



Learning and Teaching Committee Agenda

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Notice of Meeting

A meeting of the **Learning and Teaching Committee** will be held at **10.00am** on **Wednesday 23 September 2009** in the in the **Science Meeting Room** (Carslaw Building, Room 450).

Members who are unable to attend are asked to notify Louise Young at the above address. Enquiries concerning this meeting may also be directed to Ms Young.

Louise Young

for

Ms Megan Kemmis
Secretary to Academic Board

31 July 2009

1. Welcome and Apologies

2. Minutes of previous meeting

(pages [3-9](#))

Recommendation

That the Learning and Teaching Committee adopt the minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 August 2009 as a true record.

3. Business arising from Minutes (not dealt with elsewhere in the Agenda)

4. Report of the Chair

Recommendation

That the Learning and Teaching Committee note the report of the Chair.

5. Report of the Academic Board

(page [10](#))

Recommendation

That the Learning and Teaching Committee note the report of the Academic Board meeting of 26 August 2009, as presented.

6. Academic Board Faculty Reviews

6.1 Faculty of Economics and Business

[Appendix 1](#)

The Academic Board Review Phase Three Report for the Faculty of Economics and Business is attached as Appendix 3.

Recommendation

That the Learning and Teaching Committee note the Academic Board Phase 3 Review Reports for the Faculty of Economics and Business, as presented.

7. Academic Board Resolutions: Assessment and Examination of Coursework

pages [11-17](#) and [Appendix 2](#)

Recommendation

That the Learning and Teaching Committee recommend that the Academic Board approve amendments to the Academic Board Resolutions: Assessment and Examination of Coursework with immediate effect, as set out in the report presented.

8. Revisions to the University's plagiarism policy

pages [18-34](#), a tracked changes version is available in [Appendix 3](#)

Recommendation

That the Learning and Teaching Committee recommend the Academic Board approve the creation of the policy: 'Academic Honesty and Plagiarism' to replace the 'Resolutions of the Academic Board: Academic Honesty in Coursework' and the 'Student Plagiarism: Course work: Policy and Procedures' with effect from 1 January 2010, as set out in the report presented.

9. Executive Summary of the Learning Centre's 2008 Annual Report

pages [35-40](#)

Recommendation

That the Learning and Teaching Committee note the executive summary of the Learning Centre's 2008 Annual Report, as presented.

10. Policy Updates and Reviews

12.1 Students at Risk Working Party

Recommendation

That the Learning and Teaching Committee note the update report of the Students at Risk Working Party.

11. General business

12. Next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled from 10am-12pm on Wednesday 28 October 2009.

Agenda Item 2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes of the Learning and Teaching Committee meeting held on Wednesday 12 August 2009

There were present: The Chair (Professor Tony Aspromourgos) presiding; Professor B Sutton; Associate Professors S Barrie, C Collyer, T Ho, I Maxwell (till 11am), P McCallum, M Lincoln and M Scoufis; Drs M Edmond (from 10.55am), M Fisher, C Groenlund, T Mogg, L Smith, C Taylor and F Waugh; Ms H Drury, J Gavan and R Kumar and Mr J Saurine and N White. Ms S Heesom and L Young were in attendance.

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed:

- Associate Professor Michelle Lincoln, replacing Dr Steve Cumming from the Faculty of Health Sciences
- Dr Murray Fisher, replacing Dr Heather McKenzie from the Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery; and
- Associate Professor Ian Maxwell who is replacing Dr Brigid Rooney from the Faculty of Arts.

Apologies were received from Professor D Armstrong, Dr S Cattle, Dr I Koprinska, Mr B Meikle and Ms S Hanfling.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 17 June 2009, were circulated and confirmed as a true record. Ms Young confirmed the Chair's query as to whether his name had been added to the attendees list of the previous meeting.

Resolution 25/09

The Learning and Teaching Committee adopted the minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 June 2009 as a true record.

3. Business arising from Minutes (not dealt with elsewhere in the Agenda)

There was no business arising from the minutes.

4. Report of the Chair

The Chair said the order of the agenda would be changed, with item 8 addressed first to allow Ms Sarah Heesom from the Office of General Counsel to speak about this proposal.

Returning to the report after item 8 was discussed, the Chair commented that he was on a "steep learning curve" in his new role with the Committee and that, given time constraints, he would give a fuller report at the next Committee meeting.

5. Report of the Academic Board

The Committee noted the written report of the Academic Board. Due to time constraints an oral report was not given.

Resolution 36/09

The Learning and Teaching Committee noted the written report of the Academic Board meeting of 1 July 2009.

6. Report of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)

In the absence of Professor Armstrong, it was agreed that this item be held over to the next meeting.

7. Academic Board Resolutions: Assessment and Examination of Coursework

This item was addressed by the Committee following extensive discussion of item 8. Professor Sutton presented the item to the Committee. He began by discussing changes to point 5.4 which recognise that there are other circumstances apart from illness that can have a long term impact on a student's academic work, such as a sustained period of grief. The revised policy suggested that special consideration was not the best measure for such students, a more appropriate decision might be to allow discontinuation with permission or temporary leave of absence. The policy encourages such students to speak to a counsellor or academic advisor and have their situation recognised. Another new section is 5.1.3, which acknowledges that student acting as carers may also require special consideration.

The new section 5.5 requires informal extensions (the request and decision) to be documented in writing, for example via email correspondence, as this provides the beginning of an audit trail if an issue were to escalate. Formal extensions needed to be accompanied by a medical certificate or, if the latter was not appropriate, a statutory declaration. Associate Professor Ho suggested the policy specify that a medical certificate from a practitioner who was a family member was not permitted. Dr Groeunlund said it should also specify students should go to a medical practitioner only, not an allied health practitioner.

Professor Sutton said the revised policy also gives tutors the right to make assessment decisions in regards to students missing classes, as in some disciplines missing one tutorial was not problematic but in others it could mean not fulfilling a core competency requirement.

Professor Sutton said the group work section of the policy was unfinished. Issues to be addressed were the large amounts of resourcing needed for group work and that an ill or otherwise academically disadvantaged student not only affected their own assessment, but the assessment for the rest of the students in their group.

For point 5.6 'Replacement Assessment', Ms Kumar suggested it be changed so that the student's best mark be taken from either the exam or replacement assessment. This was in response to the fact students who have to work during their holiday periods sometimes do not have sufficient time to prepare for a replacement assessment. Professor Sutton argued it was illogical to potentially count the earlier mark as the replacement assessment was initiated in response to the student being impaired in the first assessment

At this point the Chair interrupted and commented that a number of people had had to leave the meeting and it would be better not to rush through the proposal. The Committee agreed to hold a Special Meeting specifically on the revised Assessment and Examination of Coursework proposal before the next official meeting on September 23.

8. University of Sydney (Student Appeals against Academic Decisions) Rule 2006 (as amended)

Professor Sutton began by introducing Ms Sarah Heesom from the Office of General Counsel to the Committee, explaining that she would be presenting the legal definition of 'reasonable' behaviour and its bearing on the updated 'Student Appeals against Academic Decisions' rule.

He told the Committee the Academic Board had looked at updating the Academic Board 'Student Appeals against Academic Decisions' resolution to address

inconsistencies with the Senate 'Student Appeals against Academic Decisions' rule. From this came the idea of combining both into a consistent single document which would avoid scope for potential inconsistency over time. Apart from consolidating the two documents, the other significant change was the incorporation of the requirement for 'reasonable' behaviour by students and staff.

The Committee thoroughly discussed the proposed consolidated rule, with the following issues raised:

- Relating to point 8.5 ("The Medical Director of the University Health Service and/or a member of the Counselling Service may be invited to attend an Appeal Hearing, to advise the Student Appeals Body on interpretation of health and personal issues.") there was debate about whether other outside experts should or could be included, and if so, the procedure for inviting them.
 - Ms Kumar suggested that international students may want a representative of the International Student Support Unit (ISSU) present to advise on relevant cultural matters. She said requests for such a representative at hearings had been made in the past, but denied.
 - Professor Sutton replied that student and faculty representations could include the need for relevant cultural matters to be considered. The Appeals Hearing Panel could also seek further information that was not presented, if they felt that further information on something such as cultural matters needed to be addressed. He added that:
 - he had no problem with a proposal recommending that the Appeal Hearing panel seek advice from an outside party;
 - it was extremely important for students to remain fully informed and involved in this latter process and not feel exploited.
 - Ms Kumar asked why, then, the rule specified a medical director and a member of the counselling service could be present. Ms Heesom replied that this was a historical issue and at the last revision of the rule, student representatives had fought hard to keep it there as procedural confirmation of academic fairness.
 - The Chair suggested 8.5 become more general in stating that outside experts could be invited to attend. It was agreed that Ms Heesom would circulate revised wording for 8.5 to Committee members in the next week.
 - Section 8.5 was raised later in the meeting, by Dr Edmond, where the committee specifically debated the issue of student consent being gained before outside experts were consulted:
 - Ms Heesom said that as a general rule consultation should never take place outside of the hearing.
 - Associate Professor McCallum pointed out there were instances where this might be necessary, such as where it is decided there is not enough information in the hearing and that a third party needs to be consulted. Ms Heesom said that in such a case the student's consent must be gained first and that they should be invited to any external discussions.
 - Professor Sutton said there was a possibility the Appeals Panel would be restricted in their decision making if a student denied consent for external consulting. The Chair said that in this instance the panel could only make the decision on material the student and faculty had provided.

- The issue of whether external advice should be sought at all, or whether decisions should be made solely on the material presented, was questioned:
 - Associate Professor Ho gave the example of a medical tribunal, where unless the expert was a treating physician they could only give advice based on the material presented.
 - The Committee agreed the Chair's proposed general wording was best. It was also suggested specifying that any general officer consulted must be independent.
- Relating to point 3.1.2 (Students are encouraged to take the earliest opportunity to discuss their concerns with relevant Faculty staff. Where possible, this will occur within: (a) 15 working days of the Student being advised of the Academic Decision; or (b) in the case of Academic Decisions relating to completion of a unit of study, within 15 working days of the unit of study result being posted by the University.)
 - Mr Taylor asked for clarification of part B. Professor Sutton said the 15 working days time frame was to give students sufficient time to challenge results and not drag the appeals process into the next semester
 - Dr Edmond said the "where possible" did not give a strong definition and this could lead to students appeals being submitted throughout the semester. Ms Heesom suggested it could be changed to "where reasonable".
 - The Committee debated whether extensions should be granted through the registrar rather than via the faculties, with the refuting argument being that this went against Academic Board intentions and working in the spirit of the legislation
- Relating to point 9.1 (Where a Faculty requires further and more detailed provision for the resolution of Student concerns or appeals about Academic Decisions, the Academic Board, on the request of that Faculty, may by resolution establish such provisions.)
 - The Chair said this section seemed obscure. Ms Heesom said it had been included as a 'catch all', in cases where there was an area where a particular faculty had circumstances not accommodated in the process.
- Relating to point 1.6.6: ("Due Academic Process means the making of Academic Decisions according to published Faculty, Academic Board and University rules, resolutions, policy and procedure, as amended from time to time and as current at the time the Academic Decision was made.") and point 2.7 (The University will handle all Student concerns and appeals regarding Academic Decisions in a procedurally fair and reasonable manner, having regard to the principles of timeliness, confidentiality, absence of bias and freedom from victimisation.)
 - Mr Taylor raised concerns that the definition in 1.6.6 did not include reasonableness and fairness. The Committee agreed these were covered by the legal definition of 'reasonableness' in point 2.7
 - Ms Kumar suggested that 'procedural fairness' should be added into the definition in 1.6.6. Ms Heesom said she had no problem with this, although some members of the committee thought such an addition superfluous.
- Ms Heesom followed this discussion with a three part breakdown of how 'reasonableness' legally related to academic decision under this rule. She prefaced by explaining the requirement for acting reasonably was well versed in law.
 1. Fair process – this includes:

- Timeliness: doing things within a reasonable time frame
 - Confidentiality
 - The decision must be in the scope of the decision maker's power.
 - Absence of actual or perceived bias
 - Allowing an opportunity for the party who is effected by the decision (eg. the student) the chance to be heard.
 - No victimisation of the student for being involved in the process. For example, a student should have no academic disadvantage pending resolution of a matter or prior to an appeal:
 - An exception would be student misconduct, where, for example, health and safety issues might be a factor or where the student would be more disadvantaged by continuing their enrolment.
 - Another exception would be where failing a specific unit with a core competency means the student cannot continue to the next level. Ms Heesom said there had been occasions where students have had to delay a semester as they did not show core competency in a required area.
2. Reasonable fact finding – this includes:
- Administrative decisions can only be made on the relevant facts that are found:
 - Ms Heesom said it could be difficult for academics to deal with cases on an individual basis when there were a great many submitted at the same time, but that this was what was required.
 - The need to rationally consider and disregard irrelevant facts:
 - This means putting aside past personal experiences with a student.
 - It also means disregarding any allegations that cannot be proved, such as a suspicion – but not proof – that a student has plagiarised their work before.
 - The ability to clearly state, using logical grounds, on what factual basis the decision was made
3. Exercise reasonable discretion – this includes:
- rationally weighing up facts, balancing them, reaching a conclusion:
 - The same fact in a case may not always be relevant, eg. an illness before an exam is relevant for the exam, but not for an assessment that was set at the beginning of semester.
 - This could include weighing up such things as whether the student in question is an international student – this might be relevant in regards to how much support they have in the context of their problem.
 - making a discretionary judgement:
 - The Appeals Hearing Panel does not put itself into the place of the decision maker. The panel's role is to ensure the decision maker took into account the relevant facts and that the process was fair. This is a legal process mirrored through all administrative appeal processes throughout Australia. The decision of the student appeals body is a decision concerning the process – there is no reassessment of the factual findings.
 - Associate Professor Ho asked how the Appeals Hearing panel would respond if a member with relevant expertise in the area

disagreed on the mark the student had received. Professor Sutton replied that the panel should stay away from making academic decisions and would only send it back to the faculty not on the basis of the mark, but of the process followed.

- relying on relevant knowledge, but not personal opinions, if there is the need to make a decision about whether something was more likely or not to have happened:
 - Sometimes there is not even enough evidence to do this. In this instance the standard rule is that the status quo prevails, eg. the student remains enrolled
- making decisions consistent with those made in similar processes:
 - Decisions mustn't appear arbitrary, for example, two similar student cases should not have very different outcomes.
- deciding actions arising from the decision that appropriately reflect the nature of the decision:
 - the 'punishment must fit the crime': the administrator must be able to clearly state why the action arising from the decision was the appropriate one.
- Following Ms Heesom's presentation on the legal obligations of acting reasonably, the Committee agreed that the information was very useful and that it should, in some form, be available to the University community:
 - Ms Heesom clarified that the definition of reasonableness already existed in common law decisions and was codified in legislation in many places.
 - It was agreed that many staff and students did not always have a good understanding of the legal definitions behind reasonable behaviour and would benefit from a guide incorporating Ms Heesom's explanations. Professor Sutton and Ms Heesom said that something prepared by the General Counsel would be the most effective vehicle for this.
 - The Chair clarified that the University did not want to tie a specific codified statement to the Student Appeals rule, but to create a supporting document that would apply across all policies:
 - Dr Edmond said preparing such a document only in relation to this rule could give the message that reasonableness only applied to it, and not to all policies
 - Associate Professor McCallum suggested the creation of something like a "handbook for decision makers"
 - Associate Professor Ho suggest a preamble be put in the revised rule about reasonableness followed to a link to more information on the website
 - Dr Edmond said that such information should go on the Students Affairs website
- Mr Taylor asked if the Student Appeals Rule could specifically reference the guide to be written up about reasonableness, and if until that time the previous wording of 2.7 could be used. It was agreed that such a document would not be prepared in time for the 26 August Academic Board meeting, meaning that Mr Taylor's suggestion would mean not submitting the revised Student Appeals Rule for this meeting.

The Committee voted in favour of the recommendation but was not unanimous. The Chair said he would report the dissent to the Academic Board.

Resolution 37/09

That the Academic Board:

(1) recommend that Senate approve amendments to the University of Sydney (Student Appeals against Academic Decisions) Rule 2006 (as amended);

(2) approve the rescission of the Academic Board Resolutions: Student Appeals against Academic Decisions, as of the date the revised Senate rule becomes effective; and

(3) approve the development of a user's guide in conjunction with the revised Senate rule

with immediate effect, as set out in the report presented.

9. Revisions to the plagiarism policy

It was agreed this item would be held over until the 23 September meeting.

10. Academic Board Faculty Reviews

11.1 Faculty of Economics and Business

It was agreed this item would be held over until the 23 September meeting.

11. Policy Updates and Reviews

12.1 Students at Risk Working Party

12.2 Assessment Working Party

It was agreed this item would be held over until the 23 September meeting.

13. General business

There were no items of general business.

14. Next meeting

The Chair asked Ms Young to coordinate the best meeting time for a Special Meeting focussing exclusively on the revised Assessment and Examination of Coursework proposal. Following that, the next meeting is due to be held on the 23 September.

Agenda Item 5 Report of the Academic Board

5.1 Report of the Academic Board meeting held on 26 August 2009

The agenda for the meeting of the Academic Board on 26 August 2009 may be accessed on the web: <http://www.usyd.edu.au/ab/>

5.1.1 University of Sydney (Student Appeals against Academic Decisions) Rule 2006 (as amended)

The Academic Board noted the report on recommended amendments to the Appeals Rule, but agreed that it should be referred back to the Committee for further consideration, as set out in the extract of the minutes of the Board's meeting below:

Dr Auld supported the move to simplify the University's policies in this area, but raised some queries regarding the draft document as follows:

- the wording of clause 2.6 appeared to conflict with part 5 of the revised policy, and it was agreed that this should be reviewed;
- the use of the phrase "where possible" was queried, and again it was agreed that this be reviewed; and
- he suggested that the user's guide be submitted with the policy for approval by the Board.

On this last point, the Chair advised that the guide would focus on the issue of "reasonableness", and was still being developed. Professor Aspromourgos added that the issue of "reasonableness" applied to a range of other policies, not just the appeals policy.

The Chair recommended that the policy be returned to the Committee for further consideration, and members agreed.

5.1.2 Proceedings of the Committee

The Academic Board noted the proceedings of the Learning and Teaching Committee meeting held on 12 August 2009.

5.1.3 Other matters

The Academic Board also:

- discussed the review of the Academic Board;
- approved an amendment to the membership of the Academic Board;
- noted the Chair's approval of an application for early submission of a PhD thesis;
- endorsed amendments to the Senate Resolutions relating to the Governance of Faculties, Colleges, College Boards, Departments, Schools and Committees;
- noted a report on the 2009 Sydney Winter School;
- approved the 2010 semester dates for the Faculty of Medicine;
- approved the amended table of comparative English test scores;
- approved amendments to the policy "Admission to Undergraduate Courses";
- endorsed amendments to the *University of Sydney (Amendment Act) Rule 1999 (as amended)* related to the deferral of admissions;
- noted the report of the PhD Review Working Party; and
- noted the Best Practice Manual for postgraduate research supervision.

Agenda Item 7 Academic Board Resolutions

7. Academic Board Resolutions: Assessment and Examination of Coursework *(pages [12-17](#) and [Appendix 2](#))*

The Assessment Working Party has now reached a stage in its deliberations where it can recommend the first series of amendments to the Academic Board Resolutions: Assessment and Examination of Coursework.

These amendments relate to Parts 1, 5 and 6, with minor changes to Parts 2, 3 and 4. Part 6 has also been renumbered as Part 7 with a new Part 6 on Reasonable Adjustments to Examinations and Assessments inserted.

A special meeting of the Learning and Teaching Committee on 8 September, 2009 focussed on the changes to the Resolutions. The minutes for this meeting follow. The latest version of the policy (not including the recommendations made in the 8 September meeting) can be found online on the Committee website as [Appendix 2](#).

Recommendation

That the Learning and Teaching Committee recommend that the Academic Board approve amendments to the Academic Board Resolutions: Assessment and Examination of Coursework with immediate effect, as set out in the report presented.

Minutes of the Learning and Teaching Committee special meeting for discussion of the 'Academic Board Resolutions: Assessment and Examination of Coursework' held on Tuesday, 8 September 2009

There were present: The Chair (Professor Tony Aspromourgos) presiding; Professors B Sutton and K Trigwell; Associate Professors C Collyer, T Ho, I Maxwell, P McCallum and M Scoufis; Drs S Cattle, C Groenlund, T Mogg and F Waugh; Ms R Kumar and Mr J Saurine. Ms L Young was in attendance.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Associate Professors Simon Barrie and Michelle Lincoln, Drs Murray Fisher, Irena Koprinska, Lorraine Smith and Charlotte Taylor; and Ms Helen Drury, Jane Gavan and Su Hanfling.

2. Academic Board Resolutions: Assessment and Examination of Coursework

The Chair told the Committee that the most appropriate way of proceeding would be to go through the new parts 5-7 section by section. He said an extensive list of comments had been emailed to him shortly before the meeting by Ms Pearl Rozenberg from the Faculty of Economics and Law, via Associate Professor Scoufis, whom he asked to present each of Ms Rosenberg's comments as the relevant section arose.

5.1.2

"Generally, serious illness or misadventure will be taken into account when considering a student's performance in a course or unit of study..."

- Professor Sutton Bruce and the Committee agreed with proposed reworking by Ms Rozenberg: "when considering a student's ability to prepare for an assessment or demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes".

"In general, the provisions of Special Consideration are intended to apply to the latter situations."

- Ms Rosenberg's comment was that the "in general" was too vague. The Committee agreed, however, that writing the Resolutions too tightly could create problems. Professor Sutton said the intention was to avoid any hard barriers that specified where a gap might be found. The Chair agreed and said the concept of reasonableness, as discussed in the August 12 Committee meeting, empowered the non specific wording. The Committee agreed to leave the wording as it was.

5.2.6

"For example, consider the instance of a student who provides a medical certificate as evidence of a sprained wrist, and applies..."

- Associate Professor McCallum said the change in rhetoric tone with this sentence was awkward and suggested it be phrased differently.

5.2.8

"Requests for Special Consideration should be lodged within five working days of the assessment."

- Associate Professor Maxwell raised concerns about the five day limit, but the general consensus of the Committee was that this was acceptable as it was practical to avoid the special consideration requests running into semester two. The five working days timeframe also fitted in with other policies including Students at Risk and Student Appeals.
- Dr Cattle suggested that it may not always be clear to readers of the Resolutions that 'working days' meant Monday to Friday. 'Working days' is intermittently used throughout the Resolutions. Professor Sutton said this was to cover where a week may include public holidays. The Committee agreed to put 'Working Days' with the Monday-Friday definition in the Resolutions' glossary, to avoid any potential confusion.

“Where circumstances preclude this, a student may still apply, but must provide a reasonable case for the delay in application.”

- Ms Rosenberg’s comment was about what defined ‘reasonable cause’. Following extensive discussion and Sara Heesom’s presentation in August 12 Committee meeting, the consensus was to leave the wording as it was.

5.3.2.4 and 5.8.3

- The Committee agreed that these two sections did not contradict each other, as suggested by Ms Rozenberg.

5.3.3.3

“(Students have a responsibility and an obligation to) provide the relevant information to their Faculty offices as soon as practicable and certainly within five working days of the due date of the assessment for which special consideration is sought.”

- Ms Rozenberg questioned if this implied that incomplete applications were acceptable, as the current practice allows students to hand in incomplete applications by the deadline and then complete it within two weeks. The Committee discussed how it was the student’s responsibility to be aware of the policy and, if they wish their application to be considered and judged in their favour, to present a sufficient application. The Resolutions, however, allow circumstances where all information or documentation that is not ready at the time of the application, such as a medical certificate, can be handed in a reasonably short time later.

5.4 Serious Illness or Misadventure

- Professor Bruce Sutton said the rewriting of this section was to lay out the options for student that, depending on their circumstances, may be more appropriate than special consideration.

5.4.1

- Ms Rosenberg expressed concern about how to resolve disagreements between students and academics on decisions made regarding special consideration. Professor Sutton said the intended meaning of the Resolutions was that if the student was present when advice was offered and they declined that advice, then they assumed the risk management burden.
- Associate Professor McCallum suggested rewriting the first few sentences to make the section less ambiguous and more succinct.

5.4.2.1

“Occasional brief or trivial illness of a one or two week duration that occur one week or more before an assessment is due or an examination undertaken.”

- The Committee agreed with Ms Rosenberg’s suggestion that this should be changed to “an illness of one or two days”.
- The Committee also discussed Ms Rosenberg’s question of whether it was still an academic decision to accept a short illness that occurred the week before an assessment. It was agreed that it was an academic decision, but that a medical certificate presented by the student had to be seriously considered.
 - The Committee acknowledged the underlying issue of fraudulent medical certificates but agreed this was beyond the scope of the University to control. Associate Professor Ho discussed the problem of students obtaining ‘just in case’ medical certificates before an assessment for an exaggerated or false illness. She also said it was difficult for practitioners to refuse a student’s request for a medical certificate and she had never heard of a doctor refusing to provide one when asked.
 - Professor Sutton said that under the replacement assessment model, students who fraudulently claimed illness and ‘juggled marks’ would no longer be able to do so.

5.5.1

- Ms Rosenberg's comments questioned why there was a "no document process" for informal extensions. Professor Sutton said this was an incorrect assumption, and that it was actually a low transaction process.
- The wording of 'informal and formal' was debated, with some Committee members feeling it was not appropriate. The Chair suggested 'minor and major' instead but reminded the Committee the intention of the meeting was not to focus on redrafting.
- Professor Sutton said the written exchange granting permission for an informal extension was important, as it could be the beginning of a paper trail ending in a Student Appeals hearing. Dr Mogg and Dr Groenlund said that in their faculties such correspondence was also sent to the course coordinator for tracking.
- Ms Kumar pointed out the difficulties for students who need an extension granted by several faculties and the difficulties for staff keeping track of such students, especially during such times as flue season when many students are ill.

5.5.2.3

"In assessing whether to grant an extension will take into account.."

- It was noted there were missing words in this section and it should read "In assessing whether to grant an extension **the decision maker** will take into account".

5.5.4.1

"If recovery from the illness or misadventure is such that, in the opinion of the teacher, continuation from the affected members is most impaired, no Special Consideration..."

- It was noted there was a mistake here and that "most" should read "not".

5.5.4.2

"Where the contribution is impaired in the opinion of the teacher..."

- Associate Professor McCallum asked if the terms teacher or lecturer should be used consistently in the document. Professor Sutton replied that "teacher" was to cover when it may be a tutor, rather than lecturer, making the decision. This opened up debate about whether it was appropriate for tutors to make decisions about special consideration, with concerns that some could be more lenient than others:
 - There were concerns that this obligation was not being communicated effectively to tutors. The Chair said the Resolutions was not intended as a management guideline and should not be worded as such, and that it was up to faculties to ensure proper communication to tutors about granting special consideration. The Committee agreed, but Associate Professor Ho pointed out that faculties needed a document such as the Resolutions to refer to for the definition of appropriate behaviour.
 - It was suggested the unit of study coordinator could make the decision, but there were concerns this person may be too busy or far removed from the context to appropriately make the decision. The Committee agreed that the tutor/lecturer could grant the extension but should record it in writing and send it to the unit coordinator (for example, by CCing them in on an email).
 - In cases of groupwork where one student does not show up for a presentation, this should also be recorded and sent to the unit coordinator
 - Professor Sutton said he would change the wording of this section to include "decisions taken by that teacher to be reported to the unit of study coordinator".
- Associate Professor McCallum said that throughout the document, terms such as lecturer should be consistently lowercase unless it is a specific word in the glossary.

5.6.4

“...If a student is unable to attend the replacement assessment, they may lodge a further application for replacement assessment.”

- Professor Sutton said he agreed with Ms Rosenberg’s clarification that this should read “...unable to attend the replacement exam due to illness or misadventure...”. However, the Committee debated that there may be other circumstances, such as student work commitments or when international students have overseas flights booked:
 - Professor Sutton said two factors had to be considered in student work commitments, the financial impact and the job security (ie. if the student risks losing their job if they take time off to complete a replacement assessment).
- The Committee agreed this was an example where reasonable behaviour had to be taken to be expected and to reword the section to, roughly “...unable to attend the replacement assessment for good reason..”.
- Associate Professor Ho asked if there was a set timeline for informing students about the date of the reassessment. The Chair suggested this was three working days, but the Committee noted this did not appear in the document.
- On a related issue, Associate Professor Ho discussed the issue of students in the Faculty of Medicine who choose to do their sub-rotation overseas. Currently such students cover the cost of doing their written and clinical assessments overseas, but was the Faculty of Medicine under any obligation to be funding this? Professor Sutton recommended she discuss the issue, which was a complex one, with the Provost.

5.7 Medical Certificates

- Associate Professor Maxell asked if the medical practitioner is really able to “provide an assessment of the impact of the illness on the ability of the enrolled student to achieve designated learning outcomes (5.7.1.3)”. Associate Professor Ho said this usually involved ticking a one to five, “mild to severe” category box on the certificate.
- Associate Professor McCallum asked about family members filling out medical certificates. Associate Professor Ho clarified that this was forbidden under the latest updates to Australian Medical Association’s code of conduct.

5.8 Procedures

- Associate Professor Collyer said the important thing to maintain was consistency of judgment, and that there needed to be communication between the panel outlined in this section and the lecturer responsible for assessment.
- Associate Professor Maxwell said the Faculty of Arts had some serious concerns with the outlined procedures, mainly in regards to the high transaction costs that would require the faculty to employ another fulltime staff member. Professor Sutton pointed out the last Academic Board report had raised some concerns with how the Faculty of Arts manages decisions about extensions and special consideration. It was important, the Committee agreed, for there to be confidence in the system’s equity, transparency and fairness.
- The problem of inconsistency across faculties was discussed, as depending on the subject and type of assessment a student could be both granted and denied special consideration for the same incident of illness or misadventure. The question of whether the Resolutions should even be addressing implementation was raised, to which the Committee agreed that its inclusion was necessary to an extent to avoid inconsistency.
- Associate Professor Collyer pointed out there was no training across the University for assessing special consideration requests. Associate Professor McCallum agreed that academics who had received training and had the appropriate skills and knowledge could replace the need for a panel.
- In determining strategies for implementation, it was important to consider discrepancy in size between faculties. A system that worked for one did not necessarily work for another. Associate Professor Ho suggested the Resolutions

be firm in concept but flexible in implementation, with perhaps several models proposed to suit the different faculty sizes.

- The Committee discussed possible implementation models that avoided high transaction cost. This included:
 - Academic units, ie. schools to taking responsibility for special consideration.
 - The Chair discussed the system in his own faculty (Economics and Business) which involved a panel of three randomly selected academics, on a rotating basis, assessing requests for special consideration via submitted paperwork only. This system has the advantage of being removed from personal interaction between a lecturer and their students, where there is more risk of the lecturer being subjective.
 - One suggestion was that a panel similar to that outlined in the redrafted Resolutions could assess special consideration transactions within the faculty at random, to ensure appropriate decisions were being made.
 - Professor Sutton said a centralised, University wide system of processing special consideration applications had been proposed at the recently held Academic Board retreat. This model, while complicated to set up, had the advantage of minimising faculty work and being distanced from the students and lecturers involved. The Committee agreed this proposed, central mechanism had significant advantages and was worth pursuing further.
- The Committee agreed that section 5.8 would be redrafted and presented at the next Committee meeting.

5.8.1

- The Committee agreed that “seven days” should be changed for clarification to “seven working days”.

5.8.7

- It was noted there was a superfluous question mark that needed removal.

5.9.2

- It was suggested this section be removed as it was repeated in its entirety in section 6.8.

5.10

- The Committee agreed that the decision to award a posthumous award lay with the academic community, ie. the Dean and staff of the relevant faculty.

6.7

“Faculty staff are required to implement the examination and assessment adjustments as notified by Disability Services.”

- Professor Sutton said this section conveyed to faculties that the necessary adjustments listed by Disability Services were requirements, not suggestions.
- The Committee discussed how privacy issues meant there had to be a degree of trust between faculties and Disability Services.

7.1 Coverage

- The Committee discussed examples of special consideration requests from students, such as playing sport, participating in a wedding party, casual work and religious holidays. Professor Sutton pointed to 7.1.2 as the ‘escape clause’ whereby faculties can make special arrangements on a case-by-case basis for situations other than those listed 7.1.1.

7.2.1.1

“..alternative dates for submission of assessments”

- Ms Kumar said this was at odds with section 5.5.2.4 which specified 20 working days as the maximum period for an extension. Professor Sutton said he would redraft the section to correct this.

7.2.2

“Faculties or departments/schools are encouraged to deal with each application for special arrangements on a case-by-case basis and to provide a flexible response to applications.”

- Associate Professor McCallum said that encouraging flexibility was at odds with the desire for centralised consistency. Professor Sutton said he would redraft the Resolutions to address this.

7.3 Timelines for Applications

- The Committee noted that if section 7.2 was going to be redrafted, this section would need to be also.

7.3.1.1

“...at the time of enrolment with regard to religious beliefs or commitments relating to moveable feasts, prayer or worship times, or with regard to other requirements of their religion which may have an impact on the types of assessment and/or examination they can undertake;”

- The Committee discussed Ms Rosenberg’s comment on how this section affected student privacy issues. Professor Sutton said there was a distinction between asking a student about the basis of their faith and asking for factual information, such as set prayer days during the year.
- Dr Groenlund said this issue became particularly difficult for faculties with extensive clinical placements in the final years of study, where flexibility is difficult. Students enrolling in their first year sometimes didn’t think about how this would occur in their fourth year.

At the conclusion of the discussion Professor Trigwell asked about assessment and scaling, this being the issue that had originally sparked the redrafting of the Resolutions. Professor Sutton said this would be the next issue brought to the Learning and Teaching Committee by the Assessment Working Party.

Professor Sutton said he would bring the revised changes to the next Learning and Teaching Committee meeting on September 23. Following that the resolutions would hopefully be able to go to the Academic Board for approval.

Agenda item 8 **Revisions to the University's plagiarism policy**

8. Revisions to the University's plagiarism policy

pages [20-34](#), a tracked changes version is available in [Appendix 3](#)

Since 2005, the University of Sydney has had two policy statements relating to plagiarism: the Resolutions of the Academic Board, 'Academic Honesty in Coursework' and the policy 'Student Plagiarism: Course work: Policy and Procedures'. The second of these policies was authorised by the Vice Chancellor to address risks after cases of plagiarism were publicised in the media. The previously existing resolutions of the Academic Board were then revised to be compatible with this policy although since the Academic Board resolutions contained other statements on academic honesty, the resolutions were not rescinded.

It has long been felt that there is unnecessary duplication between these documents, and a Working Party of the Learning and Teaching Committee recommended in 2007 that they be combined. In 2009, the Chair of the Board requested that Associate Professor Peter McCallum draft a combined policy which is attached for discussion. In line with other recommendations of the Working Party, the draft also contains a statement on the use of plagiarism detection software. This and other changes have been added as noted below, in line with discussions at the Academic Board in 2008.

In particular it has been made clear that avoidance of plagiarism is not just a responsibility of coursework students but also a responsibility of research students and staff. In the case of staff it is clarified that the responsibility to avoid plagiarism applies to teaching and official documents as well as research, and it is noted that staff should see themselves as role models to students in sustaining a culture of academic honesty.

Below are notes on the draft and its relationship of to the two previous documents.

1. The name has been changed to 'Academic Honesty and Plagiarism'
2. A statement making it clear that staff and students are expected to avoid plagiarism and maintain academic honesty in all their work has been inserted (2.1, paragraph 3). It is also made clear that the responsibility for reporting plagiarism lies with academic staff and students. Non academic staff are not specifically charged with the reporting responsibility though all staff have the responsibility to avoid plagiarism.
3. In line with the view expressed at the Academic Board in 2008, it is clarified that avoidance of plagiarism by staff relates to official internal and external documents as well as to teaching and research.
4. The definition section has been expanded to include the glossaries from both policies.
5. The definitions and procedures of the 'Student Plagiarism: Coursework' policy have been preserved in connection with the section on Procedures for dealing with Plagiarism (section 5).
6. Reference to other policies have been updated
7. The two previous policies have difference of tone – the student plagiarism policy has a sharper legal focus while the Academic Board resolutions has a more discursive style. Some of the latter has been curtailed, in order to create a unified document, without (it is hoped) loss of intent.
8. A section on academic honesty, plagiarism prevention and plagiarism detection has developed from the former Academic Board resolutions and statements in the Working Party report, and has been inserted before the procedures section.

9. The statement on roles and responsibilities from the original Academic Board Resolutions has been retained.
10. The Office of General Council is scrutinising the policy to test its fitness for purpose as a replacement for the previous policy '*Student Plagiarism: Course work: Policy and Procedures.*'

Recommendation

That the Learning and Teaching Committee recommend the Academic Board approve the creation of the policy: 'Academic Honesty and Plagiarism' to replace the 'Resolutions of the Academic Board: Academic Honesty in Coursework' and the 'Student Plagiarism: Course work: Policy and Procedures' with effect from 1 January 2010, as set out in the report presented.



The University of Sydney

Academic Board Policy: Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

Approved by: Academic Board on 14 November 2001
Date of effect: 1 January 2002
Last amended: 5 April 2006

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1 – Preliminary

1.1 **Commencement**

This Policy commence on xxx.

1.2 **Purpose**

The purpose of this document is:

1.2.1 to set out the principles underpinning the University's approach to plagiarism and academic honesty;

1.2.2 to identify responsibilities for ensuring that the principles of academic honesty in coursework are implemented;

1.2.3 to be a resource document relating to academic honesty in coursework; and

1.2.4 to be a resource document containing the procedures relating to dealing with plagiarism in coursework, pursuant to Senate rules and regulations, and Academic Board policies.

1.3 **Authority**

The University of Sydney (Academic Governance) Rule 2003 requires the Academic Board to formulate and review policies, guidelines and procedures in relation to academic matters. The University of Sydney (Coursework) Rule 2000 (Division 1, 5(4)) requires the Academic Board to establish policies for assessment and examination of coursework.

1.4 **Revision**

This document is maintained by the Academic Board in consultation with the Registrar and is published by the Academic Board.

1.5 **Dictionary**

In this document:

Acknowledgement of the Source means identifying at least:

- the author or person who owns the Work; and
- the place from which the Work or part of the Work was sourced.

Assessment means evaluation of a student's performance by written/oral examination, assignments, presentation, theses, etc.

Award course means a formally approved program of study which can lead to an academic award granted by the University.

Coursework award course means an award course not designated as a research award course. While the program of study in a coursework award course may include a component of original, supervised research, other forms of instruction and learning normally will be dominant. All undergraduate award courses are coursework award courses.

Dean means the dean of a faculty or the director or principal of an academic college or centre, or chairperson of a board of studies.

Department or **school** means the academic unit which has responsibility for the relevant unit of study.

Dishonest Plagiarism has the meaning given to it in 3.3.4.

Examiner means the person responsible for assessing the Work.

Faculty means a faculty or college board, as established in each case by its constitution, or, where applicable, a board of studies. Faculties are responsible for award courses, and in this document the term refers to the faculty responsible for the award course concerned.

Groupwork means a formally established project to be conducted by a number of students in common, resulting in a single piece of assessment or a number of associated pieces of assessment.

Legitimate co-operation means any constructive educational and intellectual practice that aims to facilitate optimal learning outcomes through interaction between students, including:

- a) researching, writing and/or presenting joint Work;
- b) discussion of general themes and concepts;
- c) interpretation of assessment criteria;
- d) informal study/discussion groups; and
- e) strengthening and development of academic writing skills through peer assistance.

Negligent Plagiarism has the meaning given to it in 3.3.3.

Nominated academic means the relevant Heads of School and/or Associate Deans responsible for handling Plagiarism or their delegates, as nominated by the Dean of the Faculty in accordance with the University's Delegations of Authority.

Plagiarism means presenting another person's ideas, findings or work as one's own by presenting, copying or reproducing them without due acknowledgement of the source. In addition, please refer to the definitions of negligent and dishonest plagiarism in *Student Plagiarism: Coursework Policy and Procedure*.

Recycling means the submission for assessment of one's own work, or of work which is substantially the same, which has previously been counted towards the satisfactory completion of another unit of study, and credited towards a university degree, and where the examiner has not been informed that the student has already received credit for that work.

Student means a person enrolled as a candidate for an award course or unit of study.

Unit of study or **unit** means a stand-alone component of an award course. Each unit of study is the responsibility of a department.

Work means ideas, findings or written and/or published material.

Written Warning means a warning issued under 3.3.3.2 (b) or 3.3.4.4 (b).

1.6 **Related Documents**

This Academic Board Policy refers to, or should be read in conjunction with, the following:

1.6.1 University of Sydney By-laws 1999;

1.6.2 University of Sydney (Amendment Act) Rule (as amended);

- 1.6.3 University of Sydney (Coursework) Rule 2000 (as amended);
- 1.6.4 Delegations of Authority: Academic Functions;
- 1.6.5 Academic Board Resolution: *Assessment and Examination of Coursework*;
- 1.6.6 Academic Board Resolution: *The Management and Evaluation of Teaching*;
- 1.6.7 Resolutions of the Senate: *Student Appeals against Academic Decisions*;
- 1.6.8 Academic Board Resolution: *Student Appeals against Academic Decisions: Undergraduate and Postgraduate Course Awards*;
- 1.6.9 Academic Board Resolution: *Student Appeals against Academic Decisions: Postgraduate Research Awards*;
- 1.6.10 Code of Practice for Responsible Research Practice and Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Research Misconduct;
- 1.6.11 University of Sydney (Academic Governance) Rule 2003 (as amended)
- 1.6.12 Student Code of Conduct
- 1.6.13 Academic board Resolution: *Review Process for Postgraduate Research Students*

2 – Principles of Academic Honesty

2.1 *Introduction*

The role of the University of Sydney is to create, preserve, transmit and apply knowledge through teaching, research, creative works and other forms of scholarship. The University is committed to academic excellence and high standards of ethical behaviour as the cornerstones of scholastic achievement and quality assurance. The University requires all students and staff to act honestly, ethically and with integrity in their dealings with the University, its employees, members of the public and others.

Academic honesty is a core value of the University of Sydney. The University is opposed to and will not tolerate Plagiarism. It is the responsibility of all staff and students to:

- (1) ensure that they do not commit or collude with another person to commit Plagiarism;
- (2) in the case of students and academic staff, report possible instances of Plagiarism; and
- (3) comply with this Policy and Procedure.

This document sets out principles of academic honesty for all staff and students and details the procedure for ensuring academic honesty and dealing with plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty in the case of coursework students. Research students are expected to abide by the same principles of academic honesty, and staff are expected to display the highest standards of academic honesty in their research, teaching and in the creation of official documents. Breaches of academic honesty in the case of research students will be dealt with according to the Code of Conduct for Responsible Research Practice and Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Research Misconduct and policy on the Review Process for

Postgraduate Research Students. Breaches of academic honesty in the case of staff will be dealt with in accord with the Code of Conduct and through appropriate misconduct provisions in policies, awards and industrial agreements.

The University will treat all identified cases of student Plagiarism seriously, in accordance with this Policy and Procedure, and with Chapter 8 of the University of Sydney By-Law 1999 (as amended) which deals with Student Discipline.

2.2 Plagiarism and academic honesty

2.2.1 Plagiarism for the purpose of this Policy means presenting another person's Work as one's own Work by presenting, copying or reproducing it without Acknowledgement of the Source. Plagiarism may take many forms. The most common form of plagiarism is where a student presents written work, including sentences, paragraphs or longer extracts from published work without attribution of its source. Work submitted for assessment may also be regarded as plagiarised where significant portions of an assignment have been reproduced from the work of another student, since this exceeds the boundaries of legitimate co-operation.

2.2.2 Plagiarism includes presenting Work for assessment, publication, or otherwise, that includes:

- a) phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs or longer extracts from published or unpublished Work (including from the Internet) without Acknowledgement of the Source; or
- b) the Work of another person, without Acknowledgement of the Source and presented in a way that exceeds the boundaries of Legitimate Cooperation.

2.2.3 Plagiarism can be negligent (Negligent Plagiarism) or dishonest (Dishonest Plagiarism).

2.2.3.1 Negligent Plagiarism

2.2.3.1.1 Negligent Plagiarism means innocently, recklessly or carelessly presenting another person's Work as one's own Work without Acknowledgement of the Source.

2.2.3.1.2 Negligent Plagiarism often arises from a student's fear of paraphrasing or writing in their own words, and/or ignorance of this Policy and Procedure. It arises from:

- a) failure to follow appropriate referencing practices;
- b) failure to determine or verify and acknowledge the source of the Work.

2.2.3.2 Dishonest Plagiarism

2.2.3.2.1 Dishonest Plagiarism means knowingly presenting another person's Work as one's own Work without Acknowledgement of the Source.

2.2.3.2.2 Alleged Plagiarism will be deemed to be alleged Dishonest Plagiarism where:

- a) substantial proportions of a student's Work have been copied from the Work of another person, in a manner that clearly exceeds the boundaries of Legitimate Cooperation;

- b) a student's Work contains a substantial body of copied material (including from the Internet) without Acknowledgement of the Source, and in a manner that cannot be explained as Negligent Plagiarism;
- c) there is evidence that the student engaged another person to produce or conduct research for the Work, either partly or wholly, for payment or other consideration; or
- d) the student has previously received a Written Warning.

2.2.4 No penalty should be imposed on a student for plagiarism without complying with the procedures set out in this policy.

2.3 Other forms of academic dishonesty

Other forms of academic dishonesty which should be referred to the head of department/school in accordance with this Policy include, but are not limited to:

- 2.3.1** recycling – that is, the resubmission for assessment of work previously submitted for assessment in the same or in a different unit of study (except in the case of legitimate resubmission with the approval of the examiner for purposes of improvement);
- 2.3.2** fabrication of data;
- 2.3.3** the engagement of another person to complete an assessment or examination in place of the student, whether for payment or otherwise;
- 2.3.4** communication, whether by speaking or some other means, to other candidates during an examination;
- 2.3.5** bringing into an examination and concealing forbidden material such as textbooks, notes, calculators or computers;
- 2.3.6** attempts to read other student's work during an examination; and/or
- 2.3.7** writing an examination or test paper, or consulting with another person about the examination or test, outside the confines of the examination room without permission.

3 – Fostering Academic Honesty and Preventing Plagiarism

- 3.1** Fostering academic honesty within the University is an essential element of an ethical education. Sustaining an ethical culture within the University involves much more than a rigorous and effective mechanism for detection. Academic staff have a duty as mentors and role models of academic honesty and to educate students about academic honesty and plagiarism. Faculties have a responsibility to foster an understanding of the nature and role of assessment in ensuring academic honesty, and to monitor the pressures that may lead students to plagiarise. As Betty Leask has pointed out, good teaching itself acts as a deterrent to plagiarism¹. The following key principles underlie the prevention of plagiarism in coursework at the University of Sydney.

¹ Leask, Betty. 2006. Plagiarism, cultural diversity and metaphor—implications for academic staff development. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*. 31(2):183-199. <
<http://www.informaworld.com/10.1080/02602930500262486> >. (accessed 15 September 2009).

- 3.1.1 Assessment should be designed to minimise incentives for students to plagiarise and maximise their opportunities to learn (in particular, reuse of essay questions should be avoided where it is likely to create an opportunity for plagiarism or recycling, questions should encourage students to apply theory to a current event or situation).
- 3.1.2 Students should be provided with formal opportunities to learn about plagiarism through such vehicles as the Plagiarism and Academic Honesty module on the Library website (<http://elearning.library.usyd.edu.au/learn/plagiarism/index.php>) and other discipline-specific modules as appropriate.
- 3.1.3 Unit of study outlines should give clear guidelines on the University's policies and procedures on plagiarism and, where appropriate, should also include discipline or subject specific examples. Where students are facing a specific type of assessment for the first time, students should be provided with written guidance on the steps they might take to ensure that plagiarism is avoided and a formative discussion around that written guidance should be undertaken.

3.2. Compliance Statements

All students are required to submit a signed statement of compliance with all Work submitted to the University for assessment, presentation or publication. A statement of compliance must be in the form of:

- a) a University assignment cover sheet;
- b) a University electronic form; or
- c) a University written statement;

certifying that no part of the Work constitutes a breach of this Policy.

4 – The Detection of Plagiarism

- 4.1 It is a key responsibility of an assessor to distinguish original from plagiarised work. Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty, and the principles of fair and transparent assessment (as set out in the Academic Board Policy: Assessment and Evaluation of Coursework) dictate that plagiarised work not be given credit.
- 4.2 The detection and identification of plagiarism is fundamentally a judgement made by an academic who is an expert in the relevant discipline and in the task of academic assessment. Web-search or plagiarism detection software, and other such means should be regarded only as tools in assisting the academic in making that judgement.
- 4.3 Where plagiarism is suspected in any item of Work, an academic should employ any reasonable means to clarify whether the work contains plagiarism, including the use of plagiarism detection software, web search engines, comparison with other assignments, and consultation with colleagues,
- 4.4 Where a staff member or academic unit intends to mandate the use of a particular piece of detection software for all students for a particular assessment task or for all work within a unit of study, this is to be accompanied by appropriate training and information for the students involved.
- 4.5 Any decision to make detection mandatory in a unit of study or group of units of study should be reported to the Learning and Teaching Committee of the Academic Board.

5 – Procedures relating to Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this Part is to ensure that faculties have proper regard for ensuring the highest standards of academic honesty. Each faculty must implement both an effective management procedure and a preventative (education & communication) strategy, in regard to academic dishonesty.

5.2 Responsibility for dealing with matters of Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

5.2.1 Issues concerning breaches of academic standards of honesty may be dealt with either through the process of determining academic results in a unit of study in accordance with this Policy, or, in the most serious cases, by invocation of misconduct procedures in accordance with the University of Sydney By-law 1999, Chapter 8 *Student Discipline*.

5.2.2 In determining the result which a student should receive in a unit of study, the Head of Department or equivalent academic unit may consider not only the results of all work submitted for assessment but also other factors as stipulated in this policy and in the University of Sydney (Coursework) Rule 2000. This includes compliance with University requirements for academic standards of honesty.

5.2.3 Failure to comply with the University's standards regarding academic honesty and plagiarism may lead in appropriate cases to failure in the work submitted for assessment or failure overall in the unit of study or such penalty as is imposed in accordance with the University procedures on student discipline (University of Sydney By-law 1999, Chapter 8).

5.2.4 In cases other than those in which procedures under Chapter 8 of the University of Sydney By-law 1999 are invoked, decisions about how to respond to cases in which a student has breached academic standards of honesty shall be made by the Nominated Academic (as defined by the "Student Plagiarism: Coursework Policy and Procedure") or head of department/school responsible for finalising results in that unit of study. Any decision relating to a case of plagiarism must be made in accordance with the "Student Plagiarism: Coursework Policy and Procedure".

5.3 Procedure for dealing with Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

5.3.1 Principles for dealing with cases of alleged plagiarism and academic dishonesty

The University's approach to suspected cases of academic dishonesty should be:

- Equitable;
- Consistent;
- Procedurally fair;
- Timely; and
- Effective

5.3.2 Procedural Fairness

5.3.2.1 The University is committed to dealing with student Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness, including the right of a student to:

- a) be informed of the allegations against them in sufficient detail to enable them to understand the precise nature of the allegations and to properly consider and respond;
- b) have a reasonable period of time within which to respond to the allegations against them;
- c) have the matter resolved in a timely manner;
- d) be informed of their rights under this Policy and Procedure and under Chapter 8 of the *University of Sydney By-Law 1999* (as amended);
- e) invite a support person or student representative to any meeting regarding alleged Plagiarism or academic dishonesty;
- f) impartiality in any investigation process; and
- g) an absence of bias in any decision-maker.

5.3.3 Identification and Assessment of Alleged Plagiarism or academic dishonesty

5.3.3.1 Where an Examiner detects or is made aware of alleged Plagiarism or academic dishonesty by a student, the Examiner must report the alleged Plagiarism or academic dishonesty to a Nominated Academic.

5.3.3.2 Where:

- a) an Examiner reports alleged Plagiarism or academic dishonesty to a Nominated Academic; or
 - b) a Nominated Academic otherwise becomes aware of alleged Plagiarism or academic dishonesty;
- the Nominated Academic must, in consultation with the Examiner, make a preliminary assessment of whether the alleged Plagiarism or academic dishonesty would, if proven, constitute Negligent Plagiarism or Dishonest Plagiarism.

5.3.4 Negligent Plagiarism

5.3.4.1 Cases of alleged Negligent Plagiarism will be handled by the Nominated Academic in accordance with this clause and with Part D Clause 9 (Procedural Fairness) above.

5.3.4.2 Where, following discussion with the student, a Nominated Academic forms the view that the Student is guilty of Negligent Plagiarism, the Nominated Academic *will*:

- a) counsel the student by explaining referencing guidelines, providing a copy of this Policy and Procedure, and referring the student to services for assistance; and
- b) issue a Written Warning about the consequences of any subsequent breaches of this Policy.

5.3.4.3 A copy of a Written Warning issued under 5.3.4.2 (b) above must be:

- a) signed and dated by the Nominated Academic and the student;
- b) retained by the student; and
- c) placed on a central file maintained by the Registrar.

5.3.4.4 Where, following discussion with the student, the Nominated Academic forms the view that the student is guilty of Negligent Plagiarism, the Nominated Academic *may* also take other appropriate action, including:

- a) requiring the student to resubmit the Work for assessment;
- b) requiring the student to undertake another form of assessment;
- c) requiring the student to undertake other remedial action; or
- d) applying a fail grade to the Work or part thereof.

5.3.4 Dishonest Plagiarism

5.3.4.1 Cases of alleged Dishonest Plagiarism will be handled in accordance with this clause and with Part D Clause 9 (Procedural Fairness) above.

5.3.4.2 The Nominated Academic will make a preliminary assessment of whether the alleged Dishonest Plagiarism is serious enough, if proven, to constitute potential student misconduct under Chapter 8 of the *University of Sydney By-Law 1999* (as amended).

5.3.4.3 In making his or her assessment under Part D Clause 12(2) above, the Nominated Academic will take into account:

- a) whether the student has previously received a Written Warning;
- b) the extent of the alleged Dishonest Plagiarism measured against the student's original contribution to the Work;
- c) the percentage value of the Work in the unit of study or course;
- d) the capacity of the alleged Dishonest Plagiarism to adversely affect the student's peers and/or teachers; and
- e) the capacity of the alleged Dishonest Plagiarism to impact adversely on the actual or perceived academic standards of the University.

5.3.4.4 Where the Nominated Academic assesses that the alleged Dishonest Plagiarism is *not* serious enough, if proven, to constitute potential student misconduct under Chapter 8 of the *University of Sydney By-Law 1999* (as amended), the Nominated Academic *will*, following discussion with the student:

- a) counsel the student by explaining referencing guidelines, providing a copy of this Policy and Procedure, and referring the student to services for assistance; and
- b) issue a Written Warning about the consequences of any subsequent breaches of this Policy.

5.3.4.5 A copy of a Written Warning issued under 5.3.4.4 (b) above must be:

- a) signed and dated by the Nominated Academic and the student;
- b) retained by the student; and
- c) placed on a central file maintained by the Registrar.

5.3.4.6 Where the Nominated Academic assesses that the alleged Dishonest Plagiarism is *not* serious enough, if proven, to constitute potential student misconduct under Chapter 8 of the *University of Sydney By-Law 1999* (as amended), the

Nominated Academic *may* also, following discussion with the student, take other appropriate action, including:

- a) requiring the student to resubmit the Work for assessment;
- b) requiring the student to undertake another form of assessment;
- c) requiring the student to undertake other remedial action;
- d) applying a fail grade to the Work or part thereof; or
- e) applying a fail grade to the unit of study.

5.3.4.7 Where the Nominated Academic assesses that the alleged Dishonest Plagiarism *is* serious enough, if proven, to constitute potential student misconduct under Chapter 8 of the *University of Sydney By-Law 1999* (as amended), the Nominated Academic will refer the alleged Dishonest Plagiarism to the Registrar.

5.3.4.8 The Nominated Academic will refer the alleged Dishonest Plagiarism to the Registrar in all cases of alleged Dishonest Plagiarism where the student has previously received a Written Warning.

5.3.5 Appeals

An appeal by a student against a decision made under the University of Sydney (Student Appeals against Academic Decisions) Rule 2006 (as amended), after first appealing to the Faculty as set out in that Rule.

5.3.6 Review by Faculty Committee

Once per year, the head of department/school shall give an account of the way in which breaches of academic standards have been dealt with and how compliance with relevant University policies has been ensured to the Teaching and Learning Committee of the Faculty or its equivalent, or such other committee as is determined by resolution of Faculty. The Committee will forward a consolidated report from the Faculty to the Academic Board for consideration and incorporation in the monitoring and review process. This report is to be in the form prescribed by the Academic Board.

6 – Code of practice for Academic Honesty

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 This Code of Practice sets out the general responsibilities of the University, faculties, departments, and individual teachers to ensure that academic honesty is a core value of the University.

6.1.2 The following guidelines must be read in conjunction with University regulations for particular degrees, the defined role of faculties/deans and departments/heads of departments, and Academic Board policies on teaching and learning and assessment and examination of coursework.

6.2 Responsibilities and obligations of the University

The University has a responsibility and obligation to:

6.2.1 ensure that its policies on academic honesty are publicised to all academic staff and students;

- 6.2.2 ensure that its policies on academic honesty are implemented and applied consistently across all faculties;
- 6.2.3 promote best practice in the detection of academic dishonesty;
- 6.2.4 ensure that academic staff and students understand clearly the different dimensions of academic honesty;
- 6.2.5 ensure that fair and well-publicised procedures are applied for the consideration of any cases where students are accused of academic dishonesty.

6.3 Responsibilities and obligations of each Faculty and Board

Each Faculty and Board has a responsibility and obligation to:

- 6.3.1 ensure:
 - 6.3.1.1 the timeliness of investigation of allegations of academic dishonesty;
 - 6.3.1.2 fair hearing of all allegations of academic dishonesty;
 - 6.3.1.3 accurate record-keeping;
 - 6.3.1.4 compliance with State privacy legislation²
 - 6.3.1.5 that all parties are informed of their rights and responsibilities in relation to an investigation of an allegation of academic dishonesty; and
 - 6.3.1.6 consistent application of policies and practices at both faculty and department level;
- 6.3.2 put in place and maintain appropriate procedures to oversee and monitor departmental implementation of University and faculty policies on academic honesty;
- 6.3.3 reinforce both student and staff awareness of their responsibilities in the area of academic honesty including a statement of University and faculty policies in appropriate publications.
- 6.3.4 communicate the academic honesty Resolution to all teaching staff to guide staff in their role in:
 - 6.3.4.1 the detection of academic dishonesty; and
 - 6.3.4.2 the process governing academic dishonesty including information regarding the referral process for allegations of academic dishonesty and the process of management (steps and outcomes).
- 6.3.5 incorporate into its orientation of new students, whether undergraduate or postgraduate, a program to inform students of good academic practice in regard to their academic performance.
- 6.3.6 design and deliver an appropriate program of communication to first year students regarding their obligations for meeting the requirements of academic honesty in all facets of their academic performance.

² NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998

6.4 Responsibilities and obligations of each department and school

Departments and schools have a responsibility and obligation to:

- 6.4.1 inform students of their requirements by providing a departmental style guide (or guides) for the presentation of assignments. This (or these) must at least set down the styles of writing appropriate for different tasks and the form(s) of referencing demanded for each task;
- 6.4.2 ensure that all academic staff are aware of the need to introduce and reinforce, from the start, student understanding of the professional and academic skills demanded by the discipline at all levels;
- 6.4.3 ensure that all academic staff are aware of the appropriate sources of assistance for students seeking to develop their skills in academic writing;
- 6.4.4 incorporate material into first year courses that will aid students to understand what academic honesty means;
- 6.4.5 put in all appropriate public documents such as departmental handbooks a statement which:
 - 6.4.5.1 states the University definition of plagiarism and gives examples relevant to the discipline;
 - 6.4.5.2 makes clear that plagiarism is unacceptable;
 - 6.4.5.3 explains the process of dealing with complaints of academic dishonesty;
 - 6.4.5.4 provides support for students in improving their skills in the preparation and presentation of all assignments;
 - 6.4.5.5 provides clear guidelines on group work, especially concerning assessment and division of tasks among group members;
 - 6.4.5.6 implements appropriate security practices for submission and return of assignments;
 - 6.4.5.7 provides clear guidelines outlining where co-operation and collaboration is encouraged and where it is prohibited; and
 - 6.4.5.8 provides clear procedures for monitoring groupwork by academic staff, to ensure fair assessment.

6.5 Responsibilities and obligations of academic staff

Academic staff have a responsibility and obligation to:

- 6.5.1 know the policies of the University, with respect to academic honesty including plagiarism, co-operation and groupwork, and to apply them consistently;
- 6.5.2 be aware of and responsive to different cultural backgrounds of students, especially in relation to the use of the work of others and to writing skills;
- 6.5.3 incorporate the principles of academic honesty into course outlines and assessment criteria;

- 6.5.4 apply appropriate referencing styles/conventions for all assessment tasks and be consistent regarding referencing styles across tasks;
- 6.5.5 provide feedback and consultation to students which identifies gaps in learning and knowledge skills and refer students to appropriate sources of assistance to improve their skills;
- 6.5.6 provide students with early notification and fair warning if they believe any individual or group may be at risk of breaching guidelines relating to plagiarism, groupwork and co-operation;
- 6.5.7 provide clear written instructions on the level of co-operation permitted within each assessment component.

6.6 Responsibilities and rights of students

Students have a responsibility to:

- 6.6.1 act in accordance with the principles of academic honesty as set out in this Resolution in the preparation, conduct and submission of academic work;
- 6.6.2 comply with the University's policies regarding plagiarism and academic honesty;
- 6.6.3 become familiar with the academic writing expectations in their particular disciplines, subjects and courses of study;
- 6.6.4 seek assistance from appropriate sources with any academic writing areas where they are aware they need more knowledge and skills; and
- 6.6.5 retain a copy of all assignments submitted.

Students have a right to:

- 6.6.6 be informed of the Resolution and policies of the University with respect to academic honesty including plagiarism, co-operation and groupwork;
- 6.6.7 gain easy access to plain English information on these issues via publications which must be available to every student;
- 6.6.8 be provided with clear guidelines on academic styles required in each department/subject;
- 6.6.9 expect consistent application of University policies and practices;
- 6.6.10 receive practical comments which assist them to review their work;
- 6.6.11 expect early notification or fair warning in the case where an academic believes a student or group of students may be at risk of breaching guidelines relating to plagiarism, groupwork and co-operation;
- 6.6.12 expect a consistent definition of academic honesty and consistent application of procedures for dealing with suspected academic dishonesty across the University;

- 6.6.13 expect explicit referencing styles within each department and consistency across tasks. (NB: some departments may sanction only one referencing style/convention, others may sanction several);
- 6.6.14 expect clear guidelines relating to all aspects of groupwork;
- 6.6.15 expect clear assessment information in each course outline, especially concerning which components are individual and which are collective;
- 6.6.16 expect clear procedures for monitoring groupwork by academic staff, to ensure fair assessment;
- 6.6.17 expect clear written instructions on the level of co-operation permitted within each assessment component; and
- 6.6.18 request that an allegation against them of academic dishonesty be referred to the Registrar under the terms of Chapter 8 of the *University of Sydney By-Law 1999* (as amended).

7 – Review

This Policy will be reviewed two years from the date of effect and subsequently according to Academic Board policy relating to review of Resolutions and Policies.

Learning Centre: Annual Report 2008

Executive Summary

The mission, values and goals of the Learning Centre reflect those of the Strategic Directions of the University of Sydney 2007-2010. In pursuing its primary role of assisting students to develop and enhance their learning and academic literacy, the Learning Centre aims to contribute to:

- the University's position as a provider of high quality learning and teaching
- the enrichment of the student experience
- the development of desirable graduate outcomes
- the success and retention of all students
- the profile of research and innovation of the University
- the University's commitment towards the provision of support for students from a diversity of backgrounds

The Learning Centre is engaged in teaching and research activities through each of its four main programs:

- the *Central Program* of academic skills workshops, SWOT activities and Staying on Track seminars
- the *Faculty Program* of learning and teaching development activities in collaboration with faculties across the University
- the *eLearning Program* of projects based in the Learning Centre and in Faculties
- the *Individual Learning Program* (ILP) of resources and consultations for individual students

1. Teaching: Facts and Figures

In 2008, student demand for the Centre's services continued to increase. There was also a continuing strong demand from faculties to work collaboratively with Centre staff to integrate learning and academic literacy support into Units of Study and degree programs.

Table 1 summarises the main teaching activities across the Centre's Programs, comparing 2007 and 2008.

	2007	2008
Central Workshop Program		
<i>Number of student enrolments</i>	1754	1733
<i>Number of workshops offered</i>	270	256
<i>Number of teaching hours</i>	1118	1108
SWOT Lectures		
<i>Number of students taught (Sem 1)</i>	2590	2630
<i>Number of lectures</i>	8	9
<i>Number of students taught (Sem 2)</i>	7	-
<i>Number of lectures</i>	1	-
Independent Learning Program		
<i>Number of students taught</i>	457	232
<i>Number of teaching hours</i>	722	601
<i>Average hrs per student</i>	1.6	2.6
Faculty Teaching Program		
<i>Number of students taught</i>	1892	2470
<i>Number of teaching hours</i>	304.5	385
<i>Number of faculties</i>	13	14
Diagnostic Assessment (MASUS)		
<i>Number of students</i>	510	886
<i>Number of Schools/Faculties</i>	5/5	5
Total Students	7,210	7,951

In 2008, the LC provided face-to-face teaching for a total of **7,065** students and diagnostic assessment for **886** students – a total of **7,951** students. In the three main teaching

programs, the Central Workshop Program, the Independent Learning Program (ILP) and the Faculty-based Program, teaching was provided for **4,435** students, (2007: 4,103). Approximately **2,630** students attended the *Learning to Learn* lectures during SWOT (Sydney Welcome Orientation and Transition) in OWeek. Apart from these sessions, orientation activities were provided to over **2,495** students in Faculties and other units such as the International Student Support Unit (ISSU), SUPRA, the Koori Centre (see Table 13 in the Appendix). There was a significant decrease in the number of students receiving individual teaching sessions but a corresponding increase in the number of students participating in the Faculty program. This reflects the Centre's strategic goals to involve Faculties more in targeted discipline-specific learning support.

CENTRAL PROGRAM

In its Central Program, the Learning Centre has a wide range of workshops designed to meet the academic language and learning needs of diverse groups of students. There are over 60 different workshops in the Central Program, ranging from 2 to 12 hours per workshop. The timetable runs from January to December, including semester and year breaks with 9 Blocks of workshops and is designed to give maximum flexibility for students in the time and duration of the courses. A total of **256** workshops totalling **1,108** hours were conducted within the Centre, many of these being repeat offerings of the more popular workshops. Of the **1,108** hours of workshops offered in the Central Program, **900** hours were available to students of all language backgrounds, with a further **208** hours (2007:176 hours) restricted to students of non-English-speaking backgrounds through the WELL program (Workshops in English Language and Learning).

Students from 16 Faculties enrolled in the Central Workshop Program. As in past years, the greatest participation was from the Faculty of *Economics and Business* (**26.8%**), followed by *Arts and Humanities* (**21%**), *Education and Social Work* (**8.3%**), *Science* (**7.6%**) and *Health Sciences* (**6.6%**).

Student demographics

Table 2 shows the profile of the students enrolled in the workshop program in terms of a number of variables, and the percentage of the total University enrolment for that variable.

Table 2: Percentage of student enrolments per variable in Central Workshop Program compared with overall University enrolments 2008

Variable	LC Enrolments % N = 1733	Total University Enrolment % * N = 45,521
Female	70.7	58.4
Male	29.3	41.6
ESB	33.2	53.0
NESB	66.8	47.0 **
International	53.8 of total (41.6% of NESB)	21.7
Undergraduate	33.4	67.3
Postgraduate (Research)	24.2	8.2
Postgraduate (Coursework)	42.4	24.5

* Figures referring to total university enrolment exclude the AGSM, Rural Management as

the Learning Centre does not provide services for these groups.

** This figure represents the proportion of students who speak a language other than English at their permanent residence.

The patterns of enrolment were generally similar to the past three years in most categories, with increased numbers of International and NESB students. **Female** students still far outweigh **male** students in enrolment in the Central Workshop Program. As in previous

years, female students remain over-represented and males under-represented in the LC workshop program when compared with the percentage of the total university enrolment.

International student numbers in the LC's Central program increased by nearly 5% in 2008 compared with 2007. They accounted for more than half of the LC enrolments, once again an unprecedentedly high proportion of the students attending the Centre. In 2008 international students formed 53.8% of enrolments in the Central Workshop Program, while representing only 21.7% of the University population.

In 2008, nearly 67% of students in scheduled workshops were of **non-English-speaking backgrounds**. This group increased by about 4% compared with 2007, which is partly attributable to the larger numbers of international students in LC workshops in 2008. They are also an over-represented group when compared to university enrolments of NESB students (47%).

The proportion of **postgraduate students** (66.6%) enrolled in the Central Workshop Program in 2008 also far outweighed that of **undergraduates** (33.4%). This again is the highest proportion of postgraduate students since 1996. Continuing the trend from the last three years, postgraduate students were over-represented in the LC's Central Workshop Program, when compared to the total University enrolment (32.7%). The percentage of research students in LC workshops (24.2%) is also over-represented when compared to the total University enrolment of 8.2%.

FACULTY PROGRAM

Departments from **14** Faculties of the University including the Koori Centre were represented in the collaborative activities in 2008. Table 8 in the Appendix shows further details of the level of participation of faculties and students in LC's Faculty Program, together with the percentage of total University enrolment for that faculty.

The number of hours of face-to-face teaching in faculty (385 hours) was 26% higher than in 2007 (304 hours) and there was a significant increase of 30% in the number of students taught (2008: 2470; 2007: 1892). Demand for this kind of support depends to a large extent on the requirements of faculty staff and changes in the faculty will have a significant impact on the number of students the LC teaches in the Faculty Program from year to year.

However, the current figures indicate a continuing interest in this mode of delivering academic language and learning support. A qualitative difference can be seen in the type of faculty teaching over the past two years. Compared with 2007, in 2008, LC staff were engaged in more teaching hours in which learning support was embedded into Units of Study and degree programs rather than offered as an adjunct to a Unit of Study. This type of teaching also typically requires considerable preparation time not reflected in the face-to-face teaching hours.

In addition to the face-to-face teaching in Faculty, there were activities such as the MASUS academic literacy diagnostic procedure and tutor training in the implementation of the procedure. The responsibility for carrying out the MASUS procedure has been handed over to faculty staff in some faculties.

Examples of faculty teaching projects were:

- Integrated learning and literacy support into first year Units of Study in *Arts (Linguistics), Education and Social Work, Engineering, Law and Pharmacy*
- Thesis writing workshops for Honours students in 6 Schools: *Accounting, Chemical Engineering, Information Technology, Geosciences, Sydney Conservatorium of Music and Vet Science (at Camden)*

- Thesis writing workshops for postgraduate research students in 5 Faculties: *Economics and Business, Engineering and IT, Health Sciences, Nursing and Midwifery and Medicine*
- Diagnostic assessment of academic writing in 5 Faculties: *Arts, Education and Social Work, Engineering and IT, Law and Pharmacy.*

OTHER ACTIVITIES

SWOT

Nine SWOT *Learning to Learn* lectures were delivered over the three days of orientation in Semester 1, one more than in 2007. Approximately **2630** new students attended these lectures during OWeek from a wide range of faculties and degree programs.

Staying on Track

The Learning Centre participated in the Staying on Track information sessions in Semesters 1 and 2 for over 500 students. The LC segment was designed to alert students to common reasons why they may be at risk of failing and to advise them of the Centre's services.

2. TEACHING IMPROVEMENT AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

eLearning projects

ALTC (Carrick) Competitive Grant: Creating a student-centred online learning environment for report writing in the sciences and engineering

<http://www.usyd.edu.au/learningcentre/wrise/>

The project creates an integrated freely available, student-centred online learning environment, the WRiSE site (Writing Reports in Science and Engineering), which will provide students with relevant, discipline-based resources and activities targeting report writing in the sciences and engineering. The project builds on established team-based expertise in the design of online report writing resources and incorporates student feedback on existing print-based and online resources to form the basis for the innovative development of an enriched online learning environment. In 2009, WRiSE will be integrated into students' writing contexts in science and engineering to support both the products and processes of their writing.

WRiSE will be accessed across the university sector, supporting a large number of student writers, many of whom, particularly in the sciences and engineering, are reluctant writers.

CONTINUING PROJECTS

Learning Centre staff were involved in a number of continuing projects, either independently or in collaboration with faculties:

- *Diagnostic assessment of student writing (MASUS) in undergraduate and postgraduate Units of Study*
- *Enabling resources to support the development of leadership skills in groupwork in Information Technology: moving beyond the comfort zone*
- *Embedded academic literacy support in various Units of Study*
- *Reading a Research Article in Biology: an eLearning Project*

3. Research and research-enhanced teaching

In 2008, Centre staff presented 4 papers on their research at 3 international conferences (see 4.2 for publication details). This is an important component of the Centre's work and contributes to its international and national standing as one of the leading centres of its kind, while at the same time ensuring that the Centre's teaching practices are informed and led by research on student learning and academic literacy. Staff were engaged in the following research and research projects:

- *A flexible electronic report-writing tool (FLERT) in Physiology: investigating its development and evaluating student learning*
- *Students' use of feedback in practical report writing: Differences between English Speaking (ESB) and Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) students*
- *Challenges facing students and staff re Thesis containing Publications.*
- *Pharmacy students and academic honesty: their attitudes, behaviours, and knowledge of policy*
- *Student attitudes and approaches to academic writing in the visual arts: creativity vs formal requirements*

Doctoral research

- *Semantic staging in the poetry of Dylan Thomas*
- Student or user-centred design of learning environments for academic writing
Contributions to the University

Increasingly, the Learning Centre contributes its expertise to the University on matters to do with quality teaching and learning. In addition to its teaching and research activities, the Centre contributed to the University through its service on committees and working parties and through its activities during Orientation and University open days.

Centre staff were members of the following committees and bodies:

- Learning and Teaching Committee
- TIES large grants selection Committee
- Learning and Teaching Strategy Group
- eLearning Technologies Committee
- SWOT Project Group
- Cadigal Students Academic Skills Program Committee (Koori Centre)
- Staying on Track Program Committee
- The First Year Experience Working Group
- Committee for Guidelines for Presentation of Assignments (Cumberland)
- Faculty of Economics and Business Learning and Teaching Committee
- The AusAID Liaison Group

Staffing

Staffing levels in 2008 changed with the retirement of 2 academic staff on the Camperdown campus in July. This led to a recruitment drive to replace staff, which was unfortunately unsuccessful. The Learning Centre continues to operate well below the staffing levels in equivalent units at other Go8 Universities.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Several quality assurance processes are in place – program evaluation and participation in benchmarking exercises. The annual Learning Centre retreat is another opportunity to shape the goals and directions of the Centre and contribute to quality assurance.

All central workshops are evaluated by student questionnaires. The Faculty Program and eLearning projects are evaluated by questionnaires, focus groups or both. The results are compiled and analysed before being disseminated among relevant staff. Feedback from evaluation and from informal dialogue between staff and students forms the basis for the continual refining and updating of LC programs and feeds back into the development of teaching and learning programs.

Of all workshops offered in the Central Program across both campuses in 2008, over 90% of students rated their overall satisfaction levels with the workshops as very satisfied (5) or satisfied (4). Considering that this represents results for 250 workshops, the student evaluations are very positive overall.

Future Directions

As part of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) portfolio, the mission, values and goals of the Learning Centre reflect those of the Strategic Directions of the University of Sydney 2007-2010.

Across the University, the focus on teaching quality through research enhanced teaching, developments in the use of eLearning technologies and the continued emphasis on the enhancement of the student experience and improved graduate outcomes have had an impact on the range and complexity of the Centre's activities.

The challenge for a unit such as the Learning Centre is to be creative in the interpretation of its role and proactive in its responses to the provision of support. Part of the challenge is to align the Centre's strategic goals in the support of a very diverse body of students more closely with University and faculty goals for quality learning and teaching. This entails working collaboratively across disciplines and other learning and teaching units and can result in powerful partnerships across the institution.

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