

The University of Western Australia
REVIEW OF COURSE STRUCTURES
DISCUSSION PAPER
DECEMBER 2006

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1. Introduction

Now approaching its centenary, the University of Western Australia has long been distinguished by the high quality of its courses. In the Australian context, this reputation has led UWA to be ranked first in Australia for undergraduate student quality and second in Australia for our undergraduate programmes.¹ At this historic juncture, however, it is arguably more vital than ever to reflect on the shape of a UWA education. What kind of attributes should we expect from our graduates in the twenty-first century in pursuit of the University of Western Australia's goal of 'Achieving International Excellence' and how best can our courses be structured to deliver the most relevant and effective education in future? To best ensure the relevance and quality of our courses in a rapidly changing environment, a review of undergraduate and postgraduate course structures at UWA will be undertaken from mid-2006 to 2007.

This Review will provide an important opportunity to build on our existing strengths, and to shape our future academic directions, in ways that reflect the University's leading position. This discussion paper provides some background and rationale for the Review, and poses some questions for consideration by members of the University community as they engage with the Review process in the period to the end of 2007. Some questions are provocative: the paper does not draw conclusions, but is intended to prompt reflection, discussion and input into the Review itself. The Review will take into account the strengths of our devolved institution, the diversity of our student body, and the complex challenges UWA faces within the sector. An explicit operational priority for UWA is to examine course structures as part of an overall strategy to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the University's work, so the

¹ Melbourne Institute for Applied Economic and Social Research, 2005

Review will take a whole of University approach to clarify and improve course structures, and will also consider national and international trends.

A number of broad questions animating discussion in the sector, not merely at national level, but globally, will usefully inform the Review. Increasing focus on graduate skills, engagement with specialist content, and preparedness for work as well as for further research, must prompt consideration of the balance between such elements and the course structures in which they are offered. What combinations of courses might best equip our students to become specialists, but with sufficient breadth of learning to ensure active engagement with the world as citizens and lifelong learners in future? How might increasing demand for practicum-based, community-based and other forms of learning be structured within our degrees? What combinations and courses will best equip our students for the global economy, society and culture of the new millennium?

As well as attention to broad brush questions concerning course structures and their relationship to overall educational experience, the Review will provide an important opportunity to address challenges arising in recent years, to improve efficiency and effectiveness of course structures and with that, the overall student experience of studying at UWA. These challenges include the wide range of course structures (both undergraduate and postgraduate) that have developed; the degree of clarity in our understanding of “honours”, “streams”, “specialisations”, “programmes” and “majors”; and some proliferation of programmes and courses in the past few years. The number of new courses and programmes being approved *has* steadily increased, although the increase per se is not necessarily cause for concern: it is timely to consider, however, whether such an increase has, and will in future, contribute to the University’s strategic directions and to the improvement of student learning outcomes.

The *Review of Degree Rules, Regulations and Procedures* (the ‘Dickson Report’) convened by T.J. Dickson, delivered in late 2001, focussed its review at the unit level to introduce a 6-point unit standard across the University. Among other things, the Dickson Report noted -

“The complexity of our degree rules and regulations and the associated administrative procedures have increased greatly over the last 10 - 15 years. During this time we have seen:

- the introduction of the HECS system and its associated administrative requirements
- the introduction of a large number of new degree programs including many joint degree programs,
- more and more complex options available to students within given programs,
- a rapid increase in the number of units offered,
- more complex assessment mechanisms being used,
- the introduction and build up of an international full fee program, including Study Abroad students
- the advent of student exchange programs,
- more complex admission criteria and an increase in the number of admission categories - UWay, Aboriginal entry, Rural entry to Medicine etc.

Most of these changes have come about as a result of the changing environment in Australian tertiary education over that time. this has led to a situation where the complexity of current course structures and their associated rules and regulations make it extremely difficult for students to understand what is required of them and for staff to know and fully understand the processes which they are required to administer or for which they give advice. It has also made our course structures difficult to explain to prospective students, schools, employers, parents and the public and this is particularly important in relation to the marketing of our courses internationally.

It is probably fair to say that ***it is extremely unlikely that we would have such a complex and diverse system if the University were now structuring its course from scratch.*** [emphasis added]

Since 2001, the complexity of overarching course structures identified in the Dickson Report remains. In fact, the number of new courses, and programmes within those courses, approved each year has steadily increased. 2003 saw two new combined courses and

thirteen new postgraduate courses approved; for 2007, we will have three new combined courses, forty new postgraduate courses and thirteen new programmes within existing courses. At this time, UWA will offer no fewer than 129 undergraduate courses, and 224 postgraduate courses (these figures do not include either courses leading to higher degrees by research (HDR) or individual programmes within courses).

These increases in categories of course offerings, and any future increases, should be contextualised with reference to current and projected growth in the student population and its distribution across undergraduate and postgraduate cohorts. As reported recently by the Vice Chancellor, while UWA has a stated goal of increasing its student population overall to 20,000 students by 2010, from a 2005 total of approximately 17,000, this growth will most likely continue to be distributed in a mix of 70:18:12 across undergraduate, higher degree research, and postgraduate coursework students. In an increasingly competitive context, and with its strong commitment to properly funded growth, UWA must ensure both the ongoing academic relevance and efficient delivery of its courses. Similarly, with the University looking to maintain and extend its higher degree enrolments, it is imperative that the pathways to HDR study—both via honours, and postgraduate coursework options—are clearly mapped for both domestic and international students.²

Further, the University's Operational Priorities Plan for 2006-2008 lays out a number of goals, such as practicum elements in all UWA courses and the development of cultural competence among our students through their study, whose realisation will potentially have an impact upon course structures.

Overall, to maintain its position as the premier university in Western Australia and as an institution with a fine international reputation, the University must ensure that planned growth contributing to the University's mission is matched by a clear vision for the shape and scope of its courses.

2. The Review's Terms of Reference

The Review of Course Structures at UWA will consider and make recommendations concerning:

- i Course structures in relation to the University's goals, priorities and mission;
- ii Course structures and their relationship to national and international trends;
- iii The impact of course structures upon the student learning experience, and the acquisition of graduate attributes;
- iv The efficiency and effectiveness of course structures, nomenclature, and aspects of administration.

In pursuit of these aims, the Review may consider areas including, but not limited to:

- definitions, including for example, length of degree courses, workload standards, combined courses, honours structures, named versus general degrees, breadth of study, more general first year study requirements;
- relevant national and international trends (for example, the Bologna Agreement, the Australian Qualifications Framework, Washington Accord, Melbourne Model);
- the processes by which new courses and programmes are approved; inter-faculty collaboration; academic year structure; timetable matters; credit transfer;
- the student experience (for example, consideration of areas in the Operational Priorities Plan such as producing culturally competent graduates; Study Abroad; extending practicum opportunities; greater emphasis upon undergraduate research opportunities);
- external factors (including demographics and employment trends, professional accreditation, government policy).

While this Review is intentionally broad-ranging, it is necessary to exclude some issues. The Review will not consider:

² 'Meeting Our Growth Targets', Vice Chancellor's Column, *UWA News*, September 11, 2006, p. 4.

- Unit content
- Teaching arrangements internal to schools and faculties
- Assessment practices
- Higher Degrees by Research
- Fees (except to indicate if any major recommendations would have an impact on existing fee policies, and to refer such detailed consideration as may be required to the relevant University bodies).

The structure, funding, timeline and reporting details for the Review are included at Appendix A.

3. Issues for Consideration within the Review

A review of course structures within a devolved institution such as UWA inevitably foregrounds certain themes, which both guide consideration of specific issues, and inform debate about the extent and direction of change. The review throws up, for example, broad issues concerning 'appropriate' levels of standardisation, or flexibility, in the University's approaches.

A number of issues identified for consideration within the Review are presented below, with preliminary questions posed for consideration. The list is by no means exhaustive, and priorities for the Review have not yet been determined.

Throughout the paper too, while there has been an attempt to define categories of data used in the discussion, it is acknowledged that at times there is no University-wide acceptance of terminology and that some data are incomplete; they are included here, however, in order to identify trends.

i. Course structures in relation to the University's goals, priorities and mission

A number of key documents convey the characteristic quality of the University, and the principles and priorities giving direction to UWA's activities in teaching, learning and research. These documents provide essential context for future planning, and baselines for assessment of current practice.

The University's Academic Profile document broadly characterises the University of Western Australia in the following manner:

"The essential defining characteristics of the University, which arise largely from the directions of our Strategic Plan and OPP, and build upon the University's core values, particular history, performance and comparative advantage, can be summarised as:

- high quality, as the pervading principle underpinning all our activities;
- comprehensive, with a broad mix of arts, sciences and professional studies;
- selective, in our support of areas of particular strength, importance and opportunity;
- research intensive, with a strong teaching and research nexus;
- internationally focused, in terms of content and standards;
- technologically innovative;
- committed to equity and equal opportunity; and
- a community resource, with a diversified support base.

UWA is also characterised as a medium-sized university by Australian standards"³

In areas bearing more practically upon course structures and their definition, there are numerous relevant documents at faculty and university level. However, in respect of the *outcomes* that the University envisages for its graduates, UWA's Educational Principles are central in suggesting the kind of educational experience we envisage for students in the

³ UWA Academic Profile, 2000, at <http://discussiondocuments.uwa.edu.au/data/page/6137/Aprofilepaper14-9-00.pdf> p. 1.

twenty-first century. The Principles themselves reflect an understanding that a UWA education does not *only* impart immediate and measurable 'graduate attributes' and skills, but also actively promotes a commitment to knowledge that long outlasts the acquisition of a degree. As the foundation of that learning process, however, outcomes within all courses of study at the University should align closely with these Principles:

"Students at The University of Western Australia are encouraged and facilitated to develop the ability and desire:

- to master the subject matter, concepts and techniques of their chosen discipline(s) at internationally-recognised levels and standards;
- to acquire the skills required to learn, and to continue through life to learn, from a variety of sources and experiences;
- to adapt acquired knowledge to new situations;
- to communicate in English clearly, concisely and logically;
- to acquire the skills needed to embrace rapidly-changing technologies in a global environment;
- to think and reason logically and creatively;
- to undertake problem identification, analysis and solution;
- to question accepted wisdom and be open to new ideas and possibilities;
- to acquire mature judgement and responsibility in ethical, moral, social, and practical, as well as academic matters;
- to work independently and in a team;
- to acquire cross-cultural and other competencies to take a citizenship and leadership role in the local, national or international community."⁴

It may also be noted that a number of these Principles are given expression in the latest Operational Priorities Plan 2006-2008, with an emphasis for example, upon practicum experience and cultural competence, among our students.

How satisfactorily do courses currently align with UWA's priorities and principles, and what processes in future may best ensure that these principles are expressed in our course structures?

As well as the principles and priorities guiding the University's decisions about course structure, the current and future discipline mix at UWA is important to consider.

For example, at present three of the nine faculties account for over half of the University's load. The Faculty of Life and Physical Sciences has the largest student load with 19.5% of the University's total load and has had significant growth since 2002. Significant growth has also been recorded in the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry and the Faculty of Law, mainly due to increased allocations of Commonwealth-supported places for medicine, dentistry and law courses.

On the other hand, there has been a significant decline in the Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Mathematics load. This decline is due to a major slump in demand for computing science places, although the decline in computing science has been partially offset by increased engineering enrolments. Strong demand and new Commonwealth-supported places allocated for 2007 for engineering courses provide the basis for strong growth in the Faculty's load over the next few years.

The decline in the load in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences is mainly due to a decline in demand for places in agriculture courses. Significant marketing efforts and refined course structures have seen a modest increase in the demand for places in 2007.

⁴ Extract from the University of Western Australia [Strategic Plan](http://www.catl.uwa.edu.au/current_initiatives/obe/principles) (in accordance with Academic Council Resolution 73/02), July 2002, at http://www.catl.uwa.edu.au/current_initiatives/obe/principles.

The drop in the Faculty of Education load over the last two years is mainly due to a decline in demand for places in the Graduate Diploma in Education. While it is hoped that demand will be restored to previous levels, the booming economy provides relatively attractive career options outside of teaching.

In what ways might course structures be used to address imbalances in load determined as undesirable with reference to the University's strategic directions?

ii. Course structures and their relationship to national and international trends

Within an increasingly globalised and competitive environment of higher education provision, marked by high mobility among students from certain regions and diversity in demand for certain courses, there has been some focus upon standardisation as a model to be pursued as a means of enabling smoother transfer and credit arrangements. (Some of these models are briefly described in a footnote to this paper)⁵. The Bologna Agreement, for example,

⁵ Examples of 'models' and agreements:

- Bologna Process

A voluntary agreement which aims to achieve consistency of student outcomes from tertiary education. It is aimed at increasing staff and student mobility and recognition of qualifications across European countries through a Diploma Supplement which will describe in common terms for future employers and others, the components and outcomes of degree study. The Bologna model to which the process has given rise, is that of a 3 year undergraduate degree + 2 year Masters program + 3year PhD research scheme (the so-called '3+2+3 model'), which does not accord easily with current Anglo-Australian model in which completion of a substantial honours thesis remains a core measure of higher degree research readiness.

- OECD Agenda

The themes of internationalisation of graduates and portability of qualifications seen within the Bologna Agreement have been echoed more recently in the OECD's Athens Agenda (June 2006), which emphasises the need for clear student learning outcomes, and more flexible approaches within the sector to meet student needs.

- Melbourne Model

At times stated to be an expression of the Bologna model, but more akin to the North American model in that students complete a general bachelor's degree followed by a professional graduate degree in a specialist area such as Law or Medicine.

- Washington Accord

An agreement which provides a mechanism for mutual recognition between signatory bodies of Engineering education accreditation processes. This leads to the effective mutual recognition of accredited Engineering Degree courses, and, generally, to exemption from the education requirement for practising in each of the signatory countries. The Institution of Engineers, Australia (IEAust) is a signatory body to this agreement.

- Australian Qualifications Framework Guidelines:

The qualifications are:

- Senior Secondary Certificate of Education;
- Certificate I;
- Certificate II;
- Certificate III;
- Certificate IV;
- Diploma;
- Advanced Diploma,
- Associate Degree;
- Bachelor Degree;
- Vocational Graduate Certificate;
- Vocational Graduate Diploma;
- Graduate Certificate
- Graduate Diploma;
- Masters Degree;
- Doctoral Degree.

envisages more standardised course models and administration of course outcomes, to enable mobility throughout the European Union. (A recent agreement forged in Athens may also herald the beginning of a mini-Bologna accord within the OECD).

Simultaneously, however, with an increasing focus upon breadth of study, and acquisition of transferable skills, others have looked to the North American model of generalist undergraduate plus specialist graduate degrees, as the combination likely to educate students to the most competitive international standard. (The so-called 'Melbourne Model', often bruited as aligning with Bologna, is more derivative of such American models.)

The trend to international models and standards is by no means new, in respect of discipline-specific accords and agreements designed to facilitate recognition of qualifications internationally. Engineering schools in Australia have long been part of the Washington Accord, for example. What is novel, however, is the extent to which accords and agreements have become multilateral, government-sponsored, and explicitly geared towards participation in an international market.

Most recently, the Australian Minister for Education released a DEST paper in April 2006, which raised questions about the extent to which Australian universities should plan for Bologna 'compatibility', and the extent to which the model will influence student markets outside Europe, most notably China.⁶

As well as international trends and models, there has recently been renewed focus upon the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). The Framework provides for a unified system of national qualifications in schools, vocational education and training (TAFEs and private providers) and the higher education sector (mainly universities). It provides guidelines to institutions about national standards for course structures at different levels. Although the guidelines and suggested course structures are not mandatory, they are designed to promote quality assurance and a national system of readily recognisable qualifications.

To what extent, and in what areas, should UWA aspire to compatibility with international models such as Bologna, and how would such compatibility sit alongside our internal priorities, principles and institutional mission?

iii The impact of course structures upon the student learning experience, and the acquisition of graduate attributes

The particular student learning experience at UWA is first influenced by the cohort of students we attract. UWA has traditionally attracted the highest proportion of school leavers in its annual cohort nationally. In 2005, 75% of its intake was school leaver, when the national average stood at 44.3%. The calibre of this intake is indicated by the proportion of high achieving students within it: UWA attracts approximately 83% of the top 5% of school leavers in the state, and over 80% of the top 10% of school leavers enrolling in WA universities.⁷ The University's dominant share of the first preferences of school leavers with a TER of 80 or above is shown in the following table.

TISC First Preferences of School-Leavers Applicants with a TER >= 80, by Institution of First Preference 2006

| Region | Total Number | UWA | Curtin | Murdoch | ECU |
|-------------------|--------------|-------|--------|---------|-------|
| Perth-Cent Metro | 916 | 74.5% | 21.0% | 2.5% | 2.1% |
| Perth-East Metro | 407 | 47.2% | 41.0% | 5.7% | 6.1% |
| Perth-North Metro | 1,359 | 54.1% | 30.9% | 3.2% | 11.8% |
| Perth-SE Metro | 729 | 49.5% | 39.9% | 8.5% | 2.1% |
| Perth-SW Metro | 906 | 49.9% | 34.9% | 12.5% | 2.8% |
| South West | 407 | 42.8% | 38.6% | 9.6% | 9.1% |

⁶ 'The Bologna Process: Next Steps', DEST, April 2006, at http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/publications_resources/profiles/Bologna_Process_and_Australia.htm

⁷ UWA in Brief, 2005; Planning Services.

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| Upper Great Southern | 41 | 41.5% | 41.5% | 9.8% | 7.3% |
| Lower Great Southern | 104 | 54.8% | 38.5% | 3.8% | 2.9% |
| South Eastern | 34 | 67.6% | 32.4% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Midlands | 89 | 42.7% | 36.0% | 12.4% | 9.0% |
| Central | 78 | 47.4% | 38.5% | 3.8% | 10.3% |
| Pilbara | 16 | 62.5% | 12.5% | 25.0% | 0.0% |
| Kimberley | 15 | 66.7% | 26.7% | 6.7% | 0.0% |
| Interstate | 11 | 36.4% | 36.4% | 27.3% | 0.0% |
| Overseas | 22 | 81.8% | 13.6% | 0.0% | 4.5% |
| Total | 5,134 | 54.7% | 32.8% | 6.5% | 5.9% |
| School Sector | | | | | |
| Government (EDWA) | 2,104 | 49.4% | 35.4% | 7.7% | 7.5% |
| Anglican Schools Commission | 878 | 68.0% | 23.8% | 4.3% | 3.9% |
| Catholic Education | 1,223 | 51.4% | 35.7% | 7.3% | 5.6% |
| Other Independent | 929 | 58.7% | 31.8% | 4.8% | 4.7% |
| Total | 5,134 | 54.7% | 32.8% | 6.5% | 5.9% |

Source: Dataset downloaded from TISC in January 2006.

Over the years 2001 to 2006, moreover, TISC preference data show an increase in the University's school leaver demand and intakes. The University has an extremely youthful and homogeneous student population, drawn also in significant measure from the private school sector.

Age at 1 January of Students Enrolled at UWA in 2001 and 2006

| Age | 2001 | | 2006 | |
|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| | No | % | No | % |
| Under 17 | 40 | 0% | 41 | 0% |
| 17 to 19 | 5774 | 38% | 6126 | 35% |
| 20 to 24 | 5194 | 35% | 6590 | 38% |
| 25 to 29 | 1381 | 9% | 1596 | 9% |
| 30 to 34 | 849 | 6% | 974 | 6% |
| 35 to 39 | 686 | 5% | 681 | 4% |
| 40 to 44 | 465 | 3% | 535 | 3% |
| 45 to 49 | 334 | 2% | 355 | 2% |
| 50 to 54 | 189 | 1% | 209 | 1% |
| 55 and over | 123 | 1% | 168 | 1% |
| Total | 15035 | 100% | 17275 | 100% |

While UWA dominates the school-leaver market for students with a TER of 80 or above, examination of demographic trends and school enrolment patterns suggest that it may be unwise to be overly dependent on school-leavers.

The decision of the WA government to raise the school entry age has resulted in a half cohort working its way through the school system (as can be seen from the following table). This half cohort will complete year 12 in 2014 and will see a marked reduction in the numbers of applicants for admission to universities in 2015.

Full-Time Students, by Category of School and Level and Year of School Education: Western Australia, 2005

| | Government | Non-Government | | | All Schools |
|------------|------------|----------------|-------------|-------|-------------|
| | | Catholic | Independent | Total | |
| Primary | | | | | |
| Pre Year 1 | 19 228 | 4 568 | 2 316 | 6 884 | 26 112 |
| Year 1 | 19 880 | 4 594 | 2 636 | 7 230 | 27 110 |
| Year 2 | 19 227 | 4 589 | 2 472 | 7 061 | 26 288 |
| Year 3 | 11 107 | 3 057 | 1 982 | 5 039 | 16 146 |
| Year 4 | 19 731 | 4 761 | 2 648 | 7 409 | 27 140 |

| | | | | | |
|--------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| Year 5 | 20 105 | 4 770 | 2 825 | 7 595 | 27 700 |
| Year 6 | 20 143 | 4 792 | 3 138 | 7 930 | 28 073 |
| Year 7 | 20 189 | 4 638 | 3 331 | 7 969 | 28 158 |
| Ungraded | | | 161 | 161 | 161 |
| Total | 149 610 | 35 769 | 21 509 | 57 278 | 206 888 |
| Secondary | | | | | |
| Year 8 | 17 127 | 5 919 | 5 414 | 11 333 | 28 460 |
| Year 9 | 17 119 | 5 598 | 5 385 | 10 983 | 28 102 |
| Year 10 | 17 724 | 5 675 | 5 593 | 11 268 | 28 992 |
| Year 11 | 15 103 | 4 992 | 4 960 | 9 952 | 25 055 |
| Year 12 | 11 661 | 4 196 | 4 258 | 8 454 | 20 115 |
| Ungraded | 473 | 73 | 142 | 215 | 688 |
| Total | 79 207 | 26 453 | 25 752 | 52 205 | 131 412 |
| Total | 228 817 | 62 222 | 47 261 | 109 483 | 338 300 |

Source: AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS, CAT. NO. 4221.0 SCHOOLS, AUSTRALIA, 2005, TABLE 10.

ABS population projections show the national and the State populations are expected to age significantly. A project commissioned by the Senate's External Environment Committee⁸ made the following recommendations in the light of the ageing population trends:

1. Given the projected changes to Western Australia's population, consideration be given to revisiting the University's emphasis on school-leavers as the core of the undergraduate student population.
2. An investigation be undertaken into the factors that deter older students from studying award courses at UWA.
3. A more detailed study be commissioned into the provisions for older students in UWA Extension courses.

Possible changes to the student age profile, as well as a stated commitment to increase diversity within our Operational Priorities Plan require consideration of the responsiveness and relevance of UWA course offerings to meet the needs of planned student profile for 2016; i.e. what will be our target student market in 2016?

Further, in a competitive market referenced frequently to 'consumer demand', sight should not be lost of the extent to which UWA, as both market and academic leader in this state, is strongly positioned to *shape* expectations concerning higher education and its outcomes in Western Australia.

Two questions arise:

How can UWA further develop its course structures to respond to changing demography and demand?

In what manner might UWA drive student expectations via its course structures, to produce excellent learning outcomes for its students in coming years?

Issues relating to entry

While a number of courses conventionally require students to have successfully completed a number of prerequisite subjects, there is some trend within the University to minimise prerequisites through the provision of introductory bridging units, especially in Mathematics and Science areas. The minimisation of prerequisites is an operational priority for the University, as part of its commitment to broaden diversity in student intake.

It should also be noted that, as a result of curriculum reform in the secondary sector, in future the conventional requirements upon students to undertake patterns of units from 'List 1' and 'List 2' subjects at secondary level, will no longer exist. The mapping of outcomes across new courses of study at secondary level, we anticipate, will automatically expose students to perspectives from both the Humanities and Sciences in Years 11 and 12. However, with a proliferation of courses of study qualifying students generally for tertiary entry (growing from

⁸ Jeska Rees, Planning Services, University of Western Australia, *The Impact of the Ageing Population on the University of Western Australia*, December 2005

22 subjects, to approximately 50 subjects by 2009), further investigation will be required to establish the extent to which any new course of study, or combination of courses, actually equip students with knowledge hitherto located in a single prior course of study or defined prerequisite.

To what extent should UWA aim to loosen its existing prerequisites, to equip students via bridging courses in order to diversify intake into (currently) prerequisite-rich courses?

At postgraduate level, a clear trend exists within the sector to recognise professional/industry experience as qualifying prospective students for entry to specific postgraduate coursework programmes. It has been noted that UWA remains behind Group of Eight averages in respect of its postgraduate coursework enrolments, which elsewhere have increasingly figured in professional education and preparation for higher degree research.⁹

To what extent should UWA recognise industry-based experience, as well as or instead of, academic achievement, as an entry qualification for postgraduate coursework?

Combined courses: general + professional¹⁰/two professional

UWA has in recent years promoted the uptake of combined degrees, as a means of best equipping students with skills and knowledge.

In 2001, 2336 students were enrolled in an undergraduate combined degree course. Of these, 114 students (5%) were enrolled in a general/general combination. By 2006, 3308 students were enrolled in an undergraduate combined degree course, and of these 254 students (7%) were enrolled in a general/general combination.

In 2001, 1720 (74%) were enrolled in a general/professional combination while 502 (21%) were enrolled in two professional courses. ("Professional courses" are defined here as Bachelor of Economics, Bachelor of Commerce, Bachelor of Engineering, Bachelor of Laws, Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery).

In 2006, 2402 students (73%) were enrolled in a general/professional combination while 652 (20%) were enrolled in two professional courses.

These figures indicate that demand for general + professional, and professional + professional combinations has been very steady. However, in relation to such combinations and in light of trends to foreground breadth *and* specialisation, generic *and* specific skills and content, the balance between breadth of education and professional preparedness requires ongoing consideration.

Is it appropriate for students to undertake a combination of two professional degrees, or would a combination of one professional and one general degree better equip our students and align with the University's Educational Principles?

General Studies

Since the mid-1990s at UWA, discussion of a general first year, or general studies units within undergraduate degrees, has arisen from time to time. The theme of general studies, and its relationship to course structures and professional study, has gained further impetus through a focus on the so-called Melbourne Model in 2005/6, with its commitment to shift to a combination of generalist undergraduate and specialist graduate degrees in the future.

In 2006, the emphasis upon generic and transferable skills, academic literacy and numeracy, cultural competence, and critical thinking, has received considerable attention in the press and in the sector's own forums including the AVCC.

⁹ 'Meeting Our Growth Targets', Vice Chancellor's Column, *UWA News*, September 11, 2006, p. 4.

¹⁰ "Professional courses" are here defined as Bachelor of Economics, Bachelor of Commerce, Bachelor of Engineering, Bachelor of Laws, Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery.

To best equip our graduates to navigate an environment in which a number of career changes may be expected and in which versatility as well as content knowledge will be crucial, what balance should be struck between generalist and specialist study within undergraduate degrees?

There has also been steadily growing demand from employer bodies for the injection of appropriate 'applied skills' as a part of university study. While employer bodies have at times charged universities with responsibility for levels of specialised professional development which, arguably, properly reside with industry itself, a focus upon experiential and service based learning as part of tertiary education is increasingly emphasised by employers and by students themselves.

UWA's Operational Priorities Plan 2006-2008 specifies a growth in practicum units as a specific goal: how might this be achieved?

A further element for consideration is that of the preparedness of some of our students to commit themselves to a specific course of study upon entry to the University. As generally young students, it may be argued that their final career choices are yet to be made, based on future experience in their study and in the workplace. Anecdotally, it would seem that premature commitment to a course of study and future career path may unravel and contribute to attrition, especially among first year students.

Institutions internationally have responded variously to this challenge, in ways worthy of consideration by UWA. Penn State University in the US, for example, has developed a Division of Undergraduate Studies which coordinates a range of first year introductory and general education units which may be credited to a number of specialist degree courses, once a student enrolls within them. Such general education units may also be taken for credit by students 'in transit', those who have re-thought their study path subsequent to their enrolment in a professional course. The units then provide a 'pause' for students in transition from one course to another, offering them for-credit units whilst they seek advice and finalise their study decisions, without necessitating their complete withdrawal from university.

Western Australia, with little tradition of general university education, is not directly comparable: market research would be required to establish the acceptability of any general education model here. However, the elements of flexibility and markedly improved retention afforded by such a model, as well as the potential pedagogic benefits of a clear focus upon high-level academic skills in communication, literacy, numeracy and critical analysis, warrant consideration.

In general terms, then, a number of questions may be considered:

Should UWA degrees include a general first year, and in what would such a first year consist?

Should generalist education precede a professional degree – or should a generalist degree be offered concurrently with a professional qualification?

Should students be required to take a number of units outside of their 'home' faculty, to ensure appropriate breadth?

Should students be required to undertake specific units in the context of their course, which are specifically designed to improve cultural competency, critical literacy, experiential learning, etc.?

Honours

Honours at UWA are offered either as a programme after completion of a pass degree (end-on honours), or concurrently with the pass degree requirements (concurrent honours).

The number of enrolments in Honours are as follows

| | |
|------|-----|
| 2001 | 540 |
| 2002 | 543 |

| | |
|------|-----|
| 2003 | 584 |
| 2004 | 561 |
| 2005 | 552 |
| 2006 | 421 |

(extracted from Unistats)

End-on honours courses comprise units to the value of 48 points, normally including a dissertation, and the classification of honours assigned is calculated on the basis of a student's performance in all of those units.

The criteria for the award of concurrent honours vary across faculties. In some cases, concurrent honours are awarded on the basis of a student's performance in some or all units of a course, the units being common to the pass degree and the degree with honours. In others, students are streamed into a specific honours unit or units having regard to past academic performance in one or more components of the course.

The trend to awarding honours may be referenced in relation to Agriculture and Engineering, where the trend to honours awards all but eclipsing standard pass awards, is clear.

| | 2001 | | | 2002 | | | 2003 | | | 2004 | | | 2005 | | |
|----------------------------------|------|----|------|------|----|------|------|----|------|------|----|-----|------|----|------|
| | H | P | %H | H | P | %H | H | P | %H | H | P | % | H | P | %H |
| Agriculture | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| BSc(Agric) | 13 | 6 | 68% | 21 | 7 | 75% | 15 | 3 | 83% | 12* | 4 | 75% | 18 | 6 | 75% |
| BSc(Animal Sc) | | | | 2 | | 100% | 4 | 0 | 100% | 11 | 5 | 69% | 14 | 3 | 82% |
| BSc(Hort) and BSc (Hort&Vit) | 2 | 3 | 40% | 2 | 2 | 100% | 2 | 1 | 50% | 10 | 1 | 91% | 1 | 2 | 33% |
| BSc(LMgt) | | | | | | | 5 | 2 | 71% | | 3 | 0% | 3 | 0 | 100% |
| BSc(NatResMan) | 11 | 4 | 73% | 16 | 3 | 84% | 12 | 4 | 75% | 13 | 2 | 87% | 15 | 3 | 83% |
| BSc(WoolSc) | 1 | 0 | 100% | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Engineering | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| BE | 106 | 19 | 85% | 120 | 30 | 80% | 125 | 62 | 67% | 146 | 55 | 73% | 242 | 96 | 72% |
| BE (from combined courses) | 129 | 7 | 95% | 159 | 8 | 95% | 125 | 13 | 90% | 163 | 20 | 89% | 0 | 0 | 0% |

*including one graduate from a combined course

(Extracted from UniStats)

Such trends beg the question as to the function of honours within a degree programme:

Should all degree courses offer capstone experiences?

How should honours be conceptualised: as preparation for a research degree, or as something additional to conventional research preparation?

Does honours adequately equip our students or higher degree research?

Honours within combined courses

University General Rule 1.2.2.18 provides that a faculty may permit a student in a combined degree course, who has completed the requirements of the Degree course, to enrol in the

course for that degree with honours. A student who is permitted to enrol for a degree with honours before completing the requirements for the combined course will be permitted subsequently to re-enrol in and complete the combined course subject to the time limits.

Anecdotally it appears that the increase in the number of students undertaking combined courses has led to a decrease in the numbers of students undertaking honours and going on to a higher degree by research. The data confirm this impression.

How should honours be positioned within combined degree courses, to best meet the requirements of students and the priorities of the University?

Postgraduate coursework

UWA's postgraduate coursework offerings are far fewer than Group of Eight averages, as already noted. It would appear, moreover, that in some instances postgraduate coursework Masters programmes are comprised of units offered concurrently to both postgraduate coursework and undergraduate students.

Legislative requirements suggest that such informal 'double badging' of units is not acceptable, unless clear distinction is made between assessment criteria for the two areas, and demonstrable differentiation exists in the level, course load and supervision of such course offerings.

As well as legislative requirements, however, it is clear that postgraduate coursework is increasingly being viewed as an appropriate qualification for HDR study. In this context, ensuring that UWA coursework degrees are pitched appropriately to serve particular purposes—industry training; articulation to research degrees—is very important, in terms of our responsiveness to market demand as well as protecting the international quality of our research higher degrees.

What guidelines may be generated to ensure that UWA's postgraduate coursework offerings are of an appropriate standard, particularly in view of the trend to recognise postgraduate coursework as qualifying students for postgraduate higher degree research?

More recently, elements of study that are 'extra' to specific course content have emerged. Two such examples include the IRIS initiative in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (which has been adopted by the Science faculties to commence in 2007), a compulsory not-for-credit online unit designed to introduce all entry level students to research and information frameworks; and the ACE online module which will be available university-wide, to introduce students to principles of ethical scholarship and academic literacy. Such initiatives attest to the growing explicit focus upon generic skills development at university, yet the proliferation of a large number of such add-on study elements to pre-existing courses begs the question:

At what stage, and in what manner, may such elements be more effectively embedded within courses themselves? Should credit points be attached to such study?

The appropriateness of course structures in respect of level of study, also arises. In some courses, undergraduate units at second and third year levels are not distinguished, but studied by students in both years, interchangeably, thereby effecting economies of scale. Similarly, some Graduate Certificate, Diploma and Masters degrees are structured to incorporate existing undergraduate units, with graduate students sharing classes and basic curriculum with undergraduates. While an argument is made that higher workload and assessment requirements for such students differentiate their experience and the level at which they learn, others argue that a graduate student requires and expects purpose-built higher level units.

To what degree should there be clear and distinct progression for students in undergraduate years, and dedicated graduate-level units within Graduate Certificate, Diploma and Masters coursework programmes at UWA?

iv. The efficiency and effectiveness of course structures, nomenclature and aspects of administration

Within a devolved and comprehensive institution, a large array of practices and rules have grown up in relation to the management of course structures, which have both protected and expressed diversity between faculties, *and* contributed to anomalies, unevenness and daunting variation for students, especially those enrolled in combined degrees. A degree of rationalisation in policy and procedure relating to course structure will be timely, not only as a means of providing efficiency and effectiveness in a period of budget restraint. More significantly, some rationalisation will improve student understanding of the processes governing courses, and in turn their capacity to navigate successfully to completion, their path through a UWA degree.

A number of issues arise in this respect, as follows:

Course "length" (or workload involved)

Currently, a standard annual full-time load at the University is 48 points. However, there is enormous variety in the minimum number of credit points which must be completed in order to obtain a degree or other qualification. For example -

- Bachelors' degrees require completion of minimum credit points of varying values, of 96 (which is usually for graduate-entry courses), 144 (the so called "three-year" degree course), 192 (the so called "four-year" degree course), 240 (to complete the requirements for the Bachelor of Dental Science and 288 points (for the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery degrees). Added to this range is the equally varying number of points required to complete the various combined courses leading to two degrees.
- Masters' degrees require completion of minimum credit points values of 48, 72, 96, and 128. The workload is usually dependent on the amount of study undertaken by candidates prior to entering the Master's degree course in line with the Australian Qualifications Framework which recommends that a Master's degree should be awarded at the end of five years or equivalent of study).
- Graduate diplomas require completion of minimum credit points values of 24, 32, 48, 50, and 60. The number of points required varies across disciplines.

Should the University impose a standard range of points values for its degrees and diplomas, and if so, at what levels of study?

Progression and transfer

Progression: Moving students through their courses in a timely manner serves to allow new students to enter and so avoid any additional rise in minimum TER scores. Under DEST regulations, the University is only funded for a stated load: any additional load is unfunded. To help students to progress, supplementary assessment provides a second chance to pass a unit where the student achieves a mark of between 45 to 49 inclusive (the standard pass mark is 50).

Units additional to degree requirements: The University has a policy of *not* encouraging students to undertake units additional to requirements. (This is where, for example, a student is interested in a particular area or may wish to complete a double major or at times change their major, where such a course of study entails enrolment in excess of the minimum points value required for the course. Permitting students to take additional units usually slows their progress through the course and in turn, the entry of new students. Delayed entry may lead to increased competition between potential entrants, and an increase in the TER score required for entry. However, additional units under certain circumstances, may improve breadth of study, and/or contribute to the interest and retention of students.

How should the University respond to competing imperatives of systemic accessibility, and individual demand?

Transfer: The University does not impose a quota on student transfers between most undergraduate courses; applications to transfer from one course to another are assessed on merit and (for the most part) without regard for the number already in the course to which a student seeks to transfer. However, such flexibility has the potential to cause unexpected fluctuations in enrolments and load which can conflict with DEST requirements that deliver a student load spread in a predetermined manner across discipline clusters.

How can the University structure its courses to minimise student transfer, without detriment to the student learning experience?

Definition of 'programme', 'major', 'minor':

There are no general definitions of a programme, major or minor at UWA but faculties are required to define significant course components in their rules.

There are no definitions of programmes in faculty rules. However, they are generally understood to comprise a very significant portion or all of a course including units of study which provide a range of relevant knowledge in the chosen subject area. A graduate who has completed a programme within a course has that programme reflected on their degree (diploma or certificate) certificate. Programmes are offered in the Bachelor of Engineering, Bachelor of Science (50110) and Bachelor of Science (70100) as well as in some postgraduate courses.

Although there is no general definition of a major, it is usually understood to mean a significant component of a course, comprising units of study concentrated in a specific subject area and including units at the higher levels. A major at UWA may represent approximately one sixth to one third of the total requirements of a bachelor's degree course. A student may complete more than one major, subject to the rules of the course concerned.

Minors are specifically mentioned in the Bachelor of Economics and Bachelor of Commerce course rules and in the Bachelor of Education and Graduate Diploma in Education rules. In the Bachelor of Economics and Bachelor of Commerce they comprise units of a level higher than Level 1 to the value of 24 points (one sixth of the course requirements) in a specific subject area. In the Bachelor of Education or Graduate Diploma in Education a minor is a Curriculum I unit with a value of six points.

Should UWA develop a university-wide definition of 'major', 'minor' and 'programme'?

Named v general degrees – 'specialisations' on degree certificates¹¹

Over the past few years there has been a demand from students for "named" degrees. What this means is that the area in which the student specialises is indicated on the degree certificate. For example, rather than be awarded a Bachelor of Science, the student is awarded a Bachelor of Science (Earth Science). Anecdotally it seems that while students express a preference for these named degrees, employers express no such preference. The question arises regarding the competing imperatives of current 'attractiveness' of a named specialised area, against the longer term longevity of a general degree name only, once a specialist trend has long passed.

In 2007 UWA will offer 34 general degrees (ie with no specialisation listed) at the undergraduate level, and 69 named degrees (ie with specialisations designated on the degree certificate).

¹¹ Here "General" degrees are where there is no specialisation listed – ie Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Marketing, Master of Engineering.

"Named" degrees are those where there is a specialisation listed in the course title which is also reflected on the degree certificate. The specialisation is listed by way of a programme within the course structure ie Bachelor of Engineering (Applied Ocean Science) , Bachelor of Science (Biomedical Science), Master of Science (Hydrogeology).

At the postgraduate level 63 general (other than higher degrees by research) (masters) degrees are on offer, and 24 specialised degrees. However over recent months some faculties have moved to including programmes in their postgraduate offerings, so this latter figure will increase.

When the specialisation is shown on the degree certificate, it is also included in the approved abbreviation (postnominals). So for example a Bachelor of Science (Earth Science) graduate would list BSc(EarthSc) as their postnominals. The question as to whether the students want the specialisation on the degree certificate only, or also want defined postnominals has been raised.

Should UWA define a policy relating to named and general degrees?

Programmes and courses

It has been suggested that it is administratively more efficient to administer courses with several programmes, rather than to administer several courses. Information from those areas involved in the administration of courses, however, indicates that there may not be much difference in levels of efficiency between having several programmes or several courses. The creation of separate courses rather than offering courses with multiple programmes, leads to greater alignment between fields of education reported for the course and the student programmes/majors. This would make majors such as Physics visible on national course information systems.

However, while there seems to be some efficiency at the faculty level in having fewer course, since it is easier to transfer students between programmes than between courses, consideration must also be given to managing the student load profile at institutional level and also in making our real course offerings visible on national databases.

Is it better to have one course with several programmes, or several courses?

Regional, offshore and continuing education courses

UWA has offered an increasing number of regional and offshore courses to students since 2001:

| Number of undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) courses taught at campuses other than Crawley: | 2001 | 2006 |
|---|----------|---------|
| Campus | | |
| Albany | 6 UG/4PG | 9UG/9PG |
| Broome | | 1UG/1PG |
| Esperance | | 1UG |
| Geraldton | | 2UG |
| Hong Kong | 2PG | 1UG/3PG |
| Jakarta | 2PG | 2PG |
| Kalgoorlie | | 2PG |
| Malaysia | | 2PG |
| Manila | | 2PG |

| | | |
|-------------|-----|---------|
| Philippines | 2PG | |
| Singapore | 5PG | 3UG/8PG |

While the Albany Centre has been our flagship regional campus based on a coordinated, university-wide effort, the development of course offerings offshore has occurred mainly in response to individual faculty relationships and negotiations. At a time when the relevance and quality of offshore programmes in the sector is subject to increasing scrutiny, it is timely to consider the relationship between the structure and content of courses taught offshore and in Albany, and those taught at Crawley.

How should UWA characterise its regional and offshore course offerings in relation to course offerings at Crawley campus?

Continuing Education

Under current University General Rules for Academic Courses (1.2.11 and 1.2.1.12) a faculty may grant credit towards undergraduate and postgraduate courses. However credit granted for units completed through Continuing Education must not exceed one-sixth of the total points value of the course towards which the credit is granted. Students enrolled through Continuing Education attend the same lecturers/tutorials, and undergo the same assessment as students undertaking the unit as part of an award course. Should there be a limit on credit towards an award course in which the student subsequently enrolls? If not, there may be a need to consider the fees charged under Continuing Education in comparison with those charged to fee-paying students.

Is study through Continuing Education at UWA Extension positioned most effectively in relation to UWA degree study ?

Number of units taught

In 2001 there were approximately 2400 units offered at UWA, including approximately 1900 undergraduate units, 490 postgraduate units and 18 foundation units through Indigenous studies.

In 2006 there were approximately 2500 units offered at UWA, including approximately 1800 undergraduate units, 700 postgraduate units and 35 foundation units through Indigenous Studies.

Relative to its size and mission, does UWA offer an appropriate number of units?

Collaborative courses

Collaborative courses are those courses which are offered in collaboration with another institution or group of institutions. This includes:

- courses which lead to a UWA award which is undertaken in association with another institution or group of institutions
- courses which lead to a joint award with another institution or group of institutions.

Over the last 4 years the University has become involved in 5 courses at the master's level (with associated Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma courses in 2). Standardisation of the administrative arrangements is crucial not alone for the easy approval of these courses through the processes in the various universities, but also for ongoing ease of administration and student service.

All collaborative courses to date have been with WA universities. We have now resolved many cross-institutional issues around these courses, but this has been a lengthy process. The complicating factors are the differing regimes and expectations of the various institutions involved and State and Commonwealth governments' legislative requirements.

Relative to its size and mission, to what level/number of collaborative courses should UWA aspire?

Overlap of content within/between courses/units

(While the exclusions listed for this review notes that course and unit content, including overlap, will not be a part of the process, the following section relates to the administrative processes by which overlap may be managed.)

Under procedures approved in late 1996, faculties are responsible for approving new units and unit deletions, subject to Academic Council endorsement. The checklists for proposals to introduce new units seeks confirmation that consultation has taken place, and the head of the school proposing the new unit is asked to confirm that the process leading to the proposal for the introduction of the new unit has included appropriate consultation with all other schools with a potential interest in the proposed unit, both internal and external to the faculty, and that the proposed unit will not overlap significantly with any existing unit. A proposal to introduce a new unit approved at the faculty level must then be endorsed by Academic Council. This mechanism serves to bring the unit to the attention of other faculties.

Academic Council has expressed the view that it has an important role in the oversight of the introduction and deletion of units by faculties. It has concerns about the proliferation of units in the University, and an ongoing interest in monitoring the unfulfilled potential for collaborative approaches to the teaching of some disciplines. It also fulfils a role in ensuring that faculties consult as necessary with other faculties which are affected by proposals to introduce or discontinue units

However, the level of information which Council receives in relation to the establishment of new units is such that members would find it difficult to make a decision on whether or not a particular unit should be established. Reliance is placed on the faculties to ensure consultation.

Is the current approach to unit and course approval an effective and appropriate approval process?

Academic Year Structure (including the length and number of semesters, non-teaching breaks, exam periods etc)

The 2002 Review of the Structure of the Academic Year was undertaken to determine how better use could be made of the University's physical, financial and human resources in discharging its teaching functions. The main thrust of the review was to investigate whether there were insuperable obstacles in moving to a three-trimester academic year. The conclusion was that there would be major difficulties in making such a change, and that this option should not be pursued. However, expanding the summer semester was recommended.

The issue of the portion of the year in which teaching takes place is currently on the agenda not only in Australia, but globally. The Bologna process, for example, envisages uniformity in many aspects of higher education including alignment of academic calendars. Ingrid Moses at the National Seminar on the Bologna Process held in Canberra in September 2006, argued that alignment with the northern hemisphere academic calendar(s) should be approached very cautiously by Australian institutions. At the same time, in the UK an article in *The Sunday Times* (reprinted in *The Australian Higher Education Supplement*) by Simon Jenkins argued that British universities must charge full-cost fees, and that expensive campuses, laboratories and libraries should not be left idle for a significant part of the year.

At UWA, the Academic Year Planning Committee has grappled over the past few years with competing arguments as to how long the mid-semester breaks should be; how long the mid-year break should be and whether an early or late start with a subsequent earlier or later finish to the year is most desirable. Individual faculty needs differ, and balancing these needs is difficult. Adding to the complication is the need to fit in with school holidays, public holidays, AVCC designated breaks, and other universities' schedules. Within such administrative complexity lie significant questions concerning the timing of teaching in particular courses, and the viability, for example, of a summer semester. Anecdotally, it would appear that an increasing number of students in faculties such as Law, are availing themselves of summer semester opportunities in the east, in the absence of similar opportunities being made available at UWA.

Should UWA reconsider the extent and organisation of a third semester, in response to student demand?

What effect might such rescheduling have upon course structures at UWA?

In-semester timetabling issues

At UWA, teaching takes place predominantly in semesters 1 and 2. University facilities and resources are not used to capacity for approximately half of the year.

Further, in semester, while the timetable allows for a span of 8am to 9pm Monday to Friday, data reveals that early morning, late afternoon, Monday morning and Friday slots are under utilised, and core teaching hours tend to fall between 10am to 4pm.

What is the impact of timetabling arrangements upon the flexibility, responsiveness, and efficient delivery of our course offerings?

Doctoral Study

While Higher Degree by Research (HDR) is specifically excluded from this Review nonetheless there should be consideration of doctoral study in terms of articulation from master's coursework and what in terms of what might constitute a coursework doctorate.

The traditional PhD is not the only route available to those wishing to pursue a doctoral degree. Different forms of doctoral study exist globally. Here at UWA candidates have the opportunity to study towards a doctorate via the PhD route or in some cases via the professional doctorate route. Professional doctorates have been set up in several faculties and all but one (the Doctor of Psychology) satisfies the DEST criteria for a research degree for funding under the Research Training Scheme (RTS) having a research component of 66.6% or greater.

The Doctor of Psychology is a professional doctorate comprising less than 66.6% research. It is an exception to the University General Rule which states that professional doctorates comprise at least 66.6% research. It was approved by Academic Council following evidence that such a course structure was accepted within the profession and available in reputable institutions overseas.

Having a coursework doctorate may open the way for articulation from coursework Master's degrees.

Should the University develop standards for professional doctorates, to determine the circumstances under which exception to the General Rule on research may be permitted and also provide for articulation from coursework Master's degrees?

A related issue is the categorisation of doctoral courses. Currently we have PhDs, and professional doctorates (classified as higher degree by research and as coursework); within these categories we have doctorates with research, with creative work, with theses, dissertations etc. There is potential for confusion about the interface between professional doctorates and higher degrees by research.

There are no differences between the various types of doctorates available at UWA for the purposes of scholarships and travel grants. All candidates completing doctorates with a research component of at least 66.6% are reported to DEST as RTS completions.

Should UWA develop up-to-date and relevant nomenclature to classify the various forms of doctoral study available?

4. DEST Funding and Reporting Considerations

It should be stated that DEST funding and reporting considerations should not take precedence over the development of educationally sound proposals. Nonetheless, where appropriate, some consideration should be given to possible implications of proposals proffered to the review from a statutory reporting and funding perspective.

While consideration has been given above to some possible implications of current practices and possible changes to courses and practices on the University's funding, the challenges of negotiating required changes to the University's Funding Agreement with the Commonwealth government should be acknowledged. In particular most of the domestic undergraduate students and many of the domestic postgraduate students enrol in Commonwealth-supported places which are the subject of an annual Funding Agreement with the Commonwealth government, which stipulates targets by discipline cluster and broad course type. The University is expected within tolerances for over- and under-enrolment, to deliver student loads consistent with the Funding Agreement. While the Commonwealth government has indicated its willingness to consider possible changes to its Funding Agreement with the University of Melbourne in the light of that institution's review of course structures, there is no guarantee that the Commonwealth will automatically endorse changes to our Funding Agreements arising from our review of course structures, especially if they lead to less opportunities for students to gain admission to universities in WA.

A further consideration is that changes to course structures that see the upgrade of initial professional qualifications to postgraduate coursework qualifications, may cause previously-eligible students to be ineligible for Austudy or Abstudy benefits which are mainly restricted to undergraduate courses.

While reporting considerations should not drive the review of course structures, it is nonetheless worthwhile noting the implications of course structures may have on meeting statutory reporting requirements and on the information subsequently produced by the Commonwealth government. The Higher Education Support Act 2003 stipulates that higher education providers have to provide data in specified formats. The current statutory reporting requirements include:

- (i) The requirement to provide to DEST with the details of all of the University's courses, including fees and HECS contribution levels, for the following year by 1 August;
- (ii) The requirement to publish the details of all unit fees and HECS contributions for the following year by 1 October; and
- (iii) The requirement to provide to four submissions of student enrolment and load details (as well as other data) each year for the DEST Student Data Collection.

The data provided on 1 August, which are subsequently presented in the DEST Going to Uni website, do not adequately reflect the range of majors and programmes offered by the University and potentially hamper the marketing of the University's courses. This is because the reporting requirements stipulate that we report by course rather than by majors, and only one field of education is associated with each course. This approach also presents similar difficulties in identifying the numbers of students enrolled in particular fields of education, especially within broad general degree programmes, such as the Bachelor of Science and the Bachelor of Arts. A further consideration, albeit a minor one, is that any proposals for changes to course structures should bear in mind the challenges in meeting the 1 August and 1 October deadlines for reporting course and unit details.

APPENDIX A - Structure, Funding, Timeline and Reporting Details for the Review

Initial Scoping Group (2006):

In August 2006 a Scoping Group was formed to initiate the Review process. That group includes:

- Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) (A/Professor Jane Long), Convenor
- Vice-Chancellor (Professor Alan Robson)
- Executive Director (Academic Services) & Registrar (Mr Peter Curtis)
- Chair of the Academic Board (Professor Graeme Martin)
- Deputy University Secretary (Ms Trudi McGlade) as Executive Officer

The role of the Scoping Group is to produce an initial discussion paper to elicit discussion in the University community; to refine the Review's terms of reference; to organise the collection of such historical data needed to inform the Review proper.

Review Personnel (2007):

After the scoping phase, an appropriately qualified senior academic from outside UWA will be invited to drive the Review who, while reporting to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education), will attend to its day-to-day operations, participate in its various working parties, and produce the final Review report for the University's consideration. In addition, an executive officer will be appointed to support the Review and its associated working parties.

The Senior Academic Review Officer will –

- lead the debate;
- have input into the vision of course structures at UWA in future
- report to the Steering Group and the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education) as required;
- oversee and participate directly as a member, in all Review working parties to ensure cohesion;
- be responsible for the delivery of any interim Review reports, and a final major Review report.

The Project Executive Officer (Level 8) appointee will –

- provide executive support to the Senior Academic Review Officer Officer;
- act as Executive Officer to the Review Steering Group and Review working parties; and
- liaise as required with other members of the University community.

The Registrar has also committed resources for this project: the Institutional Research Unit and Planning Services will be involved in providing necessary data, while the Project Executive Officer will liaise closely with the Deputy University Secretary as matters arise.

Background information to inform the Review:

A database of information including, but not limited to, the following will be prepared prior to the Review proper commencing its business:

- Courses
- Number of students in each course
- Number of students in each unit
- Number of units taught
- School SURF data
- CEQ, Graduate Destination Survey and NSSE data
- Bench-marking information
- Relevant Government policies
- Information on the teaching/research nexus

- Academic Year Planning Committee – review of academic year
- Outcomes of Assessment Review survey (Assessment Standing Committee)
- School review data
- Course review data
- Timetabling and use of facilities

Steering Group (2007):

To assist in guiding the Review process once it is properly underway, a Steering Group will be established for 2007, to include:

- Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) as Convenor
- Executive Director (Academic Services) & Registrar
- Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning)
- Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training)
- Chair of Academic Board
- Guild President
- Deputy University Secretary
- Senior Academic Review Officer (Level E)
- Review Executive Officer (as Executive Officer)

Funding of the Review:

To support this important University priority, funding in the amount of \$180,000 has been allocated from the University Strategic Fund with further supplementation from the Vice Chancellor's Discretionary Fund. The funding will provide for the equivalent of one year's full-time salary for the Senior Academic Review Officer and the Review Executive Officer. It is envisaged that the salaried appointees to the project would commence early in 2007, but that some preliminary work (notably background data collection) would be undertaken prior to this time.

Review Timeline and Reporting Lines:

It is envisaged that easily achievable and uncontentious recommendations may be made during the course of the Review in 2007. Any such early recommendations will be put for consideration to Academic Board/Council, and implemented upon approval. There will be an emphasis throughout on consultation, and input from staff, schools and faculties.

Consultation with the University community (2006-2007):

It is anticipated that consultation will include:

- A Vice Chancellor's Forum series throughout the life of the Review, to enable input by all members of the University;
- Referral of any uncontentious, interim recommendations to relevant committees and to Academic Council for consideration;
- Informal liaison between the Senior Academic Review Officer, and Deans, School Heads, Associate Deans, staff and students, as necessary;
- A formal period of consultation, notified by all-staff email, on matters considered by the Review's working parties prior to any draft recommendations being forwarded to the Review;
- Wide circulation of the Review report for discussion;
- Presentation of the Review report and recommendations to Academic Council for consideration.

APPENDIX B - Summary of questions within draft scoping paper:

i Course structures in relation to the University's goals, priorities and mission

1. How satisfactorily do courses currently align with UWA's priorities and principles, and what processes in future may best ensure that these principles are expressed in our course structures?
2. In what ways might course structures be used to address imbalances in load determined as undesirable with reference to the University's strategic directions?

ii Course structures and their relationship to national and international trends

3. To what extent, and in what areas, should UWA aspire to compatibility with international models such as Bologna, and how would such compatibility sit alongside our internal priorities, principles and institutional mission?

iii The impact of course structures upon the student learning experience and the acquisition of graduate attributes

4. How can UWA further develop its course structures to respond to changing demography and demand?
5. In what manner might UWA drive student expectations via its course structures, to produce excellent learning outcomes for its students in coming years?
6. To what extent should UWA aim to loosen its existing prerequisites, to equip students via bridging courses in order to diversify intake into (currently) prerequisite-rich courses?
7. To what extent should UWA recognise industry-based experience, as well as or instead of, academic achievement, as an entry qualification for postgraduate coursework?
8. Is it appropriate for students to undertake a combination of two professional degrees, or would a combination of one professional and one general degree better equip our students and align with the University's Educational Principles?
9. To best equip our graduates to navigate an environment in which a number of career changes may be expected and in which versatility as well as content knowledge will be crucial, what balance should be struck between generalist and specialist study within undergraduate degrees?
10. UWA's Operational Priorities Plan 2006-2008 specifies a growth in practicum units as a specific goal: how might this be achieved?
11. Should UWA degrees include a general first year, and in what would such a first year consist?
12. Should generalist education precede a professional degree – or should a generalist degree be offered concurrently with a professional qualification?
13. Should students be required to take a number of units outside of their 'home' faculty, to ensure appropriate breadth?
14. Should students be required to undertake specific units in the context of their course, which are specifically designed to improve cultural competency, critical literacy, experiential learning, etc.?
15. Should all degree courses offer capstone experiences?
16. How should honours be conceptualised: as preparation for a research degree, or as something additional to conventional research preparation?

17. Does honours adequately equip our students or higher degree research?
18. How should honours be positioned within combined degree courses, to best meet the requirements of students and the priorities of the University?
19. What guidelines may be generated to ensure that UWA's postgraduate coursework offerings are of an appropriate standard, particularly in view of the trend to recognise postgraduate coursework as qualifying students for postgraduate higher degree research?
20. At what stage, and in what manner, may such elements (study "extra" to specific course content) be more effectively embedded within courses themselves? Should credit points be attached to such study?

iv The efficiency and effectiveness of course delivery, existing course structures, nomenclature and aspects of administration

21. Should the University impose a standard range of points values for its degrees and diplomas, and if so, at what levels of study?
22. How should the University respond to competing imperatives of systemic accessibility, and individual demand?
23. How can the University structure its courses to minimise student transfer, without detriment to the student learning experience?
24. Should UWA develop a university-wide definition of 'major', 'minor' and 'programme'?
25. Should UWA define a policy relating to named and general degrees?
26. Is it better to have one course with several programmes, or several courses?
27. How should UWA characterise its regional and offshore course offerings in relation to course offerings at Crawley campus?
28. Is study through Continuing Education at UWA Extension positioned most effectively in relation to UWA degree study?
29. Relative to its size and mission, does UWA offer an appropriate number of units?
30. Relative to its size and mission, to what level/number of collaborative courses should UWA aspire?
31. Is the current approach to unit and course approval an effective and appropriate approval process?
32. Should UWA reconsider the extent and organisation of a third semester, in response to student demand?
33. What effect might such rescheduling have upon course structures at UWA?
34. What is the impact of timetabling arrangements upon the flexibility, responsiveness, and efficient delivery of our course offerings?
35. Should the University develop standards for professional doctorates, to determine the circumstances under which exception to the General Rule on research may be permitted and also provide for articulation from coursework Master's degrees?
36. Should UWA develop up-to-date and relevant nomenclature to classify the various forms of doctoral study available?