NOTES FROM A MEETING OF THE FACULTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS/SUB-DEANS’ GROUP HELD FRIDAY 4 MARCH 2011 IN THE SENATE ROOM

Sylvia welcomed Tennille Trevaskis, Faculty of Business Postgraduate Coordinator, to the meeting.

1. UPDATE FROM ACADEMIC COUNCIL
Sylvia Lang provided an update on the Academic Council meeting held Wednesday 2 March, noting in particular the following Part 3 items:

1.1 University Policy on Special Consideration
Sylvia thanked all those who had contributed to the development of the policy which has been developed over a long and broad consultation process.

Sylvia noted that some Council members queried the reference in the policy that only SubDeans would be in a position to allow any adjustment to marks who noted that the responsibility to adjust marks lay with the Board of Examiners. Sylvia clarified that the intention in the policy wording was for SubDeans to make an initial recommendation to the BOE.

*Sylvia requested members to provide feedback re the new policy ASAP, particularly with regard to item 3.3 of the procedures.*  The draft policy is available as attachment L of the Academic Council agenda located at [http://committees.intranet.uwa.edu.au/acaboard/academic_council_from_2010/agendas/2011/2_march](http://committees.intranet.uwa.edu.au/acaboard/academic_council_from_2010/agendas/2011/2_march)

Sylvia noted the intention of the policy is to limit the adjustment of marks to those cases recognised as serious. A member queried who would assess the ‘seriousness’ of an application, Sylvia noted that this would be an assessment made by the faculty based on the evidence provided by the student.

Sylvia also noted that the new policy does not provide for ‘marking with discretion’: marks can only be adjusted at the end of the process when the results of all assessments are available. The Special Consideration form is currently being amended to reflect the new policy.

A member queried when the new policy would be effective; Sylvia noted that the new policy became effective as soon as it was approved by Academic Council on 2 March.

A member queried whether Trimester 1 Business students lodging Special Consideration applications would be assessed under the old or new policy. Sylvia noted that in this regard, applications should be considered in light of the new policy but a student could make a case to the faculty to be governed by the old policy if they could demonstrate that they would have behaved otherwise had they known in advance that the change to policy would occur.

The policy was approved by Council.

1.2 University Policy on Show Cause
Sylvia noted that there had been a big increase in the number of Show Cause applications received for 2010, with a total of 41 applications received to date. Sylvia also noted that the number of applications upheld had not been substantial.

Sylvia also noted that several Show Cause applications received where students had been suspended/excluded by their faculty after only one semester of study. Sylvia referred to the ESOS requirement that international students are provided intervention strategies to assist where they are found to be struggling with their course, noting that it is also a requirement of the University that domestic students be treated the same as international students to the extent that the University can do this given applicable legislation. It was noted that when a suspension/exclusion is placed after only one semester of study, there is no allowance for the provision of intervention strategies to be activated to assist a student who is not coping.
A member from ALVA noted that there was a problem with the time limit for applications in the current Show Cause rule insofar as it does not provide for faculties to consider late applications.

Sylvia noted that the draft policy presented to Academic Council on 2 March provides more information about the kinds of issues that might be cited in support of applications (see item 2.2 of the “Criteria for determining Show Cause applications”). The policy also has a requirement that the student provide evidence that they have taken steps to address the issues outlined in their Show Cause application and outlining those steps. The policy states that evidence helps to strengthen an applicant’s case. The Show Cause policy is available as Attachment M at the following link:

2. SPECIAL CONSIDERATION FORMS CAPTURE ON TRIM

Members recalled at the FAO/SubDeans Group meeting of 8 October, where it was noted:

A member asked, with regard to Special Consideration documents, if the entire document could be kept on the one file. Currently Special Consideration applications are being split into Part 1 (student normal file) and Part 2 (confidential student file). Members agreed that Special Consideration applications should no longer be split and one confidential student file should be used (TRIM). In circumstances where the confidential student file needs to be accessed by others who do not currently have access, a request should be made to the appropriate person to approve access.

Justine McDermott, Associate Director Archives and Records Management Services, attended the meeting and spoke to this item. Justine noted that Special Consideration forms were captured in TRIM as individual files, however due to the confidential and sensitive nature of Part 2 of the forms, different security was allocated to Parts 1 and 2, Part 2 being allocated restricted access.

After some discussion, it was agreed that the Special Consideration forms should not be split and that restricted access apply to both parts of the forms. It was pointed out that those who handled such forms were aware of their potentially sensitive nature and required to deal with them in strictest confidence.

Justine advised that she will be contacting the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) to inform her of the decision confirmed by the group, namely that part 1 and part 2 of the Special Consideration form be captured and stored in TRIM as one file with the same access (student in confidence caveat) allocated to both parts of the form.

3. UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Members noted that work is underway to draft or redraft a number of University Policies. These fall into several categories:

- New policies to reflect decisions relating to NC2012
- Amendment of existing policies to reflect changes relating to NC2012
- Policies written to capture the policy content of existing rules
- Rewriting of existing policy statements currently in the form of committee resolutions, communications from senior staff etc

The FAO and Sub-Deans Group represents a wide range of knowledge and expertise that is vital to effective policy analysis and development. In the coming months members will be invited to comment on and provide input into the policy development process. Sylvia thanked those who have already submitted valuable feedback on a variety of policies.
3.1 University Policy “Units additional to course requirements”

Members were asked to consider the policy on “Units additional to course requirements” which is in a first draft stage with a view to providing comment and feedback. A copy of the draft policy was attached to the agenda, together with a copy of the existing policy for reference.

Sylvia introduced this item seeking feedback from the group, particularly with regard to whether members considered that the new rules should provide for a range of points for bachelor’s degrees.

From the discussion it became evident that there were a variety of views on whether students should be permitted to undertake additional units and, if so, the circumstances in which this would be allowed. Some felt that allowing students to do additional units to complete a major that was not strictly required to complete the degree requirements was acceptable whereas others did not agree with this.

It was noted that current policy did not permit faculties to allow students to undertake additional units unless this was provided for in the rules for the course (as was the case in the Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Commerce). All other requests must be considered under the existing policy and a case made to the Chair of the Academic Board through the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) under the Waiver of Rules policy. It was pointed out that all such requests were considered on their merits and in terms of the policies that applied.

The need for some flexibility in the number of points that could be attempted was noted given the introduction of new courses and the variety of prior study completed by existing students who may wish to transition to one of the new bachelor’s degree courses. It was noted that students were not required to accept credit available to them nor were they obliged to transition to a new course. Students wishing to remain in and complete an existing course would be supported to do so. For some students this might be the best option.

A member spoke against permitting students to complete three majors in the new courses. She pointed out that the information provided widely to date contemplated two majors only. Other members expressed the view that it would be inequitable to allow some students to complete three majors while others (because of the content of the majors chosen or because they changed academic direction at some point or did not know from the outset what major(s) they wished to pursue) would be able to complete only two.

A member pointed out that “academic justification” referred to in the policy, in an academic institution might justifiably be taken to mean the desire to broaden one’s knowledge. Another member suggested that students might be permitted to take additional units for a sensible academic purpose.

A member from Student Services reminded the group of the HESA Act and suggested that the legislation might ultimately determine the policy outcome.

It was agreed that the wording be adjusted as necessary to reflect the Act.

A member noted that Bachelor of Science students who wished to exceed 144 points were required to submit a formal request to the faculty.

Sylvia asked members to consider when, if a point range was included for bachelor’s courses, a formal request for approval to exceed 144 points would be required.

*Members were asked to provide any further feedback ASAP. Please see agenda attachment A, item (2) pages A2-A3.*

5. OTHER BUSINESS

5.1 Transfers

Harvey noted that no more transfers or re-enrolment transfers will be accepted.

5.2 TRIM capture of forms

Peter Miller reminded members that ARMS/TRIM staff should be contacted when new
forms or changes to existing forms are being considered. Also stapling has become an issue in the TRIM office. Members were asked to kindly staple document only ONCE, in the top left hand corner, and from the front of the document. There have been a number of cuts and injuries caused by awkwardly placed or wrongly sized staples being used. Please consider when forwarding documents to TRIM.

5.3 2012 Handbooks
Mary Carroll noted that handbooks for 2012 will be available in hard copy for PG, UG(existing), UGNC2012 and Units.

5.4 Rachel Schmitt advised members that Wayne Betts will be delivering a presentation re NC2012 on 18 March at the Murdoch Lecture Theatre. An all staff email will be circulated shortly.