1. Review of Course Structures

Professors Don Markwell, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) and Ian Reid, Senior Academic Reviewer for the Review attended and led a discussion on the Review of Course Structures.

Professor Ian Reid opened the discussion with a brief update of the process for the Review of Course Structures.

Over 140 submissions had been received to date from students, staff, alumni and external stakeholders. Aspects from the submissions are currently being consolidated for recurring themes to contribute to the development of an ‘Issues and Options Paper’ which will be distributed later this year. The Paper will provide recommendations for consideration by the University community and feedback.

Professor Reid said that the FAO/SubDean Group could provide a particularly valuable viewpoint and he hoped that the group will be vigilant and provide consideration and feedback to the review process.

Professor Reid also noted that some matters would probably be handled during the process (ie approved through the relevant committees) rather than waiting until the culmination of the Review.

The Steering Group is currently establishing working groups and deciding what sequence and priority needs to be given to the different working groups.

Professor Reid asked the group “What are the most important issues the Review should address, from this group’s particular perspective?”

- The recurring issue of the administration of examinations (lack of sufficient time for markers), was raised. It was suggested that there is not enough time for markers to correct papers and the problem was exacerbated by the increasing number of students each year.
  Suggestions such as:
  o the academic year to start a week earlier to allow an extra week for the examination period
  o the semesters to move to 12 week semester. A members suggested that some faculties were already not teaching over the full 13 weeks
  o a trimester year, using the summer session
  However, the suggestion of a 12-week semester has in the past been unpopular particularly with faculties organising field trips etc.

- The proliferation of course/degree choices available to new students, including the wide range of combined courses, is causing confusion for students (particularly at point of entry) and problems with timetabling and efficiency.

  Trudi noted that the “Combined Courses for High Achievers” has caused an increase in the number of combined course offerings. A member suggested that this has also resulted in sometimes bizarre combinations, often creating clashes in timetabling. Faculties could not effect changes to lecture times to suit courses with 2-3 students. In addition, it was noted that some different courses contained similar content, adding to the confusion.

- It was noted that one of the Review’s Working Parties would focus on Postgraduate Courses
Professor Reid noted that the University of Melbourne model was based on the premise that school leavers were not in a position to make an informed vocational choice and it had confined the number of degrees available at entry so that by the time students graduate, they should have an idea of their strengths and what area to pursue in postgraduate education. Professor Reid noted that this model is being widely discussed through the Review and asked the group whether they had any feelings about **lowering the number of initial degrees on offer**?

There was some confusion with the terms ‘generalist’ and ‘professionalist’ which were not clearly defined.

There was also some confusion about what constitutes a ‘professional’ degree course and what was a ‘general’ degree. There was some disagreement with the definitions used in the Discussion Paper.

Professor Reid said the basic question was where do we want our students to start and finish?

It was suggested that a ‘generalist’ degree followed by a “professionalist” degree would not suit the majority of students, given the time and cost involved. Many students knew what they wanted to do at University and did not need additional time to decide.

Professor Markwell said that there is a strong tendency towards ‘generalist’ education as an important element of education, that to be equipped in a world of rapid change, there is a need to know a wide range of subjects; for a greater breadth (as opposed to specialisation) as a prelude to specialised knowledge. Professor Markwell said that one of the drivers of this way of thinking, were employers who often looked for well developed communication skills and ethics, and prospective employers often voiced that universities placed too much emphasis on specialised knowledge at the expense of these attributes. Professor Markwell noted that there was a sense that universities had a role to play in the development of communication skills and moral ethics.

Professor Markwell asked how the University can equip students with these attributes and suggested that perhaps it’s about teaching in a way that puts greater emphasis on communication skills, ethics etc.

It was reported that there was a belief at least amongst some staff that in a technical course such as the Bachelor of Engineering, three years equivalent study could be devoted to technical study and a year to ‘Arts’ to develop communication skills.

In Law, there was some concern with developing programs within the Faculty so that students moved through the program as a cohesive group, to develop a cohort and that perhaps **compulsory units at the beginning of the course** would achieve this. This did not always work well for students in combined courses who were at different stages of their Law studies and did not comprise a ‘cohort’ as such.

A member said that **combined courses** needed to be administered more efficiently and that concurrent enrolment often made this process easier to manage. It was pointed out that concurrent enrolment, however, did not suit international students.

Professor Markwell advised that the University should not let government policy affect any decision making, adding that the Minister has indicated that the universities should work out what they need and the Government will accommodate as best it can. He went on to say that the Minister had indicated that she was favourable to diversity within the higher education sector.

A member said that they agreed with a ‘generalist’ approach, for at most the first two years of undergraduate education, but didn’t agree with moving to a full Melbourne model. Professor Markwell assured members that there wasn’t any pressure to go with the Melbourne model
and that it simply provided a comparison to investigate. Professor Markwell said that there were numerous ways to offer ‘generalist’ entry, perhaps provide certain compulsory units at some point in their degree, perhaps in the first year?

Professor Markwell said it was hoped that the Issues and Options Paper will provide a variety of ways to achieve changes and there should not be a focus on the Melbourne model.

Professor Reid agreed, saying that the Melbourne model provides an example and we need to think about alternative models.

There was a query with regard to the working groups being developed within the Review, what are they, and how will members be selected?

Professor Markwell responded that the Steering Group will establish the following working groups:

- Framework and Definitions of Degrees (Trudi McGlade, Chair)
- Postgraduate Coursework (David Plowman, Chair)
- Teaching-Research Nexus (Lyn Abbott, Chair)
- Honours (Phillippa Madden, Chair)
- Recognition of Prior Learning and Prerequisites (Chair TBA)

Professor Markwell noted that there is a focus for working group members to have expertise across the university in the area and for the working parties to be small in numbers. Submissions to the Review relating to each area will be distributed to individual working parties with the Steering Group overseeing all submissions.

- On the matter of Practicum Programs. Professor Reid noted that this has been brought up very briefly with the Steering Group but that further discussions are planned and that this is an important area which needs to be addressed but that careful consideration should be given to the implication of stipulating practicum programs for students.

Professor Markwell agreed that this is an area where many universities are looking at expanding, some universities looking at a considerable portion of the course made up of work experience/community service.

Professor Markwell suggested that the University move to consider and develop approaches in the following themes:
- Learning in the Workplace
- Undergraduate exposure to research and research skills
- Capstone – an opportunity for all students or just some?
- An international experience, providing opportunities for students to study abroad.
- Honours

In closing Professors Markwell and Reid thanked members for affording them the opportunity to have this discussion. Trudi thanked them for attending and for providing a small forum in which members could have their say on this important Review.

Information about the Review, including The Discussion Paper and responses submitted can be found at: [http://www.coursestructuresreview.uwa.edu.au/](http://www.coursestructuresreview.uwa.edu.au/)

2. Update from Academic Council

Trudi reported that Sylvia Lang attended Academic Council last Wednesday in Trudi’s absence and that all items on the agenda requiring approval/recommendation to Senate were approved or recommended.
3. Indexing in the SPE

There had been some discussion at our last meeting about indexing of the names of prizes and scholarships. The indexing of the name such that for example the Tom Collins Prize in Australian Literature would be indexed as Collins Prize in Australian Literature, Tom. This issue had been raised with Valerie Koay, Manager, Publications and she had replied as follows:

“There has always been a search facility on the SPE web site but it is on the side navigation bar and so does not stand out. We have now placed the search box right on the web page itself and also improved it to search for keywords in titles of scholarships, prizes and endowments. So please try it out by going to the following web site:

http://spe.publishing.uwa.edu.au/latest

If you key in the word "Hackett" you will get the following results:

1. Hackett Scholarships
2. Hackett Prize for Latin, Lady
3. Hackett Foundation Alumni Honours Scholarship 4. Hackett Prize, Patricia

Similarly if you key in the work "Saw" you get the following results:

Saw Medical Research Fellowships, W.A. and M.G.
Saw Medical Research Fellowships, Althelstan and Amy

This improved search facility should help our users in looking for any scholarship, prize or endowment.

No matter what indexing convention we use there are pros and cons.

For example, if we stay with our current indexing convention where the surname is placed first, then as can be seen above, all the Hackett scholarships and prizes will be listed together alphabetically. If we use the indexing convention you described then the Lady Hackett Prize for Latin, for example, will be listed under "L" and the Patricia Hackett Prize will be listed under "P". If a user is scrolling through the alphabetical index then it does not stand out that there are two Hackett scholarships and two Hackett prizes. External users are likely to be more familiar with family names than initials or first names. For example, if someone wants to see what the Saw family has contributed to UWA, then you have the two Saw fellowships listed together instead of one under "W" and one under "A". Our culture frequently bends towards designing our web sites more for internal than for external users."

She goes on to say that “there is no automatic way to change our indexing convention. Each entry needs to be corrected in five places for the change to take effect. It would be a time-consuming process.”

She concludes by saying that nevertheless if the group feels strongly about changing the indexing, then Publications will make the changes.

For discussion and decision.

There was some discussion. Jane Larke (Archives and Records) noted that the current indexing was not in accordance with current indexing conventions, because the name of the prize was different to the name of the person and so it was appropriate to index on the name of the prize not the person. The proposed model was correct.

It was noted that the search engine would permit the listing of all prizes and scholarships offered by the same family.
It was agreed to request Publications to make the changes to the proposed indexing. The additional workload was noted and members appreciated the willingness of the Publications Unit to make these changes if requested.

Members also wondered if there was any possibility of enhancing the listing of the prizes under each faculty. Currently if a prize is available in a faculty, but is administered by another faculty, a search brings up a note to check under the other faculty’s entry. Would it be possible to have all prizes available in a faculty in one list? This could also apply to scholarships.

Trudi to follow up with Publications.

Harvey advised that TRIM references have been forwarded to Publications. These will be included in the details of the prizes.

4. Any other business

(i) Anthony Turner advised that Postgraduate fees for 2008 have been circulated; anyone who has not received a copy should contact Anthony.
(ii) Jane Larke said that any late submissions for the Student Thesaurus should be forwarded to her asap.
(iii) Jane Larke also advised that Archives & Records will be distributing archive boxes to schools/administrative units who are scanning material for TRIM.
(iv) Jannette Barrett reminded members that archive copies of agenda and minutes should contain the relevant attachments. Any queries should be directed to the University Archivist, Maria Carvalho.