1. UPDATE FROM ACADEMIC COUNCIL

Sylvia Lang provided an update on the Academic Council meeting held on Wednesday 7 October 2009:

(a) Items from Board of Coursework Studies

(i) Service Learning Working Party Report

While Interim Recommendations 1-4 were endorsed by Council, there was discussion regarding various facets of the report including:
- the recording and management of service activities;
- the need to introduce the recommendations over time;
- how to reconcile a requirement to undertake activities that were essentially voluntary in nature;
- how these activities are recognised and captured on student transcripts;
- ensuring that an equitable and sensible process is established and that those who, for a variety of reasons, may have difficulty in fulfilling the requirement are not discriminated against.

(ii) Postgraduate Course Development Working Party Interim Report

The recommendations submitted were endorsed by Council.

(iii) Honours and B.Phil Working Party Report

There was considerable discussion at Council regarding equity issues associated with this course. There was concern that some would be excluded from participating because of background, ie coming from low socio-economic areas. It was noted, however, that the intent was to cater for students who achieve at very high levels. This item was referred back to the relevant Interim Board of Study for consideration of the issues raised by Council.

(v) Embedding Research Working Party Report

Council approved the recommendations submitted.


Council approved the Recommendations submitted.

Executive Officer’s Note: An All-Staff email has been circulated drawing attention to the working party recommendations approved by Council.

(b) Review of UWA Educational Principles in the Context of the Future Framework

Sylvia noted that there was some discussion regarding the term ‘cultural literacy’ in the context of the principles and it was agreed that a definition be provided in the document. W/Professor Jane Long will be providing this. The principles would be attached to the Academic Council minutes.

There was discussion in the group as to whether there were specific ways that ‘indigenous knowledge’ could be acquired. Sylvia noted that this aspect had not been explored, and suggested that there might be specific units to deal with cultural issues.
(c) Proposal to partner with Open Universities Australia (OUA) for delivery of Distance Learning Options in Integrated Human Studies

Sylvia noted that this matter has been referred to the Executive. Sylvia also noted that there are currently 30 Australian universities involved with OUA, two of which are Go8 universities.

(d) New Course – Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching (Faculty of Education)

This course was approved. It was noted that all assessments would be recorded as Ungraded Pass or Ungraded Fail. It was queried whether this course would articulate with the Graduate Diploma/Master's. It was noted that if the same units were undertaken within the Graduate Diploma in Professional Studies in Education and a mark and grade recorded, then it would be possible to articulate to the higher level courses.

It was also noted that prospective students for the Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching must be employed as a tertiary teacher.

(e) New Course – Graduate Diploma in Energy Law (Faculty of Law)

This course was also approved. There was some discussion that the course is 24 points, but it was noted that this was in line with similar Graduate Diplomas in Law at other institutions.

2. AWARDING OF CREDIT (ADVANCED STANDING) FROM THE INTERNATIONAL CENTRE TO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS - UPDATE

Sylvia noted that SIMS had developed a proposed process to address this issue. The proposal has been forwarded to Garry Hendy at the International Centre for consideration. As Garry is currently out of office, the matter has been deferred to the next meeting of this group.

3. CALCULATOR POLICY

Rob Blandford provided the following background to the current Calculator Policy and draft policy for consideration.

At UWA, all faculties currently use a list of approved calculators (as approved by ECM) in order to sanction which may be taken into examinations. Students must have their calculators checked against this list and are then given an approval sticker which has to be affixed to the calculator for easy visibility during examinations.

There are a number of problems with the current system:

1. Ad-hoc approval had been given for calculators which were not on the list, provided that they had no data storage or graphics functions.
2. Recently an error in the calculator checking process had resulted in a programmable calculator being on the list of approved calculators.
3. During examinations, some unit coordinators had been insistent that certain machines be permitted in exams, even when no approval sticker had been given. This had caused embarrassment and confusion for Student Administration staff invigilating examinations.

In order to avoid the current issues, it was proposed that the University move to a system whereby students are given a restricted list of pre-approved machines (approximately 5 only) which they may buy.

Rob referred to a policy currently in use at Oxford University:
http://www.economics.ox.ac.uk/index.php/graduate/intranet/calculators/

There was general agreement to limit the number of calculators to five; that these would be readily available through the University; and to negotiate with a supplier who could guarantee
that the same calculators could be available for at least three years. Members agreed to retain the valid sticker system which allows for easy and quick identification.

It was agreed that the ‘calculator policy’ be implemented on a dual system in 2010.

4. CHANGED OPTIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS – UPDATE FROM INTERNATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OFFICER

Members were reminded that at the last meeting David Norman had spoken to the following items:

(a) ACCESS UWA

Members are reminded that this matter was discussed at the last meeting of this group where it was noted that the University had previously been advised by DEEWR that Student Visa holders could only undertake concurrent study in CRICOS-registered courses. DEEWR had recently confirmed that this also applied to units studied via Access UWA.

It was agreed at that meeting that the International Centre staff would meet with a group of interested sub-Deans and FAQs to discuss how best to proceed. Any interested persons should email David Norman.

In the meantime, Sylvia and David Norman will be preparing a paper outlining the issues for the attention of the Registrar. This matter to be discussed at next meeting.

(b) UNSATISFACTORY PROGRESS – STUDENT VISA HOLDERS

Members were reminded that this matter was discussed at the last meeting of this group where it was agreed that a ‘show cause’ rule be drafted and submitted for consideration by the Academic Council at its 7 October meeting. A copy of the draft rule, as approved by the Academic Council, subject to final drafting in consultation with the FAO/SubDeans Group, was tabled at the meeting.

There was some discussion as to how to ‘operationalise’ the policy ie should faculties decide on their own individual ways of implementing the policy, or should guidelines be prepared to ensure some consistency of application? Several faculties were favourable to establishing a set of University-wide guidelines.

It was noted that the Faculty of Life and Physical Sciences has a ‘show cause’ policy in place whereby a small committee meets to assess situations where a student for reasons such as prolonged illness, or where a student may fail badly in the first semester and withdraw from the second semester which would impose an immediate sanction, and the student has requested the Faculty to consider the student’s circumstances and allow for re-enrolment.

It was noted that the Science Faculties had a more lenient approach in terms of the progress status applied to students in their first academic year. Sylvia stated that the introduction of the new courses framework and the associated rewriting of the rules provided an opportunity for consistency of approach on many issues. She suggested there might be consideration for the treatment of first-year students across the University to acknowledge the particular difficulties such students might experience in adapting to University life.

There was some discussion regarding the wording of the ‘show cause’ rule and a number of changes were proposed.

Sylvia reminded members that it had also been agreed at the last meeting that the current ‘warning’, ‘end-of-year progress’, ‘mid-year progress’ and ‘intervention’ letters be reworded to take into account the newly drafted ‘show cause’ rule. A copy of a proposed re-drafted ‘end-of-year progress’ letter was tabled for discussion. Several amendments were recommended.
Executive Officer’s Note: a working group will meet to discuss the wording of the current letters and the updated draft letters will be provided at the next meeting of the FAO and sub-Deans group.

There was some discussion about On Probation conditions, where these were currently recorded and which of them might be managed through Callista. It was noted that a restriction on the number of points in which a student might enrol in a semester or year could be managed through Callista.

Harvey tabled copies of screenshots for progress status in StudentConnect which reinforced the need for students to contact their student adviser in relation to progress status resulting from unsatisfactory academic performance.

5. CONFERRAL OF DEGREES/CERTIFICATES/DIPLOMAS LISTS - ADMINISTRATIVE ERRORS

Sylvia noted that the Vice-Chancellor had drawn to the attention of the University Secretary that there had been an increasing number of administrative errors coming through on the lists of degree conferrals going to the Graduations Office. Faculty officers were requested to take all reasonable steps to ensure the accuracy of conferral lists submitted. It was noted that the errors might be symptomatic of the reduced staffing and increased student numbers currently being experienced by faculties.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

Sylvia noted that the Senior Legislative Officer position advertised recently in Governance Services has been filled with the new person commencing in January 2010.