Sylvia welcomed members to the first meeting of this group for 2013, and welcoming new members Carolyn Wood (Faculty Administrative Officer, ALVA), Maxine Cutter (Acting Manager Coursework Scholarships, BGRS) and Rosalind Wisenthal (Student Affairs, ECM).

1. ACADEMIC COUNCIL MEETING OF 5 JUNE 2013

Members noted the minutes were available at http://committees.intranet.uwa.edu.au/acaboard/academic_council_from_2010/minutes/2013/5_june

Sylvia noted that this year, group meetings would be focusing on policies.

2. UNIVERSITY POLICY ON UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE COURSES (UP12/20) – Ref F36524

Members noted that item 2.5 of the above policy (http://www.universitypolicies.uwa.edu.au/search?method=document&id=UP12%2F20) refers:

2.5 Each undergraduate degree course requires a student to complete 24 units of which no more than 12 must be at Level 1 and at least four must be at Level 3.

A member had sought clarification concerning the number of Level 3 units that a student must complete to satisfy two majors if there is overlap of units at Level 3. Sylvia advised that a student satisfies the requirements of a major by completing the units specified for that major. Where the approved structure of majors undertaken by a student provides for overlap of units at Level 3, a student is not required to undertake any additional Level 3 units to satisfy the requirements of both majors.

A member from Arts queried the requirement that if students are undertaking units on exchange, they must, for all majors, complete at least one Level 3 unit and preferably two at UWA.

Sylvia explained that these were principles supported by the Board of Coursework Studies and that one of the main reasons for them was to permit calculation of honours eligibility. It was noted that a policy relating to study abroad and student exchange was currently being written.

It was agreed that follow up action should be taken to determine whether, where a major did not include four level three units, a note was included in the Handbook to alert students to the fact they must complete another Level 3 unit to satisfy the requirements of the degree.

3. UNIVERSITY POLICY ON SPECIAL CONSIDERATION (UP11/23) - Ref F25751

Members recalled that there had been discussion at the March 2012 meeting of the Group concerning the operation of the University Policy on Special Consideration introduced in early 2011. (Notes from the March Meeting are available at the following link http://www.fao.uwa.edu.au/fao__sub_deans_meeting_dates_and_notes/2012)

A member had raised a concern regarding the current approval process whereby it would be possible for an allocated advising faculty to approve, as an outcome of a request for special consideration, an exemption from the requirement to complete a particular assessment component of a unit offered by another faculty. It had been pointed out that such a decision could impact on a student meeting the learning outcomes of the unit in question.

A member from ALVA noted that before a decision in the circumstances outlined above, the allocated advising faculty should have discussions with the other faculty affected. This was accepted practice.

It was noted that a project was underway to revise the Special Consideration application form. A member noted that it would be beneficial if the form:

- did not list all the outcomes codes
- provided a space to indicate the kind of assessment involved
- provided a space for students to specify what outcome they sought rather than the broad option of ‘Other’

Concern was expressed about the ‘adjust mark’ option. It was noted that this should be used very rarely. It was to be applied only when a student’s adverse circumstances were rated as severe and when no other option was considered to be feasible. It was noted that most
institutions did not have the ‘adjust mark’ option and it was suggested that this provision in the policy be reviewed.

Sylvia advised members that the Guild has been informed that the ‘adjust mark’ option would only be applied in the most severe cases.

It was noted that the review of the Special Consideration policy was due in early 2014.

4. UNIVERSITY POLICY ON CREDIT TRANSFER, ADVANCED STANDING AND RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (UP11/54) - Ref F34875

A member had sought clarification of clauses 4.8 and 4.9 of the University Policy on Credit Transfer, Advanced Standing and Recognition of Prior Learning, in particular with reference to the difference between credit for an incomplete course and credit in the case of a student who is transferring from one course of the University to another.

Sylvia noted that in the circumstance where a student was transferring from one undergraduate course to another, the student may apply to transfer all credit (subject to completing the full requirements of the course into which they were transferring).

It was noted that the notion of ‘transfer’ at postgraduate level was not the same as at undergraduate level given the different admission requirements that applied.

Sylvia advised that the policy, which was an amalgamation of five earlier policies, was under review and asked members to forward any feedback to her, noting that issues raised at the meeting would be included in the policy review.

5. APPROVALS FOR EXCHANGE UNITS

A member has asked that the group consider the approval process for requests from students to undertake units overseas. The member has expressed the view that a student’s allocated advising faculty required clear and consistent guidelines about what can and cannot be approved in cases where the units in question are outside the discipline area of the advising faculty.

In discussion regarding unit approval forms available from the Study Abroad Office, it was noted that there was a requirement to have the form approved by the Unit Coordinator and it was agreed that the Office be asked to remove this.

It was agreed that an electronic system of managing requests would be preferable and noted that a new software system had been under development and was about to be trialled. While there was not currently a facility in the system to create a database of decisions on a unit by unit basis, work would be carried out in this respect in future.

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