

AGENDA ITEM 12**Report of the Learning and Teaching Committee****12.2 Report of the Learning and Teaching Committee meeting held on 19 November 2008**

The Committee met on Wednesday 19 November 2008 there were present: The Chair (Associate Professor G Ryan) presiding, Professor D Armstrong, Associate Professors D Airey, S Barrie, M Boughton, C Collyer, M Freeman, P McCallum, P McGreevy, Drs S Cattle, D Collins, S Cumming, E Fonacier, P Gemeinboeck (for R Saunders), C Groenlund, J Jones, A Rubino, F Waugh, C Taylor, Mr A Cooper (for B Meikle), Ms J Gavan, Ms R Kumar and Ms K Laing. Mr M Charet and Ms A Griffiths were in attendance.

The full agenda for the meeting may be accessed on the web at:

http://sydney.edu.au/ab/committees/oldcom/learn_teach/2008_agendas.shtml

12.2.1 Academic Board Faculty Reviews: Faculty Progress*pages G3-G5*

The Committee received and noted the attached report from the Faculty of Science regarding progress on items from the Phase Three Review held in late 2007.

The Committee also:

- received and held over the report of the Phase Three Review of the Faculty of Medicine;
- noted that the progress report from the Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources would be received in the near future; and
- noted that the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technologies has been asked to provide a progress report.

Recommendation

That the Academic Board note the Faculty Progress Report from the Faculty of Science, as set out in the report presented.

12.2.2 2007 Annual Report of the Institute for Teaching and Learning*pages G6-G7*

The Academic Board is asked to note the 2007 Annual Report of the Institute for Teaching and Learning. This report was considered by the Learning and Teaching Committee at its October meeting. An outline from the report is provided here at pages 6-7 and the full report is available online at

<http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/aboutus/annualreport07.pdf>

Recommendation

That the Academic Board note the 2007 Annual Report of the Institute for Teaching and Learning, as set out in the report presented.

12.2.3 Retiring Members of the Committee

The Committee was informed that it was the last meeting for longstanding members Associate Professor David Airey from the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technologies and Dr Diane Collins from the Conservatorium of Music. The Committee thanked Associate Professor Airey and Dr Collins for their long service to the Learning Teaching Committee.

Associate Professor Greg Ryan also informed the Committee that it would be his last meeting in the role of Chair. On behalf of the Committee, Associate Professor Barrie thanked Professor Ryan for all his work as Chair.

Recommendation

That the Academic Board recognise and thank Associate Professors Greg Ryan and David Airey and Dr Diane Collins for their exemplary service on the Learning and Teaching Committee.

12.2.4 Proceedings of the Committee

(1) Ethical Principles regarding Special Consideration

It was noted that the Principles for Special Consideration, formulated by the Assessment Working Party, had been the focus topic at the previous meeting of the Academic Board.

Several suggestions to clarify the principles had been made by members at the October meeting of the Learning and Teaching Committee and these were to be incorporated ahead of the document being circulated to members for further comment. Responses are to be discussed at the first Learning and Teaching Committee meeting of 2009. The outcome of the discussion would then be returned to the Assessment Working Party for consideration. It was emphasised that these principles were not policy, and that the next step would involve examining current policy and procedures in light of the principles.

(2) Other reports

The Committee noted the following reports:

- Report of the Academic Board meeting held on 12 November 2008
- Report of the (Acting) Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)
- Oral report of the Chair

Faculty of Science

FIRST PROGRESS REPORT ON RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PHASE THREE

Recommendation 1	Monitoring, recruiting and supporting Indigenous students
Action taken by the Faculty	The main problem here is the lack of numbers of indigenous students in science. This is a problem for all science faculties and it is exacerbated at Sydney because of our maths requirements. We have drawn up a plan for a long-term project with various private and selective schools in the Sydney area, to identify potential future indigenous science students, and we will work with these schools and the DET to develop a career path for these students that includes a science degree at the University of Sydney. The Pro-Dean, Dr Tom Hubble, is leading this initiative. We are also working with the Faculty of Medicine to develop a pathways program for high achieving indigenous students, through our Advanced Science degree and Talented Student Program, to graduate medicine.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	We will complement this program with a tracking and support package to be developed.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	On track
Recommendation 2	Enhancing efficiency of teaching.
Action taken by the Faculty	The dean has held discussions with all heads and in some instances the entire academic staff, of schools (Mathematics and Statistics being the most recent example), to decrease contact hours in first year units of study, to bring them into line with Academic Board guidelines. This will not only decrease staff teaching loads but also save schools significant amounts of money. In addition, schools have been urged to continue to review their senior offerings with a view to reducing overlap and consolidating their units of study. Some schools are well on the way to achieving this.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	This will be monitored annually.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	This project has been met with considerable resistance by academics in some schools, but the recent request from the Vice Chancellor to cut spending by 6% seems to have engaged the heads of school and I am confident of achieving our target of five contact hours per six credit point first year unit of study over the next year.
Recommendation 3	Integration of faculty and school planning and activities.
Action taken by the Faculty	The faculty has participated in a pilot project involving development of school and faculty strategic planning using the balanced scorecard template developed by the planning office. This has been accomplished with the school of chemistry and will be rolled out across the faculty in 2009.

Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	The faculty will implement strategy design sessions with heads of school and associate deans early in the year, to develop plans of action that can be readily incorporated into the detailed planning that occurs as part of the university's budget process.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	We have an 11 page spreadsheet detailing actions to achieve strategic goals associated with the budget process and this will be updated yearly.
Recommendation 4	Postgraduate coursework
Action taken by the Faculty	We have begun a careful cost analysis of our PG course work offerings and have placed several programs on notice to improve student numbers or face the axe. We are also undertaking market research and bench marking with competitors to determine new markets and new degrees. One of these will involve the Institute of Sustainable Solutions.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	A new Director of PG coursework will be appointed in 2009 and this person will work closely with the marketing team to develop new programs.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	Notwithstanding the above, the faculty needs to be clear about its core values and not get carried away with developing courses just to raise revenue. There needs to be clearly defined demand and the desire of staff to teach these courses and they must be aligned with our goals. Ensuring pathways to HDR programs will be a priority.
Recommendation 5	Feedback to research students
Action taken by the Faculty	The Director of PG research is developing new guidelines to ensure better and clearer feedback to students through annual reports. The Director of PG research held a discussion session with postgraduate coordinators at the October meeting of the Board of Postgraduate Research to ensure better and clearer feedback to students through the annual review process. Almost all candidates in the Faculty will have annual interviews with School based review panels as part of the APR process.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	Some schools (noticeably, Physics) now include annual interviews with their PhD students and I am urging all schools to adopt this procedure
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	
Recommendation 6	Development of research students careers.
Action taken by the Faculty	The faculty is developing workshops to assist PhD students in obtaining employment after their degrees and to plan their careers.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	At the moment this is focused on research careers but we will work with Sydney Talent to present alternatives to HDR students in the new year.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of	A work in progress

action taken	
Recommendation 7	Support for research students to attend overseas conferences
Action taken by the Faculty	This matter has been referred to heads of schools as the faculty wishes to continue to devolve most of its research support funds to the schools. Most schools have a scholarship program for this purpose but I don't expect that this will be enhanced much in the near future as we have been urged to cut our travel expenses.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	

1. Overview of the ITL year

It is the role of the Institute for Teaching and Learning (ITL) to work with the University community to research, enhance, assure the quality of teaching and student learning. The ITL contributes to this process through professional development, for example, development programs for staff new to teaching, surveys providing staff with information from students on their teaching, and support for staff applying for teaching awards and grants. In addition to professional development of staff, the ITL also supports, and in some instances leads, the planning for and carrying out of educational development. These activities include work on faculty-based projects such as course development or assessment redesign, on University-wide working groups and committees such as the Learning and Teaching Committee of Academic Board, and in the provision of research literature and data to support educational decision-making.

In 2007 the ITL began a process of shifting the focus of its role in supporting professional and educational development more towards a discipline-based approach. In doing so, it is acknowledging the advances in knowledge about the pedagogies of the disciplines and how this might be used to meet the needs of individual faculties. The main changes in ITL have been in three areas: in the structural systems through which ITL work is conducted, in the resources needed by ITL to implement such an approach, and in the academic development programs that provide the means for individual professional development in teaching.

Following a review in early 2007 of the three main academic development programs offered by ITL (Principles and Practice of University Teaching and Learning, Graduate Certificate in Educational Studies (Higher Education) and Research Higher Degree Supervision Development Program) the format in which those programs are to be offered from late 2008 has changed. They have been redeveloped, based on participant feedback and surveys of relevant academic staff, to include more flexibility for participants in what they choose as the focus of their development work, and more discipline-based choices. The changes proposed are presented in more detail in the 'Programs' section of this report.

In the six years prior to 2007, six Strategic Working Groups (in areas such as the first year student experience and research-enhanced learning and teaching), running in parallel, were the main structural systems through which ITL work with faculties was conducted. Each group contained a nominee of the dean and met four or five times a year to grapple with the issues related to effective faculty implementation of that particular university strategic initiative. While much was achieved through this structure, the outcomes from the groups differed in quality, and even in the more effective working groups the changes achieved were not experienced evenly across the faculties.

During 2007 a new structure was developed that involved a closer working relationship between the Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching) in each faculty and the ITL. Meeting monthly with the ITL and the Deputy Provost, the Associate Deans have continued to engage with the strategic issues identified by the University, but in addition, are developing specific action points from their own faculty teaching and learning plans aimed at improving student learning. Each action plan has been developed to meet the needs of each faculty, and is being endorsed by the dean of the faculty. The ITL negotiates with each Associate Dean to determine the resources available to achieve each action point.

To support the achievement of the targets set for each faculty action point and in order to develop the new discipline focus of the restructured academic development programs, changes have been made to enhance the expertise of academic development services in the ITL. For example, some of the previous focus on generic development has been replaced by a disciplinary focus. Four new senior academic development staff, each with experience in teaching, and in leading teaching and learning development, in one or more of the University faculties, will be appointed to ITL in 2008/9. Each will work with one faculty 'cluster', comprised of four or five faculties.

The changes are anticipated to have significant effects on the ITL and on the way it works. In addition to the outcomes expected through the network of Associate Deans, relations between ITL and the faculties are expected to be improved, and the needs of the faculties are more likely to be met. While the research conducted in ITL is expected to continue to be internationally competitive, the changes could mean that the research topics and

themes are likely to be more discipline-based or have more of a local 'flavour'.

Given the structural and staff changes outlined above, 2007 was a challenging year for the ITL however most of its core work was achieved. In each of the following sections, contributions from ITL in teaching evaluation, in professional development programs, in projects to support teaching and learning development, in service to the University and community, and in research, have been strong, and in some cases exemplary. The ITL worked with over 350 faculty staff on formal professional development courses and with many others on a variety of educational development projects, while maintaining significant research and service contributions. Moreover, the ITL processed almost 100,000 Unit of Study Evaluation forms, and achieved returns on the Australian Graduate Survey of over 53%, which is 10% above the responses from the previous two years. With the restructuring largely complete a unique opportunity now exists for ITL to make a major contribution to the next phase of professional and educational development at the University of Sydney.

Summary of Highlights

- Engagement with a restructuring process which has led to a stronger disciplinary and faculty-based focus in all development activities;
- A review of all academic development programs which has led to revision of the Principles & Practice program, the Graduate Certificate in Educational Studies (HE) and the Research Higher Degree Supervision Development program;
- An increase of over 10% in response rates for the Australian Graduate Survey (incorporating the Course Experience Questionnaire);
- Processing of almost 100,000 evaluation forms for Unit of Study Evaluations and feedback for teachers;
- Completion of professional development courses by over 200 faculty staff and over 150 additional new enrolments;
- Establishment of an Associate Deans (L&T) network;
- Service to 19 committees and working groups;
- Produced 15 publications, including books, chapters and refereed journal articles; and
- New research and development income totalling over \$330 000.