MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FACULTY OF LIFE AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES
TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMITTEE HELD IN ROOM 1.55, FIRST FLOOR, PHYSICS BUILDING
ON TUESDAY 13 MAY 2008

Present:
Professor Geoff Hammond (Chair)
Ms Jenny Gamble (Faculty Manager)
Dr Nancy Longnecker (CATLyst)

Representatives from Schools:
Dr Jan Meyer (Anatomy and Human Biology)
Professor Don Robertson (Biomedical, Biomolecular and Chemical Sciences)
Professor Tim Ackland (Sports Science, Exercise and Health)
Dr Paul Abbott (Physics)
Dr Davina French (Psychology)

Other Representatives:
Ms Marjan Heibloem (Representative from FNAS)
Ms Felicity Renner (Associate Librarian, Biological Sciences Library)
Ms Jacqueline McNally (Postgraduate Student Representative)

Apologies
Dr Jane Emberson (Academic Student Advisor)
Miss Matilda Oke (Undergraduate Student Representative)

Mrs Lesley Tubic as Secretary

1. MINUTES
RESOLVED – 4
that the minutes of the meeting of Teaching and Learning Committee held on Tuesday 8 April be confirmed.

2. DECLARATIONS OF POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT OR PERCEIVED CONFLICT OF INTEREST
No declarations of conflict were declared.

3. ITEMS/BUSINESS IN PROGRESS FOR NOTING SINCE PREVIOUS MEETING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item/Business in Progress</th>
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<tr>
<td>Professor Alan Dench, Chair, Animal Ethics had asked the Faculty to consider changes he proposed to make to the approval process for the use of animals in teaching.</td>
<td>Response had been prepared by Don Robertson, Jan Meyer and Jenny Gamble</td>
<td>Finalised</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teaching and Learning Guide for Faculty Staff.</td>
<td>Chair to check revised draft prepared by Ms Heather Morton</td>
<td>In progress</td>
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4. **CHAIR’S REPORT**
The Chair reported as follows:

**UWA Teaching and Learning Committee** - The Chair informed members that a proposal to change the name of the UWA Teaching and Learning Committee to the Education Committee or the Education Policy Committee had not been approved.

**Peer Evaluation of Teaching at UWA** - The Chair informed members that the UWA Teaching and Learning Committee had proposed that a peer evaluation of teaching be introduced at UWA. Representatives from the Faculties of Life and Physical Sciences and Natural and Agricultural Sciences had unsuccessfully argued against the proposal. He had proposed that a cost benefit analysis be conducted before these initiatives were implemented.

**Teaching Fellowships** – The Chair informed members that the Faculty had been unsuccessful in acquiring any of the $22,000.00 fellowships in the last round.

**Teaching Awards** – The Chair informed members that the Teaching Awards ceremony had been held on Friday 4 May 2008. Recipients from this Faculty were:
- Dr Peter Whipp, School of Sport Science, Exercise and Health - Early Career
- Professor Bruce Elliott and Mrs Kerry Smith, School of Sport Science, Exercise and Health - Work Integrated Learning.
- Human Biology Team - School of Anatomy and Human Biology.

**2009 Handbook** – The Chair informed members that he had been surprised at how early requests had been received for unit updates for the 2009 UWA handbook. The deadline for schools was 30 May 2008. Ms Jenny Gamble, Faculty Manager told members that it had been proposed that Calliope be used as the central source for unit descriptions. This on-line system would be more efficient and enable unit information to be updated on a regular basis. Members commented that this would be time consuming and possibly costly process.

**Teaching and Learning Performance Fund (TLPF)** – the Chair invited members to form a small group to assess the TLPF applications. The following members accepted the invitation:
- Professor Tim Ackland
- Professor Don Robertson
- Dr Paul Abbott.

5. **SCHOOL REPORTS**

**Biomedical, Biomolecular and Chemical Sciences (BBCS)** – Professor Don Robertson reported that:
- OPP priorities had to be identified.
- BBCS currently agreed to teach each unit twice to PSB students in Singapore. The PSB Corporation was seeking an agreement to have each unit taught three times.
- Several serious plagiarism cases amongst international students.

**Sport Science, Exercise and Health (SSEH)** – Professor Tim Ackland reported that postdoctoral courses had been accredited by the Australian Association for Exercise and Sports Science (AAESS) in April. AAESS representatives would conduct a site visit in August or September 2008.

**Physics** – Dr Paul Abbott reported that a merger between the physics departments at Curtin University and Murdoch University may affect enrolments in astronomy and astrophysics at UWA.

**Psychology** – Dr Davina French reported that the Head of School wanted to find ways in which teaching efficiency could be improved without comprising quality.

6. **CATLYST REPORT**
Dr Nancy Longnecker reported to members regarding the following CATL activities:
**Teaching Month** – this was half way through. Joint activities had been co-ordinated with Dr Sue Miller, CATLyst with the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences (e.g. panel discussion about practicum placements).

**On-Line Writing Unit** – Student Services were funding the development of on-line written expression modules for first-year. These units would be incorporated into a current first year units and could be used by co-ordinators to compliment existing assessment processes. It had been noted that these faculty specific modules were not specific enough for FLPS.

**Research Project** – A project regarding classroom attendance had received human ethics approval. The next stage would involve student and staff interviews.

7. **UWA HANDBOOK: SCIENCE FACULTIES’ POLICY AND GUIDELINES**

Dr Jane Emberson, had prepared a document which outlined the changes she felt should be made to the Science Faculties’ policy and guidelines section of the UWA handbook. Feedback from the committee was requested. Members recommended the following changes be included:

**Student Exchange Cross-Institutional Enrolments** - Following discussion by members it was decided to seek clarification from Dr Jane Emberson, regarding the formal and informal guidelines for these sections.

*Action. Dr Emberson to be consulted regarding changes to these sections.*

**Special Consideration** – Members felt that it would be difficult to enforce requests for detailed medical certificates and recommended that the word ‘detailed’ not be included.

*The Chair would seek clarification from Dr Emberson regarding special consideration for multiple choice examinations.*

**Deferred Examinations** - ‘extreme mitigating circumstances’ to be changed to ‘exceptional circumstances’.

8. **REVIEW OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS OF UWA GRADUATES – REF: F19237, F983**

In March 2007 a working party had been established to investigate and advise on strategies to ensure that the level of confidence in the English language skills UWA graduates was maintained. Academic Council at a meeting on 5 March 2008 considered the recommendations made the working party and resolved (R16/08) endorse all the recommendation except for recommendations 7, 9, 10 and 15. A copy of this item was tabled at the meeting (*Attachment A*).
6. REVIEW OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS OF UWA GRADUATES – WORKING PARTY REPORT – Ref F19237, F983

Members were advised of the following background information:

- In July 2001, the Review of Strategies to Meet the English Language Needs of UWA Students had made several recommendations including that a reassessment of needs and strategies be made in the future. The need for reassessment of English language competence was again confirmed by the Academic Council in 2005 with regard to admissions requirements.

- At its meeting on 1 March 2007, the Teaching and Learning Committee had endorsed a proposal to formulate a joint working party of the Teaching and Learning Committee and the Admissions Committee to investigate and advise on the action necessary to ensure that the University could continue to have confidence in the English language skills of its graduates.

- The Working Party had been duly established and Professor Dennis Haskell appointed as convenor.

- The Working Party’s draft report entitled “Review of English Language Skills of UWA Graduates” had been tabled at a meeting of the Admissions Committee held on October 2007 where it had been resolved (R26/07) to:
  i. endorse the report of the Review of English Language Skills of Graduates and incorporate minor changes as minuted in its discussion;
  ii. forward the amended report to the Teaching and Learning Committee for its consideration and endorsement; and
  iii. forward recommendation 1 relating to the setting of higher scores for certain IELTS components to the Board of the Graduate Research School for its consideration.

- The report had subsequently been considered at a meeting of the Teaching and Learning Committee held on 8 November 2007 at which it had been resolved (R46/07) that the Teaching and Learning Committee endorse the report and recommendations, amended where noted in debate, and forward the amended report and recommendations to the Academic Council for its consideration, endorsement and adoption as appropriate.

Members had before them a copy of the extract of the meeting of the Teaching and Learning Committee held on 8 November 2007 together with the report of the Review of English Language Skills of Graduates.

Invited to speak to the report, Professor Dennis Haskell explained that the subject of the review was controversial and evoked a wide range of opinions. Students, staff and graduates had been surveyed. The report aimed to be dispassionate and to make recommendations only where change was proposed. The Working Party had concluded that matters had improved since 2001 and that there was not a crisis. Professor Haskell suggested it was an area that should probably be reviewed every five or six years and envisaged that the questionnaires would permit a database of responses to be built up over time for comparative purposes.
Professor Haskell went on to address a number of the report recommendations as follows.

Recommendation 1
Based on feedback from students and supervisors, the required IELTS overall average for postgraduate research students had been increased to 6.5 (with scores no lower than 6.0 for speaking and listening and no lower than 6.5 for reading and writing). The proposed average was in line with the more stringent of such requirements amongst the Group of Eight. It was not anticipated that the change would have a marked effect on the student intake.

Recommendation 4
The Working Party had been strongly in favour of an improvement in the staff: student ratio in CELT. The ratio at UWA was at the lower end of those in the Group of Eight. The proposal was to increase staff by one member. It was pointed out that the cost involved was not estimated to be great and that resources applied in this area were expected to bring considerable benefits to staff with responsibility for teaching students with English language difficulties.

Recommendation 10
Feedback received in relation to this recommendation had concerned the nature of staff responsibility with respect to English language training. It had been proposed that what could reasonably be expected of staff was an awareness of support mechanisms. Professor Haskell explained that the Working Party had been anxious to retain the notion of responsibility. It was recognised that staff were not all experts in English language training.

Recommendation 11
Professor Haskell acknowledged that the issue of professional editorial assistance for students' work was controversial. Responses to questionnaires had shown that it was considered more acceptable for postgraduate students to receive such help than for undergraduate students. Postgraduate students seeking help of this kind were currently directed to the Society of Editors whose members were well aware of the appropriate boundaries of editorial assistance. The Working Party had been concerned that if editorial assistance was not provided for officially, it might be driven underground.

Recommendation 12
Surveys had indicated that some staff had difficulties with English language. Various interventions to remedy this had been reported. Assistance was available through CELT and additional publicity about its availability had been recommended.

Recommendation 13
Members were reminded that units in English language studies were currently offered in a number of faculties and that credit-bearing sequences of units of the kind proposed were available in other universities around the world.

Recommendation 15
It was a fact that plagiarism was occurring. The extensive work that had already been undertaken by the Teaching and Learning Committee in relation to this matter, including the comprehensive review of penalties, was acknowledged.

The following were amongst the points raised by members in relation to the report recommendations:

Recommendation 1
It was noted that the recommended IELTS scores represented minimum requirements and that faculties could propose more stringent requirements if they wished. It was confirmed that local students were also required to meet a minimum standard in English language.
Recommendation 3
It was acknowledged that English was now a world language expressed in a variety of ways and spoken with a variety of accents. It was important to be able to recognise at what point there was a problem that needed to be addressed.

Recommendation 4
A member spoke in support of the provision of additional resources in the area of English language and study skills. She stated that staff in her area were currently struggling to deal with the number of students who had problems with English language and also with study skills in an educational culture that was not familiar to them. She pointed out that only those students with most acute problems were currently being referred for assistance in recognition of the current shortage of relevant resources.

Members welcomed the Registrar’s advice of an arrangement agreed with CELT that would permit it to increase its support for staff and students in the area of English language and learning skills.

Recommendation 5
It was confirmed that on-line resources in the area of English language and study skills were available to transnational students.

Recommendation 7
A member queried how workload calculations in relation to this recommendation would be undertaken.

Council’s attention was drawn to the potential workload associated with calculating the time spent dealing with English language problems.

It was pointed out that, whilst staff currently assessed literacy, they were not aware of the number of students from non English speaking backgrounds that they were teaching. Given the University’s policy of minimising differentiation between local and international students, guidance would be required on how to determine which students were from such backgrounds.

It was pointed out that local students may be from non English speaking backgrounds and international students from English speaking ones. It was suggested that the issue was not a student’s language background but whether or not they were experiencing problems with English language. Such problems existed amongst local students, including amongst those from homes where English was the first language.

The importance of identifying at an early stage those students who required assistance with English language and of early intervention were emphasised.

It was suggested that English language skills of students should be assessed each year.

It was pointed out that, whilst it may not be possible to assess the extent of English language difficulties amongst students in a lecture-room setting, such problems were likely to come to light in the context of a tutorial.

In response to comments, members were advised that information provided to the Working Party had been that a great deal of time was spent dealing with students who had difficulties with English and that the aim of the recommendation had been to address the resentment that existed amongst staff in relation to this matter.

Given feedback on the recommendation it was suggested that it be amended to read as follows:

*that workload calculations for teaching in units where significant numbers of students have problems with English language, and for postgraduate research supervision of students with*
such problems, give due consideration to the work required to cover difficulties with English language skills.

Recommendation 9
It was pointed out that the University had a number of good policies in place. However there had been concerns amongst the Working Party about the level of awareness of policies and lack of adherence to them. It was noted that this was an issue that had been raised previously at Academic Council. It was proposed that the value of conducting periodic audits to ensure awareness and adoption of selected Academic Board and Council resolutions be brought to a future meeting of Council for consideration.

Recommendation 10
A member queried the meaning of ‘English language skills’ and whether staff were equipped to assess these. It was pointed out that being an English speaker was not sufficient qualification to teach and assess English language skills. The potential for the proposed responsibilities to place staff under additional stress was also highlighted.

It was pointed out that teaching staff were already engaged in assessing language skills. The proposal was not that staff become involved in teaching such skills as sentence construction, for example, but rather that they be able to recognise when students needed help and know where such help could be obtained.

In light of the discussion it was suggested that the recommendation be amended to read as follows:

*that the Teaching and Learning Committee work with Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees to advise all academic staff and all professional staff who have direct contact with students of their responsibilities with respect to identifying students who may require additional English language training and to knowing where such training is available, and to provide details of facilities available.*

Recommendation 11
A member queried how much editorial assistance was appropriate in the case of students who had significant problems with English language. Some students required help at all levels of their work. The value of IELTS as a measure of English language competence was questioned given the level of language skills of some students who had achieved the requisite test scores. In response it was explained that IELTS was generally considered to be a good measure of language ability on the day. However, a considerable period of time could sometimes elapse between the date of the test and the student commencing their studies and English language skills could deteriorate during this period. Students were accepted by the University in the belief that they would be able to cope with English language but unfortunately this sometimes proved not to be the case.

Recommendation 13
Support was expressed for both generic and discipline-specific credit-bearing units in English language studies.

Recommendation 15
The extensive work undertaken in relation to plagiarism was pointed out. A thorough review of the application of penalties for plagiarism had been undertaken and the penalties overhauled. It was suggested that, in common with other universities, UWA should monitor the matter.

The work of the Working Party, in particular the valuable contribution of its convener, Professor Dennis Haskell, and its Executive Officer, Dr Kabilan Krishnasamy was recognised.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) expressed the view that the Review of English Language Skills of Graduates had been a very useful exercise and had placed the University in a leading position in this respect.
Having noted some minor modifications to the text of the report, Council

RESOLVED – 16

(i) that recommendation 7 be amended to read as follows:
that workload calculations for teaching in units where significant numbers of students have problems with English language, and for postgraduate research supervision of students with such problems, give due consideration to the work required to cover difficulties with English language skills

(ii) that recommendation 10 be amended to read as follows:
that the Teaching and Learning Committee work with faculty teaching and learning committees to advise all academic staff and all professional staff who have direct contact with students of their responsibilities with respect to identifying students who may require additional English language training and to knowing where such training is available, and to provide details of facilities available

(iii) that recommendation 9 be referred to a future meeting of Academic Council for consideration;

(iv) that recommendation 15 be monitored; and

(iv) that all other report recommendations as set out in the attachment be endorsed.

Attachment A
REVIEW OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS
OF UWA GRADUATES

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: That from 2009 admission to postgraduate research study at UWA requires an IELTS (or the equivalent) overall score of 6.5, with scores no lower than 6.0 for speaking and listening and no lower than 6.5 for reading and writing.

Recommendation 2: That Planning Services undertake annual analysis which maps students' UWA results against their admission scores for English language requirements.

Recommendation 3: That in consultation with the Teaching and Learning Committee, the Equity and Diversity Office prepare guidelines and other resources on cultural sensitivity in teaching and assessment, including as regards the use of varieties of English.

Recommendation 4: That staff numbers for English language assistance in the Learning, Language and Research Skills Unit be increased to 2.0 FTE and that a comparable ratio of English language advisors: students be maintained as the University grows.

Recommendation 5: That all unit outlines should include the following statement or similar: Assistance with Study Skills, including English language skills, is available free of charge to all enrolled students from Student Services [www.studysmarter.uwa.edu.au; location: Student Services, Guild Village, Second Floor; tel.: 6488.2423].

Recommendation 6: That Student Services develop more on-line resources to assist improvement in English language skills.

Recommendation 7: That workload calculations for teaching in units where significant numbers of students have problems with English language, and for postgraduate research supervision of students with such problems, give due consideration to the work required to cover difficulties with English language skills.

Recommendation 8: That Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees check that each 'year' of the Faculty's courses require students to demonstrate English language skills, and report their findings to the University's Teaching and Learning Committee.

Recommendation 9: That Academic Council discuss the value of conducting periodic audits in order to ensure awareness of and adoption of selected Academic Board and Academic Council resolutions.
Recommendation 10: That the Teaching and Learning Committee work with Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees to advise all academic staff and all professional staff who have direct contact with students of their responsibilities with respect to identifying students who may require additional English language training and to knowing where such training is available; and to provide details of facilities available.

Recommendation 11: That the Teaching and Learning Committee work with Faculties to devise guidelines for undergraduate students and postgraduate students undertaking coursework for professional editorial assistance permitted in preparing assignments, similar to those that apply to postgraduate research students.

Recommendation 12: That the Head of Human Resources and the Manager of Equity and Diversity seek the best means to ensure Central Administration, Faculty and School awareness of CELT training in English language skills available to staff.

Recommendation 13: That the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) liaise with the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and the Director of the Centre of English Language Teaching for the development of a minor sequence of credit-bearing units in English language studies to be made available to approved undergraduate students who would benefit significantly from such learning.

Recommendation 14: That language immersion students studying at UWA under approved Student Exchange/Study Abroad agreements for degrees other than University of Western Australia degrees be exempt from normal UWA English language admission requirements and that the Admissions Committee determine appropriate entry requirements for such students.

Recommendation 15: That the Teaching and Learning Committee undertake a review of the application of penalties for plagiarism, at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Recommendation 16: (a) That UWA, through the International Centre, the Teaching and Learning Committee, Student Services and contacts with the Guild investigate, encourage, and publicise ways to increase the extent of interaction between Australian and international students, including at Orientation, in order to enrich the student experience for all UWA students;

(b) That UWA encourage the Heads of College to seek a more proportionate distribution of international students in each individual college.