

Guidelines for Good Practice in Teaching & Learning

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1. INTRODUCTION

This is the first edition of the University of Sydney's *Guidelines for Good Practice in Teaching and Learning*. The purpose of the document is to provide a brief but comprehensive guide to good practice in the implementation and management of learning and teaching, based on the relevant University policies.

Audience and structure

This series of good practice statements is intended to be useful to all members of the University of Sydney, including both staff and students. It will however be of greatest importance to senior academic staff with responsibilities for organising, managing and ensuring the quality of teaching. The document is couched as a series of criteria, which can be used as a checklist by administrators, deans, heads, co-ordinators of courses and units, and by individual academic staff, in evaluating the quality of their contribution to the educational experiences offered by the University.

(Each criterion is accompanied by a brief italicised note explaining the rationale for its inclusion)

Scope

This document focuses on *what* should be achieved. No prescription is made as to the means by which these ends are to be reached, since the *how* will vary from one subject and one learning context to another. These *Guidelines* do not impose regulations. Every statement in them will not be relevant to every part of the University. They are however strongly endorsed as outlines of what faculties, schools and departments should strive to achieve if they wish to provide coursework teaching that meets the standards appropriate to Australia's first University.

Approach

The University has many functions in the society of which it is a part, but of these functions, teaching is the most visible. The primary aim of teaching at the University is to facilitate student learning. Thus the approach adopted in this document is focused on student learning. It should be clearly understood that teaching is explicitly taken to mean helping students to learn, and not simply a range of activities undertaken by teachers.

The relevance of these *Guidelines* to quality assurance processes will be apparent to everyone. I hope that the document will assist faculties, schools and departments in preparing for internal and external review of their educational provision. I expect that the *Guidelines* will be issued in a revised form as a result of experience gained and feedback received on their usefulness. Like other research-intensive universities around the world, we are committed to the idea that defining and implementing good practice in teaching is a progressive process driven by the best available evidence.

Paul Ramsden
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning)
August 2001

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND DICTIONARY

Bibliography

This document draws on a number of sources, mostly Resolutions of the Academic Board. Since some criteria are derived from more than one source document, the provision of individual references for each criterion would be cumbersome, and would disrupt the flow of the document. Accordingly, the source documents on which this draft is based are listed on the last page. However, where a section draws heavily on a single source document, that document is identified by footnote.

Dictionary

In this document:

Academic unit means a faculty, academic college, board of studies, school, department, centre or interdisciplinary committee of the University.

Assessment or **examination** means assessment by written/oral examination, assignments, presentation, theses, etc.

Course means a program of study at undergraduate or postgraduate degree, diploma or certificate level which can lead to an academic award granted by the University.

Dean means the dean of a faculty or the director or principal of an academic college, or chairperson of a board of studies.

Department means a faculty (if the faculty does not have an internal departmental structure), board of studies, school, centre or interdisciplinary committee of the university. Departments are responsible for units of study, and in this document the term refers to the department responsible for the unit of study concerned.

Faculty means a faculty, college board or the Australian Graduate School Of Management Limited, as established in each case by its constitution, or, where applicable, a board of studies. Faculties are responsible for award courses, and in this document the term refers to the faculty responsible for the award course concerned.

Student means a person enrolled as a candidate for an award course or unit of study.

Unit of study or **unit** means a stand-alone component of an award course. Each unit of study is the responsibility of a department.

2. RECRUITMENT, ADMISSION AND RECEPTION OF STUDENTS

2.1 Recruitment of students

Good Practice means that

- Prospective students have timely and easy access to the:
 - details of courses
 - requirements for admission, and
 - contact points for further information at University, Faculty and Departmental level, as appropriate
(this is to help prospective students to make well-informed choices, and thus to maximise their chances of academic success)
- Prospective students with special needs can find specific information related to those special needs in the information provided by the University, Faculties and Departments (see Section 3)
(this is to facilitate achievement of the University's equity goals)
- Prospective students have easy access to information points at University, Faculty and Departmental level, staffed by knowledgeable and friendly persons
(this is to promote a positive image for the University)
- Prospective students receive prompt and effective responses, at University, Faculty and Departmental level, to requests for information and assistance
(this is to promote a positive image for the University)

2.2 Admission of students

Good Practice means that

- The admission policies of Faculties and Departments are transparent, equitable, defensible and accessible
(this is to ensure open accountability, and to enable most eligibility decisions to be made by administrative staff)
- Where necessary, prospective students who may lack the requisite skills in English are directed to sources of support in developing such skills before admission
(this is to ensure that students, once admitted, can benefit from the course, and that they can demonstrate their knowledge and understanding at assessment and examination)

- Prospective students receive prompt and sympathetic communication about decisions arising from the admission processes of Faculties and Departments
(this is to enable prospective students to make their own decisions and arrangements expeditiously)

2.3 Admission interviews (where undertaken)

Good Practice means that

- Faculties and Departments develop internal documentation about the purpose, scope and process of the interview, and the criteria on which decisions are to be made
(this is to ensure that interviews are conducted consistently, with uniform goals)
- Interviewees are given adequate notice of interviews, and full information about the time and place of the interview, by Faculties and Departments
(this is to enable interviewees to make travel and other arrangements to attend)
- Interviewees are given clear information about the scope and nature of the interview, and the criteria on which decisions are to be made
(this is to ensure that consistent messages are given to interviewees, thus enhancing equity)
- Interviewees are given opportunities to inspect Faculty or Departmental facilities, and to meet current students
(this is to maximise prospective students' familiarity with the course and its environment, and thus to increase the probability of academic success)
- Interviewers are trained in the purpose and process of the interview, and maintain confidentiality
(this is to maximise consistency across interview panels, and to protect privacy)
- Interviews are conducted consistently, conform to the agreed process, and are restricted to those matters relevant to the decision criteria
(this is so that admission decisions can be made on the basis of the agreed criteria)
- The findings and recommendations of the interview are documented and signed by all interviewers
(this is to demonstrate that admission decisions have been based on the agreed criteria)

2.4 Reception and enrolment of students

Good Practice means that

- Students experience quick, efficient and friendly enrolment and registration procedures

(this is to show that the University recognises that students' time is also valuable, and that they themselves are valued)

- Students are provided with clear written information (e.g. maps, information booklets) which are appropriate to prepare them to participate in the courses and units for which they are enrolled
(this is so that students can undertake any necessary logistic preparation for classes before they begin)
- Students are given early advice on access to USYDnet, and are encouraged to register for MyUni
(this is to improve students' access to information and to establish and enhance their information technology skills)
- Students are encouraged to attend Orientation activities
(this is to improve student engagement with the University from the outset, and to enhance their awareness of the facilities available to them)

2.5 Induction of students

Good Practice means that

- Students are given information on how to access the range of support services available to them
(this is so that students know what help is available to them)
- Students' first experience of each course and unit comprises a program designed to provide them with an adequate orientation to the course or unit. The orientation program should include:
 - a formal welcome by a senior member of the Faculty or Department
 - clear presentations, supplemented by written material, on the structure of the course or unit, course or unit requirements (including assessments and examinations), choices open to students within the course or unit, and student responsibilities
 - the opportunity to ask questions, and identification of where supplementary information and answers may be found; and
 - opportunities to meet informally with staff and current students
(this is to ensure that students are familiar with all aspects of the course or unit, and its operation)

2.6 Early review of progress

Good Practice means that

- In each course or unit, students are given early opportunities to test the extent to which they are coping with its academic demands, and the extent to which it is meeting their academic needs
(this is to ensure that students have the opportunity to identify and address difficulties in a timely way)
- In each course or unit, students who recognise that they are having academic or other difficulties are actively encouraged to request and receive assistance from teachers
(this is to ensure that students at academic risk have access to timely support)
- In each course or unit, students who appear to be at academic risk are identified, given academic support by teachers, and directed to other sources of support, such as the Counselling Service, Learning Centre and Mathematics Learning Centre, as necessary
(this is to ensure that students at academic risk are given timely active and appropriate support)

3. VALUING AND SUPPORTING STUDENT DIVERSITY ¹ ²

The educational experiences of all students can be immeasurably enriched by the diversity of culture and background which students bring to the University. This means that all levels of the community of scholars must strive to ensure the inclusion of all its members into that community.

While students who are members of specific groups may have specific needs, which are outlined below, there are several generic approaches which are appropriate.

Good Practice means that

- Students from diverse backgrounds and with diverse needs are valued, supported and integrated into the community of learners by means of flexible approaches on the part of Faculties, Departments, co-ordinators of units of study, and individual academic staff
(this is to facilitate achievement of the University's equity goals, and to maximise the probability of academic success for students who may be at a disadvantage in an educational context which may favour other students)
- Generic approaches to meeting the needs of students who are different are adopted where appropriate, e.g.
 - flexible timetabling of learning and assessment
 - an inclusive non-stereotyping, non-discriminating learning environment which does not draw special attention to differences between students

¹ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategic Plan 1998-2000 Triennium. Senate Resolution 114, December 1997, July 1999.

² Equity Plan 2000-2002. Vice-Chancellor.

- opportunities to meet and give / receive support to/from similar students, including the establishment of peer-mentoring schemes
- opportunities to meet and mix with all other students
- ensuring awareness of existence of, and access to, student support services generally
- support in dealing with discriminatory behaviour or harassment (e.g. through the Staff and Student Equal Opportunity Unit)
(this is to maximise support for such students, and to minimise disadvantage).
- Specific needs of members of groups are met as follows:

3.1 Women

- Specific needs of women students may include:
 - support in acquiring specific competences (e.g. mathematics for scientists through the Mathematics Learning Centre) to increase the number of women enrolling in and successfully completing courses
 - additional support (such as mentoring by women within the subject) to increase the number of women enrolling in and successfully completing courses in subjects not traditionally studied by them, such as Engineering
 - provision of information about accessible and affordable childcare facilities (e.g. through the Child Care Co-ordinator)

3.2 Mature-age students

- Specific needs of mature-age students may include:
 - support in acquiring or upgrading skills, such as computer literacy (e.g. through the Computer Access Centres)
 - provision of information about accessible and affordable childcare facilities (e.g. through the Child Care Co-ordinator)

3.3 Students supporting their study with part-time employment

- Specific needs of self-supporting students may include:

- flexible approaches to modes of teaching and assessment, which acknowledge the competing demands of part-time employment
- support in securing part-time or casual employment (e.g. through the Casual Employment Service)

3.4 International students

- Specific needs of international students may include:
 - orientation programs
 - support from the International Student Services Unit
 - support in improving language skills (e.g. through the Learning Centre)

3.5 Indigenous students

- Specific needs of indigenous students may include:
 - flexible approaches to enrolment, study and assessment processes, including Show Cause requirements
 - flexible timetabling to accommodate cultural and community obligations
 - support in accessing the expertise and facilities available in The Koori Centre and Yooroang Garang

3.6 Students from religious, ethnic, language (NESB) and other minorities

- Specific needs of students who are members of minority groups may include:
 - flexible timetabling to accommodate religious observances, and other cultural and community obligations

3.7 Students with educational and / or socio-economic disadvantage

- Specific needs of educationally or economically disadvantaged students may include:
 - opportunities for the development of academic skills to accommodate prior differences in educational experiences or in prerequisite knowledge and understanding (e.g. through the Learning Centre)
 - financial assistance through loans, scholarships, etc (e.g. through the Financial Assistance Office)

- support in securing part-time or casual employment (e.g. through the Casual Employment Service)
- access to subsidised accommodation (e.g. through the Accommodation Service)

3.8 Students from rural or isolated communities

- Specific needs of such students may include:
 - financial assistance through loans, scholarships, etc. (e.g. through the Financial Assistance Office)
 - assistance with finding accommodation (e.g. through the Accommodation Service)

3.9 Students with disability

- Specific needs of students with disability may include:
 - reasonable accommodation for activities such as teaching and assessment
 - access to support from Disability Services
 - introduction to the Student Disability Liaison Officer in their Faculty

3.10 Students on placement off-campus

- Specific needs of students required to undertake off-campus placements may include:
 - assistance with finding accommodation
 - financial assistance with travel and accommodation (e.g. through the Financial Assistance Office)
 - access to electronic and other University communication systems
 - access to on-campus staff
 - regular visits from on-campus staff.

4 OPTIMISING STUDENT LEARNING ³

4.1 The design of courses and units

Good Practice means that

- Students receive an explicit statement of the generic and specific goals of each course and unit, linked to the University's Generic Attributes of Graduates (*this is to ensure that the goals of the course or unit are clear to all*)
- For each course and unit, students receive clear information about:
 - the weighting of different parts of the program
 - the nominal time allocated to each activity
 - details of how progress and achievement will be assessed (see Section 5.1 below)
 - names and contact details of teaching and administrative staff (*this is to enable students to plan their work and their lives, and to seek help if they need it*)
- For each course and unit, the Department or Co-ordinator can demonstrate a clear relationship between the teaching and learning activities specified for the course or unit, and the development of "knowledge skills, thinking skills, personal skills, personal attributes, practical skills, and written and oral communication skills." (Generic Attributes of Graduates of the University of Sydney) (*this is to ensure congruence between educational goals and strategies*)
- Students will have a period for consolidation and review before the examinations scheduled for each course or unit (*this is to enable students to integrate and consolidate their learning*)

4.2 The structure of good teaching

Good Practice means that

- Students' experience of a course or unit shows that teachers have taken account of the following elements:
 - background – students' prior knowledge has been ascertained
 - definition of content – students are told what they are expected to learn
 - orientation – students are given the context and rationale for learning

³ The Management and Evaluation of Teaching. Academic Board Resolution, effective 2001.

- motivation – students' interest is evoked and sustained
- appropriateness – students experience teaching methods which are appropriate to the context and goals of learning
- participation – students are encouraged to undertake active learning
- inclusion – students' diverse backgrounds are seen to be valued
- elaboration – students are encouraged to build new knowledge on existing structures
- application – students are given examples of how the knowledge is used
- formative assessment – students are given opportunities to test their new knowledge
- resources – students are aware of other resources for study (e.g. library, electronic)
- summary – students are given a summary of what has been delivered
- progressive independence – students are supported in the progressive assumption of responsibility for their own learning
(these elements have been consistently shown to contribute to effective learning)

4.3 The process of good teaching

Good Practice means that

- Students' experience of a course or unit shows that teachers demonstrate the following attributes:
 - punctuality – students find that teachers attend punctually for scheduled teaching sessions
 - clarity – students find that teachers are audible and legible
 - lucidity – students find that teachers' explanations are clear
 - relevance – students understand how the subject matter relates to the overall objectives of the course or unit
 - expertise – students can see that the teacher is knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the subject material

- interaction – students are encouraged to interact and to dialogue with other students and the teacher
- pacing – students find that the content is neither too great nor too sparse for the time allocated
- clarification – students are given opportunities for questions to be asked and answered in real time
- technological competence – students find that teachers show familiarity and dexterity with audiovisual and information technology
- back-up – students are given and use supplementary written materials (which are provided at the beginning of the relevant session)
- follow-up study – students are aware of, and can access, additional study resources (e.g. hard copy, electronic)
- acceptance – students' contributions on the basis of their diverse backgrounds are valued by their incorporation into class interactions
- discrimination – students do not experience discrimination or harassment on any basis
- privacy – student confidences, e.g. in respect of personal information, are strictly maintained
(these attributes are those consistently identified by students as being the hallmarks of effective teachers)

4.4 Educational facilities

Good Practice means that

- Students experience the provision of adequate educational facilities, e.g. accommodation (lecture theatres, tutorial / seminar rooms), technology, libraries, and other support for teaching and learning.
(this is to maximise the effectiveness, efficiency and acceptability of learning)
- Students and staff undertake teaching and learning activities in facilities which conform to the University's policies on occupational health and safety
(this is to ensure that students and staff enjoy a safe and healthy working environment)

4.5 Student support services

Good Practice means that

- Students are encouraged to use the personal, welfare and academic support services that are provided to facilitate their success at university
(this is to ensure that students have access to services which meet their developmental needs and enhance their academic skills, as well as providing remediation and support for students who are at risk personally or academically)
- Students benefit from the student support activities which are developed in collaboration between Student Services, and Faculties and Departments
(this is to ensure that student support is integrated into Faculties and Departments wherever appropriate)
- Students receive understanding, encouragement and appropriate referral to student support services from academic staff
(this is to ensure that students whose well-being may be affected by a range of factors receive appropriate support to maximise their retention and success)

4.6 Careers advice and support for students

Good Practice means that

- Students develop early familiarity with the Careers Centre, encouraged by Faculties, Departments and individual academic staff
(this is to encourage students to develop an early plan for their career after graduation, to revise the plan regularly, and to make study and enrolment decisions in the light of their plan)
- Students benefit from efforts by Faculties, Departments and individual academic staff to develop opportunities for student work, (e.g. vacation work, part-time employment, work experience etc.), and to negotiate the provision of sponsorships, scholarships, and other forms of partnership
(this is both to assist students, and to develop mutually productive relationships with outside organisations)
- Students receive balanced and confidential career advice from academic staff whom they approach
(this is to improve students' ability to make sound career decisions)
- Students receive fair and accurate references from academic staff, who give assistance in preparing *curricula vitae*, etc.
(this is to maximise students' chances of securing positions, without jeopardising the University's credibility by making false claims on the student's behalf)

5 ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

5.1 The assessment of student learning ⁴

5.1.1 Information about Assessment

Good Practice means that

- At the beginning of delivery of each course or unit, students receive an explicit statement about the scope and nature of the assessment, including details of all aspects of the assessment process, and indicating the formative or summative status of each assessment task
(this is to ensure that students are aware from the outset of how they will be assessed)
- Students are informed about the basis on which assessment decisions are made
(this is to encourage open and transparent assessment decision-making)

5.1.2 Validity of Assessment

Good Practice means that

- For each course and unit of study, the Department or Co-ordinator can demonstrate that the assessment is generally representative of the generic and specific goals of the course or unit
(this is to ensure that there is congruence between what is assessed and the overall goals of the University, and to encourage congruence between what is taught and what is assessed)

5.1.3 Assessment Instruments

Good Practice means that

- For each course and unit of study, the Department or Co-ordinator can demonstrate that the assessment instruments possess adequate validity and reliability
(valid assessments test the achievement of the goals of the course or unit of study (rather than other attributes), while reliable assessments enable academic judgments about competence to be made with confidence)
- Students have adequate opportunity for formative practice on each type of assessment instrument that is to be used summatively
(this is so that student performance at summative assessment reflects their knowledge understanding and skills, rather than their capacity to adapt effectively to novel demands)

5.1.4 Assessment Timetable

Good Practice means that

- The absolute duration of assessments is no more than is required to achieve adequate validity and reliability, and the relative duration of the parts of the assessment reflects the relative importance of the goals whose achievement they are testing
(this is to reduce the burden of assessment on students and academic staff, while ensuring validity and reliability)
- Assessments are timetabled to:
 - take account of other academic demands on students' time
 - allow adequate time for the preparation and submission of assignments
 - allow adequate time for formative feedback and remediation before competence is tested summatively; and
 - allow adequate time for summative feedback, remediation and re-assessment before progression in the course is delayed
(this is to ensure that assessments are fair and effective tests of student competence, and that the usefulness of feedback is maximised)
- Changes to assessment requirements or timetabling are communicated in a timely way, and do not differentially disadvantage any student
(this is to ensure that students have adequate time to prepare for assessments)

5.1.5 Marking Assessments

Good Practice means that

- When tasks or papers are marked:
 - they are marked according to the published criteria and standards
 - retrospective changes to criteria or standards are published; and
 - marks are combined in a statistically and educationally defensible way
(this is to ensure that assessments are marked fairly)
- Academic judgments which may impact on a student's progression in a course or unit:
 - are not made by a single marker without review by colleagues; and

- are supported by adequate documentation of the ways in which the student's performance has fallen short of the published standards
(this is to ensure that academic judgments are robust and defensible)
- Decisions about student progression (whether at Faculty, Department or Co-ordinator level):
 - are based on the application of agreed procedures and standards
 - take due account of applications for special consideration due to serious illness or misadventure
 - are adequately documented
 - are communicated to students in ways which protect their privacy; and
 - are communicated to students in a timely way
(this is to ensure fairness, and sensitivity to students' needs and rights)

5.1.6 Feedback on Assessments

Good Practice means that

- Students are given feedback on assessment which:
 - includes access to their marked scripts and other relevant assessment material
 - provides a useful identification of individual strengths and deficiencies
 - describes the attributes of a satisfactory performance when one has not been achieved; and
 - enables the student to undertake effective remedial learning;
(this is to maximise students' chances of successful remediation and re-assessment)

5.1.7 Remediation

Good Practice means that

- Students requiring remediation experience adequate academic support in:
 - clarifying the ways in which their performance was unsatisfactory; and
 - undertaking and monitoring their remedial learning

(this is to maximise students' chances of successful remediation and re-assessment)

5.1.8 Re-assessment

Good Practice means that

- Students are re-assessed:
 - using similar instruments to those used at the initial assessment, and possessing similar validity and reliability; and
 - according to published criteria and standards which are similar to those applied to the initial assessment
(this is to ensure fairness and transparency of process)

5.1.9 Appeals

Good Practice means that

- Students are aware of the grounds for, and mechanisms of, appeal against:
 - academic judgments (resulting from e.g. inaccurate marking, marking bias) which may impact on their progression or ultimate graduation
 - grading decisions which may impact on their progression or ultimate graduation; and
 - decisions about exclusion
(this is to ensure the application of natural justice by enabling students to challenge unfavourable decisions)

5.2 The evaluation of teaching⁵

Good Practice means that

- The University, Faculties, Departments, Co-ordinators of courses and units, and individual academic staff, are proactive in soliciting information through which to evaluate the quality of their respective contributions to the educational experiences offered by the University
(this is to ensure that program evaluation is seen as an essential part of the cycle of quality improvement)

⁵ The Management and Evaluation of Teaching. Academic Board Resolution, effective 2001.

- Student feedback on all aspects of teaching and assessment is solicited through a program of regular, systematic and methodologically sound collection of information from students, followed by analysis, interpretation and, where appropriate, publication of the analysis and interpretation of the data, and reporting on the actions arising from it
(this is to ensure that student feedback is not only actively solicited, but seen to be acted upon as an important contribution to quality improvement)
- Students participate in the evaluation, review and development of courses and units
(this is to harness the insights of students, and to ensure that they are built into the evaluation cycle)

6 ACADEMIC PLANNING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

6.1 Input to academic planning ⁶

Good Practice means that

- Students participate in academic planning and review processes, whether through formal membership of boards or committees, or through co-option onto working parties set up for specific planning processes
(this is to ensure the incorporation of student insights into the planning process)
- Student members of such boards, committees and working parties receive the same information as all other members
(this is to enable their full and effective participation)
- Relevant external input to academic planning and review processes is sought, from community and / or professional bodies or institutions, as appropriate for the course or unit
(this is to ensure continuing relevance of educational programs to the societal needs that they are intended to meet)

6.2 Faculty Teaching and Learning Plans ⁷

Good Practice means that

- Faculty Teaching and Learning Plans include an operational component, setting out the goals of the Plan. Achievement against the goals is reported to the Academic Board annually
(the process of developing the Plan is an important contribution to ensuring that educational goals are shared across the Faculty; the specification of goals enables evaluation of achievement to take place)

⁶ The Management and Evaluation of Teaching. Academic Board Resolution, effective 2001.

⁷ The Management and Evaluation of Teaching. Academic Board Resolution, effective 2001.

- Faculties and Departments undertake annual review and revision of the Teaching and Learning Plan. In addition to responding to quality assurance and evaluation data, these reviews should also take account of the potential for greater flexibility in:
 - learning pathways and program design in courses and units
 - setting educational goals and methods of assessment in courses and units; and in
 - modes of program delivery, student participation and styles of learning in courses and units.
(this is to ensure that that the educational opportunities offered by the University can be regularly updated to meet the needs and choices of students, and the demands placed on graduates, as well as taking advantage of relevant advances in information technology)
- In particular, Faculties and Departments review annually the extent to which the educational possibilities of advances in information management and technology could be exploited in the delivery of each of their courses and units
(this is to ensure that the educational opportunities offered by the University are seen to be taking full advantage of contemporary technological capabilities, and are using them to enhance, rather than to replace, the personal interactions which are the hallmark of University education)

6.3 Quality Assurance ⁸

Good Practice means that

- Faculties and Departments establish and maintain quality assurance mechanisms which collect and analyse information needed to monitor the quality of all teaching activities, and which review and report annually to the Academic Board
(this is to reinforce at Departmental and Faculty level the importance attached to quality assurance, and to enable the University to report accurately and comprehensively on the quality of its educational offerings)
- In particular, each Faculty documents the mechanisms by which it assures itself that its students:
 - receive and understand a clear statement about the aims and intended outcomes of each unit of study
 - achieve a balance between the various skills and attributes that each program of study is intended to develop
 - are able to link the outcomes of their units of study into a coherent whole

⁸ Guidelines for Academic Quality Assurance Systems. Academic Board Statement (May 2001)

- receive early feedback on performance, and support to improve outcomes
 - are identified and supported if they appear to be at academic risk;
 - experience an assessment program which is fair, equitable, valid and reliable
 - understand and benefit from the assessment program; and
 - in fact achieve the aims and intended outcomes of the program
(this is to raise awareness about the importance of quality assurance in education, and to maximise the usefulness of this self-evaluation exercise as a preparation for a forthcoming Academic Board-initiated visit)
- In addition, each Faculty documents the mechanisms by which it assures itself that its educational programs:
 - draw upon the disciplinary research expertise of academic staff
 - provide high-quality research supervision and training
 - are characterised by high-quality teaching, which is adequately and publicly rewarded
 - are informed by developments in the theory and practice of university teaching and learning
 - are modified in response to valid and reliable evaluative feedback from students, graduates and staff; and
 - are monitored in respect of the extent to which they achieve the educational goals specified in the Faculty's Teaching and Learning Plan
(this is to raise awareness about the importance of quality assurance in education, and to maximise the usefulness of this self-evaluation exercise as a preparation for a forthcoming Academic Board-initiated visit)
 - Faculties actively explore ways in which the Academic Board-initiated visits to Faculties can be used to strengthen and improve the quality assurance systems planned and implemented by the Faculty *(this is to improve the quality of student learning)*
 - Faculties and Departments formulate, implement and review quality assurance mechanisms in respect of all on-line learning activities in which they are engaged. These mechanisms should address:
 - staff training and development both in the pedagogical and technical aspects of on-line teaching and learning

- the design and development processes for “going live” with on-line learning packages
- the evaluation of student experience and learning outcomes; and
- the costs (both direct and indirect) of implementation, evaluation and regular updating
(this is to ensure that the quality of student learning experiences is enhanced by the adoption of on-line learning)

7. STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

7.1 Recruitment of academic staff

Good Practice means that

- Recruitment procedures for all academic positions are conducted in accordance with the University’s Personnel Policy on Appointment of Academic Staff, and meet the following criteria:
 - a clear advertisement of the requirements of the position
 - the demonstrated capacity of the applicant best able to meet the advertised requirements of the position, particularly in relation to educational skills
 - adherence to policies relating to discrimination
 - training for members of selection panels
 - documentation of the reasons for selection or rejection of each applicant.
(this is to ensure that the best applicant is not only selected, but is seen to be selected)

7.2 Induction of academic staff

Good Practice means that

- Personnel Services, Faculties and Departments ensure that new staff members receive all necessary documentation, and are able to complete all the necessary formalities, well in advance of the date of taking up their position
(this is to minimise delay in taking up academic responsibilities on arrival)
- Faculties and Departments provide a welcome to new staff members, which includes:
 - a planned introduction to the Faculty, the Department and the position
 - the opportunity to meet academic and general staff; and
 - an introduction to relevant University facilities and units (e.g. the Institute for Teaching and Learning, Student Services, Staff and Student Equal Opportunity Unit)
(this is to ensure the early development of strong collegial relationships)
- The head, or other senior member of the Department, undertakes an early interview with the staff member to plan an appropriate program to develop educational skills, including the identification of an educational mentor
(this is to maximise the staff member's potential as an educator)

7.3 Attributes of academic staff

Good Practice means that

- Academic staff:
 - demonstrate a high level of knowledge and understanding of the subject material they teach
 - in their teaching, demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how students learn, both generically and in their subject
 - use methods for teaching and learning which are appropriate for the subject area and for the level of the academic program;
 - use learning technologies which are appropriate to the context of learning
 - demonstrate clearly the link between teaching, learning outcomes, and student assessment

- use teaching practices which are inclusive and non-discriminatory, as well as being respectful of, and sensitive to, differences among students
- monitor and evaluate their own teaching activities
- search for new ways to help student learning
- actively share ideas on teaching with other academic staff
- work as members of an educational team with shared goals
- support the application of quality assurance methods to improve the quality of student learning;
(this is to maximise the capacity of academic staff to contribute to student learning)
- Academic staff perform in ways which demonstrate that they hold the professional values of:
 - respect for individual learners, and commitment to their development and empowerment
 - commitment to the development of learning communities, including students, teachers, and all those who support learning activities
 - commitment to continuous reflection and evaluation, and consequent improvement, of their own teaching
 - commitment to scholarship in teaching, both generally and within their own discipline; and
 - commitment to encouraging participation in higher education and to equality of educational opportunity
(this is to make explicit the value-base of effective teaching)

7.4 Performance of academic staff

Good Practice means that

- Each academic staff member has a regular opportunity for a confidential interview with the head, or other designated senior member of the Department, for the purpose of reviewing and documenting career progress and discussing opportunities for further career development
(this is to maximise the educational development of each staff member)
- The Department actively provides and supports facilities and opportunities for self-assessment and peer review of the educational activities of each staff member

(this is to maximise the educational development of each staff member, and to demonstrate the value placed on education by the Department)

- Student feedback on teaching (see Section 5.2) includes information on the educational contributions of individual staff members, which is passed confidentially to the staff member concerned
(this is to enable staff members to receive detailed feedback on student perceptions of their performance)

7.5 Opportunities for academic staff

Good Practice means that

- The University, Faculties and Departments create an environment where individuals and teams are encouraged to reflect on their teaching, its process and its outcomes, and are supported in their innovations to improve the quality of student learning
(this is to show that a professional approach which incorporates continuous reflection, improvement and evaluation is valued by the institution)
- Departments make available opportunities and funding for study leave, conference leave, visits to other institutions, etc., which are at least as accessible for pursuing educational interests as for research interests
(this is to demonstrate that educational activities are as highly valued as research and scholarship)
- Departments provide opportunity, encouragement and resources for all staff to attend activities, inside and outside the university, designed to improve teaching performance
(this is to reinforce the institutional commitment to education)
- While Faculties and Department encourage academic staff to seek opportunities to supplement income (whether personal, Departmental or Faculty) from outside earnings, academic staff who do attract additional income from outside earnings demonstrate that income-earning activities enhance teaching, or at least do not detract from it
(this is to ensure that education remains as a primary goal of the University)
- The Institute for Teaching and Learning provides, and evaluates the effectiveness of, a range of programs and activities designed to support academic staff in developing their educational knowledge, understanding and skills
(this is to demonstrate that the work of the Institute is effective, efficient and responsive to the needs of staff in enhancing student learning)
- The Institute for Teaching and Learning provides, and evaluates the effectiveness of, programs and activities designed to enable academic staff to develop and practise inclusive approaches to teaching which enhance the learning of all students

(this is to demonstrate that the work of the Institute is effective, efficient and responsive to the need to maximise the inclusivity of student experience)

- The University, Faculties and Departments encourage contributions to the educational goals of the University through access to promotion, discretionary awards and non-financial benefits
(this is to demonstrate institutional commitment to education as a primary goal of the University)
- Through the decisions of its promotions mechanisms, the University makes it clear that excellence in teaching is an essential prerequisite for promotion at all levels, and can be the major reason for a successful application for promotion to the rank of full professor
(this is to demonstrate institutional commitment to education as a primary goal of the University)
- Where an application for promotion is unsuccessful, the University provides detailed confidential comments indicating clearly which aspects of the applicant's performance did not meet the required standard, and what should be attended to in order to improve the chance of success
(this practice mirrors the type of feedback that unsuccessful students should receive)

7.6 Departmental management

Good Practice means that

- Departments have a well-defined and publicly visible management structure, with clear lines of accountability, reporting and documentation
(this is to encourage transparent and accessible academic management at Departmental level)
- Departments have access to a room that can be booked and used for formal and informal meetings of staff
(this is to facilitate the collegial exchange of information at a group level)
- Departments have regular minuted meetings, at which Departmental activities are open to review, and at which academic staff are encouraged to express their views on Departmental activities
(this is to encourage transparent and democratic academic management at Departmental level)
- Departments provide academic accommodation and facilities which constitute an environment which maximises creativity, scholarship and productivity
(this acknowledges the importance of the environment in the production of good work)

- The teaching and administrative loads of the Department are distributed equitably over time, taking into account seniority and experience, and the need for junior staff to establish both the educational and research arms of their academic career *(this is to reinforce equity, and to discourage the inappropriate exercise of power)*
- Those responsible for the management of the Department give due encouragement, recognition and reward to academic staff in the pursuit of excellence in student learning *(this is to ensure that a commitment to high quality learning is properly respected and supported)*

8 CONCLUSION

These Guidelines represent a set of criteria by which to evaluate the improvements in quality of the University's activities in the field of teaching and learning through the delivery of coursework awards, at a number of levels in the organisation.

They serve to make clear the commitment of the University of Sydney to meeting the needs of tomorrow's society, through the provision of high-quality educational experiences for its students today, the monitoring of quality standards, and by continuing to adapt effectively to a rapidly changing world.

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