

**AGENDA ITEM 11****Report of the Learning and Teaching Committee****11.2 Report of the Learning and Teaching Committee meeting held on Wednesday 25 March 2009**

The Committee met on 25 March 2009, when there were present: The Acting Chair (Professor B Sutton) presiding; Associate Professors S Barrie, C Collyer, M Freeman, T Ho, P McCallum and M Scoufis; Drs S Cattle (from 11am), S Cumming, M Edmund (from 10.35am), J Jones, I Koprinska, B Rooney, R Roubin, C Taylor (from 11.15am) and F Waugh; and Ms R Kumar. Mr M Charet was in attendance.

The full agenda for the meeting may be accessed on the web at:

[http://www.usyd.edu.au/ab/committees/learn\\_teach/agendas.shtml](http://www.usyd.edu.au/ab/committees/learn_teach/agendas.shtml)

**11.2.1 Academic Board Faculty Reviews****(1) Faculty of Pharmacy***separate attachment*

The Academic Board Review Phase Three Report for the Faculty of Pharmacy was circulated as Appendix 1 to the agenda. The Committee was informed that since the Academic Board review, the Faculty of Pharmacy has reviewed its curriculum, established an education unit to assist with future curriculum development, and was addressing infrastructure concerns and issues of communication between staff and students. It was also reported that an Alumni Officer had recently been appointed to facilitate communication between students and faculty, especially relating to establishing and maintaining clinical relationships with institutions and the government.

The full report is available on the Committee's website at:

[http://www.usyd.edu.au/ab/committees/learn\\_teach/Agendas/Agendas\\_2009/Appendix\\_2\\_-\\_Phase\\_3\\_Review\\_Report\\_-\\_Pharmacy.pdf](http://www.usyd.edu.au/ab/committees/learn_teach/Agendas/Agendas_2009/Appendix_2_-_Phase_3_Review_Report_-_Pharmacy.pdf)

***Recommendation***

*That the Academic Board note the Academic Board Review Phase Three Report for the Faculty of Pharmacy as presented.*

**(2) Faculty of Engineering and Information Technologies**

G3-G6

The Faculty of Engineering and Information Technologies provided a written update on progress in the twelve months since their review, which is attached as Appendix 2. It was noted that the faculty had implemented a series of teaching awards and seminars to improve the quality of teaching and was reviewing lowly-evaluated Units of Study at the end of each semester to see how those units might be improved.

***Recommendation***

*That the Academic Board note the update report from the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technologies as presented.*

**11.2.2 Proceedings of the Committee****(1) Students At Risk**

G7

The Committee was informed that a report had been received arising from a review of the Students At Risk and Student Appeals policies and their implementation across the University. The review had been commissioned by Professor Sutton and the Registrar in 2008, and made a number of recommendations. The Committee agreed to establish a working party to

discuss the recommendations and their implementation, with terms of reference and membership agreed upon, as attached.

**(2) Future Student Administration Program (FSAP)**

Associate Professor McCallum suggested that a submission be made to the FSAP on behalf of the Academic Board, and asked that comments and suggestions for inclusion in this submission be forwarded to him. It was suggested that faculties should examine their local systems and include the functions they provide in any response, noting that such systems have arisen out of a lack of such functionality in FlexSIS but might be included in the new system.

**(3) Reports**

The Committee noted the following reports:

- Report of the Academic Board meeting held on 25 February 2009
- Oral report of the Chair

**Faculty of Engineering and Information Technologies**

**FIRST PROGRESS REPORT ON RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PHASE THREE**

<p><b>Recommendation 1</b></p>	<p>The Academic Board recommends that the School of Information Technologies be encouraged to consider the contributions it can make to key communities both within and outside the University of Sydney. On the basis of this, the School might proceed to formulate a business case for that could help to ensure its future viability.</p>
<p><b>Action taken by the Faculty</b></p>	<p>A/Prof Sanjay Chawla took office as Head of School at the start of 2008. A school-wide retreat on 25 March 2008 led to adoption of a 5-year strategic and operational plan (a copy is attached). The key objectives of the plan are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To be the leading IT research training school in Australia recognised for quality in the region and the world.</li> <li>2. To be the centre of IT-driven interdisciplinary teaching, learning and research in the University.</li> <li>3. To be financially sustainable and achieve an operating margin of 15% by 2012.</li> </ol> <p>In 2008, teaching began for a new curriculum in both SIT and Electrical &amp; Information Engineering 2008, involving substantial (approx 25%) reduction of unit deliveries, through coordinating the material between the schools on topics of common interest such as networking and software development. The School is also moving to a greater role in teaching of Faculty-wide computing units, with a substantial share in ENGG1801 in 2009, and complete planning and delivery for the new unit ENGG5201 for the new MPE degree in 2009. A new interdisciplinary position has been advertised (jointly between the School, and the Faculty of Economics &amp; Business, funded in the first instance by the university's New Appointments Scheme).</p> <p>Combined degrees have been introduced (BIT/BCom in 2008, with BIT/BSc, BIT/BA and BIT/BMedSci to follow in 2009). These encourage students to focus on the interdisciplinary topics that will be the strategic direction for SIT; they also attract high-achieving students, with UAI cutoffs above 95. In 2008, we enrolled 14 Students in BIT/BCom. As well, marketing for the BIT has been successful, with a doubling in the number of first preferences at UAC for 2009.</p> <p>Student interest in the postgraduate coursework programs continues to grow.</p> <p>The School's involvement with external partners has increased markedly, with a large role in the new Smart Services CRC (3 academic staff members; 4-5 postdocs), and an increased engagement with the Capital Markets CRC (Dr Curran taking on the part-time role of Director of Language Technology Research in that CRC). Staff are also devoting time to collaboration with NICTA. There is an increasing involvement with partners in the health industry, to add to existing collaborations in that field.</p> <p>Within the University, members of the School are working closely with other disciplines in Sydney Bioinformatics, with the School of Mathematics &amp; Statistics over their nGAME project, and with the School of Physics in astro-informatics.</p> <p>Two new ARC grants for 2009 have been won by SIT members in collaborations with other Schools (respectively, Biological Science and Education).</p>

<b>Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)</b>	<p>The School continues to seek an increased role in teaching IT competency as a core graduate attribute throughout the university.</p> <p>The School is holding ongoing discussions with NICTA about means for establishing an "Algorithms" research agenda (driven by USyd academics) within NICTA.</p> <p>The School was reviewed by OSISP in July-Sept 2008, and recommendations flowing from that review will be implemented in 2009 and beyond.</p>
<b>Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken</b>	<p>The Faculty is pleased to see the BIT UAC first preferences have doubled in number for 2009.</p> <p>The School has been successful in grant applications and obtaining a substantial number of postgraduate students with research scholarships.</p> <p>It is our expectation that the School of IT will continue to grow in their student numbers, research strengths and collaborative projects. The School has worked diligently throughout 2008 to lift its profile.</p>
<b>Recommendation 2</b>	<p>The Academic Board encourages the Faculty to develop strategies that will ensure the ongoing sustainability of quality learning, teaching and research in all disciplines.</p>
<b>Action taken by the Faculty</b>	<p>The Faculty's Learning and Teaching committee drafted an action plan for quality teaching. This plan works on the vision for a vibrant and well-resourced learning environment that supports high quality, inclusive learning experiences and addresses the Faculty's plan to develop a system to recognise and reward excellence in teaching. (The plan is attached.)</p> <p>The Faculty also addressed the student:staff ratios in Schools and a number of academic staff appointments were made in 2008.</p> <p>Support and mentoring to new and younger members of staff to apply for ARC grants has been provided throughout the year and will continue.</p>
<b>Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)</b>	<p>The Learning and Teaching committee meet regularly and strive to improve the quality of learning and teaching being conducted throughout the Faculty. A number of in-service workshops and seminars were held in 2008, which all faculty staff were invited to. Topics ranged from eLearning, interactive learning and excellent teaching practices.</p> <p>Monies from the LTPF will be put towards a number of projects in 2009 aimed at both improving the teaching experience in individual UOS and addressing strategic faculty wide issues</p>

<p><b>Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken</b></p>	<p>The burden of the student:staff ratios is reflected in the USE survey results and the difficulties in sustaining quality research. Attempts have been made to appoint new staff in schools with the highest student:staff ratios, and this will be ongoing in 2009. By reducing the student:staff ratios this burden will be reduced and an improvement in USE results should be seen in 2009. The Faculty also had a successful year in obtaining ARC Discovery and Linkage grant funding for 2009 with 20 new ARC Discovery Grants and 4 new ARC Linkage Grants. A particularly pleasing feature of these new grants was the number of new and younger members of staff who received them thus contributing to the Faculty's long term sustainability.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 3</b></p>	<p>The Academic Board recommends that the Dean and Faculty be encouraged to develop mechanisms to enhance and reward good teaching.</p>
<p><b>Action taken by the Faculty</b></p>	<p>The Faculty set up an award to reward good teaching at the end of 2007, with one award for each School and an overall "excellence in teaching" award for the Faculty. For 2007 the award was self-nomination. The winners of the award were invited to give a seminar on their teaching methods at a Learning and Teaching day held on 16 June 2008. Two of the three points in the faculty's L&amp;T action plan for 2008-2009 are focused on mechanisms to enhance and reward good teaching. This plan was developed specifically to address the Academic Board recommendation.</p>
<p><b>Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)</b></p>	<p>The award scheme for good teaching in 2008 will be similar to that used in 2007, but the action plan requires a more sustainable solution to be developed. One suggestion has been that Units of Study whose USE results have improved markedly will have their academic coordinator targeted for an award. The faculty L&amp;T committee in association with ITL have been discussing how best to reward good teaching. A sum of money from the LTPF for 2009 will be distributed to outstanding teachers to reward them. A more sustainable solution is being developed for the long term. A sum of money from the LTPF has been earmarked to enhance good teaching including the development of the Conceive Design Implement and operate (CDIO) initiative.</p>
<p><b>Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken</b></p>	<p>The Faculty was successful in obtaining nominations from all schools, bar AMME, who already have an in-school reward system in place. Excellent presentations were given at the L&amp;T day in June to promulgate best practice across the faculty. This was attended by about half of the faculty's academic staff. An L&amp;T newsletter is proposed to provide a more permanent reminder of these good teachers and their initiatives. It was decided that self-nomination is not necessarily going to identify the teachers who strive for excellence, therefore other methods will be used in future.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4</b></p>	<p>The Academic board recommends that the Faculty explore mechanisms to make it easier for students to access equipment in other areas of the University and make the guidelines for cooperation clearer.</p>
<p><b>Action taken by the Faculty</b></p>	<p>The extent of cooperation depends on the field. In Biomedical and Bio-Engineering, access of equipment with other faculties such as Medicine, Science and Pharmacy is now occurring. Teaching physiology as part of Biomedical Engineering uses the resources of University's Physiology Department. The Faculty is also encouraging the sharing of teaching and research resources across Schools. Some teaching laboratories are now being accessed by students from other Schools. Research collaborations across Schools are being encouraged through faculty-wide workshops on specific research themes. A Faculty wide Bio- and Bio-Medical</p>

	<p>Engineering Workshop was held in November 2008, and 18 academics in the Faculty presented and collaborated.</p> <p>With the potential decommissioning of the Wind Tunnel in the Woolley building, work has begun on the development of a "state of the art" wind tunnel for both laminar flow and boundary layer operations. The Schools of Civil Engineering and Aerospace, Mechanical and Mechatronic Engineering are working closely on the development of this new tunnel which will be used for both teaching and research</p>
<b>Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)</b>	Additional research workshops will be held in 2009 on selected themes such as energy, materials and complex systems. Such workshops could well be extended across faculties. The Faculty will examine closely the needs of students as expressed in surveys and staff-student liaison meetings and will facilitate access to other facilities as required.
<b>Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken</b>	With respect to teaching, the faculty is comfortable with the sharing arrangements now in place. With respect to research, more cooperation across faculties could be put in place but the Faculty appreciates that this is largely driven by needs of specific researchers.
<b>Recommendation 5</b>	The Academic board recommends that the Faculty develop, implement and evaluate strategies to improve the supervision of research higher degree students.
<b>Action taken by the Faculty</b>	The Graduate School of the Faculty has examined closely the individual comments made by students in the postgraduate surveys of 2006 and 2007 and has identified areas that may be underlying the relatively lower satisfaction with supervision. The Faculty has initiated a review of student administration services with a view toward improving and streamlining the student's experience through candidature. The process of annual reviews of research students is closely monitored by the Graduate School and the review forms are revised to enable students to express their concerns in a timely manner. Cases where supervisory issues arise are taken over and subsequently managed by the Graduate School.
<b>Further action planned but not yet implemented (if appropriate)</b>	The Faculty intends to make the completion of the supervisor training program a regular condition of employment. This program is now reviewed by the University and the Faculty has had significant input to this review process. The Faculty plans to hold a series of seminars on best practice in supervision of postgraduate research with a view toward rewarding and spreading such best practice across the Faculty.
<b>Faculty's evaluation of the success of action taken</b>	The Faculty acknowledges that changing and improving supervision practices is a slow process and while pleased with the progress so far, this item remains as a rolling item on the agenda of the Graduate School.

## **Working Party to Review the Policy "Identifying and Supporting Students at Risk"**

### **Introduction:**

In 2007, the Academic Board commissioned a review of the implementation of the policy. This was held concurrently with a review of the implementation of the Senate Rule on Student Appeals Against Academic Decisions. The report has now been submitted and contains a number of observations and recommendations directed at the Academic Board policy.

### **Terms of Reference:**

To consider the report and its recommendations and provide a response to the Academic Board which may contain recommendations for revision of the policy that will enable its academic intent to be more effectively met. The working party will report to the June meeting of the Learning and Teaching Committee

### **Membership:**

Bruce Sutton (Chair)

Three members of academic staff:

Dr Stephen Cattle (AFNR)

Dr Narelle Shadbolt (Associate Dean, Student Support – Med)

Dr Sabine Ludewig (E&B)

Dr Nerida Jarkey (Arts)

Dr Robyn Gibson (ESW)

Dr Janet Jones (Learning Centre)

Two undergraduate student members

Noah White (Science and SRC president)

One other student representative (TBA)

Two faculty managers:

Ms Maria McQuilty (ESW)

Ms Suzanne Winch (Science)

Deputy Registrar:

Dr Margaret Edmond

The working party may need to call on other staff occasionally to provide input on specific issues.