

FACULTY OF RURAL MANAGEMENT

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

MONDAY 20 MAY 2002

**FINAL REPORT AND
RECOMMENDATIONS**

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The following Academic Board Review Team visited the Faculty of Rural Management at Orange on Monday 20 May 2002 as part of the review and evaluation of teaching, learning and research training in all faculties within the University.

Chair

Professor Anne Reynolds Deputy Chair, Academic Board

Team members

Professor Peter McCallum Sydney Conservatorium of Music
Assoc. Professor Michael Prosser Institute for Teaching and Learning
Dr Rosanne Taylor Faculty of Veterinary Science
Dr Sue Taylor Faculty of Pharmacy

Administrative Officer

Rachel Symons Quality Assurance Officer (Teaching and Learning)

- 1.2 During the visit the Team interviewed the following groups of staff:

- Dean Professor Kevin Parton and Senior Academic Staff¹
 - Mr Ross Wilson, Pro-Dean
 - Mr Chris Morgan, Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning)
 - Assoc. Professor Geoff Gurr, Associate Dean (Research)
 - Mr Bernie Duffy, Manager, Client Services
- Undergraduate Students
- Postgraduate Coursework Students (by teleconference)
- Postgraduate Research Students
- Faculty academic and general staff²
- Open session (individual appointments with staff and students)

- 1.3 The Faculty provided the following documentation on its teaching, learning and research training activities to the Review Team prior to the visit:

- Self-Evaluation of the Quality of Teaching and Learning in the Faculty of Rural Management - 2001
- Faculty of Rural Management Operational Plan July 2000 – January 2002
- Learning Matters at Orange
- Faculty and Campus Structure
- Sample Capability Portfolio
- Capability Program
- Markers Handbook

- 1.4 The findings of the Review Team in relation to the teaching and learning and research training activities of the Faculty, based on the above documentation and interviews conducted during the visit are included in the following report.

2 ACHIEVEMENTS AND HALLMARKS OF THE FACULTY

- 2.1 The Faculty views one of its achievements as the successful development and support of flexible delivery of learning. Students are able to study on-campus, by distance education or a combination

¹ Referred to as Faculty in the report

² Referred to as staff in the report

of the two modes. Students appreciated this flexible approach since it provided them with a diverse range of outlooks, as well as scope to choose their courses and methods of study.

- 2.2 The Faculty identified a key hallmark as its strong commitment to the scholarship of teaching. A number of staff have formal educational qualifications, providing a community in which teaching is highly valued. There is a significant research thrust in teaching and learning. The internal publication *Learning Matters* is a successful communication vehicle to alert all staff to matters relating to teaching and learning. The Review Team found that the collegiate and collective approach to teaching, learning and research training, and the team approach to the development of resources practised by the Faculty led to good experiences for students and staff.

3 CHANGES AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

- 3.1 Changes and future developments for the Faculty of Rural Management at Orange include the inclusion of an Agricultural Science degree program and a Bachelor of Pharmacy (Rural) degree program. These will commence in 2003. In addition the Centre for Rural Education at Orange is being developed. This will co-locate the university, technical college and high school on one campus.
- 3.2 Mixed views were expressed on these developments by both staff and students. On the one hand, some students indicated that they were not keen to lose the advantages that came from the size and prevailing ethos of the Faculty. Conversely, others expressed the opinion that bringing other programs into the faculty, such as Agricultural Science and Pharmacy, would benefit the campus, the region and the rural area. People who studied in the country were considered by the students to be more likely to remain there to work. Staff were keen for a period of stability in which they could reflect on and improve Faculty strategies.
- 3.2 The Review Team found that all parties were positive about the development of the Centre of Regional Education at Orange (CREO). Staff felt although it would initially bring disruptions there were challenges ahead in the integration of the Faculty capability-based program and the TAFE competency-based programs.

4 BENCHMARKING

- 4.1 Benchmarking of the Capability Program is undertaken with Alverno College, Wisconsin, USA. The Faculty told the Team that they are investigating ways of tracking this program with the University of South Australia. Informal benchmarking with Australian universities is accomplished by staff attendance at educational conferences and by the sharing of distance education programs. The Faculty considered that it would be difficult for them to formally benchmark with other Australian universities, since they were the only Rural Management Faculty within Australia.

Commendation 1

Benchmarking of the capability program with Alverno College, Wisconsin, USA, is highly commended.

Recommendation 1

The Review Team recommends that the Faculty should consider ways to externally benchmark units and courses (content, breadth, depth and challenge) and the quality of graduate outcomes. This may involve comparisons with degree programs with more than one university or college and could be both local and international.

5 CAPABILITY PROGRAM

- 5.1 The Capability program has been developed by the Faculty as a means of embedding the University Generic Attributes of Graduates into the curriculum. Internal undergraduate students are required to complete a portfolio showing their level of achievement against each of the capabilities before graduation. Students saw the practicality of compiling their portfolios and said that it made them think about their achievements against each of the capabilities. They also saw the relevance of the portfolio in the search for future employment.
- 5.3 However, the Review Team found that the program is not fully supported by all members of staff. Whereas some saw the program as a means of adding value to the course and encouraging students to think about and develop an understanding of certain issues, others thought that the Faculty should not expect students to hold specific values, beliefs or perspectives before they graduated³. The Team considered that limited support of the program by some staff is undermining the effectiveness of the program
- 5.4 Distance education students had not been involved in the pilot of the Capability Program, and staff were unclear as to how these students could be involved in the future. Staff informed the Review Team that they thought there could be problems in the area of collecting data, assessment and evaluation of portfolios. However, they thought it should be included in the education program for these students to achieve equity between internal and external modes of study.
- 5.5 Whilst there are indications that the Capability program has been piloted with some success, the Review Team feels that there is still some way to go in embedding the program into the curriculum and learning experiences of the students.

Commendation 2

The Review Team commends the Faculty on its positive approach to embedding the University Generic Attributes of Graduates into the curriculum through the development and implementation of the Capability Program.

Recommendation 2

The Review Team recommends further development of staff skills and understanding of the Capability Program within the Faculty. This will ensure that a coherent approach is adopted across all programs.

6 DISTANCE EDUCATION

- 6.1 The Faculty offers a range of external postgraduate and undergraduate courses through its comprehensive distance education program. The Review Team were interested in finding out the students' reasons for choosing this mode of study and what their experiences were, especially in terms of residential schools, resources and support.
- 6.2 They found that the postgraduate coursework students, in particular, appreciated the flexible nature of the program that allowed them to work and study simultaneously from their home location. They informed the Review Team that they appreciated the challenging curriculum and the supportive staff. The orientation program and residential schools for both undergraduate and postgraduate students were found to be beneficial as ways of meeting other students, making good friendships and getting to know lecturers.

³ Capability 7: To hold personal values, beliefs and ethics necessary for a sustainable and healthy planet. Capability 8: To hold a perspective which acknowledges local, national and international issues.

- 6.3 However, the Review Team also found that distance education students had more negative experiences than internal students in relation to accessibility of course information and material and staff. Both staff and students commented on the communication problems experienced by some distance education students. There was concern expressed by postgraduate coursework students about the currency of some of the material presented in the graduate certificate program and the level of material presented in the residential school.
- 6.4 Postgraduate coursework students informed the Team that they would appreciate being informed by the Faculty about the coverage and level of material in each of the residential schools, particularly if joint undergraduate and postgraduate schools were being held. Examples were provided of joint undergraduate and postgraduate schools where information was pitched at the undergraduate students and had already been covered by the postgraduate students in their bachelor degrees. Students told the Review Team that residential schools pitched at postgraduate level were exciting, challenging and useful.
- 6.5 Support for distance education students is provided through a distance education newsletter and personal contact from Student Support Services. Problems are identified at an early stage and students are advised of the extended semester option and provided with strategies for managing their workload. Staff told the Team that they considered that personal communication was a vital factor in the retention of distance education students. The Review Team concluded that support for the distance education program is coherent and systematic.

Commendation 3

The Review Team commends the Faculty on its systematic and coherent support system for the distance education program.

Recommendation 3

The Review Team recommends that the Faculty investigate ways of ensuring that the level of material presented in residential schools is commensurate with the student cohort involved, and that a mix of undergraduate and postgraduate material should be avoided where possible.

Recommendation 4

The Review Team recommends that the Faculty ensure that material presented in the graduate certificate programs is current and relevant to the course.

7 ONLINE LEARNING

- 7.1 The Faculty considered that WebWise, the Faculty developed online learning, was innovative and deepened the student experience both on and off campus. Each distance education unit has an online component, with some units in their third offering. Instructional Designers were responsible for the structure and delivery of all units. External units created and delivered through WebWise largely determined the design of internal units. *(See also Section 9.5)*
- 7.2 The Review Team found that postgraduate coursework students did not experience the quality interaction between staff and students on the Web that they expected. Students felt that it was often more effective to communicate with staff and other students by email than through WebWise. Some postgraduate students had positive experiences of using WebWise, using it to look at the contents of other units and gain exposure to the virtual university. However, in terms of assessment, they did not find WebWise very useful. Internal students reported limited use of the electronic elements of the units they were studying. The Review Team concluded that although web-based learning was in place, it did not effectively support learning across the Faculty.

Recommendation 5

The Review Team recommends that in order to improve the use of WebWise across the Faculty, good practice of WebWise should be spread throughout the Faculty.

8 RESEARCH-LED TEACHING

- 8.1 The Faculty is aware of the need to further develop their research culture and is taking steps to address this issue. New staff are mentored in their research and placed with established researchers to aid in the process. The Faculty is also working on a revision of its Research Management Plan. Two research centres have been established through research strength initiatives and more are planned. Staff workloads take into account staff preferences for either teaching or research. Members of staff are also being encouraged to complete their PhDs. The history and tradition in the Faculty of research and scholarship in teaching are evident in the teaching and learning material distributed to students. The in-house publication *Learning Matters* is used to communicate the results of this research within the Faculty. The Dean reported that a staff seminar had recently been given on teaching informed by research.
- 8.2 Staff advised the Review Team that they were aware of the need to work further on their research strengths but felt they needed guidance on how to achieve this. It was not clear to the Review Team that all staff understood what the University meant by research-led teaching. Some staff indicated that the practice of running a farm or consulting constituted research which informed their teaching.
- 8.3 Staff indicated to the Team that heavy workloads, particularly in first year, impacted on their ability to undertake research. They were often not teaching in their main subject area and had to endeavour to stay abreast of developments in a wide range of fields.
- 8.4 During their discussions with the Team, students demonstrated little awareness of the research strengths of the Faculty or how research was integrated into their curriculum.
- 8.5 The Teaching and Learning Plan did not reflect the full spectrum of development activity occurring at the Faculty and the plan should be revised to better reflect the priorities and activities described to the Team during the visit. The Review Team considered that research should also be made a focal point of teaching and learning plans and strategies.

Commendation 4

The Faculty is to be commended on the high level of debate on key aspects of learning, particularly teaching and assessment of graduate capabilities and for their research in this area. The in-house publication Learning Matters is an excellent means of communication.

Recommendation 6

Whilst there was an indication of a growing research culture and the building of research teams within the Faculty, possibly confined to a cluster of staff at this point, the Review Team feels that there is a need for better management of staff development, for example in the completion of PhDs and the recruitment of research performing staff. This will be essential to the successful expansion of the Faculty research profile.

Recommendation 7

The Review Team recommends that the Faculty consider ways of making research a focal point of their Teaching and Learning plans and strategies. It also recommends that the Faculty revise the Teaching and Learning Plan to better reflect the priorities and activities that were described during the visit.

Recommendation 8

The Review Team recommends that the Faculty actively plan changing the strategic directions of the Faculty to enhance staff opportunities for research and create an effective research culture.

9 QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

- 9.1 The Faculty reported that they had undergone a major revision of the undergraduate program in 1999, simultaneously with a major upheaval of staff. There had been a forty-five percent reduction in academic staff and a thirty percent reduction in the number of units offered. This restructuring had led to more commonality across courses, helping to raise standards. Staff saw this constant review of courses as an advantage.
- 9.2 Workloads, in particular for staff engaged in first year teaching, the wide range of teaching areas covered by some staff, the loss of staff expertise through retirement, and the resulting impact on content and curriculum relevance of units were all commented on by staff and students. Faculty informed the Review Team that they were reviewing current workloads in order to manage them more effectively.
- 9.3 Terms used by staff and students to describe teaching and learning within the Faculty included cooperation, consultation, common units and negotiation, consistent quality, integration of theory and management, and the accessibility of all staff. The view was expressed by staff that the small interdisciplinary nature of the Faculty provided them with opportunities to make innovations in teaching and learning practices, leading to the discovery of different perspectives which could then be used in their teaching practice.
- 9.4 Members of the Student Association Education Committee reported that this Committee provides avenues for undergraduate students to raise questions about the quality of teaching they receive. This committee includes representatives from each course and is considered by students to be open and willing to respond to problems. Individual schools have internal facilitation mechanisms through which concerns may be raised with staff and the Student Association Education Committee.
- 9.5 Staff informed the Review Team that they thought there was a high degree of accountability for external programs that flowed through to the internal programs. Boundaries between external and internal units were starting to blur. Some internal units had trialled the use of WebWise with success. Staff thought that the students appreciated the flexibility of being able to undertake some activities online. Students who fail internal units are offered the option of undertaking the same unit in external mode the following semester. *(See also Section 7)*
- 9.6 The flexibility of the delivery modes and duration of the programs, for example, the extended semester option for external students and the ability for internal students to take some external units, were perceived by students to be positive characteristics of the Faculty. However, staff told the Team that there were inherent problems in allowing students to undertake a mix of internal and external units of study. The Team considered that the mix of students and modes of study could present problems in learning, particularly in relation to feedback.
- 9.7 The Review Team found that teaching in the Faculty is informed by professional practice. Staff have a variety of consultancy and other industry experience that is fundamental to their academic work, in particular for the practical components of their unit offerings. It was not clear to the Team what percentage of staff had experience with consultancy or other industry links that involved teaching and research or were currently involved in such activities vis-à-vis the number of staff with or without industry links. *(See also Section 8)*

Commendation 5

The Review Team found that the size and prevailing ethos of the campus make it conducive for students to learn and interact with staff, and for staff to cooperate effectively in teaching and other duties.

10 ASSESSMENT

10.1 The Review Team was impressed with the Faculty's approach to assessment and feedback to students. It found that there was a consistent approach across the Faculty, and that constant monitoring of the rate of feedback and return of marked work to students. Distance education students were provided with the same level of feedback as internal students. Instructional designers play a role in ensuring that all units follow the same format, provided detailed assessment information, and they give guidance on marking requirements. Students thought that the staff provided clear guidance on assessment criteria and standards. The Review Team found that both staff and students used feedback as an integral part of learning in most units.

10.2 Marker's Handbook

10.2.1 The Review Team were told that the Marker's Handbook, provided to all staff (full-time, part-time, and casual), included advice and practical information on all matters pertaining to assessment, marking, feedback, rights of students and the responsibilities and obligations of the Faculty, unit coordinators and markers. This handbook is not provided to students.

10.2.2 Faculty informed the Team that the Client Services Department monitored compliance with the assessment and feedback process. In the case of distance education students, assignments were recorded when they arrived and when they were returned to students. If assignments were not returned to the student within fourteen days, the marker was alerted. Staff reported that internal students advised them when assignments were overdue for return.

Commendation 6

The Faculty should be commended for its approach to assessment and feedback. The Marker's Handbook is a good initiative that could be used as a model by other faculties. The mechanism for monitoring the rate of feedback and return of marked work to students is a strength and an example of good practice.

11 EVALUATION AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

11.1 The Review Team found that student evaluations within the Faculty are used to improve teaching and learning. Evaluation and quality improvement of all courses is a continuous process. The Faculty reported that, independent of the staff member responsible, from Semester One 2002, every unit of study would be evaluated every time it was offered. In addition staff members are required to evaluate their own units and provide information on the changes made resulting from student feedback. Students receive feedback through the Students Association Education Committee. This new policy has been designed to ensure that the results of student evaluations would be acted upon, and that students would be made aware that changes resulting from their evaluations were being addressed by the Faculty. The Team found that staff and students did not discuss the feedback together or consider how student evaluations would be used to improve units.

11.2 The Faculty reported to the Review Team that evaluations for distance education units were centrally embedded in a Faculty questionnaire, which included open questions targeting structure and content. There was no staff involvement in the collection of this information, which was returned centrally, copied and sent to relevant teaching staff by the Client Services Department. Instructional Designers

use the original evaluations to identify and correct problems within the unit. All evaluations are available for future revision of subjects.

- 11.3 Internal students told the Review Team that there had been changes to the way in which their feedback was collected. Forms were either distributed by email or by a staff member who was not the lecturer of the unit. They reported that since most of the comments concerned the problems of the courses, rather than the good points, and that not everyone completed the evaluations, they may present an unbalanced view. Students reported that although student ID numbers were used instead of names, they did not consider the evaluations to be anonymous. This created concerns amongst the undergraduate student body about possible repercussions following critical comments.
- 11.4 In the area of quality improvement, the Team was informed that information gained by Faculty representatives at University quality assurance workshops and committees was passed on to other members of the Faculty on a regular basis. The publication *Learning Matters* had recently contained information on performance indicators, the Faculty position on the indicators and where to find relevant information on the website.

Commendation 7

The Review Team commends the Faculty on its practice of open access to unit evaluation results and the way in which these are used to improve teaching and learning.

Recommendation 9

In following the practice of open access to student evaluations the Review Team recommends that the Faculty pay careful attention to resolve two existing problems:

- *Students report that most evaluations were not anonymous (as student ID numbers were provided), creating concern about possible repercussions following critical comments; and*
- *Staff and students did not discuss the feedback together, or consider how student evaluations are used to improve units.*

12 STUDENT PROGRESSION

- 12.1 The Review Team was interested in ascertaining what strategies the Faculty has in place to address acknowledged problems in the area of recruitment, progression and student retention, due in part to the low UAI cut-off. The Faculty reported that rigidity in application of the UAI for the past two years had resulted in improvement in the quality of students. They considered that the introduction of the Bachelor of Land Management (Ecological Agriculture) in 2002 provided them with the opportunity to diversify and expand the student base, and led the way to change in the curriculum.
- 12.2 The Review Team found that there were a number of resources in place within the Faculty which assisted students in their learning, and identified and monitored students at risk. These included the First Year Experience program, Learning Experience Week, and peer assisted tutoring in units at risk. The Faculty considered that it had consequently achieved a good learning environment for internal students.

12.2 First Year Experiences program

- 12.2.1 The First Year Experience program has been in place for a couple of years and the Faculty considered that it was proving beneficial. Through the program constant monitoring of students identifies those in need of assistance and they are directed to relevant resources. Faculty reported that the performance of students during 2001 had led to academic input into the orientation program and the management of residences to make them more conducive to learning.

12.2.2 Students told the Team that they found the program very welcome, helpful and a valuable introduction to Faculty life for the first year students. Students in later years appreciated the opportunities afforded through the program to help first year students in various management projects.

12.3 Learning experience week

12.3.1 Learning Experience week was valued by the students. They told the Team that this, together with the First Year Experience program, helped with the transition from school to university. Seminars were held on writing styles and examinations. In addition numeracy and literacy tests were held during this week through which dyslexic students and others in need of assistance were identified. Students told the Review Team that the open communication paths identified during this week were vital and helped with their learning processes.

12.4 Peer-assisted tutoring

12.4.1 The Faculty informed the Review Team that peer-assisted tutoring is used with units of study that are considered to be at risk, rather than students that are at risk. It has identified units which include examinations as an area in which there is a low confidence factor in the student cohort, and has introduced a scheme whereby third year students mentor second year students in the skills needed to pass these units. Staff thought that students valued this mentoring and saw it as an important part of their success.

12.5 Identifying distance education students at risk

12.5.1 The Review Team were informed that personal communication was a vital factor in the retention and identification of distance students at risk. Students are contacted regularly and provided with advice on workload management. The extended semester option is offered to students who are experiencing difficulties in completion of assignments. It was not clear to the Review Team whether external students had a good understanding of how to access help when needed.

Commendation 8

The Faculty is to be congratulated on the resources that are in place to assist students in their learning, and to identify, monitor and counsel students at risk. This includes First Year Experience program, Learning Experience Week, and peer-assisted tutoring for units at risk. This could be a model for other faculties that have a similar profile in terms of UAI entry requirements.

13 RESEARCH SUPERVISION AND TRAINING

13.1 The Faculty is a new Faculty within the University of Sydney and is in the process of developing its research supervision and training program. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of postgraduate research students in recent years, with seven new PhD candidates commencing in 2002. The first PhD from the Faculty graduated at the end of 2000. The Faculty has identifiable strategies in place to assist and mentor staff to become effective supervisors of research students. Staff are encouraged to undertake the Institute for Teaching and Learning postgraduate supervision workshop either online or at Camperdown campus. The number of staff able to supervise research students is increasing.

13.2 Postgraduate research students chose to study at the Faculty for a number of reasons, including proximity to home location, personal contacts, resources, expertise of staff, and the supervisors for their particular projects. They reported that they had very positive experiences and received good support in terms of resources. Their supervisors were knowledgeable in their research areas and

always approachable. Students appreciated being treated as staff by the Faculty. They valued the departmental research seminars and the opportunities available to inter-relate with other members of the research student community. However, it was not clear to the Review Team whether there was a seminar series which all students attended, or whether there were other common activities or opportunities for interaction among the students. Students told the Review Team that the program would continue to be successful if the Faculty kept the current format. Postgraduate research students thought that the fostering of relations between Orange and the main campus at Camperdown would be beneficial to the student cohort, and a task that SUPRA might like to consider.

- 13.3 The Review Team found that postgraduate students and supervisors were unaware of University programs to support the postgraduate training experience. The Faculty has yet to adopt and implement the College of Science and Technology ten-point plan on research training. The Faculty was aware of aspects of this plan that needed attention, in particular the implementation of a formal induction program for postgraduate research students. Due to the previously small number of research students a formal induction program had not previously been necessary as staff had been able to induct students on an informal basis.
- 13.4 Undergraduate students reported that targeted research skills training was incorporated in two compulsory semester length undergraduate units. They considered that this training useful, not only for their undergraduate studies but also for possible postgraduate work.

Commendation 9

The Review Team commends the Faculty on the growth in the numbers of research postgraduate students, and the satisfaction of students with their experiences.

Recommendation 10

The Review Team recommends that the Faculty adopt and implement the College of Science and Technology ten-point plan on research training. They also recommend that the Faculty investigates the introduction of common activities and opportunities for interaction among postgraduate research students, including a common seminar series.

14 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

- 14.1 The Review Team considered the results of the interviews, the Self-Evaluation Report, and the Teaching and Learning Plan and concluded that the Faculty of Rural Management was following good practices in the areas of the embedding of University Generic Attributes of Graduates through the Faculty Capability program; benchmarking of the Capability program; support for distance education; debate on key aspects of teaching and learning, the provision of a conducive learning environment for students; assessment and feedback, including the Marker's Handbook; open access to evaluation results; monitoring and support for students at risk, particularly the First Year Experience and peer-assisted mentoring programs; and research supervision and training.
- 14.2 The Review Team recommends that the Faculty give consideration to improving practices in external benchmarking of units and courses; development of staff skills and understanding of the Capability Program; level of material covered during distance education residential schools; spreading of WebWise throughout the Faculty; staff development in relation to research and research training; confidentiality and feedback of student evaluations; and implementation of the College of Science and Technology ten-point plan for research training.
- 14.3 These findings were communicated to the Dean of the Faculty of Rural Management through the Summary Report of the Findings of the Review Team which was sent to the Faculty on 26 June 2002.

15 AREAS OF GOOD PRACTICE (COMMENDATIONS)

Based on the Self-Evaluation Report, the Teaching and Learning Plan and the findings of the Review visit, the following areas of good practice in teaching, learning and research training have been identified within the Faculty of Rural Management.

Commendation 1

Benchmarking of the capability program with Alverno College is highly commended.
(See Section 4)

Commendation 2

The Review Team commends the Faculty on its positive approach to embedding the University Generic Attributes of Graduates into the curriculum through the development and implementation of the Capability Program. (See Section 5)

Commendation 3

The Review Team commends the Faculty on its systematic and coherent support system for the distance education program. (See Section 6)

Commendation 4

The Faculty is to be commended on the high level of debate on key aspects of learning, particularly teaching and assessment of graduate capabilities and for their research in this area. The in-house publication Learning Matters is an excellent means of communication.
(See Section 8)

Commendation 5

The Review Team found that the size and prevailing ethos of the campus make it conducive for students to learn and interact with staff, and for staff to cooperate effectively in teaching and other duties. (See Section 9)

Commendation 6

The Faculty should be commended for its approach to assessment and feedback. The Marker's Handbook is a good initiative that could be used as a model by other faculties. The mechanism for monitoring the rate of feedback and return of marked work to students is a strength and an example of good practice. (See Section 10.2)

Commendation 7

The Review Team commends the Faculty on its practice of open access to unit evaluation results and the way in which these are used to improve teaching and learning. (See Section 11)

Commendation 8

The Faculty is to be congratulated on the resources that are in place to assist students in their learning, and to identify, monitor and counsel students at risk. This includes First Year Experience program, Learning Experience Week, and peer-assisted tutoring for units at risk. This could be a model for other faculties that have a similar profile in terms of UAI entry requirements. (See Section 12.5)

Commendation 9

The Review Team commends the Faculty on the growth in the numbers of research postgraduate students, and the satisfaction of students with their experiences. *(See Section 13)*

16 AREAS OF CONSIDERATION FOR IMPROVEMENT (RECOMMENDATIONS)

Recommendation 1

The Review Team recommends that the Faculty should consider ways to externally benchmark units and courses (content, breadth, depth and challenge) and the quality of graduate outcomes. This may involve comparisons with degree programs with more than one university or college and could be both local and international. *(See Section 4)*

Recommendation 2

The Review Team recommends further development of staff skills and understanding of the Capability Program within the Faculty. This will ensure that a coherent approach is adopted across all programs. *(See Section 5)*

Recommendation 3

The Review Team recommends that the Faculty investigate ways of ensuring that the level of material presented in residential schools is commensurate with the student cohort involved, and that a mix of undergraduate and postgraduate material should be avoided where possible. *(See Section 6)*

Recommendation 4

The Review Team recommends that the Faculty ensure that material presented in the graduate certificate programs be current and relevant to the course. *(See Section 6)*

Recommendation 5

The Review Team recommends that in order to improve the use of WebWise across the Faculty, good practice of WebWise should be spread throughout the Faculty. *(See Section 7)*

Recommendation 6

Whilst there was an indication of a growing research culture and the building of research teams within the Faculty, possibly confined to a cluster of staff at this point, the Review Team feels that there is a need for better management of staff development, for example in the completion of PhDs and the recruitment of research performing staff. This will be essential to the successful expansion of the Faculty research profile. *(See Section 8)*

Recommendation 7

The Review Team recommends that the Faculty consider ways of making research a focal point of their Teaching and Learning plans and strategies. It also recommends that the Faculty revise the Teaching and Learning Plan to better reflect the priorities and activities that were described during the visit. *(See Section 8)*

Recommendation 8

The Review Team recommends that the faculty actively plan changing the strategic directions of the faculty to enhance staff opportunities for research and create an effective research culture. (*See Section 8*)

Recommendation 9

In following the practice of open access to student evaluations the Review Team recommends that the Faculty pay careful attention to resolve two existing problems:

- Students report that most evaluations were not anonymous, creating concern about possible repercussions following critical comments; and
- Staff and students did not discuss the feedback together, or consider how student evaluations are used to improve units.

(*See Section 11*)

Recommendation 10

The Review Team recommends that the Faculty adopt and implement the College of Science and Technology ten-point plan on research training. They also recommend that the Faculty investigate the introduction of common activities and opportunities for interaction among postgraduate research students, including a common seminar series. (*See Section 13*)

Anne Reynolds
Chair, Review Team
Deputy Chair, Academic Board

1 October 2002

**FACULTY OF RURAL MANAGEMENT, ORANGE
ACADEMIC BOARD FACULTY REVIEW VISIT****MONDAY 20 MAY 2002****SUMMARY REPORT OF THE FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW TEAM****1. INTRODUCTION**

The Academic Board Review Team visited the Faculty of Rural Management at Orange on Monday 20 May 2002 to review and evaluate academic planning and quality assurance systems within the Faculty. Interviews were held with the following groups:

- Dean Professor Kevin Parton and senior academic staff
- Undergraduate students
- Postgraduate research students
- Postgraduate coursework students (by teleconference)
- Faculty academic and general staff

There was also an open session at the end of the visit at which staff and students were invited to come and speak to the Review Team individually.

This report is a short summary of the main findings of the Review Team as reported to the Dean of the Faculty, Professor Kevin Parton, at the end of the visit.

2. GENERAL COMMENTS ABOUT CHANGES IN THE FACULTY

- i. Staff and students reported in a mixed way about past, current and future changes in the Faculty. Responses from internal students indicated that they were keen not to lose the advantages to their learning which came from the size and prevailing ethos of the Faculty. Bringing other programs to the Faculty, such as Agricultural Science and Pharmacy were viewed as being of benefit to the campus, the region and the rural areas since people who studied in the country are more likely to stay there to work.
- ii. Staff were keen for a period of stability in which they could reflect and improve Faculty strategies.

3. AREAS OF GOOD PRACTICE**a. Graduate Attributes, Aims and Outcomes**

- i. The Faculty is to be congratulated on its positive approach to embedding the University Generic Attributes of Graduates into the curriculum through the development and implementation of the Capability Program. In particular, benchmarking of the program with Alverno College is highly commended.

b. Assessment

- i. The Faculty should be commended for its approach to assessment and feedback. Students and staff

use feedback as an integral part of learning in most units. The Marker's Handbook is a good initiative that could be used as a model of good practice for other faculties. Mechanism for monitoring the rate of feedback and return of marked work to students is a strength and an example of excellent practice.

c. Evaluation

- i. Student evaluations are used to improve teaching and learning. The practice of open access to unit evaluation results is commended.
- ii. The Faculty reported that there were to be substantial changes to the policy on student evaluation of teaching in particular, issues of confidentiality, and in the collection and analysis of data. This would ensure that the results of student evaluations were acted upon and that students are aware that changes resulting from their evaluation are being addressed by the Faculty.

d. Research led teaching

- i. The history and tradition in the Faculty of research and scholarship in teaching are special strengths, and well reflected in the teaching and learning material distributed to students. The Faculty is to be commended on the high level of debate on key aspects of learning, particularly teaching and assessment of graduate capabilities and for their research in this area. The in-house publication *Learning Matters* is an excellent means of communication.
- ii. Targeted research skills training was identified in two compulsory semester-length undergraduate units and there was an awareness among students of the usefulness of this training, not only for their undergraduate studies but also for possible postgraduate work.

e. Research supervision and training

- i. The Faculty has identifiable strategies to assist and mentor staff to become effective supervisors of research students. The research seminars have a positive impact on students who attend and could be extended across the Faculty. It was not clear to the Review Team whether there was a seminar series which all postgraduate students attended, or whether there were other common activities/opportunities for interaction among postgraduate research students.
- ii. There has been a dramatic recent growth in the numbers of research postgraduate students. The students seem well satisfied with their experiences as postgraduate students.
- iii. The Faculty is aware of the Intellectual Property policy relating to student research and the need to plan a response for when the situation arises in the future. It was not apparent to the Team that students are aware of the implications of the policy for their research work.

f. Student progression

- i. The Faculty is to be congratulated on the resources that are in place to assist students in their learning, and to identify, monitor and counsel students at risk. This includes First Year Experience, Learning Experience Week, and peer-assisted tutoring in units at risk. This could be a model for other faculties that have a similar student profile in terms of UAI entry requirements.
- ii. The Faculty has a series of strategies ready to implement in terms of recruitment of a wider student base. The new degree Land Management (Ecological Agriculture) is leading the change in curriculum and broadening the student base.

g. Teaching and Learning Quality

- i. The size and prevailing ethos of the campus make it conducive for students to learn and interact with staff, and for staff to cooperate effectively in teaching and other duties.
- ii. The flexibility of the delivery modes and duration of programs, for example the extended semester option for external students, were perceived by students to be positive characteristics of the Faculty.
- iii. Teaching is informed by professional practice. Staff have a variety of consultancy and other industry experience that is fundamental to their academic work, in particular for the practical components of their unit offerings. It was not clear to the Review Team what percentage of staff had experience with consultancy or other industry links that involved teaching/research or were currently engaged in such activities vis-à-vis the number of staff involved in research with or without industry links.

4. AREAS OF CONSIDERATION FOR IMPROVEMENT

a. Graduate Attributes, Aims and Outcomes

- i. While there were indications that the Capability Program has been piloted with some success, there was still some way to go on embedding the program in the curriculum/ learning experience. A major obstacle appears to be the fact that distance education students have not been made part of the pilot, and it was not yet clear how the program could be extended to include them. Further development of staff skills and understanding of the Capability Program is needed to ensure a coherent approach is adopted across all programs. Partial support by the Faculty is undermining the effectiveness of the program.
- ii. The Faculty should consider ways to externally benchmark units and courses (content, breadth, depth, challenge) and the quality of graduate outcomes. This may involve comparisons with degree programs from more than one university or college, and could be both local and international.
- iii. Distance education students had more negative experiences than internal students in relation to accessibility of course information and material and staff. There was some concern expressed by postgraduate distance education students about the currency of some of the material presented in the graduate certificate program, the level of material presented in the residential school, and the lack of interactivity in their experience of using WebWise.

b. Evaluation

- i. In following the practice of open access to student evaluations, the Faculty needs to pay careful attention in order to resolve two existing problems:
 - Students report that most evaluations were not anonymous, creating concern about possible repercussions following critical comments.
 - Staff and students did not discuss the feedback together, or consider how student evaluations are used to improve units.

c. Research-led teaching

- i. Students have little awareness of the research strengths of the Faculty or how research was integrated into their program.
- ii. Whilst there was an indication of a growing research culture and the building of research teams in the Faculty, possibly confined to a cluster of staff at this point, there is a need for better management of staff development, for example in the completion of PhDs, the recruitment of research performing

staff, and the development of supervisory skills. This will be essential to the successful expansion of the Faculty research profile.

- iii. Research needs to be a focal point of Faculty teaching and learning plans and strategies
- iv. An active plan is needed to change the strategic directions of the Faculty to enhance staff opportunities for research and to create an effective research culture.
- v. It was not clear to the Review Team that all staff understood what the University meant by research-led teaching. Some staff indicated that running a farm constituted undertaking research which informed their teaching.

d. Research supervision and training

- i. Postgraduate students and supervisors were unaware of University programs to support the postgraduate training experience, and the Faculty had yet to adopt and implement the College of Science and Technology 10-point plan on research training.

e. Student Progression

- i. It is not clear whether external students had a good understanding of how to access help when needed.

f. Teaching and Learning Quality

- i. Workloads, in particular for staff engaged in Year 1 teaching, the wide range of teaching areas covered by some staff, the loss of staff expertise through retirements etc, and resulting impact on content and curriculum relevance of units, were all commented on by staff and students.
- ii. The mix of theory and practice in different programs was not readily understood by all students.
- iii. Strategies outlined in the Teaching and Learning Plan did not reflect the full spectrum of developmental activity occurring at the Faculty. The plan should be revised to better reflect the priorities/activities that were described during the visit.
- iv. Internal students reported limited use of the electronic elements of the units they studied. It was reported to the team that the structuring and delivery of all units was largely determined by external units created and delivered through WebWise.
- v. Web-based teaching was in place but did not effectively support learning across the Faculty. Distance students did not experience the quality interaction between staff and students on the Web that they expected, suggesting that the use of WebWise is not well aligned with other teaching/ learning/ assessment activities.

Anne Reynolds
Chair, Review Team
Deputy Chair, Academic Board

27 June 2002

APPENDIX TWO**LIST OF DOCUMENTATION SUPPLIED BY THE FACULTY**

- 1 Self-Evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning in the Faculty of Rural Management (see Appendix Three)
- 2 Faculty of Rural Management Operational Plan for 2002
- 3 Review of the Faculty of Rural Management's achievements to date with its Teaching and Learning Operational Plan (July 2000 to January 2002 (see Appendix Four)
- 4 *Learning Matters at Orange* 2002 issues (internal publication)
- 5 Faculty and campus structure
- 6 Responsibilities of an Instructional Designer (more recently designated as an Educational Developer)
- 7 Capability program for third year students
- 8 Capabilities 1-9: Background on each of the capabilities
- 9 Example of a Capability Portfolio submission
- 10 Capabilities, Constructivism and Portfolios – working towards a fresh approach to curriculum design in management education
- 11 Trialing a graduate outcomes capability framework: an evaluation
- 11 Faculty of Rural Management Handbook 2002
- 12 The Marker's Handbook

Self-Evaluation of the Quality of Teaching and Learning in The Faculty of Rural Management—2001

Introduction

The Faculty of Rural Management offers the following advanced diplomas and undergraduate degrees: Management, Farm Management, Business (Agricultural Commerce), Rural Business Administration, Horticultural Management, Viticultural Management, Equine Business Management and Land Management. A new advanced diploma and degree program in Land Management (Ecological Agriculture) is currently being prepared for introduction in 2002. Postgraduate certificates, diplomas and masters are offered in Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Management Studies. Students may also enrol in an MPhil or PhD program.

Responsibility for the management of undergraduate teaching and learning lies with the Associate Dean (Undergraduate Studies and Educational Development) Mr Chris Morgan. Postgraduate courses are the responsibility of Mr Basil Baldwin, Associate Dean (Postgraduate Studies). Professor David Kemp (Associate Dean, Research) has responsibility for the Faculty's research students.

It is important to realise that The Faculty of Rural Management supports highly flexible delivery of learning to its students. Most courses may be studied on-campus, by distance education or a mix of the two. Enrolment statistics for March 31, 2001 indicated 372 (335 EFTSU) internal students and 669 (244 EFTSU) distance education students.

The Faculty is in the process of implementing its Teaching and Learning Operational Plan (July 2000 - January 2002). This self-evaluation has provided an opportunity to review progress and respond to the seven topic areas recommended for comment in the Guidelines for Academic Quality Assurance Systems (pp. 19 - 20).

1. How does the faculty ensure that each course and unit 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.

Course and unit aims and learning outcomes must be approved by the Faculty; changes to these must also have Faculty acceptance. The documentation resulting from Faculty approval provides a set of Register Unit Outlines (RUOs) that represent the official Faculty record of each unit on offer. Teaching staff are required to ensure that the units they present comply with the RUOs.

Courses and units undergo revisions from time to time as the need arises. For example, the Bachelor of Business (Agricultural Commerce, the Bachelor of Management and the Bachelor of Rural Business Administration) curricula and the units related to "Agronomy" are currently under review. It might be beneficial to introduce a system, in future, whereby all courses and units undergo a regular review process, (at least every five years) since a few units have not been updated.

New internal students spend approximately four hours during Orientation Week with their Course Coordinator who uses this time to discuss course aims, learning outcomes, the structure of the course, assessment processes and broad content areas. Students also receive Faculty Handbooks that cover similar information and a Student Unit Information booklet (SUI) for every unit they study that details aims, learning outcomes, capabilities, assessment and other matters.

b) *Ways in which relations between generic and disciplinary skills in the curriculum are monitored.*

FRM has developed its own set of nine "Capabilities" based initially on the University's "Graduate Attributes" but customised and further refined for the students this faculty enrolls. Capabilities were first introduced in 1999 on a three year trial and will be reviewed during second semester 2001. Unit Coordinators are required to list the capabilities and the level at which they are covered in their Student Unit Information booklets supplied to students during Week 1 of semester. Staff have been urged to ensure that the capabilities are fully integrated into the discipline in every unit, particularly in assessment procedures. Staff development has been provided and two staff visited Alverno College in Wisconsin, USA, to attend a week-long workshop about "Abilities", the Alverno equivalent. Students are required to present a Capability Portfolio as a graduation requirement. These portfolios are evaluated by a small panel of academics and a representative from industry and involves an interview process. A Capability Coordinator was appointed in 2000 and is responsible for the program. Academic Advisors, if resources permit, assist students to consider their achievement of capabilities and the development of individual portfolios. The three-year trial has been evaluated by an external evaluation expert who has presented interim reports for 1999 and 2000.

Despite an enormous amount of work to integrate capabilities across the various disciplines the innovation continues to have, at best, a lukewarm reception from many students and some staff. Important issues have yet to be resolved.

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

Constructive alignment between learning objectives, content and assessment is recognised as an important educational principle for ensuring intended learning outcomes are achieved across all units. Two instructional designers play a major role in monitoring constructive alignment. Most units are evaluated annually by students and in some cases the evaluation instruments specifically ask students to report on how well they felt they achieved the learning outcomes. This emphasis on the achievement of LOs when evaluating should be fostered. Some staff use the ITL surveys regularly.

d) *Methods for providing coherence between units of study and courses.*

All FRM undergraduate courses consist of three categories of units: core units, course selection units and optional units. Core units are mandatory since they are considered essential to the achievement of the course objectives. Course selection units, while not mandatory, are highly relevant to further study and achievement of course objectives. Students are required to select a given number of course selection units from the range on offer. Through this system of core and course selection units a high degree of coherence is maintained between units studied and course aims.

The Faculty is currently debating a return to a system of 'majors' and 'minors' that, if adopted, would be likely to contribute further to coherence between units and courses.

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?**

Teaching staff are encouraged to attend conferences to stay abreast of current disciplinary research and/or conferences dealing with emerging developments in what constitutes effective learning and teaching. For example, six of 31 fulltime academics will be attending the 15th Biennial Forum of the Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia (ODLAA) in Sydney in September. One person is co-convenor of the Forum, another is a member of the Forum Planning Committee and three are presenting papers.

Staff incorporate current research findings into the teaching of their units in many cases. However, a check of the dates of the recommended readings in some units reveals that these have not been updated in accordance with the latest theory and practice. In some units this matter needs attention.

The presence of a very well informed staff educationally (45% have educational qualifications) ensures that current debate on educational matters is prevalent. Weekly seminars sometimes are devoted to matters of pedagogy and there is an impressive array of teaching techniques in use (e.g. tours, mentor schemes, contract learning, WebWise, online learning, praxis and well developed distance education programs). Faculty Teaching Excellence Awards have been operating for some years and will now be linked with the University Awards and the National Teaching Excellence Awards. An in-house publication, *Learning Matters*, addresses a range of educational issues on a regular basis. The Faculty Learning Committee meets monthly or bi-monthly and stimulates educational debate and organises staff development activities.

The WebCT group (WebWISE) works effectively as a change agent in encouraging the integration and development of online teaching across all undergraduate and postgraduate units. In October 2000, a Working Party was established to investigate and provide recommendations on strategies to foster the further development of quality learning within the Faculty. This report was completed early this year. It is hoped that the newly appointed Dean will move on some of the recommendations in due course.

The above initiatives all contribute to the enhancement of FRM's undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Whereas, the educational input is perceived to be strong, there may be weaknesses in a few discipline areas where staff are not actively engaged in research or well read at the cutting edge of their discipline.

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.***

A major emphasis was placed on "Assessment as Learning" in 1999 as a staff development program (Professor Nightingale, from UNSW led this program). Workshops were held and Action Learning Groups formed. As a result assessment procedures have been reviewed by many staff. Instructional Designers (IDs) also assist staff to ensure that constructive alignment between assessment and intended learning outcomes exists in their units. Occasionally problems are encountered where students are clearly not achieving the intended LOs and IDs are then asked to intervene to suggest ways of rectifying the situation.

b) ***Methods for ensuring that assessment practices and standards are fair and equitable.***

A faculty publication, *The Markers' Handbook* is provided to all teaching staff. This excellent booklet, updated last year, provides valuable advice and practical examples of such assessment

matters as:

- being an effective marker
- setting assessment criteria
- examples of grade standards
- giving constructive feedback
- rights of students
- responsibilities and obligations of the Faculty
- responsibilities and obligations of unit coordinators
- responsibilities and obligations of markers

As a result of the above initiatives staff have no excuse for not being fully conversant with what constitutes effective and fair assessment procedures.

Nevertheless, assessment problems are sometimes encountered and various measures need to be taken to better monitor assessment effectiveness. In June, the Student Association Education Committee complained that there was an excessive workload (assignments and examinations) in the last two or three weeks of semester. This situation needs careful monitoring and possible action as a proliferation of assessment items is not conducive to quality performance and may lead to surface learning only.

Lecturers are required to provide students with explicit marking criteria for all assignments (The Markers' Guide, 2000:12). There is some doubt, however, as to how thoroughly this is observed by some staff. Again, a monitoring process would be helpful. It is usual practice for staff working in team teaching situations to discuss marking criteria and their application in order to standardise marking and the awarding of grades.

A clearly explained appeals policy is in place for any students who feel they have been unfairly assessed. This policy and associated procedures are detailed in the Faculty's Handbook.

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

Lecturers responsible for marking external assignments aim to turn these assignments around within three working days. This process is monitored and lecturers who are two weeks overdue in their marking receive reminders. If three weeks elapse the academic's supervisor is notified with the expectation that the matter will be investigated. The number of assignments being sent and marked electronically is gradually increasing and this further reduces the turnaround time.

In the past, emphasis has been placed on the efficacy of feedback but it may be timely to revisit this matter. There is no monitoring of the actual feedback supplied to students.

d) *How information from assessments is used to improve teaching and learning.*

Many teaching staff use assessment results to reflect on their teaching. Where weaknesses are detected steps are taken to rectify matters. The emphasis on continuous assessment, whereby assignments can be used in a formative way, greatly assists this approach. Final examinations are used sparingly and only when there are strong educational arguments to suggest this is the best assessment method available.

At the conclusion of every semester, the appropriate Associate Dean reviews all grades that have been recommended by the teaching staff. Particular care is taken to ensure that students have been assessed in a manner that is considered fair and equitable. The Associate Dean will, however, occasionally come across anomalies which are then investigated (e.g. abnormally high failure rate in a unit) in order to intervene to improve the teaching/learning of the unit next time it is offered.

e) ***Methods for ensuring that students understand the assessment processes.***

It is normal practice for lecturers to spend classtime to discuss assignment expectations. Particular care is taken to provide external students with full details about their assignments using the following headings:

- Introduction (purpose of assignment)
- Preliminary study/activity
- The task
- Resources needed
- Presentation
- How your assignment will be assessed (criteria)

Many staff consult with the Faculty's two Instructional Designers when planning their assessment strategies.

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.***

In 1999 the Faculty adopted the following definition of learning:

“Learning is a creative, active and lifelong process entailing the combination of information and experience which results in the construction of meaning”.

The Faculty of Rural Management teaching staff endeavour to uphold this ideal and the curricula and approaches to learning reflect the adoption of more constructivist thinking. Over recent years there has been a sustained move towards encouraging deep level, student-centered learning that is both relevant and experiential. This underlying philosophy is reinforced through staff development activities, the Faculty's Learning Committee, the increasing number of staff completing qualifications in higher education and a lively interest in educational research.

Five academics are presently engaged in an Australia-wide research project that is exploring the determination of levels at Universities. This work, in effect, will also monitor the breadth, depth, variety and challenge of the learning activities required of students studying any FRM units. Two models have been established to enable the review and will be trialled shortly.

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

Interesting examples of the Faculty's theoretical stance on learning and monitoring of the achievement of learning outcomes are reflected in the adoption of WebWise.

WebWise is an attempt to use emerging technology to enhance the learning experiences of distance education students. All external students (provided they have access) can now view their Student Unit Information booklet, use a Forum site and have private mail using WebWise. However, some teaching staff are now integrating WebWise into their teaching methodology by encouraging students to engage in collaborative learning, completing group assignments and accessing sophisticated resources online. These innovative teaching strategies are constantly being evaluated and the results reported at staff seminars.

Arising from this work is the proposal that the Faculty create a Multi-media Production Unit.

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

A number of methods are used to monitor the quality of teaching including the following:

- Senior staff mentor new and junior staff (sometimes rather ad hoc though!)
- Instructional designers assist staff requesting peer reviews
- Student unit evaluations are conducted annually for most units
- The Faculty’s Learning Committee takes a leadership role in encouraging discussion and the formulation of policies relating to sound educational practices
- The Curriculum Coordinators’ Group (CCG), a working party that reviews curriculum matters and answers to the Learning Committee
- The Student Association Education Committee’s regular feedback to Faculty
- The presence of student representatives on relevant committees to provide student perspectives
- Use of the Teaching Performance Indicators

Teaching staff are kept informed of what constitutes quality teaching through such means as:

- *Learning Matters* (an in-house publication)
- Seminars and Workshops
- Encouragement to attend Educational Conferences
- Encouragement to undertake research into educational practices and subsequently publish
- Encouragement to continue their studies in higher education.

d) ***How the Faculty supports, recognises and rewards good teaching.***

The Faculty supports, recognises and rewards good teaching by:

- Providing a Faculty Teaching Excellence Award
- Ensuring that from 2001 the Faculty Teaching Excellence Award will be aligned with the University’s and the National Teaching Excellence Awards
- Ensuring quality teaching is an essential part of academic promotion.

Finally, it should be noted, how well the Faculty of Rural Management performed vis a vis other faculties with regard to the relevant TPIs for 2000.

Category of TPI	Score	Faculty Ranking
3. Student Course Evaluation Questionnaire (SCEQ) “Good Teaching Skills”	+ 9.4	3rd
8. Graduate Careers Council of Australia (GCCA) “Good Teaching Skills”	+ 9.8	1st

Although being ranked so highly on these two indicators (17 Faculties) is pleasing, the Faculty is experiencing serious deficiencies according to other indicators (see number five below).

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.***

Two TPIs specifically address student progression rates. In 2000, FRM recorded the poorest results in

the University for both:

1. Student Progress Rate: The ratio of the passed subject load (EFTSU) to the total certified subject load aggregated to Faculty level and expressed as a percentage. Average of last two years of data . . .78%
2. First to second year retention. Retention within the University of Sydney, derived from SIDs, expressed as a percentage. Average of last two years of data . . .64%

These results are distressing. Further analysis revealed the mean UAI score of on-campus students commencing their studies in 2000 was 62.53 (The University regards students with a UAI score <85 as being “at risk”). 40% had studied only 2 unit ‘Contemporary English’ and nearly 70% “Maths in Society”.

The great majority of FRM students are from rural or isolated communities, a fact that needs to be fully acknowledged when any comparisons are made. Many are studying by distance education which consistently records higher attrition rates than on-campus cohorts.

It was resolved in 2000 that a special program “Improving the first year on-campus undergraduate experience” should commence in 2001. Funding of \$65,000 was consequently received from the Teaching Improvement Fund. The Program goals are:

- To raise the academic performance of on-campus first year students. By the end of 2002 the pass rate to be at least 85% and the retention into second year to be at least 80%.
- To assist staff involved with on-campus first year students to be more effective lecturers.
- To lift the satisfaction-levels of on-campus first year students such that the FRM in Orange enjoys a higher community profile and eventually increases enrolments.

Strategies employed to achieve these goals include:

- Appointment of a FYE Coordinator, a Learning Skills Advisor (2 days a week) and a Web-based Programmer (2 days a week).
- Development of a series of diagnostic tests for written English, numeracy and computing.
- Introduction of an intensive first week skills development program.
- Close liaison with first year Unit Coordinators regarding individual student progress.
- Integration of study skills into the first year curriculum and assessment procedures.
- Design and development of interactive web-based packages for introduction in 2002.

Early results are promising, however, it is too early to provide any empirical evidence of improved progression rates.

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

In addition to the FYE initiative, other arrangements are in place to support students. These include the provision of assistance on an individual basis by the Student Learning Advisor (since the start of the First Year Experience program referrals have increased 70%) and the giving of relevant seminars to students at opportune times. A Student Counsellor is also available to assist with personal problems.

Reduced staffing resources have made it difficult for the Faculty to maintain the same level of service to external students.

Student exit interviews are conducted where possible, however, many students “disappear” (particularly distance education students) without being appropriately questioned as to their reasons for departing. A better understanding of why students leave might provide FRM with data on which it might act to retain more students.

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

The Faculty of Rural Management is a *new* Faculty within the University of Sydney and is developing its research supervision and training program. The first PhD from the Faculty graduated at the end of 2000. There are 16 postgraduate research students within the Faculty, nine are doing PhDs. In addition, the coursework Masters students are doing small research projects, as are the few Honours students. At this stage only five staff members have a significant role in supervising research students.

a) Arrangements for ensuring high standards of supervision.

- All postgraduate students are required to prepare a research proposal within the first six months that is reviewed by supervisors and external reviewers. This document outlines the program of research and approximate timetable, which supervisors can then use to monitor progress. The Board of Research and Postgraduate Studies then considers reviewers' reports and may require changes to planned work.
- All students are reviewed annually and have the opportunity to discuss with their supervisors and the Associate Dean (Research) any issues of concern. The review process consists of the Annual Report Form as well as the Departmental Review Meeting.
- New supervisors discuss with the Associate Dean (Research) their role.
- The aim is to have at least two supervisors for each postgraduate student (one principal and one associate as per University policy)—often there are three, of which two are likely to be from external research organisations. We have a program of bringing in experts as adjunct, visiting and honorary appointments to the Faculty so that they can help develop our research profile and supervise postgraduate students. Part of this program involves developing connections with relevant CRCs.
- Supervisors are reminded of the training programs in place for supervisors at the ITL. To date one staff member has completed the program on postgraduate supervision and he has more regular meetings with his students than others and this is probably a reason for his higher success rate—he regularly asks students to rate how he is performing as a supervisor. We would like to encourage more staff to do such courses, but this will depend upon them assuming a role in supervising postgraduate students.
- The College of Science & Technology has developed a series of protocols to improve the postgraduate experience for students. These protocols have been distributed among relevant staff and are used as a basis for discussions. We would like all supervisors to adopt them as a relevant checklist. The protocols can be used as a basis for discussing performance with managers.

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

- Progress of all postgraduate students is considered every two months by the Board of Research & Postgraduate Studies with regard to the stage they are at, progress of reviews and any other information available.
- Supervisors are encouraged to regularly discuss progress with students and to identify any problems. Identifying problems can be difficult with the part-time/distance research students who don't always acknowledge their problems or frustrations to their supervisor. It can take some time to resolve issues over the phone and/or via email.
- For workplace supervisors of distance students we aim to make their employer/local manager aware of the commitments they have made. However it is not always possible to gain an appreciation of the commitments required.
- Tighter consideration of potential candidates to ensure they are committed and have the ability to complete their studies.
- Reviews of students who have been slow or showing no progress, to assess their ability to complete. These reviews give the students time to review their own progress and to decide if they wish to continue. In some cases this has led to the de-enrolment of students when no satisfaction has been reached—often after a year of negotiations.

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

- Bi-monthly meetings of the Board of Research & Postgraduate Studies provide a formal mechanism to consider current research programs and plan future directions. The Board has prepared papers for staff to outline the role of research within the Faculty and University and how staff could commence a more active research program. Any research related issues raised by the Faculty are referred to the Board for action.
- A Research Forum is held monthly where staff and students present aspects of their work and at which any issues related to research can be raised.
- Student reviews are used to identify where problems exist for facilities or support.
- The Faculty is developing a proposal to form a Research Institute, which will coordinate the research being done and the facilities used for research. The Institute aims in part to emphasise the role of research within the University and to provide more of the core facilities needed.
- Staff and students regularly raise issues with the Associate Dean (Research).

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

- Student reviews—in person or via written comments (annually), are used to identify areas that could be improved. Difficulties with supervisors can be identified and acted upon. To date these problems have mainly arisen with associate supervisors who have not given as much time to the student as promised and alternatives have been sought.
- Exit questionnaires with all students who have either finished, or withdrawn, though not all reply. Reminders are sent.

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?**

Much of this section has already been dealt with above.

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

University policy dictates that "units of study will be evaluated at least once every three years" (The Management and Evaluation of Coursework Teaching, page 13). For many years FRM has maintained a far higher unit evaluation rate. For example, every unit offered by distance education includes a student evaluation. Although response rates are low, a system is in place whereby these evaluations are noted and filed. Whenever a distance education unit is to be revised the accumulated evaluations are available. The majority of teaching staff engaged in on-campus teaching conduct anonymous student unit evaluations each time their units are offered and again this information is fed in to the review process prior to the next delivery.

b) Arrangements for applying university performance indicator data to improving educational quality.

FRM staff have been kept well informed of TPIs and action is taken (e.g. FYE project, introduction of Capabilities) to try to rectify deficiencies. An area of concern yet to be fully addressed is TPI No. 10, Full-time further study. Few, if any, FRM graduates aspire to an Honours year or other postgraduate study.

c) Consistency between university requirements and Faculty QA and improvement mechanisms.

FRM has a representative who attends all the University-wide workshops on Evaluation and Quality Assurance. Information gleaned from these workshops is regularly passed on to Faculty staff for debate and possible action.

d) Methods used to monitor progress towards goals specified in the Faculty's Teaching and Learning Plan.

FRM's Teaching and Learning Operational Plan for June 2000 to January 2002 is currently being reviewed to ascertain:

- the extent to which targets have been achieved
- targets that need to be addressed before January 2002
- possible directions for a revised Teaching and Learning Operational Plan for the period January 2002 - June 2003.

David Roberts
(July 2001)

FRM's Teaching and Learning Operational Plan for 2002

Context

The Faculty of Rural Management is located in the College of Sciences and Technology. It is one of the smallest of the University's faculties with about 570 EFTSU, and 82 effective full-time staff, of whom 35 are academics. The Faculty is physically located at Orange and is currently the only faculty based on this campus.

The Faculty offers the following advanced diplomas and undergraduate degrees: Management, Farm Management, Business (Agricultural Commerce), Rural Business Administration, Horticultural Management, Viticultural Management, Equine Business Management and Land Management. A new degree, Bachelor of Land Management (Ecological Agriculture), commences in 2002. Postgraduate certificates, diplomas and masters are offered by course work in Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Management Studies.

Strengths

Flexible delivery of nearly all programs. Students may study at a distance, on-campus or a combination of both modes.

Location in rural Australia. In the 28 years since teaching began at the campus, powerful networks have been established with rural communities, industries and organisations across Australia. This enables the Faculty to understand the needs of rural Australia, and to conduct tours to many rural enterprises. The cost of accommodation in Orange is less expensive than Sydney and this, as well as being a rural setting, makes it more attractive to many students.

Comparatively small on-campus classes because more than 50% of the student body studies by distance education. This engenders a strong sense of commitment and concern for student welfare at a personal level.

Weaknesses

An isolated, small Faculty is unable to offer its students the same range of formal and informal activities and cultural pursuits as most other University of Sydney students enjoy. There is little opportunity for FRM students to mix with students from other disciplines.

Although the Faculty offers flexible delivery methods, its isolation makes it difficult to offer a wide variety of units of study or double degrees.

Steady decline in distance education enrolments since 1997 when HECs was substantially increased.

Most students enrolled with the faculty are from rural Australia and commence study with low UAI scores. Although in recent years the numbers of students studying postgraduate programs has increased, the Faculty compares poorly with other University faculties in attracting postgraduate, fee-paying and international students.

Not all students have access to the internet thereby limiting the extent to which they are able to take advantage of the pedagogical benefits of using novel teaching methods such as WebWise.

Increasing competition for the Faculty's traditional market from other universities and educational providers.

Opportunities

A newly appointed Dean bringing new ideas and initiatives.

Acceptance, politically, for the advancement of the Centre for Regional Education, Orange (CREO). Initial Federal funding of \$2m has been approved.

The further development of the FRM capability program leading to better employment opportunities for graduates and closer ties with industry.

The Faculty campus being used for courses other than rural management thereby leading to an enhanced social and cultural environment.

The provision of improved IT services to all students thereby providing greater flexibility in the delivery of programs and enhanced learning experiences.

The development of curriculum initiatives with the Bachelor of Ecological Agriculture (new), Bachelor of Business (revised), Bachelor of Management (revised) and the Master of Rural Management (revised).

Threats

The decline of distance education enrolments to a critical level.

The increasing work-loads and consequent stress being felt by some staff.

Executive summary

The Faculty accepts the six broad objectives as they appear in the 'Teaching and Learning Strategic Plan 1999 - 2004'. It believes that vigorous and dedicated long-term support of these objectives will enable this Faculty to further enhance its own position as an outstanding provider of undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, both in Australia and internationally. The Operational Plan for 2002 details strategies, objectives, indicators, targets and responsibilities that reflect the specific needs and emphases of the Faculty of Rural Management. This Operational Plan has built upon the review of the previous Operational Plan, July 2000 to January 2002, which is attached as an addendum, and also incorporates the findings of the most recent Teaching Performance Indicators.

FACULTY OF RURAL MANAGEMENT OPERATIONAL PLAN FOR 2002

Objective 1: Attract, foster and graduate an increasing proportion of the most intellectually able students, both local and international, including an agreed minimum proportion who have suffered social and educational disadvantage.

Strategies	Objectives	Targets	Responsibility
1.1 To provide equitable access for the educationally and socially disadvantaged.	<p>Investigate special admission schemes for indigenous students.</p> <p>Develop a plan to facilitate participation by remotely located students.</p> <p>Provision of appropriate facilities for disabled students.</p>	<p>Report to the Pro-Dean on support processes available locally and nationally by June 2002</p> <p>Plan presented to the Pro-Dean by June 2002</p> <p>Implement specific programs for dyslexic students February 2002</p> <p>Ascertain other disabilities experienced by students and design appropriate programs where possible.</p>	<p>Manager, Client Services</p> <p>Marketing Manager</p> <p>Learning Skills Advisor</p> <p>Learning Skills Advisor</p>
1.2. To provide opportunities for international students to study with FRM.	<p>Investigate funding mechanisms to support international students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AusAID ▪ Virtual Colombo Plan <p>Undertake an analysis of potential countries that may provide fee-paying students.</p>	<p>Report findings to the Dean by May 2002 and prepare implementation plan for 2003.</p> <p>As above</p>	<p>Pro-Dean</p> <p>Marketing Manager (report) Pro-Dean (Implementation)</p>

FACULTY OF RURAL MANAGEMENT OPERATIONAL PLAN FOR 2002

Objective 1: Attract, foster and graduate an increasing proportion of the most intellectually able students, both local and international, including an agreed minimum proportion who have suffered social and educational disadvantage.

Strategies	Objectives	Targets	Responsibility
1.3. To attract higher enrolments in FRM's undergraduate and postgraduate programs	<p>Review current marketing strategies and develop a marketing plan that in particular targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sustainable Agriculture (PG) ▪ Ecological Agriculture (UG) ▪ Bachelor of Business (UG) ▪ Bachelor of Management (UG) 	Marketing Plan presented to the Dean by April 2002 for implementation later in the year.	Marketing Manager
1.4. To provide programs to ensure effective transition from school/work to University.	Extend 'students-at-risk' FYE program to include students studying by distance education.	<p>Extended program to commence February 2002.</p> <p>Apply for Teaching Improvement Funds to investigate barriers to internet usage by distance education students.</p>	<p>FYE Co-ordinator</p> <p>Manager Materials</p>
1.5. Monitor and improve FRM's Teaching Performance Indicators (TPIs).	<p>Collect and disseminate TPI data to Faculty staff</p> <p>Develop QA programs to improve FRM's performance against TPIs.</p>	<p>Attend Evaluation and Quality Assurance Workshops in Sydney and report regularly to Faculty</p> <p>Learning Committee to regularly review TPIs and make recommendations for new programs.</p>	<p>Faculty EQA Representative</p> <p>Learning Committee</p>

Objective 2: Provide a rich diversity of formal and informal learning opportunities for all students, challenging them and thus enabling them to reach their full potential.			
Strategies	Objectives	Targets	Responsibility
2.1 To facilitate cross-faculty enrolment between FRM and other USyd faculties	Liaise with the appropriate faculties: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agriculture ▪ Economics and Business ▪ Pharmacy 	To develop an agreement with (at least) the Faculty of Economics and Business for cross-faculty enrolments in UG and PG units commencing 2003.	Dean
2.2. To provide an enriched informal environment for students.	Explore the potential for closer liaison between FRM students and the many social, cultural and sporting activities within the Orange district e.g. Rotaract.	Identify organisations and contacts within the Orange district with whom links might be developed	Pro-Dean
2.3. Expand the educational utilisation of the Orange Campus beyond FRM	Continue the planning of the Centre for Regional Education, Orange (CREO) to include opportunities for collaboration between FRM, TAFE, Senior High Schools and other University Faculties.	Announcement of policies and plans for the future of CREO at appropriate times.	Dean and Senior University Staff
2.4 To encourage stimulating and challenging teaching through incentives and public recognition.	Implement the decisions of the review of the Capability trial 1999-2001.	Introduction of new Capability policy in February 2002.	Associate Dean (UG) and Co-ordinator, Capability Program.
2.5 Expand the provision of resource-based and learner-centred flexible learning.	Appoint a manager to coordinate the development of learning materials for flexible delivery. Further develop educational strategies for flexible learning.	Appointment effective February 2002. Provide inservice training workshops early 2002. Six staff conducting PG coursework supervision to complete ITL's program of PG Supervision.	Dean and Associate Dean (UG) Associate Dean (UG) and Manager of Learning Materials Associate Dean (PG)

Objective 3: Provide curricula that are informed by current research, scholarship and professional practice, are responsive to the needs of rural communities and result in graduates well equipped to contribute successfully to the global society.

Strategies	Objectives	Targets	Responsibility
3.1. Regularly review programs & assess the quality of all courses with reference to relevance and national benchmarks of academic standards.	<p>Establish mechanisms for obtaining input from stakeholders for all FRM's programs.</p> <p>Conduct curriculum reviews and develop plans for implementation.</p>	<p>Obtain Faculty Advisory Council, graduate and employers input into the curriculum revisions of the BBus and BMan by March 2002.</p> <p>Reviews completed for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BBus (June 2002) ▪ BMan (June 2002) ▪ Plants Curriculum (March 2002) <p>Rural Management Studies (PG) (March 2002)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a consequence of the above reviews the BFM degree will be reviewed during 2002. 	<p>Board of Undergraduate Studies.</p> <p>Board of Undergraduate Studies</p> <p>Professor of Farm Management Board of Postgraduate Studies</p>
3.2. Undertake evaluations of all teaching and learning programs.	<p>Acceptance of a new unit evaluation policy for all units offered by FRM.</p> <p>Monitor FRM's Teaching Performance Indicators (TPIs) in UG and PG programs.</p>	<p>New policy implemented in time for 1/2002.</p> <p>Improve TPI ratings that scored negatively in 2001.</p>	<p>Associate Deans (UG and PG)</p> <p>Dean</p>

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

Strategies	Objectives	Targets	Responsibility
4.1 To reward excellence in teaching.	Develop alignment between FRM's, University and National teaching awards.	Alignment in place in 2002.	Learning Committee

Objective 4: Foster an environment where quality & innovation in teaching & learning are valued and supported by appropriate resources & adequate recognition.			
Strategies	Objectives	Targets	Responsibility
4.2. To foster innovation in teaching.	Encourage staff participation in online discussions, seminars, conferences and to contribute to <i>Learning Matters</i> .	Create a set of criteria for an FRM innovation award. Implement Innovation Award in 2002 and present at an appropriate occasion. Incorporate a series of Teaching & Learning Seminars within the weekly seminar program.	Learning Committee Learning Committee Seminar Planning Committee
4.3. To encourage teaching staff to seek funding to improve their teaching.	Increase staff awareness of funding opportunities.	Establish a system for the effective dissemination of information about funding opportunities. Instructional Designers to provide support to any applicants.	Dean Instructional Designers

Objective 5: Strive to provide the best possible physical, social and learning support environment incorporating extensive opportunities for access to IT and recognising the multicultural nature of Australia.			
Strategies	Objectives	Targets	Responsibility
5.1 To provide significant investment in information technology enhancements and improve student access to IT.	Review existing utilisation of IT within the Faculty. Develop Faculty IT Strategic Plan for 2002 onwards.	Review completed by March 2002. Strategic Plan developed and adopted by June 2002.	Manager IT Pro-Dean and Manager IT.
5.2. Provision of quality teaching facilities.	Review the adequacy of the Faculty's teaching facilities.	Conduct a survey of staff and physical resources. Report results and make recommendations May 2002.	Pro Dean

Objective 5: Strive to provide the best possible physical, social and learning support environment incorporating extensive opportunities for access to IT and recognising the multicultural nature of Australia.

Strategies	Objectives	Targets	Responsibility
5.3 To provide student support services that are accessible, equitable and focused on student needs.	Review the result of the SCEQ and other instruments. Further develop FRM's website to allow students to review information and select their units for the ensuing semester.	Prepare an implementation report (based on findings) by October 2002. Provide details of unit assessment procedures, learning outcomes, content and teaching staff involved on FRM's website by September 2002.	Management Client Services and Learning Committee Marketing Manager & Manager Materials

Objective 6: Attract, develop & reward well qualified staff with a strong commitment to teaching informed by research and offer opportunities for teaching development.

Strategies	Objectives	Targets	Responsibility
6.1 To provide additional staff development and training in a range of teaching methods including flexible learning models.	Development of online staff training and associated activities such as WebWISE tailored specifically to Faculty needs, including postgraduate supervision, assessment, evaluation, and flexible learning. Continue to increase the proportion of academic staff completing qualifications in teaching in Higher Education	Increasing percentage of staff adopting new teaching methods each year. Produce at least 10 copies of in-house publication <i>Learning Matters</i> each year. Improve % of staff undertaking qualifications by end of 2002.	Dean & Learning Committee. Associate Dean UG Dean

Objective 6: Attract, develop & reward well qualified staff with a strong commitment to teaching informed by research and offer opportunities for teaching development.

Strategies	Objectives	Targets	Responsibility
<p>6.2. To encourage and recognise teaching which builds on scholarship and research.</p>	<p>Encourage staff to participate in activities that lead to recognition by the University's Scholarship Index.</p>	<p>Collect baseline data (2001) for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ attendance of staff at education conferences, teaching workshops and training sessions/programs ▪ number of scholarly publications on teaching, learning and/or assessment practice or research ▪ number of conference presentations on educational topics. <p>Demonstrate an improvement on 2001 using the median point score.</p>	<p>Dean and Academic Staff Reviewers</p> <p>Dean</p>

APPENDIX FIVE REVIEW OF FACULTY OPERATIONAL PLAN

FACULTY OF RURAL MANAGEMENT OPERATIONAL PLAN JULY 2000 – JANUARY 2002

Objective 1: Attract, foster and graduate an increasing proportion of the most intellectually able students, both local and international, including an agreed minimum proportion who have suffered social and educational disadvantage.

Strategies	Objectives	Targets	Review Comments
1. To provide advanced programs, scholarship schemes and special admission schemes.	Investigate special admission schemes for indigenous students.	Baseline report to be submitted to Dean by January 2001.	Manager, Client Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not carried out.
	Educational provision for international students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of customised program for 15 students from Tianjin International Business College each year, commencing in 2000. 	Unit Coordinator, International Studies (China) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very successful three month program for 20 TIBC staff and students conducted 2000. Similar program currently underway for TIFERT (previously TIBC) July-September 2001.
Development of new marketing strategies to attract distance education students.	DE marketing plan involving new marketing strategy to commence July 2000 (see Starting Committee)		Marketing Manager <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major review <i>Distance Education at University of Sydney, Orange: An Evaluation of Attrition and Retention Levels</i> conducted in 2000. <p>This has provided a re-focus on FRM's provision of Distance Education.</p> <p>During 2001 a new marketing strategy has been formulated that placed the marketing emphasis upon Ecological Agriculture (new degree commencing 2002) a more generic Bachelor of Management and (as a group) business, rural business administration and farm management. Sustainable Agriculture is to be promoted at the postgraduate level.</p> <p>A working party is looking at the long-term promotional strategies.</p>

<p>2. To provide programs to ensure effective transition from school to university.</p>	<p>Development of scheme for visits to schools.</p>	<p>Scheme in place by July 2000.</p>	<p>Marketing Manager</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A strategy whereby up to 50 High Schools will be visited by FRM staff commenced July 2001. Such visits are to encourage enrolments and assist potential students understand university expectations.
	<p>Development of a 'New-students-at risk' program.</p>	<p>Scheme in place by February 2001.</p>	<p>Academic Skills Advisor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'New-students-at-risk' program successfully launched in February 2001 as part of the First Year Experience (FYE) project for which \$65,000 funding was received from the Teaching Improvement Fund.
<p>3. To monitor progression rates as part of a standard set of performance indicators.</p>	<p>Establishment of student progress rates indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> unit pass rates first to second year retention rates 	<p>Each course to have PIs for 1999/2000 available by August 2000.</p>	<p>Program Leaders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FRM representative has attended all Evaluation and Quality Assurance workshops conducted by ITL at which TPI's are discussed and FRM staff are fully aware of the significance of these two TPI's for this faculty. Progression rates are monitored on a course basis and results imparted to staff and students via Learning Matters an in-house publication.
<p>4. To develop and implement methods for enhancing the first year experience and to communicate the resulting improvements to prospective students, parents and teachers.</p>	<p>Identify the problems experienced by first year students.</p>	<p>Report with recommendations due to Dean by September 2000. Strategies in place for start of 2001.</p>	<p>Associate Dean-Undergraduate Studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a result of a review of the problems experienced by first year students in 2000 a special FYE program commenced February 2001 under the appointed FYE coordinator. Program involves an intensive study skills week in first week of semester (including diagnostic tests) and the development of 12 web-based modules for introduction in 2002.

Appointment of an Academic Skills Advisor to support student skills development.	Appointment for 2000-2001	Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic Skills Advisor appointed February 2001. This will be a full-time permanent appointment.
Placement on the Homepage of a Skills Development Zone which staff and students, both on & off campus can access to help with the development of necessary academic skills.	Completed by June 2001		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This proposal has been subsumed into the FYE project in the form of web-based modules.
Establishment of communications to inform prospective students, parents and teachers of the positive effects of new strategies for first years.	Staff visiting schools in 2001 to report progress. DE students informed via WebWISE and External Student News during 2001.	Marketing Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students, parents, alumni are being informed of progress with FYE program through <i>External Student News</i>, Parents' Dinner and the Alumni Newsletter <i>Templar's Vine</i> with a circulation of around 4000 copies.
5. To facilitate the enrolment of students from other faculties into our units of study.	Agreement of other faculties for students to enrol in FRM units.	Dean and Associate Dean-Undergraduate Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Faculty of Agriculture allows students to enrol in some FRM units.

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

1. To provide a wide variety of course offerings including opportunities for enrolment in combined degree programs and double major degrees.
 - Review current availability of units and levels in order to provide a wider variety of course offerings.
 - Review hard and soft barriers on enrolment and increase in number of units available to students in each course 2000-2002.
 - Review undertaken. As a result of the review the following strategies were introduced:
 - i) Number of Level 3 undergraduate units required was changed

ii) The offering of units in each semester was revised for each course.

iii) Recommended pathways were developed for students in the B.Bus and Bachelor of Farm Management programs.

- A few new units are being developed for the introduction of the Ecological Agriculture degree in 2002.

Development of collaborative arrangements with other Faculties regarding combined degrees.

One arrangement in place by first semester 2002.

Program Leaders and ID staff

- The Faculty of Veterinary Science has agreed to give credit to high performing USO graduates to enable alternate entry into Vet. Science.

Expand the educational utilisation of the Orange campus beyond the FRM presence

Form a centre for Regional Education in Orange in 2000. Establish an additional presence on campus by 2002.

Dean and senior faculty staff.

- A major report has been completed entitled, *The Centre for Regional Education, Orange* and forwarded to the Vice-Chancellor and the NSW Minister for Education and Training and widely disseminated elsewhere.

2. To encourage stimulating and challenging teaching through incentives and public recognition.

Extension of 'Capability Education' into third year of internal degree programs.

Extend capabilities program to 3rd year internal students in 2001.

Dean & all academic staff.

- Capability Education has been extended into third year during 2001. The culmination of this trial program will be evaluated by an external evaluator at the end of the year.

Continuation and further refinement of Faculty Teaching Innovation Awards.

Increase the number of applications for Teaching Innovation Awards 2000-2001.

Dean and Learning Committee.

- There was one application for a faculty teaching award in 2000. There was one unsuccessful application for a Vice-Chancellor's Award for Teaching Excellence in 2001.

Review additional incentives and forms of recognition for teaching performance.	Report with recommendations to Dean by December 2000.	Learning Committee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff opinions were canvassed by the Learning Committee and a report presented to the Acting Dean in December 2000.
3. Expand the provision of resource-based and learner-centred flexible learning.	Review the potential for the Bachelor of Equine Business Management course to be offered by distance education.	Decision by December 2000 in readiness for possible implementation in 2002.	<p>Associate Dean Undergraduate Studies and Equine Business Management course team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review occurred. Decision was taken not to offer the whole Bachelor of Equine Business Management course by distance education, however, it was agreed that the third year be available by distance education. Only one unit, Horse Enterprise Management II, needs to be developed for DE delivery.
Implementation of staff training in WebWISE and on-line material development.	Increase the proportion of staff who have had WebWISE training.	Learning Committee and WebWISE core group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WebWISE training has been provided for both academic and general staff. Individual assistance has been provided by Sally Brownlow, three Wednesday seminars have been devoted to WebWISE and 25 staff recently attended a workshop conducted by Steve Sheely and Kim McShane. A follow-up workshop is being considered.
Further development of educationally appropriate on-line delivery.	Increase in delivery of units on-line 2000-2002.	Lecturers, ID staff and computer programming staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of units that make use of online delivery methods has increased in 2001 to six. In addition, all distance education units and some internal units provide WebWISE access to students.
Extension of WebWISE support	Increase in use of interactive		

facility for distance education and on-campus students. technology for supporting students 2000-2002.

Objective 3: Provide curricula that are informed by current research, scholarship and professional practice, are responsive to the needs of rural communities and result in graduates well equipped to contribute successfully to the global society.

<p>1. Regularly to review programs & assess the quality of all courses with reference to an agreed set of PIs, including international & national benchmarks of academic standards.</p>	<p>Development & application of a set of reliable PIs/benchmarks referenced to national & international standards.</p>	<p>Development of course teaching & learning PIs completed by December 2000 & applied in 2001.</p>	<p>Program Leaders with assistance from IDs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information is now readily available to all staff and students about TPIs (<i>Learning Matters</i> and online). This information has been disseminated so that the data may be reviewed on a course by course basis. A list of appropriate courses offered at other Go8 universities has been developed to serve as comparators.
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<p>2. To undertake routine student & graduate evaluation of all teaching & learning programs.</p>	<p>Establishment of a University-wide system for unit evaluation.</p>	<p>Faculty based unit evaluation system used consistently across all FRM units by 2/2000.</p>	<p>Dean and Associate Dean Undergraduate Studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every unit offered by distance education is evaluated by students. The processes for on-campus unit evaluations are being reviewed during semester 2/2001.
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<p>Development of greater staff awareness of CEQ scores.</p>	<p>Improvement in CEQ scores for FRM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good teaching • Generic skills • Overall satisfaction 	<p>Dean</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff have access to SCEQ scores for the faculty (online). Discussions will be held during 2/2001 to evaluate the SCEQ scores and determine means whereby higher rates of student satisfaction might be achieved.
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<p>3. To seek input to course development from employers and the professions through advisory bodies & employer surveys.</p>	<p>Establishment of employer surveys and/or advisory bodies for each course.</p>	<p>First employer surveys or meetings of Advisory bodies conducted by June 2001.</p>	<p>Dean and Program Leaders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some progress. A survey of academics, practitioners and professional bodies was carried out as part of the Ecological Agriculture course development process. <p>Review conducted of Master of RMS</p>
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program. Proposals for change discussed with Faculty Advisory Committee and industry. This is on-going.

4. To develop generic & - specific attributes of graduates & promote ways of embedding these qualities in all courses.

Capabilities (including attributes) system already in developmental stage.

Completion of embedding of capabilities into every unit by 2001.

Dean and Capabilities Coordinator.

- Capabilities have been included in all on-campus units (not distance education units). The extent to which the capabilities are impacting on student learning varies substantially from unit to unit

Capabilities evaluated by external assessor 1999-2001.

- The three year Capability Education Trial ends in 2001. An external evaluator is conducting a longitudinal study of the program's introduction (1999-2001).

Resolution concerning long term use of capability portfolios (presently being trialed) by December 2001

- The future of the Capability Education program will be debated by Faculty on October 31.

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

1. To reward excellence in teaching by allocating funds to staff based on teaching & learning performance.

Development of teaching and learning management plans.

First plans completed & published by December 2000.

Dean and Learning Committee.

- FRM's Teaching and Learning Operational Plan for July 2000 to January 2002 accepted by Faculty. Review of progress (this document) completed August 2001. FRM's proposed Teaching and Learning Operational Plan for January 2002 to January 2003 to be presented to Faculty at its meeting on October 31.

2. To ensure explicit recognition of teaching in appointments and promotions.	Increase in the number of academic staff promoted & appointed where teaching performance is a major criterion.	Improvement in performance by December 2001.	Dean <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unable to gauge whether there has been an improvement in performance until 2001 round of promotions is completed.
Regular reporting by Dean of the processes used to ensure proper recognition of individual teaching performance.	Reporting system in place by December 2000.	Dean <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No progress. 	
3. To link performance management of academic staff to the recognition of improvement of teaching.	Development of performance management scheme to include criteria related to innovative teaching and flexible learning.	Implementation commences 2001 subject to University policy.	PVC (T & L) & A/PVC (IT) and Dean. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professor Koder will visit FRM to discuss the Performance, Management and Development (PM and D) Program August 23/24, 2001.

Objective 5: Strive to provide the best possible physical, social and learning support environment incorporating extensive opportunities for access to IT and recognising the multicultural nature of Australia.

1. To provide significant investment in information technology enhancements and improve student access to IT.	Increase in investment and student access.	Collect baseline data for 2000 with regard to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty investment in IT for teaching during the year Student satisfaction with provision of IT services 	Dean and Learning Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Faculty has not yet developed an IT strategic plan. With the very recent appointment of a new Dean it is expected that steps will now be taken to provide faculty direction in the form of a two to three year IT strategic plan to cover research, teaching and administration.
	Develop Faculty IT strategic plan for 2001 onwards.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the last 12 months the faculty has established a strong IT team with a wide range of skills.

Consistent increase in IT investment, 1999-2001; improvement in student perceptions of ease and quality of access to IT.

- Although students have not been surveyed with regard to satisfaction with the provision of IT services, two marked improvements have been achieved. IT access has been extended considerably so that students can now have access at the Horse Unit and in the student residences. Reliability has also been improved and less downtime is required.

2. To emphasise the provision of high quality space for teaching.

Survey of perceptions of current space quality and impact on student learning; improvement in staff and student perceptions of quality.

Survey completed by Nov 2000; consistent improvement in student and staff experiences in surveys from 2001-2002.

Director ITL; PVC (T&L) in collaboration with Faculty Management.

- Survey not conducted.

3. To provide student support services that are accessible, equitable, and focused on student needs.

Student experience questionnaire to be administered and reported on annually.

Improvement in student experiences from 2001-2002.

Manager, Client Services

- The following improvements in student services have been achieved:
 - Services have been consolidated into a 'one-stop shop' at Client Services and staff are now more multi-skilled.
 - Orientation folders are now provided to all new intakes two weeks before they arrive at the campus.
 - IT access is faster and now available 24 hours a day.
 - Students can now access results, assignments, timetables and other information online.
 - 'House Leaders' have been increased from 3 to 15 in the Residences. Less complaints and higher retention rates in Residences.

<p>4. To provide greater opportunities for FRM students to widen their horizons and become more involved in multi cultural experiences.</p>	<p>Investigate ways & means whereby the strategy can be achieved.</p>	<p>Report, with recommendations to relevant senior university staff by December 2000. Strategies in place early 2001.</p>	<p>Dean and Learning Committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report not completed.
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Objective 6: Attract, develop & reward well qualified staff with a strong commitment to teaching informed by research and offer opportunities for teaching development.

<p>1. To provide additional staff development and training in a range of teaching methods including flexible learning models.</p>	<p>Development of on line staff training and associated activities such as WebWISE tailored specifically to Faculty needs, including postgraduate supervision, assessment, evaluation, and flexible learning.</p>	<p>Increasing percentage of staff adopting new teaching methods each year.</p>	<p>Dean & Learning Committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the last 12 months a number of staff have adopted new online teaching methods that include structured online discussions, archiving of student assignments for future reference, submitting and marking assignments online and the use of chat rooms.
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<p>Produce at least 10 copies of in-house publication <i>Learning Matters</i> each year.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During 2000, 13 editions of the 'in-house' publication Learning Matters disseminated. By the end of July 2001, seven editions had been circulated.
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<p>Review the number of academic staff who have undergone training in university teaching.</p>	<p>Increasing proportion of staff with training in university teaching.</p>	<p>Dean</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One more member of staff has graduated with the Graduate Certificate in Higher Education in 2001.
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2. To encourage and recognise teaching which builds on scholarship and research.

Development of PIs for scholarly publications related to teaching and production of peer-reviewed resources with particular reference to distance education and on-campus teaching.

Collect baseline data (2000) for:

- attendance of staff at education conferences, teaching workshops and training sessions/programs
- number of scholarly publications on teaching, learning and/or assessment practice or research
- number of conference presentations on educational topics

Dean and Associate Dean Undergraduate Studies

- All baseline data for 2000 was collected, summarised and presented in FRM's Annual Report for 2000.
- Performance during 2001 is being carefully monitored. Results will not be available until the end of the year.

Demonstrate increase in performance in 2001 and 2002, i.e.

- attendance of staff at education conferences, teaching workshops and training sessions/programs, compared with 2000.
- Number of scholarly publications on teaching, learning and/or assessment practice or research, compared with 2000
- Number of conference presentations on educational topics, compared with 2000

Needs assessment:

Conduct a survey of staff needs in relation to their educational professional development.