MINUTES OF THE FACULTY OF LIFE AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES MEETING HELD IN THE ECONOMICS AND COMMERCE CONFERENCE ROOM ON 15 OCTOBER 2008

PRESENT: Professor George Stewart (as Chair), Professor Lawrie Abraham, Associate Professor Murray Baker, Dr Tony Bakker, Mr Guy Ben-Ary, Professor Sue Berners-Price, Professor Charlie Bond, Ms Marina Carrara, Associate Professor Barbara Chang, Dr Craig Clark, Dr Mark Cruickshank, Professor Ian Dadour, Dr Jan Dook, Mr Michael Eilon, Professor Bruce Elliott, Dr Jane Emberson, Mr David Faithfull, Mrs Judy Fetherston, Dr Luis Filgueira, Dr Andre Fletcher, Dr Daniel Franklin, Ms Jenny Gamble, Dr Silvana Gaudieri, Ms Gabrielle Gooding, Dr Pete Hammond, Mr Chris Harris, Professor Alan Harvey, Dr Swaminatha Iyer, Dr Linda Jeffery, Mr Jay Jay Jegathesan, Mr Herb Jurkiewicz, Dr Charlene Kahler, Dr Mahdad Karimi, Mr Matthew Kenrick, Mr Matthew Kohler, Dr Melissa Latter, Mr Alan Light, Ms Roslyn London, Dr Nancy Longnecker, Dr Mohamed Makha, Dr Peter McFawn, Professor Harvey Millar, Associate Professor Dave Morrison, Ms Heather Morton, Mr Steve Parkinson, Ms Susan Pippet, Professor Colin Raston, Mr Rod Robinson, Professor Lin Schmitt, Professor Mark Spackman, Professor Geoff Stewart, Dr Naomi Trengove, Dr Robert Tuckey, Dr Daniela Ulgiati, Professor Grady Venville, Mrs Jenni Wallis, Mrs Kath Williams, Associate Professor Michael Wise, Professor George Yeoh

APOLOGIES: Professor Arunasalam Dharmarajan, Dr Debra Judge, Dr Thelma Koppi, Associate Professor Lee Yong Lim, Associate Professor Ian McArthur, Dr Allan McKinley, Ms Lee Triplett, Professor Alice Vrielink, Professor John Watling

Imelda Ooi as secretary

1. MINUTES REF: F3059

RESOLVED – 1
that the Minutes of the Full Faculty meeting held on 18 September 2007 be confirmed.

2. DECLARATION OF POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT OR PERCEIVED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Chair invited members to declare interests in relation to any items on the agenda. No conflicts of interest were declared.

3. REVIEW OF COURSE STRUCTURES - RECOMMENDATIONS REF: F25045

The Chair welcomed Professor Ian Reid, Senior Academic Reviewer, to the meeting and said that it was an opportunity for the full faculty to discuss issues relating to the proposed reform of course structures and to seek clarification on any issues.

Professor Reid stated that he had been heavily engaged in discussions with various groups on issues relating to the proposal and had attended the meeting to listen to any concerns that members might have on the proposed reforms. He foreshadowed a comprehensive response to the recommendations in the report of the Review of Course Structures would be formulated prior to the discussion by Academic Board at its next meeting in November.
During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- clarification was sought on the definition of broadening units, in particular, units offered across two faculties e.g. Psychology. Professor Reid responded that ‘broadening’ units had to be outside the area of knowledge of degree specific majors i.e. units not ordinarily offered in the Bachelor of Science.
- In the event of boundary disputes as to which degree a particular unit offered would come under, it was pointed out that the Board of Coursework Studies had the authority to adjudicate on these matters.
- The Faculty wished to retain the foundation packages. Professor Reid stated that they would have to be substantially modified to accommodate the ‘broadening’ requirement and would leave it to the Faculty to do so.
- A question was raised as to why it was necessary to have both the Bachelor of Health and the Bachelor of Science. There was concern as to whether there was any control in place to prevent specialised units being created for the Bachelor of Health which were subsets of the units in the Bachelor of Science. Professor Reid replied that there were stringent measures in place to prevent undesirable duplication of units. In cases of duplication, the Board of Coursework Studies would adjudicate.
- The Bachelor of Health degree was seen as a gateway to the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) which had a thousand applications for just over a hundred places and thus should not be jeopardised but members were concerned that the Bachelor of Health would then be seen as the only pathway to MBBS.
- It was felt that the boundaries for the ‘areas of knowledge’ was unclear. Professor Reid commented that the ‘area of knowledge’ was defined as a cluster of associated disciplinary fields and none of the areas of knowledge would be the possession of a particular Faculty.
- One member questioned why the honours would be retained with the introduction of the two-year masters. He felt that the honours would be cheapened as a consequence. Professor Reid replied that it was to provide a range of choices and possibilities for students and to ensure that their needs would be catered for as some would opt to do the honours whilst some would prefer to progress to the masters.
- The loss of named programmes was a concern. It was felt that the Faculty had put in great deal of hard work to establish these programmes to target international markets.

The Chair thanked Professor Reid for his attendance at the meeting and taking time to listen to the concerns and comments of members. Professor Reid strongly urged members to forward any issues of concern they might have to him.

4. DEAN’S REPORT REF: F1158

The Chair gave a report on the 2008 – 2009 Faculty Funding and Strategies. He outlined the position of the Faculty in respect to its budget and the need to achieve a balanced budget in 2009 and beyond. The University was facing a number of challenges which included:

- Collapse in investment income arising from the volatile stock market. It had decreased by 55% on 2008 estimate.
- CPI not being taken into consideration in funding grants from the current Federal Government.
- Diminishing income and lack of cash to meet current growth commitments. New capital works would need to be put on hold as a consequence.
- Lack of sufficient student accommodation and increasing costs of building.

The Faculty would be operating a deficit budget of around $5M in 2009 which would grow to around $10M in 2011 without further funds or reduction in costs. The Vice-Chancellor had ruled that the Faculty and Schools would not be allowed to go into deficit for 2009. The University had imposed a 5% surcharge on the 2009 funding. Some of this had been returned to the Faculty to minimise the impact. However, it had to be restricted to generate income or used to reduce costs.

The Dean stressed that Schools had to take measures to reduce costs and increase income. The following main points were noted:
• The Faculty was already focussing on the recruitment of international students in order to generate more income.
• Schools had to look at ways to maximise the retention of students in their programs and increase retention rates.
• The decline in PhD enrolments was a concern. Schools were urged to focus on the causes for this decline.
• Publications had dropped around 20% in the last three years which had an adverse effect on the funding. A further drop in 2009 would have serious consequences for the Faculty. One member queried whether it was the quality or the quantity of publications that had gone down. The Chair responded that it was the quantity. Another member commented that young academics often procrastinated in publishing because of the focus on quality. One member re-iterated that there should be a statement that research is a priority of the University and that this needed to be reinforced with staff.
• Contract research income was down.
• Expenditure for the use of animals in research had gone up by 40%. Schools needed to review animal usage as these rising costs were unsustainable.
• Faculty travel grants would be placed on hold for 2009.
• Measures would be put in place to achieve a reduction in costs for Schools. The Vice Chancellor had imposed a moratorium on new staff appointments and replacements in the Faculty. Schools would be required to provide a detailed budgetary forecast on its financial standing for each new appointment put forward which would have to be signed off by the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor.
• The Chair stressed that it would be necessary to cut staffing levels in Schools. A letter would be sent to all staff in Schools which had deficit budgets to provide options for pre-retirement contracts, part-time employment or voluntary redundancies. Schools also needed to look at restructuring their units and major offerings to reduce costs. One member commented that Schools might be in danger of losing quality staff which would have a negative impact on the University and suggested that the University should perhaps underwrite the deficit for the time being. The Chair advised that the Faculty had been operating on a deficit budget for a number of years and it was time to address it.

ITEMS FOR THE ATTENTION OF ACADEMIC SECRETARIAT

5. GRADE FC (FAILED COMPONENT) REF: F1158

Members noted that at the Board of Studies meeting held 3 June 2008, the issue of excluding students from examinations was considered, particularly those students who had not attended sufficient laboratories. In recognition of this, the Registrar’s Office had introduced a grade of FC (Failed Component). This meant that students who had passed the unit overall, but failed a core component would have a grade of FC entered against the unit with a mark of 48%. In the case of units in which a supplementary examination was available, these students would be eligible for a supplementary examination and it would be up to Schools to ensure that the test applied to these students was appropriate for the failed component. FC would only be available if the assessment mechanism statement for the unit advised that there was core component which must be passed in order to pass the unit overall.

The Academic Student Adviser, Dr Jane Emberson, advised that a group meeting would be held to discuss the implications of the FC grade.

6. CHANGE IN NAME FOR THE UWA SCIENCE COMMUNICATION TRAVEL AWARD REF:

The establishment of the UWA Science Communication Travel Award was recently approved by circulation to members. Members noted that since the approval, the donor had requested that the title of the Award be changed so that it be named after his mother. It would now be known as Elizabeth Anne Nichols (nee Troup) Travel Award.

RESOLVED – 2

to recommend that the change in name of the UWA Science Communication Travel Award to Elizabeth Anne Nichols (nee Troup) Travel Award be approved, and forwarded to the Legislative Committee for action.
7. PROPOSED STUDENT EXCHANGE WITH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY OF CHINA REF:

Members had before them a proposal from the Faculty to establish a student exchange agreement with the University of Science and Technology of China (USTC). USTC was one of the top universities in China and had a high standard of teaching and research, as well as strongly developed international collaborations, and had concluded agreements with about 100 universities and research institutions in more than 30 nations and regions throughout the world.

Members noted that the School of Physics, in particular, had been interested in participating in such an exchange, and in furthering links in the area of PhD student collaboration. The School had proposed to set up a joint/double-badged PhD programme with USTC which had been approved in principle recently by the Board of the Graduate Research School and Academic Council. Close collaborative links had been formed between the Gravity Wave group in the School of Physics and a group with similar interests in the Department of Astronomy and Applied Physics at USTC.

Members noted that the approval of this Student Exchange Agreement would enable fees to be waived on a reciprocal basis, and the exchange of students at both undergraduate and postgraduate level to take place. The initial participating School would be the School of Physics but future collaborative exchanges with USTC might involve other Schools within the Faculty.

A copy of the Exchange Agreement and a letter of support from the Head of the School of Physics had been attached to the agenda for information.

RESOLVED – 3
that the Faculty approve the proposed Student Exchange Agreement between the School of Physics and the Department of Astronomy and Applied Physics at the University of Science and Technology of China.

(Secretary’s note: Since the meeting, it became apparent after further discussion that USTC would be unable to waive fees for undergraduate students as they were funded by the Ministry of Education in China, and the waiving of fees was not permitted. Postgraduate fees, however, were not a problem. The agreement has been revised to remove any reference to undergraduate students).

8. APPROVAL PROCESS FOR SCHOLARSHIPS REF: F1158

At a recent Scholarships meeting, it was noted that at present, Statute 31 allowed for the approval of single faculty scholarships by the faculty board. For multi faculty scholarships, the Academic Board had delegated this responsibility to the Legislative Committee. It had been suggested by Governance Services that, rather than having straightforward scholarship conditions approved by faculty board, the group consider the possibility of the dean of the faculty approving straightforward scholarship conditions based on standard sample conditions on behalf of the faculty board. This would then be put forward for noting by board members. Complex scholarship conditions would still be approved by the relevant faculty board.

RESOLVED – 4
that the Faculty delegate the responsibility of approving straightforward scholarship conditions to the Dean on behalf of the Faculty.

9. PROPOSED INTRODUCTION OF MASTER OF FORENSIC SCIENCE (RESEARCH) REF:

Members had before them a proposal from the Centre for Forensic Science for a new research degree – Master of Forensic Science in 2009. Speaking to the item, Professor Ian Dadour, Director of the Centre, said that the current Master of Forensic Science (thesis and coursework) was no longer deemed a
research degree as some of the units were no longer recognised as research. The total research for the degree was less than 66% and, therefore, would not be eligible for Research Training Scheme (RTS).

The current degree would now be classified as coursework. This meant that students no longer had an option of undertaking a research degree at the Masters level. He had consulted extensively with all facets of the forensic community in WA, nationally and internationally as well as students and graduates about the proposed research degree. All were in favour of the proposal. It would enable students to undertake research in either a broad or specialist area of forensic science.

**RESOLVED – 5**
to recommend that the introduction in 2009 of the Master of Forensic Science (research) be approved and the proposal forwarded to the Graduate Research School for consideration.

**Confirmed**