AGENDA

1. **ATEM CONFERENCE 22 TO 24 APRIL 2009**
   
   Jon Stubbs, Director of Student Services, will talk briefly to the group about the next ATEM Conference to be held in Fremantle from 22 to 24 April.

2. **UPDATE FROM ACADEMIC COUNCIL**
   
   Sylvia Lang will provide an update on the Academic Council meeting held on Wednesday 4 March 2009.

3. **COMPLAINTS HANDLING SYSTEM**
   
   Gina Barron, Manager, Complaints Resolution, will speak to the group about the Complaints Handling System and will seek feedback on whether the system ought to be extended to include student appeals. Attached is a paper prepared by Gina for consideration by members (Attachment A).
   
   For discussion.

4. **REPEATING UNITS**
   
   Currently University General Rule 1.2.1.4 states as follows:
   
   “(1) Students are not permitted to enrol in a unit which is the same or substantially the same as one which they have previously passed or had credited towards their course unless the faculty decides that there are sound academic reasons for them doing so.
   
   (2) If a student is permitted to repeat a unit, the unit is credited only once towards their course.”

   The intention of the rule is that, unless the Faculty allows otherwise for sound academic reasons, students will not be able to repeat a unit that they have previously passed, irrespective of the course in which the unit was passed, or for which they have been granted advanced standing in the course in which they are enrolled.

   It has come to light that the Student Information Management System will permit a student to repeat a unit if they enrol in that unit in a different course however it will not permit them to repeat a unit in the same course if they have already passed the unit, or have advanced standing for it, in that course.

   It is proposed to initiate a change to the system so that, unless the Faculty permits otherwise in accordance with UGR 1.2.1.4, students will not be allowed -
   
   - to enrol in a unit that they have previously passed, irrespective of the course in which it was passed
   - to enrol in a unit for which they have been granted advanced standing in the course in which they are enrolling.
   
   For discussion.
5. **HANDBOOK ENTRIES FOR HIGHER DEGREE BY RESEARCH PRELIMINARY**

It has been brought to the attention of the Secretariat that there are a variety of entries in the Postgraduate Handbook for the Higher Degree by Research Preliminary and it has been proposed that they contain some common wording.

The following is proposed for discussion:

“A higher degree preliminary course is a course of study that a student may be required to complete before the Faculty or the Board of the Graduate Research decides whether or not to admit the student to candidature for a research higher degree (master’s by research, PhD or other doctoral degree by research)”

6. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Members will be invited to raise any other items for discussion.
PREAMBLE/BACKGROUND
As a result of the review of complaints at The University of Western Australia – and extended work of staff in Human Resources, the University is in the early stages of developing a Complaints Resolution Framework (CRF). As this framework develops, it will deliver a more effective and efficient handling of complaints from staff, students and the public. It will contribute to the prevention of problems that give rise to complaints and assist in the reduction of risk and increased satisfaction from all key stakeholders.

A key part of this framework was the purchase of a Complaint Handling System (CHS) from the University of Western Sydney and work on this system is one of our key current tasks. Over the next couple of months, we will be populating the CHS with UWA specific information. This includes the identification of all staff involved in complaint management and ensuring that they have access to the system. We also need to consider best practice steps in complaint management, categories for all complaints and links to support staff and relevant policy. Use of the new system will enable a range of benefits including:
- In the long term, substantial reduction of the total factor cost of handling complaints;
- Facilitating implementation of speedy resolutions;
- Preventing complaints from escalating and compounding;
- Reduction of inappropriate (and overly costly) measures to rectify and resolve complaints; and,
- Provision of qualitative and quantitative data so the University can make proactive improvements to processes and systems.

DETAILS OF THE COMPLAINT HANDLING SYSTEM (CHS)

Functionality
- System has capacity to provide longitudinal data and trends in complaints for management decision-making at many levels, with UWS system specifically designed for the University environment and effectively linking with Alesco, Callista and TRIM;
- System design supports current model of devolved responsibility for complaints resolution;
- Favourable response from approx. 100 staff who attended demonstrations in March 2007.

Management Improvement and Best Practice
- Tool to make it easier to manage all aspects of complaints;
- Better co-ordination and management of complaints based on best practice;
- Introduction of this system will provide for regular management reporting (number, location, type of complaints) and provide capacity for system improvements:
  - Could be expanded or copied to provide a similar system for the management of appeals.

Risk Management
- System addresses some aspects of Senate risk management concerns about damage to the reputation of UWA given that poor complaints management is a significant risk factor;
- NSW Ombudsman (Dec 06) recommended that all Universities have a centralised recording system and it is expected that all State Ombudsmen will follow suit.
- All public authorities in WA must now follow new international standards on complaints-handling (ASA/ISO 10002:2006).
- The UWS Complaints Management System was commended by AUQA in December 2006.
POSSIBLE EXPANSION / DUPLICATION TO SUPPORT MANAGEMENT OF STUDENT APPEALS

As the University embarks on the development of a complaints resolution framework, there is concern that there is not a similar framework for the management of Student Appeals. While appeals are distinctly different to complaints, there is often a need for staff to consider if the matter before them is an appeal or a complaint and to provide direction to a student as to the process that they should follow. It is also true that at some points in appeals, elements of complaint arise and the appeal policy does not enable consideration of these easily.

Further to this, it is clear in reviewing case files that there is no central repository for appeals that enable collation of data regarding the number, type and outcomes of appeals at the School, Faculty and University level. There is also difficulty at times in ensuring that decision makers have all the information before them in order to make decisions or that consistency of decision making over time is enabled. As such, a case management approach, supported by software enabling the collation of a case file, could be highly effective.

It is not clear yet how much work would be required to either modify the CHS to enable it to be used for Student appeals or indeed for modification in a duplicated system. In either case the following considerations are currently noted:

- Any system developed needs to be user friendly – one that supports the work of those currently undertaking this work, not an added burden
- Information within the system needs to be vetted carefully to accurately reflect policy and processes already in place;
- Development of proformas and templates to assist could be located within the system

Benefits of system for student appeals:

- Registration of all work and steps involved in an appeal including a pre-appeal stage where student is directed to take certain steps prior to lodging a formal appeal
- Ability to link/divert to complaint where elements of complaint enter an appeal – for example a refusal to provide feedback on assessment/examination
- Creation of a case file that could progress through the various levels in each appeal process
- Collation of information at school and faculty level as to the number and type of appeals and the outcomes of appeals – may allow for early identification of broader issues.
- Collation of information regarding considerations and determinations at committee levels involved in appeals.
- Readily accessed report generation regarding the statistics arising from appeals enabling identification of broader issues and informing future changes to policy.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The concept of use of such a system is placed before this group for consideration. Many of those in this group will be able to utilise the CHS when it goes into production and it considered that it may be worthwhile to consider a case management approach to all this type of work. Alternatively, this group may feel that they wish to see how the system functions before expanding it further. It should be noted that the funding currently available for enhancements of the system may not be available in the future. A demonstration of the system to all schools and faculties is planned but a separate demonstration for this group can be also be organised.