



The University of Sydney

Graduate Studies Committee Agenda

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Notice of Meeting

A meeting of the **Graduate Studies Committee** will be held at **2.00pm** on **Monday 4 April 2005** in the Darlington Centre Boardroom.

Members who are unable to attend are asked to notify Mark Smith at the above address. Enquiries concerning this meeting may also be directed to Mark.

Mark Smith
for

Dr W Adams
Registrar

29 March 2005

Agenda

Pages

1. Apologies

The following apologies have been received: Associate Professor D Coleman

2. Minutes of previous meeting

5-8

Recommendation

That the Graduate Studies Committee adopt the minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 February 2005 as a true record.

3. Business arising from Minutes (not dealt with elsewhere in the Agenda)

4. Report of the Academic Board

4.1 The report of the Academic Board meeting of 16 March 2005 will be supplied in the supplementary agenda.

- 5. Report of the Chair**
- 5.1 Higher degrees**
- 5.1.1 Deferment of public availability of thesis** (confidential attachment)
- Recommendation*
That the Graduate Studies Committee note and confirm the action of the Chair in approving the deferment of public availability of a higher degree thesis, as set out in the report presented.
- 5.2 The Length of PhD examinations at the University of Sydney** 9, 10-22
- Recommendation*
For discussion
- 5.3 Oral report**
- Recommendation*
That the Graduate Studies Committee note the report of the Chair.
- 6. Report of the PhD Award Sub-Committee**
- 6.1 Oral report of the Chair of the PhD Award Sub-Committee**
- Recommendation*
That the Graduate Studies Committee note the report of the Chair of the PhD Award Sub-Committee.
- 6.2 Report of the meeting held on 8 March 2005** 23
- 6.2.1 Receipt of report**
- Recommendation*
That the Graduate Studies Committee receive and note the report of the PhD Award Sub-Committee meeting held on 8 March 2005.
- 6.2.2 Period of Candidature for Revision and Resubmission of Thesis** 23
- Recommendation*
That the Graduate Studies Committee advise faculties that any period of prescribed candidature for revision and resubmission of a thesis should be referred to in terms of its full-time equivalency.
- 6.2.3 Proceedings of the Sub-Committee** 23
- Recommendation*
That the Graduate Studies Committee note the proceedings of the PhD Award Sub-Committee, at its meeting of 8 March 2005, as set out in the report presented.
- 7. Report of the Postgraduate Coursework Sub-Committee**
- 7.1 Oral report of the Chair of the Postgraduate Coursework Sub-Committee**
- Recommendation*
That the Graduate Studies Committee note the report of the Chair of the Postgraduate Coursework Sub-Committee.

7.2 Report of the meeting held on 28 February 2005 **24**
7.2.1 Receipt of report

Recommendation

That the Graduate Studies Committee receive and note the report of the Postgraduate Coursework Sub-Committee meeting held on 28 February 2005.

7.2.2 Course Review Template (Postgraduate Coursework) **24, 26-34**

Recommendation

That the Graduate Studies Committee recommend that the Academic Board approve

- (i) the use of the Course Review Template (Postgraduate Coursework) as a framework for evaluating a postgraduate coursework course once every four years; and*
- (ii) postgraduate courses which have professional accreditation will be reviewed within an appropriate time frame to coincide with this process, provided that this period does not exceed five years.*

7.2.3 Interpretation/review of policy element in Creation, Variation and Deletion of Award Courses and Units of Study **24, 35-52**

Recommendation

That the Graduate Studies Committee recommend that the Academic Board approve the amendments to the Academic Board Resolutions: Creation, Variation and Deletion of Award Course and Units of Study, as set out in the report presented.

8. Amendment of the Resolutions of the Senate

8.1 Faculty of Law: Appendix: Units of Study Offered within the Faculty - Master of Business Law; Master of International Law, Graduate Diploma in International Law; Graduate Diploma in International Business Law; Graduate Diploma in Corporate, Securities and Finance Law **53-55**

Recommendation

That the Graduate Studies Committee recommend that the Academic Board recommend that Senate approve the amendments of the Resolutions of the Senate relating to the Appendix: Units of Study Offered within the Faculty - Master of Business Law; Master of International Law, Graduate Diploma in International Law; Graduate Diploma in International Business Law; Graduate Diploma in Corporate, Securities and Finance Law by coursework programs in the Faculty of Law, with effect from 1 March 2005, as set out in the report presented.

9. Postgraduate English Language Requirements **56-61**

Recommendation

That the Faculties review Appendix One of the Postgraduate English Language Requirements and advise the Graduate Studies Committee Secretary of any amendments prior to the next meeting of the Graduate Studies Committee.

10. Library Sub-Committee

- 10.1** The Graduate Studies Committee is invited to nominate a member to join the Library Sub-Committee.

Recommendation

The Graduate Studies Committee nominate and advise the Library Sub-Committee as to who will be our representative on the Library Sub-Committee.

11. General business

12. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 16 May 2005 at 2.00pm in the Darlington Centre Boardroom.

Agenda Item 3
Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes of the Graduate Studies Committee meeting held on Monday 14 February 2005

There were present: The Acting Chair (Associate Professor A F Masters) presiding, Professors M Behnia, J Christodoulou, F Nicholas and L Zhang, Associate Professors W Julian, B Paltridge, and N Weber and Dr B Singh. Ms S Paynter was in attendance.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from: Professors C Adam, J Carter, D Hensher and T Hirst, Associate Professors B Buckley, D Coleman, R Magnusson, and M Thompson, Drs M Boughton and P Dunbar-Hall and Ms G Wong.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

Resolved

That the Graduate Studies Committee adopt the minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 November 2004 as a true record.

3. Minutes of the Joint meeting of Graduate Studies Committee and Postgraduate Awards Sub-Committee

Resolved

That the Graduate Studies Committee adopt the minutes of the Joint meeting of Graduate Studies Committee and Postgraduate Awards Sub-Committee held on 29 November 2004 as a true record.

4. Business arising from Minutes (not dealt with elsewhere in the Agenda)

4.1 The Length of PhD Examinations at the University of Sydney

At the October 2004 Graduate Studies Committee meeting Associate Professor Masters had explained that during the recent Australian Universities Quality Assurance (AUQA) visit the University was questioned over the length of examination time for PhD theses and had advised that the problem had been identified and procedures put in place to help correct the problem.

The Committee had noted that Associate Professor Masters would prepare a discussion paper on the advantages of establishing a centralised department to co-ordinate the examination process of research higher degrees for consideration by faculties.

Associate Professor Masters advised that he had discussed the prospect of centralising the co-ordination of the examination process of research higher degrees with the Chair of the Academic Board and the Dean of Graduate Studies (DoGS) and both had offered their support.

The DoGS was invited to comment and advised that the University of Sydney was the only Go8 University which did not have a centralised department to co-ordinate the examination time for research higher degrees. The universities of Melbourne and Queensland both had faster examinations times than the University of Sydney.

Members noted that the Research Training Scheme (RTS) would no longer be allocated by load but instead by completions, and the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) would also be adhering to new procedures which would allocate funds based on the volume of completions.

Members noted that the University of Sydney had the lowest number of international research students than any of the Go8 universities and that the length of examination

times was a disincentive for potential international students. It was agreed that solutions had been proposed in the past to speed up examination times but that it was now time to implement a process that would provide immediate results.

The Acting Chair informed members that he wanted the discussion paper circulated to faculties for comment and hoped that at the Graduate Studies next meeting these comments and the proposal could be discussed at length.

The Acting Chair advised that, under the circumstances, the status quo could not be considered an option. There was a clear problem that needed a solution.

Resolved

That the Graduate Studies Committee note the report on the length of PhD Examinations at the University of Sydney and circulate the discussion paper *The Length of PhD Examinations at the University of Sydney* to faculties for comment.

5. Report of the Academic Board

Resolved

That the Graduate Studies Committee note the report of the Academic Board meeting of 8 December 2004, as set out in the report presented.

6. Report of the Academic Board

Resolved

That the Graduate Studies Committee note the report of the Academic Board meeting of 2 February 2005, as set out in the report presented.

7. Report of the Acting Chair

7.1 Postgraduate English Language Requirement

The Acting Chair reminded members that the Committee had discussed the draft amendments to the *Postgraduate English Language Requirement* policy at its May 2004 meeting and had resolved to endorse the revised policy and recommend its approval by the Academic Board. It was noted that due to the time taken to clarify the authority of dean's to waiver English language requirements quoted in the *Delegation of Authority: Academic Functions* policy, the amended policy had not yet been considered by Academic Board.

The Acting Chair requested that members note that, now the issue of the Delegations of Authority had been clarified, it was appropriate to recommend that the Academic Board approve the draft amendments to the policy as resolved in May 2004. He advised that any queries could be cross referenced with the policy approved in May 2004.

Members sought clarification on the following sections of the amended policy:

4. Principles

4.3 Proof of proficiency in English may include:

4.3.2 successful completion of the course "English for Academic Purposes" at the University's Centre for English Teaching

5. Dean's ability to waive English language requirements in certain circumstances

5.3 The Dean of the Faculty may waive English Language requirements where a candidate submits a recognised English language test score which deviates from the University, or specific course requirements by:

5.3.1 IELTS (International English Language Testing Scheme) not more than 0.5 below the overall band score and not more than 1.0 below in any of the individual bands

The requirements above the University minimum for the Test of English as a First Language (TOFEL) and Test of Written English (TWE) for the faculties of Architecture and Medicine were queried and members were advised that this information would also be clarified. The Acting Chair undertook to check that these sections were as agreed in May 2004 and to update the table in appendix one to its current equivalent.

Resolved

That the Graduate Studies Committee endorse the amendments to the *Postgraduate English Language Requirement* policy and recommend that the Academic Board approve the revised policy, with immediate effect, as set out in the report presented.

7.2 Higher degrees

7.2.1 Admission to candidature and appointment of examiners

Resolved

That the Graduate Studies Committee note and confirm the action of the Chair in approving the admission to candidature of, and appointment of examiners for, candidatures for higher degrees, as set out in the report presented.

7.2.1 Deferment of public availability of thesis

Resolved

That the Graduate Studies Committee note and confirm the action of the Chair in approving the deferment of public availability of a higher degree thesis, as set out in the report presented.

7.3 Oral report

Resolved

That the Graduate Studies Committee note the report of the Chair.

8. Report of the PhD Award Sub-Committee

8.1 Oral report of the Chair of the PhD Award Sub-Committee

The Acting Chair asked Professor J Christodoulou to comment on the PhD Award Sub-Committee's December meeting. Professor Christodoulou noted that the item of most interest was the third quarter reports for 2004, advising that this data was a key indication that a solution to the problem of lengthy examination periods needed to be implemented.

Resolved

That the Graduate Studies Committee note the report of the Chair of the PhD Award Sub-Committee.

8.2 Report of the meeting held on 7 December 2004

8.2.1 Receipt of report

Resolved

That the Graduate Studies Committee receive and note the report of the PhD Award Sub-Committee meeting held on 7 December 2004.

8.2.2 Proceedings of the Sub-Committee

Resolved

That the Graduate Studies Committee note the proceedings of the PhD Award Sub-Committee, at its meeting of 7 December 2004, as set out in the report presented.

9. Amendment of the Resolutions of the Senate

9.1 Faculty of Medicine: Master of Surgery by coursework

Resolved

That the Graduate Studies Committee recommend that the Academic Board recommend that Senate approve the amendments of the Resolutions of the Senate relating to Master of Surgery by coursework degree in the Faculty of Medicine, with effect from 1 January 2005, as set out in the report presented.

10. Postgraduate English Language Requirements

Resolved

That the Graduate Studies Committee recommend that the Academic Board amend the policy "Postgraduate English Language Requirements" as set out in the report presented.

11. General Business

11.1 Reports from Faculties

11.1.1 Faculty of Pharmacy: Master of Pharmacy

Resolved

That the Graduate Studies Committee note the amendment of the Resolutions of the Faculty relating to the Master of Pharmacy, as set out in the report presented.

11.2 New Guidelines for the Australian Postgraduate Awards (APA) and University of Sydney Postgraduate Awards (UPA)

The Dean of Graduate Studies advised that at its December 2004 meeting the Academic Board had noted that the Research Office would undertake a detailed analysis of the impact of the new guidelines for the APA and UPA on the current cohort of scholarship applications during February and March 2005. It was noted that the analysis of the guidelines would take an additional couple of months to be completed.

11.3 Scholarship completions

The Dean of Graduate Studies reported that after analysing the progress of research higher degree scholarship holders who had begun their candidature in 1999 and 2000, the average completion rate was only 60%. Members noted that these findings had been sent to the three college Pro Vice-Chancellors and would be discussed at the next Committee of Deans meeting. The universities of Melbourne and Queensland both had a higher rate of completions and the potential loss to the University when a candidate did not complete their higher degree was estimated at \$170,000.

It was agreed that the detailed results would be circulated to members and discussed at the next Graduate Studies Committee meeting.

12. Next meeting

The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on 4 April 2005 in the Darlington Centre Boardroom.

Agenda Item 5 Report of the Chair

5.2 The Length of PhD examinations at the University of Sydney

- 5.2.1** At the February 2005 Graduate Studies Committee meeting the Committee discussed the length of examination times and how it provided a disincentive for potential students and the need for the University to implement a process to speed up examination times.
- 5.2.2** A discussion paper titled “The Lengths of PhD Examinations at the University of Sydney” by Associate Professor Masters was circulated to all Faculties for comment.
- 5.2.3** Attached are the responses to date received from the Faculties regarding the discussion paper.

The Length of PhD Examinations at the University of Sydney Responses to Discussion Paper

Faculty of Arts

Professor Stephen Garton

Dean, Faculty of Arts

2 March 2005

Sally - I welcome the opportunity to comment on the Graduate Studies discussion paper on length of examinations. This is a serious issue and one that requires careful consideration. As a Faculty with one of the worst records we have been looking into this issue. From a brief sample of cases one of the major delays arises from the failure of departments and supervisors to arrange the appointment of examiners before submission. Too many wait till submission before beginning the process of contacting examiners and thus it is often up to a month before the Faculty is able to send out the thesis for examination (our most famous case which I had to resolve on becoming Dean in 2001 was a 10 month delay in the appointment of examiners but that department has now left the Faculty). So I would like us, whatever happens, to sanction a policy of preventing students from submitting a thesis until departments had finalised examiners. Such a policy could go a long way to addressing the problem of delay.

But there is a larger issue in the discussion paper - the one concerning the possible transfer of the administration of thesis examinations (and perhaps even wider than this - the thesis candidature) by the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies. I support this proposal. Many Universities have opted for this approach and it works well. There would be a central point of administration and hence consistency in policy and practice.

Moreover I believe there could be genuine administrative savings across the University from such a development. Most Faculties have staff allocated to thesis administration. In a large Faculty like Arts we have one full time Level 5 doing this work. If this labour was concentrated and rationalised in one office I believe there is a good chance that there would be efficiency gains and savings. Of course it would require all Deans to commit to the process. And it would involve a change management plan and the transfer of staff and on-going funding to a Graduate School. I would be happy to commit to such a process I believe it would be in the best interests of improving the administration of thesis candidature and examination.

Regards. Stephen Garton

College of Humanities & Social Sciences

Naomi Ramanathan

Student Administration Services Manager

21 March 2005

MEMORANDUM TO:

Chair

Graduate Studies Committee

The Length of PhD Examinations at the University of Sydney

Comments on the discussion paper circulated by the Graduate Studies Committee, 15 February 2005

Current procedure in the Faculty of Arts

The discussion paper identifies statistics relating to the completion of PhD examinations across the University in comparison to Academic Board requirements. In the past 5 years, it is stated that of 1537 examinations, only 2% have met these requirements.

Faculties are required to report to the PhD Award Sub Committee every instance of an examination exceeding 6 months, and the reason for the delay:

“Where the length of time between date of submission and the candidate being informed of the result is **6 months or longer**, Faculties are asked to provide the reason for the delay and, if the delay is caused by an examiner, whether the examiner was internal or external.”

Excerpt from *Quarterly Report* form for PhD Award Sub Committee

The discussion paper incorrectly states that the period is 8 weeks – this is not current practice. The period of 8 weeks is the timeframe for examiners to complete their examination report. The period of 6 months is the length of time from the date of submission to the date on which the candidate is informed of the result. This, in fact, is the designated period set for PhD examinations by the Academic Board.

The Faculty of Arts has in place a comprehensive Thesis Examination Tracking program through which the details of examinations are individually and thoroughly maintained. In every examination the Faculty follows the guidelines set out in the discussion paper: examiners are advised that the examination must be completed within 8 weeks, reminded after 6 weeks, and reminded again upon the 8 week deadline if the report has not been returned, with a frank demand for the submission of the examination report immediately. Frequent email reminders are sent by the Faculty office where a further delay is reported and has been acknowledged by the Faculty. In addition, the Faculty sends a Thesis Acknowledgement form with every thesis, requiring the signature of the examiner upon receipt of the thesis, acknowledging the expected date of completion in the examiner’s own hand. This form is headed ‘Important!’ and is returned, by fax, in more than 90% of cases.

The Faculty administers 80-100 examinations simultaneously at peak times of the year. The procedure does not merely involve the tracking of examiners and their individual progress with reports. It encompasses responsibilities on the part of students three months prior to the date of submission, the appointment of examiners by departments during this period, and articulated examination follow-up through department recommendations regarding the award of degrees, the Faculty’s Postgraduate Matters Committee (PGMC), meeting once a month to consider recommendations as required, and the PhD Award Sub Committee, also meeting once a month.

The statistic of 2% of 1537 examinations reflects this often necessarily protracted procedure. The date of examination “completion” is the date on which the Faculty advises the candidate of the outcome of the examination. As many examinations proceed through the Faculty’s PGMC, and a lesser number through the PhD ASC, the figure often reflects the time taken for fair and considered assessment of award recommendations by senior academic staff members within the candidate’s departments. Thus delays must, in many instances, be attributed, not to tardy examiners, or to the Faculty’s own procedures for tracking the examination, but to the proper functioning of these two committees. Further, circumstances arise beyond the control of the Faculty which may delay the examination despite the best efforts of all concerned: the withdrawal of an examiner who has previously agreed to undertake the examination, and who must then be replaced, cannot be foreseen. The Faculty responds to such situations promptly and appropriately as they arise.

Delays by examiners

Every possible effort is made by departments and Faculty staff to ensure that examiners who have indicated that they are willing to conduct the examination are indeed available to do so within the set period of the examination. Academic staff responsible for the appointment of examiners work hard to ensure that appointees meet the criteria set by the Academic Board. As examiners are required to be involved in active research in the candidate’s field, the appointment of examiners is necessarily determined by the subject matter of each thesis. In the Faculty of Arts, some research is highly specialised, and supervisors can experience difficulties in locating and then securing the agreement of possible examiners.

Having done so, the Faculty is understandably reluctant, in many cases, to replace examiners because of reported delays. In January-February 2005, four international examiners, for four different theses, reported delays: one had fallen on ice and sprained an ankle, one had been hospitalized for illness, one had suffered the loss of a parent, and one had been unexpectedly appointed to higher duties following the illness of a senior colleague. None of this is unusual. All four examiners reported that they had

read the thesis concerned and advised that they would be able to submit their respective reports, with delays varying from three to five weeks beyond the 8 week timeframe. Clearly, these late submissions are preferable to the dismissal of the examiners concerned, and starting the whole process over from scratch.

The Faculty liaises with all examiners, monitors and records all correspondence, and promptly reports significant delays to the departments concerned, so that academic staff members are aware of the possible need for intervention or the replacement of an examiner.

Changes to procedure within the Faculty of Arts

Following advice received from the office of the Dean of Graduate Studies in 2004, the Faculty sought to tighten procedures relating to both the appointment of examiners and the provision of department recommendations following the submission of examiners' reports.

Acceptance of theses for submission is now contingent on the appointment of examiners having been finalized prior to submission. Theses are now despatched to examiners immediately.

Departments are required to return recommendations to the Faculty within 5 working days of the examiners' reports being received. This period allows time for senior academic staff members within the department to meet and discuss the reports. Where a meeting of the Faculty's PGMC is pending, departments are asked to expedite the process.

The proposed changes outlined in the discussion paper

The procedures outlined in the discussion paper beginning "So as to best ensure the timely completion of examinations..." are identical to those currently pursued by the Faculty, except that they do not involve the office of the Dean of Graduate Studies. Determinations, recommendations and references to the Registrar are all noted as the same as those "presently" followed. There is, in fact, no clear difference between the proposed change to procedure and the current procedure, and no explanation as to how a transfer of administration to the office of the Dean of Graduate Studies will expedite the procedure. The "new approach" described is thus not new.

Further, there is no rationale for removing the administration of examinations from the Faculty when an excellent monitoring system is currently in place. Indeed, so good are our procedures that the Faculty of Science commissioned the designer of the Faculty of Arts' Thesis Examination Tracking program to design a program suited to Science's own requirements early in 2005.

The examination of PhD theses is an integral part of the over-arching administration of each student's candidature. The Faculty has a small team of dedicated administrative staff who are personally familiar with many candidates, and with all supervisors and departmental postgraduate research coordinators. Faculty staff encounter candidates at the time of their application and see them through enrolments every year, offering professional advice and support in matters academic, administrative, financial, and – not infrequently – personal. The Associate Dean for Postgraduate Research provides close support for both students and staff and is an important link between matters of research candidature at Faculty level and matters arising for discussion at the Faculty's Postgraduate Matters Committee. The examination process is one of anxiety for many candidates: it is not a statistical matter to be considered separately from the rest of an individual's candidature. Students frequently contact advisers in the Faculty office to enquire about the progress of their examination. They will not appreciate having to deal with another office of the University during this anxious period.

Oral examinations

The discussion paper suggests that: "It is likely that the logistics associated with the present expectation that each Department/School conduct the oral is the most significant impediment to the use of oral examinations". The discussion paper therefore suggests that the Dean of Graduate Studies "could have a room dedicated to the conduct of oral examinations (including telecommunications facilities)".

The Faculty supports any effort to streamline examination procedure, and supports the option of oral examinations, where appropriate. However, the Faculty of Arts encompasses many disciplines, and

theses in some fields are subjected to a scrutiny more suited to intensive reading and /or visual examination than others. Oral examination should be considered as an alternative to current procedure on a case-by-case basis. In addition, some examinations involve three international examiners; the logistics of conducting separate or combined interviews with three examiners by telephone should be considered in relation to the anxiety of individual candidates and their willingness/ability to respond appropriately in such circumstances.

The Faculty would certainly consider using the room designated for oral examinations as described in the discussion paper when required.

Conclusion

The establishment of a Graduate School in the University has been mooted. The Faculty supports the establishment of a central body to oversee and support graduate studies, incorporating and streamlining relevant disparate offices and roles currently spread across the University. What the Faculty does not support is the piecemeal dismantling of current procedures or the relocation of current administrative roles. This will merely result in students being bounced between the Faculty office and the office of the Dean of Graduate Studies. Essential files will be transferred backwards and forwards between the two offices, possibly antagonising students and certainly resulting in poor customer service. The Faculty would therefore support the entire process from admission to graduation being managed by the Dean of Graduate Studies and not just a part of the examination process.

Faculty of Economics and Business

Christopher Riley

Faculty Executive Officer

23 March 2005

Dear Sally,

I am writing on behalf of the Dean in relation to your memorandum of 15 February regarding the establishment of a centralized Department to coordinate the examination process of research higher degrees.

I can advise that after due consultation, the Faculty of Economics and Business does not have any objections to the proposals.

Kind regards,
Chris Riley

Faculty of Nursing

Dr Sue Forsyth

Coordinator Research Degrees

17 March 2005

Dear Sally,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Discussion Paper on the Length of PhD Examinations at the University of Sydney (dated 15 February 2005).

I am aware that there is an existing problem of lengthy examination times for PhD's across the University, and can therefore understand why it is recommended that administrative oversight of PhD examinations across the University be vested in the Dean of Graduate Studies. In principle, I support the recommendation. In practice, however, the Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery does not have a record of lengthy examination times. We have in place good administrative procedures that ensure that PhD examinations occur within the recommended time frame. One of my concerns with the recommendation as it stands is that a centralised examination process may, in fact, lead to delays in processing due to the additional administrative procedures necessary for, for example, reporting back

to Faculties in the case of replacement examiners. Delays in processing PhD's within the Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery are minimal because the process is handled efficiently in-house (ie, within the Faculty).

Regards, Sue

Faculty of Rural Management

Maureen MacKinney

10 March 2005

Dear Sally

Re: Discussion paper – The Length of PhD Examinations at the University of Sydney

The Faculty of Rural Management support the proposal.

Regards

Maureen

Faculty of Science

Associate Professor Neville Weber

Associate Dean (Postgraduate Research)

17 March 2005

Dear Sally,

Re: Length of PhD Examinations Discussion Paper

The Postgraduate Studies Committee (PGSC) of the Faculty of Science considered the discussion paper on the length of PhD examinations at its meeting in March.

There was no support at the Faculty meeting for centralising the administration of the examination process for research degrees. The committee felt that the proposal did not provide any indication of how centralisation would actually achieve a reduced examination time. In fact, the proposal appears to add another level of notification into the process as the Faculty Board of Graduate Studies would still have to advise the Dean on the outcome of the examination who then has to contact the Dean of Graduate Studies as well as the Registrar. At present when a set of reports arrive all recommending award or minor typographical corrections a recommendation on the outcome of the examination can be made without reference to the Head of School or PGSC. Under the new proposals these cases would be channelled via the Head of the relevant School to the Faculty concerned before the candidate can be notified, adding several days to the processing time.

The proposal does not address the administration of other higher degrees such as research Masters degrees and higher doctorates like the DSc. It appears these will still be handled by the relevant faculty, so each faculty will need to maintain administrative systems to deal with these processes.

The University PhD resolutions refer to the time an examiner is allocated to submit their report. This is just one component of the examination process. Are the data reported in the discussion letter referring to the time the thesis is with the examiners or the total examination time from the lodging of the thesis to notifying the candidate of the outcome of the examination? The Faculty of Science has recently implemented a satellite database system to track the examination process for each candidate. This system will lead to automated reminders being sent to examiners to help achieve the 2 month target in all cases. However the time taken by examiners is just one part of the total process. The Faculty of Science has been working very hard to minimise the time from receipt of the thesis at the Faculty Office to the dispatch of the thesis to examiners. Schools are regularly asked to remind students to lodge the Intention to Submit form three months prior to submitting their thesis. Schools are asked to nominate examiners before the thesis arrives at the Faculty Office and copies of the

request for examiners are now sent to Postgraduate Coordinator, Heads of School and the supervisor so that all parties know of the request and action can be taken if the supervisor is away on leave for any reason. Moreover Schools are asked to submit the names of possible examiners electronically to speed up the preparation of, and reduce transcription errors in the preparation of letters and address labels. The Faculty staff also ensures that reports are acted on as soon as a full set is available. However if there is disagreement in the recommendations or a recommendation of emendations, revise and resubmit or non-award then the Head of School and supervisor have to be consulted. Heads are given three weeks in which to reply. If there is a revise and resubmit or non-award recommendation then these cases have to wait until the next PGSC meeting to be considered before a recommendation can be sent to the PhD Awards subcommittee. To help expedite things last year an extra meeting of PGSC was called in December so that such cases did not have to wait until the next scheduled meeting of PGSC in February.

As a Faculty we have put in place procedures to help reduce the average total time for examination of **all** research theses. Establishing an extra office to handle aspects of the examination process for PhD candidates does not appear to be cost effective, nor is it clear how this will achieve reduced examination times more effectively than ensuring best practice measures are implemented in all Faculty offices.

There was discussion of the proposal to increase the use of oral examinations. Some schools supported this idea, others were concerned it would reduce the pool of available examiners and more importantly exclude overseas examiners. Some Schools argued that sending theses to overseas experts for examination was an excellent way of advertising the standard of the research at the University of Sydney and also helped some of our graduates find postdoctoral positions. There were also questions about the cost of oral examinations and who would meet these costs.

Yours sincerely,
Neville Weber
Associate Professor
Chair, Postgraduate Studies Committee, Faculty of Science

School of Biological Sciences
Michael Thompson
Head, School of Biological Sciences
18 March 2005
Dear Sally,

I circulated your discussion paper to all staff and requested responses. I have pasted the responses below, except for one which came as an attachment, so it is attached here. There is plenty of fertile ground in these comments, but the main message seems to have to do with limited time/ priorities / lack of recognition for the task.

I hope that these comments help. Please get back to me (or one of the respondents) if you want further clarification.

Mike Thompson

Dr Dieter Hochuli
Institute of Wildlife Research
24 February 2005
Dear Mike

I'm not sure what length of examination means - if this is simply about speeding up how long the thesis is in the hands of examiners this seems like overkill. We pay a very modest amount for examinations, and many of those agreeing to do it have numerous other priorities.

I doubt that speeding up the time the document is in examiner's hands will result from a new administrative approach. Perhaps if the uni amends its criteria to something that can be accommodated in a single page report it could be sped up. We often get the equivalent of something like 5 paper reviews, something that takes a long time and something that people do because they feel that is what is most appropriate. I think we should be more prescriptive in what we hope to get from a PhD examiner, specifically lowering expectations of what is in a report.

If this change is about the time from submission to acceptance, my experience is that the process can also be held up by the consultative process once reports are back in the School and then the Faculty/University and the need for supervisors to consult with absent students from afar. I don't think these would be fixed with a centralised approach.

Dieter

Professor A.J. Underwood , FAA
Centre for Research on Ecological Impacts of Coastal Cities
24 February 2005
Mike

Re: Period needed to examine a Ph.D.

Seriously: I can only reply by pointing out that the target may be and probably is inappropriate. I am a typically busy academic. I start work about 5.30 a.m. on most days and finish around 7 p.m. If I am asked to examine a thesis, I know I will spend somewhere around 20 hours on it (assuming it is the typical and necessary 200 pp.). If I am to do this in eight weeks, I must find about 2.5 hours a week (or an extra 2.5/37.5 of a supposed week and 2.5/80 of a real week). This is never actually possible. I can probably do about 1 - 1.5 hours extra and this would take about 14 - 20 weeks. This seems to fit with the 5 months that the University discovered it was taking. I doubt this is an accident and wonder if it really can be improved.

Professor A.J. Underwood , FAA

Dr Lars Jermiin
Unité de Biologie Moléculaire du Gène chez les Extrêmophiles
24 February 2005
Dear Mike,

I would like to add my five cents worth to the issue on the time taken to examine PhD theses. The university's record on the time taken to examine a PhD thesis is not good enough and something should be done about it. In that regard, I am among the guilty examiners.

A good place to start would be to ensure that the theses are properly proof-read before they are submitted -- last year, I examined two PhD theses from the University of Sydney, one from our school and one from SMMB. In both cases, the theses were so poorly written that it took me much longer to decipher what was done. In hindsight, one should have returned the theses to the students but you only really discover the shortcomings after having commenced the examination. In both cases, the examination took up towards 80 hours and involved marking over approximately 2000 errors.

Following the ordeals, I wrote to Neville Weber from the School of Mathematics and Statistics:

Dear Neville,

I am writing to you (as Associate Dean of Postgraduate Research) to express my concerns about a possible decline of our academic standards.

I have so far examined two PhD thesis this year, and both of them were from this university and both were in need of revision (in one case, I recommended acceptance pending major revision while in the other case I recommended re-submission, after major points of concern had been addressed). The research presented ranged from being poor to being extremely poor. Both theses were furthermore written in a sloppy manner that rendered it very difficult to examine them.

I am let to believe that there is a procedure preventing the submission of such theses, yet they were submitted for examination, and examined by me and two examiners. I contacted the other examiners and their points of view were largely similar to mine (both theses were deemed of a poor quality).

I realize that a sample of two theses is too small to make any generalization about the quality of theses emanating from our faculty. Nonetheless, I think there is cause for concern because they send a signal about poor academic standards to the academic staff at other institutions. It is embarrassing that we have allows such poor theses to be considered ready for examination. It reflects poorly on all of us, and it detracts from the value that many students put on the PhD degrees earned through this university.

Finally, given the very poor standard that I have seen lately, it has taken me much longer time examine these two theses, and that's a waste of my time. In the future, I will be far more reluctant to accept an invitation to examine theses from this university. In the essence, I have used precious time normally dedicated to my private life and to my students to assist another colleagues fix poorly presented thesis, and the research presented therein. That's a poor investment of my time.

If this indeed is a more general problem, then could I ask you to bring this issue to the attention of our schools and departments, so that something can be done about it. Its our long-term future that is being eroded here.

All the best,

Lars

Ps. I have discussed the matter with Metthew Charet

All the best,

Lars

Dr Jenny Saleeba
Lecturer in Genetics
25 February 2005
Hi Mike,

Regarding lengthy PhD examinations, the most time consuming part of the examination process seems to me to be that of getting the examiner to read and comment on the thesis. The slowness of the examining process actually shows that academics are prioritising their tasks well. Currently there is no reason to have a thesis examination as a high priority relative to teaching, paper writing, grant writing etc.

How to tackle this issue? Well, academics tend to be time poor, research funding poor and relatively income poorish. Therefore they may be motivated by money. How about we make the job of examining a PhD or MSc thesis a consultancy that is charged at full consultancy rates. The money can be paid into a research account or accepted as personal income. The catch would be that the examiners report must completed within 8 weeks of receiving the thesis in order for the money to be paid.

In this scenario the academic would have good reason to give the thesis examination a high priority and they would be happy in the knowledge that they are considered a high value professional that is paid for their point of view and expertise.

I will leave the budget issue to you and the University. But there is \$100,000 at stake!

Regards,

Jenny

Associate Professor Chris Gillies

Fruit Fly Research Centre

2 March 2005

My response attached

chris

The Lengths of PhD Examinations at the University of Sydney

Comments on proposal:

So as to best ensure the timely completion of examinations, and in the context of our present procedures, this would involve ¹*the Dean of Graduate Studies being informed* of the examiners and ²*inviting them to act on behalf of the Registrar, submission of theses to, and their despatch to examiners, by the Dean of Graduate Studies, return of examiners' reports to the Dean of Graduate Studies, who would also follow up on late reports and seek replacement examiners if necessary*. In appropriate cases, ³*the Dean of Graduate Studies would then ask the Head of School to forward a recommendation to the Dean of the Faculty, who would, with the advice of a Faculty Board of Graduate Studies, make a determination on the outcome of the examination, which would be processed as presently, with the Dean of Graduate Studies being advised of the outcome of the examination, in addition to the Registrar* (as at present). Any re-examination of a thesis would be administered by the Dean of Graduate Studies, as above.

Although the university has had the means of considerably facilitating the examination process through oral examinations, this route has been little used, despite the potential of enabling all examinations to achieve an outcome within 8 weeks. It is likely that the logistics associated with the present expectation that each Department/School conduct the oral is the most significant impediment to the use of oral examinations. It might reasonably be expected that the Dean of Graduate Studies could have a room dedicated to the conduct of oral examinations (including telecommunications facilities). The room could presumably be made available when not required for examinations. In the event of an oral examination, the Dean of Graduate Studies would administer the examination, with the Dean of the Faculty making the academic decision regarding the outcome of the examination, as at present.

¹Who would inform the DOGS – Dean of Faculty or Head of School?

²How will putting the DOGS in the chain speed up the process?

³This chain of advice is unnecessarily long – surely some of these approvals can be conflated?

School of Chemistry

Neville Weber

22 March 2005

Dear Sally,

The following submission was made by the School of Chemistry to the Dean of Science. I am forwarding it to you to include with the responses to the discussion paper tables at the Graduate Studies Committee.

Kind regards,

Neville Weber

From: Trevor Hambley
Sent: Friday, 18 March 2005 11:01 AM
To: David Day
Cc: smc@alf.chem.usyd.edu.au; desterke@physics.usyd.edu.au
Subject: The Length of PhD Examinations

Dear David,

I write in response to the memo dated 15th February, 2005 from the Academic Board on the subject of "The Length of PhD Examinations at the University of Sydney". We have considered this memo in the School of Chemistry and make the following comments.

1. The stated motivation for a need to change is the AUQA report. This report states:

"The University sets itself the target to examine theses within eight weeks. Statistics are kept quarterly, and indicate that the University is having difficulty meeting this ambitious target. Given that this target is made known to staff and students, the University needs to either develop strategies for improving performance against this target, or recalibrate the target so as to set more realistic expectations."

Thus, the AUQA report suggests that the target is unrealistic and that "recalibration" is an appropriate response, as is improving performance against the target. The option of "recalibration" has not been mentioned in the document as the alternate, entirely appropriate response.

2. Two changes to the thesis examination process are mooted: management of thesis examination by the Dean of Graduate Studies and increased use of oral examinations. No statistical evidence is provided that oral examination accelerates the process. Also, setting up an oral examination requires accurate and advance knowledge of the date of thesis submission, a rare event in our experience.

No case is made to explain why central handling of theses would be more effective, but we make the following observations:

- (a) Intervention by the supervisor is usually more effective in accelerating examination than is intervention by the Faculty and therefore removing the process one further step is most likely to be counterproductive.
- (b) Because of the need to avoid re-enrolment, most theses are submitted in late March or late August whereas they used to be submitted more uniformly through the year. At the Faculty level this creates a major bottleneck which unquestionably delays the examination process despite the best efforts of the staff. Centralisation of thesis acceptance and distribution to examiners could only cause an even bigger problem unless a very large number of staff were made available to deal with the influx of theses at the peak times.
- (c) The efficient and timely exchange of information between faculty office and the deans is essential for the proposal. another level of reporting (and following up documents and recommendations) would appear to create more work and hence further delays.

3. The question of "recalibration" has not been addressed in the proposals. The fact that only 3% of theses are examined inside the 8 week deadline demonstrates that it is totally unrealistic and this contributes to the dissatisfaction amongst candidates. It is understood that a shorter deadline has been adopted to encourage more rapid turn around by examiners and this has been partly effective. However, a distinction needs to be drawn between the time allowed for examination and the total time from submission to report, making allowance for handling, postage, and consideration of the reports. Given all the above we suggest that a more realistic average time is 4 months.

4. We agree that steps must be taken to reduce examination times and note the following:

- (a) Failure of supervisors to provide names of examiners in a timely manner causes substantial delays and should be addressed more assertively at both the School and Faculty level.

(b) The above mentioned March and August bottlenecks need to be recognised and additional support provided at those times if possible.

(c) Slow response by referees is a problem that is not unique to thesis examination, but also bedevils journal refereeing and grant reviewing.

In the latter cases, automatically generated emails are frequently used to remind reviewers of impending and past deadlines. To do the same for thesis examination would require the establishment of a database of theses under examination and it is extraordinary that such databases are not used uniformly. Development of a database to be used university wide would assist faculties in the examination process and would also allow for centralised oversight and statistical monitoring of the examination process (as well as many other aspects of candidature). This we suggest, would have the greatest long term impact on improved management of thesis examination.

Regards,

Trevor
Professor Trevor W. Hambley
Head of School
School of Chemistry

School of Psychology
Justin Harris, PhD
Post graduate coordinator
16 March 2005

Please find below my comments, as post graduate coordinator in the School of Psychology, in response to the memo dated 15 Feb regarding the length of PhD examinations at the university and the proposal that the administration of the examination process be taken over by DoGS.

One obvious and major source of delays is difficulty extracting reviews from some examiners. It is not clear what gains could be made here.

Another likely source of some delay (potentially contributing weeks to the process) are inefficiencies in some of the current procedures as implemented by the faculty. One problem is that it can be difficult for schools to know when students have submitted. An automated system by which schools are informed (by email) as soon as a thesis is submitted would help to iron out some delays by allowing schools to complete necessary paperwork more promptly.

Use of internal mail can add considerable delays.

Unfortunately, the memo does not indicate HOW a shift in processing to DoGS would improve any of the current issues. Unless real changes were implemented, the move to DoGS may only relocate the problem and potentially add to delays by creating an extra administrative step. The implementation of more efficient procedures would presumably streamline the examination process wherever they were performed.

Justin

Faculty of Veterinary Science

Frank Nicholas
20 March 2005

The Lengths of PhD Examinations at The University of Sydney

Response from the Faculty of Veterinary Science

The Faculty's Postgraduate Education and Research Training Committee considered this issue by correspondence. While there were some members who supported the proposal, overall there was strong opposition to the idea of setting up yet another central office. The Committee's overall response can be summarised as follows:

- The one fundamental reason why the examination process is slow is the fact that examiners have huge and competing demands on their time.
- Examiners are paid a trivial amount of money if they are external examiners and nothing if they are internal examiners. There is little to no incentive for examiners to push the thesis to the top of the pile in their competing priorities.
- Setting up a special force to harass examiners into hurrying up when they are taking on these substantial extra burdens at zero to minimal cost to the University is likely to result in a trend towards perfunctory and superficial examiners' reports.
- I've been the recipient of centralized automated harassment which only added to the frustration of not being able to do the job on time, whereas a more sympathetic personal approach by a colleague might be more effective.
- As an examiner I have been irritated by 'hurry-up' letters and emails that have an official and authoritative tone. They were not conducive to 'hurrying' me up.
- Regardless of what system is used, the fundamental problem in most cases is going to be one of workload – and neither system is going to address this.

Although it was not stated in these terms, the clear message from the committee is that the best strategy for decreasing the length of examination would be to set aside the same funds as would be required to establish and run a central office, but rather than establish such an office, devote the funds to:

- a) increasing the rate of pay for both internal and external examiners
- b) cover the costs of, and provide facilities for, oral examination (as recommended in the report)

Yooroang Garang

Warren Losberg
Research Co-ordinator
Yooroang Garang
School of Indigenous Health Studies.
28 February 2005
Hello Sally,

I discussed the above with Dr Freidoon Khavapour (who has considerably more experience in these matters than myself) and he indicated that Yooroang Garang has never had any difficulty with having postgraduate students' theses examined on time. He also assured me that staff in the School always complete the examinations within the specified time period. We understand the importance of not delaying examinations and do our utmost to conform with the rules specified by the Board. However, Yooroang Garang prefers that oral examinations not be used, if possible, as we feel this disadvantages our Indigenous students who find the procedure too stressful.

regards

Unknown source

Model for PhD Examination incorporating an Oral Examination

Note: this model can be administered by either the home faculty of the candidate or by the Dean of Graduate Studies

1. Each candidate is required to nominate a firm date for submission of the thesis at the time of enrolment for the last semester of candidature.
2. Two to three months prior to the nominated date of submission of the thesis an Examination Committee is appointed on the recommendation of the Head of the School (who will consult the supervisor and other academic staff in the research area of the thesis); each examiner is contacted and is required to give an undertaking to be available for reading and analysing the thesis over a period of 8 weeks from the date of thesis submission, and to be available to participate in the oral examination on the nominated date of the oral exam (fixed as the nearest convenient date to day 57 from submission); mode of attendance - in person, by phone, internet or video-conference, and payment of transport costs (where appropriate) should be negotiated and finalised at this time.
3. Each thesis examination committee consists of:
 - i. Head of the School of the candidate (acts as chair of the committee)
 - ii. One member of the School with at least general knowledge of the research area of the thesis
 - iii. Three examiners expert in the research area of the thesis and not associated with the School, of whom at least two must be from outside the University of Sydney, and, except in exceptional circumstances, at least two must be members of the academic staff of universities which award research doctorates
4. On the day of submission of the thesis (day 0 – at the DOGS or Faculty office) a copy is sent by registered express airmail and/or electronically to each member of the examination committee; they have 56 days, less transport time, to read and analyse the thesis.
5. On or before day 56 each examiner will email a preliminary report (maximum of two A4 pages) with an indicative result to the chair of the committee.
6. On the nominated examination day (day 57 or nearest convenient date) the examination committee meets at a designated time and place; overseas and interstate members may attend in person or be present by phone, internet or video-conference hookup. At least two hours before the commencement of the meeting the chair will email copies of all preliminary reports to the members of the committee. Copies of the preliminary reports are emailed to the supervisor at the time of commencement of the examination committee meeting.
7. The order of business of the examination committee meeting should be:
 - i. brief discussion by committee of thesis outcomes, difficulties and highlights; determination of type and order of questions for candidate
 - ii. committee meets with candidate (maximum of two hours); each examiner has opportunity to question candidate on matters related to the thesis
 - iii. committee meets with supervisor; examiners may clarify aspects of the thesis and the candidate's answers to questions, but the supervisor is not present as an apologist for the candidate
 - iv. committee then caucuses to arrive at a recommendation – *award degree with or without emendation, award subject to conditions, revise and resubmit, fail* (in the cases of *award with emendation* and *award subject to conditions* it should be possible to set realistic but short deadlines for these thesis corrections to be completed so that the whole examination process would be finalised within three months of submission of the thesis); the recommendation is determined by a simple majority of examiners, but at least two of the expert examiners must vote for the majority decision; if the examiners cannot arrive at a single result within these guidelines then the divided decision will be reported to the Dean who may appoint an additional examiner or an adjudicator.

Agenda Item 6 Report of the PhD Award Sub-Committee

6.2 Report of the PhD Award Sub-Committee meeting held on 8 March 2005

The Committee met on 8 March 2005 when there were present: The Chair of the PhD Award Sub-Committee (Associate Professor A F Masters) presiding, Professors J Christodoulou and P Wilson, Associate Professors D Brennan and M Harding and Dr M Boughton. Ms M Kemmis was in attendance.

6.2.1 Receipt of Report

The Sub-Committee **recommends** that the Graduate Studies Committee receive and note the following report of the meeting held on 8 March 2005.

6.2.2 Period of Candidature for Revision and Resubmission of Thesis

The Sub-Committee noted that there appeared to be some confusion regarding setting a prescribed period of candidature for revision and resubmission of a thesis in cases where the candidate was enrolled in part-time study. The Sub-Committee recommends that faculties be advised that such periods of further candidature should be referred to in terms of its full-time equivalency.

Recommendation

That the Graduate Studies Committee advise faculties that any period of prescribed candidature for revision and resubmission of a thesis should be referred to in terms of its full-time equivalency.

6.2.3 Proceedings of the Sub-Committee

(1) Doctor of Philosophy

(a) Award of the degree with qualification

The Sub-Committee noted that the Chair had considered the examiners' reports, together with the recommendations of the head of department/school concerned and the faculty board of postgraduate studies, with respect to three candidates and resolved to approve the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, subject to emendations.

(b) Revise and Resubmit

The Sub-Committee noted that the Chair had considered the examiners' reports, together with the recommendations of the head of department/school concerned and the faculty board of postgraduate studies, with respect to one candidate and resolved to recommend that the degree of Doctor of Philosophy not be awarded but that the candidate be allowed to revise and re-submit the thesis.

(c) Cases referred to the Sub-Committee

The Sub-Committee considered examiners' reports, together with the recommendations of the head of department/school concerned and the faculty board of postgraduate studies, with respect to six candidates and resolved:

- (i) to approve the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, subject to emendations, in four cases;
- (ii) to refer the examinations back to the Faculty for further consideration in one case; and
- (iii) to request further information from the Faculty in one case.

(d) Appointment of Examiners

The Sub-Committee noted that examiners had been appointed for thirty-nine candidates for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Agenda Item 7

Report of the Coursework Sub-Committee

7.2 Report of the Postgraduate Coursework Sub-Committee meeting held on 28 February 2005

The Committee met on 28 February 2005 when there were present: The Chair (Dr M Boughton) presiding, Associate Professors W Julian, A McLachlan, M J Mahony and M Thompson. Ms Sally Paynter was in attendance.

7.2.1 Receipt of Report

The Sub-Committee **recommends** that the Graduate Studies Committee receive and note the following report of the meeting held on 28 February 2005.

7.2.2 Course Review Template (Postgraduate Coursework)

26-34

The Postgraduate Coursework Sub-Committee discussed the Course Review Template (Postgraduate Coursework), noting that it had been trialled in the Faculty of Law where it had received positive feedback. The Faculty had suggested that the reviews be conducted every four years instead of every three. This suggestion was discussed by the Sub-Committee and it was noted that the time frame for conducting these reviews did not always fit into the cycle for courses which were professionally accredited. It was resolved that the template should specify that the postgraduate coursework reviews be conducted every four years and that there be a provision for courses which are professionally accredited to be allowed to review up to every five years.

Clarification was sought on the definition of a 'postgraduate course' and whether the review would undertake to evaluate each stream within a degree or if it would be sufficient to review the generic degree alone. It was resolved that as long as the units of study within a degree were defined by one set of rules then a 'postgraduate course' should be defined as the generic degree.

The Sub-Committee questioned the composition of the review team as quoted in the review template but agreed that this was merely a suggested list of participants and deans of faculties were given the discretion to invite other members. The Faculty of Pharmacy had met face-to-face for a full days meeting and had been able to conduct any follow-up business via email correspondence. It was agreed that following the template had lead to an efficient and effective review of postgraduate courses by the Faculty of Pharmacy and the Sub-Committee were pleased to endorse it.

Recommendation

That the Graduate Studies Committee recommend that the Academic Board approve

- (i) the use of the Course Review Template (Postgraduate Coursework) as a framework for evaluating a postgraduate coursework course once every four years; and*
- (ii) postgraduate courses which have professional accreditation will be reviewed within an appropriate time frame to coincide with this process, provided that this period does not exceed five years.*

7.2.3 Interpretation/review of policy element in Creation, Variation and Deletion of Award Courses and Units of Study

35-52

The Postgraduate Coursework Sub-Committee discussed the importance of clarifying whether Academic Board approval was necessary to alter the mode of delivery for a program.

The Sub-Committee recommends that the Graduate Studies Committee recommend that the Academic Board approve the amendments to the policy *Creation, Variation and Deletion of Award Courses and Units of Study* as set out in the report presented on page 47 (additions indicated by underline, deletions indicated by strikethrough).

Recommendation

That the Graduate Studies Committee recommend that the Academic Board approve the amendments to the Academic Board Resolutions: Creation, Variation and Deletion of Award Course and Units of Study, as set out in the report presented.

Course Review Template (Postgraduate Coursework)

This template is to be used as a framework for evaluating a postgraduate coursework course once every four years (postgraduate courses which have professional accreditation will be reviewed within an appropriate time frame to coincide with this process, provided that this period does not exceed five years)

. For each course there shall be a report on:

- background of the course
- analysis of the course
- future directions for the course
- recommendations

Responsibility for reporting is with the Dean of Faculty. The report should focus on matters of strategic importance. Once the reports in a Faculty are complete, a summary of the reports of all reviews in that year should be forwarded to the Dean of Graduate Studies. The Dean of Graduate Studies will review and discuss any issues with the Dean of the Faculty for further action. A summary of all annual reports will be presented to the Academic Board after consideration by the Postgraduate Coursework Sub-Committee and Graduate Studies Committee.

Please note that this review should draw upon and not replace or be seen additional to compulsory existing reviews within the Faculty (such as external reviews), but that data collected for compulsory reviews may be sourced, thereby avoiding the need for the Faculty to collect another set of data.

The committee membership of the review team within an individual Faculty requires approval by the Dean of the Faculty. The review team may consist of:

- Associate Dean (with responsibility for postgraduate coursework) or their nominee as Chair
- Head of Department and/or course convenor
- At least one teaching staff involved in the course
- Staff member external to the School/Department/Discipline but within the same Faculty
- Staff member external to the Faculty but within the University
- An expert in the field external to the University
- Any other member nominated by the Dean of the Faculty

The review team should meet at least once. Responsibility for organisation of the reviews lies with the Faculty.

Course Review Template (Postgraduate Coursework)

Faculty _____

Review Team Members

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

Date of this review:

Date of last review (if applicable):

Please attach relevant documentation (if applicable)

1. Background	
1.1 Course name (Please include embedded courses in this review, e.g. GradCert, GradDip)	
1.2 Course code	
1.3 Course aims/description	
1.4 Briefly state the history of the course	
1.5 Teaching delivery mode	

1.6 Method of assessment (e.g. % written assessment, % oral assessment, % attendance, % examination/s, etc)				
1.7 What changes, if any, have been made to the course since the last review (if applicable)? Briefly describe (e.g. changes in the mode of delivery, assessment, etc)				
1.8 Enrolments over the last three years (EFTSU)? (Or since commencement of course, if sooner)	Year 1 Year 2 Year 3	<u>Graduate Certificate</u>	<u>Graduate Diploma</u>	<u>Masters</u>
1.9 Completions over the last three years (EFTSU)? (Or since commencement of course, if sooner)	Year 1 Year 2 Year 3	<u>Graduate Certificate</u>	<u>Graduate Diploma</u>	<u>Masters</u>
1.10 Academic load and other resources devoted to the course (full-time staff equivalent)	Year 1 Year 2 Year 3	<u>Graduate Certificate</u>	<u>Graduate Diploma</u>	<u>Masters</u>

<p>1.11 Student feedback on teaching and course outcomes</p> <p>You can include details about SCEQ open-ended questions, feedback from focus groups and other questionnaires and surveys used within the Faculty.</p> <p>Please specify how the data is collected and how many students were involved (if relevant)</p>	<p><u>Year 1 results</u></p>	<p><u>Response/outcomes</u></p>
	<p><u>Year 2 results</u></p>	<p><u>Response/outcomes</u></p>

	<u>Year 3 results</u>	<u>Response/outcomes</u>

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2. Analysis of the Course	
2.1 Strengths (e.g. graduate outcomes, industry recognition, etc)	
2.2 Weaknesses (e.g. capacity issues, marketing of the course, etc)	
2.3 Opportunities (e.g. areas for growth, enrolment opportunities, collaborative opportunities, etc)	

2.4 Threats/potential problems (e.g. competition, resourcing issues, fee structure, etc)	
2.5 Comments on the adequacy of resources devoted to the course (include staffing resources)	

3. Future Directions (please provide a brief report on future directions for the course for the next three years)	
3.1 Future of the course	
3.2 Projected enrolments	
3.3 Plans for improvements	
3.4 Timeline for implementation of improvements	

4. Recommendation

4.1 Is the course meeting its stated objectives (as indicated in Section 1.3 of the form)?
 Yes No

Briefly explain reason(s) for your answer

4.2 Should the course continue to be offered? Yes No

Briefly explain reason(s) for recommendation

If yes;

- Are additional resources required? Yes No

Briefly explain reason(s) for recommendation

- Are modifications required to the course content and/or method of delivery?
 Yes No

Briefly explain reason(s) for recommendation

4.3 Additional comments

Signature (Chair of the Review Panel)

Date

Signature (Dean of Faculty)

Date



The University of Sydney

Academic Board Resolutions: Creation, Variation and Deletion of Award Courses and Units of Study

Approved by: Academic Board on 4 May 2005

Date of effect: 5 May 2005

Last amended: 10 December 2003

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**Course Proposal/Amendment Requirements can be found
on the Academic Board website at
http://www.usyd.edu.au/su/ab/Course_proposals/Course_proposals.html**

Part 1 – Preliminary

1. **Commencement**

These resolutions of the Academic Board commence on 1 January 2001.

2. **Purpose**

(1) To assemble in one place Academic Board principles and policies related to the creation, variation or deletion of academic courses and units of study at the University of Sydney; and

(2) To describe the procedures used to maintain award courses and units of study, pursuant to both Academic Board policies and the requirements of the relevant administrative systems.

3. **Authority**

(1) The University of Sydney Act states that the Senate of the University “may provide such courses, and may confer such degrees (including *ad eundem gradum* degrees and honorary degrees) and award such diplomas and certificates, as it thinks fit”.

(2) Pursuant to the Act, the University of Sydney (Amendment Act) Rule 1999 (as amended) states that:

The Senate may determine the requirements to be satisfied by candidates for a degree, diploma or certificate for the award of the degree, diploma or certificate (Part 10, Division 1, Section 63 (2)).

The Senate has resolved that the procedures for the consideration, and deadline for submission of proposals for new and amended award programs and courses will be determined by the Academic Board (Part 10, Division 2, Section 64 (1)).

4. **Revision**

This document, and the policies and procedural pro-formas to which it is linked, is maintained by the Academic Board and by the Registrar’s Data Audit Committee. It is also published as part of the VCAC/Academic Board document *Units of Study and Award Courses: Their Creation and Maintenance*.

5. **Dictionary**

Award Course

An award course is a formally approved program of study which can lead to an academic award granted by the university. An award course requires the completion of a program of study specified by course rules. Award courses are approved by Senate on the recommendation of the Academic Board. Students normally apply to transfer between undergraduate award courses through UAC. The award course name will appear on testamurs. The University broadly classifies courses as undergraduate, postgraduate coursework or postgraduate research. The award courses offered by the University are:

Higher Doctorates
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Doctorates by research and advanced coursework
Masters Degree by Research
Masters Degree by Coursework
Graduate Diploma
Graduate Certificate
Bachelor's Degree

Advanced diploma
Diploma
Associate Diploma

Course Rules

Course Rules govern the allowable enrolment of a student in a course; e.g. a candidate may not enrol in units of study having a total value of more than 32 credit points per semester. Course Rules also govern the requirements for the award of the course; e.g. a candidate must have completed a minimum of 144 credit points. Course Rules may be expressed in terms of types of units of study taken, length of study, and credit points accumulated.

Coursework

A term used to describe an award course not designated as a research award course. While the program of study in a coursework award course may include a component of original, supervised research, other forms of instruction and learning normally will be dominant. All undergraduate courses are coursework courses.

Faculty

A faculty, consisting mainly of academic staff members and headed by a dean, is a formal part of the University's academic governance structure, responsible for all matters concerning the award courses that it supervises (see the 1999 Calendar, pp.110-111). Usually, a faculty office administers the faculty and student or staff inquiries related to its courses. The Calendar sets out the constitution of each of the University's 17 faculties.

Major

A major is a defined program of study, generally comprising specified units of study from later stages of the award course. Students select and transfer between majors by virtue of their selection of units of study. One or more majors may be prescribed in order to satisfy course requirements.

Majors may be included on testamurs.

Minor

A minor is a defined program of study, generally comprising units of study from later stages of the award course and requiring a smaller number of credit points than a major. Students select and transfer between minors (and majors) by virtue of their selection of units of study. One or more minors may be prescribed in order to satisfy course requirements.

Minors may be included on testamurs.

Postgraduate

A term used to describe an award course leading to the award of a graduate certificate, graduate diploma, degree of master or a doctorate. Normally, a postgraduate award course requires the prior completion of a relevant undergraduate degree or diploma. A 'postgraduate' is a student enrolled in such a course.

Research

A term used to describe certain award courses in which students undertake and report systematic, creative work in order to increase the stock of knowledge. The research award courses offered by the University are higher doctorates, Doctor of Philosophy, doctorates by research and advanced coursework, and certain degrees of master designated as research degrees. The systematic, creative component of a research course must comprise at least 66% of the overall course requirements.

Stream

A stream is a defined program of study within an award course, which requires the completion of a program of study specified by the course rules for the particular stream, in addition to the core program specified by the course rules for the award course. Students enrolled in award courses that involve streams will have the stream recorded on their enrolment record.

Students normally enter streams at the time of admission, although some award courses require students to enrol in streams after the completion of Level 1000 units of study. Where permitted to do so by faculty resolution, students may transfer from one stream to another, within an award course, provided they meet criteria approved by the Academic Board on the advice of the faculty concerned. A stream will appear with the award course name on testamurs, e.g. Bachelor of Engineering in Civil Engineering (Construction Management).

Undergraduate

A term used to describe an award course leading to the award of a certificate, diploma, advanced diploma or degree of bachelor. An 'undergraduate' is a student enrolled in such a course.

Part 2 – Nomenclature

1. Glossary of terminology

(1) Principles

The adoption of common terminology for academic programs within the University of Sydney assists students and staff by reducing the potential for confusion and the need for wasteful translation. A glossary of the terminology used by the Student Information System (FlexSIS) and related academic and administrative activities is maintained under the Policy Index at http://db.usyd.edu.au/policy/policy_index.stm

(2) Policy

The Academic Board has resolved that, wherever applicable, the terminology defined in the FlexSIS Glossary should be used in descriptions of the University's academic programs.

2. Non-award courses

(1) Principles

The University offers academic programs that are not parts of award courses but are nevertheless associated with the name of the University. These often provide professional development at postgraduate level, but also include programs offered by Continuing Education and individual departments and schools. These non-award courses do not pass through the academic approval processes required of award courses and units of study. It is important that the distinction between award and non-award courses be clear to students and other relevant parties.

(2) Policy

As a general principle, no certificate of completion of any non-award course should include any of the generic words used in the titles of award courses. Examples of words that should *not* be used include 'Certificate', 'Diploma', 'Graduate Certificate', etc. Phrases such as 'Certificate of Attendance' or 'Certificate of Completion' may be used. Certification of non-award courses is, of course, subject to the University's policy regarding the use of the Coat of Arms (see *Delegations of Authority: Administrative Functions*).

3. Consistent nomenclature

(1) Principles

- (a) The purpose of a consistent nomenclature across the University's award programs is:
 - (i) to rationalize and streamline University policies and procedures;
 - (ii) to conform as closely as practicable to national standards derived from DETYA;
 - (iii) to ensure that Course Rules are readily understood, logically consistent, and computationally tractable (e.g. by allowing automatic checking of eligibility for graduation and so forth); and
 - (iv) to facilitate the automatic production of entries in handbooks, etc, and the preparation of management information.
- (b) The name of an award course comprises one essential component (generic name) and one or more optional components (stream name). Programs of study in award courses comprise selected units of study, chosen in accordance with published Course Rules. Course Rules often specify structured programs of study involving several units of study within and across levels; these structured programs are variously known as majors, minors and subject areas.
- (c) The components of award courses, and the policies concerning their maintenance and use, reflect the diversity of award course structures that have developed in the University. Given the existing complexity of the University and its operating environment, faculties are precluded from introducing award course components outside these descriptors, and are encouraged to simplify descriptors and structures as far as possible.
- (d) Faculties should recognise that the titles and structures of award courses must reflect not only the policies of the Academic Board, but also the requirements of the University's business systems, in particular the structure of FlexSIS, and policies emerging from Government and legislative requirements.

(2) Policy

- (a) The names of award courses (undergraduate and postgraduate), and their governance rules, expressed by Senate and faculty resolutions, must adhere to authorized nomenclature.
- (b) The name of an award course comprises one essential component and one or more optional components.
 - (i) Generic award. All award courses must include a generic or parent award which is an associate diploma, a diploma, advanced diploma, bachelor's degree, graduate certificate, graduate diploma, master's degree or doctorate (e.g. Bachelor of Arts).
 - (ii) Stream(s) within a generic award. These components are optional. Faculties are permitted to offer streams within streams, but are not encouraged to do so. The combination of a generic award with a stream is known as specialization (e.g. Bachelor of Science (Bioinformatics)).

- (c) Course Rules for award courses govern allowable enrolments and requirements for the award. Course Rules may specify patterns of study involving several units of study, known as majors, minors and subject areas.
- (d) Award courses may involve combined or double degrees. Students will receive separate testamurs for the two awards.
- (e) The following table summarizes some key distinctions between the components of programs of study of an award course:

Table: Components of Award Courses

	Generic Award	Stream(s)	Major(s)
Mandatory	Yes	No	No
Created/Altered/ Deleted by	Senate	Senate	Academic Board
Published in	Calendar	Calendar	Faculty Handbook
UAC Code allowed	Yes	Yes	No
Printed on testamur	Compulsory	Optional*	Optional*
When do students enter	On admission	On admission**	After 1-2 years
Mode of entry	Enrolment	Enrolment**	Selection of units of study

* Faculty resolutions may specify whether or not the stream(s) or major(s) in which a student graduates are to appear on the testamur. If a student becomes eligible to receive a testamur with more than one award title, the Registrar will determine the adopted form.

** Faculty resolutions may permit students to transfer between streams within a given generic award, during the period of their enrolment in that generic award. If such transfers are permitted by faculty resolution, the resolution must specify the basis on which transfer is allowed. The purpose of this Academic Board policy is to ensure fairness and equity where entry to a particular stream is academically competitive for newly admitted students.

- (f) The name and abbreviation used for each award course offered by the University shall be that approved by the Senate on the advice of the Academic Board and the faculty or faculties concerned.
- (g) The canonical descriptor of a unit of study is defined by FlexSIS. It ensures the general relevance of the descriptor to curriculum planning and organisation, both by staff and by students.
- (h) Award courses and units of study are related via progression and completion rules. These rules, and many other types of linkage between course and unit information and other enrolment data, are handled using constructs available within FlexSIS. They do not form part of the descriptor for units of study.
- (i) With respect to the eight character alphanumeric code which uniquely identifies each unit of study, no department, school or faculty may use the same alpha component for its unit of study codes as another department, school or faculty.

- (j) Units of study may not be duplicated by assigning different unit of study codes to essentially identical units of study. Where it is necessary to identify different mode(s) of teaching applying to a particular unit of study, this may be done by using a specified field within the FlexSIS system developed for this purpose.
- (k) Faculties must use a nomenclature for award courses that distinguishes between research courses and coursework courses. The same award should not be available by the two methods of candidature.

4. Semesterization

(1) Principles

- (a) Award courses and units of study at the University of Sydney are semesterized. The purpose of semesterization is to:
 - (i) support students' progression by ensuring the orderly management of assessment across units of study;
 - (ii) assist timetabling, room allocations, and so forth;
 - (iii) allow sufficient administrative control (e.g. through uniform cut-off dates) of courses, units of study and students' enrolments;
 - (iv) facilitate the preparation of reports for HECS/DETYA, etc.
- (b) Academic Board policies regarding periods of instruction are made pursuant to Senate Resolutions, which state that:
 - (i) The academic year shall contain such periods of instruction, commencing and concluding on such dates as the Academic Board may determine.
 - (ii) Any faculty or academic college which wishes to operate according to dates which are different from those prescribed by the Board may apply to the Board for such permission. Any such application must be made by no later than the November Board meeting of the year preceding that in which the faculty or college wishes to vary the prescribed dates.

(2) Policy

- (a) The Academic Board determines the periods of instruction in standard teaching sessions named First Semester, Second Semester and Summer Session.
- (b) It is Academic Board policy that all units of study will be semesterized at the undergraduate level. This means that any undergraduate units of study in which students formally enrol must normally be established as being taught and examined in either the First or Second Semester, or in both semesters if the course is offered twice, or in the Summer Session if offered in the Summer School.
- (c) Although they are semesterized for administrative purposes, certain components of final honours year, or postgraduate units of study relating to a thesis or other similar research-orientated project, or units of study involving field-work, clinical placements, practicums or similar activities, may be assigned two or more semesters for completion. Such assignments are approved by the Registrar on the advice of the Data Audit Committee.

- (d) It is acceptable to offer units of study in postgraduate award courses in non-standard teaching sessions, provided that appropriate arrangements have been made concerning facilities and other resources.

- (e) The Academic Board acknowledges that the increasing use of flexible teaching and learning modes for both on-campus and off-campus studies tends to conflict with defined semester times. However, students' progression and choice of unit of study options may be unnecessarily and inadvertently impaired if study programs and assessment events in flexibly-delivered units of study are not synchronized with the established Semester/Summer Session pattern. Such synchronization is of particular importance in many undergraduate courses, but is less important in stand-alone postgraduate coursework award courses or in certain undergraduate courses that may be quarantined.

5. Credit points

(1) Principles

- (a) The building blocks of all award courses are units of study. A course generally comprises many units of study, selected according to the regulations of the faculty or board which controls the course. However, different units of study do not always have equal academic demands or content. Moreover, many of the units of study offered by the University may be taken as part of more than one course, including courses not controlled by the faculty which controls the unit of study.
- (b) The absence of a tight mapping between courses and units of study is an important aspect of academic flexibility and efficiency in the University. However, it does require that the University establish a measure of the relative quantitative contribution of a unit of study to a course. The consistency of the relativities of units of study across the University is determined by the Academic Board policy relating to credit points.

(2) Policy

- (a) Credit points indicate the relative quantitative contribution of a unit of study to an award course.
- (b) Units of study shared across courses are required to have the same credit point value in every course. This policy applies when units of study are shared between faculties or between undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Where units of study are available to students of more than one faculty, faculties shall design units of study to maximise compatibility and availability to students of the university.
- (c) The relationship between the level of student effort in a unit of study and the credit point value of that unit is articulated and defined within the context of all of the courses sharing that unit of study. Faculties shall use credit points to monitor student work-load on the basis that 24 credit points equates to the effort expected of a full-time student, studying 36-48 hours per week. A credit point should therefore equate notionally to a minimum expectation of 1.5 – 2 hours of student effort.
- (d) The normal full-time load for all undergraduate and postgraduate coursework award courses is 24 credit points per semester (or 12 points for the Summer Session).
- (e) The normal credit point load for a unit of study shall be six credit points. Such standardisation exists in an attempt to maximise student choice and flexibility. In all cases, the credit point value of a unit of study will be an integer, normally lying between 3 and 24. In assigning the level of student effort and hence the credit point value of a unit of study, faculties should be mindful of the advantages to students when credit points in preferred academic pathways add naturally to a sum of 24 per semester. This is best achieved by using credit point values that are divisors of 24 (i.e., 3, 4, 6, 8, 12).
- (f) Faculties introducing new units of study with a credit point value other than six shall inform the Academic Board, noting the rationale for the deviation from the standardised model and addressing issues of compatibility.

- (g) A faculty may, on academic grounds, propose to the Undergraduate or Graduate Studies Committees units of study with 1 or 2 credit points. Although such units of study are discouraged, they will normally be approved if the unit of study is available only within courses controlled by the proposing faculty.

(3) Notes

- (a) Student transcripts and student record files will record a single result and a single credit point value for each unit of study attempted by a student. In those cases where the textual description of a unit of study includes reference to options within that unit, the transcript will not include a result or a credit point value for any specific option. Any option for which a result and credit point value is required must be identified as a stand-alone unit of study, with a distinct descriptor.
- (b) The requirement that each unit of study have a single unique credit point value, even if it is available in a range of courses (e.g. a mathematics unit in the BSc, the BE and the Combined Arts/Law degrees), may lead in principle to different minimum total credit point values for different degrees, or to different full-time study requirements per semester according to the award course chosen. In general, faculties are expected to construct undergraduate degree programs on the basis that a normal full-time load is 24 credit points per semester and, if necessary, to use this as a minimum credit point value for the construction of academic programs for entire award courses.
- (c) The credit point terminology refers to the value of a unit of study towards meeting award course completion requirements. While it may be expected to relate in a reasonably direct way to the amount of work in a unit of study, or to the load generated by a unit of study, these are matters to be determined by the faculty or faculties involved. There is no underlying necessity that “equal credit points” imply “equal amounts of work” or “equal load” across different courses of study offered by the University. However, faculties are encouraged to develop clear and consistent guidelines regarding how they define a credit point in terms of the student workload, contact hours, assessment and examination requirements applying to their own discipline and courses.

Part 3 - Levels of approval for changes to courses and units of study

1. Principles

(1) Levels of approval for the creation, variation or deletion of courses and units of study are established to:

- (a) Ensure that proposals for new or amended award courses and units of study are examined in the appropriate University-wide context, while reflecting the delegation of academic authority to approve certain amendments, additions or deletions to academic courses and units of study.
- (b) Where necessary, to align the academic development of the University with the provision of resources to sustain new or changed courses and units of study.
- (c) Establish time-scales and cut-off dates in the procedures for creating and maintaining award courses and units of study, to ensure that important deadlines can be met (such as the publication of the Universities Admissions Centre Guide and faculty handbooks) while allowing time for proper review of the academic and administrative implications of proposed changes.
- (d) Exploit wherever possible the power and flexibility of the University's information management systems to facilitate and streamline the consideration of proposals.

(2) So far as possible, the approval processes will be identical for undergraduate and postgraduate award courses and units of study. Where necessary, the specific needs of undergraduate or postgraduate courses will be mentioned separately.

2. Policy

Approval levels for the creation, variation or deletion of award courses and units of study are classified as follows:

(1) Senate approval

- (a) New award courses, including combined/double degrees.
- (b) Alterations to existing award courses involving:
 - (i) a change to the name or deletion of an award course;
 - (ii) addition, modification or deletion of a stream that is specified in the award course name on the testamur;
 - (iii) a change in the duration of an award course; or
 - (iv) addition or deletion of an honours component in the award course.

(2) Academic Board approval

- (a) Substantial revision to the academic content of an award course including:
 - (i) additions, modifications or deletions of majors or subject areas;
 - (ii) adoption of a new mode of delivery (e.g. web-based, off-campus, change of campus, interstate or offshore) in all or part of a course;
 - (iii) significant alterations of academic pathways through the award course resulting from a review of the award course; or
 - (iv) any change to an award course that has not been reviewed at course level within the past 5 years.

- (b) Changes having an impact on the study options available to prospective students, including changes to:
 - (i) selection/admission procedures and standards; or
 - (ii) prerequisites, co-requisites and assumed knowledge.
- (c) Changes having a significant impact on the professions, employers or the wider community, including:
 - (i) enhancement or diminution of employment opportunities;
 - (ii) entry into a new segment of the education system or higher education sector; or
 - (iii) ~~new off-shore or distance education~~ mode of delivery eg off-shore or distance education delivery modes.

(3) Faculty approval

- (a) All additions, modifications or deletions to units of study under the academic direction of the faculty, provided that adequate notification of changes has been given to the deans of all other faculties offering award courses in which the unit is listed in the unit of study table.
- (b) In approving the actions described in (a), faculties must be mindful of advice regarding the resource implications of such approval, normally provided by the Dean. Boards of Studies may approve the actions described in (a) only with the permission of the dean of the faculty responsible for the relevant unit of study.
- (c) Faculties are required to inform the Chair of the Academic Board before making a change to the mode of delivery of a unit of study. This step is required to allow appropriate monitoring of the impact of flexible delivery modes on University-wide teaching resources such as the Library and information technology systems.
- (d) The Data Audit Committee has specified those aspects of an existing unit of study which a faculty may change and those which it may not. Those aspects which may be changed are: the semester in which the unit is offered; the description of the unit in the faculty handbook; pre- and co-requisites; departmental split; course associations applying to the unit; the title of the unit. Those aspects which may not be changed are: the eight character alphanumeric unit of study code which functions as a unique identifier for the unit; the unit's credit point value; the Field of Education code; HECS band; fees band; the level of the unit; mode of delivery. In exceptional circumstances a dean may present a case to the Data Audit Committee to change the alphanumeric code, having first obtained the agreement of those other deans in whose award course(s) the unit is offered.
- (e) Faculty approved variations must be reported annually to the Undergraduate or Graduate Studies Committee, as appropriate. Such reporting will normally occur simultaneously with finalization of the Unit of Study Master File for the following year.

(4) Determining approval levels

Where doubt exists, the Chair of the Academic Board shall determine the level of approval required after consultation with the relevant dean(s). Changes requiring ultimate approval by Senate or the Academic Board will normally require prior approval by the relevant faculties. The fact that an academic governance regulation appears in a faculty handbook, or is published as a faculty resolution, is not of itself evidence that only faculty approval is required for any proposed change.

(5) Minor Changes to Senate Resolutions

- (a) Senate resolved in June 1995 that minor changes to Senate Resolutions relating to award courses and units of study, previously submitted by faculties, colleges and boards of studies to the Academic Board and Senate for approval, be approved by those bodies under delegated authority from Senate. The minor changes described in this Senate resolution correspond to the faculty approval level defined above. It should be noted that any such changes to Senate Resolutions will be required only for resolutions drafted prior to the commencement of the Senate's Undergraduate Courses Rule (1999) and Coursework Rule (2000); newer governance rules will be expressed as faculty resolutions, or will be Senate or Board approved.
- (b) Minor changes authorized by faculties in accordance with provision (5)(a) must be reported to the Secretariat (i) to enable updating of the Calendar and (ii) to fulfil the requirement that such changes must be reported to the Undergraduate or Graduate Studies Committees. Reports are normally provided by faculty secretaries in the form of extracts from the relevant minutes of faculty meetings.

(6) Timescales for approvals

Senate and Academic Board approval for proposed changes in award courses and units of study may be requested at any time. Approval procedures will include information on the normal time to process a request. Except as permitted by the policy and procedures regarding late, urgent approval, no course or unit of study may be advertised or offered until it has been duly approved.

(7) Preliminary approval

- (a) Provision exists for a faculty to seek Preliminary Approval for a new award course or for changes to an existing course where the proposed changes may affect students' subject choices for Year 11 and Year 12. This provision reflects the long lead time required to give notice to Year 10 students about changes to University admission requirements. Such approval may be given by the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor who will normally consult with the Chair of the Academic Board to evaluate the academic implications of the proposal. All award courses given Preliminary Approval must be advertised with the qualification "subject to approval".
- (b) Deans will inform the Academic Board, through a faculty report, when Preliminary Approval has been granted for a new course. A full proposal must be approved before students enrol in such a course.

(8) Late, urgent approval

- (a) Late urgent approval for variations in award courses and units of study may be given by the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, who may consult with the Chair of the Academic Board and the Registrar to determine the implications of such approval. Examples of Late, Urgent Approval include authorization

to insert a proposed new course into the UAC Guide. All award courses given Late, Urgent Approval must be advertised with the qualification “subject to approval”.

- (b) Where an award course or unit of study has been given Late, Urgent Approval, a full proposal must be approved as soon as possible, according to the normal procedures.

Part 4 – Guidelines for approval for changes to courses and units of study

1. Principles

(a) Senate and Academic Board policies relating to the maintenance of award courses and units of study require that all changes be formally approved, by faculties, the Academic Board, or Senate, depending on the nature of the change.

(b) This Part provides guidelines to be followed in seeking formal approval for proposed changes requiring approval by the Academic Board or Senate. The guidelines aim to:

- (i) ensure conformity with all relevant policy;
- (ii) encourage coherence and consistency in the expression of Senate and faculty resolutions relating to award courses and units of study;
- (iii) provide all of the information required by the relevant approving authorities, especially information associated with academic quality assurance; and
- (iv) minimize administrative workload, and streamline the procedures as far as possible while respecting collegial values and the views of stakeholders.

(c) The Guidelines and related pro-formas are revised and updated from time to time, by staff in the Secretariat and Corporate Information Unit, working with advice from the Chair and deputy chairs of the Board, deans and faculty managers.

2. Roles and Authorities

(1) Heads of Schools/Departments

In faculties with a school/department structure, the head of school/department is required by Resolution of Senate to consult with the school/department board and with the professors in the school/department concerning the units of study offered by the school/department. Proposals to change units of study offered by the school/department will normally be prepared by the head or the head's agent, working with the advice of the school/department board, the professors, and, in many cases, a committee or working party with special expertise and interest in the specific academic area.

(2) Chairs of Boards of Studies

In respect of academic matters, boards of studies report to Senate through the Academic Board. However, academic decisions made by boards of studies may have resource implications for faculties and departments. To align academic development with the provision of resources, a chair of a board of studies must obtain the agreement of the relevant dean before the board of studies determines a change in academic program.

(3) Deans and College Directors

Deans and college directors, in consultation with faculty secretaries, are responsible for:

- (a) establishing policies and procedures, consistent with University policies and procedures, for managing all aspects of faculty-approved changes. In particular, these policies and procedures will cover the creation, variation and deletion of units of study under the academic supervision of the faculty;
- (b) preparing proposals for changes requiring approval by the Academic Board and/or Senate; and
- (c) ensuring that all proposed changes to award courses and units of study are formally approved by faculty boards or boards of studies.

(4) Academic Board

- (a) Proposals requiring approval by the Academic Board and/or Senate normally will be considered first by the Undergraduate Studies Committee or the Graduate Studies Committee as appropriate. The respective chairs of these committees may form small working parties to consider proposals that are complex or potentially controversial.
- (b) Provision exists for minor changes, of a typographical or editorial kind, to be made to the Resolutions of the Senate or of the Academic Board without the formal approval of Senate or the Academic Board.
- (c) It is not the role of the Academic Board or its standing committees to assess, in detail, the specific academic content of a proposal to introduce or change an award course or unit of study. Nor is it the role of the Academic Board or its standing committees to assess, in detail, the resource needs and implications of new teaching initiatives. However, the Academic Board does advise Senate and the Vice-Chancellor on all matters relating to the University's educational programs. The Board and its committees will concern themselves principally with matters relating to:
 - (i) the academic need for, and merit of, the proposed change;
 - (ii) the extent to which a proposed change has been the subject of appropriate consultation and approval within faculties, and between all faculties having an academic interest in the proposed change;
 - (iii) the consistency of the proposal with relevant University policies;
 - (iv) the potential impact of the proposed new course or change on University resources, including the Library, central information technology resources, and the resources of other faculties and schools/departments, and
 - (v) the presence of appropriate mechanisms to evaluate the quality of delivery and academic outcomes of the proposal, and to make any improvements if required.
- (d) It is important to recognize that by their terms of reference and by convention, the Academic Board and its committees are not authorized to reject proposals for reasons related to the provision of resources. However, the committees may comment on resource-related matters when reporting to the Academic Board. Such comments may be of particular importance in framing the Board's advice to Senate for Senate-approved changes.
- (e) Frequently, Academic Board standing committees will suggest or require changes be made by faculties to proposals before submission to the Academic Board (and thence Senate if appropriate).
- (f) Academic Board will normally receive proposals from its standing committees with a recommendation to approve, or that Senate approve, the proposed new course or change.

3. Timelines

(1) Approval of changes

- (a) It is Academic Board policy that proposed changes requiring approval by the Academic Board and/or Senate will be considered at any time. The time

scale for approval is dependent upon the calendar of meeting dates of the relevant standing committee (Undergraduate or Graduate Studies), the following meeting of the Academic Board, and, if Senate approval is required, the following normal meeting of Senate (other than a Senate Colloquium meeting, which does not consider Academic Board reports). The Calendar of meeting dates is published on the internet at:

Academic Board:

<http://www.usyd.edu.au/su/ab/meetings/meetings.html>

Undergraduate Studies:

<http://www.usyd.edu.au/su/ab/committees/USC/meetings.html>

Graduate Studies:

<http://www.usyd.edu.au/su/ab/committees/GSC/meetings.html>

- (b) It is the responsibility of faculty secretaries and deans to monitor the calendar of meeting dates, to take account of the consideration of proposals by working parties, and to ensure that approvals are in place by appropriate key dates.

(2) Key dates

Key dates are normally established by the Registrar, and include:

- (a) cut-off date for notification to Year 10 students of changes that may impact on the selection of HSC subjects. Proposals of this kind may be the subject of Preliminary Approval by the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor [normally, 34 months prior to the introduction of the change];
- (b) cut-off date for the UAC Guide for admissions in the subsequent calendar year [normally, 10 months prior to the introduction of the change]; and
- (c) finalization of the Units of Study Master File for the subsequent year [normally, by the end of September in the year preceding the year in which the change will apply]. After this date the Units of Study Master File may be altered only with the approval of the Registrar. To facilitate the completion of the Master File a series of milestone dates for the creation of the following year's units of study schedule have been developed and published in the document *Units of Study and Award Courses: Their Creation and Maintenance*.

Agenda Item 8

Amendment of the Resolutions of the Senate

8.1 Faculty of Law: Appendix: Units of Study Offered within the Faculty - Master of Business Law; Master of International Law, Graduate Diploma in International Law; Graduate Diploma in International Business Law; Graduate Diploma in Corporate, Securities and Finance Law

On the recommendation of Faculty of Law Postgraduate Coursework Committee, the Faculty of Law recommends that the Graduate Studies Committee recommend that the Academic Board recommend that Senate approve the amendments of the Resolutions of the Senate relating to Master of Business Law; Master of International Law, Graduate Diploma in International Law; Graduate Diploma in International Business Law and Graduate Diploma in Corporate, Securities and Finance Law by coursework programs with effect from 1 March 2005.

The Faculty has requested these amendments so that discrepancies between the Calendar and the Law Faculty Handbook are eliminated and to incorporate changes in the structure of the various specialist programs.

The amendments to resolutions are set out in the following pages, with additions indicated by underlining.

Recommendation

That the Graduate Studies Committee recommend that the Academic Board recommend that Senate approve the amendments of the Resolutions of the Senate relating to the Appendix: Units of Study Offered within the Faculty - Master of Business Law; Master of International Law, Graduate Diploma in International Law; Graduate Diploma in International Business Law; Graduate Diploma in Corporate, Securities and Finance Law by coursework programs in the Faculty of Law, with effect from 1 March 2005, as set out in the report presented.

Resolutions of the Senate

(Additions indicated by underlined, deletions by strikethrough)

Appendix: Units of Study Offered within the Faculty of Law

Master of Business Law

Optional units of study

The optional units of study for the Master of Business Law will be the units offered by the Faculty each year towards the Master of Taxation, the Master of International Taxation, the Graduate Diploma in Corporate, Securities and Finance Law, the Graduate Diploma in International Business Law and the Graduate Diploma in Commercial Law. However, the following units are not available for credit:

- Immigration and Nationality Law
- International Environmental Law

~~Taxation of Business and Investment Income – A~~

~~Taxation of Business and Investment Income – B~~

Master of International Law, Graduate Diploma in International Law

Optional Units of Study

Advanced International Trade Regulations
Asian and Pacific Environmental Law
Chinese Laws and Chinese Legal Systems¹⁶
Chinese Legal Systems and Foreign Investment
Comparative Competition Law
Comparative Environmental Law
Comparative International Tax
Immigration and Nationality Law
Legal Reasoning and the Common Law System
Maritime Law
Sustainable Development Law in China
Tax Law in Asia and the Pacific
Tax Treaties
The Legal System of the European Union
Trade and Commerce in European Law

Graduate Diploma in International Business Law

Optional units of study

Advanced International Trade Regulations
Chinese Legal Systems and Foreign Investment
Comparative Competition Law
Comparative International Tax
~~Immigration and Nationality Law~~
~~International Environmental Law~~
International Transport Law
Legal System of the European Union
Maritime Law
Modern Corporate Governance
Public International Law
Taxation in Asia and the Pacific
Tax Treaties
Trade and Commerce in European Law

Graduate Diploma in Corporate, Securities and Finance Law

Optional units of study

Advanced Financing Techniques
Advanced International Trade Regulation
Comparative Competition Law
Comparative Corporation Taxation
Comparative International Taxation

Corporate Fundraising
Corporate Taxation
Debt Financing
Equity Financing
International Business Law
International Trade Regulation
Modern Corporate Governance
Regulation of Collective Investment
Regulation of Derivatives, Products and Markets
Stamp Duties
Takeovers and Reconstructions
Taxation of Financial Institutions and Financial Transactions

Agenda Item 9

Postgraduate English Language Requirements

9. Postgraduate English Language Requirements

The Graduate Studies Committee has received a request from the Faculty of Architecture and Faculty of Education and Social Work to update Appendix One: “*Schedule of approved Faculty variations, above the University minimum requirements*” of the *Postgraduate English Language Requirements* policy. As the *Postgraduate English Language Requirements* policy requires approval by the Academic Board all Faculties are invited to review Appendix One of the policy and advise the Graduate Studies Board of any changes prior to the next meeting. The new amended policy will then be forwarded to the Academic Board for approval.



The University of Sydney

Postgraduate English Language Requirements

Approved by the Academic Board on 16 March 2005

Date of effect: 17 March 2005

1. Policy

This policy outlines the Academic Board's position on English language requirements for applicants for postgraduate award courses for whom English is not their first language.

2. Background

The Academic Board has established the minimum English language requirements for postgraduate award course applicants. Faculties may ask the Academic Board to approve specific requirements above the University minimum levels. Students must be made aware of the English language requirements at the time of application.

3. Coverage

This policy applies to all applicants, both local and international, for postgraduate coursework and postgraduate research award courses.

4. Principles

4.1 Once candidates have satisfied academic eligibility provisions (admission) and met any necessary student visa requirements, candidates must also satisfy these provisions relating to English language proficiency.

4.2 Faculties may request that the Academic Board approve English language requirements above the minimum set out in 4.3.3 below. Approved Faculty variations above the minimum requirements are set out in appendix one of this policy.

4.3 Proof of proficiency in English may include:

4.3.1 a record of satisfactory achievement in tertiary studies in which the language of the institution was English and the language of instruction, examination and assessment was English. Satisfactory achievement will be determined by the appropriate Faculty and should be relevant to the discipline concerned.

4.3.2 successful completion of the course "English for Academic Purposes" at the University's Centre for English Teaching.

4.3.3 an internationally recognised English language test meeting the University minimum requirements, or approved Faculty requirements where these are higher than the University minimum:

4.3.3.1 IELTS (International English Language Testing Scheme) overall band score of 6.5 with a minimum of 6.0 in each band; or

4.3.3.2 TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) 577 plus TWE (Test of Written English) at 4.5; or

4.3.3.3 CBT (Computer-based TOEFL) 233 plus Essay Rating 4.5; or

4.3.3.4 Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English grade A or B;

4.3.3.5 GCSW English language grade A or B; or

4.3.3.6 CULT (Combined Universities Language Test 70); or

4.3.3.7 the relevant Faculty requirements set out in Appendix One, where the requirements are higher than the University minimum above.

5. Dean's ability to waive English language requirements in certain circumstances

- 5.1 In accordance with the *Delegations of Authority: Academic Functions*, the Dean of the Faculty has the ability to waive English language requirements in certain circumstances.
- 5.2 In waiving English language requirements the Dean of the Faculty must be satisfied, on the advice of the head of department/school concerned that the candidate has English language competency to enable the successful completion of the course.
- 5.3 The Dean of the Faculty may waive English language requirements where a candidate submits a recognised English language test score which deviates from the University, or specific course requirements by:
 - 5.3.1 IELTS (International English Language Testing Scheme) not more than 0.5 below the overall band score and not more than 1.0 below in any of the individual bands; or
 - 5.3.2 TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) not less than [International Office to provide equivalent] plus not less than TWE (Test of Written English) at [International Office to provide equivalent];
- 5.4 In establishing satisfaction that the candidate has English language competency to enable the successful completion of the course, where the Dean is waiving English language requirements, the Dean may consider all relevant factors including such things as ability to communicate in an academic environment; known to the Faculty for at least two years; previous appropriate work experience in an English language environment; and verbal discussion between the Faculty and the candidate.
- 5.5 The Graduate Studies Committee may approve exceptions to the limits of 5.3 in exceptional circumstances.

6. Time limits

- 6.1 Where a candidate is providing proof of proficiency in English through a record of satisfactory achievement in tertiary studies. The tertiary studies must have been undertaken no more than a maximum of 5 years prior to the application.
- 6.2 Where a candidate is providing proof of proficiency in English through successful completion of an appropriate course at the University's Centre for English Teaching, the course shall have been completed no more than 2 years prior to the application
- 6.3 Where a candidate is providing proof of proficiency in English through an internationally recognised English language test, scores older than two years at the time of application will not be accepted.

7. Procedures for waiving English language requirements

- 7.1 The Dean must record in writing the approval to waive English requirements on an individual basis outlining:
 - 7.1.1 the proof of proficiency in English provided by the candidate;
 - 7.1.2 the reasons, in accordance with this policy, the Dean approved the waiver.
- 7.2 The Faculty Office (or appropriate administrative unit) shall ensure:
 - 7.2.1 a record of the approved waiving of requirements is kept on the student file;
 - 7.2.2 for local applicants, that the basis for admission is recorded in FlexSIS; and
 - 7.2.3 for International applicants, that the International Office is advised of the approval to waive English requirements and the basis for the decision and that the International Office ensures that the basis for admission is recorded in FlexSIS.

8. Authority

8.1 Development/consultation

Consultation on this policy involved the International Office, the Strategic Director (Internationalisation), faculties, the Postgraduate Research Training Sub-Committee, Graduate Studies Committee, and the Academic Board.

8.2 Management responsibility

The Dean of Graduate Studies shall have overall management responsibility for the policy.

8.3 Implementation and monitoring

The Dean of Graduate Studies shall have responsibility for implementing and monitoring the policy.

8.4 Review

The Dean of Graduate Studies shall initiate a review of the policy in July 2006.

8.5 Communication

The Dean of Graduate Studies shall be responsible for communicating the policy.

8.6 Contact

Inquiries should be directed to:
Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies
H04
Phone: 9036 9518
E-mail: DoGS@usyd.edu.au

9. Related information

9.1 Related University legislation, resolutions, policies and procedures include:

9.1.1 University of Sydney (Amendment Act) Rule 1999 (as amended) at
<http://www.usyd.edu.au/publications/calendar/>

9.1.2 Probationary candidate and English expression at
http://db.usyd.edu.au/policy/policy_index.stm

9.2 University policies superseded or replaced by this policy:

9.2.2 Postgraduate English Language Requirements (approved 28 April 2004) at
http://db.usyd.edu.au/policy/policy_index.stm

9.3 External legislation, resolutions, policies related to this policy include:

9.3.1 Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 at
<http://www.dest.gov.au/esos/>

9.3.2 National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students (The National Code) at
http://www.dest.gov.au/esos/National_Code/contents.htm

Appendix One: Schedule of approved Faculty variations, above the University minimum requirements

Faculty	Course	Requirements (above the University minimum)	Approval Date
Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources			
Faculty of Architecture	All postgraduate award courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TOEFL – 600 or better plus TWE at 4.5+ • IELTS – Overall band score of 7.0 or better, with no component being below 6.5 	12 May 1999
Faculty of Arts			
Faculty of Dentistry			
Faculty of Economics and Business	All postgraduate award courses except the Commerce courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TOEFL – 600 or better plus TWE at 4.5+ • IELTS – Overall band score of 7.0 or better, with no component being below 6.0 	12 February 1997
Faculty of Education and Social Work	Master of Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IELTS – Overall band score of 7.5 or better with no band less than 7 	16 March 2005
Faculty of Engineering			
Faculty of Health Sciences	Doctor of Health Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IELTS - Overall band of 7.0, with individual band of speaking and writing of no less than 6.5 	12 June 2002 (effective from 1 January 2003)
	Master of Occupational Therapy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TOEFL – 600 or better, plus TWE at 5.0+ • IELTS – Overall band score of 7.0 or better, with at least 6 for Speaking and 7 for Writing on each band 	8 December 2000
	All postgraduate Physiotherapy courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IELTS – Overall band score of 7.0 or better 	12 February 1997
Faculty of Law	All postgraduate award courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IELTS – Overall band score of 7.0 or better, with at least 6.0 in each of the components 	12 February 1997
Faculty of Medicine	All postgraduate award courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TOEFL – 600 or better overall, plus TWE at 4.5+ 	13 December 2000
Faculty of Nursing	All postgraduate award courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IELTS – Overall band score of 7.0 or better, with at least 7.0 in each of the components 	14 August 2002
Faculty of Pharmacy	All postgraduate award courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TOEFL – 600 or better plus TWE at 4.5+ • IELTS – Overall band score of 7.0 or better, with no component being below 6.5 	28 April 2004 (effective from 1 January 2005)
Faculty of Rural Management			
Faculty of Science	Master of Nutrition and Dietetics; Master of Nutritional Science; Master of Applied Science (Nutrition and Dietetics); Graduate Diploma in Applied Science (Nutrition and Dietetics); and Graduate Certificate in Applied Science (Nutrition and Dietetics)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TOEFL – 610 or better plus TWE at 5.0+ • CBT – 253 or better plus Essay Rating 5.0 • IELTS – Overall band score of 7.5 or better, with at least 6.5 in each of the components 	28 April 2004 (effective from 1 January 2005)
	Graduate Certificate in Applied Science (Psychology of Coaching), Graduate Diploma in Applied Science (Psychology of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IELTS: Overall band score of 7.5 as a minimum on each band with no band falling 	TBC (effective from 1 January 2005)

	Coaching) and Master of Applied Science (Psychology of Coaching)	below a score of 6.0	
Faculty of Veterinary Science	All postgraduate award courses except the Veterinary Public Health Management courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IELTS: Overall band score of 7.0 with no band falling below a score of 6.5. • TOEFL: 600 or better plus TWE at 5.0+ • CBT: 250 plus essay rating 5.0 	TBC (effective from 1 January 2005)
	Master of Veterinary Public Health Management; Graduate Diploma in Veterinary Public Health Management; and Graduate Certificate in Veterinary Public Health Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TOEFL – 600 or better plus TWE at 5.0+ • CBT – 250 plus Essay Rating 5.0 • IELTS – Overall band score of 7.0 or better, with at least 7.0 for Speaking and 7.0 for Writing on each band. 	12 November 2003
Sydney College of the Arts			
Sydney Conservatorium of Music			