

FACULTY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND NATURAL RESOURCES

FIRST PROGRESS REPORT ON RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PHASE THREE

Recommendation 1	The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty consider its committee structure to see where efficiencies might be made that would help to address the issue of workload.
Action taken by the Faculty	With the arrival of a new Dean in early 2008, a small number of administrative roles have been abolished or re-aligned, Faculty committees have been re-constituted (into smaller groups), and a review of administrative support roles in the Faculty undertaken.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	Re-defined administrative support roles have been created, and existing administrative staff have been interviewed for these positions. Appointments are to be made in early 2009.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	Too early to say definitively, but some office-bearers, such as the Associate Dean (Teaching & Learning), are still required to be members of many Faculty and University committees.
Recommendation 2	The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty give high priority to the development of an effective marketing strategy, to target both local and international students.
Action taken by the Faculty	In collaboration with the University's Marketing and Communications group, the Faculty has engaged a public relations/marketing company, <i>Pollinate</i> , to undertake a wide-ranging review of the Faculty. The overall objectives of this <i>Project Future Proof</i> are to; "Explore the reasons behind the decline in enrolments and understand what young people want from the Faculty in order to clearly establish the principle triggers and barriers to the Faculty repositioning itself as the leading choice for aspiring students in order to increase enrolments from 2009 onwards."
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	An interim report on the key issues facing the Faculty was delivered in October 2008, while a final report including recommendations of the strategies likely to be most effective for the Faculty will be delivered in early to mid-2009. The recommendations of <i>Project Future Proof</i> will be considered by the Faculty Executive.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	Too early to say.
Recommendation 3	The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty consider how it might develop more proactive strategies to develop and, where appropriate, to raise its academic aspirations. A mechanism for this might be for the Faculty to establish an Advisory Board, with wide industry representation and an external chair, as a focus for stakeholder involvement in future strategic planning.
Action taken by the Faculty	The formulation of such strategies and mechanisms is part of the brief for <i>Project Future Proof</i> . A new administrative role introduced in July 2008, the Associate Dean (Development), has been charged with developing a stronger alumni group for the Faculty, and engaging alumni and industry stakeholders in planning of future course offerings.

Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	A new degree offering is in the planning stage, with input being sought from University and industry stakeholders.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	Too early to say.
Recommendation 4	The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty review its strategies for addressing student recruitment issues, consider reviving its media campaign and consider a coordinated plan for communicating with government, teachers, students.
Action taken by the Faculty	The formulation of such strategies is part of the brief for <i>Project Future Proof</i> .
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	Depends on the recommendations of <i>Project Future Proof</i> .
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	N/A
Recommendation 5	The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty explore mechanisms for optimising the engagement of distant students with activities on the Camperdown campus, for example improving transportation between the Camden and Camperdown campuses and developing teleconference facilities.
Action taken by the Faculty	Teleconferencing facilities are available at both campuses, but nothing has been done about transport between the two campuses.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	A new building at the Cobbitty campus, and the concurrent relocation of some Faculty research staff to Cobbitty and the Mt Annan Botanic Garden, may provide the impetus for a transport link between the main campus and Camden to be investigated more fully in the future.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	N/A
Recommendation 6	The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty develop a flexible workload model, taking into account some of the models already developed in the University.
Action taken by the Faculty	A draft workload policy has been prepared by a Faculty member and is under review by the Dean. The Associate Dean (Teaching & Learning) is presently carrying out a teaching load audit of all Faculty staff.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	The Dean and Associate Dean (Teaching & Learning) will consider the present workloads of academic staff, including new appointments, and will alter the teaching schedule to ensure that the finalised workload policy is adhered to.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	N/A

Recommendation 7	The Academic Board recommends that, as a matter of urgency, the DVC (Research) be requested to examine the impact of the University's and Sydnovate's current philosophy and practices on the Faculty's longstanding collaborations with rural Research and Development Corporations (RDCs) and, if appropriate, facilitate a solution which ensures the Faculty's capacity to continue these research relationships.
Action taken by the Faculty	Protracted negotiations between Faculty members, Sydnovate and rural R&D providers have partially resolved the contractual impasses surrounding rights to IP. Further negotiations are continuing regarding testing services carried out by the Plant Breeding Institute and liability clauses.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	Rural R&D providers to consult with the Vice Chancellor about these issues in February, 2009.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	Partially successful.
Recommendation 8	The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty address the reasons for the continuing delays in putting lecture notes on WebCT.
Action taken by the Faculty	All unit coordinators urged to maintain the currency of WebCT sites. As a further initiative, some unit coordinators have moved their WebCT sites from Category "A" to Category "B" classification.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	None.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	Successful - there were no complaints about this issue in Staff-Student Liaison Committee meetings of 2008.
Recommendation 9	The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty review its compliance with the Academic Board policy on parallel teaching of undergraduate and postgraduate coursework units of study.
Action taken by the Faculty	At present, most units offered to postgraduate coursework students satisfy clauses 4.2. and 4.3 of the University of Sydney (Coursework) Rule 2000. Some parallel teaching of postgraduate coursework students and undergraduate Pass students continues, but there are now fewer opportunities for postgraduates to select such parallel-taught units.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	A proposal is currently before the Faculty to revamp the postgraduate coursework programs offered so that all component units are taught only to postgraduates, or non-Pass undergraduates who seek special permission to attempt these units. If adopted, this proposal will ensure that all postgraduate coursework programs offered by the Faculty will comply with the recommendations of the current Review of Coursework Masters offered by the University.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	N/A

Recommendation 10	The Faculty is encouraged to explore avenues by which research students can be given opportunities to develop skills and expertise in academic teaching.
Action taken by the Faculty	No formal actions as yet.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	On an <i>ad hoc</i> basis, various research students have given lectures and run small practical classes for undergraduate units during 2008, due largely to staff illness. Subsequent to Recommendation 9 above, there may be opportunities for research students to become involved in the teaching of postgraduate coursework units.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	N/A
Recommendation 11	The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty consider the introduction of Faculty guidelines for research supervision to supplement the University-wide code of conduct, and better advise postgraduate research students of their opportunities, obligations, and thesis options.
Action taken by the Faculty	A postgraduate handbook continues to be updated and released each year. This handbook directs postgraduates to student resources, policies and guidelines for thesis production. Postgraduate degree resolutions and policies for the Faculty have also been reviewed in 2008.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	A series of postgraduate research studies forums will be held during 2009. These will focus on issues such as inducting research candidates, confirming candidature, managing the research program, reviewing candidate's progress and their writing of the thesis, and matters affecting the candidate's experience of research.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	Reasonable success, as evidenced by fewer issues identified during the 2008 annual postgraduate student progress reviews.
Recommendation 12	The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty consult with students over the issue of identification of discipline streams on degree testamurs.
Action taken by the Faculty	None as yet.
Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)	Consultation with students over the inclusion of discipline streams and generic graduate attributes on degree testamurs.
Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken	N/A