

AGENDA ITEM 12**Report of the Learning and Teaching Committee****12.2 Report of the Learning and Teaching Committee meeting held on 23 September 2009**

The Learning and Teaching Committee met on 23 September 2009 when there was present: The Chair (Professor Tony Aspromourgos) presiding; Professor B Sutton; Associate Professors S Barrie, C Collyer, T Ho, M Lincoln, I Maxwell and M Scoufis; Drs M Fisher, I Koprinska, R Saunders, L Smith and F Waugh; Ms H Drury and Rashmi Kumar; and Mr Bruce Meikle. Ms L Young was in attendance.

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

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

12.2.1 Academic Board Faculty Reviews: Faculty of Economics and Business

The Committee received the Academic Board Review Phase Three Report from the Faculty of Economics and Business. The faculty is engaged in several initiatives in regards to assessment, teaching and group work, including team based learning and student peer review of group work. An effective tutor development program has been established and a peer review program for lecturers is being piloted. The faculty is also working towards increasing student satisfaction with its programs, hopefully leading to improved student responses in the Course Experience Questionnaire.

The full report is available on the Committee's website at:

http://sydney.edu.au/ab/committees/oldcom/learn_teach/agendas/2009/Appendix3_Aug09_Phase3ReportEconomics&Business.pdf

Recommendation

That the Academic Board note the Academic Board Phase 3 Review Reports for the Faculty of Economics and Business, as presented.

12.2.2 Academic Board Resolutions: Assessment and Examination of Coursework

separate attachment

The revised 'Academic Board Resolutions: Assessment and Examination of Coursework' policy, developed by the Assessment Working Party, has amendments related to Parts 1, 5 and 6, with minor changes to Parts 2, 3 and 4. Part 6 has also been renumbered as Part 7 with a new Part 6 on 'Reasonable Adjustments to Examinations and Assessment' inserted. The Committee extensively discussed the revised resolutions at a special meeting held on 8 September 2009 and also in the 12 August and 23 September meetings.

Recommendation

That the Academic Board approve amendments to the 'Academic Board Resolutions: Assessment and Examination of Coursework' with immediate effect, as set out in the report presented.

12.2.3 Executive Summary of the Learning Centre's 2008 Annual Report

pages 3-8

In 2008 the Learning Centre had increased student enrolments for the majority of its programs, with a marked increase in the faculty teaching program. Enrolment patterns remained similar to the previous three years with female students outweighing male student in the Central Workshop Program. There was a rise in enrolments from international students and students from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Recommendation

That the Academic Board note the executive summary of the Learning Centre's 2008 Annual Report, as presented.

12.2.4 Proceedings of the Committee

(1) Revisions to the University's plagiarism policy

The Committee discussed the draft 'Academic Honesty and Plagiarism' policy which merges the existing 'Resolutions of the Academic Board: Academic Honesty in Coursework' and the 'Student Plagiarism: Course work: Policy and Procedures'. The item was held over for final discussion in the 28 October meeting.

(2) Reports

The Committee noted the report of the Academic Board meeting held on 26 August 2009. They also received the oral report of the Chair and an oral update report of the Students at Risk Working Party.

Learning Centre: Annual Report 2008

Executive Summary

The mission, values and goals of the Learning Centre reflect those of the Strategic Directions of the University of Sydney 2007-2010. In pursuing its primary role of assisting students to develop and enhance their learning and academic literacy, the Learning Centre aims to contribute to:

- the University's position as a provider of high quality learning and teaching
- the enrichment of the student experience
- the development of desirable graduate outcomes
- the success and retention of all students
- the profile of research and innovation of the University
- the University's commitment towards the provision of support for students from a diversity of backgrounds

The Learning Centre is engaged in teaching and research activities through each of its four main programs:

- the *Central Program* of academic skills workshops, SWOT activities and Staying on Track seminars
- the *Faculty Program* of learning and teaching development activities in collaboration with faculties across the University
- the *eLearning Program* of projects based in the Learning Centre and in Faculties
- the *Individual Learning Program (ILP)* of resources and consultations for individual students

Teaching: Facts and Figures

In 2008, student demand for the Centre's services continued to increase. There was also a continuing strong demand from faculties to work collaboratively with Centre staff to integrate learning and academic literacy support into Units of Study and degree programs.

Table 1 summarises the main teaching activities across the Centre's Programs, comparing 2007 and 2008.

Table 1: Summary of Learning Centre Teaching 2007 - 2008

	2007	2008
Central Workshop Program		
<i>Number of student enrolments</i>	1754	1733
Number of workshops offered	270	256
Number of teaching hours	1118	1108
SWOT Lectures		
<i>Number of students taught</i>	2590	2630
(Sem 1)	8	9
Number of lectures	7	-
<i>Number of students taught</i>	1	-
(Sem 2)		
Number of lectures		
Independent Learning Program		
	457	232
<i>Number of students taught</i>	722	601
Number of teaching hours	1.6	2.6
Average hrs per student		
Faculty Teaching Program		
<i>Number of students taught</i>	1892	2470
Number of teaching hours	304.5	385
Number of faculties	13	14

Diagnostic (MASUS)	Assessment		
		510	886
Number of students		5/5	5
Number of Schools/Faculties			
Total Students		7,210	7,951

In 2008, the LC provided face-to-face teaching for a total of **7,065** students and diagnostic assessment for **886** students – a total of **7,951** students. In the three main teaching programs, the Central Workshop Program, the Independent Learning Program (ILP) and the Faculty-based Program, teaching was provided for **4,435** students, (2007: 4,103). Approximately **2,630** students attended the *Learning to Learn* lectures during SWOT (Sydney Welcome Orientation and Transition) in OWeek. Apart from these sessions, orientation activities were provided to over **2,495** students in Faculties and other units such as the International Student Support Unit (ISSU), SUPRA, the Koori Centre (see Table 13 in the Appendix). There was a significant decrease in the number of students receiving individual teaching sessions but a corresponding increase in the number of students participating in the Faculty program. This reflects the Centre's strategic goals to involve Faculties more in targeted discipline-specific learning support.

CENTRAL PROGRAM

In its Central Program, the Learning Centre has a wide range of workshops designed to meet the academic language and learning needs of diverse groups of students. There are over 60 different workshops in the Central Program, ranging from 2 to 12 hours per workshop. The timetable runs from January to December, including semester and year breaks with 9 Blocks of workshops and is designed to give maximum flexibility for students in the time and duration of the courses. A total of **256** workshops totalling **1,108** hours were conducted within the Centre, many of these being repeat offerings of the more popular workshops. Of the **1,108** hours of workshops offered in the Central Program, **900** hours were available to students of all language backgrounds, with a further **208** hours (2007:**176** hours) restricted to students of non-English-speaking backgrounds through the WELL program (Workshops in English Language and Learning).

Students from 16 Faculties enrolled in the Central Workshop Program. As in past years, the greatest participation was from the Faculty of *Economics and Business* (**26.8%**), followed by *Arts and Humanities* (**21%**), *Education and Social Work* (**8.3%**), *Science* (**7.6%**) and *Health Sciences* (**6.6%**).

Student demographics

Table 2 shows the profile of the students enrolled in the workshop program in terms of a number of variables, and the percentage of the total University enrolment for that variable.

Table 2: Percentage of student enrolments per variable in Central Workshop Program compared with overall University enrolments 2008

Variable	LC Enrolments % N = 1733	Total University Enrolment % * N = 45,521
Female	70.7	58.4
Male	29.3	41.6
ESB	33.2	53.0
NESB	66.8	47.0 **
International	53.8 of total (41.6% of NESB)	21.7
Undergraduate	33.4	67.3

Postgraduate (Research)	24.2	8.2
Postgraduate (Coursework)	42.4	24.5

* Figures referring to total university enrolment exclude the AGSM, Rural Management as the Learning Centre does not provide services for these groups.

** This figure represents the proportion of students who speak a language other than English at their permanent residence.

The patterns of enrolment were generally similar to the past three years in most categories, with increased numbers of International and NESB students. **Female** students still far outweigh **male** students in enrolment in the Central Workshop Program. As in previous years, female students remain over-represented and males under-represented in the LC workshop program when compared with the percentage of the total university enrolment.

International student numbers in the LC's Central program increased by nearly 5% in 2008 compared with 2007. They accounted for more than half of the LC enrolments, once again an unprecedentedly high proportion of the students attending the Centre. In 2008 international students formed 53.8% of enrolments in the Central Workshop Program, while representing only 21.7% of the University population.

In 2008, nearly 67% of students in scheduled workshops were of **non-English-speaking backgrounds**. This group increased by about 4% compared with 2007, which is partly attributable to the larger numbers of international students in LC workshops in 2008. They are also an over-represented group when compared to university enrolments of NESB students (47%).

The proportion of **postgraduate students** (66.6%) enrolled in the Central Workshop Program in 2008 also far outweighed that of **undergraduates** (33.4%). This again is the highest proportion of postgraduate students since 1996. Continuing the trend from the last three years, postgraduate students were over-represented in the LC's Central Workshop Program, when compared to the total University enrolment (32.7%). The percentage of research students in LC workshops (24.2%) is also over-represented when compared to the total University enrolment of 8.2%.

FACULTY PROGRAM

Departments from **14** Faculties of the University including the Koori Centre were represented in the collaborative activities in 2008. Table 8 in the Appendix shows further details of the level of participation of faculties and students in LC's Faculty Program, together with the percentage of total University enrolment for that faculty.

The number of hours of face-to-face teaching in faculty (385 hours) was 26% higher than in 2007 (304 hours) and there was a significant increase of 30% in the number of students taught (2008: 2470; 2007: 1892). Demand for this kind of support depends to a large extent on the requirements of faculty staff and changes in the faculty will have a significant impact on the number of students the LC teaches in the Faculty Program from year to year.

However, the current figures indicate a continuing interest in this mode of delivering academic language and learning support. A qualitative difference can be seen in the type of faculty teaching over the past two years. Compared with 2007, in 2008, LC staff were engaged in more teaching hours in which learning support was embedded into Units of Study and degree programs rather than offered as an adjunct to a Unit of Study. This type of teaching also typically requires considerable preparation time not reflected in the face-to-face teaching hours.

In addition to the face-to-face teaching in Faculty, there were activities such as the MASUS academic literacy diagnostic procedure and tutor training in the implementation of the procedure. The responsibility for carrying out the MASUS procedure has been handed over to faculty staff in some faculties.

Examples of faculty teaching projects were:

- Integrated learning and literacy support into first year Units of Study in *Arts (Linguistics), Education and Social Work, Engineering, Law and Pharmacy*
- Thesis writing workshops for Honours students in 6 Schools: *Accounting, Chemical Engineering, Information Technology, Geosciences, Sydney Conservatorium of Music and Vet Science (at Camden)*
- Thesis writing workshops for postgraduate research students in 5 Faculties: *Economics and Business, Engineering and IT, Health Sciences, Nursing and Midwifery and Medicine*
- Diagnostic assessment of academic writing in 5 Faculties: *Arts, Education and Social Work, Engineering and IT, Law and Pharmacy.*

OTHER ACTIVITIES

SWOT

Nine *SWOT Learning to Learn* lectures were delivered over the three days of orientation in Semester 1, one more than in 2007. Approximately **2630** new students attended these lectures during OWeek from a wide range of faculties and degree programs.

Staying on Track

The Learning Centre participated in the Staying on Track information sessions in Semesters 1 and 2 for over 500 students. The LC segment was designed to alert students to common reasons why they may be at risk of failing and to advise them of the Centre's services.

TEACHING IMPROVEMENT AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

eLearning projects

ALTC (Carrick) Competitive Grant: Creating a student-centred online learning environment for report writing in the sciences and engineering

<http://www.usyd.edu.au/learningcentre/wrise/>

The project creates an integrated freely available, student-centred online learning environment, the WRiSE site (Writing Reports in Science and Engineering), which will provide students with relevant, discipline-based resources and activities targeting report writing in the sciences and engineering. The project builds on established team-based expertise in the design of online report writing resources and incorporates student feedback on existing print-based and online resources to form the basis for the innovative development of an enriched online learning environment. In 2009, WRiSE will be integrated into students' writing contexts in science and engineering to support both the products and processes of their writing.

WRiSE will be accessed across the university sector, supporting a large number of student writers, many of whom, particularly in the sciences and engineering, are reluctant writers.

CONTINUING PROJECTS

Learning Centre staff were involved in a number of continuing projects, either independently or in collaboration with faculties:

- *Diagnostic assessment of student writing (MASUS) in undergraduate and postgraduate Units of Study*

- *Enabling resources to support the development of leadership skills in groupwork in Information Technology: moving beyond the comfort zone*
- *Embedded academic literacy support in various Units of Study*
- *Reading a Research Article in Biology: an eLearning Project*

Research and research-enhanced teaching

In 2008, Centre staff presented 4 papers on their research at 3 international conferences (see 4.2 for publication details). This is an important component of the Centre's work and contributes to its international and national standing as one of the leading centres of its kind, while at the same time ensuring that the Centre's teaching practices are informed and led by research on student learning and academic literacy. Staff were engaged in the following research and research projects:

- *A flexible electronic report-writing tool (FLERT) in Physiology: investigating its development and evaluating student learning*
- *Students' use of feedback in practical report writing: Differences between English Speaking (ESB) and Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) students*
- *Challenges facing students and staff re Thesis containing Publications.*
- *Pharmacy students and academic honesty: their attitudes, behaviours, and knowledge of policy*
- *Student attitudes and approaches to academic writing in the visual arts: creativity vs. formal requirements*

Doctoral research

- *Semantic staging in the poetry of Dylan Thomas*
- *Student or user-centred design of learning environments for academic writing Contributions to the University*

Increasingly, the Learning Centre contributes its expertise to the University on matters to do with quality teaching and learning. In addition to its teaching and research activities, the Centre contributed to the University through its service on committees and working parties and through its activities during Orientation and University open days.

Centre staff were members of the following committees and bodies:

- Learning and Teaching Committee
- TIES large grants selection Committee
- Learning and Teaching Strategy Group
- eLearning Technologies Committee
- SWOT Project Group
- Cadigal Students Academic Skills Program Committee (Koori Centre)
- Staying on Track Program Committee
- The First Year Experience Working Group
- Committee for Guidelines for Presentation of Assignments (Cumberland)
- Faculty of Economics and Business Learning and Teaching Committee
- The AusAID Liaison Group

Staffing

Staffing levels in 2008 changed with the retirement of 2 academic staff on the Camperdown campus in July. This led to a recruitment drive to replace staff, which was unfortunately unsuccessful. The Learning Centre continues to operate well below the staffing levels in equivalent units at other Go8 Universities.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Several quality assurance processes are in place – program evaluation and participation in benchmarking exercises. The annual Learning Centre retreat is another opportunity to shape the goals and directions of the Centre and contribute to quality assurance.

All central workshops are evaluated by student questionnaires. The Faculty Program and eLearning projects are evaluated by questionnaires, focus groups or both. The results are compiled and analysed before being disseminated among relevant staff. Feedback from evaluation and from informal dialogue between staff and students forms the basis for the continual refining and updating of LC programs and feeds back into the development of teaching and learning programs.

Of all workshops offered in the Central Program across both campuses in 2008, over 90% of students rated their overall satisfaction levels with the workshops as very satisfied (5) or satisfied (4). Considering that this represents results for 250 workshops, the student evaluations are very positive overall.

Future Directions

As part of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) portfolio, the mission, values and goals of the Learning Centre reflect those of the Strategic Directions of the University of Sydney 2007-2010.

Across the University, the focus on teaching quality through research enhanced teaching, developments in the use of eLearning technologies and the continued emphasis on the enhancement of the student experience and improved graduate outcomes have had an impact on the range and complexity of the Centre's activities.

The challenge for a unit such as the Learning Centre is to be creative in the interpretation of its role and proactive in its responses to the provision of support. Part of the challenge is to align the Centre's strategic goals in the support of a very diverse body of students more closely with University and faculty goals for quality learning and teaching. This entails working collaboratively across disciplines and other learning and teaching units and can result in powerful partnerships across the institution.

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