culture, such as the regular publication of “Research Matters at Orange”, the commitment of Faculty funds on conference support, academic staff support to undertake higher degrees; research student scholarships, the appointment of research active staff and the development of a research website.
- 6.1.3 The Review Team commends the redevelopment of the Faculty Research Plan and the aim of doubling research income by 2006. (*See Commendation Seven*)
- 6.1.4 Through the measures listed in 6.1.2 above and the encouragement of “research active” staff in the promotion process, Faculty management is clear about the need to develop a dual teaching and research focus amongst academic staff. In order to make time to develop skills in research, staff are encouraged to stop any over-assessing (*see Section 4.3.2*). It is recommended that the collegial strengths of the Faculty be exploited to assist research inactive staff, e.g. through the use of research teams. (*See Recommendation Eight*)

6.2 Associate Supervisors

- 6.2.1 The Faculty has turned the lack of qualified supervisors into a benefit through the innovative use of Associate Supervisors. This allows novice supervisors both from Faculty and industry to be twinned with experienced supervisors on staff. This twinning assists the spread of a research culture amongst staff and provides the postgraduate student with access to both experienced researchers and those with industry experience.
- 6.2.2 Postgraduate students (especially International students) were enthusiastic about access to and the responsiveness of supervisors. However there were some cases reported where Associate Supervisors were unresponsive at critical times, e.g. the publishing of journal articles. While the Faculty encourages Associate Supervisors to attend the ITL Supervisor Development Program the pressure of face-to-face teaching and the voluntary nature of this staff development mitigates against its 100 per cent adoption.

6.3 Services to Postgraduate Research Students

- 6.3.1 The intimate nature of the campus and the collegiality characterised by the staff and students provided informal support mechanisms to postgraduate research students. Access to Library resources, laboratories, office space, University fleet, I.T. assistance, disciplinary and research methodology assistance were adequate for the current number of postgraduate research students. It is noted that existing resources for postgraduate students are facilitated by small student numbers and the faculty may face a challenge in maintaining these as numbers increase.
- 6.3.2 Where students demands were unmet was in the areas of computers (students reported that their output was limited by the speed of the hand-me-down computers they were using); access to funds for travel to international conferences and counselling and student advice.

7. GOAL 4: INTERNATIONALISATION

- 7.1 The Faculty provides internationalisation both through its curriculum and research. The Asian Agribusiness Research Centre (AARC) is facilitating considerable cooperative research

activity; while current International students, both undergraduate and postgraduate, endorsed the quality of the learning provided by the Faculty, commenting that assignment work provided opportunities to use international examples and work experience.

- 7.2 Current International students commented on the need to increase cultural awareness on campus, both among students and staff. Recommendation Seven has already dealt with this issue.
- 7.3 As mentioned in Section 5.1.2 the Faculty has ambitious targets with regards to building its International student cohort. Practical steps have been taken via the signing of Memoranda of Understanding with tertiary education institutions in both China and India. The Review Panel was pleased to see the partnering with TAFE both with regards to the provision of ESL courses and TAFE initiatives in Beijing.
- 7.4 The Review Team notes the intention to develop a Marketing Plan in the area of Internationalisation and endorses this direction. The Review Panel recommends that this plan focus both on teaching, learning and research, as well as means of overcoming International student reluctance to undertake distance and online courses and means of developing cultural diversity in student support. (*See Recommendation Nine*)

8. GOAL 5: ENGAGEMENT WITH INDUSTRY AND THE PROFESSIONS

- 8.1 The Capability Program (particularly inclusion of industry in final portfolio interview) and the regular industry tours included as part of coursework, engaged the Faculty with local industry and professions. For a discussion of the Capability Program see Section 4.2. There was some student comment that farmers were inadequately briefed prior to some field trips.
- 8.2 Another opportunity utilised by the Faculty to engage with Industry and the Professions was the use of Associate Supervisors outside of the faculty (see Section 6.2).
- 8.3 The Review Team recommend that the Faculty engage industry as an active partner in their strategic planning in research (see Section 6.1); specifically in the development of Linkage Grants. As part of this process investigation of the needs of potential industry partners should be undertaken. (*See Recommendation Ten*)

9. GOAL 6: EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

- 9.1 The Review Team commends the Faculty on the quality and timeliness of its management information, particularly the Monthly Budget Summaries. The redevelopment of the Faculty website to provide an International and a research focus is also to be commended. (*See Commendation Eight*)
- 9.2 Students reported positively on the support provided by both the Library and I.T. (especially in the area of database support).

10. GOAL 7: SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

- 10.1 The Self-Evaluation Report listed a large number of local community groups that benefit from both the facilities of the campus and the expertise of Faculty staff. The Review Panel commends the work of the Professional Services arm which provides a link to the community through customised research and professional development programs. (*See Commendation Nine*)

- 10.2 The Review Team anticipates that the maturation of CREO will increase the breadth of strategic (over individualistic) connection to the community. Opportunities have been mentioned in earlier sections (*Sections 4.5.5 and 5.2*).
- 10.3 The Review Team felt that a more strategic approach to linking with community could provide the Faculty with marketing opportunities both in traditional and non-traditional markets, in addition to increasing its industry links. The Review Team recommends that the Faculty work to develop a strategic plan as a means of focussing its links with the community. (*See Recommendation Eleven*)

11. CONCLUSIONS

11.1 Commendations

Introduction

1. The Faculty is commended for its active response to the Phase One Review of the Faculty. (*See Section 2.1*)
2. The Review Team commends the Faculty on the development of the fully online and full-fee paying Master of Sustainable Management, which has been well received by the first intake of students and encourages the Dean to continue this change in Faculty profile and strategic approach to resource allocation. (*See Section 2.3*)

Overview of Quality Assurance

3. The Faculty is commended on its successful application for a TIF grant to enable benchmarking nationally and internationally for the Farm Management, Horticultural Management and Equine Business Management programs. (*See Section 3.4.1*)

Goal One: Quality Teaching and Learning

4. The Faculty is commended on work done since the first round review on ensuring the confidentiality of student evaluation of coursework, and on nullifying the issue of parallel teaching of undergraduate and postgraduate coursework programs. (*See Section 4.1.2*)
5. The Faculty is commended for its achievement in offering quality teaching using online resources and through distance education and for acting on issues which emerged in the last review. Feedback from staff and students suggest that work in this area is a model of good practice. (*See Section 4.4.2*)
6. The Faculty is commended for its response to the drop in student enrolment, specifically the expansion into management training and professional development and expanding its disciplinary base. (*See Section 4.5.4*)

Goal Three: Excellence in Research

7. The Review Team commends the redevelopment of the Faculty Research Plan and the aim of doubling research income by 2006. (*See Section 6.1.3*)

Goal Six: Effective Management

8. The Review Team commends the Faculty on the quality and timeliness of its management information, particularly the Monthly Budget Summaries. The redevelopment of the Faculty

website to provide an International and a research focus is also to be commended. (*See Section 9.1*)

Goal Seven: Service to the Community

9. The Review Panel commends the work of the Professional Services arm which provides a link to the community through customised research and professional development programs. (*See Section 10.1*)

11.2 Recommendations

Overview of Quality Assurance Processes

1. The Review Team notes the intention of the Faculty to review its Research Management Plan. The Review Team recommends that the Plan include both new initiatives for early adopters of change and resourced mechanisms for more gradual forms of change, to provide current staff with pathways to becoming research active. (*See Section 3.2.3*)

Goal One: Quality Teaching and Learning

2. The Review Team recommends that the current review of the Capability Program include issues such as timing, communication of the Program's aims, its voluntary/ assessable nature, resources, and the extent to which the curriculum is structured to manage the capabilities. (*See Section 4.2.5*)
3. It is recommended that the faculty develop a more strategic approach to assessment, including both summative and formative assessment. The development of a Student Workload Policy which uses the credit point as a regulator of expected student workload, may be of assistance in this area. Frequent assessments may be necessary in early years but could be tapered to a more research focus in later years. (*See Section 4.3.5*)
4. The Review Team recommends the Faculty liaise with the Faculty of Arts on the effects on retention rates of raising the entry UAI. (*See Section 4.5.3*)
5. The Review Team commends the Faculty on its openness to seeking non-traditional sources of students and recommends that it exploit the opportunities offered by CREO to develop new strategic partnerships. (*See Section 4.5.5*)
6. It is recommended that the faculty explore models used in other faculties (such as the Faculty of Science) for enhancing awareness of research among coursework students. (*See Section 4.6.2*)

Goal Two: Diversity, Access and Equity

7. The Review Team recommends that the Faculty monitor staff and student profiles and support services and continue to develop initiatives that facilitate the move to diversity. (*See Sections 5.1.3 and 5.2.2*)

Goal Three: Excellence in Research

8. It is recommended that the collegial strengths of the Faculty be exploited to assist research inactive staff, e.g. through the use of research teams. (*See Section 6.1.4*)

Goal Four: Internationalisation

9. The Review Team notes the intention to develop a Marketing Plan in the area of Internationalisation and endorses this direction. The Review Panel recommends that this plan focus both on teaching, learning and research, as well as means of overcoming International student reluctance to undertake distance and online courses and means of developing cultural diversity in student support. (*See Section 7.4*)

Goal Five: Engagement with Industry and the Professions

10. The Review Team recommend that the Faculty engage industry as an active partner in their strategic planning in research (see Section 6.1); specifically in the development of Linkage Grants. As part of this process investigation of the needs of potential industry partners should be undertaken. (*See Section 8.3*)

Goal Seven: Service to the Community

11. The Review Team recommends that the Faculty work to develop a strategic plan as a means of focussing its links with the community. (*See Section 10.3*)

Assoc. Professor Peter McCallum
Chair, Review Team

November 10 2003

APPENDIX ONE: FACULTY RESPONSE TO PHASE ONE RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1	The Review Team recommends that the Faculty should consider ways to externally benchmark units and courses (content, breadth, depth and challenge) and the quality of graduate outcomes. This may involve comparisons with degree programs with more than one university or college and could be both local and international.
Action taken by the Faculty	Applied for and received a TIF grant for \$50,000 to enable benchmarking nationally and internationally for three programs: Farm Management, Horticultural Management and Equine Business Management.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	Research assistant expected to complete preliminary work this year. Program Leaders to visit selected Institutions early in 2004 and to begin revision of the curricula on their return.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	Too early to see any measurable outcomes.
Recommendation 2	The Review Team recommends further development of staff skills and understanding of the Capability Program within the Faculty. This will ensure that a coherent approach is adopted across all programs.
Action taken by the Faculty	A well attended staff development session has been conducted: March 4 - How to integrate capabilities into your teaching.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	A Capability Management Sub Committee has been set up by the Learning Committee under Kerry Cochrane, Capability Co-ordinator. This committee is to promote the embedding of capabilities into the curriculum and monitor the capability portfolio. Another staff development workshop is planned for late 2003.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	Students and staff are to be surveyed late October to determine the usage and understanding of the capability program. \$5,110 has been provided from the Faculty's Scholarship Index Funds to support this research project. Until the results of the survey are known it is not possible to make an evaluation of the success of the action taken.

Recommendation 3	The Review Team recommends that the Faculty investigate ways of ensuring that the level of material presented in residential schools is commensurate with the student cohort involved, and that a mix of undergraduate and postgraduate material should be avoided where possible.
Action taken by the Faculty	Staff have been reminded of the Review Team's concern prior to the February, April and July Residential Schools and asked to seek alternatives where possible. The situation has been monitored with staff being asked to supply details of any mixing of cohorts. Inquiries have shown, however, that the mixing of cohorts for Residential Schools is the exception rather than the rule and that, in the few cases where it does happen, there are good reasons for combining the groups (eg optional revision for postgraduate students in the undergraduate unit <i>Soil Resource Management</i> and similar 'practicals' for the two undergraduate units <i>Wildlife Management</i> and <i>Habitat Management</i> . Documentation from staff providing sound educational (and resource-based) reasons for mixing cohorts are available on request.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	The situation will continue to be monitored.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	Mixing of cohorts seldom occurs; when it does happen there are valid educational reasons. Faculty agrees that the situation is being effectively monitored.
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Recommendation 4	The Review Team recommends that the Faculty ensure that material presented in the graduate certificate programs be current and relevant to the course.
Action taken by the Faculty	Matter raised at both subsequent meetings of the relevant program team. Unit Co-ordinators have reviewed their respective units and updated where necessary. Systemic review of the program initiated.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	Changes flowing from current review to be implemented as rapidly as possible.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	Unit specific action has been rapid. Program wide action initiated.

Recommendation 5	The Review Team recommends that in order to improve the use of WebWise across the Faculty, good practice of WebWise should be spread throughout the Faculty.
Action taken by the Faculty	Ms Sally Brownlow has been appointed the Faculty's Online Learning Coordinator. Part of her responsibility is to promote good practice in the use of WebCT (previously WebWise). Ms Brownlow has conducted one-on-one training with many academics, and has overseen the integration of online learning components in a significant number of internal and external units in 2003. All new academics to the Faculty have been required to participate in individual WebCT orientation sessions with Ms Brownlow. Ms Brownlow also participated in a Staff Development Day by organising and facilitating a session on designing online learning activities and e-moderation "Ways of achieving improved online learning". Ms Brownlow has further developed the Faculty template for all WebCT units, which reflects the Faculty website and offers increased student help facilities and standardisation across all units.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	Ms Brownlow is in the process of developing a Unit Development database which will facilitate the implementation of quality assurance measures for all online learning activities. It will ensure that appropriate design and review processes have been undertaken for each unit. It will also facilitate the sharing of resources and ideas among academics. A further staff development day is planned to concentrate specifically on the challenges of e-moderation and its crucial role in online pedagogy. Ms Brownlow is attending the ODLAA conference in October.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	The March 4 Staff Development was well received and timely. The subsequent concentration on individual training has been time consuming, but valuable, as academics have learnt the processes when they are needed, ie. in context. The number of students using WebCT has greatly increased in 2003, and this is reflected in increased academic use, and a growing realisation that it is 'worth the time'.
Recommendation 6	Whilst there was an indication of a growing research culture and the building of research teams within the Faculty, possibly confined to a cluster of staff at this point, the Review Team feels that there is a need for better management of staff development, for example in the completion of PhDs and the recruitment of research performing staff. This will be essential to the successful expansion of the Faculty research profile.
Action taken by the Faculty	Staff appointed since last review have research capacity. Two staff have completed higher degrees. A 'Rural Management Research Institute' has been established to better co-ordinate the development of the research culture.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	Research Management Plan to be revised. Research-related staff development activities organised since last review visit will be continued.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	A wide range of strategies has been implemented and there are tangible signs of positive results. It should also be noted that five staff are currently studying for higher degrees.

Recommendation 7	The Review Team recommends that the Faculty consider ways of making research a focal point of their Teaching and Learning plans and strategies. It also recommends that the Faculty revise the Teaching and Learning Plan to better reflect the priorities and activities that were described during the visit.
Action taken by the Faculty	<p>Faculty invited Associate Professor Angela Brew to conduct a staff development session on research-led teaching. An audit into research-led teaching was conducted in August and a workshop held October 9 addressed the need to implement a staged development program for all undergraduate students whereby research activities would be gradually and progressively introduced. <i>Learning Matters 04/03</i> was devoted to what is meant by research-led teaching. John Eiseman, FRM's representative on the University's Research-led Teaching Working Party, reports regularly to the Learning Committee on debate and developments.</p> <p>With regard to revising the Teaching & Learning Plan to better reflect current practice, the committee charged with producing the Faculty's Teaching and Learning Operational Plan for 2003 was particularly cognisant of the need for greater comprehensiveness and accuracy. The draft plan was disseminated to all staff as a working document and was accepted by Faculty as reflecting our activities and priorities.</p>
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	<p>Discussion of the appropriateness of a tenth capability that deals specifically with research-led teaching and learning.</p> <p>Incorporation of strategies in the Faculty's Teaching and Learning Operational Plan for 2004 that further address research-led teaching.</p>
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	The Faculty has undertaken a steep learning curve. There is still a need to consolidate our understanding of research-led teaching to fully incorporate into our teaching and learning.
Recommendation 8	The Review Team recommends that the Faculty actively plan changing the strategic directions of the Faculty to enhance staff opportunities for research and create an effective research culture.
Action taken by the Faculty	A Faculty research grant scheme was developed in 2003 and resulted in five applications. The majority of Orange-based academics participated in a Research Day. Research groups have been revised and more carefully defined.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	The first joint Rural Management-School of Chemistry PG research project is about to be initiated and a number of other collaborative initiatives planned.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	Considerable progress has been made but a proportion of Faculty appears to be resistant to embracing research as a central activity.

Recommendation 9	<p>In following the practice of open access to student evaluations the Review Team recommends that the Faculty pay careful attention to resolve two existing problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students report that most evaluations were not anonymous, creating concern about possible repercussions following critical comments; and • Staff and students did not discuss the feedback together, or consider how student evaluations are used to improve units.
Action taken by the Faculty	A new Faculty-wide student evaluation policy that addresses these issues was introduced in 2002 (see Appendix 1.1)
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	The new policy has been in place now for three semesters. With experience, some minor adjustments have been made. In 2004 Faculty will adopt USE for the year.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	The new policy has been very well received by students and staff. Significant changes to the way some units are taught have resulted.
Recommendation 10	The Review Team recommends that the Faculty adopt and implement the College of Science and Technology ten-point plan on research training. They also recommend that the Faculty investigate the introduction of common activities and opportunities for interaction among postgraduate research students, including a common seminar series.
Action taken by the Faculty	The CST protocols were already well implemented at the time of the last meeting but the level of compliance has been reviewed since this time. The Associate Dean (Research), SUPRA Representative, DOGS & SUPRA President have met to explore scope for more interaction.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	Postgraduate students are being more strongly integrated into the lunchtime seminar series and twice-yearly postgraduate conferences (day-long) are planned.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	Action taken and planned has/will enhance the postgraduate experience for Orange based research students.