MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
FACULTY TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMITTEE
held in Room 1.58, First Floor, Physics Building
on Tuesday 10 March 2009

Present:
Dr Peter Whipp (Deputy Chair)
Ms Jenny Gamble (Faculty Manager)
Dr Nancy Longnecker (Teaching and Learning Co-ordinator)

Representatives from Schools:
Dr Jan Meyer (Anatomy and Human Biology)
Professor Don Robertson (Biomedical, Biomolecular and Chemical Sciences)
Dr Peter Whipp (Sport Science, Exercise and Health)
Associate Professor Ian McArthur (Physics)
Dr Vance Locke (Psychology)

Other Representatives:
Professor Andrew Bassom (Head of School/School of Mathematics and Statistics)
Dr Thomas Martin (Senior Lecturer/Faculty Offshore Programs Director)
Dr Jane Emberson (Academic Student Advisor)
Ms Marjan Heibloem (Representative from FNAS)
Ms Felicity Renner (Biological Sciences Library)
Miss Lauren Hollier (Undergraduate Student Representative)

Apologies
Professor Geoff Hammond (Chair)
Mr David Enright (Senior Administrative Officer, Faculty Offshore Programs)
Ms Rachel Owens (Postgraduate Student Representative)

Mrs Kath Williams (Executive Officer)

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED – 1

that the minutes of the meeting of Teaching and Learning Committee held on Monday 3 November 2008 be confirmed.

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

No conflicts were declared.
3. ITEMS/BUSINESS IN PROGRESS FOR NOTING SINCE PREVIOUS MEETING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item/Business in Progress</th>
<th>Progress Update</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and Learning Guide for Faculty Staff.</td>
<td>Draft to be checked by Faculty Student Advisor and Faculty Manager prepared by Ms Heather Morton</td>
<td>On hold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal request to SIMS for standardised marks. Request has been submitted for the position in cohort (percentage) which was easier to calculate.</td>
<td>Chair and Faculty Manager to report</td>
<td>In progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The specification of learning outcomes for courses and majors offered in the Faculty.</td>
<td>Audit to be undertaken by Teaching and Learning Co-ordinator. School to recommend major/s sequence</td>
<td>In progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audit of each major sequence to determine whether English Language Competency Skills are shown in at least one unit in each year level.</td>
<td>Audit to be undertaken by Teaching and Learning Co-ordinator. School to recommend major/s sequence</td>
<td>In progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Operational Priorities Plan (OPP) implementation strategies and targets</td>
<td>Faculty Manager has updated implementation strategies and targets and distributed them to members for consideration</td>
<td>In progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should students at PSB be offered a 1) BSc Science and Technology or 2) BSc with selected majors</td>
<td>Academic Student Advisor to report</td>
<td>In progress</td>
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4. HOW FACULTY HANDLES OUTCOME OF SUPPLEMENTARY EXAMS

The Faculty Offshore Programs Director had raised a question with the Academic Student Advisor of how the Faculty handled the outcome of supplementary exams. The Academic Student Advisor confirmed that a supplementary exam replaced all previous assessment in the unit and it was her understanding that this was the view of the University.

Members noted this.

5. UNIT INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (UIMS)

In collaboration, The Faculty of Life and Physical Sciences and The Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences have built upon the Calliope System and developed a more robust, simplified and functional system. This new system, UIMS, focused on the needs of the students and staff at the faculty and school level. Members were informed that UIMS was available online from the link below:

http://www.unitoutlines.uwa.edu.au/

Furthermore this item was discussed at the Faculty Executive Committee meeting in February where it was agreed that from Semester one 2009 unit outlines were required to be updated using UIMS.

Members noted this.
6. **ANONYMOUS ASSESSMENT**

By way of background, in early 2007, the Assessment Standing Committee of the Teaching and Learning Committee commissioned a small working party, convened by Professor Graeme Martin, to explore possible models of anonymous assessment. A pilot had been conducted in semester 1 2008. A copy of the full report on Anonymous Assessment Pilot had been circulated with the agenda. Prior to the meeting the representative from Psychology had circulated his views on the Report (Attachment A).

Members agreed that if a problem of bias was shown to exist they would support measures to combat it. Furthermore, they felt that the model under consideration did not achieve this. They questioned whether there was substantiated proof that examiners were biased. The undergraduate student representative commented that she herself could not perceive any issue of bias. However, the Science Union was in favour of anonymous assessment.

It was agreed the main areas of concern were:

- The rationale behind doing anonymous assessment had not been provided.
- The model being proposed did not achieve anonymous assessment as it used student numbers.
- More information was needed about the operational outcomes of the pilot. Did the change in process achieve anything?
- The proposed model increased workload of staff, both academic and professional; in some cases by more than 5 hours per unit and this was unacceptable.
- Professional staff were overwhelmingly not in favour of the proposed model.

**ACTION** The views of this committee be conveyed to the Assessment Standing Committee.

7. **NEW GRADE FOR FAILED COMPONENT**

At the September 2008 meeting a member requested clarification of the introduction of a new grade ‘FC’ which indicated that although the student had achieved a score greater than or equal to 50% a compulsory component of the unit had been failed and therefore the unit had been failed overall. It has been decided that the ‘FC’ grade would to be available in all units, i.e. no need for specific approval beforehand (as was required for units which recorded a final grade of Ungraded Fail (UF) and Ungraded Pass (UP)). However if it was to be used in a unit, the ‘assessment mechanism statement’ needed to be clearly spelt out, including the circumstances in which it was to be applied. As FC indicated that the unit had been failed it had been agreed across faculties that a mark of 48% would be recorded against that unit. This meant that students would be eligible for a supplementary exam if supplementary exams were available in that unit.

The Academic Student Advisor felt the availability of supplementary exam after the award of a grade of FC was problematic because of the laboratory component and requested member’s views on this. One member suggested that in those units in which a supplementary exam was available, provisions should be made for a supplementary assessment to be available in all components of the unit. If a laboratory component could not be rerun, another method of evaluating a student’s understanding could be used.

**ACTION** Members were asked to consider within their Schools whether it was appropriate to have a supplementary assessment in all components of a unit and to report back to the Committee.

8. **FORMALISING A POLICY FOR PERMITTING A SECOND OVERLOAD**

The Academic Student Advisor proposed that the informal policy for permitting a second overload, which was that an overload in second semester would be approved if the student undertook an overload in first semester (over 27 points) and had passed all their units with a mark of at least 55% in each unit and an average of at least 60% in that semester, be displayed on the Faculty website. A member commented that students should be permitted a second overload if they had
passed all the units that they had undertaken in first semester. The Academic Student Advisor responded that this policy was designed to protect students. Members suggested that that the policy also state that responsibility for undertaking the overload rested with the student and could never be used as grounds for special consideration.

Members supported the Academic Student Advisor’s suggestion.

**ACTION** Executive Officer to arrange for informal policy to be displayed on the Faculty website.

9. **MASTER OF SCIENCE THESIS – FACULTY POSITIONAL STATEMENT ON COMPLETION BY PAPERS**

The Acting Chair had asked the Committee to consider whether or not the Faculty should take a position on submission of papers for a Master of Science by research. Members had before them information from the Graduate Research & Scholarships Office 2009 which related to the composition of a thesis as a paper or series of papers. The Acting Chair reported that it was policy within the Graduate Research School (GRS) that students could submit their thesis as a paper or series of papers. He asked whether the Faculty should take a position on this i.e. encouraging students to submit their thesis in the form of a paper or series of papers. Members commented that submitting papers would not be sufficient as there also needed to be overarching discussion linking the papers together. There was some doubt as to what would be expected of a masters student if they chose to submit their thesis as a paper or series of papers and asked that more advice be sought from the Graduate Research School.

**ACTION** Executive Officer to seek advice from the Graduate Research School.

10. **STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT**

The Undergraduate Student Representative advised that the Science Union was concerned that the Chemistry laboratory sessions for first year students had been halved and what impact this would have on preparedness for dealing with chemicals in the third year.

**ACTION** BBCS Representative agreed to take this back to the School and report back to the Committee.

(Executive Officer’s Note: advice has been received from the Chair of Chemistry that the reduced laboratory experience will mean that students in later years of their course will have less developed laboratory skills than previously. However, this is unlikely to be a cause for real concern as laboratory skills being developed in first year were minimal and will be developed more fully in the later years of the course.)

11. **SCHOOL REPORTS**

Schools had nothing to report.

12. **TEACHING AND LEARNING CO-ORDINATOR REPORT**

Members were informed that in FNAS all level 3 units now had corresponding level 8 postgraduate units. However, there was no such policy in LPS. The Teaching and Learning Co-ordinator asked if there was a need for consistency. The FNAS representative reported that this was being trialled in the first semester and agreed to report back the results of the trial to the Committee in September.

13. **OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS**

Under any other business the Academic Student Advisor advised that she had met a staff member from the Careers Office at Link week who was interested in doing a presentation on the opportunities open to students e.g. mentoring. It was decided that information such as mentoring could be displayed on the Faculty SharePoint site:

http://teams.science.uwa.edu.au/Teaching%20and%20Learning%20Awards/Forms/AllItems.aspx
14. TEACHING AND LEARNING INDICATORS

Two documents were distributed at the meeting:
- The UWA Student Learning Experience: Strategy and Management – 2009
- Teaching and Learning Indicators – January 2009

ACTION  Members were asked to consider the Teaching and Learning Indicators report within their schools as this would be an item for discussion at the April Meeting.
Hi Katherine,

Would you mind sending the message below out to the TLC members for me?

Thanks,

Vance

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Dear all,

These are a series of issues that struck me as I read over the report on the anonymous examination trial and that I thought I'd share to foster discussion.

Cheers,

Vance

Overall it's not clear what problem is being solved by this new system. Is there really evidence of systematic bias? Clearly when you ask students "should assessments be anonymous?" the majority answer 'yes'. But since asking the question implies that there's an issue to be fixed it'd be hard to answer 'no'. What if students were asked if they perceive bias in the system? Do the majority (or even a large minority) perceive that they're being unfairly dealt with? If not, then the extra work entailed at all levels doesn't justify the workload. If there's demonstrable bias in the marking of units then there may be better ways of reducing bias rather than a 'one-size-fits-all' system like this.

This issue is even more important given the time taken to implement this new system. The majority of academic staff reported spending 0-5 extra hours of extra work combining the anonymized marks to produce unit reports. The item (Q6D - pg A47) has bins of 'Extra 10+ Extra 5-10 Extra 0-5 Equal Saved 0-5 Saved 5-10 Saved 10+'. Most responded 'equal' or 'extra 0-5'. The professional staff reported an even stronger preference for the 'extra 0-5' option. Given the number of units run within any given school, 5 hours extra processing per-unit (assuming the academic and professional staff estimates are not cumulative - which may not be true) would add days of work for Schools to complete before sending out marks.

The other issue is that the feedback from experts in the field - academic and professional staff - isn't adequately considered. The majority of academic staff (62.5%) do not want anonymous assessment implemented for exams. And an overwhelming 88% of administrative staff do not want it implemented. A majority of student (70%) do. Yet the comments reported seem to reflect the fact that most students assume that staff members aren't biased. Again, offering people a 'fairer' choice will always get a positive response. If there's evidence of bias then something should definitely be done. If not, the target of future interventions should be to reassure students of the unbiased assessments they currently receive.

The system trialled swapped student numbers for names as the source of identification. This seems to be no use in small units (where students are easily identified anyway) or in larger units (where large student numbers make individual identification difficult). This is reflected in the comments from students and staff and in the conclusions below.

Section 13.9 of the conclusions states that:
- 70% of students were in favour of anonymous assessment for the semester examinations
- 37.5% of academic staff were in favour of anonymous assessment for the semester examinations
- smaller units (< 50) are not really able to be anonymously assessed due to knowledge of student handwriting, styles etc
- larger units (> 100) are effectively anonymous anyway due to the reduced opportunity for academic staff to get to know the students in an individual way

Despite the fact that the evidence (aside from student preferences) suggests that this is an unnecessary.
complicated and time-consuming process, the conclusion is that anonymous assessment be carried out for 5 years then reviewed.

Of course there were also many problems that emerged with the system. From a huge return rate for MCQs which couldn’t be processed, to the difficulties in tracking down students who had written down the wrong student number and the added stress for students of finding correct seat numbers. Such errors could be addressed, as suggested in the report, with an investment of more time and technology. Again the expense is hard to justify without some clear problem to address.

It seems to me that the recommended changes to be made for this trial clearly further violate students’ anonymity (providing lists of student IDs and seat numbers outside venues, having staff attend the first 10 minutes of exam so they’re exposed seating position/numbers — and having this information sent to staff) further increase workloads (multiple reminders to students, extra timetabling issues) and reduced student freedom in the exam venue (seating location preference, crowding student together). So to get this anonymous process right, the recommendations entail less-anonymity and more work.