

AGENDA ITEM 12**Report of the Learning and Teaching Committee****12.2 Report of the Learning and Teaching Committee meeting held on 11 September 2007**

The Committee met on 11 September 2007 when there were present: The Chair (Associate Professor G Ryan) presiding, Professors D Armstrong, D Guest and B Sutton, Associate Professors D Airey, C Collyer, M Freeman and P McCallum, Drs C Asmar, S Cumming, M Edmond, M Rosenman, S Thomas and F Waugh, and Mr J Clegg and Ms S Hanfling. Ms A Griffiths and M Kemmis were in attendance.

12.2.1 Use of Bonus Marks

The Committee noted that the Faculty of Economics and Business had asked for clarification regarding the use of bonus marks. Associate Professor Freeman advised members that a member of staff in the Faculty of Economics and Business had raised the possibility of providing bonus marks to students who participated in research projects which were not directly related to their studies. He noted that concerns had been raised at this suggestion, including the fact that marks would be awarded that were not related to learning outcomes or standards of achievement, as well as issues of equity and the application of the appeals policy to such a marking scheme. He stated that he had been advised that this system was used in other faculties, and was particularly prevalent in the discipline of psychology here and at other universities. He noted that a colleague at another university had described a system where students participated in such research and then submitted a reflective report which was graded (students who did not participate in the research submitted a reflective report on another topic).

Members commented on the matter as follows:

- Mr Clegg expressed SUPRA's strong objection to the use of the term "bonus", and their concern that any such additional assessment should be equitable and fairly graded. SUPRA was not averse to optional assessment items in units of study, nor to students (at least theoretically) being able to achieve more than 100% in assessment marks for a unit of study. He pointed out that the system used in psychology effectively gave students the option of either participating in research or submitting an essay;
- Dr Waugh advised that the Faculty of Education and Social Work did not use a system of bonus marks and that there would be major issues of equity involved in such a scheme;
- Professor Sutton agreed with Associate Professor Freeman's concerns, noting that the scheme lay outside the Academic Board's current assessment structure. He also agreed with Mr Clegg that any such scheme should be included in the unit of study outline with reasonable alternatives. He concluded that bonus marks were not academically defensible;
- Professor Armstrong noted that the scheme appeared to be designed to assist staff rather than students, and he expressed concern that pressure could be placed on students to participate in such schemes. He agreed that any assessment unrelated to learning outcomes was contrary to the University's principles of assessment;
- Associate Professor McCallum agreed with Mr Clegg that the term "bonus" should not be used and, while noting that options could be inserted into the existing assessment structure, expressed support for maintaining the strong link between assessment and learning outcomes;
- The Chair advised that he had discussed this idea with the Faculty of Pharmacy's Learning and Teaching Committee. Committee members had not expressed

support for the concept with one pointing out that it sent the wrong signals to students about research involvement;

- Dr Cumming pointed out that this system was often used to ensure that honours students had a pool of research subjects available to them, rather than to provide subjects for staff projects, and that the focus was on supporting student work; and
- Associate Professor Collyer noted that the Faculty of Science's Talented Student Program included research-based units and a group project. The Program was aimed at developing the research skills of talented students.

While noting the point raised by Dr Cumming, Professor Sutton expressed strong concern regarding the general system of awarding research involvement with bonus marks. It was agreed that he would write to deans outlining the concerns of the Committee and advising faculties that such schemes do not comply with the University's current assessment policies.

Recommendation

That the Academic Board note the report on the use of Bonus Marks.

12.2.2 Proceedings of the Committee

(1) Report of the Deputy Provost (Learning and Teaching) and Pro Vice-Chancellor

The Deputy Provost (Learning and Teaching) and Pro Vice-Chancellor reported to the Committee on the following matters:

- Faculty Learning and Teaching plans;
- Meetings with Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching);
- Learning and Teaching funding;
- Review of Learning and Teaching Support;
- Teaching Improvement and Equipment Scheme (TIES);
- University Workload Committee;
- Provost's Working Groups; and
- a Learning and Teaching Forum on teaching in a research intensive university (to be held later in the year).

(2) Other Reports

The Committee also noted the following reports:

- the current status of the Assessment Working Party;
- the implementation of the recommendations of the Plagiarism Detection Working Party;
- a query regarding the re-marking of key assessment items (where student progression would be affected);
- a report on the Sydney Welcome and Orientation Transition Program for 2007; and
- the report of the Academic Board meeting held on 29 August 2007.