

ACADEMIC BOARD PHASE THREE REVIEW

REVIEW TEAM REPORT

Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery

2009

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SECTION I: PREFACE

(1) Background

The Academic Board reviews are intended to encourage in faculties an academic culture that values scholarship, free inquiry and intellectual rigour and honesty, supporting, in turn, the development and maintenance of high standards of teaching, scholarship and research.

In 2001, the Academic Board initiated a cycle of collegial reviews of the academic activities within faculties with a view to supporting faculties in developing effective academic quality assurance processes. These were followed up in 2003 with a second phase of faculty reviews, which expanded the scope to include all elements within the University Strategic Plan.

The Phase 3 Review is based on the Faculty's Self-Evaluation Report (SER) which provides an overview of the Faculty's assessment of the culture which supports, and the processes that lead to, continuous quality improvement in the Faculty at the time of the Review. To guide the development of the SER, faculties were invited to address criteria adapted from the Baldrige Education Criteria for Performance Excellence 2007.

(2) The Review Process

The Faculty presented its SER to the Academic Board on 30 July 2009 along with a number of supporting documents and relevant data. The Review Team met on 6 August 2009 to consider these materials.

The review visit took place on 14 August 2009. The key purpose of the visit was to enable the Review Team to assess the robustness and validity of the Faculty's judgements.

Implementation

Within six weeks of receipt of the Review Report, the Faculty is required to provide the Academic Board with a response to the recommendations contained in the report, indicating how the Faculty will build the recommendations into Faculty planning processes

Twelve months after the date the report is presented to the Academic Board, the Faculty is required to provide the Board with a progress report responding to the recommendations.

(3) Membership

3.1 Review Team

Professor Bruce Sutton, Chair

Professor Jo-anne Brien, Faculty of Pharmacy

Professor Gabrielle Meagher, Faculty of Education and Social Work

Professor Stephanie Short, Faculty of Health Sciences

Adjunct Professor Debra Thoms, Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer, NSW

3.2 Senior Faculty Representatives

Professor Jill White, Dean

Dr Murray Fisher, Acting Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching), Director pre-registration programs

Ms Kylie Mayes, Faculty Manager

Dr Heather McKenzie, Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) currently on SSP leave

Associate Professor Donna Waters, Associate Dean (Research)

Professor Kate White, former Associate Dean (Research), currently Chair of Cancer Nursing (Cancer Institute of NSW)

The Review Team also met with a group of other academic and administrative staff.

3.3 Students

The Review Team met with two groups of students: nine pre-registration students: graduate-entry and combined degree students and eight research students (three doctoral, two master's and three undergraduate honours). Arrangements for telephone interviews with post-registration postgraduate coursework students ran into technical problems and their input was sought via email following the review day.

The Review Team acknowledges the need to be careful about generalising the views of a small group of students to the whole student body.

SECTION II: OUTCOMES

This section summarises the main findings and lists the commendations, affirmations and recommendations. It should be noted that, in addition, other favourable comments and suggestions for improvement are mentioned throughout the text of the Report. The Report draws on the information provided in the SER as well as discussion with staff and students. The Review Team acknowledges that the comments of staff and students during the Review visit may not be representative of the entire Faculty but point to issues which the Faculty might wish to explore.

In some places, text from the SER has been incorporated directly into the text of this Report.

(1) Introduction to Findings

The Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery is structured as a single entity. The Bachelor of Nursing (pre-registration) was phased out from the beginning of 2005 and since that time the Faculty has undergone significant restructuring. The Faculty now offers:

- pre-registration nursing education at the master's level, as either a Graduate-entry master's or in a four-year combined degree program
- post-registration Bachelor of Nursing for holders of diplomas in nursing
- a focussed range of post-registration postgraduate coursework courses; and
- research degrees (PhD and Master's).

The Review Visit provided evidence of a Faculty with a renewed sense of purpose and direction, positioned to make a solid contribution to the academic and intellectual life of the University.

The SER and discussions with staff and students during the Review visit brought out issues which are addressed further within this Report, as follows:

1. There is evidence that the culture of the restructured Faculty, with its focus on transparency of operations and collaboration in the delivery of high quality programs is helping to drive improvements in teaching and research. The Faculty is looking to the University for support to find its place within the academic organisational structure and sees significant synergies in a closer relationship with other health related faculties, particularly Medicine.
2. The development of strategic alliances and collaborative activities with other faculties in the University and industry is a key element in improving the research performance in the Faculty, providing possibilities for the Faculty to leverage off a staff base that has been small, and is a growing with strategic profiling in aligned areas of research.
3. The Faculty is able to demonstrate the value-add of its graduate-entry programs. This is important in establishing the competitive advantage of these programs.

A summary of Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations follows. Note that these are not prioritised by the Review Team. They are listed below in the order in which the relevant issues appear in the SER.

(2) Commendations

Areas where the Academic Board commends the practices of the Faculty are as follows:

1. The Academic Board commends the Faculty for the success it has achieved in the development of a purposeful collegial culture supportive of the Faculty's strategic goals.
2. The Academic Board commends the Faculty for the implementation of strategies, including the development of collaborative links within the University, nationally and internationally, that will assist in the development of its research profile.
3. The Academic Board commends the Faculty for its commitment to effective communication, particularly the monthly GOSSIP sessions, which are providing a strong focus for communication across both the staff and student bodies.
4. The Academic Board commends the Faculty's for its pro-active approach to the establishment and maintenance of relationships with key communities.
5. The Academic Board commends the Faculty for the creation of the role of Quality Advisor and the effective use of this position in driving quality improvement in the Faculty.
6. The Academic Board commends the Faculty for effective management of its student representative groups which provide a forum for students to raise issues regarding their academic programs and for those issues to be addressed.
7. The Academic Board commends the Faculty for the strategies it has in place to build effective relationships with research students.
8. The Academic Board commends the Faculty for the award of a prize in Occupational Health and Safety Week, underscoring the effectiveness of the Faculty's approach to OHS.
9. The Academic Board commends the Faculty for the mechanisms it has in place to ensure the academic quality of its courses and units of study, including the quality circle and unit of study mapping to ensure that student workload is evenly spread.

(3) Affirmations

Areas where the Academic Board affirms the Faculty's identification of the need for improvements to its practices are as follows:

1. The Academic Board affirms the Faculty's plans to strengthen strategies and processes that will assist in the building of relationships with combined degree students.
2. The Academic Board affirms the Faculty's plans to improve its engagement with alumni.
3. The Academic Board affirms the Faculty's intention to supplement the standard survey instruments with purpose-designed surveys in order to gain a clearer understanding of the sources of students concerns with teaching as reflected in SCEQ results.

(4) Recommendations

Areas where the Academic Board recommends improvements to the practices of the Faculty are as follows:

1. The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty actively promote the opportunities for students to learn about and participate in academic governance in the Faculty.
2. The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty ensure ongoing evaluation of the new postgraduate post-registration curriculum to ensure staffing sustainability and management of costs, in order to ensure continuity of the quality of program delivery.
3. The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty provide clearly articulated advice to pre-registration students on the range of career options available to them that would take advantage of the skills they acquire in the merging of the discipline of nursing with another academic discipline.
4. The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty explore the ways in which it can achieve opportunities for greater clinical engagement by academic staff.
5. The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty ensure that student concerns in relation to the structure of combined degrees are addressed, particularly in relation to clinical education and the joint teaching of combined degree and graduate-entry master's students.
6. The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty review assessment practices across the Faculty to ensure consistency and clarity of advice to students, in accordance with Academic Board policy.
7. The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty review the administration of clinical placements to ensure clarity and consistency in procedures for their organisation and management and effective communication with students on all aspects of their placements.
8. The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty make appropriate use of national and international benchmarking to evaluate the quality of its programs and the relative performance of its graduates.

SECTION III REPORT

(1) FACULTY PROFILE

Since the last Academic Board Review (Phase 2) in 2003, the Faculty underwent a significant restructure that resulted in its moving to becoming predominantly postgraduate with an increased emphasis on research. The Faculty has engaged in strategic repositioning and rebuilding aimed at ensuring it has a secure, sustainable and valued position in the University and is able to achieve its vision to be:

- the premier research-intensive nursing and midwifery faculty nationally;
- respected and highly regarded internationally; and
- the graduate-entry and post-registration nursing education provider of choice to the high-achieving student.

The Review Team noted that there has been a University-wide conversation about the future organisational arrangements for the Faculty. In the light of this, the Faculty recognizes the importance of administrative efficiencies and indicated to the Review Team that it looks forward to being co-located with the Faculty of Medicine in the new building as has been proposed. This observation resonated with the Review Team and provided a context in which it could see the Faculty's strengths and academic linkages within the University more completely.

A key focus of the Review was on the ways in which the academic quality of the Faculty's programs is developed and sustained through the processes underpinning the new directions and strategies of the Faculty, and the mechanisms the Faculty has in place to measure their effectiveness. It is recognised that the Faculty is still at an early stage of its new structure.

The SER indicates that the academic calibre of the Faculty's intake has improved with the development and growth of graduate-entry programs and the Faculty has increased its focus on research and the development of a research culture for students and staff.

1.1 Faculty environment

(a) Faculty culture

The restructure of the Faculty has been underpinned by cultural change as the Faculty focuses on reframing an understanding of the contribution of nursing as an academic discipline. The main emphasis in this report is on the discipline of nursing though the Review Team recognises the Faculty's plans to investigate opportunities to expand its teaching activities into midwifery once a solid research base in this discipline has been established (see Main academic activities below).

The SER advises that the Faculty's culture has become more inclusive, both internally with a stronger student focus, and externally with a greater industry and alumni focus. There are more formal structures for engagement with the student body and greater levels of engagement with the wider University community and other faculties of health. The Faculty is also improving and extending its engagement with industry stakeholders.

Comments made to the Review Team confirmed that the Faculty has been successful in developing a purposeful collegial culture under the leadership and guidance of the Dean. Staff agreed that the goals and objectives of the Faculty were clear and that there has been an upward trajectory. There is a positive culture in the Faculty with evidence of vision and clarity and a sense of engagement at all levels of staff and students. The issue of engagement with students through student representative groups is also addressed elsewhere in this report.

Commendation 1

The Academic Board commends the Faculty for the success it has achieved in the development of a purposeful collegial culture supportive of the Faculty's strategic goals.

(b) Faculty structure and governance

The Faculty is structured as a single entity focussing on the discipline of nursing at the pre-registration level and specialised sub-disciplines of nursing and the discipline of midwifery at postgraduate and research levels.

A Faculty Management Committee is responsible for the overall directions of the Faculty, supported by a number of committees. The Faculty's governance structure reflects the new management structure and active engagement across the Faculty and a new professional/general staff structure has been devised to support the academic structure.

The SER indicates that the Faculty is satisfied that the new governance and management structures are working well. The Review Team explored the extent to which staff and students agreed that this was the case, and the criteria the Faculty has established by which the success of its new structure can be measured. Staff indicated to the Review Team that they were satisfied that the new structure provided clear lines of responsibility for both academic and general staff and that management and governance processes were clearer.

Pre-registration students, who in many other respects were very well-informed, did not seem well-informed as to the role and identity of student representatives on governance committees and the Faculty may wish to ensure that they are given greater opportunity to learn about and participate in the academic governance of the Faculty. It was noted, however, that the student representatives on the Faculty Board, who would have been able to advise the Review Team on this issue, had not been able to meet with the Review Team.

Recommendation 1

The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty actively promote the opportunities for students to learn about and participate in academic governance in the Faculty.

(c) Main academic activities

The Faculty offers a Master of Nursing in four-year combined degrees with the faculties of Arts, Health Sciences and Arts, a Graduate-entry master's degree, coursework master's degrees, graduate diplomas and certificates and postgraduate research degrees. A post-registration Bachelor of Nursing is also offered for students who hold a diploma of nursing. The Faculty is building up research strengths in midwifery and consider the opportunities and sustainability of midwifery programs once those research strengths have been established. The focus of the Faculty is on positioning itself as a specialist provider of high quality programs.

Combined degree students

Combined degree students were enthusiastic about the opportunity to gain both a bachelor's and a master's degree in four years. They liked the fact that the program would give them two separate areas of expertise which would be helpful in the employment market both locally and internationally. (Issues relating to the management of combined degree programs are addressed in Section 7, Academic Process Management.)

Graduate-entry master's students

This group of students generally seem more assured and very satisfied with their decision to enrol in this Faculty. As with the combined degree students, they had considerable satisfaction in the knowledge that their qualification in Nursing would be at the Master's level and were confident that they were well respected for their knowledge and abilities.

Clinical education

The Faculty has given particular attention to clinical education in revising its curriculum for pre-registration students. It is working towards greater use of the University's five clinical schools and the opportunities for interprofessional learning in clinical placements, which will benefit the education of nurses. (Issues relating to the organisation and management of Clinical Placements are addressed in Section 7.1.3, Coursework Delivery.)

Postgraduate coursework

The Review Team was unfortunately not able to talk to postgraduate coursework students as planned and their views are not included here (*an email request was forwarded to students to submit any issues of concern to the Review Team, but no responses were received.*).

Concerns for the Review Team centred on the sustainability of effort in terms of staff academic skills and management of costs associated with teaching across a focussed range of areas. The Review Team was advised that the capacity and quality of postgraduate programs has been addressed with the new post-registration postgraduate curriculum from 2010. It is important that the Faculty ensure ongoing evaluation of the outcomes of those changes. It is noted that this will be a significant role for the recently appointed Quality Advisor.

Recommendation 2

The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty ensure ongoing evaluation of the new postgraduate post-registration curriculum to ensure staffing sustainability and management of costs, in order to ensure continuity of the quality of program delivery.

(d) Research

The Faculty is conscious of the need to enhance its research profile. The focus on curriculum development and implementation of the GEMs programs has impacted on the time available to staff to develop their research profiles. There has, however, been recent growth in research-active staff and research income and the Faculty is implementing a range of strategies to support research improvement. It has identified areas of research strength and is concentrating on the development of collaborative links within the University, nationally and internationally. This is addressed further in Section 7, Research and Research Training.

Commendation 2

The Academic Board commends the Faculty for the implementation of strategies, including the development of collaborative links within the University, nationally and internationally, that will assist in the development of its research profile.

(e) Engagement with stakeholders

Improvements in external engagements are integral to the achievement of the Faculty's strategic goals and the Faculty has indicated that its ability to use such engagements to respond to changes in the health sector has given it a leading position in some areas. This includes engagement with professional associations and government/health sector agencies.

In this and other statements made regarding the positioning of the Faculty, the Review Team was concerned that no supporting data had been provided. It was noted that the Faculty had recently completed a benchmarking exercise with G08 nursing faculties but the results had not yet been analysed. A recommendation concerning benchmarking is included in Section 7, Academic Process Management.

International Collaborations

The Review Team explored the benefits to the Faculty of its off-shore teaching programs and the extent to which those relationships could be used to develop collaborative research activity. The Review Team formed the view that those collaborations had positive outcomes for the Faculty in terms of both its international and research profile, including:

- the Bachelor of Nursing conversion program, available to international students through an agreement with the Singapore Institute of Management, has given the Faculty access to a potential pool of research students;
- the Faculty is also trying to foster research relationships with other off-shore partners;
- there are social responsibility goals in the Faculty's international activities including, for example, assistance with writing a new midwifery curriculum for Vietnam;
- there is a strong international market for research and post-registration programs with strength in this that other sections of the university can tap into.

While the International Nursing PhD Collaboration (INPhD) offers an opportunity for PhD students to engage in an international experience, active participation in international conferences provides similar opportunities and contributes significantly to the broader profession through knowledge transfer. In 2009, research students gave oral presentations at conferences in France, Singapore and Italy. In 2010, six research students have already had papers accepted for presentation at an international conference in USA.

1.2 Challenges and key changes affecting the Faculty's competitive position

The Faculty's competitive position is underpinned by the continuing development of high quality programs that will attract students of the highest-calibre and enhance the Faculty's reputation, and through the development of its research profile.

(a) Pre-registration courses

The Faculty's key differentiation from other schools of nursing is that its pre-registration courses are now at the master's level, following the phasing out of the pre-registration Bachelor of Nursing. The Faculty indicated that its focus is on high-level education for positions of leadership and social responsibility: its graduates will be recognised as having high-level academic training with an international focus.

The Review Team was particularly interested in exploring the value-add which the Faculty gave to its programs and how this was perceived by students. Students confirmed that they were attracted to the Faculty by both the reputation of the Faculty and the reputation of the University. Both graduate-entry and combined degree students believed that the award of a Master of Nursing as their primary professional qualification would give them a competitive edge. The curriculum ensures that graduates develop high levels of critical thinking and an insightful approach to their profession. The Review Team was advised that there is evidence both anecdotally and from a survey undertaken via a TIES grant that pre-registration Master of Nursing graduates from the University of Sydney are very motivated and highly sought after. It was anticipated that there will be a rapid career progression for these students. There was little objective information at this stage, however, on which the Faculty's claims regarding the quality of its graduates can be validated. See Recommendation 8.

In response to government Healthcare Reforms, the Review Team noted that the Faculty had commenced preliminary discussions for the possible introduction of a new Bachelor of Nursing (Primary Health Care). Curriculum would be developed and would facilitate the links between the primary health care program and nurses in practice. A factor in the planning is the possibility of a significant increase in undergraduate enrolments. It was also anticipated that there would be international opportunities in a BN Primary Health Care.

(b) Infrastructure and resources

The Faculty is concerned that the building into which its activities were consolidated following its downsizing in 2004 contributes to a difficulty in reaching excellence in teaching and research.

The Review Team had the opportunity to inspect the Faculty's facilities and formed a view that infrastructure was below expectations for the quality of courses the University expects the Faculty to deliver. The Faculty has been able to achieve some useful refurbishment in terms of laboratory teaching spaces and the co-location of staff. As mentioned above, the Faculty indicated to the Review Team that it looks forward to being co-located with the Faculty of Medicine in the new building as has been proposed.

(2) LEADERSHIP

2.1 How senior leaders lead

(a) Vision and values

The Faculty's vision is to be the premier research-intensive nursing and midwifery faculty nationally, respected and highly regarded internationally and to be the graduate-entry and post-registration nursing education provider of choice to the high-achieving student.

The SER indicates that the determination of the vision and values of the Faculty have not been a top-down process but rather one owned by all members of staff. Nevertheless, the substantive cultural change in the Faculty's leadership style and future directions has been difficult for a small number of staff to accept. Senior leaders work with all staff members to embed the values and goals the Faculty has agreed upon.

Comments made to the Review Team indicated that staff were satisfied that the Faculty had strong leadership and that its vision and values were integrated into all Faculty activities.

No evidence was provided that students had been given an opportunity to contribute to the determination of Faculty vision and values. This may relate to the issue raised earlier in this report that there could be more active promotion of opportunities for students to participate in academic governance in the Faculty.

(b) Communication

Mechanisms for communication include:

- Faculty and committee meetings
- Dean's all-staff emails
- Website/intranet
- monthly GOSSIP (**G**eneration of **S**cholarship in **P**ractice and something to **SIP**).

The Review Team formed the view that staff and students are satisfied that the communication flows in the Faculty generally work well and they are able to access the information they need. Both staff and students particularly commended the monthly GOSSIP sessions. It was noted that a TIES grant would evaluate the effectiveness of the GOSSIP sessions.

There was some evidence of difficulties in communication with pre-registration students, particularly combined degree students, for example in relation to organisational arrangements for professional placements which are addressed in Section 7, Academic Process Management.

Opportunities for input and feedback

The Faculty has instituted a number of mechanisms that help to provide an atmosphere of open communication between staff. These include the process for feedback on the Dean's leadership, a 360° peer review, and a 'Closing the Loop' day where staff were able to provide constructive feedback and cross-fertilisation of ideas regarding the pre-registration Master of Nursing programs.

Commendation 3

The Academic Board commends the Faculty for its commitment to effective communication, particularly the monthly GOSSIP sessions which are providing a strong focus for communication across both the staff and student bodies.

(c) **Measurement of leadership outcomes and Faculty performance**

The Faculty uses results from standard tertiary-sector and University instruments to guide its planning. This includes outcomes from the PREQ/SREQ/SCEQ/USE. Feedback is also obtained from meetings of student representatives. The ways in which the Faculty uses these findings are addressed elsewhere in this report (Student and Stakeholder Focus; Academic Process Management).

2.2 Social responsibilities

2.2.1 Ethical behaviour

The Faculty has a number of processes in place to encourage and ensure ethical behaviour including:

- Faculty Values Statement;
- promulgation of University policies and codes of conduct;
- dissemination of information to students on ethical behaviour including guidelines on plagiarism; and
- monitoring of student behaviour in clinical placements.

2.2.2 Support of key communities

The SER advises that Faculty contributions to key communities are generally undertaken on an individual basis, through the interaction of staff members with the profession and their involvement with a range of organisations. The Faculty's research output uses staff members' affiliations with key external organisations as one form of information dissemination.

The Review Team was not informed of the strategic goals that underpin these engagements, but drew the inference that they provide important avenues of communication between the Faculty and important stakeholders.

Commendation 4

The Academic Board commends the Faculty's for its pro-active approach to the establishment and maintenance of relationships with key communities.

(3) STRATEGIC PLANNING

3.1 Strategy development

3.1.1 Strategy development process

The Faculty has a four-year strategic plan covering the period 2008-2011. The major focus of the plan is on the rebuilding, development, integration of the Faculty. The SER advises that all members of staff had an opportunity to participate in the strategic planning process.

Comments made to the Review Team confirmed that staff felt a sense of engagement in the strategic planning process. It was not clear, however, that mechanisms were in place to give students a voice.

3.1.2 Strategic academic objectives

The Faculty's strategic academic objectives for Research, Learning and Teaching, Student Experience and Sustainability were noted.

Quality Advisor

The Faculty has created the role of Quality Advisor as one of a number of measures designed to help achieve its key strategic goals. The Quality Advisor is responsible for leading the development, implementation and evaluation of Faculty quality improvement in the areas of teaching, curriculum and student experience.

The Review Team explored the ways in which the Quality Advisor operated within the Faculty and support and authority given to this position. It was noted that the Faculty had stepped outside the discipline of nursing in making the current appointment, bringing in a person with skills and expertise in education delivery. It was clear that staff were satisfied that the Quality Advisor played a key role in driving quality improvement in the Faculty. The position reports to the Associate Dean Teaching and Learning and the appointee is a member of the Teaching and Learning Committee and relevant sub-committees. This ensures that recommendations from the Advisor have a clear pathway for consideration.

Commendation 5

The Academic Board commends the Faculty for the creation of the role of Quality Advisor and the effective use of this position in driving quality improvement in the Faculty.

3.2 Strategy deployment

3.2.1 Action plan development and implementation

The Faculty has developed action plans and these are being introduced across the Faculty. All staff members are regarded as owning particular sections of the action plans, for example through committee membership.

The Faculty has a range of methods for communication of action plans. The Review Team formed that view that the newly embraced ethos of the Faculty and the range of forums for discussion provide an environment in which staff are encouraged and supported in the achievement of the Faculty's goals.

3.2.2 Performance projections

Performance projections are achieved through a range of mechanisms, including analysis of past performance (where relevant), modelling of projections and conduct of surveys and focus groups.

(4) STUDENT AND STAKEHOLDER FOCUS

4.1 Student, stakeholder and market knowledge

(a) Student recruitment

The Faculty has distinct market segments in pre-registration and post-registration education.

Combined degree programs/graduate-entry master's (pre-registration)

Prospective pre-registration students are identified through a range of marketing activities. The Faculty is the only one in Australia offering a combined Bachelor/Master of Nursing program which has made it particularly attractive to high-achieving students.

Awareness of the career aspirations of students is of critical importance in the marketing of pre-registration programs to both school-leavers and graduates. The Review Team found that both groups were attracted by the reputation of the University and the Faculty and the fact that their qualification in nursing would be at master's level.

Combined degree students were pleased to be able to complete both a bachelor's and a master's degree in four years and this had been a driving factor in their decision to enrol at the University of Sydney. Enrolment in a combined degree enabled them to pursue studies in areas of both broad academic and professional interests. They felt that the combined degree would considerably broaden their career options and there were expectations that international careers would be available.

The Review Team explored with both staff and student groups the range of career options potentially available to graduates beyond the public health sector. It also explored the benefits of a combined degree combining nursing with another academic discipline and the possible niche professional areas that would take advantage of this. It is important that the Faculty ensure that the range of career options is adequately articulated to potential and current students.

Recommendation 3

The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty provide clearly articulated advice to pre-registration students on the range of career options available to them that would take advantage of the skills they acquire in the merging of the discipline of nursing with another academic discipline.

Research Students

Most of the research higher degree students in the Faculty are recruited through the undergraduate honours program or through the completion of honours in postgraduate coursework degrees. Research students indicated to the Review Team that their personal goals in undertaking research degrees were to contribute to the knowledge-base of nursing through a combination of academic and clinical skills.

(b) Obtaining and using student feedback

The SER advises that the Faculty has a strong student focus and has developed a good relationship with its students who have easy access to academic and administrative staff members. Comments made to the Review Team validated this claim.

Student representative groups

The Review Team noted that meetings with pre-registration student representative groups (SRGs) were initiated in 2008. These have a much broader, more engaged and focussed student participation than that of the former staff/student liaison committee. The groups meet at least three times a year and comprise representatives from the first-year and second-year pre-registration cohorts.

There was evidence that these meetings are working well and that they provide an effective mechanism for students to raise issues of concern and for those issues to be addressed. There is a clear process for consideration of issues raised at these meetings, which are attended by the Associate Dean Learning and Teaching. Students bring matters to those groups which are then reported to the Learning and Teaching Committee. They are given feedback on the outcomes of SRG discussions and curriculum changes have been made based on the feedback from those meetings. Students were satisfied that the Faculty had put more emphasis on improving the student experience through the provision of this forum for feedback.

The Review Team concluded that there is a clear process of closing the loop in relation to SRG meetings.

Commendation 6

The Academic Board commend the Faculty for effective management of its student representative groups which provide a forum for students to raise issues regarding their academic programs and for those issues to be addressed.

4.2. Student and stakeholder relationships and satisfaction

4.2.1 (a) Building relationships with students

Pre-registration students

Strategies to build relationships with students include:

- orientation program
- Faculty guide for students
- preparation program for graduate-entry master's students which all students are welcome to attend
- social activities.

The Review Team found specific differences between the ways in which graduate-entry master's and combined degree students experienced their relationships with the Faculty. Graduate-entry master's students generally seemed to be very comfortable with their relationships with the Faculty, but this was not always the case with combined degree students. Combined degree students may experience some sense of confusion in the early years of their degrees as they try to reconcile affiliations with their two separate faculties. This is a problem that is not confined to this Faculty.

The Faculty has become increasingly aware of the problems faced by these groups of students and has instituted a framework of advisors for each combined degree group, as well as a separate advisor for graduate-entry master's students. The Faculty also has a TIES grant with the Faculty of Health Sciences which is exploring the experiences of the combined degree students. It is hoped that this will enable the Faculty to move forward with strategies and resources to support combined degree students.

Affirmation 1

The Academic Board affirms the Faculty's plans to strengthen strategies and processes that will assist in the building of relationships with combined degree students.

Research students

Faculty mechanisms to support research students include an induction program, workshops and meetings and attendance at GOSSIP meetings. Research students indicated that they felt well supported by the Faculty. They were well-informed on Faculty policies and procedures, including processes for raising issues of concern. They were satisfied that the PRSS system provided the kinds of support required for their research. Students also praised the support provided by Research Week activities.

Commendation 7

The Academic Board commends the Faculty for the strategies it has in place to build relationships with research students.

Students from underprivileged/disadvantaged backgrounds

The Faculty's CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) program was designed to support graduate-entry Master of Nursing students and the Faculty is considering the implementation of this program for other courses. This program is being evaluated as part of a TIES Grant. Its success was recognised through the receipt of a 2009 ALTC Citation award.

The Review Team explored the other options open to the Faculty to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly with respect to support for indigenous students. It was noted that the Faculty had previously offered a Bachelor of Nursing in Indigenous Health. The Faculty remains committed to supporting indigenous students. It has an Indigenous Advisor and participates actively in NAIDOC week activities and the University's CADIGAL program offers support to indigenous students. Staff were concerned that the course requirements of the current pre-registration programs presents some difficulties in attracting indigenous students, who may find it difficult to be taken out of their cultures for the extended periods required by these programs.

(b) Alumni

The Review Team noted the Faculty's intentions to improve engagement with its alumni. The Review Team encourages the Faculty to utilise its engagement with its alumni to enhance the profile of the Faculty in the community.

Affirmation 2

The Academic Board affirms the Faculty's plans to improve its engagement with alumni.

4.2.2 Determining student and stakeholder satisfaction

Student satisfaction is measured primarily through the formal evaluation mechanisms of USE, CEQ and SCEQ and SREQ.

The Faculty acknowledges that undergraduate students are less satisfied with the performance of the Faculty than the University average, when measured through SCEQ scores. In the Faculty's view, this was directly related to the change-over from the Bachelor of Nursing to the combined degree/graduate-entry program. The Review Team noted, however, that the relatively low SCEQ scores predated the changes to the Faculty's programs.

Comments made to the Review Team indicated greater levels of student satisfaction than demonstrated through the formal evaluation mechanisms.

Research students reinforced the view put by the Faculty that low SREQ results related largely to the fact that most students were part-time, with research students indicating a considerable degree of satisfaction with their programs. The Faculty indicated that in its view, the SREQ measured the student's work climate rather than the faculty research climate and the focus of questions may be inappropriate for part-time students. Personal financial issues are of specific concern and the value of additional scholarships needs to be explored in this respect (see Section 7.2.2, Research training).

Overall, the Faculty has some concerns that standard survey results do not always provide the data that can inform actions in a timely and effective manner. As the new Faculty programs become more firmly embedded it is proposing to conduct its own surveys that may help to facilitate improvements.

Affirmation 3

The Academic Board affirms the Faculty's intention to supplement standard survey instruments with purpose-designed surveys in order to gain a clearer understanding of the sources of students concerns with teaching as reflected in SCEQ/SREQ results.

(5) MEASUREMENT, ANALYSIS AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

5.1 Selection and use of information and data

The Review Team noted the Faculty's summary of the data used to measure performance and support Faculty decision making.

5.2 Management of information and knowledge

The Faculty has a wide range of mechanisms in place to effectively manage organisational data, information and knowledge.

(6) WORKFORCE FOCUS

6.1 Workforce Engagement

6.1.1 Workforce enrichment

It is recognised that the Faculty is still in the early stages of its restructure and is continuing to develop and refine the mechanisms that will both enrich and engage its workforce. The successful implementation of the cultural changes inherent in the revised structure of the Faculty is key to the enrichment of the Faculty workforce.

A key focus of the Faculty's workforce enrichment strategy has been on recruitment campaigns targeted to address key competency areas and required skill mixes. All staff are expected to develop research capability and learning and teaching strengths. The Faculty has a range of strategies to develop and support new staff including staff induction days, attendance at ITL programs and mentoring for both teaching and research.

Concerns were expressed by the Faculty that there are obstacles to clinical engagement by Faculty staff, which impact on the enrichment of its workforce. Conjoint appointments that would enable staff to move between academia and health care, such as those used by the Faculty of Medicine, are not readily available. Greater clinical involvement would enable academics to educate students using specific case-based issues and provide greater clinical credibility.

Recommendation 4

The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty explore the ways in which it can achieve opportunities for greater clinical engagement by academic staff.

Workforce Planning

Work pattern planning in the Faculty aims for transparency in the teaching load and a common understanding of what the load is. The Faculty is developing work pattern guidelines in association with the new EBA. The Review Team did not explore workload issues during the Review Day.

The Faculty has some concerns that the workload associated with cross-Faculty supervision is not recognised by the University. The Review Team agreed that this should be addressed within the University's financial model.

The Faculty also places considerable emphasis on succession planning and knowledge transfer, including the documentation of processes and procedures.

6.1.2 Workforce and leader development

(a) **Performance Management and Development**

The SER advises that the restructured Faculty, with transparency in governance and management and effective mechanisms for communication with staff, provides for a culture of openness and collegiality that underpins high performance and motivation. Comments made to the Review Team confirmed that there are high levels of collegiality and trust in the restructured Faculty.

PM&D

The PM&D program is utilised for a review of staff plans and an explanation of how these plans are linked to the Faculty Strategic Plan.

Workforce and leader development

Strategies for workforce and leader development include:

- Mentoring
- Workshops on specific themes
- Financial assistance for conference travel and SSP support.

(b) Mentoring

The Faculty has an informal mentoring scheme to support new and early career staff and the Review Team formed the view that this operates effectively, particularly with respect to the development of research capability.

(c) Recognising and rewarding staff

The Faculty has a range of strategies to recognise staff achievements, including annual teaching excellence awards.

6.2 Workforce environment

The Review Team explored the mechanisms the Faculty has in place to provide a supportive workforce climate and ensure the engagement of its workforce in the delivery of quality outcomes in teaching and research.

A range of issues arising from the Faculty restructure have impacted on the workforce environment. The Faculty places considerable emphasis on its future direction and on the benefits of working in teams. There is evidence that the Faculty has been successful in achieving engagement by staff, who recognise that the Faculty is moving forward in a culture of transparency and collegiality.

All staff have been requested to provide statements of contemporary engagement. The Review Team noted that this was at an early stage but would be implemented during the coming years through the PM&D program.

The importance of Occupational Health and Safety issues in the Faculty was noted by the Review Team.

Commendation 8

The Academic Board commends the Faculty for the award of a prize in Occupational Health and Safety Week, underscoring the effectiveness of the Faculty's approach to OHS.

(7) ACADEMIC PROCESS MANAGEMENT

7.1.1 Core competencies /accreditation requirements

The Faculty's Strategic Plan reflects the core attributes and competencies required of graduates, with teaching programs linked to core research areas.

The accreditation process ensures that pre-registration courses are designed to meet the requirements of the Nurses and Midwives Board. The Review Team explored the impact and potential constraints of accreditation on curriculum. Staff indicated that accreditation does not place any constraints on the curriculum; rather it provides the foundation for the curriculum. The Faculty's pedagogic approach has been to ensure that competency requirements are met within a research-led teaching philosophy. The graduate-entry program enables learning and teaching to be conducted at a higher level of critical thinking.

A growing number of specialist organisations have, or are developing, competency statements that inform the curricula in the Faculty's specialist master's courses. As with pre-registration courses, the focus on research-led teaching and the level of critical analysis distinguishes the Faculty's courses.

Pre-registration students agreed that the Master of Nursing provided a level of education and training that was recognised as being at a high level of academic excellence. Students are satisfied that they are being well prepared for professional practice.

7.1.2 Coursework design

The Faculty has a range of mechanisms in place to ensure the quality of its programs. A quality framework for learning, teaching and the student experience is being developed. The quality of the Faculty's programs is underpinned by the quality circle process for unit of study development. The Review Team formed the view that this process work effectively across the Faculty and that there is a high level of staff involvement, including support from the Quality Advisor.

Commendation 9

The Academic Board commends the Faculty for the mechanisms it has in place to ensure the academic quality of its courses and units of study, including the quality circle process and unit of study mapping to ensure that student workload is evenly spread.

Combined degree students

There are indications that there are some challenges in the interface of the combined degree with the nursing components. Students indicated while that there had been considerable recent improvement in the management of their courses, they had ongoing concerns on a number of issues including:

- there was insufficient practical training – the balance between academic requirements and the need for a strong practical base can be very difficult for student nurses to manage when in the hospital environment;
- there was concern at the one year break between clinical placements – this disadvantaged students who did not gain from continuity in their clinical education;
- the Faculty did not appear to acknowledge that student learning needs in the combined and graduate-entry groups were very different from each other. Students came to the program with differing levels of prior knowledge and a diversity of backgrounds, which made it difficult to teach students within the same group.

The Review Team noted that the Faculty was aware of a number of these concerns and had responded through the appointment of advisors for each specific group of combined degree students, with a separate advisor for graduate-entry master's students. The Review Team suggests that the Faculty may wish to also investigate the extent to which there are inherent problems in the structure of combined degrees, including the issues raised by students.

Recommendation 5

The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty take steps to ensure that student concerns in relation to the structure of combined degrees are addressed, particularly in relation to clinical education and the joint teaching of combined degree and graduate-entry master's students.

Indigenous Health issues

Students indicated that they would appreciate more opportunity to be exposed to indigenous health issues through electives. Indigenous health is a major focus of the pre-registration program. There are common units of study in indigenous health and the faculty's interest in this area is obvious throughout the curriculum. Rural health placements are offered in indigenous communities. Students reported that they would like the opportunity to move beyond hospitals and work in community settings.

7.1.3 Coursework Delivery

Student satisfaction is measured through the formal evaluation mechanisms of USE, CEQ and SCEQ. This is addressed in Section 4, Student and Stakeholder Focus. The outcomes of those evaluations indicate ongoing concerns with aspects of coursework delivery of pre 2010 program. As noted above, the Faculty has concerns with the validity of the data collected through surveys and intends to conduct some of its own student and staff surveys using questions that are more Faculty-specific than those in many of the general instruments. It is important, nevertheless, that the Faculty continue to address those factors that impact directly on its CEQ and SCEQ scores.

Pre-registration students highlighted the following specific areas of concern to the Review Team:

Assessment Practices

Problems had been encountered across a number of units of study, indicating that assessment practices across the Faculty are inconsistent. These included lack of feedback on award of marks and grades; no advice on marking criteria; and no information as to which staff member had marked a specific paper.

Recommendation 6

The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty review assessment practices across the Faculty to ensure consistency and clarity of advice to students, in accordance with Academic Board policy.

Clinical Placements

The organisation and management of clinical placements was raised with the Review Team as a key concern for pre-registration students. The view was expressed that the Faculty did not attempt to take sufficient account of student needs, such as the most appropriate geographical location. Timetabling is also a concern, with some placements taking place at the same time as exams and the requirement that clinical placements be undertaken during the vacations, which means that students are unable to undertake paid employment during this time. Student would appreciate more support and understanding from the Faculty in the management of clinical placements.

The Review Team appreciates the constraints on the Faculty and the high degree of competition for places which affects the Faculty's ability to meet all student requirements. It is noted that the Faculty is building a closer Faculty of Medicine's clinical schools and that from 2011 all final-year, pre-registration Nursing and Midwifery students will have a 'clinical home' in one of the teaching hospitals. Nevertheless, the Review Team formed the view that the concerns raised by students should be addressed by the Faculty.

Recommendation 7

The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty review the administration of clinical placements to ensure clarity and consistency in procedures for their organisation and management, and effective communication with students on all aspects of their placements.

7.1.4 Benchmarking

The SER indicates that the Faculty has recently undertaken recent benchmarking with GO8, nursing faculties, the results of which were being awaited. This is likely to provide useful data for the Faculty, which has generally found benchmarking at national and international levels difficult because the range of its courses differs from other nursing faculties or schools.

The Review Team had some concerns that the Faculty has some reliance on anecdotal feedback to measure the quality of its graduates and in relation to other statements made in the SER regarding the positioning of the Faculty with respect to other institutions.

While acknowledging the complex nature of benchmarking, the achievement of the Faculty's aspirations needs to be measured against both national and international benchmarks. This may not always be possible on a whole of Faculty approach, but could be on a program basis.

Recommendation 8

The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty make appropriate use of both national and international benchmarking to evaluate the quality of its programs and the relative performance of its graduates.

7.2 Research and research training

A key focus of the Faculty's research is to provide an evidence-based research framework that will enhance the value of the nursing profession and its contribution to patient experience, health outcomes and the quality of care. The recent establishment of the Chair of Cancer Nursing, combining research and clinical roles, demonstrated the possibilities for the future contributions of Nursing to research and practice within a clinical setting.

See also Section 1.1 (d) above.

7.2.1 Core research competencies

Strategic planning has identified the following areas of Faculty clinical and research expertise:

- Chronic diseases and co-morbidities
- Maternal, perinatal and women's health
- Cancer and palliative care
- Mental health
- ICU trauma and emergency

The Faculty is mapping its research strengths to other area of the University and is working closely with key researchers other faculties. The Review Team formed the view that the Faculty's research expertise is able to be enhanced through the development of collaborative links with other faculties. The Faculty is also broadening its methodological expertise through new appointments such as the recent appointment of a biostatistician.

7.2.2 Development of research productivity and quality

The downsizing of the Faculty since 2004 is reflected in the decline of research income and productivity since that time, although there has been an upward trend in weighted research publications.

The Faculty has a range of mechanisms to encourage excellence in research and assist staff to achieve their research potential. These include:

- mentoring for new and early-career staff
- framework to support mid-career staff to develop research profiles
- development of research groups and networks
- administrative support through the Research Support Officer
- fostering of collaboration and communication within the Faculty through GOSSIP

- support for attendance at national and international conferences.

The Faculty recognises the need to improve its research productivity and increase external research funds needed to support research activity. It has commenced a number of initiatives with a view to achieving these goals, including increasing the numbers of research grant applications and the development of collaborative links within the Faculty and across the University. Mentoring and encouragement of collaborative applications, combining experienced and new researchers are important components of the strategy to improve success in research grant funding. The Faculty also utilises professional support from other cognate faculties to foster staff expertise and skills in the development of research grant proposals.

In discussion with staff, the Review Team noted that there was a positive culture for the development of research productivity within the Faculty. Examples were provided of collaborations across the Faculty and with other relevant areas of the University, with staff actively seeking and finding opportunities to work together.

The Review Team formed the view that the Faculty is now positioned to develop the productivity and quality of its research efforts. Recent changes and initiatives have been of a quality and nature that should enable the Faculty to achieve its research goals and ensure its place within a research-intensive University (see Commendation 2).

7.2.3 Research Training

The Faculty currently has 27 PhD and 6 Master's by research students.

Research (RHD) students are usually work focussed with family responsibilities and undertaking full time study with limited scholarship funding is not the same in other professions. Part-time candidature can affect the timely completion of quality research and impacts on the student experience, which, as mentioned earlier in this report, is reflected in some of the SREQ scores. The Faculty is investigating how it might provide better access to scholarships for its research students, but it is recognised that this is a difficult issue to resolve.

The Faculty has initiated a range of mechanisms aimed at improving the experiences of research students. These include:

- Research/Review Week
- Faculty induction day
- opportunities to attend and present at seminars
- skills workshops.

Research students indicated that these support mechanisms were working well. Communication channels were made clear and they felt part of an inclusive Faculty research culture. They indicated that the Faculty provided opportunities to engage with the Faculty as a whole, particularly through the GOSSIP sessions, and that the Faculty was a collaborative and collegial environment. There were many opportunities for them to present, through GOSSIP and Research/Review Week and support was available for presentation at local and international conferences.

There was evidence that the practical processes supporting RHD student candidatures, including advice on resolution of problems and the operation of the PRSS, are operating effectively in the Faculty. See also Commendation 7.

The Review Team acknowledges that there was very strong positive feedback from research students to all of the issues discussed with them during the Review Visit. This further underscores the Review Team's observation that the Faculty is now positioned to develop the productivity and quality of its research efforts.

Research Supervision

There was evidence that research students were satisfied with the quality of their supervision. Students enjoyed good relationships with their supervisors. It was noted, however, that while electronic communication with supervisors worked well, some students encounter difficulties in scheduling face-to-face meetings which, the Review Team agreed, have an intrinsic value for research students.

Research students indicated that they were happy with the support they received for the development of professional attributes, including methodological insights.