

ACADEMIC BOARD PHASE THREE REVIEW

REVIEW TEAM REPORT

Faculty of Health Sciences

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 are 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 15 May 2009 along with a number of supporting documents and relevant data. The Review Team met on 25 May 2009 to consider these materials.

The review visit took place on 1 June 2009. The key purpose of the visits was to enable the Review Team to assess the robustness and validity of the Faculty's judgements in the SER.

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 respond to the recommendations.

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 Ian Caterson, Director, Institute of Obesity, Nutrition and Exercise
Professor Bruce Murdoch, University of Queensland
Associate Professor Donna O'Connor, Faculty of Education and Social Work
Associate Professor Cameron Stewart, Faculty of Law
Professor Lesley White, Faculty of Pharmacy

3.2 Senior Faculty Staff

Professor Gwynnyth Llewellyn, Dean
Mr Sam Aquilina, Associate Director Finance
Mr Scott Avery, Executive Director
Dr Nicole Richardson, Operations Manager
Dr Steve Cumming, Associate Dean and Director, Learning & Teaching
Associate Professor Gerard Sullivan, Associate Dean and Director, Staff Development
Professor Kathy Refshauge, Associate Dean and Director, Research and Innovation

Associate Professor Martin Thompson, Pro-Dean

The Review Team also met with other groups of staff, including early career researchers.

3.3 Students

The Review Team met with four groups of students: eighteen undergraduate students; fifteen graduate-entry master's students; five postgraduate coursework students and ten research higher degree students (eight doctoral; two master's).

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 Self-Evaluation Report (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 Health Sciences is the largest health sciences faculty in Australia. It is located on the Cumberland Campus.

Following a recent restructure, the Faculty operates as a single-entity, multidisciplinary unit. It comprises:

- Ten disciplines:
 - Behavioural and Social Sciences in Health (formerly Behavioural and Community Health Sciences)
 - Exercise and Sport Science
 - Health Informatics
 - Medical Radiation Sciences
 - Occupational Therapy
 - Orthoptics
 - Physiotherapy
 - Rehabilitation Counselling
 - Speech Pathology
 - Indigenous Health Studies
- Six research groups and two research centres.

There are graduate programs in these disciplinary areas and in Health Education, Sexual Health, Development Disability and a University-wide Bachelor of Health Sciences program.

Teaching is organised around the ten discipline areas and research around the six faculty research groups.

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

1. The new Faculty management structure may have resulted in a perception of a loss of collegiality and inclusiveness. There could be opportunities for the Faculty to more actively encourage the engagement of staff and students in Faculty activities.
2. The strategies that the Faculty has implemented to improve its research productivity and develop a sound research culture are achieving success.
3. There are potential risks for the Faculty in the projected transition to a predominantly graduate-entry faculty.
4. Student feedback, including from the CEQ, is indicative of ongoing concerns with respect to teaching quality and a lack of engagement with the student community.
5. The Faculty should give more attention to benchmarking as a mechanism for validating the achievement of its aspirations.

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 implementing a major organisational restructure aimed at consolidating its leadership position in both research and teaching.
2. The Academic Board commends the Faculty for its engagement with the local community through its on-campus clinics in a range of allied health areas.
3. The Academic Board commends the Faculty for the mechanisms it has put in place to identify its student markets generally and for its knowledge of and support for programs for indigenous students through Yoorang Garang.
4. The Academic Board commends the Faculty for its approach to the management of data, including quarterly reporting against KPIs in the Balanced Scorecard, the employment of a Strategy and Policy Analyst and regular reviews and development of internal Knowledge Management systems.
5. The Academic Board commends the Faculty for the introduction of the *Staff Abroad Scheme* which supports staff to visit international institutions for short periods of time.
6. The Academic Board commends the Faculty for the development of a Student Research Mentorship Program to stimulate students' interests in research and for initiating a review of the Honours program.
7. The Academic Board commends the Faculty for its significant improvements in research productivity and looks forward to seeing a continuing upward trajectory as the Faculty moves closer to meeting the research expectations of a research-intensive university.

(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 proposals to refine the recently implemented restructure with the introduction of Deputy Dean positions to replace the Pro-Dean and additional Associate Dean positions.
2. The Academic Board affirms the Faculty's plans to significantly enhance the student learning experience through the implementation of the *Learning Revolution* project.
3. The Academic Board affirms the Faculty's plans to improve its engagement with alumni, including the Health Sciences Alumni awards.
4. The Academic Board affirms the Faculty's intention to develop a unit of study database in collaboration with the faculties of Engineering and Architecture, utilising the Engineering Unit of Study Management System as a platform.

(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 consider how a culture of collegiality and inclusiveness can be further encouraged in the new organisational structure. This might include:
 - promotion of the opportunities in the existing management and governance structure for all staff and students to become involved in Faculty activities;
 - development of strategies that will actively encourage staff and students to engage with the Faculty culture; and
 - ensuring that staff and students have clear pathways through which issues can be addressed and that they are made aware of those pathways.
2. The Academic Board recommends that the role of Discipline Heads in the new structure be further considered and clarified, particularly in respect of curriculum development and delivery and the mentoring of staff.
3. The Academic Board recommends that that the Faculty ensure that the academic risk factors inherent in:
 - the realignment of the student cohort to one which is predominantly graduate-entry; and
 - the provision of clinical training in a climate of increasing competition for places and growing requirements for payment by training providers;are adequately assessed through the development of a risk management plan and discussions with external stakeholders.
4. The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty develop strategies to ensure that its communication processes work well at all levels of staff and students. It is further recommended that the Faculty develop staff and student evaluation mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of these strategies.
5. The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty adopt a coordinated strategy for the establishment and management of links with external stakeholders.
6. The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty develop mechanisms to facilitate the continuing participation of staff and students in the development of its strategic objectives.
7. The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty consider how it can expand the Student Ambassador program to involve a greater number of students and foster a greater level of engagement with the Faculty across the student body.
8. The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty develop clearly articulated processes to improve student engagement with the Faculty. This may include:
 - a student representation system which allows students to contribute to planning and decision-making;
 - regular staff-student liaison committees at which academic as well as administrative issues can be raised; and
 - mechanisms for the Faculty to take student feedback into account in reviewing the organisation and delivery of course material and to report back to the student body on the outcomes of feedback.
9. The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty adopt a more formal approach to benchmarking to achieve clarity about its national and international comparators and feed this back into strategic planning.
10. The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty consider how it can
 - further develop interprofessional and interdisciplinary teaching;
 - work more closely with other cognate faculties in the University in the delivery of common units of study; and
 - include a greater focus on indigenous health in its professional preparation programs.

11. The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty implement mechanisms to
 - enhance the teaching skills and professionalism of all teaching staff, particularly discipline specialists;
 - provide a more formal system of staff mentoring, particularly for early career staff; and
 - ensure consistency of the quality of teaching across the Faculty.
12. The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty provide more opportunities and encouragement for RHD students to
 - engage in interdisciplinary activities; and
 - develop professional skills relevant to their future careers, including as academics.

SECTION III REPORT

(1) FACULTY PROFILE

A key goal of the recent Faculty restructure has been the consolidation of the Faculty's position as Australia's pre-eminent research and teaching institution in the health sciences. Central to this are targeted improvements in research productivity and a change in the student profile to an emphasis on graduate-entry to professional preparation programs.

Commendation 1

The Academic Board commends the Faculty for implementing a major organisational restructure aimed at consolidating its leadership position in both research and teaching.

A key focus of the Review was an exploration of the ways in which the revised structural model will enable the Faculty to achieve its strategic goals and ensure sustainability, and the mechanisms the Faculty has in place to measure its effectiveness.

1.1 Faculty Environment

(a) Faculty culture

A key challenge for the Faculty has been to create a Faculty culture in place of the previous school and profession-based cultures. In undertaking the restructure, there was acknowledgement that the academic integrity of disciplines was not necessarily dependent on their being located within individual schools and that a changed model might encourage a culture of interdisciplinary activity and collaboration in both teaching and research. Discipline identity is now contained within the teaching programs, with research being largely interdisciplinary. The Faculty has acknowledged that there has been some difficulty in achieving the cultural change needed to ensure the successful implementation of structural change.

The Review Team explored how far the Faculty had progressed in addressing this challenge and the mechanisms it had in place to measure the health of its work culture. The Faculty has adopted a number of strategies to ensure that staff have an opportunity to engage in the change management process and make the necessary cultural adaptations. The Review Team formed the view that while these strategies are having some impact, there is evidence that some students and staff are not yet engaged with or fully supportive of the interdisciplinary culture promoted by the new structure. It is noted, however, that the restructure is at an early stage and more time is needed to assess the success of the Faculty's strategies.

See **Recommendation 1** under (b) below.

(b) Faculty structure and governance

Key features of the new Faculty structure are:

- a Faculty Executive is responsible for the overall directions of the Faculty;
- Discipline Heads have an academic and professional leadership role, with an emphasis on external links rather than internal management.

The Faculty's governance structure has mechanisms through which staff and students can make a contribution to Faculty activities. The Review Team found, however, that staff and students were not always aware of the opportunities that might be available for them to develop greater involvement with the Faculty. As the new structure becomes more firmly embedded, the Faculty may wish to consider how it can further promote those opportunities and actively encourage engagement.

The Faculty is proposing some changes to the current structure, replacing the Pro-Dean with two Deputy Deans, adding an additional Associate Dean Learning and Teaching and an Associate Dean for International and External Relations.

Recommendation 1

The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty consider how a culture of collegiality and inclusiveness can be further encouraged in the new organisational structure. This might include:

- promotion of the opportunities in the existing management and governance structure for all staff and students to become involved in Faculty activities;
- development of strategies that will actively encourage staff and students to engage with the Faculty culture; and
- ensuring that staff and students have clear pathways through which issues can be addressed and that they are made aware of those pathways.

Affirmation 1

The Academic Board affirms the Faculty's proposals to refine the recently implemented restructure with the introduction of Deputy Dean positions to replace the Pro-Dean and additional Associate Dean positions.

Discipline Heads

The responsibilities of Discipline Heads as set out in the SER are to 'fulfil an academic and professional leadership role to ensure excellence in academic programs relevant to their discipline, high level mentoring for academic staff within their discipline and quality relationships with professional bodies'.

The Review Team formed the view that there was some ambiguity concerning the ways in which those responsibilities were able to be fulfilled under the new structure, particularly with respect to the lines of responsibility for coordinated alignment and quality delivery of curriculum in a discipline. Key points made to the Review Team concerning the role of Discipline Heads include:

- it is strategic and externally-focussed (accreditation; liaison with professional bodies);
- course co-ordinators are now responsible for degree programs;
- resources are provided through the relevant governance portfolio to the course co-ordinator, channelled through the Discipline Head;
- staff development needs are discussed with the Director of Staff Development - Discipline Heads have no management role;
- staff mentoring occurs in a variety of ways (PM&D; research convenors) - while Discipline Heads have an overview of all aspects of mentoring of an individual staff member, this is not seen as a formal role.

The Review Team was unable to see a process that would enable Discipline Heads to align curricula with the strategic needs of their discipline or discern clear lines for the division of responsibility between course coordinators and Discipline Heads. It was also felt by some staff that course coordinators at Level B require specific support to enable them both to develop their careers (in both teaching and research matters) and to discharge their responsibilities to their students.

The Review Team notes that there are differences between the responsibilities of Discipline Heads as set out in the SER and those set out in the Academic Governance document (Appendix V). The former may more accurately reflect the actual responsibilities of Discipline Heads but ambiguities remain, particularly in respect of curriculum development and delivery and responsibilities for academic staff within their discipline.

Reaching agreement and understanding as to the role and function of Discipline Heads in the new structure is an issue which requires further attention by the Faculty and this is addressed further in a number of places in this report.

Recommendation 2

The Academic Board recommends that the role of Discipline Heads in the new structure be further considered and clarified, particularly in respect of curriculum development and delivery and the mentoring of staff.

Students

The Review Team was concerned that there did not seem to be any reference to the ways in which students have been involved in discussions on and have responded to the new culture and structure. As mentioned elsewhere in this report, the Review Team has significant concerns as to the extent to which the Faculty has addressed the overall issue of student engagement.

(c) Main academic Activities

The Faculty offers undergraduate entry degrees, graduate-entry master's degrees, coursework master's degrees, graduate diplomas and certificates and postgraduate research degrees, across a wide range of discipline areas. The wide range of discipline areas continues to be strength for the Faculty while also presenting a significant burden in relation to staff workload.

Key issues for the Review Team centred on the levels of interdisciplinary and interprofessional learning and teaching in the Faculty and the extent to which there were opportunities for collaboration with cognate faculties in the University in the delivery of common units of study. The Review Team explored with staff and research students the growth of interdisciplinary relationships in the new structure.

The Review Team formed the view that the restructured Faculty is now well placed to improve the extent of its interdisciplinary and interprofessional learning and teaching, particularly with the implementation of its *Learning Revolution* project (see also **Recommendation 10**).

Affirmation 2

The Academic Board affirms the Faculty's plans to significantly enhance the student learning experience through the implementation of the *Learning Revolution* project.

(d) Engagement with stakeholders

The Review Team explored the mechanisms the Faculty has in place to judge the value of its relationships with external stakeholders.

Those relationships include external advisory committees for each discipline in the Faculty, links with key government agencies, agreements with clinical training providers, and relationships with accrediting bodies. These links facilitate professional input into academic programs and well as Faculty input to external policy.

See also Section 2.2.2.

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

Its position as the longest serving provider of allied health professionals in Australia has given the Faculty a competitive advantage in leadership in its degree programs. Students confirmed that they were attracted to the Faculty by its outstanding reputation, and, in some disciplines, this was the only University at which a particular program was available. The Faculty aims to maintain its leadership position in learning and teaching through the key strategic objectives of transforming the Faculty into a predominantly postgraduate faculty and improving the quality of the student learning experience.

(a) Reprofiting the student cohort

The Faculty has made a number of key strategic decisions aimed at consolidating and improving its competitive position, including the reprofiling of the student cohort from 70% undergraduate/30% postgraduate, to 30% undergraduate/70% postgraduate over the next five years. This will be largely achieved through an increasing emphasis on professional training through graduate-entry master's (GEM) programs, underpinned by a broad Bachelor of Health Sciences degree. The Faculty will continue to provide undergraduate programs in the high demand, high-end professions (Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech Pathology, Exercise and Sport Science and Diagnostic Radiography). The Bachelor of Health Sciences will be one major pathway program to GEM programs but there will also be a range of pathways from other degrees at the University of Sydney and other universities.

The Review Team explored the stimulus for this strategy, the levels of consultation with the professions and other stakeholders, the implications for teaching and the impact that this might have on the numbers of students proceeding to research degrees. The Dean indicated that the key driver for the GEM programs had been to differentiate the Faculty as a national and international leader in allied health training and education, with graduates who would be leaders in the health professions. The Faculty had commenced graduate professional training programs some years ago and the professions were comfortable with this strategy. GEM programs are currently the subject of an external analysis and survey of stakeholders to investigate the potential markets for these degrees.

The challenge for the Faculty was to ensure that demand for graduate-entry professional places increases while the undergraduate HECS load in the professional programs decreases. Specific attention had been given to the marketing of GEM programs and the Bachelor of Health Sciences. The successful marketing of the Bachelor of Health Sciences resulted in a 247% increase in applications in 2009. The Faculty is maintaining its overload load as it changes its profile from mainly undergraduate professional preparation programs to offering graduate entry programs in all its professional disciplines. The Faculty was confident that there would continue to be high demand for graduate-entry professional programs, as there has been for those already offered in the Faculty. There was evidence that graduates of those programs are highly employable.

Undergraduate students indicated to the Review Team that there would probably remain considerable interest in entering professional programs directly from high school and their preference had been for four-year professional training programs. GEM students, on the other hand, envisaged a growing demand for graduate-entry programs as more students chose to specialise at a later stage. As noted above, the Faculty would continue to offer undergraduate programs in high demand health professions. The Review Team emphasises the importance of discussions with external stakeholders (including students and employers) in the Faculty's assessment of the viability and implications of its graduate-entry strategy.

The Review Team explored the mechanisms the Faculty has in place to manage the potential risks in its strategy to move to a predominantly graduate-entry Faculty with regard to professional programs. It was noted that the changing of the profile to an emphasis on graduate-entry professional programs had been fiscally examined by the University and the Faculty and the University were comfortable with the outcomes of the modelling that had been undertaken.

The Review Team formed the view that the Faculty should develop a risk management plan in which all implications of its strategy are assessed.

(b) Clinical Training

Ensuring excellence in clinical training in a climate of increasing competition for places and requirements for payment from some providers are ongoing challenges for the Faculty. The challenge for the Faculty is to distinguish itself as a leader in the provision of appropriate clinical training.

It was noted that the management of clinical training is an Australia-wide issue. The National Health Workforce Taskforce recently established by COAG is considering possible models for the planning, management and allocation of clinical placements across all disciplines. Faculty staff have been active in the relevant policy debates and the Faculty is both resourceful and creative in its approach to clinical training.

Recommendation 3

The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty ensure that the academic risk factors inherent in:

- the realignment of the student cohort to one which is predominantly graduate-entry; and
 - the provision of clinical training in a climate of increasing competition for places and growing requirements for payment by training providers;
- are adequately assessed through the development of a risk management plan and discussions with external stakeholders.

(c) Research

A key challenge for the Faculty has been to improve research productivity in the Faculty. It has implemented a range of strategies aimed at improving its research profile, and there is evidence that research productivity has improved in recent years (see Section 7.2 Research).

(d) Infrastructure and Resources

The restructure of the Faculty has provided the opportunity to review and reallocate resources across the Faculty. There is evidence that staff are satisfied with the transparency of resource allocation and the levels of support provided by the Faculty to a range of administrative processes.

The Faculty has indicated that the provision of high quality teaching and research remains a challenge while it has the highest student/staff ratio of all health faculties in the University.

(e) Campus Location

The Faculty has identified its location on the Cumberland campus as impacting on both student satisfaction scores and research productivity. It is clear that this will not be resolved in the near future and the Review Team explored the mechanisms the Faculty has in place to manage this. Evidence was provided that there are good relationships with other faculties, with joint appointments (particularly in medical radiation sciences), inter-faculty research and other forms of collaboration. There was evidence of sharing of resources. For example, Orthoptics, which has a very small enrolment, is unable to maintain the currency of its equipment and is building links with Ophthalmology to try to obtain assistance.

(2) LEADERSHIP

2.1 How Senior Leaders Lead

2.1.1 Vision and values

Faculty leadership comes principally through the Executive which comprises the Dean; the Pro-Dean; Directors of Research and Innovation, Learning and Teaching, and Staff Development; the Executive Director; and the Associate Director, Finance. Key issues for the Review Team centred on the extent to which staff agree that (i) this leadership structure provides the most appropriate framework for advancing the Faculty's strategic objectives in learning and teaching and research; and (ii) the Faculty has a clear and shared mission and vision.

The Review Team understood the Faculty's need for a strong centralised management structure able to effect significant change efficiently while attempting to maximise to the whole academic community the benefits and opportunities of the revised structure. The challenge for the leadership team has been to align and engage all staff in the achievement of the Faculty's vision in an organisational environment very different from that which existed previously.

While there is evidence that staff feel the Faculty's vision is strong and consistent and that there is clear direction, there appears to be a perception that the revised structure has reduced the capacity for Faculty-wide involvement in the achievement of that vision.

The Review Team notes that the Faculty has a range of mechanisms within its organisational and governance structures which provide opportunities for staff to participate in Faculty activities and make their voice heard, and which would be able to foster a culture of collegiality and inclusiveness. The Review Team formed the view, however, that those mechanisms may not be as obvious as they should be to all staff. It is important that the leadership team actively encourage staff to become more involved in Faculty activities and ensure that the lines of communication that will facilitate this are well-known and well-used.

See **Recommendation 1**

2.1.2 Communication and Faculty Performance

In the new Faculty structure, communication is based around courses and programs rather than disciplines.

There is a range of mechanisms for communication with staff including:

- Daily FHS Bulletin
- Dean's Newsletter
- Faculty Intranet – Staff Central
- Quarterly Faculty meeting
- Faculty Forums
- Faculty-wide emails.

The information flow from portfolios is an important additional mechanism for communication.

The SER has acknowledged that there is some evidence that not all staff believe the communication mechanisms in the new structure are effective and it has been difficult to keep everyone informed during the current period of significant change. Comments from staff and students reinforced this statement. At the same time, issues were magnified by the early stage of the restructure. Some of the most significant concerns related to the issue of delegations and responsibility, about which there appears to remain considerable uncertainty.

The Review Team noted that the Faculty is undertaking a review of internal communications to facilitate the engagement of all staff with Faculty vision and values. It was not clear, however, how the Faculty is currently measuring, or intends to measure in the future the effectiveness of its communication strategies.

The Review Team was concerned that there was no reference to mechanisms for communication with students about the Faculty's structure and leadership. The Review Team noted that the students interviewed generally seemed unaware of the overall directions of the Faculty and its strategic objectives.

Recommendation 4

The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty develop more effective mechanisms to ensure that its communication processes work well at all levels of staff and students. It is further recommended that the Faculty develop evaluation mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of these strategies.

2.2 Social responsibilities

2.2.1 Ethical Behaviour and Corporate Social Responsibility

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

- promulgation of University policies and codes of conduct;
- advice to students on the ethical codes of practice of their professions;
- Faculty Student Grievance Policy and Procedures document in line with University procedures.

2.2.2 Support of Key Communities

Good relationships with the local community are maintained through the Faculty's clinics and services. Clinics provide clinical practice for students as well as community engagement. The Review Team noted comments that some of the impetus had been lost in relationships with the local community but did not follow this up on the Review Day.

Relationships with international communities are fostered through international fieldwork placements under the aegis of Operation International and similar programs.

The Review Team also noted that the Faculty has inter-institutional agreement with faculties in a number of universities in Asia, Europe and North America which involve exchange of information and, where appropriate, students, in a variety of educational development and research initiatives.

The Review Team was not informed of the strategic goals that underpin these engagements.

Commendation 2

The Academic Board commends the Faculty for its engagement with the local community through its on-campus clinics in a range of allied health areas.

Recommendation 5

The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty adopt a coordinated strategy for the establishment and management of links with external stakeholders.

(3) STRATEGIC PLANNING

3.1 Strategy development

3.1.1 Strategy development process and strategic academic objectives

The Faculty has a five-year strategic plan covering the period 2005-2010, completed prior to the restructure. Fine tuning of this plan has taken place pending the development of a new strategic plan. Faculty strategy is contained within a Statement of Intent, which is the basis of the Balanced Scorecard used for planning.

Strategy development has been undertaken through meetings with Discipline Heads, the professoriate, the Executive and Level C staff. Strategy development is driven by the Faculty's goal of becoming a predominantly graduate-entry faculty.

The process of strategy development in the Faculty appears to have been top-down and some staff reported on the lack of opportunity to voice their opinions. Furthermore, it was not clear that students had been or were to be given an opportunity to participate in the process. For example, undergraduate students did not appear to be aware of the Faculty's strategy to move to an emphasis on GEM programs. The Review Team agreed that the Faculty should find a mechanism to provide them with a greater level of involvement.

Recommendation 6

The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty develop mechanisms to facilitate the participation of staff and students in the development of its strategic objectives.

3.2 Strategy deployment

The SER indicates that the Faculty achieves strategy deployment through its leadership and governance structures, through course-coordinator and Discipline Heads meetings and via Staff Central. The Faculty has developed a Statement of Intent which provides staff with goals against which they can develop workplans. All staff are able to view workplans, the Balanced Scorecard and progress towards meeting Faculty goals on Staff Central. Tracking, measurement of outcomes and performance planning is achieved through the Balanced Scorecard.

The Review Team noted that the emphasis in deployment of strategy was very much from a management rather than an engagement perspective. The separation of teaching and research activities into Disciplines/Faculty Research Groups appears to have led to differing levels of engagement with the Faculty's overall strategy. There appears to be greater clarity and alignment of staff with the strategic goals of the Faculty within the Faculty Research Groups at this stage. The extent to which staff aligned all of their activities with the Faculty's strategic directives was not clear.

Performance projections

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

The *Learning Revolution* project, intended to significantly enhance teaching and learning in the Faculty, was launched in 2008 following feedback and discussion sessions to review the gap between the Faculty's performance on key learning and teaching benchmark indices and those of their national competitors. With respect to research performance, which has seen marked improvements in recent years, the Faculty is investigating mechanisms to provide more effective support for both early career staff and more experienced researchers. For example, early career staff and less experienced researchers are mentored to assist in the development of their research profiles.

(4) STUDENT AND STAKEHOLDER FOCUS

4.1 Student, stakeholder and market knowledge

Mechanisms for the measurement of market outcomes include surveys of students and employers; student recruitment data; outcomes in the Balanced Scorecard and feedback from the profession.

Prospective Students

(a) Undergraduate and graduate-entry professional preparation

Prospective students are identified through a range of marketing activities and links with professional bodies. The Faculty has a successful Student Ambassador Project, through which Student Ambassadors represent the Faculty at marketing events and are able to comment informally on the student experience (see 4.2.1 below).

The Faculty has given specific attention to those cohorts of students identified as strategically important to the Faculty, including prospective candidates for the Bachelor of Health Sciences and GEM programs.

(b) Postgraduate specialist degrees

Knowledge of markets for postgraduate specialist degrees has been largely driven in the past by individual disciplines. The Faculty is about to commence a postgraduate specialist degree review which will assist in the planning of enrolments in those degrees.

(c) Indigenous students

Indigenous students are identified in a number of ways and provided with a range of support mechanisms, particularly from the Yoorang Garang Indigenous Support Unit.

Commendation 3

The Academic Board commends the Faculty for the mechanisms it has put in place to identify its student markets generally and for its knowledge of and support for programs for indigenous students through Yoorang Garang.

(d) Research students

The Faculty recognises that more marketing needs to take place to attract research higher degree students.

The Faculty would like to see more of its honours students undertake research higher degrees and acknowledges that it has not always been successful at this in the past. It was noted that there is considerable pressure on allied health graduates to move directly into the workforce.

4.2. Student and stakeholder relationships and satisfaction

4.2.1 (a) Building relationships with students

The SER indicates that strategies to build relationships with students include:

- Prize nights
- Graduating reception for doctoral students, their families and supervisors
- Student Ambassador Program
- Student Central: this unit has been redesigned to improve the quality of service to students
- A wide range of programs to support students from low socio-economic/minority background and indigenous students.

The Faculty does not appear to have any mechanisms to measure the effectiveness of its strategies aimed at building relationships with students. There is reference on several occasions to anecdotal evidence, for example regarding Student Central, which was not validated by comments made by students to the Review Team. As indicated elsewhere in this report, and as reflected to some extent in the Faculty CEQ scores, students do not generally feel engaged in the life of the Faculty. The building of effective relationships with students would need to incorporate greater opportunities for their input through, for example, staff-student liaison committees and greater attention to the importance of feedback as mentioned below.

While the Review Team gained a favourable impression of the Student Ambassador Scheme, it is concerned that it is a very small program, with about 30 student ambassadors, from a total student population of over 5,000. Comments made to the Review Team indicated that not all students are aware of the existence of the Scheme. An expanded scheme of this kind might be a useful mechanism for the Faculty to involve a greater number of students in Faculty activities and foster a greater level of engagement across the student body.

Recommendation 7

The Review Team recommends that the Faculty consider how it can expand the Student Ambassador program to involve a greater number of students and foster a greater level of engagement with the Faculty across the student body.

(b) Alumni

The Review Team noted the Faculty's recent initiatives in developing relationships with its alumni. The Review Team appreciates the challenge for the Faculty in addressing the discipline-based loyalties of its alumni. It encourages the Faculty to leverage off this discipline focus and engage alumni from all disciplines, which will further enrich the interdisciplinary focus of the restructured Faculty.

Effective engagement with its alumni will bring a range of benefits to the Faculty, including avenues for obtaining feedback from past students on the quality of their academic programs and promotion of the Faculty in the community.

Affirmation 3

The Academic Board affirms the Faculty's plans to improve its engagement with alumni, including the Health Sciences Alumni awards.

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. It was noted, however, that student satisfaction as measured by USE was significantly better than that measured by SCEQ. The Faculty is investigating the reasons for these scores and it is hoped that the implementation of the *Learning Revolution* will see the commencement of an upward trend.

The Review Team found that some students did not feel that their educational experiences were at a level which they expected on entering University with little sense of challenge and exposure to new ideas in their academic and professional training. It is recognised that accreditation requirements dictate specific components of the curriculum. The challenge for the Faculty is to present what appears to be rote-learning in a way that will enable students to arrive at a deeper understanding of their discipline (see also Section 7 Academic Process Management).

There is evidence that students are not provided with sufficient opportunity to provide informal feedback on academic aspects of their courses through, for example, staff-student liaison committees, and are not advised of the outcomes of more formal feedback from previous years. The Review Team feels strongly that the Faculty needs to address this issue and implement mechanisms that will enable students to feel members of an academic learning community rather than students who are solely the recipients of learning material. It is noted that the Faculty has held a number of Student Forums in which all students were invited to participate in a facilitated conversation with the Faculty Executive. The outcomes of those forums appear to have been limited to aspects of campus life rather than academic issues that might concern students. As indicated earlier in this report, there is no evidence that students have a voice in relation to the discussions about the academic directions of the Faculty.

Recommendation 8

The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty develop clearly articulated mechanisms to improve student engagement with the Faculty. This would include:

- a student representation system which allows students to contribute to planning and decision-making;
- regular staff-student liaison committees at which academic as well as administrative issues can be raised;
- mechanisms for students to provide feedback on all aspects of their programs; and
- mechanisms for the Faculty to take student feedback into account in reviewing the organisation and delivery of course material and to report back to the student body on the outcomes of feedback.

(5) MEASUREMENT, ANALYSIS AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

5.1 Selection and use of information and data

The Faculty undertakes quarterly reporting against KPIs listed in the Balanced Scorecard. This information is used to provide links to the Faculty's strategic objectives. The Faculty is able to use data indicating the level of interest in graduate-entry master's courses and specialised master's degrees to inform its decision-making in growing and developing GEM programs.

The Faculty's Strategy and Policy Analyst is a key resource in ensuring the effective coordination and utilisation of data from multiple sources.

Commendation 4

The Academic Board commends the Faculty for its approach to the management of data, including quarterly reporting against KPIs in the Balanced Scorecard, the employment of a Strategy and Policy Analyst and regular reviews and development of internal Knowledge Management systems.

Analysis and review of performance

The Faculty regularly reviews performance. Sets of data, which are KPI driven, enable workplans to correlate back to Faculty activities. Of critical importance to the Faculty, KPIs have been developed to focus on goals for improving good teaching outcomes as measured by the SCEQ.

The extent to which the Faculty utilises benchmarking against national and international competitors to review performance is raised in a number of sections of the SER. The Faculty has stated that it is an area of primary focus but there was no benchmarking data provided within the SER to indicate the outcomes of the benchmarking exercises that have been undertaken to date¹.

Recommendation 9

The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty adopt a more formal approach to benchmarking in order to achieve clarity about its national and international comparators and feed this back into strategic planning.

5.2 Management of information and knowledge

Information and knowledge is managed through ongoing reviews which inform the strategic directions of the Faculty. The Faculty has developed a number of internal Knowledge Management systems including:

- *Ask Health Science*: an online student query tool with frequently asked questions on a range of issues.
- Staff Central: a staff intranet sharing news, events, policy and practice updates, and Faculty achievements.
- Workgroups: within Staff Central to assist with knowledge management and communications for research groups, committees and professional teams.
- Feedback on Faculty documents/ review reports is addressed through an on-line portal.
- KPI Management: Sharepoint technology is used via Staff Central to report on KPI data on the Faculty Balanced Scorecard.

¹ The Faculty has advised as follows in response to this comment: *Benchmarking FHS with other national and international organisations is quite difficult as there is no completely identical organisation available. This exercise has been undertaken a number of times, including recently with CEQ data from University of Queensland, La Trobe and University of Melbourne in selected disciplines. What is available are parts of organisations that could be compared to parts of FHS, but this is fraught with danger and any benchmarking exercise would need to carefully segregate relevant sections of both organisations. Nevertheless, it would be a good exercise and we should continue to attempt to benchmark with these known limitations.*

The Faculty is engaged in a collaborative project with the faculties of Architecture and Engineering to develop a comprehensive unit of study database which will address the information needs of student, academic and management users.

Affirmation 4

The Academic Board affirms the Faculty's intention to develop a unit of study database in collaboration with the faculties of Engineering and Architecture, utilising the Engineering Unit of Study Management System as a platform.

(6) WORKFORCE FOCUS

6.1 Workforce engagement

6.1.1 Workforce enrichment/engagement

Cultural changes inherent in the restructure of the Faculty, workload expectations and the impact of external changes such as budget reductions are the key factors affecting workforce enrichment and workforce engagement in the Faculty.

As indicated earlier in this report, 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. There appears to be a perception that the revised structure has reduced the capacity for Faculty-wide involvement in the achievement of the Faculty's vision. The Review Team found that the mechanisms to facilitate this involvement may not be as obvious as they should be to all staff. It is important that staff be actively encouraged to become more involved in Faculty activities and that the lines of communication that will enable this are well-known and well-used.

The Review Team was concerned that there may be academic quality implications arising from the problems of ensuring staff engagement. This issue is further addressed in Section 7 Academic Process Management.

Workload formula

Workforce engagement is facilitated through the application of the Faculty's workload formula for teaching and research. Staff appreciate the transparency of the formula, although it is agreed that it needs further refinement. There is some evidence that junior staff have heavier teaching loads and this impacts on their ability to develop their research profiles.

The Review Team noted that the management of teaching and research workloads is not coordinated, with research targets being established separately from the teaching formula. Staff reported a concern that there is no transparency in the workload for supervision of RHD students, with numbers of RHD students under supervision not factored into the teaching workload. The challenge is to bring it all together.

6.1.2 Workforce and leader development

(a) Performance management and development

PM&D

Performance Management and Development reviews are conducted by staff outside the staff member's discipline and the SER indicated that the Faculty believes the process works well. Nevertheless, some concerns were expressed that PM&D review would be more appropriately conducted within the reviewee's own discipline area. This is an issue the Faculty may wish to explore further.

Staff development

The Faculty has established a Staff Development Office, headed by an Associate Dean. This office manages SSP applications. To facilitate international links, the Faculty has introduced a *Staff Abroad Scheme* which supports staff to visit international institutions for short periods of time. Other staff development opportunities organised through the Staff Development office include a professional development day for course co-ordinators and other learning and teaching leaders planned for mid-2009 and leadership development courses.

Commendation 5

The Academic Board commends the Faculty for the introduction of the *Staff Abroad Scheme* which supports staff to visit international institutions for short periods of time.

(b) Workforce planning and recruitment

The Staff Development Office has responsibility for all recruitment, allowing for improved coordination and oversight of all recruitment activities.

The Faculty has provided flexibility in its academic recruitment by employing discipline specialists who, as expert practitioners, work with students in the development of professional practice skills. Appointments are contract-based for three years, and normally part-time.

The Review Team explored the role and function of discipline specialists and the extent to which they are mentored and trained by the Faculty. The Review Team explored the professional path of discipline specialists. It was noted that they generally had no research profile or expectations and returned to clinical practice following their appointment in the Faculty. However, the Review Team accepted the Faculty view that discipline specialists are engaged precisely because they are clinical experts and they are not required to have a research profile. They are employed to teach clinical skills, for example, muscle testing, which are more appropriately taught by clinicians rather than academics. They are employed on a part-time basis while working as highly experienced clinicians thus bringing up-to-date and relevant clinical knowledge into the classroom. Students have commented favourably on the involvement of clinical specialists in teaching clinical skills. However, the Review Team has broad concerns, not confined to this Faculty, that the growing use of discipline specialists may present a challenge in ensuring continuing quality in program delivery.

(c) Mentoring

Mentoring in the Faculty is conducted informally. PM&D is used for mentoring and research group convenors have responsibility for mentoring within their groups. Early career staff in particular saw their research group convenor as their prime mentor. Staff mentoring was still considered to be the responsibility of the Head of Discipline, but this was no longer seen to be a formal role. (See also **Recommendations 2 and 11**).

(d) Recognising and rewarding staff

The Faculty has a range of awards 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 capability of its workforce to deliver quality outcomes in teaching and research.

There are a number of issues arising from the Faculty restructure that impact on the workforce environment. Reference to these has also been made earlier in this report. The separation of reporting lines for teaching and research and the role of course co-ordinators in relation to Discipline Heads were identified as some of the key issues of concern to staff.

One of the key aims of the restructured Faculty has been breaking down of disciplinary silos and the encouragement of cross-disciplinary activities. There remain some concerns among some staff that the breakdown of emphasis on disciplines is not necessarily beneficial. This underlines the importance of developing the cultural changes required to ensure the effectiveness of the restructured Faculty, as addressed earlier in this report.

(7) ACADEMIC PROCESS MANAGEMENT

7.1.1 Core competencies

The University's generic attribute competencies are overlaid with the professional competencies required by accrediting bodies.

The quality and currency of the Faculty's courses is ensured through an ongoing cycle of reviews.

7.1.2 Coursework design

Accreditation

The accreditation process ensures that courses are designed to meet the requirements of the relevant professional body. The Review Team explored the impact and potential constraints of accreditation on curriculum. It was acknowledged that while there is some tension between the competency requirements of accreditation and academic excellence, there is a productive interaction with accrediting bodies. Discipline Heads have responsibility for driving the process for their own disciplines and they and other staff are on accrediting bodies. This enables the Faculty to take a leadership role.

The Review Team formed the view that the Faculty's mechanisms for the administration of accreditation requirements were operating effectively and noted that they had been streamlined following the restructure. There was acknowledgement of the good levels of support provided by the Faculty, although it was clear that some Discipline Heads would appreciate further increases in the level of such support for this complex and time-consuming process. It was hoped that national registration would standardise and improve the process.

Undergraduate students

Given the size and diversity of the Faculty, student experience in respect of coursework design and its impact on workload is inevitably variable.

Undergraduate students were generally satisfied with the design of their courses, although the Review Team was given examples of courses in which there was overlapping material between units and material perceived as being irrelevant. Key issues centred on the lack of engagement that students felt with curriculum issues and some sense of frustration that, although they could raise issues with course coordinators, this was unlikely to have any positive outcome.

GEM students

GEM students raised a number of issues of concern with the Review Team, including:

- students do not always feel they are being taught at Master's level (the Review Team emphasises the significance of this issue);
- courses are not intellectually stimulating;
- there are perceptions that the two-year programs are trying to cram in material equivalent to the four-year program, creating an excessively heavy workload - the Faculty may not be taking full advantage of the requirements for prior learning required for admission;
- some material is rushed through without sufficient time for information to be fully assimilated;
- insufficient thought seems to have been given to the organisation of programs – the lack of logical progression from one topic to another makes learning more difficult.

The Review Team felt that the Faculty may wish to explore these comments in considering the design of GEM programs.

The Review Team gained the impression that students feel disempowered in bringing forward any complaints and do not see any outcomes from their feedback in both the design and the delivery of their courses (see **Recommendation 8**).

The SER advises that the Faculty has a strong, student-centred focus, with a philosophy of interdisciplinary learning. The Review Team explored with students the extent to which they agreed with this statement and their own experiences of interdisciplinary learning. Students indicated that they have little exposure to interdisciplinary or interprofessional learning. They would also appreciate more opportunity to be exposed to indigenous health issues through electives.

Recommendation 10

The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty consider how it can

- further develop interprofessional and interdisciplinary teaching;
- work more closely with other cognate faculties in the University in the delivery of common units of study; and
- include a greater focus on indigenous health in its professional preparation programs.

Postgraduate coursework

Postgraduate Coursework advanced learning students appear to be generally very satisfied with the design of their courses.

7.1.3 Coursework delivery

The SER advises that the overall quality of academic programs is the responsibility of teaching teams which include unit, year and course co-ordinators. The SER did not make clear how frequently these teams meet and whether clear and effective guidelines are in place through which any member of staff would be able to raise issues of concern with teaching teams, or how issues raised by students are taken into account in the evaluation of courses.

Students raised concerns with the Review Team which may guide the Faculty as it considers the academic quality issues that impact on its relatively low ratings in student satisfaction surveys, including:

- the considerable variability in the quality of teaching in the Faculty. Students were particularly concerned that there were communication difficulties in the delivery of material from teachers from non-English-speaking backgrounds. The Review Team realises that this is being addressed by the *Learning Revolution* but is concerned that the SER does not acknowledge that this is a problem for the Faculty;
- the importance of the Faculty developing improved mechanisms for consultation with students on academic aspects of their work. It is of concern that students do not appear to have the opportunity to provide informal feedback and are not informed of the outcomes of feedback by previous cohorts. The SER refers to 'staff perception' of how students feel about their learning experiences, but provided no information on the mechanisms for direct measurement that could validate that perception. (See **Recommendation 8**)

Issues regarding the quality of teaching were raised by undergraduate, GEM and postgraduate coursework advanced learning students. The Review Team notes that the *Learning Revolution* includes a series of seminars for staff on how to enhance their delivery.

On a more positive note, students are generally satisfied that they are being well prepared for professional practice.

Recommendation 11

The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty implement mechanisms to

- enhance the teaching skills and professionalism of all teaching staff, particularly discipline specialists;
- provide a more formal system of staff mentoring, particularly for early career staff; and
- ensure consistency of the quality of teaching across the Faculty.

Benchmarking

While acknowledging the complex nature of benchmarking, the Review Team formed the view that the Faculty could make better use of national and international benchmarking data to drive improvements in teaching and to validate its claim to be Australia's pre-eminent research and teaching institution in the health sciences. It is noted that some benchmarking has been undertaken on a discipline by discipline basis.

Honours

The Faculty has acknowledged that there are challenges in the management of its honours programs, which include both appended and integrated models. Articulation from pass to honours programs has historically been low in the Faculty, which impacts on the Faculty's ability to recruit RHD students from its own graduate cohort. Graduates of the Faculty have good employment opportunities and are keen to enter professional practice on the completion of their degree, particularly those who have completed GEMs.

The Review Team noted that the Faculty is undertaking a review of Honours in the Faculty with the aim of streamlining the management and structure of Honours. The Faculty has also developed a Student Research Mentorship Program to stimulate students' interests in research.

Commendation 6

The Academic Board commends the Faculty for the development of a Student Research Mentorship Program to stimulate students' interests in research and for initiating a review of the Honours program.

7.2 Research and research training

7.2.1 Research

The Faculty has implemented a range of strategies aimed at improving its research profile and there is evidence that research productivity has improved in recent years.

(a) Structure of research and innovation

The Faculty restructure has been effective in breaking down disciplinary silos in research. Research active staff belong to one of the following six Faculty Research Groups (FRGs)

- Ageing, Work and Health
- Disability and Community
- Clinical and Rehabilitation Sciences
- Exercise, Health and Performance
- Medical Imaging and Radiation Statistics
- Health Informatics and Statistics

and the Australian Stuttering Research Centre. The FRGs cross all Faculty disciplines and each is led by a research convenor.

The Review Team formed the view that this structure facilitates research and encourages research productivity. Early career staff benefit from being members of interdisciplinary teams. The structure has also provided for levels of administrative support to staff for their research activity. The development of FRGs has also led to a greater integration of research with the Camperdown campus and the Faculty has been successful in improving links between clinical and basic research. The Faculty is encouraged to build on this to further improve these links.

Nevertheless, the Faculty has identified some inconsistencies in the depth of research leadership across all FRGs. The Review Team considered that the mapping of research across groups was not always obvious and did not form a clear view as to how the Faculty managed this. It was also not apparent how much multidisciplinary research was actually taking place.

(b) Encouraging excellence in research

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

- seed funding for early career researchers
- support for development of grant applications through mentors
- mock interviews for fellowship applications
- mentoring activities for students and staff
- more targeted infrastructure for research
- support for early career staff through Early Career Excellence in Research award.

The Review Team agrees with the Faculty's view that that the processes and strategies employed by the Faculty to drive research performance are working well.

The Review Team was pleased to note the upward trajectory achieved by the Faculty in respect of research income, which had grown by 37% from 2007 to 2008. The Faculty still has some distance to cover in meeting the research expectations of a research-intensive university but the Review Team agreed that the structures and strategies now in place would provide a solid basis for achieving this.

Commendation 7

The Academic Board commends the Faculty for its significant improvements in research productivity and looks forward to seeing a continuing upward trajectory as the Faculty moves closer to meeting the research expectations of a research-intensive university.

(c) Transfer of benefits

The Faculty has a good record in respect of the transfer of the benefits of its research to the community. It was not, however, clear to the Review Team that the Faculty had mechanisms in place to measure the impacts of the activities mentioned, or the extent to which the outcomes of Faculty research were taken up by the professional communities concerned.

(d) Evaluation of research productivity and quality

The Faculty has recently undergone an external formal review of the Research and Innovation portfolio.

7.2.2 Research training

Research higher degree enrolments have increased from 143 in 2007 to 184 in 2008 (1st semester only), with an increasing number supported by scholarships. While the Faculty is anticipating continuing growth in RHD numbers, it was noted that this growth may be restricted in some Faculty Research Groups because of lack of supervisor capacity. The majority of RHD students are enrolled in the areas of Disability and Community and Clinical and Rehabilitation Sciences.

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

- Faculty induction day
- opportunities to attend and present at seminars
- skills workshops.

The Review Team explored the extent to which RHD students felt part of a vibrant Faculty research culture and the benefits which came from their location within interdisciplinary research groups, rather than schools, as had been the case in the previous Faculty structure. The Review Team found that RHD students continue to have a discipline-specific focus and the benefits of belonging to a multidisciplinary team were not obvious at present. There appeared to be few opportunities for them to engage with the Faculty as a whole and they worked within small groups of people with similar interests. The SER has indicated that seminars are held at the research-group level for most FRGs, skills workshops are run for students at all stages of their research degrees, and research students are

invited to Faculty seminars. There may be limited take-up of these opportunities and it would be appropriate for the Faculty to consider how it can promote cross-Faculty collegiality among RHD students.

Other issues of concern to RHD students include:

- they would like to have more opportunity to develop skills relevant to their future careers, including as academics, for example through participation in the development of research grant proposals;
- resource issues relating to consumables and access to equipment;
- uncertainty regarding management lines of responsibility when problems arose.

Recommendation 12

The Academic Board recommends that the Faculty provide more opportunities for RHD students to

- engage in cross-Faculty and interdisciplinary activities; and
- develop professional skills relevant to their future careers, including as academics.

Research supervision

The Review Team noted that the Faculty had increased its emphasis on the mentoring and training of supervisors. There was evidence that RHD students were generally satisfied with the quality of their supervision. There are, however, indications that relationships between students and supervisors are not as close as they might be, with some staff preferring email and telephone rather than face-to-face contact. This may reflect workload issues for staff, since, as indicated above, research supervision is not factored into the workload formula. It is noted that this has not impacted on completion rates, which are above the University average, but may point to continuing disengagement by some staff.