

**FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE**

**ACADEMIC BOARD VISIT TO REVIEW  
TEACHING, LEARNING AND  
RESEARCH TRAINING**

**WEDNESDAY 23 OCTOBER 2002**

**FINAL REPORT AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The following Academic Board Review Team visited the Faculty of Architecture on Wednesday 23 October 2002 as part of the review and evaluation of teaching, learning and research training in all faculties within the University.

## Chair

Professor Judyth Sachs                      *Chair, Academic Board Chair*

## Team members

Dr David Airey                                *Department of Civil Engineering*

Professor Ann Brewer                      *Assistant Pro-Vice-Chancellor*

Professor Peter McCallum                 *Sydney Conservatorium of Music*

Professor Paul Ramsden                  *Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning)*

## Review Team Secretary

Elizabeth Hanna                             *Executive Officer (Quality Assurance)*

## Observers

Dr Graham Hendry                         *Faculty of Medicine*

Dr Robyn Gibson                          *Faculty of Education*

1.2 During the visit the Team interviewed the following groups of staff and students:

- The Acting Dean, Associate Professor Peter Phibbs
- The Acting Dean and Senior Faculty staff:
  - Dr Simon Hayman                      Associate Dean (Research)
  - Professor Tom Heneghan             Professor of Architecture
  - Assoc Prof Warren Julian           Associate Dean (Postgraduate)
  - Dr Harry Margalit                     Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning)
  - Dr Michael Rosenman                (Design Computing)
  - Kristine Sodersten                     Associate Dean (Undergraduate Studies)
- Undergraduate students
- Postgraduate coursework students
- Postgraduate research students
- Faculty academic staff
- One member of staff participated in the open session available to staff and students

1.3 The documentation provided by the Faculty on its teaching, learning and research training activities to the Review Team prior to the visit is listed in Appendix 1.

1.4 The Report provides a record of the Review Team's findings in relation to the teaching and learning and research training activities of the Faculty, based on the documentation considered and discussions with Faculty staff and students. The Report addresses the Team's deliberations under eight main headings:

- Background, Achievements and Hallmarks of the Faculty
- Implementation of Academic Board Policies and Guidelines
- Graduate attributes, aims and outcomes
- Teaching and Learning
- Research-led Teaching
- Research Training
- Quality Assurance Processes
- Student Progression
- Faculty Administration

The *Areas of good practice* and *Areas for consideration for improvement* identified by the Review Team are provided in the Conclusions in section 11. The conclusions are cross-referenced with the full text of the report.

## **2. BACKGROUND, ACHIEVEMENTS AND HALLMARKS OF THE FACULTY**

- 2.1 The Faculty was restructured in 2001 from four departments to a non-departmental one-school model. The Faculty now comprises a single school, the School of Architecture, Design Science and Planning, within which sit four disciplinary groups: Architecture and Allied Arts; Architectural Science; Design Computing & Cognition; and Urban and Regional Planning and Policy. The Review Team was advised by the Faculty that the key motivating idea behind the restructuring had been a belief that, in view of the changing face of professional practice, the divisions into the old departments had become outdated and contributed to the segregation of fields of study in a way that no longer was relevant to the industry. The new structure is considered to facilitate a more integrated and multidisciplinary approach to Architecture and its related disciplines. Staff were, on the whole, very positive about the restructuring and considered that it had given the Faculty a new breath of life.
- 2.2 The Faculty consulted closely with the profession in the restructuring process and considered that the new structure had the strong support of the profession. Individual members of staff noted that the way the Faculty was perceived by the profession now seemed to be much more positive than it had been before the restructuring.
- 2.3 One of the benefits of the restructuring has been that research activity and research student numbers have become more evenly distributed across the Faculty's four disciplinary groups. This contrasts with a polarisation of research activity within certain departments under the previous structure.
- 2.4 There has recently been a number of new appointments to the Faculty, following significant staff losses four or five years ago. This was thought to have contributed to the overall sense of energy, enthusiasm and optimism which the Team detected among both staff and students.
- 2.5 The restructuring, however, has not been without its drawbacks. One of these has been that under the previous departmental structure, some of the more technical areas were funded at a higher level. Under the new structure, all areas are resourced under the same, lower level, funding allocation.
- 2.6 The Faculty's communication mechanisms have not yet become fully effective under the new structure, in the view of some staff members. There is now no equivalent of the old Departmental meetings. They voiced concern that the dissolution of the old Departments had resulted in a reduction in student contact. However, the Faculty indicated its awareness of these issues and its commitment to improvement.
- 2.7 The Faculty offers a range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses. There are three undergraduate programs: the Bachelor of Design (Architecture) (a new program introduced in 2001 to replace the BSc Architecture from 2001); Bachelor of Design Computing (new, introduced in 2001); and the Bachelor of Architecture, a two-year professional program which for most students follows on from the Bachelor of Design (Architecture). The three plus two structure for the professional program in Architecture provides students with the flexibility to change direction after the three year degree. In the past professional training has taken six years of study in the Faculty, with a three plus three structure. The reduction to five years is in keeping with trends elsewhere.
- 2.8 The Review Team received very positive feedback from students on the new programs: the Bachelor of Design (Architecture); and Bachelor of Design Computing. Students commented positively on their overall experience of the programs. Particular points drawn attention to in relation to the new programs and other Faculty programs included: the value of being exposed to

the latest research and cutting edge developments in their area; the responsiveness of staff to student feedback, which staff sought out, responded to, and reported back on; the quality of studio experience; the quality of student feedback, particularly in studio work; the exposure to the latest developments in professional practice through the tutorial system and visiting speakers; and the exciting and stimulating dynamic that currently exists in the Faculty. The Review Team commended the Faculty on the success of these new programs and on the positive views expressed by students.

- 2.9 There is a broad range of postgraduate programs including the following areas: Audio Design; Building; Design Computing; Digital Media; Sustainable Design; Facilities Management; Film and Digital Video; Heritage Conservation; Illumination Design; Urban Design; and Urban and Regional Planning.
- 2.10 The Team was advised by the Faculty that, since 1998, the student load in the Faculty has increased by 50%. This has had a major impact on the Faculty as the staff numbers have not increased proportionately. Finding ways to minimise the impact of this change in the staff:student ratio on both the staff and student experience is seen by the Faculty as one of the key challenges it currently faces. The Team was advised that the staff is certainly feeling the strain, with increased stress levels and illness. There was now less time to provide extra support for students at the ends of the spectrum, ie those who are very talented, and those who are experiencing difficulties. It was felt by some staff that the quality of life in the Faculty had decreased noticeably, for example, staff no longer had time for interaction in the staff room and collegiality generally had diminished. Also, the social life of the Faculty had suffered, for example there used to be a student Review and a Faculty newspaper. Some staff members voiced concern that the SSR situation had already resulted in compromises in the amount of teaching and content in the new programs.
- 2.11 Senior staff acknowledged that the issue of workload and potential staff burn-out is a real concern for the Faculty's management. Work is currently underway on developing workload models and other strategies to address the problem. The Review Team welcomed this advice.
- 2.12 Throughout its discussions with staff, the Team heard many negative comments regarding the Faculty's accommodation. The Faculty has a five-stage master plan for the refurbishment of the Wilkinson Building. Stage 1, involving the expansion and refurbishment of the BDesign (Architecture) design studios for first, second and third year students, has been completed and students and staff appear to be happy with the results. However, stages 2 – 5 are currently in question under the University's Capital Development Plan and the Faculty is concerned that the works may be postponed or not approved.
- 2.13 Stages 2 – 5 make provision for: expanding studio space for BArchitecture students (Yrs 4 and 5); relocation of ceramics studio; creation of new design computing studios, digital media lab and general access computing lab for the BDesign Computing degree, digital media graduate program and undergraduate general access to computing; relocation of the audio visual centre and creation of new staff offices; relocation of Student Services Centre; creation of new Faculty hub on Level 2; and the creation of new research student open-plan workspaces and new staff offices on Level 5.

*See Commendations 1, 2 and 3 and Recommendations 1 and 2 on pages 15 and 16.*

### **3. IMPLEMENTATION OF ACADEMIC BOARD POLICIES AND GUIDELINES**

- 3.1 The Academic Board has a variety of policies and guidelines that faculties are required to promulgate and implement. The Review Team was interested in ascertaining how effectively the Faculty communicated information about policies and guidelines to staff and students. It was particularly interested in the Academic Honesty policy, the Intellectual Property rule and communication to students of improvements in courses relating to student evaluations.

- 3.2 Discussions with students revealed varied awareness of University policy. In many cases, students were aware of the issues surrounding the policies on academic honesty and intellectual property, but were not familiar with the actual policies themselves and did not know where to find them. Postgraduate coursework students had received the Postgraduate Studies Handbook and postgraduate research students had received the Postgraduate Research Studies Handbook. Generally, students seemed to be aware of changes that had been made to their programs as a result of student feedback.
- 3.3 While staff appeared to be familiar with key University policies, the Review Team formed the view that the communication of policy throughout the Faculty to staff and students was not working as effectively as it might.

*See Recommendation 3 on page 16.*

## **4. GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES, AIMS AND OUTCOMES**

- 4.1. The Team was advised that the Faculty has changed dramatically in recent years in terms of the management of units of study and their objectives and assessment, with Year Co-ordinators playing a critical role. All new units of study must be approved via the Board of Undergraduate or Graduate Studies Committee. The relevant Committee will ensure that unit objectives and graduate outcomes are clearly articulated and coherent, and that graduate outcomes link appropriately to the University's stated Generic Attributes of Graduates. At the level of delivery, Year Co-ordinators and/or Unit Co-ordinators hold regular meetings with Tutors to ensure clarity about the objectives for each session. The assessment process includes parity sessions where staff meet to discuss parity of assessment across the Faculty and the relation between objectives, graduate attributes and assessment. Recently there has been greater agreement between staff on gradings and it is felt that there is a better understanding among lecturers and tutors of unit objectives and assessment criteria. A further strategy is the standardised use of an assessment sheet that requires the stipulation of criteria of assessment linked to the unit objectives. Staff members have noticed a marked decrease in the number of student appeals against assessment results in recent years.
- 4.2 Discussions with students revealed varying levels of awareness of the generic attributes developed by their studies. Some undergraduate students expressed the view that generic skills such as analytic, problem solving and communication skills were all built into the curriculum, but that it would have been helpful if their inclusion in the learning process could have been made more explicit. Other students considered that graduate attributes were fully integrated and that there was no need to draw specific attention to them. Design Computing students expressed the view that there was a less integrated approach to skills in their discipline and that outcomes and attributes were not as clearly articulated as they are in Architecture units of study.
- 4.3 Postgraduate coursework students indicated awareness that graduate attributes such as presentation and problem solving skills were integrated into their programs. However, one student expressed the desire for more opportunities to develop team working skills.
- 4.4 The Review Team had no concerns regarding the appropriateness of the Faculty's approach to graduate attributes. However, it considered that it would be helpful to students if they were made more explicitly aware of how and where their programs develop graduate attributes. (see Recommendation 4)

*See Recommendation 4 on page 16.*

## 5. TEACHING AND LEARNING

### *Fostering innovation and good practice in the Faculty*

- 5.1 The Faculty had identified in its Teaching and Learning Plan an area of weakness in that the Faculty has been slow to implement recent advances in teaching and learning. Developing a more co-ordinated approach to Teaching and Learning across the Faculty is a current priority. This will include improving the effectiveness of the Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee in providing a stronger leadership role in relation to teaching and learning matters. One area that has been identified for consideration is improving overall co-ordination of student evaluation questionnaires for units of study and ensuring that questionnaire fatigue does not become an issue.
- 5.2 A further area for improvement identified by the Faculty in the documentation presented to the Review Team was the need to foster greater involvement of staff, including those of longer standing, in Faculty dialogue on the latest developments in the theory and practice of university teaching (see Self-evaluation Report, s 2 (b)).

### *Student views of teaching and learning in the Faculty*

- 5.3 Student feedback on their teaching and learning experience in the Faculty was on the whole very positive. Both undergraduate and postgraduate students commended the excellence of the teaching in some areas. Lecturers and tutors were often inspirational and there were many comments about their being at the cutting edge of their field and internationally renowned. Undergraduate students indicated that the broad mix of teaching styles was a strength. They could see the benefits of both the more established, conservative approach to knowledge and delivery, and the more open, energetic cutting edge approaches adopted in some areas. Some (undergraduate) students did not perceive these different styles as being polarised between younger and older members of staff, or between members of staff and visiting tutors, but considered that there was variety across the range of staff involved in delivery, and that there was both good and bad practice across that range. They cited examples of long-established staff whose teaching was inspiring and up-to-date as well as those whose delivery was uninteresting and was thought not to have been updated in years. Similarly, there were young visiting practitioners who were wonderful teachers and other instances where, while they might be a leader in their field, they were considered to be poor at communicating with students.
- 5.4 The Review Team was impressed at the overall positive tenor of the views expressed by students on the standards of teaching. At the same time, it encouraged the Faculty in its stated commitment to ongoing improvement and wider involvement of staff (including those of longer standing) in the latest developments in the theory and practice of teaching.

*See Commendation 3 and Recommendation 5 on pages 15 and 16.*

### *Tutors and studio work*

- 5.5 The Faculty values highly the input that visiting practitioners make to delivery, particularly in the area of Design tutors. The Faculty has in place in some areas, but not all, a system whereby tutors are selected by an appointments committee which includes the program Co-ordinator and Year Co-ordinator. Tutors are subsequently supported throughout the semester with workshops to ensure appropriate induction to unit objectives and teaching philosophies, and their performance is closely monitored. This system was thought to work well and the Faculty would like to extend the practice to all areas. The Review Team supported this aspiration, noting the need to ensure appropriate quality control over all aspects of delivery.
- 5.6 In the Bachelor of Architecture degree prospective tutors are required to make a presentation to students. Students then vote for the tutor they would like to work with. Tutors not receiving votes are not appointed. This system is thought to work well, although problems that may arise with

individual tutors later in the semester can be difficult to resolve. It was noted by Faculty staff that finding sufficient resources to provide appropriate training for tutors was always a problem, and they indicated that additional support at University level would be welcome. Postgraduate research students who are involved in teaching/tutoring advised the Team that they had not received any training.

- 5.7 Students considered the design tutoring system to be a very positive aspect of their experience in the Faculty. They liked the range of tutoring expertise and the access this provides to architects and designers at the forefront of current professional practice. Tutors who took a very rigorous approach in challenging assumptions and stimulating argument were particularly appreciated. There were instances, however, where tutors were not effective and students noted that the systems for dealing with dissatisfaction that came to light once term was underway were unclear.
- 5.8 One of the great strengths of study in the Faculty was considered by students to be the allocation of dedicated studio space for each individual student. It was thought that other similar courses in Sydney did not have the same facility, and that this gave the Faculty a competitive edge.

*See Commendation 5 and Recommendation 6 on pages 15 and 16.*

#### ***Awareness of key Faculty documents in Teaching and Learning***

- 5.9 The Review Team sought to discover from staff and students the extent of awareness and/or involvement in the Teaching and Learning Plan and (for staff only) the Self-evaluation Report. Staff seemed to be aware of the Teaching and Learning Plan, and some had been involved in discussions. However, there seemed to be little awareness among the staff regarding the Self-evaluation Report. Students were not aware of the Teaching and Learning Plan, although postgraduate coursework students indicated that they would be interested to see it.

*See Recommendation 1 on page 16.*

#### ***Recognition of good teaching***

- 5.10 Faculty staff have recently been invited to submit applications for excellence in teaching awards. Staff felt that good teaching was recognised within the Faculty and played an important part in promotions. However, they also felt that there is a tendency for good teaching to be undervalued by the general community. Undergraduate students indicated that they were not aware of any mechanisms to reward good teaching, other than the appreciation expressed by students on an informal basis. They also noted that the Faculty did not appear to have any mechanisms for dealing with poor teaching performance.

#### ***Integration of theory and practice***

- 5.11 The Faculty has devoted much attention to the integration of theory and practice in recent years, particularly in the development of the new undergraduate programs. Undergraduate students expressed the view that the level of integration between theory and design issues worked well on the whole, although it very much depended on the effectiveness of the teacher: a good teacher will bring all elements together, whereas areas can break apart and become difficult to integrate if the teacher is not effective. Some undergraduate students commented that certain theory components were very dry and unrelated to practice.
- 5.12 The views expressed by postgraduate coursework students on the integration of theory and practice were similar to those of the undergraduates. It worked very well in most, but not all areas.

### ***Advanced student program for high achievers***

- 5.13 The Faculty runs an advanced student program for high achievers. This is an informal program which seeks to stimulate high achievers by giving them the opportunity (available in certain electives) to work on individual projects with members of staff. The students met by the Team appeared to have limited awareness of this program.

### ***Teaching and Learning Support***

- 5.14 Students indicated that there was limited use of WebCT in the Faculty. During discussions, staff noted the importance of such programs only as a supplement rather than as a replacement for other types of learning. Staff held some reservations regarding the desirability of making lecture notes available on WebCT, mainly that it may diminish the acquisition of a broad range of skills (such as note taking), encourage lack of attendance and adversely affect the level of knowledge retained. Staff indicated that the Faculty had first encouraged and then subsequently discouraged the posting of lecture notes on WebCT, mainly due to concern about intellectual property issues.
- 5.15 Student experience of support systems such as WebCT was varied. It worked very well for Design Computing students but some other undergraduates had not heard of it. Postgraduate coursework students indicated that the supplementary material provided by lecturers was not always of a high standard, for example one lecturer had distributed hand-written notes from 1992. The Review Team recommended a more co-ordinated Faculty approach to learning support systems such as WebCT.
- 5.16 The Faculty's library was thought to be an excellent resource by students. However, the lack of weekend opening and weekday evening opening beyond 6.30pm was thought to be regrettable. It created particular problems for part-time students engaged in full-time employment.
- 5.17 Although the Review Team had noted significant negative comment from the 2001 SCEQ student evaluations about IT facilities, the students met by the Team were complimentary about the standard of IT facilities available, particularly the twenty-four hour access.

*See Commendation 6 and Recommendation 7 on pages 15 and 16.*

### ***Clarity of assessment and feedback on student work***

- 5.18 Undergraduate students indicated that, for the most part, the requirements for assessment were made clear. There were varying reports on the level of feedback on assessed work. In some units of study, there was not much feedback at all, whereas in others the feedback was thought to be outstanding, particularly in relation to studio work, where both staff and students discuss work in detail and give feedback to its author. Again, the Review Team noted a degree of contrast between the views expressed by students during discussions and those from the 2001 SCEQ results which indicated a lower level of student satisfaction in relation to feedback, suggesting that there had been improvement in this area.
- 5.19 Postgraduate students commented that the expectations of assessment were clear. Feedback on work was for the most part very good. Examples were cited where staff would spend over half an hour giving one-to-one feedback. Students noted their appreciation of the opportunity to get feedback on major pieces of work while still in draft stage.

*See Commendation 7 on page 15.*

### ***Professional links***

- 5.20 The Faculty has strong links with the Architecture profession and professional bodies. However, students from the Design Computing program cited the absence of professional links as a

shortcoming. They were aware that a similar course at another university incorporated work experience. They suggested that developing stronger industry contacts and work experience opportunities for the degree should be a priority for the Faculty.

*See Recommendation 8 on page 16*

#### ***Accessibility of staff***

- 5.21 Both undergraduate and postgraduate students commented that, on the whole, staff were accessible and supportive. However, in terms of the overall collegiality of the study environment for postgraduate coursework students, it was felt that there was room for improvement in terms of a more structured approach to engendering a social and communicative environment.

#### ***Students combining work and study***

- 5.22 Staff noted that there is a need to consider how to address the impact of students' need to undertake employment concurrently with their studies.

#### ***Non-offering of advertised units of study***

- 5.23 Faculty staff acknowledged that there had been some instances where units of study had not been able to be offered and indicated that arrangements to avoid this in future are in hand.

*See Recommendation 9 on page 16*

#### ***Collaboration with other institutions***

- 5.24 The Review Team enquired as to the extent to which the Faculty collaborated with other faculties of Architecture in teaching, research and research training matters. The Faculty had approached the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) and The University of New South Wales (UNSW) to discuss sharing resources at undergraduate level, but, this had not been successful, largely due to issues related to resources and protectionism. Collaboration has worked in the sharing of staff, for example one member of staff also teaches at the University of Newcastle and UTS. The Faculty is in discussion with the Queensland University of Technology, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and Deakin University regarding possible sharing of human resources. There is also collaboration in research conferences, such as one currently being organised involving the four Architecture schools in Sydney.

#### ***Summary***

- 5.25 The Review Team formed the view that teaching and learning was working well in the Faculty in many aspects. There have clearly been significant improvements in areas such as student feedback, clarity of objectives, and overall student satisfaction. The Team considered that the Faculty had a healthy self-critical approach and was committed to ongoing development and improvement in teaching and learning and the structures to support it.

## **6. RESEARCH-LED TEACHING**

- 6.1 In designing the new undergraduate programs, the Faculty has given priority to orienting units of study towards an enquiry-based and research-based approach. They have been planned to develop a research based approach in the early years of study. Students have the opportunity to select areas of interest and have the opportunity to work in groups following particular specialisations and research interests. Proposals are currently being considered to increase the focus on teaching based on research groups in Years 4 and 5 (B Architecture).

- 6.2 Whilst the integration of research and teaching was thought to be very effective in the new Design Computing undergraduate degree, staff considered that achieving integration in Architecture courses was more challenging.
- 6.3 In students' views, the exposure to the latest research from around the world was a strength of the Faculty. They were aware of the research interests of staff and of the impact it made on delivery. The view was expressed by some undergraduate students that there were staff who were clearly more interested in their research than in teaching, at the expense of the quality of their teaching. Other students disagreed and the predominant view was that exposure to the latest research was exciting and enriching. It was pointed out that in Architectural subjects there was not such a strong focus on research.
- 6.4 The Review Team considered that the Faculty's students benefited from a healthy and vibrant research culture and that Faculty research was integrated appropriately into delivery.

*See Commendation 8 on page 15.*

## **7. RESEARCH TRAINING**

- 7.1 The Team was advised that the Faculty has traditionally been a leader in research in Architecture in Australia. It used to represent approximately 50% of Australia's university research activity.
- 7.2 All new research students are interviewed by the Associate Dean (Postgraduate Studies) and the Associate Dean (Research) during their first year of study. The annual report on each candidate's progress is read by the Associate Dean (Postgraduate Studies) who will address any relevant issues with the student's supervisor. Students are encouraged to withdraw or change to a Masters degree if it seems likely that they will be unable to complete.
- 7.3 In response to a query from the Review Team regarding how the Faculty ensures the quality of supervisors, the Faculty explained that supervisors with an unsuccessful supervising record would not be permitted to supervise again. However, there appeared to be no formal mechanisms to ensure the quality of supervision.
- 7.4 All of the Faculty's research students are required to complete a unit of study on research methods. Where gaps in their knowledge are identified, they are encouraged to undertake undergraduate units of study. The Faculty is considering how to respond to a need for tuition in statistical methods and analysis recently identified in a number of external examiners reports and indicated that centrally organised support in statistics for research students would be welcome. The Review Team suggested it may be worth investigating possibilities at College as well as University level.
- 7.5 The majority of research students met by the Review Team indicated that they felt isolated. While there was one student present who worked closely within a group of about 12 PhD students, others considered that the Faculty's mechanisms for creating a collegial and interactive environment for research students were not working. They considered that there was a real need for the Faculty to foster greater communication between research students, between research students and staff, and also between students and outside specialists in their field.
- 7.6 Research students met by the Review Team indicated that they were not invited to any Faculty committees, nor were they aware of any other research students who sat on them. They indicated that they would be interested in participating as active members (rather than as observers).
- 7.7 Students had received the University's Postgraduate Research Studies Handbook and had found it helpful. Some were familiar with Academic Board policies such as those on academic honesty and intellectual property.

- 7.8 The Review Team gathered from discussions with research students that there is wide variation in practice in the running of seminars for research students. Some are held weekly in small groups, others are held fortnightly, while others range between weekly and monthly meetings. The Review Team also gained the impression that there was varied awareness of the financial resources available to research students.
- 7.9 Research students expressed the view that, although none was present, some of the international research students experienced difficulties with English. Staff indicated that they were aware of English language support available within the University and directed students to it. However, students do not always follow the recommendation and there can be a tendency for students not to want to recognise the problem.
- 7.10 Postgraduate coursework students interviewed by the Team expressed the view that there is a need for a more structured approach to developing research skills.

*See Recommendations 10, 14 and 16 on page 17.*

## **8. QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESSES**

- 8.1 Noting that there had been some delays in the Faculty producing the Self-evaluation Report and Teaching and Learning Plan for the Review, the Team enquired as to whether or not the circumstances that had led to this delay had been addressed. The Faculty expressed confidence that, now that the Faculty was entering into a period of post-restructuring consolidation, such problems would not arise.
- 8.2 The Review Team had received the results of (S)CEQ student evaluations for the years 2000 and 2001. It noted that SCEQ results showed some quite distinct improvements in performance between 1999 and 2001<sup>1</sup> and asked staff for their views on the reasons for the improvements. Staff suggested that the recent appointment of new members of staff had injected new life into the Faculty and alleviated to some degree the overburdening of staff. The general spirit of constructive renewal in the Faculty was thought likely to contribute to an overall more positive attitude among students. Also, much work had been done recently on clarifying unit of study objectives and ensuring that tutors are aware of them. Faculty staff expressed the view that the improvements in the student experience were quite remarkable given the deterioration in the Faculty's staff:student ratio.
- 8.3 While discussions with students clearly indicated that students felt that their feedback was well received and responded to by the Faculty, and that changes were made as a result, the Team found that staff were unable to identify the key issues arising from the SCEQ evaluations. This suggested to the Team that the Faculty's processes for ensuring that such feedback is appropriately discussed, analysed and disseminated throughout the Faculty's staff were not working effectively.
- 8.4 The Faculty had acknowledged in its Self-evaluation Report (s.4 (a), page 5) that the ITL unit of study questionnaire was not appropriate for studio based courses. The Review Team welcomed the advice that the Faculty intends to devise its own questionnaire for studio based courses.
- 8.5 The Team's discussions with students revealed that they considered that most staff were accessible and that the Faculty responded constructively to student feedback. One BDesign student who was a student rep on the Sydney University Architectural Society (SUAS) indicated that more than half of the problems he raised were fixed within two weeks, and that staff would report back on action that had been taken and ask whether it had been effective. Students from the BArchitecture

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<sup>1</sup> (for example, Q16 Staff make a real effort to understand difficulties I may be having with my work" - up 14% since 1999; Q7 "The degree course administration is effective in supporting my learning" - up 23% since 1999; Q4 "The workload is too heavy" – down 22%; Q11 "My degree course has stimulated my enthusiasm for further learning" - up 10%)

program indicated that the Year Co-ordinator actively sought student views on improvements that could be made, and reported back on action taken as a result. Students on the old BSc (Architecture) program expressed less positive views on staff responsiveness to feedback.

- 8.6 There were mixed responses on whether or not students had been advised of the changes resulting from student feedback gathered via SCEQ questionnaires. Some, including Design Computing students, had been specifically advised of changes that had been made while others had not. Students commented that they were more aware of changes made through feedback systems other than the SCEQs.
- 8.7 The Faculty maintains strong professional links and seeks feedback on course design and development as part of its ongoing quality assurance processes. The accreditation processes of affiliated professional bodies also provide valuable opportunities for external input.
- 8.8 The Faculty currently has no formalised benchmarking procedures. However, there are a number of activities which enable exchange of information, such as: the Australian heads of schools of Architecture meetings, visiting scholars to the Faculty (currently from Denmark, Hong Kong, and Columbia), visiting Panels of the Institute of Architects, and staff attendance at Australian and international conferences. The Faculty is currently developing a course in collaboration with the University of Adelaide and the University of Hong Kong.
- 8.9 In terms of the effectiveness of other quality assurance structures and processes, such as Faculty committees and mechanisms for monitoring student progress, the Team recognised that these aspects of the Faculty's activities are still bedding down post-restructuring. Similarly, mechanisms to support innovation and good practice in teaching and learning, including for visiting staff (such as Design tutors) are still in the process of developing and the Faculty appeared committed to extending current areas of good practice more widely across the Faculty. Good practices have already been established in some areas to facilitate the integration of casual and visiting staff and the Team supported the Faculty's intention to extend them to other areas. Improved communication structures will play an important role in the Faculty's ongoing development and improvement. It was noted that the Faculty currently has no off-shore programs.
- 8.10 The Team noted that University policy was not being effectively implemented in the Faculty with regard to student membership on key Faculty committees. Although the Faculty had apparently made efforts to encourage student participation, the Review Team considered, in light of student comment, that the Faculty needed to review its processes to ensure appropriate proactive mechanisms for electing student representatives to sit on Faculty committees.

*See Commendations 9, 10 and 11 and Recommendations 11, 12, 13, and 14 on pages 15 and 17.*

## **9. STUDENT PROGRESSION**

- 9.1 The Faculty carries out diagnostic testing of all First Year students during the First Year Experience introductory program in the first week of semester. These tests check knowledge and skill in areas such as Physics, Mathematics, English and spatial skills. Students with shortcomings are advised to undertake remedial elective programs which have been specifically developed by the Faculty. Shortcomings are quite typical in areas such as Mathematics and Physics. It is common, for example, for about 75% of students to have inadequate knowledge in Physics. The First Year assessments have been specifically designed to facilitate students being able to catch up in areas of deficiency through the award of 'incomplete' results until the student has reached the appropriate level.
- 9.2 Staff voiced their regret at the University's discontinuation of Boards of Examiners as this has removed the opportunity for a structured process for considering each individual student's results across all their units of study

- 9.3 The Review Team was advised by postgraduate coursework students that the arrangements for entry mid-year had not been managed well. There had been a lack of information across all aspects from enrolment procedures to course information and induction activities. Faculty members of staff indicated that they are aware of the problem and are addressing it.
- 9.4 Although no such students were present to speak with the Review Team, both postgraduate coursework and research students expressed the view that they had student colleagues, whose first language was not English, who were struggling linguistically. Incidences were cited of students who were too shy or embarrassed to seek help from staff, and instead sought assistance from other students, or did not seek assistance at all. Staff acknowledged that there were problems in some areas with English language competency. They were aware of the English language support available within the University and referred students to them. However, students did not always take up these opportunities. The Review Team recommended that the Faculty consider ways to address these issues.

*See Recommendations 15 and 16 on page 17.*

## **10. FACULTY ADMINISTRATION**

- 10.1 It was acknowledged that there have been problems with the Faculty's administration and the Faculty is considering ways to address this. The Review Team suggested that it may be possible to make more use of *My Uni* to alleviate the problem. Staff were very supportive of the dedication and quality of the administrative staff (none of whom were present). However, they noted that the restricted office hours were not convenient for students, particularly part-time students. Another problem area was enrolment and teaching staff suggested that scheduling enrolments earlier might help. While postgraduate research students had experienced no problems, postgraduate coursework students reported problems with administrative matters, such as enrolment.

# 11. CONCLUSIONS

## 11.1 AREAS OF GOOD PRACTICE

### *Commendation 1*

The Faculty is congratulated on the success of the recent restructuring and the sense of cohesion, enthusiasm and renewal that currently exists in the Faculty. The Faculty appeared to have achieved a marked turnaround in the levels of staff and student satisfaction in recent years. In particular, it was apparent to the Review Team that staff in areas where teaching and research processes may have been hampered by inter-departmental division and insularity under the previous structure, had responded to the new organisational structure with outstanding commitment and professionalism. It was clear that both staff and students had a genuine passion for their discipline and that such passion was a guiding value of the Faculty. (see s. 2)

### *Commendation 2*

The Faculty is commended on the strength of the new Bachelor of Design (Architecture) and Bachelor of Design Computing courses, and the positive feedback from students on these courses.

### *Commendation 3*

The Team commends the Faculty on the positive and constructive views held by its students on their educational experience in the Faculty. (see ss 2, 5.3, and 5.4)

### *Commendation 4*

The process used in some areas to select tutors, induct them to teaching and learning philosophies and support them throughout the semester, was commended as an example of good practice. The Faculty is encouraged to extend this practice across the Faculty. (see s. 5.5 – 5.8)

### *Commendation 5*

The Faculty is commended on the provision of an effective studio component, supported by a strong tutorial system, and on the high level of student satisfaction with this component of their studies. (see ss. 5.5 – 5.8)

### *Commendation 6*

The quality and expertise in the Faculty's library provision is highly commended, although the absence of weekend and weekday evening opening beyond 6.30pm is regrettable. (see s. 5.16)

### *Commendation 7*

The Faculty is commended on its good practice in some areas in providing students with useful and timely feedback on their work. (see ss. 5.18 – 5.19)

### *Commendation 8*

The Faculty's success in integrating research and teaching was noted as an example of good practice. The high level of student awareness of research-led teaching was commendable.(see s. 6)

### *Commendation 9*

The Faculty is commended on the improvement in student views of their educational experience in the Faculty as demonstrated in the (S)CEQ results in some areas between 1999 and 2001. (see s. 8)

### *Commendation 10*

The Faculty is commended on the positive views expressed by students on the accessibility of staff and their receptiveness to student feedback. (see s. 8)

### *Commendation 11*

The Faculty is proactive in seeking and responding to student feedback, and in advising students of changes that have been made. The Faculty is commended on its good practice in this area. (s. 8)

## 11.2 AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION FOR IMPROVEMENT

### ***Recommendation 1***

Notwithstanding the clear success of the restructuring, the Review Team supports the Faculty in its commitment to continue working towards improving communication and towards strengthening the sense of community throughout the Faculty. In developing its systems of communication, the Faculty needs to develop a stronger sense of ownership across the Faculty of key documents, such as the Teaching and Learning Plan and Self-evaluation Report. The Team noted the views expressed in some quarters that the dissolution of the old departments had resulted in a reduction in contact with students and encouraged the Faculty to find ways to rebuild this. (see ss. 2 and 5.9)

### ***Recommendation 2***

The Faculty is encouraged in its recognition of and commitment to improving the issue of workload for teaching staff. The development of workload models and the recent new staff appointments are welcomed. However, the Faculty needs to continue to consider ways to keep to a minimum the impact of increasing staff:student ratios on both the staff and the student experience. (see s. 2)

### ***Recommendation 3***

The processes for disseminating University policy (such as, for example, Academic Board policy on academic honesty and intellectual property) should be reviewed to ensure that they are drawn to the attention of all staff and students, who should have access to the actual policies, rather than only being made familiar with the essence of them. (see s. 3)

### ***Recommendation 4***

It is recommended that the Faculty implement strategies to ensure that the graduate attributes relevant to units of study are made more explicit to students, particularly in unit of study outlines. (see s. 4)

### ***Recommendation 5***

The Faculty is encouraged in its stated commitment to ongoing improvement in teaching and learning practices and to achieving wider involvement of staff (including those of longer standing) in the latest developments in the theory and practice of teaching (see Self-Evaluation Report (s. 2 (b))). It is suggested that greater use could be made of staff development opportunities offered by the University's Institute of Teaching and Learning. (see ss. 5.1 – 5.4)

### ***Recommendation 6***

The Faculty is encouraged to develop a more formalised approach across the Faculty to the recruitment, orientation and support of Design Tutors and other visiting and sessional staff. This could build on good practice already existing in some areas. (see ss. 5.5 – 5.8)

### ***Recommendation 7***

While it is acknowledged that there may be courses (such as those based in the studio) where WebCT may be of limited or no use, it is recommended that a more co-ordinated approach is developed to the use of WebCT and implemented across the Faculty. (see ss. 5.14 – 5.17)

### ***Recommendation 8***

The Faculty clearly has strong and effective professional links for most areas. However, in light of student feedback (see s. 5.20), it is suggested that the Faculty may wish to consider ways to strengthen such links in the area of Design Computing.

### ***Recommendation 9***

Mechanisms should be implemented to ensure that, as far as possible, advertised units of study are offered. (see s. 5.23)

**Recommendation 10**

It is recommended that the Faculty review its management plan for postgraduate research student support and training with a view to ensuring minimum standards of quality across the Faculty. Matters suggested for particular attention include:

- (i) the need to develop a stronger and more active research community across the Faculty, and thereby avoid the sense of isolation currently experienced by some students.
- (ii) the need to develop appropriate strategies for safeguarding the quality of postgraduate research supervision. For example, one strategy could be to require supervisors to complete the Postgraduate Supervision Development Program run by the University's Institute for Teaching and Learning.
- (iii) the need for a more co-ordinated and systematic approach to resource support for postgraduate research students. The aim is to ensure that research students across all discipline areas receive appropriate levels of resource support and that they are made better aware of the resources available to them. (see s. 7)

**Recommendation 11**

Noting that many staff did not appear to be aware of the key issues emerging from (S)CEQ results, the Team recommended that the Faculty's processes are revised to ensure that the outcome of student evaluations (from CEQs, SCEQs, and staff/student consultative committees) is appropriately analysed, discussed and responded to within the Faculty and disseminated to staff across the Faculty. In accordance with Academic Board policy, students need to be advised of the outcomes of student feedback. (see s. 8)

**Recommendation 12**

The Faculty is encouraged to develop a student unit of study evaluation questionnaire which is appropriate for studio based work. The University's Institute of Teaching and Learning may be able to provide assistance. (see s. 8)

**Recommendation 13**

The Faculty is encouraged to establish more formalised benchmarking practices with institutions, both nationally and internationally. (see. s. 8)

**Recommendation 14**

In accordance with Academic Board policy, there should be student representatives on Faculty committees (such as the Teaching and Learning Committee, Undergraduate and Postgraduate Boards of Study, Faculty) (see Management and Evaluation of Coursework Teaching Part 4, s. 2 (1) (a) and (b)). Faculty is recommended to review its processes to ensure appropriate proactive mechanisms for electing student representatives to sit on Faculty committees. Also, it is suggested that there is a need to raise the profile of student representation on Faculty committees among the student body. (see ss. 7.6 and 8.10))

**Recommendation 15**

The processes for managing mid-year entry are recommended for review by the Faculty to ensure that students commencing course mid-year receive the same level of information, induction and support as students starting in first semester. (see s. 9)

**Recommendation 16**

It is recommended that the Faculty consider strategies to ensure that students from non-English speaking backgrounds are appropriately supported and made fully aware of the language support provision available in the University, such as that provided by the University Learning Centre. (see s. 9)

## APPENDIX ONE: DOCUMENTATION CONSIDERED BY THE REVIEW TEAM

- Faculty Self-evaluation report
- Faculty Teaching and Learning Plan
- SCEQ results and analyses
- CEQ results and analyses
- State and Territory Registration Boards and The Royal Australian Institute of Architects SVP Resume, 3 September 2002
- Faculty Undergraduate Board of Studies - Minutes of 28 November 2001
  
- Faculty Undergraduate Board of Studies - Minutes of 17 April 2002
  
- Faculty Undergraduate Board of Studies - Minutes of 22 May 2002
- Faculty Undergraduate Board of Studies - Minutes of 31 July 2002
- Bachelor of Architecture Program notes
- Unit of Study Outlines for:
  - Design Practice 1A
  - Planning Procedures – Intensive
  - Integrated Architectural Design Studio 1, Year 4, 2002

**Faculty of Architecture**

**Academic Quality Assurance**

**Self-Evaluation Report 2001**

***History and Context***

The Faculty of Architecture was the first Faculty of Architecture in Australasia. The Australasian Foundation Chairs in Architecture, Town and Country Planning, Architectural Science, Design Science and Urban Design were all established in this Faculty. The Faculty holds a deserved reputation in Australia and internationally for academic and professional leadership in all of the disciplines of the built environment.

The Faculty of Architecture is a part of the College of Sciences and Technology. It consists of one School (of the whole) and three research centres, plus a variety of laboratories, studios, lecture theatres, seminar rooms and other research and teaching facilities. It also has an art gallery and art workshop studio spaces on an adjacent site. In 2001 the structure of the Faculty changed from what had been four departments to a non-departmental one-school model, within which there are four disciplinary areas: Architecture & Applied Arts, Architectural & Design Science, Design Computing & Cognition, and Urban & Regional Planning & Policy. A professor or associate professor heads each disciplinary group.

**Undergraduate and Graduate Programs of Study**

The Faculty has three undergraduate programs of study (plus Honours). Two of these – the Bachelor of Design (Architecture) and the Bachelor of Design Computing – are new three-year programs introduced in 2001. The third undergraduate program is the Bachelor of Architecture, a two-year professional program in architecture which for most students follows on from the Bachelor of Design (Architecture). All three programs are offered at Honours level, the first two by a traditional fourth-year honours research year, and the BArch by an honours dissertation called the Advanced Study Report.

The Faculty has fifteen graduate coursework programs in four clusters. These are in Architecture (Architectural Design, Architectural History Theory & Criticism, and Heritage Conservation), in Architectural and Design Science (Audio Design, Building, Building Services, Energy Conservation, Facilities Management, and Illumination Design), in Design Computing (Design Computing, Digital Media, Film & Digital Video), and in Urban Planning (Housing Studies, Urban Design, and Urban & Regional Planning).

As of the 13<sup>th</sup> of May 2002, there are 531 students (518.7 EFTSUs) enrolled in the undergraduate programs and 445 (242.7 EFTSUs) in graduate coursework programs.

The Faculty also has a significant number of graduate students enrolled in research degrees. There are **23** enrolled in the Master of Philosophy and **51** in the Doctor of Philosophy programs in the areas of Architecture, Architectural Science, Design Computing & Cognition, Environment-Behaviour Studies, and Urban & Regional Planning.

Thus in total the Faculty currently has over 1,000 students and over 800 EFTSUs.

## Committees and Boards Overseeing Teaching and Research

There are two Boards of Study of the Faculty that overview the delivery of the programs of study. The Board of Undergraduate Studies (BoUGS) deals with all undergraduate programs. It has three subcommittees that deal specifically with each of the three undergraduate programs of study – the Bachelor of Design (Architecture) Program Committee, the Bachelor of Design Computing Program Committee, and the Bachelor of Architecture Program Committee – and a subcommittee that deals with the Honours Program – the Honours Subcommittee. The Board of Graduate Studies (BoGS) oversees all graduate coursework and research programs. It does not have any committees or subcommittees, but is comprised of the coordinators of each of the fifteen graduate programs. Both Boards report directly to Faculty and are headed by a respective Associate Dean (Undergraduate Studies) (Graduate Studies).

The Faculty also has a Teaching & Learning Committee that deals with the quality of teaching and learning issues across all programs. There is also a Research Policy Committee that deals with the quality of research in the Faculty and where some activities relate to the graduate research programs. Both of these policy committees report directly to Faculty and are headed by a respective Associate Dean (Teaching & Learning) (Research).

## Mission

As stated in the Faculty's strategic plan, *Creating the Future: Strategic Plan 1999-2004* (currently being updated), the mission of the Sydney Faculty of Architecture is to engage in internationally recognised teaching and research in architecture, architectural science, design computing, urban planning and other related professions and disciplines pertaining to the quality of the built environment. Our goal is to continue to be one of the nation's leading centres for teaching and research in architecture and related professions and disciplines and to produce graduates and research of international distinction. Graduates and researchers of the Faculty will be able to apply professional, intellectual and practical skills in the formulation and resolution of problems and issues pertaining to the quality of life and the quality of the built environment understood in its social, ecological, economic, political and aesthetic contexts.

The Strategic Plan and the Teaching & Learning Strategic Plan are appended (see attachments A & B).

### Specific Quality Assurance Questions and Responses

(1) *How does the faculty ensure that each course (program) and unit of study has an appropriate set of aims and outcomes, clearly communicated to and understood by students, and including generic as well as disciplinary skills?*

(a) Systems for informing students about course and unit expectations and ensuring that students understand them:

- All new degree programs and units of study must be approved by the Boards of Undergraduate or Graduate Studies and then by the full Faculty. In 2001 all units of study were required to submit course and unit of study descriptions based on the requirements of the Academic Board's policy on the Management and Evaluation of Teaching.
- Unit of study and course descriptions are contained in handouts which are distributed to students at the commencement of units of study and programs.
- Information about courses and units of study is contained in the Faculty *Handbook*, available on the Web and in paper format (appended as Appendix C).

- Faculty's Marketing and Development Centre and Student Services Centre are readily accessible by students and there are Faculty course and curriculum advisers (listed in the Faculty *Handbook*).
- The Faculty has Associate Deans for Undergraduate Studies, Graduate Studies and Teaching & Learning. Students are directed to the former two Associate Deans by members of the Student Services Centre and are available by appointment.

(b) Ways in which relations between generic and disciplinary skills in the curriculum are monitored:

- Student responses to these relations are monitored through SCEQs and student evaluations of units of study.
- Program Committees and Program Coordinators are in place for all programs and these committees monitor and review the programs on an ongoing basis using the results of the SCEQs.

(c) Methods for ensuring that courses and units of study enable students to achieve intended learning outcomes:

- Program committees ensure alignment between aims, assessment methods and intended outcomes. This process is currently being implemented through the rewriting and review of Unit of Study descriptions.

(d) Methods for providing coherence between units of study and courses:

- Programs are designed around objectives, which are implemented through units of study, and approved by Program Committees and Boards of Study
- Regular review of courses and units of study to ensure coherence is done by the Program Committees and thence the Boards of Study. This particularly applies to the recently introduced undergraduate degree programs and is being extended to all programs.

2. *How does the faculty ensure integration of research, including both disciplinary research and evidence about effective learning and teaching, into its undergraduate and postgraduate courses?*

(a) How links between current disciplinary research and the research expertise of staff and the curriculum are managed:

- One central facet of the new Bachelor of Design (Architecture) is the explicit integration of knowledge in relevant disciplinary areas into each design activity. While in part this reflects established knowledge in the field, given that there are active researchers in the relevant disciplinary areas, the results of recent research are also being introduced both into the design activity itself and into associated presentations of related knowledge.
- The majority of graduate programs have developed from active areas of research in the Faculty and consequently present the results of current research.
- Although most staff are engaged in research, this is not always effectively conveyed to undergraduate students. Staff will be encouraged to present this more explicitly.

(b) How links between developments in the theory and practice of university teaching and learning and the curriculum are managed:

- **New academic staff members are required to attend ITL workshops and courses.**
- **Individual staff members are engaged in monitoring developments in university teaching. It is a concern of the Teaching and Learning Committee, however, that this needs to be expanded to academic staff of longer standing, and discussions as to how this might be achieved are underway.**

3. *How does the faculty ensure that student assessment is effective and contributes to learning, and that the assessment process is well understood by students?*

(a) Methods for ensuring that assessments enable students to achieve intended learning outcomes:

- **Professionally accredited courses, eg, the Bachelor of Design (Architecture) / Bachelor of Architecture and the Master of Urban & Regional Planning – are independently reviewed by national accreditation bodies from the relevant professional institutes.**
- **Program Committees ensure alignment between objectives and assessment methods.**
- **Student responses to this alignment are monitored through the SCEQs and CEQs.**

(b) Methods for ensuring that assessment practices and standards are fair and equitable:

- **This is a developing area within the Faculty. The Board of Undergraduate Studies and the Teaching & Learning Committee are currently working on methods to ensure that assessment criteria are explicit and transparent.**
- **Undergraduate courses that are studio based conduct parity sessions to ensure consistency of marking across the unit of study.**
- **The Faculty has an internal appeals process to consider instances where students feel that assessment has been unfair. It is noteworthy that the Faculty has had few formal appeals against assessment in recent years.**

(c) Methods for ensuring that assessments provide students with prompt and effective feedback on their progress:

- **Many of the Faculty's UG and PG courses are studio or workshop based, with a strong tutor involvement. Under these circumstances student work is presented within the tutorial group and feedback is immediate.**
- **For assignments that are assessed by staff independently, lack of resources (especially tutor assistance) has sometimes slowed feedback. The Teaching and Learning Committee is currently investigating how the assessment process might be rationalised to ensure prompt feedback.**

(d) How information from assessments is used to improve teaching and learning:

- Where programs are reviewed by professional bodies for accreditation purposes, these reviews provide invaluable comments and suggestions which are acted upon.
- Many of the assessment tasks within the Faculty are in a form that can be exhibited. Regular exhibitions of student work, both within the Faculty and outside, allows staff to comment on program strengths and weaknesses and to tailor teaching and learning to address these.
- Program Committees monitor Unit of Study marks for anomalous or unacceptable profiles or failure rates, which are then investigated.

(e) Methods for ensuring that students understand the assessment processes:

- Information is available in unit of study outline on the web [http://www.arch.usyd.edu.au/nwfa/prosp\\_students/index.html](http://www.arch.usyd.edu.au/nwfa/prosp_students/index.html) and in the Faculty Handbook. Unit of study presenters are required to draw students' attention to requirements at the commencement of each unit.
- Refer to 3(b) above.

4. *How does the faculty ensure the quality of its teaching and recognise good teaching?*

(a) Methods for monitoring the breadth, depth, pace, variety and challenge in teaching:

- Faculty uses the ITL Unit of Study evaluation instrument. Concern has been raised, however, about it's appropriateness for studio courses.
- Program Year coordinators are available to students, in confidence, if they have concerns about the above aspects of teaching.

(b) How decisions about the selection of particular teaching strategies in relation to student learning outcomes are monitored:

- Regular review of Unit of Study and Program effectiveness occurs through monitoring student results, external review, peer and self-assessment and student evaluation.

(c) Methods used to enhance the quality of teaching, including staff development, mentoring and peer review:

- The Faculty has provided financial support to those members of staff developing and implementing the two new undergraduate programs and the Faculty and former Departments (now School) have provided funds to staff for the development of on-line units of study.
- New staff are required to attend the 3-day "Principles and Practices of University Teaching and Learning" course at the ITL.
- The Faculty through the Teaching & Learning Committee encourages staff to attend conferences relevant to Teaching and Learning and has supported staff in attending such conferences to present refereed papers.

- Tutors in the architecture programs are interviewed prior to engagement to assess the suitability of their teaching. In addition, tutor-training workshops are run with the assistance of the Institute for Teaching and Learning. Faculty staff have also been the recipients of substantial Teaching Improvement Fund grants to develop tutor-training methods.
- The Teaching and Learning Committee is investigating ways of distributing the Teaching Quantum funds to directly assist staff in their teaching

(d) How the faculty supports, recognises and rewards good teaching:

- The Teaching and Learning Committee has proposed there be a special competitive fund for supporting the improvement of teaching.
- The Committee has also proposed there be a Faculty fund for rewarding an outstanding teacher each year.
- Both will be put in place for 2003.

5. *What arrangements does the faculty have in place to monitor and support student progression?*

(a) Arrangements for identifying students at risk of non-completion or failure and the processes used to intervene in these cases:

- The First Year Experience introductory program identifies students with potential weaknesses.
- Faculty provides specifically developed elective courses for students who are shown to have weaknesses in key areas, e.g., mathematics.
- Intensive tutor/students interaction in studio and workshop based Units of Study identifies students at risk.
- Staff are encouraged to use formative assessment tasks to identify students at risk.
- The “show cause” procedure is implemented for students at risk of failing programs.

(b) The use of learning resources and academic support to assist student learning outcomes:

- Students have unrestricted access to the Faculty’s extensive computing resources that cover a variety of platforms and includes an extensive library of software.
- The Faculty has an extensive collection of slides and videotapes of material relevant to architecture and the built environment and this is available for student use through the staffed Audio-Visual Centre.

- The Faculty supports, through its Architectural & Technical Services Centre, student access to workshops for model making and provides tutoring in the use of machinery in the building of models.
- The Faculty houses one of the finest Architecture and Planning libraries in Australia, which students are encouraged to use.
- It is an aim of the Faculty to expand the number of Web-based teaching and learning resources. The Faculty has made a number of recent academic appointments with very strong skills in this area.

6. *How does the faculty ensure the quality of research supervision and training?*

The Faculty has a Board of Graduate Studies that oversees all aspects of graduate research quality assurance. The Board of Graduate Studies is made up of all the coordinators from each of the graduate programs and this facilitates ongoing monitoring of each program.

The Associate Dean (Graduate Studies) together with another member of staff meets with all research students on a yearly basis to discuss their supervision and progress.

The Faculty also has implemented the College of Science and Technology Protocols for Research Supervision.

**(a) Arrangements for ensuring high standards of supervision:**

- The Faculty has adopted the CST guidelines for the supervision of research students.

**(b) Mechanisms in place for ensuring effective completion and retention:**

- Faculty follows the University policy in this area regarding, for example, the completion of a research proposal within one year for full-time students, public presentation of the proposal, encouragement of students to publish and encouragement and support for attending and presenting at referred conferences.

**(c) How the research climate for students and provision of resources to support research are monitored:**

- Board of Graduate Studies monitors the provision of resources to research students and provides monetary support for research students on a competitive basis.
- The Research Policy Committee of the Faculty also monitors and provides funds for research students in relation to resources such as computers and equipment required for research purposes.

**(d) The use of student and/or graduate views to improve the experiences of research higher-degree students:**

- Each Board and Committee of the Faculty has one or more student representatives who are full voting members. Student views are actively encouraged.
- Disciplinary research groups hold regular (generally weekly) seminars where research students, staff and visitors present current work, e.g., the Audio & Acoustics Group, the Environment-Behaviour Studies Group, the Key Centre for Design Computing & Cognition, and the Urban & Regional Planning & Policy group. Other groups are being encouraged by the Associate Dean (Research), eg, in architecture and architectural science.

- Graduate research students are encouraged to become part of the University's community of scholars, participating in research seminars and social gatherings, as well as gaining some teaching experience (for those desiring it) and voluntary involvement with consultancies.

7. *What are the faculty's arrangements for evaluation and quality improvement, including the use of student and graduate feedback and other performance indicator data to monitor and enhance performance? How does it recognise good teaching?*

(a) Mechanisms in place for collecting and acting on the results of student and graduate feedback on teaching, units of study and courses:

- **The Faculty uses the ITL Unit of Study survey instrument and encourages coordinators to respond in four ways to students' concerns where they occur - how the unit will be changed, why the unit is the way it is and the pedagogical reasons for this and if changes cannot be made for resource reasons.**
- **The Teaching & Learning Committee reviews feedback from the CEQ and SCEQs and recommends action where necessary.**
- **Faculty has a representative (the Associate Dean [Teaching & Learning]) on the Evaluation and Quality Assurance Working Party. This person chairs the Teaching & Learning Committee, which recommends action.**
- **Faculty has a representative on the First-Year Experience Working Party (the Associate Dean [Undergraduate Studies]). This person reports to the Teaching & Learning Committee which recommends action.**

(b) Arrangements for applying University performance indicator data to improving educational quality: As for (a) above.

(c) Consistency between University requirements and Faculty QA and improvement mechanisms:

- **The Faculty strives to ensure that, as far as possible, the Faculty strategic plan and the University strategic plan are consistent.**

(d) Methods used to monitor progress towards goals specified in the faculty's teaching and learning plan:

- **SCEQ and CEQ data are monitored for trends.**
- **See 4(b) above.**
- **Several of the Faculty programs are externally reviewed for professional accreditation. This serves as an alternative, independent QA process which is particularly useful in monitoring program-wide progress.**



## Faculty of Architecture

### Faculty of Architecture: Teaching and Learning Plan

#### Context

The Faculty of Architecture was the first such Faculty in Australia. A large number of the most recognised and acknowledged architects in the profession since the founding of the Faculty are graduates of the Faculty. As well as being the first in Australasia to establish Chairs in Architecture, Town and Country (now Urban and Regional) Planning, and Urban Design, the Faculty was the first in Australia and worldwide to establish Chairs in Architectural Science and in Design Science. The multidisciplinary background of the academic staff of the Faculty also reflects this broad view of architecture.

The Faculty has two professional, accredited undergraduate programs – the Bachelor of Science (Architecture) [to be renamed the Bachelor of Design (Architecture) from 2001] and the Bachelor of Architecture together with a graduate professionally accredited program, the Master of Urban and Regional Planning. The relevant professional bodies accredit the two Architecture programs and the Urban and Regional Planning program. The Faculty also has an undergraduate program, the Bachelor of Design Computing, in addition to 11 well established and well regarded graduate programs ranging from Audio Design through Building Services, Design Computing, Digital Media, Energy Conservation, Facilities Management, Heritage Conservation, Housing, Illumination Design and Urban Design.

#### Strengths of the Faculty in Teaching and Learning

- Strong graduate programs well accepted by the diversity of professionals who access them.
- Innovations in the first-degree program that reflect recent thinking in teaching and learning.
- Success in specific areas in attracting research students.
- A multidisciplinary academic staff who broaden the knowledge base available to students and have developed specific expertise in relating their disciplines to architectural and other types of design.
- The development and implementation of a virtual campus with online learning in all design computing units of study.

#### Weaknesses in the Faculty

- Slowness in becoming familiar with and widely implementing the recent advances in knowledge and methods relating to teaching and learning at all levels of the Faculty.
- Weakness in the Bachelor of Architecture program as reflected, for example, in relatively weak CEQ results and retention rates over a number of years.

- Understaffing in the BArch program, and in certain areas of the BSc/BDes program.
- Some fragmentation, lack of efficiencies and understaffing in the graduate programs.
- Failure to attract high level, local research students to the Faculty.
- Lack of wide spread use of IT and other innovative approaches to teaching and learning.

#### **Opportunities for the Faculty**

- Use the two-degree undergraduate structure of the Faculty to develop a first degree concerned more broadly with design in the context of the built environment and the second-degree program focussing on professional architecture.
- Use such a structure, together with the graduate programs, to provide alternative, fast-tracked educational pathways, both within and outside the Faculty for students in the Faculty.
- Use this structure to provide access for students from outside the Faculty to units of study within the Faculty.
- Utilize the internationally recognised strengths of the Faculty in design computing to develop IT teaching materials and market them within Australia and overseas.

#### **Threats to the Faculty**

- Significant budgetary problems resulting from external pressures, declining government funding, unsupplemented salary increases and the intensive use of part time teachers that is traditional in the teaching of design.
- Continued separation between the teaching of design and the knowledge that must be used in design, generally a characteristic of both architectural and other types of design education within Australia and worldwide.
- Failures to fully utilize the unique interdisciplinary expertise of the academic staff both in undergraduate and graduate teaching programs to the benefit of our students.
- Erosion of roles traditionally performed by architects in the construction process.
- Pressure on space and other teaching resources because of increases in student numbers.

#### Objectives (2000-2004)

- 1 Attract, foster and graduate an increasing proportion of the most intellectually able students both local and international.***

##### *Strategies*

- Maintain and expand procedures for informing students, parents, school counsellors and key school staff members (eg, design and technology teachers) about the programs of study in the Faculty in order to attract the most intellectually able students.*

- ii Maintain programs to ensure an effective transition from school to university and focus on the first year experience.
- iii Improve progression and retention of students, and decrease periods to graduation using, where appropriate, standard performance indicators.
- iv Develop an advanced student program (pre-Honours?) for high achievers from first year through to graduation.

**2 *Provide flexibility through a rich diversity of learning opportunities for all students, challenging them and thus enabling them to reach their full potential.***

*Strategies*

- i Provide opportunities for students within the Faculty to take progressive units of study in other Faculties and to allow access of students from other Faculties to units of study offered within the Faculty.
- ii Develop highly targeted combined and double degrees with other faculties where the combinations enhance both the intellectual basis of each program and the skills and abilities graduates will offer to the community.
- iii Develop new degree programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels within the Faculty that reflect new opportunities within the broad sphere of design and the built environment to better serve professionals practicing in the context of the built environment and through them improve the quality of the built environment to the benefit of society generally.
- iv Develop IT resources within the Faculty and collaborate with other Faculties, departments, special centres and institutions to facilitate and encourage the use of innovative teaching methods and assessment procedures that are focussed on student learning and utilize IT.

**3 *Provide curricula that are informed by research, scholarship, creative works and professional practice, are responsive to the needs of the many communities served by the University and result in graduates well equipped to contribute successfully to the global society in which they will live and work.***

*Strategies*

- i Regularly review and assess the quality of all programs and units of study in the Faculty using national and international benchmarks of academic standards.
- ii Assess; evaluate and respond to results of yearly student and graduate evaluation of all units of study and programs.
- iii Review the currently established professional advisory committees for each of the undergraduate programs of study, and establish professional advisory committees for each of the graduate programs of study.
- iv Develop attributes of graduates specific to the Faculty and articulate their relationship to the generic attributes of graduates of the University of Sydney.

- 4 *Foster an environment where quality and innovation in teaching and learning are valued and supported by appropriate resources and adequate recognition.*

*Strategies*

- i* Continue to include an emphasis on the commitment and support of the Faculty for excellence and innovation in teaching in advertisements at all levels for academic staff positions.
- ii* Reward innovation and excellence in teaching within the Faculty and encourage teaching that builds on and demonstrates a relationship to scholarship and research.
- iii* Encourage and support staff to develop their understanding of teaching methods that emphasize a focus on student learning.
- iv* Support staff in developing innovation in teaching and learning.

- 5 *Develop the best possible physical environment to support teaching and learning.*

*Strategies*

- i* Provide investment in technology appropriate to the focus of the Faculty and to continue to expand student access to these resources
- ii* Provide dedicated studio work environments supplemented by appropriate informal seminar and break-out spaces to support the new BDes(Arch) program by expansion and refurbishment of the existing design studios.
- iii* Improve the spaces used for teaching particularly in terms of their access to innovative IT based teaching methods.
- iv* Develop, make more efficient and spatially amalgamate as necessary the physical workshops in the Faculty and encourage their integration into innovative design teaching.

Operational Plans and Performance Indicators: mid - 2001, end 2002

- 1 *Attract, foster and graduate an increasing proportion of the most intellectually able students both local and international at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.*

**Operational plan:** Continue marketing effort at undergraduate level and extend to postgraduate programs in 2002 to attract as diverse and as talented a group of high standard entrants as possible. Arrange postgraduate events such as the current open nights and develop a marketing strategy to identify other avenues

**Performance Indicators:** Record number of contacts at each undergraduate event in 2001 and relate to enrolments numbers, UAI level and performance in first year in 2002. Report to Faculty at end of 2002 on changes in these indicators in relation to preceding years with recommendations regarding appropriate future actions. Postgraduate marketing plan presented to Faculty for adoption. (Continue to follow these students through the five years of the combined degree.)

**Operational plan:** Develop and implement procedures for identifying students with English language difficulties at the postgraduate level which are known indicators of performance at the postgraduate as well as undergraduate level similar to those being implemented at the undergraduate level. Continue procedures at the undergraduate level.

**Performance Indicators:** Students identified and counselled at end of first semester by the first year coordinator in 2000 and 2001 with advice concerning appropriate remedial actions, for example participation in appropriate programs at the Learning Assistance Centre. Student performance and participation in remedial programs monitored in semester 2 in both years with continued counseling if necessary. Similar procedures implemented at the postgraduate level in 2002.

**Operational plan:** Develop advanced student programs and offer prizes to acknowledge high achievement.

**Performance Indicators:** Program developed in 2000, implemented in first year in 2002 with prizes awarded at the end of 2001. Develop advanced student programs as research based electives in available second semester 2002.

## **2 Provide a rich diversity of learning opportunities for all students, challenging them and thus enabling them to reach their full potential.**

**Operational plan:** Develop and implement the second year of the new Bachelor of Design and Bachelor of Design Computing degrees and continue to structure their degree programs and timetables to allow flexibility in accessing progressive sets of units within and outside Faculty. . Review and evaluate the BDes(Arch) and BDesComp first degree programs end 2001.

**Performance Indicators:** Monitor enrolments in progressive sets of units of study within and units of study outside Faculty in semester 2 in 2001 and 2002. Report to Faculty on the first year of the two new programs and implement changes arising from the reviews in 2002.

**Operational plan:** Continue to participate in the Broadway program and the Faculty's flexible entry program to allow access to disadvantaged students or students without formal qualifications.

**Performance Indicators:** Record numbers of entrants and track progress, report to Faculty end 2002.

**Operational plan:** Explore and develop as appropriate proposals for combined or double degrees with Engineering, Arts, Economics and possibly Law and the Sydney College of the Arts. Finalize talks with Economics and renew talks with Music regarding a joint degree in 2003

**Performance Indicators:** Board of Undergraduate Studies and Academic Board approval of at least one combined / double degrees in 2002.

**Operational plan:** Call for proposals for developing IT teaching and learning resources and fund proposals to develop teaching materials on-line in both the undergraduate and postgraduate programs.

**Performance Indicators:** Availability of one new online unit of study in 2002 and two new units of study in 2003. Market these courses to relevant Faculties in other institutions. Record levels of enrolments from outside the Faculty and develop and implement plans for increasing these enrolments in subsequent years.

- 3 *Provide curricula that are informed by research, scholarship, creative works and professional practice, are responsive to the needs of the many communities served by the University and result in graduates well equipped to contribute successfully to the global society, in which they live and work.*

**Operational plan:** Analyze TPI data for 2000 as it becomes available in 2001-2002. Combine with UOS data gathered for units in 2001 and mid-semester based evaluations and feed back to students. Examine PREQ data.

**Performance Indicators:** Availability of report on actions based on analysis of PI data.

**Operational plan:** Professional Advisory Committee to be established for all undergraduate and graduate programs, with at least annual meetings to review programs.

**Performance Indicators:** All programs to have Professional Advisory Committees established by end of 2002. Minutes of meetings with Advisory Committees available, implement recommendations and report on the results of actions taken by the end 2001.

**Operational plan:** Develop a Faculty policy on attributes of graduates that includes the generic attributes of graduates of the University of Sydney. .

**Performance Indicators:** Review all postgraduate and undergraduate programs to ensure Faculty policy on attributes of graduates has been fully implemented.

- 4 *Foster an environment where quality and innovation in teaching and learning are valued and supported by appropriate resources and adequate recognition.*

**Operational plan:** Inclusion of this commitment in all staff advertisements.

**Performance Indicators:** Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning) and where time permits the full Teaching and Learning Committee to continue review all advertisements in 2002 and to ensure this emphasis is included for all academic positions and implemented in selection committees at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

**Operational plan:** Establish a prize for innovation and excellence in teaching.

**Performance Indicators:** Prize of \$2500 established for innovative teaching in 2001. Calls made for nominations for prize and nominations in 2002. nominations assessed by the Teaching and Learning Committee with the first prize being awarded in 2002 (if recommended).

**Operational plan:** Encourage presentation at conferences and publication of innovative developments in teaching and learning.

**Performance Indicators:** At least two publication in a fully referred journal or conference proceedings related to teaching and learning in 2002

*Operational plan:* Provide opportunities for staff to access funds to attend and present at conferences focussed on teaching and learning.

*Performance Indicators:* Record of applications for and awards of support funds up to a total of \$1000 in 2002.

*Operational plan:* encourage and support staff to attend appropriate courses and workshops offered by the Institute on Teaching and Learning.

*Performance Indicators:* Record numbers of staff attending Institute for Teaching and Learning workshops in 2000 to establish base line data and increase attendance by 20% above this level in 2001.

*Operational plan:* Provide teaching development funds within the Faculty, encourage and facilitate applications for teaching development funds at the College and higher levels.

*Performance Indicators:* Award of at least one teaching development grant to a value of \$5000 in 2002

5 *Develop the best possible physical environment to support teaching and learning.*

*Operational plan:* Continue to implement policy for rolling replacement and upgrading of technology resources relevant to both undergraduate and postgraduate programs.

*Performance Indicators:* Document separately at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels actual extent of implementation in 2002. Report to Faculty on level of resources put into the undergraduate and postgraduate levels with recommendations for action in 2003.

*Operational plan:* Continue expansion of networking of design studios, re-organisation and improvement of design studios in line with the plan for refurbishing the building.

*Performance Indicators:* Document the extent of networking in 2002 and report to Faculty with recommendations for 2003.

*Operational plan:* Implement plan for re-organisation of the physical facilities within the workshops. Continue to implement ways in which the workshops can be used in physical model making and making and testing of designs.

*Performance Indicators:* Report to Faculty at end of 2002 on levels and types of student use of workshops with recommendations for changes if necessary.