



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

*Achieving International Excellence*

# Education for Tomorrow's World: Courses of Action

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*Report of the Review of Course Structures  
The University of Western Australia*

## Volume 2 Appendices

**September 2008**



## Volume 2

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## Appendix 1

### Terms of reference and review process

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The University of Western Australia (UWA) commissioned a Review of Course Structures in late 2006 to consider and make recommendations concerning:

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

A Steering Group, whose membership is indicated in Appendix 2, guided the Review process.

A Discussion Paper on course structures was released in December 2006. In response to its circulation over 160 submissions were received, more than half of them from staff and students of the University. Appendix 4 lists the responses submitted during this first stage of the process. Numerous submissions came from alumni, and nearly thirty from external stakeholders including the WA Department of Education and Training, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry WA, private and state secondary schools, and several professional associations.

The Course Structures Review Steering Group then developed an Issues and Options paper, *Courses for Tomorrow's World*, releasing this in mid-October 2007. (Like other documents mentioned in the present summary of the Review process, it is available on the Review website: <http://www.coursestructuresreview.uwa.edu.au/>.) The paper was informed by research, submissions to the Review, and the reports of working parties established to examine areas of particular interest (Generalist/Specialist Education, Honours, the Teaching-Research Nexus, and Postgraduate Coursework). Appendix 3 provides further information on the working parties assisting the Steering Group with the Review.

*Courses for Tomorrow's World* was widely distributed, with an open invitation to comment. The paper set out seven options for structural change to the University's courses.

Meanwhile, in the latter part of 2007, the project leaders continued to conduct many consultation meetings with individuals and groups across the University community and beyond it. During this time the separate report of the Review's working party on Postgraduate Coursework was also extensively discussed, its recommendations being endorsed (with minor amendments) by Academic Council in February 2008.

Nearly 100 written submissions to *Courses for Tomorrow's World* arrived by the requested date of 31 January 2008 or soon afterwards. Appendix 5 lists the submissions received during this second stage of the process, and Appendix 6 provides the Steering Group's evaluation of each option.

The Steering Group has carefully considered all submissions, along with reports of some 60 consultation meetings (several conducted interstate and overseas) and relevant research findings. These findings include the results of a commissioned market survey carried out by the University's Institutional Research Unit (through Dr Greg Marie), information provided to the Review by the Australian Council for Educational Research (through Dr Hamish Coates), and advice from two additional

working parties: one on Frameworks and Definitions of Degrees and another on Resource Implications.

Throughout the Review process it has been gratifying that members of the UWA community and external stakeholders have in general responded very constructively, welcoming the opportunity to debate matters of acknowledged importance. A predominant theme in submissions and consultations is that the Review is timely and necessary. As the Postgraduate Students' Association states, this process "raises a broad range of issues that the University must address in our effort to become a world-leading university in the twenty-first century and achieve international excellence."

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## **Appendix 2 Members of the Steering Group**

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### **Members**

Professor Don Markwell, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) - Convenor  
Mr Peter Curtis, Executive Director (Academic Services) and Registrar  
Associate Professor Jane Long, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning)  
Professor Robyn Owens, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training)  
Professor David Plowman, Chair, Academic Board  
Professor Karen Simmer, Deputy Chair, Academic Board  
Professor Ian Reid, Senior Academic Reviewer (from 22 March 2007)  
Ms Trudi McGlade, Academic Secretary  
Mr Nikolas Barron, 2008 Guild President (from February 2008)  
Mr David de Hoog, 2007 Guild President

### **Administrative Support Staff**

Ms Mia Betjeman, Project Officer (from 19 February 2008)  
Dr Rita Armstrong, Administrative Officer (from 18 March 2008)  
Mr Simon Kidd, Senior Research Officer (Education Policy)  
(from 22 July 2008)

Ms Ambelin Kwaymullina, Project Officer (from 5 February 2007 to  
3 February 2008)  
Ms Suzanna Santa, Administrative Officer (from 25 June 2007 to  
31 January 2008)



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### **Appendix 3**

#### **Working parties assisting the Steering Group**

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The Steering Group established six working parties to assist it with matters of particular interest or complexity. Three of these (on Honours, the Teaching-Research Nexus, and Postgraduate Coursework) were asked to produce formal reports and recommendations, and these are reproduced as Appendices 7, 8 and 9. A fourth working party, on Generalist/Specialist Education, drafted material that was incorporated into parts of the Issues and Options paper, *Courses for Tomorrow's World*. Two additional working parties, one on Frameworks and Definitions of Degrees and another on Resource Implications, began their work at a later stage and have provided advice to the Steering Group on particular points but were not asked to write comprehensive reports.

Membership of these groups was as follows:

#### **Working Party on Frameworks and Definitions of Degrees**

Ms Trudi McGlade, Academic Secretary (Chair)  
Mr Peter Curtis, Registrar  
Ms Marjan Heibloem, Senior Faculty Administrative Officer, Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences  
Professor Brett Kirk, Associate Chair, Academic Board  
Ms Sylvia Lang, Acting Academic Secretary  
Mr Robert McCormack, Director, Planning Services  
Professor Robyn Owens, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training)  
Professor David Plowman, Chair, Academic Board  
Professor Ian Reid, Senior Academic Reviewer  
Mr Jon Stubbs, Director, Student Services

#### **Working Party on Generalist/Specialist Education**

Professor Ian Reid, Senior Academic Reviewer (Chair)  
Professor Don Markwell, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)  
Mr Peter Curtis, Executive Director (Academic Services) and Registrar  
Associate Professor Jane Long, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning)  
Professor Robyn Owens, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training)  
Professor David Plowman, Chair, Academic Board  
Professor Karen Simmer, Deputy Chair, Academic Board  
Ms Trudi McGlade, Academic Secretary  
Mr David de Hoog, 2007 Guild President

#### **Working Party on Honours**

Professor Philippa Maddern, Head of School, School of Humanities, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (Chair)  
Dr Chantal Bourgault, Communication Studies, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences  
Ms Bronwyn Crowe, President, Postgraduate Students' Association  
Professor Andrew Deeks, Civil and Resource Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Mathematics  
Professor Cheryl Praeger, Mathematics and Statistics, Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Mathematics

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Professor Geoff Soutar, Marketing, UWA Business School  
Professor Ian Reid, Senior Academic Reviewer

### **Working Party on Postgraduate Coursework**

Professor David Plowman, Chair, Academic Board (Chair)  
Dr Simon Clarke, Deputy Dean, Faculty of Education  
Professor Simon Anderson, Deputy Dean, Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts  
Professor Robyn Owens, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training)  
Professor Judith Finn, School of Population Health, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences  
Professor Steve McShane, Management (Management and Organisations), UWA Business School  
Ms Bronwyn Crowe, President, Postgraduate Students' Association  
Ms Tracy Taylor, Team Manager, Business School Administrative Support, UWA Business School  
Professor Ian Reid, Senior Academic Reviewer

### **Working Party on Resource Implications**

Professor Ian Reid, Senior Academic Reviewer (Chair)  
Mr Peter Curtis, Registrar  
Mr Robert McCormack, Director, Planning Services  
Professor Robyn Owens, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training)  
Professor David Plowman, Chair, Academic Board

### **Working Party on Teaching-Research Nexus**

Professor Lyn Abbott, School of Earth and Geographical Sciences, Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences (Chair)  
Ms Robyn Carroll, Senior Lecturer, Law School  
Professor Alan Harvey, School of Anatomy and Human Biology, Faculty of Life and Physical Sciences  
Associate Professor Jane Long, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning)  
Professor Bill Loudon, Dean, Faculty of Education  
Professor Robyn Owens, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training)  
Professor Ian Reid, Senior Academic Reviewer

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## Appendix 4

### List of submissions received in response to the 2006 Discussion Paper

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The Course Structures Review Discussion Paper was released in December 2006. Comment was invited on that paper until 30 April 2007. In response, submissions were received from the following:

#### **Staff (Individual)**

Adjunct Prof David Agostini  
Professor Mohammed Bennamoun  
Ms Marion Bateman  
Mr Gary Bettison  
Mr Wayne Betts  
Associate Professor Neville Bruce  
Professor Alan Bryant  
Professor Mark Bush  
Ms Shobha Cameron  
Ms Filomena D'Cruz  
Associate Professor John Dell  
Dr Jane Emberson  
Ms Jacqueline Flowers  
Mr Warren Flynn  
Professor Dennis Haskell  
Associate Professor Les Jennings  
Dr Debra Judge  
Dr Brenton Knott  
Dr Peter Kovesi  
Mr Peter le Breton  
Mr Kenn Martin  
Associate Professor Peter Morgan  
Mr David Norman  
Associate Professor Carolyn Oldham  
Dr Matthew Piggott  
Professor David Plowman  
Dr Johanna Pluske  
Professor Paige Porter  
Professor Cheryl Praeger  
Ms Averil Riley  
Professor Don Robertson  
Professor Ian Saunders  
Dr Henry Schapper  
Dr Judy Skene  
Mr Jon Stubbs  
Ms Jolanta Szymakowski  
Professor James Trevelyan  
Mr Gordon Walsh  
Professor Michael Wise  
Mr Michael Wood

#### **UWA Staff (Group)**

Discipline Group of Social Work and Social Policy  
Discipline Group of History  
Equity and Diversity Office  
Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts

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Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences  
Faculty of Education  
Faculty of Life and Physical Sciences  
Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences  
Governance Services  
Heads of Colleges Committee  
International Centre  
Health Sciences  
Medical Curriculum Committee (FMDH)  
Organisational and Staff Developmental Services  
School of Dentistry  
School of Electrical, Electronic and Computer Engineering  
School of Indigenous Studies  
School of Psychology  
Science Communication Unit  
Student Services  
UWA Albany  
UWA Business School  
UWA Library

**Student (Individual)**

Anonymous  
Mr Tod Attard  
Mr Peter Buzzacott  
Mr Anthony Cunningham  
Ms Johanna Frankenberger  
Ms Gabrielle Howarth  
Mr Peter Hutton  
Ms Renee Kaczmarczyk  
Ms Mary Lannigan  
Ms Jen L-C  
Ms Shannan Maisey  
Ms Katherine Marmion  
Ms Alyssa Nixon-Lloyd  
Ms Shirlene Ong  
Mr Mark Pazolli  
Mr Charles (Jian Zhao) Phang  
Mr Charles Pope  
Mr Gus Riggs  
Mr Arj Selvam  
Mr Damon Seymour  
Ms Liann Smithson  
Ms Crystal Thomas  
Ms Gillian Wakeford

**Student (Group)**

Blackstone Society  
Postgraduate Students' Association  
UWA Arts Union  
UWA Guild  
UWA Science Union  
UWA Young Engineers

**Alumni**

Dr Daniel Berinson  
Mr Gerald Bottomley

Dr Cameron Bracks  
Mr Peter Burke  
Mr Charles Burleigh  
Mr Jeremy Buxton  
Mr Steve Chamarette  
Ms Mary Chape  
Ms Jackie Davidson  
Mr Haydn Davies  
Ms Karen Dawson  
Ms Jessie Ee  
Mr Luke Fimmel  
Ms Polly Fox  
Ms Shirley Glaister  
Mr Bryan Gorddard  
Dr Dave Goddard  
Mr Daryl Goh  
Mr Danil Handaya  
Emeritus Professor Murray Hill  
Mr Bryan Kilgallin  
Mr Albert Koenig  
Dr Lawrence Lai  
Mrs Peta Libby  
Mr David May  
Ms Catherine McDonald  
Mr Glen McLeod  
Mr David Meacock  
Mr James Millar  
Mr Ted Mouritz  
Ms Fleur Muller  
Mr Malcolm Mummery  
Ms Wendy Peh  
Dr Tan Hong Pew  
Ms Paula Pritchard  
Ms Jane Robinson  
Mr Mick Rogers  
Dr Amanda Sainsbury-Salis  
Ms Elizabeth Scott  
Associate Professor Jason Sharmon  
Dr Erica Smyth  
Ms Melissa Soh  
Mr Frank Sotzik  
Ms Mary Straiton  
Mr Ronald Strickland  
Mr Tan Soh Har  
Dr Algimantas Taskunas  
Dr Lesley Syme  
Mr Les Thean  
Mr Glen Tsou  
Mr Andrew Tsoulis  
Mr Edwin Tjandra  
Mr Walter Vivian  
Ms Debbie Whiting

**External (Group)**

Australian Quality Framework Advisory Board  
Australian Academy of Science  
Chamber of Commerce and Industry (WA)

CPA Australia  
Department of Education and Training (WA)  
Future Foundation  
Law Society of WA  
Royal Australian Institute of Architects, Joint Education Committee  
Royal Australian Chemical Institute  
Study Group Australia  
UWA Alumni Dental Society

**External (Individual)**

Professor Don Aitken  
Mr Neil Blake  
Emeritus Professor Douglas Clyde  
Mr Ian Weldon

**Secondary Schools**

Principal of a Regional District High School  
Presbyterian Ladies' College  
Iona Presentation College  
St Mary's Anglican Girls' School  
Lake Joondalup Baptist College

**Appendix 5**  
**List of submissions received in response to the 2007 Issues and Options paper**  
***Courses for Tomorrow's World***

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*Courses for Tomorrow's World: An Issues and Options Paper on the Structure of Academic Programs at The University of Western Australia* was released in October 2007.

In response, submissions were received from the following:

**UWA Staff (Individual)**

Professor Simon Anderson  
Ms Marion Bateman  
Associate Professor Daniel Brown  
Dr David Butler  
Professor Raymond da Silva Rosa  
Mr Philip Etherington  
Dr Jane Emberson  
Dr Lyn Fernandes  
Ms Jacqueline Flowers  
Associate Professor Alex Gardner  
Professor Dennis Haskell  
Associate Professor Christopher Hinz  
Dr Debra Judge  
Dr Brenton Knott  
Dr Catherine Lees  
Mr Paul Lloyd  
Professor Geoffrey London  
Associate Professor Christine McMenamin  
Professor Paul McMenamin  
Professor John Melville-Jones  
Dr Roderic Pitty  
Dr Nathan Scott  
Professor Margaret Seares  
Mr Steven Sheely  
Clinical Associate Professor Krishna Somers  
Ms Jolanta Szymakowski  
Professor James Trevelyan  
Mr Gordon Walsh  
Professor George Yeoh

**UWA Staff (Group)**

Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences  
Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts  
Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences  
Faculty of Life and Physical Sciences  
Faculty of Law  
Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences  
Graduate School of Education  
UWA Business School  
School of Dentistry  
School of Music  
School of Population Health  
School of Psychology  
School of Sport Science, Exercise and Health  
School of Humanities

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School of Medicine and Pharmacology  
Discipline Group of English and Cultural Studies  
Discipline Group of History  
Unit: Science Communication  
Unit: Pharmacology and Anaesthesiology  
Teaching and Learning Committee  
Equity and Diversity Unit  
Office of Finance and Resources

**Student (Individual)**

Ms Jane Cannon  
Ms Isabel Da Silva  
Ms Janice Lim  
Ms Elizabeth Lissiman  
Mr Vidya Rajan  
Mr Evgeni Sergeev  
Mr Sean Tomlinson  
Ms Anissa Winkler  
Ms Jade Winterton

**Student (Group)**

Arts Union  
Blackstone Society  
Economics and Commerce Students' Society  
Health Science Society  
Music Students' Society  
Postgraduate Students' Association  
Student Guild  
University Engineers' Club  
WA Medical Students' Society

**Alumni**

Dr Leigh Dale  
Ms Margaret Herley  
Dr Steven Ho  
Mr Drew Johnson  
Mr Bryan Kilgallin  
Mr Roger Miller  
Mr Murray Rosenberg  
Ms Sueli Sano  
Dr Lesley Syme  
Mr Dante Travaglini  
Mr Glen Travers  
Mr Tim Tucak

**UWA Colleges**

St George's College  
St Thomas More College  
Currie Hall

**Secondary Schools**

Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia  
West Australian Secondary Schools Executives Association

**External (individuals)**

Professor Don Aitken  
Ms Sylvia Caratti  
Emeritus Professor Douglas Clyde  
Ms Melanie Hindley  
Dr Steven Quinton  
Mr Paul Houghton  
Mr Lloyd Townley  
Mr Glen Travers

**External (groups)**

Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board  
Australian Dental Association (WA)  
Professional Historians Association  
Law Society of Western Australia  
Curriculum Council of Western Australia  
Department of Education and Training (WA)  
IDP Education (Hong Kong)



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## Appendix 6 Evaluation of the options

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### Criteria for evaluation of the options

#### **Procedure**

Before formulating recommendations, the Steering Group needed to be sure of having a clear, detailed picture of what each option proposed in *Courses for Tomorrow's World* (or variant suggestions put forward subsequently) would imply. This picture was developed by drawing iteratively on points made in written submissions, reports from working parties, commissioned research, consultation meetings, and deliberations of the Steering Group itself. Having arrived at an understanding of the practical aspects of all options, the Steering Group was then able to make an informed judgment on the basis of the following criteria.

As this appendix is a record of a particular stage of deliberations about previously described options, statements made here do not necessarily represent the final views of the Steering Group.

#### **Criteria**

Criteria for evaluating the options are implicit in a range of considerations set out in the "Contexts" and "Principles" sections of *Courses for Tomorrow's World*, which generally attracted a high level of agreement from stakeholders. The Steering Group shaped those considerations into the four criteria:

- Strengths to develop
- Problems to solve
- Opportunities to pursue
- Risks to mitigate

By paying serious attention to this set of criteria, UWA can realistically test its aspirations to provide the best possible courses to its students, to enrich relationships with the communities it serves (local, national and international), and to position itself strategically for future emergence as one of the world's leading universities.

#### **Strengths to develop**

There is a very high level of agreement that any change in course structures should where possible enhance the following aspects of a UWA education, so that they can all earn wider recognition as strongly positive and distinctive features:

- High quality of the student body
- High quality of the academic staff
- Comprehensive range of courses
- Depth in every field of study, including rigorous Honours courses
- Nexus with a research-intensive culture
- Rich co-curricular learning environment (e.g. through colleges, Guild, societies, campus facilities)

- High quality infrastructure for teaching and learning (e.g. well equipped classrooms, libraries and other learning spaces)
- International standards of excellence as a frame of reference

All these matters were discussed in the “Contexts” and “Principles” sections of *Courses for Tomorrow's World*, and there is no need to reiterate here what was said in that document. Their importance to students is indubitable: 95.4% of students entering UWA say that “the quality of the University” is either a “significant influence” or a “major influence” on their choice of institution, and 87.6% attach the same high importance to “the international recognition of UWA degrees” (IRU 2008).

However, it should be noted that not everybody regards all of the potentially defining characteristics as securely established strengths. For instance the Teaching-Research Nexus Working Party, commissioned as part of this Review, reported that the linkage of teaching programs with a research culture is unsystematic at UWA, varying considerably from one discipline to another (see Appendix 9).

### ***Problems to solve***

In view of the strengths just listed, it is quite reasonable to ask whether the Review has identified any significant weaknesses in the University's present educational practices – any problems serious enough to warrant such far-reaching structural reforms as some options contemplate. For many stakeholders the answer is certainly yes. In the initial Discussion Paper, in the subsequent document *Courses for Tomorrow's World*, and/or in various submissions and consultations, several problems have come to light, and these are summarised below. Although there is no unanimous agreement that they are all substantial, a good deal of opinion on these matters is emphatic enough to indicate a need to take them seriously and explore possible solutions.

#### *Unduly complicated, inconsistent and untidy course structures*

There appears to be an almost unanimous view that many of the different course structures and associated rules not only cause confusion to students but also create avoidable administrative difficulties, and therefore need to be both simplified and standardised. The Student Guild response to *Courses for Tomorrow's World* remarked:

Anecdotally, first year students raise the issue of administrative complexity as one of the biggest hurdles to their enjoyment of their first year of study.... Students would welcome a policy on named and general degrees that aimed to improve the clarity of degree nomenclature for students and industry.

Definitions of such fundamental concepts as “program” and “major” lack clarity and consistency, while administrative practices vary with regard to credit transfer, the points value of units, prerequisites, academic progress and several other matters. Some submissions identify specific examples of unnecessarily troublesome nomenclature and regulations. Many particular inconsistencies stem from certain general trends identified in the original Discussion Paper for this Review, among which are a proliferation of degree programs, including many combined courses leading to dual qualifications; more complex options available within programs; rapid growth in the number of units offered; and increasingly complex admission criteria and categories.

*Excessive workload pressure on staff*

It is often said that a great deal of academic staff time is being taken up with complex course administration processes at the expense of teaching and research priorities. There is also a strong view that units and courses have multiplied to the point where they are too numerous to be sustainable without draining staff energies and compromising standards of excellence. For instance the Faculty of Life and Physical Sciences states in its submission: "We see a need to reduce the number of units offered, to allow students and academic staff the time for reflection." Over-provision may be compounded by over-teaching, i.e. more intensive instruction than is appropriate to facilitate resourceful learning or justifiable as a prudent use of resources. While it is not possible to address these issues fully within the terms of reference for this Review, some means of alleviating workload pressures on staff through simplified and standardised structures would be valuable to individuals and to the institution.

*Financial pressure on students*

*Australian University Student Finances 2006*, the final report of a national survey (Universities Australia 2007), found that "many Australian university students were in stressful financial situations", finding it "difficult to support themselves week-to-week" and experiencing considerable anxiety about making ends meet and about the debts they were accumulating. Of the undergraduates enrolled as "full-time", 70.6% reported working during semesters – 14.8 hours per week on average. As noted in *Courses for Tomorrow's World*, this financial pressure on students "has implications for the nature and extent of their engagement with the University, the nature of the student experience they are seeking, the expectations they bring to their courses, their willingness to tolerate administrative complexity, and their need for access and equity considerations." Any changes to course structures that UWA may decide to implement must be accompanied by measures to lessen any adverse financial impact on students.

*Pressure on students to choose a career pathway too early*

While some students enter the University strongly committed to a particular career pathway, others have little or no idea what they will ultimately want to do, while some who begin with a firm sense of direction may wish later that they had not made their choice so early. As admission to professional programs normally occurs at the undergraduate entry stage, many students are under pressure to decide prematurely.

The submission from the Blackstone Society (which represents UWA Law students) gives an example:

This means that a significant proportion of Law students are not interested in their Law degree or concerned about how they perform. By the time such students realise that they don't want to be doing Law, they are usually approaching the halfway mark in their degree, and so may stick with Law to the end so as not to have wasted the previous years; even so, they remain uncommitted and disengaged. By making students complete a different degree prior to commencing Law, this problem would be reduced.

The Curriculum Council of Western Australia also observed:

[UWA] students are amongst the youngest in the world, and that has a flow-on effect on the maturity of university course selection that is made by these students. The demands of university entry requirements have an impact on secondary student subject choice

at the end of year 10. It is a matter of concern that students are making uninformed subject selections at a very early age.

#### *Lack of student maturity in professional programs*

Students who move straight from secondary school into courses such as Medicine, Engineering or Law are often unable to bring sufficient life experience or interpersonal skills to bear on their studies. Some staff members remark that it is manifestly inappropriate, for instance, to put 16-year-old or 17-year-old students into clinical situations.

The student body represented by the Blackstone Society commented in its submission that graduate entry into professional programs “would hopefully mean that law students would be more mature and committed to their studies, meaning that they would individually and collectively get more out of their degree.” This submission added:

Anecdotal indications are that graduate law students tend to achieve more highly on average than students commencing an LLB immediately after high school. It is generally believed that this trend is due to the greater maturity of temperament and of thought in graduate students – not only are they older, but they have also formed sound study habits and the ability to see the ‘big picture’ and the reasons for legal principles, rather than being bogged down in the details.

[Graduate entry] promises to raise the maturity levels of all UWA law students, meaning that their engagement with and understanding of the course would be raised, thus raising the quality of law graduates.

The School of Medicine and Pharmacology observed:

Advantages of moving to a graduate entry program relate to the maturity of the students, their capacity to learn independently, and the opportunity to modify the program to a fully integrated course.

Professional education, it is argued, should occur at a stage where students have enough breadth of knowledge and personal development to be able to master the interrelationships between technological, scientific, humanistic and social aspects of their field.

#### *Inequitable aspects of admission to professional programs*

Some people argue that if prestigious and lucrative professions remain accessible through undergraduate courses, entry to which is determined by TER scores that are in turn influenced by one’s socio-economic background, UWA can be seen as reinforcing advantages out of kilter with its proclaimed commitment to equity. The Law Society of Western Australia in its submission stated:

In its academic programs and course structuring UWA should seek to ensure that those wishing to pursue legal studies are not constrained by so doing from cultural or socio-economic constraints.

#### *Lack of systematic attention to UWA Educational Principles*

The UWA list of “Educational Principles” specifies a range of things that the University wishes to see exemplified in the skills and attitudes of its graduates, but there is no mechanism for ensuring that these are comprehensively embedded in all

courses. Many stakeholders think that students are often obtaining a degree without having acquired all of these attributes. Especially noteworthy is the concern expressed by a range of academic staff and employers about the attained level of certain generic skills, in particular oral and written communication.

As noted in a submission by academics teaching the Science Communication Program at the University:

The Employability Skills for the Future report (DEST, 2002) identified communication skills as being critical. In a study for the Australian Council of Deans of Science (2001), close to 90% of the 1245 graduates surveyed stated that their degree did not provide them with the level of communication skills required by their employer.

Representatives of industry employers have reported an overall lack of confidence in graduate abilities, particularly with respect to 'generic skills' gained through a Bachelor of Science (Raison, 2006). Other studies recommend science communication training at undergraduate and postgraduate levels (Clarke, 2001; House of Lords, 2000; Royal Society, 2006).

#### *Courses out of step with external expectations*

The relationship between undergraduate and graduate programs appears to be changing, nationally and internationally, as employers and professional bodies in several fields look beyond Bachelor degrees to a higher-level qualification. The recent move to establish a Master degree in Architecture as the standard professional credential is a case in point.

The same trend is apparent for Engineering degrees. The American Society of Civil Engineers and the National Academy of Sciences (USA) have both made recommendations for the first professional degree in Engineering to be a Master of Science in Engineering (or equivalent). It is their belief that a four-year program does not provide adequate time for a continually expanding curriculum (American Society of Civil Engineers 2008; National Academy of Sciences 2005).

UWA may be failing to position its graduates well for the future if it ignores developments such as these.

#### *Over-specialised undergraduate courses*

Some stakeholders believe that many graduates lack sufficient breadth of knowledge and understanding to achieve their potential in either employment or civic participation. For example the WA Medical Students' Society remarks in its submission,

Due to the highly vocational nature of the medical course, students may graduate with a detailed knowledge of medicine but very little broad knowledge in important areas such as business, philosophy and political science. These general areas are relevant to future doctors as they are respected members of the community with strong lobbying power on behalf of their patients and the public in general. Weighing the role of the doctor as health care provider versus community leader may dictate a greater inclusion of a more general education.

The Chancellor, Dr Michael Chaney, has recently emphasised that graduates must "be aware of a breadth of issues, including how to work in teams and how to accommodate and understand other people's views." He regards it as a matter for

concern that so many “come out of universities with specialist knowledge but not understanding the context of their decisions or anything outside their specialty” (*Australian Financial Review*, 11 February 2008, p34).

Although there are others who believe that UWA programs probably achieve a better balance between breadth and depth than most of those in other countries, the predominant view seems to be that undergraduate course structures should impose certain limits on specialisation.

#### *Insufficient preparation to participate in a globalised and culturally diverse environment*

It is estimated that nearly a quarter of UWA graduates are already working overseas, and this proportion will certainly increase. In addition, the international mobility of the workforce is bringing more and more people from other countries into the economic and cultural life of Australia. Some stakeholders believe that many UWA graduates are inadequately equipped for this globalised environment. Further, it is argued that within this international context there should be a strong emphasis on cross-cultural understanding, especially knowledge of the beliefs and customs of Indigenous Australians. (A 2007 report on the cultural competence of UWA students, presented to the Vice-Chancellor's Internationalisation Reference Group, included a recommendation that curriculum development be undertaken with a view to devoting more course content to Indigenous Studies.)

#### **Opportunities to pursue**

It is not enough to ask what problems the Course Structures Review is trying to address. A more positively framed question has also been posed throughout the process: What opportunities does it provide for this University to improve structural aspects of its teaching and learning, enhance the educational experiences of its students, and thereby lift its standing within the international community of academic institutions?

The Preamble to *Courses for Tomorrow's World* made the following statement: “The Course Structures Review represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to design structures that ensure UWA maintains its place as one of the leading universities in Australia, and attains its vision of achieving international excellence.” This aspiration is closely linked to the declared aim of becoming recognised within 50 years as one of the top 50 universities in the world. As it approaches its centenary, UWA is ambitious about positioning itself for the future as an outstanding institution in which excellent research and excellent educational provision go hand in hand.

#### *Expansion of exemplary local practices*

The main principle underpinning this University's mission, value statements and core activities is the pursuit of the highest possible quality of academic performance. There are already many fine examples of this in a number of its courses. It seems axiomatic that UWA is more likely to achieve a reputation for distinctive forms of excellence in its educational programs if it builds on some of its existing achievements than if it merely tries to emulate what other institutions are doing. Accordingly, with the aim of enlarging the learning opportunities for all students, the Review has attempted to identify a number of very good innovative practices already developed in some areas of the University and to indicate how these might be applied more extensively. For example:

- Embedding an explicit research focus into teaching at all levels of a course (as exemplified by Psychology, among other disciplines).

- Enhancing intensive discipline-focused communication skill development (of the kind represented by Science Communication units).
- Offering cross-faculty courses (as in the teaching partnership between Business and Engineering).
- Linking student projects with the research and development needs of organisations in the wider community (as facilitated through the Centre for Co-operative Education for Enterprise Development).
- Providing special academic challenges for outstanding students (of the kind represented by the Advanced Science program).

These innovations reflect some of the “strengths to preserve” listed above.

#### *Selective adaptation of quality-enhancing structures from elsewhere*

In addition to expanding some of its own innovative curriculum practices, UWA should be alert to the possibility of adapting, where congenial to its own ethos, some structures that have exemplified high standards of educational excellence elsewhere. For instance the idea behind the Australian National University’s PhB (Bachelor of Philosophy) and the National University of Singapore’s University Scholars Program could be combined with aspects of UWA’s own Advanced Science course to provide a university-wide set of research-intensive study opportunities for outstanding students.

#### ***Risks to mitigate***

##### *Stagnation*

The fact that UWA has long been pre-eminent in the local academic arena does not guarantee that this position will be secure in the future. There is much of which the University can be justly proud, but if it rests on its laurels it may not be in a position to serve its students and communities well in a changing world characterised by intense competition in higher education as in other fields. In case some of yesterday’s strengths become tomorrow’s weaknesses, the University needs to avoid lapsing into complacent inertia. Doing too little is at least as much of a risk as taking on too much.

##### *Loss of enrolments*

Any decrease in domestic and/or international student numbers would create financial difficulties for UWA, especially in view of the intention stated in its 2007 Strategic Plan to increase enrolments significantly. Such a decrease could occur as a result either of making injudicious changes to the status quo or of failing to make judicious, even bold, changes to the status quo.

##### *Damage to reputation*

Fulfilling the declared aim of gaining recognition within the next 50 years as one of the world’s top 50 universities will require UWA to engage vigorously in continuous improvement of its programs. If any reform of its course structures is conducted in a way that does not demonstrate an exceptionally strong commitment to academic excellence, there will be long-term negative effects on its standing. Conversely, that standing may be weakened if the University is seen as merely marking time while rival institutions forge ahead.

### *Decline in resources*

Being exceptionally well resourced, the world's leading universities are characterised by (among other things) low student/staff ratios, which enable them to provide a highly interactive learning/teaching environment. Excellence is expensive. UWA's Course Structures Review stems directly from an aspiration to join the top international tier of universities and provide its students with the highest possible standard of education. This will require it to protect and augment its resource base. Any decline in its financial position – whether caused by decreased enrolments, decreased public funding, or decreased income from endowments and other discretionary sources – would be seriously harmful to its ambitions, as would any inefficient deployment of those resources.

### *Underestimating costs of structural change*

A recurrent and emphatic theme in many consultation meetings and submissions is that the University must be able to deploy very substantial resources to minimise the adverse impacts of structural change, whatever option is chosen. Those impacts are not all directly financial; they include the disruption of student course planning and the heavy demands on staff time and energy during the long transitional processes of implementation. But substantial material resources will ultimately need to be made available to ensure success.

## **Evaluation of the options**

Each of the strengths, problems, opportunities and risks discussed above has been carefully considered in evaluating the various options for possible change to the University's course structures. In what follows here, the options are examined in turn with reference to that set of criteria. The full process of evaluation informed and preceded any decisions on which structural changes to recommend.

### **Evaluation of Option 1**

#### *Option 1 in summary*

- *all UWA Educational Principles to be demonstrably embedded in every course;*
- *each Faculty to determine what opportunities it should provide to link specific graduate attributes to course objectives, learning experiences, professional requirements and assessed outcomes;*
- *course administration and nomenclature to be made simpler and more consistent (within the context of this option) across the University.*

#### *Responses in summary*

It seems that almost everyone sees Option 1 as necessary but insufficient. There is strong support for it, provided that it is incorporated into another option.

#### *Implications in summary*

Exactly what it would mean to implement this option is a matter not widely discussed in meetings or submissions. Option 1 has tended to be either overlooked or dismissed as something hardly different from what the University already does. But this may underestimate the challenges and opportunities involved, which include the following:

- "Simplification and consistency" are not enough. Significant standardisation of course rules should be the aim, particularly with

regard to pre-requisites, advanced standing, transfer, progression etc. where the principles underlying the rules are not discipline-specific.

- The idea of demonstrably embedding all UWA Educational Principles “in every course” will need to be interpreted in a flexible and context-specific way, as there is a big difference between a course where students follow a set path (e.g. Medicine) and one where they create a structure from an extensive range of alternatives (e.g. Arts). For the latter, implementation of Option 1, if not carefully handled, could produce the absurd result of requiring every unit to demonstrate every Principle. Adopting a model of 24 points of “general” or broadening unit content across the University would help to address this, as such units can be structured so as to ensure intensive coverage of the Educational Principles.
- The progress that the University has already made in relation to Learning Outcomes in recent years will have to be taken into account in relation to any future plans for embedding of the Principles, since there may be considerable actual overlap, and/or perceived overlap. Experience with Outcomes indicates that even the apparently modest changes envisaged in Option 1 may throw up complex matters of implementation.
- Revising the UWA Educational Principles, which some see as a desirable process, would require careful thought. As the Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts says in its submission, “the current principles, with one or two exceptions, articulate the foundations of all intellectual engagement, irrespective of location, and in this sense they do not differentiate or distinguish the University of Western Australia from other tertiary institutions ... In seeking differentiation and/or distinction, a more ambitious and aspirational set of characteristics could be developed.”
- The UWA Educational Principles seem to be formulated with first-cycle degrees particularly in mind. The University’s Teaching and Learning Committee should be asked to consider what practical relevance they should have to postgraduate coursework outcomes.

#### *Evaluation in summary*

Option 1 addresses only two, or at most three, of the nine significant “problems to solve” listed earlier: the unduly complicated, inconsistent and untidy course rules, to some extent the excessive workload pressure on staff, and the lack of systematic attention to graduate attributes.

In other respects it is clearly insufficient of itself, failing to capitalise on existing strengths, engage with opportunities, or mitigate risks.

The Steering Group believes that the University should establish a mechanism for implementing Option 1 as a necessary foundation for more extensive course structure changes.

## **Evaluation of Option 2**

### *Option 2 in summary*

- all students complete 24 points of common general foundational units during their first year of study;
- these units would meet “cultural competence” requirements, focus on generic skills, and/or showcase different disciplines and methods of inquiry;
- course administration and nomenclature to be made simpler and more consistent (within the context of this option) across the University;
- all UWA Educational Principles to be demonstrably embedded in every course.

Options 2 and 3 are variants of the same basic idea: that all students should take “general” units to the value of 24 points. The structure for general units envisaged in Option 2 is a common foundation semester during the first year of study, whereas Option 3 proposes a more flexible set of distributed requirements.

*Courses for Tomorrow's World* suggests that the “common foundational core” proposed in Option 2 should comprise broadening units of an introductory nature – i.e. with no prerequisites or assumed prior knowledge – that are specifically designed with particular learning outcomes in mind for all students. These common general units were envisaged as being able to achieve any or all of the following purposes:

- develop key generic skills (e.g. written communication, critical thinking, cultural competence) at an early stage;
- provide at least a basic knowledge of Maths, Computing Science and English;
- showcase different methods of inquiry, and foster an understanding of how scientific and cultural models of interpretation can interact, through some introductory-level interdisciplinary units designed specifically for this purpose.

All this was presented in the spirit of “general education” – aiming “to give students a coherently structured engagement with fundamental skills and knowledge across the arts and sciences, so that their learning is not confined entirely within a specialised area.”

### *Responses in summary*

Among those stakeholders who are attracted to the idea of a set of common foundational or introductory units there appears to be very little agreement about the form they should take (e.g. “cultural competence” is variously applied to Indigenous culture, Australian studies, LOTE and other things – all with quite different implications for unit development). Further, a number of stakeholders oppose the idea of common units altogether, for some or all of the following reasons:

- generic skills can be developed more fully in particular disciplinary contexts than in common general units;
- it is not feasible to provide foundational knowledge of Maths, Computing Science etc. through common general units, because students would have extremely different levels of prior knowledge;
- introductory-level interdisciplinary units would not be suitable vehicles for showcasing different methods of inquiry, because they can hardly avoid superficiality (to cope with diversity of student backgrounds and interests) and cannot draw on first-hand disciplinary knowledge.

*Implications in summary*

Putting into practice Option 2 (that is, a common foundation semester during the first year of study) raises a number of administrative challenges. If students are required to undertake general foundational units, the University will need to decide:

- Whether a student who fails any of the units must repeat and pass them before proceeding to a second year. (If so, procedures will need to be devised for progression, appeals, conceded passes, etc. If not, many students are unlikely to apply themselves diligently to the general units and the “requirement” becomes empty.)
- What requirement, if any, to impose on a student transferring to UWA after a first year of study at another institution.
- How to manage the impact of a foundation semester requirement on students in those disciplines (e.g. Music, Medicine, Architecture) where the uninterrupted sequential acquisition of certain skills, knowledge and experience is said to be essential and first-year course content is already very dense. Option 2 may in effect add a semester to the length of the degree in such cases.
- How to avoid increasing the total number of units offered by UWA through over-supply of general units that are newly designed for foundational purposes.
- How to manage the logistical consequences of having all students take the same few units at the same early stage. (As the practical limits on staff expertise and resources would probably prevent more than a small number of new purpose-built units from emerging, enrolments in each would be especially large – probably over 3000; and this would not only carry onerous practical implications for teaching and assessment arrangements, timetabling etc., but also restrict the scope for high-quality teaching/learning interaction.)

*Evaluation in summary*

The main rationale for Option 2 is that it would curb the perceived tendency towards over-specialised courses. It could also help students to acquire some of the desired graduate attributes, and could enhance in some respects the quality of academic programs.

On the other hand it would entail complications that might well exacerbate rather than alleviate the administrative problems identified. It could also turn students away because of the inflexible nature of the foundation unit requirements and the potentially adverse impacts noted above.

On its own, it would not make a significant contribution to capitalising on UWA's existing strengths, engaging with opportunities, or mitigating risks.

The Steering Group believes that Option 2 should not be implemented as it stands because it would create more difficulties than it could alleviate. However, combining aspects of it with Option 3 may be feasible and perhaps desirable.

### **Evaluation of Option 3**

#### *Option 3 in summary*

- all students complete 24 points of general units, but these need not be taken during the first year and need not all be tied to a particular set of common units;
- any such units that are not purpose-designed common units must be taken from outside the home discipline and from an approved list of general units;
- course administration and nomenclature to be made simpler and more consistent (within the context of this option) across the University;
- all UWA Educational Principles to be demonstrably embedded in every course.

#### *Responses in summary*

Option 3, though some oppose it, has attracted considerably more support than Option 2, mainly for the reasons given by the School of Humanities:

In favour of this option is that spreading the requirement to take the 24 points of general units over, say, Years 1 and 2 would provide much more flexibility and student choice, and would reduce workloads, since all general units would not have to be offered in every semester. It would also enable students to study their general units alongside their disciplinary speciality, thus increasing the possibility of their perceiving synergies between their general and specific studies.

Other submissions refer to the need to ensure that the units do not overly constrain student choice. As noted in the submission from the Student Guild:

Disciplinary breadth and citizenship are qualities that UWA should very seriously consider instilling in its graduates. From our perspective, Option 3 offers more freedom and fewer constrictions on student life and advancement than Option 2 does, especially in the format proposed in *Courses for Tomorrow's World*. In that sense, it is the preferred of the two options from our perspective. But concerns still linger over both proposals, and they should be very seriously considered before any decisions are made.

#### *Implications in summary*

Option 3 shares with Option 2 the purpose of providing a “general education” – aiming to give students a coherently structured engagement with fundamental skills and knowledge across different disciplines, so as to prevent their learning from being wholly confined to a specialised area.

Some units may be considered particularly suitable for this purpose because they have intrinsic breadth, covering a greater range of cross-disciplinary information than is usual and engaging with more than one method of enquiry.

However, the simplest way to achieve a measure of educational breadth is through specific structural requirements: that is, student choice can be partly constrained so that every course must include at least one unit from each of two or more categories. The categories may, for instance:

- reflect in an introductory way the main intellectual traditions with which all students should acquire some familiarity (e.g. science or technology, arts, and commerce);

- relate to some elements of the globalised and culturally diverse environment in which graduates will be living and working (e.g. languages other than English);
- reinforce certain fundamental “generic” skills (e.g. communication, critical thinking, numeracy and technology); for, although it is desirable to develop these skills in specialised as well as general units, there is a strong case for ensuring that they also receive explicit and focused attention separately.

General units suitable for each category would need to be identified through an approval process along these lines:

- All faculties nominate units that they regard as appropriate in relation to the given categories (e.g. particularly successful at fostering one or more generic skills).
- These nominated units undergo an independent and transparently rigorous review and mapping process.
- Units that meet agreed criteria are referred to Academic Council (via an intermediate body) for ratification.
- Units that do not yet meet the criteria are given feedback and support to help them meet the criteria in a later review.

Option 3 would permit most or all of the requisite general units to be provided or slightly adapted from across the current range of UWA course offerings, rather than newly invented as additions to it. There are several practical advantages of doing things in this way:

- It can preserve an element of student choice, thus minimising the criticism that the University is imposing uniform requirements in the form of educationally controversial units that purport to be broadening but are arguably narrow, uncongenial and/or irrelevant to many students.
- It can nevertheless be simply structured in such a way as to require some breadth, as explained above. Units approved as suitable for “general” educational purposes can be clustered into two or more groups, with each student taking at least one 6-point unit from each group.
- It may be compatible with entry restrictions for certain approved general units, thus mitigating some teaching and assessment problems posed by a very large diverse cohort, such as the difficulty of testing knowledge of introductory-level science if the class includes some with no relevant prior learning alongside others with a strong background.
- It is likely to spread enrolments across a relatively wide range of units, making practical arrangements such as the provision of adequate classroom space more manageable.
- It simplifies the question of ownership (academic and financial responsibility) for these general units, as a faculty that offers such a unit can be held directly accountable for teaching, assessment, quality assurance, practical support arrangements, associated learning materials, costs of unit development and maintenance, and course administration – with budgetary provision being made accordingly on the normal basis of teaching load calculations.

- It removes or lessens the need for new unit development to be resourced. An appropriate approval mechanism can determine the suitability of nominated units for the intended purpose.

#### *Evaluation in summary*

Like Option 2, Option 3 is unable – on its own – to capitalise significantly on existing strengths, engage with new opportunities, or mitigate risks.

Like Option 2, it would curb the perceived tendency towards over-specialised courses, could help students to acquire some of the desired graduate attributes, and could enhance in some respects the quality of academic programs.

It would be less difficult to administer efficiently than Option 2. Further, being less restrictive and less rigid than Option 2, it would be less likely to run the risk of turning students away.

The Steering Group believes that Option 3, though not satisfying many of the evaluative criteria if it were to stand alone, would be well worth implementing as a means of ensuring educational breadth, and would serve the University well in combination with more extensive changes as proposed in later options. Integrating elements of Option 3 into any changes will provide new opportunities for students to enhance their knowledge and skills.

#### **Evaluation of Option 4**

##### *Option 4 in summary*

- all students to choose 24 points of “broadening” units from outside the core requirements of their major, but deemed relevant to it;
- each Faculty must advise its students to ensure that the intended combination of relevance and breadth is consistently achieved;
- course administration and nomenclature to be made simpler and more consistent (within the context of this option) across the University;
- all UWA Educational Principles to be demonstrably embedded in every course.

#### *Responses in summary*

Option 4 tends to be favoured by current student groups. Submissions not only from the Guild but also from several School-based and faculty-based student groups (particularly Engineering, Medicine, Music, Economics and Commerce, and Health) all express a preference for Option 4. The main reason given for this support is that Option 4 is seen as permitting a closer fit than Options 2 and 3 between increased breadth of study and the particular needs of students in different courses.

On much the same grounds, two discipline-based groups of staff are also attracted to Option 4. The School of Psychology regards it as “more flexible” than 2 or 3, and so better able to satisfy aspirations for breadth in ways that accommodate student needs across different disciplines. The School of Sports Science, Exercise and Health likes the fact that Option 4 keeps the focus on the home discipline, allowing “domain-specific content to be the medium through which generic skills are progressively developed”.

Three considerations qualify the support expressed for Option 4 in some responses:

- This support is mainly expressed in general terms. More detailed comments received on specific practical implications of this option have a negative cast; and even some of the submissions that rate it as the preferred option also indicate concern about the challenge of implementing it satisfactorily (e.g. the Economics and Commerce

Students' Society remarks that Option 4 would require "continuous and transparent review of units").

- Some of the support for Option 4 depends on its incorporation within more extensive structural changes. For instance the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences thinks that Option 4 (like 2 or 3) would be "significantly easier to introduce if the large-scale change envisaged in Options 6 and 7 was embraced, but would be far less practical for implementation in this faculty if it were to be mandated as stand-alone policy in the context of our already demanding and intensive courses focused on producing qualified professionals."
- Some comments suggest that a judicious blend of Option 4 with Option 3 could prove attractive to more stakeholders than Option 4 alone.

Negative comments on Option 4 tend to find fault with a perceived lack of clarity regarding the criteria that determine whether the "broadening" units chosen are "relevant" in any particular case. This could result in inconsistent implementation: it is said (e.g. by the School of Humanities) that strict interpretation by one faculty might mean that its students take a much narrower range of subjects than students in another faculty, while some other students might end up with a degree that included fascinating sidelines, but no enhancement of their range of disciplinary approaches or intellectual tools.

#### *Implications in summary*

As implied above, a number of comments reflect uncertainty as to what Option 4 would actually mean in practice, because it gives faculties considerable discretion in interpreting the principles of breadth and relevance. Some submissions see this option as simply maintaining the status quo, as most faculties believe they already incorporate an element of breadth into their course structures by allowing students to take units outside the home discipline. On the other hand, if Option 4 goes beyond existing arrangements, with the aim of systematically remedying the narrowness of particular courses (as envisaged in the submission from the Economics and Commerce Students' Society), it could become unwieldy to administer. Expecting faculty-based course advisors to counsel students on the selection of broadening units would be a challenge, given the diversity of interests and disciplines within each faculty.

It is not only the concept of "broadening" that seems to pose difficulties in administering Option 4, since its scope will vary according to several factors including discipline base and faculty size. Two other key concepts underlying this option are the "major" and the "home discipline". There are certain practical difficulties about each of these in an Option 4 scenario (i.e. if no other structural changes are introduced):

- At present, not all degrees are structured in terms of a major. For example, a law degree is not: rather, it requires students to complete certain compulsory units and then a specified number of elective units.
- For the large number of students enrolled in combined courses leading to double degrees, or enrolled in single degrees but with more than one major in different disciplines, no "home discipline" exists to govern the choice of broadening units.

### *Evaluation in summary*

#### *Pursuing opportunities*

Option 4 may help to enhance the quality of courses in innovative ways, though its capacity to do so would require further consideration.

#### *Developing strengths*

Option 4 – on its own – is unable to develop significantly any of the University's existing strengths.

#### *Solving problems*

Like Options 2 and 3, it would tend to counteract the perceived tendency towards over-specialised courses, and help students to acquire some of the desired graduate attributes. On the other hand it may prove complicated to administer properly because of the increased need to advise individual students, and could thus aggravate certain inefficiencies.

#### *Mitigating risks*

It would not be likely to have any positive impact on risk management. Indeed it runs the risk of amounting to no significant change at all; some see this option as simply maintaining the status quo.

Accordingly the Steering Group believes that Option 4 is not a satisfactory basis for broadening undergraduate courses.

### **Evaluation of Option 5**

#### *Option 5 in summary*

- *an Honours degree becomes the standard UWA undergraduate program – all students normally graduate with Honours;*
- *a distinctive designation (e.g. "Honours with Distinction") given for a level of achievement high enough to qualify for enrolment in a higher research degree;*
- *ample room for common, general or broadening units as in Options 2, 3 or 4, along with a research capstone and/or practicum and/or Study Abroad;*
- *course administration and nomenclature to be made simpler and more consistent (within the context of this option) across the University;*
- *all UWA Educational Principles to be demonstrably embedded in every course.*

#### *Responses in summary*

Most people who have expressed a view on this Option are strongly opposed to the idea of making a four-year Honours program the standard UWA undergraduate course. Objections are that

- it would dilute the Honours experience;
- it would lessen the value of an Honours degree;
- not all students are suitable or motivated;
- supervision loads would be unmanageable;
- resources required would be unaffordable;
- students would face greater financial costs.

Although there is very little support for Option 5 in the form proposed in *Courses for Tomorrow's World*, some aspects of it have attracted qualified interest. For instance the Blackstone (Law Students') Society, taking this option to be primarily about

requiring all undergraduate students to complete a capstone research project, does express the view that it could, if linked to appropriate coursework, significantly improve certain generic skills of Law graduates – particularly research skills, written communication skills and project management skills – that are not, in its view, adequately developed within the present course structures. On the other hand, the Law School opposes Option 5, arguing that a requirement for all its students to undertake a substantial research project would entail unmanageable supervision loads for staff.

From some quarters there is a positive response to the general idea of making the standard first-cycle degree a four-year (full-time) undertaking, with a research thesis as just one possibility for the final year alongside other possibilities such as an integrative group project, Study Abroad, practicum work and so forth. For instance, in the only faculty submission that favours any aspect of Option 5, the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences argues that the first degree should be a four-year one (like its own existing degrees), though it strongly opposes conferring the Honours title on all such undergraduate degrees, submitting that:

Honours must remain an elite qualification that is obtained only through the highest academic achievement as is the case for many elite universities. Granting Honours to all degrees and then developing a new terminology, such as Honours with Distinction, to indicate elite standing will not offer any clarity to those unfamiliar with the current system and will only cause confusion among those who are familiar.

The submission discusses in constructive detail how the fourth year could be organised to cope with the range of student interests and abilities. Similarly the School of Psychology submission offers practical suggestions about a suitable set of arrangements for a fourth year.

The possibility of a more flexible version of the four-year degree concept is evaluated separately in a later section of this report.

#### *Implications in summary*

Practical implications of Option 5 (as originally described) include the following.

- As a four-year program will extend time spent, and therefore HECS debt or fee incurred, for most UWA undergraduates (almost 39% of whom are currently enrolled in three-year degrees), a significant amount of scholarship support will be required to offset the cost to students of a fourth year.
- Providing an additional year to an estimated 10,000 students will also require a corresponding increase in teaching resources, including a large number of extra staff positions and augmented infrastructure.
- As the proportion of graduating Australian resident students at UWA who have chosen an Honours degree pathway is small and has been declining steadily for several years, a decision to introduce a four-year first-cycle degree for all students will run directly counter to the market trend. The Arts Union submission puts this point simply: “The fact that many students who qualify to do Honours within the current course structure do not choose to take the opportunity suggests that it is not what many individual students want.”
- Promoting four-year undergraduate courses to international students as a prestige product will also pose a very considerable challenge in view of the clear messages from recruitment agents offshore about the strong preference for completing degrees in the shortest possible

time, and the responses of current UWA international students to a recent market survey (IRU 2008b), with a clear majority (59%) saying this change is undesirable and 53% saying they would not have chosen UWA if all its undergraduate courses took four years of full-time study.

- As a four-year program is potentially difficult to reconcile with the high demand for either five-year combined degrees (approx. 28% of undergraduate enrolments, and a much higher percentage in some faculties) or for some specific professional degree programs, the University will find it difficult to attract high-performing students who currently opt for combined degrees to improve their employment prospects and/or to exhibit their status.
- As the 3+2 model (associated particularly with the Bologna process) is regarded in some places as facilitating international recognition and mobility, UWA will need to present a 4+1 structure as a variant of this rather than a violation of it. (Note: the Bologna model does in fact include flexibility and Bachelor courses can be three or four years, with one- or two-year Master and three-year Doctoral courses.) There will also be a need to emphasise that American and Chinese universities generally favour a four-year undergraduate degree structure, Scottish universities appear likely to retain it, and it will become standard in large parts of Asia – e.g. it is being introduced uniformly in Hong Kong from 2012. However, it should be acknowledged that entry to university in some of those countries occurs or will soon occur at an earlier stage than here, so the first of the four tertiary years resembles our Year 12 and the apparent parallel is somewhat misleading.
- If it is to be viable in a policy environment where undergraduate domestic fee-paying courses are outside the norm, a four-year first-cycle degree will require lobbying to secure sympathetic Commonwealth funding policies.
- From the point of view of those engaged in longer professional programs such as Medicine and Dentistry, Option 5 is seen as hardly applicable. Its value to Law is doubtful, for while school-leaver entry to a four-year LLB (Hons) might appeal to those wishing to graduate as soon as possible, there could be reluctance to employ graduates who were so young and who lacked the market advantage of holding two degrees and the breadth obtainable from sustained study in a second discipline. The four-year degree would also be unattractive to graduate entrants to the LLB, who can obtain a graduate-entry law degree (JD) in three equivalent full-time years at other Australian law schools.
- As with Options 6 or 7, Option 5 will create a need for resource-intensive professional development to help staff members cope with the transition to new teaching and administrative arrangements.
- The lengthening of undergraduate courses raises potential equity issues, in particular with regard to adverse financial impacts on students (notably additional course fees, living expenses and incidentals). Steps to mitigate any such impacts may involve negotiating government policy changes, availability of scholarships, etc.

- It will be necessary to decide whether combined courses should continue alongside the new four-year structure. If so, they are likely to keep attracting very large numbers, and this would eclipse the distinctiveness of Option 5.
- If the University wishes to make the four-year course structure mandatory (as in the original Option 5 outline) rather than optional (as in the softer revised proposal discussed later), it will also have to make a decision on whether some students can exit from the course after three years, and if so under what circumstances. If there is a possibility of obtaining a degree after three years, there will be no material difference from the present system. Perhaps a diploma could be awarded, though this would deviate from AQF guidelines and lack market appeal.

### *Evaluation in summary*

#### *Developing strengths*

A large part of the rationale for Option 5 is that, because the extra year of undergraduate study gives ample room for more breadth and depth, several of the strengths that UWA aspires to develop (e.g. disciplinary depth and an international frame of reference) can be properly addressed through such means as a research capstone and/or Study Abroad arrangement.

#### *Solving problems*

By allowing greater breadth through the incorporation of Options 2, 3 and/or 4, it would tend to counteract the perceived tendency towards over-specialised courses, and provide plenty of scope for students to acquire some of the desired graduate attributes.

#### *Pursuing opportunities*

Making the four-year structure a standard UWA requirement for undergraduate degrees will certainly be distinctive in the Australian marketplace. Whether many potential students will see it as attractive is less certain.

#### *Mitigating risks*

Option 5 intensifies certain risks, especially potential loss of enrolments: the additional year (for those currently able to complete a degree in three years) and consequent increase in costs (including opportunity costs of delayed entry into professional employment) may well deter many very able students – particularly from disadvantaged groups – from applying to UWA when shorter comparable alternatives are available elsewhere. Further, if UWA discontinues combined courses leading to double degrees, it may well lose very good students who see better value in two degrees over five years than in one degree over four. But if it does not discontinue combined courses and the three-year structure on which most of them are based, Option 5 may make little material difference to existing arrangements, in which case it runs a different risk: doing too little to avoid future stagnation.

Accordingly the Steering Group believes that Option 5, as presented in *Courses for Tomorrow's World*, would create more difficulties than it could alleviate.

## **Evaluation of Option 6**

### *Option 6 in summary*

- *a five-year framework in which general Bachelor degrees articulate into professional or specialist Master degrees;*
- *expanded provision of postgraduate coursework programs;*
- *no combined undergraduate courses to be offered, as the Master degree becomes the means of acquiring a second qualification within the same total timeframe;*
- *common, general or broadening units as in Options 2, 3 or 4 could be incorporated into the undergraduate degrees;*
- *course administration and nomenclature to be made simpler and more consistent (within the context of this option) across the University;*
- *all UWA Educational Principles to be demonstrably embedded in every course.*

### *Responses in summary*

Most of the submissions from UWA faculties are cautiously receptive to Option 6 and none of them adamantly opposes it except (by implication) the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences, which prefers a four-year undergraduate degree. Positive comments from faculties include “an exciting possibility”, “one of the preferred models”, and “we see many strengths in the 3+2 models”, though there is also concern (especially from the Business School) about risks that it could pose, and some faculties argue that variations to the schematic 3+2 structure would be necessary in particular cases to accommodate such requirements as professional accreditation.

The views of UWA schools, staff groups and individual academics are more mixed, while a number of student groups are opposed to this option. Among submissions from external stakeholders, both the WA Department of Education and Training and the WA Curriculum Council favour Option 6, mainly because it “provides the most appropriate balance between access and opportunity for students in public schools” and “reduces pressure on students to make specialist choices in the WACE certificate. The age of students making choices in Western Australian schools is of serious concern.”

Within the University, the educational basis for the support that a 3+2 model attracts is partly summarised in these terms by the Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts: “The introduction of a 3+2 model does, if carefully planned and with a great deal of goodwill and lateral thinking that ignores so-called disciplinary boundaries, allow for greater synergies, efficiencies and real interdisciplinarity in teaching programs, thus implicitly responding to concerns about breadth and diversity but without the prescriptions detailed elsewhere in the options document.”

Some other submissions recognise

- that there may be educational benefits in discontinuing combined courses, “as they have often led to course juxtapositions which lack academic integration and diminish a student’s sense of connectedness to a discipline” (Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences);
- that completing a three-year Bachelor degree with obligatory breadth, prior to professional training, allows students to think clearly about the kind of career that suits them, and to make an informed and educated choice rather than a premature commitment: e.g. “a requirement of general units within an undergraduate BSc and expanded MSc

options for further study provide greater opportunity for developing sound basic content knowledge and generic skills as well as deepening students' knowledge within their chosen field" (Academics teaching the Science Communication Program at the University);

- that there are potential "equity gains" (Faculty of Law) in basing entry to professional programs on performance at tertiary rather than secondary level.

On the other hand the main reasons given for opposition to Option 6 include possible student disengagement, increased HECS, equity issues arising from larger proportions of full fee paying students, and the impact on student life (e.g. submissions from the Blackstone Society and University Engineers' Club). Accordingly, some submissions express concern about potential loss of students to other universities.

### *Implications in summary*

#### Definition

Putting Option 6 into practice would face, to begin with, a definitional challenge: determining what can properly count as a general first-cycle program. There is no clear-cut distinction between a "general" and a "specialist" or "professional" degree, especially if some professional content is necessary in the first degree as a pathway or preparation for the second. Some critics say that almost every faculty will want to offer its own "general" degree, and that this – if permitted – will default before long to something very similar to present structures and content.

However, when due weight is given to pragmatic considerations, there seems a reasonable prospect that if the University decides to adopt Option 6 it can achieve a fair measure of agreement on the choice of five or six general first-cycle degrees to subsume most of the existing Bachelor degrees, which number more than 70.

#### Breadth

Option 6 envisages that the first-cycle degrees would incorporate broadening units (whether structured as for Option 2, 3 or 4 or in some other way), to the value of 24 points. If implementing some form of Option 6, the University will need to be sure that it incorporates "breadth" requirements in a way that maximises educational benefits and minimises administrative complexities. Evaluation of Options 2, 3 and 4 indicates that Option 3 may provide the best framework for broadening courses; but several issues, mentioned in previous discussion, remain to be resolved with regard to the particular arrangements through which the requisite units would be developed, approved, resourced and offered.

#### Accreditation

The course structure outlined in Option 6 will need to be reconciled with the content requirements of professional accreditation processes. While it is important to note that in most cases these constraints are not entirely inflexible, variations to a strict 3+2 structure will be necessary in certain fields.

#### Equity

The course structure envisaged in Option 6 raises some equity issues at the same time as it alleviates others. On the one hand (as noted above), basing entry to professional programs on performance at undergraduate level is widely seen as more equitable than basing it simply on a TER score. On the other hand, the University will need to anticipate that students from certain socio-economic groups, faced with potentially more extensive and expensive study commitments, may turn away or struggle unless adequate compensatory arrangements can be made through scholarships, guaranteed places and other such measures. For instance, it has been

suggested that Indigenous students will not find a 3+2 structure attractive, and that the prestige value of UWA will not be enough to draw them away from institutions where they could directly enter into a professional program. Indigenous students may be deterred from entering graduate-level professional programs by the perception of raised barriers. However, special entry in such cases – not for all students – to a pre-Med, pre-Law (etc.) stream could lessen the problem.

### Honours

In a structure reflecting Option 6, bearing in mind the high value that almost everybody at UWA (as reported by the Honours Working Party) attaches to the traditional kind of research-focused Honours program, the University will have to decide whether, and if so exactly how, this can continue to be accommodated in relation to a standard 3+2 (or more) structure. Specific questions are:

- whether all terminating undergraduate degree programs should allow an Honours opportunity;
- whether this will entail the further opportunity to articulate into a one-year Master course through a 4+1+1 arrangement, or in some cases (e.g. Psychology) will necessitate a 4+1+2 sequence to satisfy accreditation requirements; and
- whether a decision on such matters can be left to faculties, as they will have a large measure of responsibility for Honours and Postgraduate programs.

### Learning environment

A lack of pre-guaranteed places in professional graduate-entry programs may create problems not only for some individuals but also, arguably, for the esprit de corps. The WA Medical Students Society submits that making Medicine a postgraduate degree

fails to solve the current issues with competition for undergraduate medical places. Instead of competing for places in the medical program, prospective students would instead compete for undergraduate courses perceived as advantageous to doing a post-graduate Medical degree. This would have the same negative consequences without the certainty of being accepted into the medical course at the end.

One person quoted in that submission makes the following comment on the possibility of “orphaning” students who have completed their Bachelor degree (and acquired a HECS debt) but cannot be accommodated in the Master degree: “This poses a real threat to the collegiate atmosphere between students within Medicine.”

There is a more general concern among some student groups, expressed for instance in the Blackstone Society submission, that Option 6 may have an adverse impact on student life. It is argued that, at present, large numbers of UWA students establish peer networks when they enter the University through faculty societies such as Blackstone and WAMSS, and that this sense of belonging and social participation would no longer be readily available under Options 6. If all students must enrol for one of half a dozen undergraduate degrees, there is (some would contend) a significant risk that the quality of campus life will decline as the individual gets lost in a sea of students. If it is only at the graduate level that students can enter smaller and more specialised faculties, then (according to this view) the traditionally vibrant extra-curricular campus culture of UWA may suffer.

On the other hand, it can be argued that Option 6 will enhance rather than diminish a student cohort experience, by bringing broader cross-disciplinary groups together while still maintaining several different identity networks. The cohort experience could continue among students proceeding to postgraduate professional studies.

#### Mobility issues

Eventually the alignment of the restructured UWA courses with the Bologna system through Option 6 will enhance international mobility after graduation for some students. The extent of this will vary according to field of study; for instance, although Law graduates can practise (sometimes after further localised study) within the “Common Law world” – in countries such as the UK, US, Canada, New Zealand, Singapore and Hong Kong – they cannot readily do so in places where Civil Law systems operate (including Continental Europe, Japan, China, Latin America and much of the Middle East and Africa) without substantial retraining.

Adoption of a 3+2 (or more) structure will mean that, during the process of completing a first-cycle degree, opportunities for students to transfer into or out of their UWA course may be restricted in some cases because it differs from the structure in most Australian universities.

#### *Evaluation in summary*

##### Developing strengths

It seems unlikely that Option 6 would have a direct effect, positive or negative, on any of the particular strengths that UWA wishes to preserve and develop. However, because it envisages large-scale curriculum changes, it would necessarily engage all staff across the University in re-thinking what excellent educational provision ought to mean, and encouraging innovative thinking about course development.

##### Solving problems

Option 6 attempts to provide a solution to most of the problems identified above, but not all. Indeed it may make a few of them worse, at least temporarily.

It would greatly reduce the number of courses leading to undergraduate degrees, and thus help to simplify some of the associated rules and regulations. It could eventually reduce some workload pressures on staff, though during the transitional period it is more likely to aggravate these pressures – as will any substantial change. It would not alleviate financial pressure on most students, and in some cases would increase them. On the other hand, it would alleviate pressure on students to choose a career pathway too early, would ensure that students enter professional programs at a more mature stage than at present, and would arguably provide a more level playing-field for determining admission to those programs. By allowing greater breadth through the incorporation of other options previously discussed, Option 6 would provide plenty of scope for students to acquire some of the desired graduate attributes. It would bring the relationship between undergraduate and postgraduate degrees into closer alignment with what appears to be an incipient trend, and would also tend to counteract the perceived tendency towards over-specialised courses. The broadening of undergraduate education envisaged in Option 6 would be designed to include studies that prepare students better for a globalised and culturally diverse environment.

##### Pursuing opportunities

Option 6 has the general aim of enlarging the learning opportunities for all students, and is compatible with the incorporation of innovative practices such as those indicated earlier. It can also be argued that Option 6 takes up the opportunity, highlighted by changes that some leading universities in the Australian/Asian region

are already making, to alter the relationship between undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

### Mitigating risks

Critics of Option 6 see it as creating risks; advocates see it as mitigating them.

The main potential risk posed by this option is that the new relationship it envisages between undergraduate and postgraduate courses may drive some students away. Significant loss of enrolments would certainly harm the University, entailing damage to its reputation and resource base. However, a survey of student opinion (IRU 2008b) shows that only 6.5% said UWA would not have been their first choice if it had changed the structure of combined degrees into a broad Bachelor degree followed by a more specialised Master degree. In the same survey, of those students expressing an opinion in response, 93% of international students and 83% of local students regarded it as desirable to change the structure of combined degrees so that a relatively broad Bachelor degree and a more specialised Master degree (e.g. BSc/ME) could be completed in the same time frame. (These figures exclude those students who answered "don't know" to the question.)

Due weight should also be given to the risk of stagnation: that is, loss of enrolments, reputation and resources may be just as likely to result from a failure to make changes that could position UWA advantageously for the future. If the pattern of student demand does shift in the way some strategists anticipate, Option 6 indicates how to mitigate risk. Notably, there is a widespread view (reinforced by recent offshore consultations) that the demand from international students for Australian undergraduate degrees will decline in the years ahead, as some of the main source countries increase the capacity of their own higher education systems, while socio-economic forces and employment market trends in the Asian region may conversely produce greater demand from international students for advanced professional programs at those Australian universities that have first-rate graduate schools with strong research underpinnings.

However, it should be noted that the domestic student market for UWA has some distinctive features. These include an exceptionally strong economy that is likely to mean, for the foreseeable future, plenty of readily available and rewarding employment opportunities within this state. Consequently some students will not feel motivated to complete even a first-cycle (let alone a second-cycle) degree, if the job market does not seem to require this. UWA regards growth in enrolments, both undergraduate and postgraduate, as a vital part of its strategic plan. It may struggle to achieve this in the face of such a buoyant economy, and Option 6 does pose a risk of exacerbating the challenge.

The Steering Group believes that Option 6 contains several valuable elements and can provide a useful basis for structural change, though it should not be adopted as an unmodified package.

## ***Evaluation of Option 7***

### *Option 7 in summary*

- Either two undergraduate degrees (BA&Sc and BPhil) or three (BA, BSc and BPhil), accommodating majors in any discipline;
- no combined undergraduate degrees to be offered, as Master degrees become the means of acquiring a second qualification within the same timeframe;
- the BPhil is a degree for outstanding students available in any discipline, with a high entry cut-off, an especially intensive research focus and a Study Abroad opportunity;
- all majors emphasise inquiry-based learning through appropriate engagement with the research culture of the discipline;
- expanded provision of postgraduate degrees as the main vehicle for professional qualifications;
- the Bachelor degrees (comprising three years of full-time study) articulate into higher research degrees through either Honours or Master programs;
- educational breadth through incorporation of general units to the value of 24 points, as for Option 2 or Option 3;
- course administration and nomenclature to be made simpler and more consistent (within the context of this option) across the University;
- all UWA Educational Principles to be demonstrably embedded in every course.

### *Responses in summary*

Except for some qualified interest in the BPhil proposal, Option 7 has not garnered much strong support, though it should be noted that very few submissions analyse the implications of this option in any detail and the reasons for opposition are seldom cogently articulated.

Of the eight faculty submissions, three express some support for Option 7 but for two others it is the least preferred and for the rest it is unattractive. Of the fourteen other submissions from staff groups (mostly schools), only two make any positive comments. Of the twenty-eight submissions from individual staff, only four give even conditional support to this option. The Guild, Postgraduate Students Association, and nearly all other student groups are opposed to it, as are most individual student and alumni submissions. Some external groups and individuals see merit in aspects of Option 7, mainly with regard to the BPhil concept.

### *Implications in summary*

#### *University entrance and prerequisites*

- Since Option 7 envisages that the first-cycle degrees are not faculty-owned, all school-leaver applicants who meet the University's basic cut-off TER score requirement will be able to enrol in the BA or BSc – presumably at the same entry level for each. Setting that level appropriately will be a challenge.
- For the BPhil, enrolment will be available to those with a much higher TER score, and again this will need to be calculated carefully to ensure that the BPhil cohort is of manageable size. (In the modified BPhil proposal – see below – this TER-based entry will be provisional and the students' status will then be confirmed or not in the light of first-year results, which may also allow some whose TER was not outstanding to be granted BPhil enrolment.)
- Faculties may impose prerequisite conditions on enrolment in (or progression into) units that they offer, to avoid a general lowest-common-denominator effect on academic standards. This will probably lead to streaming and therefore to the emergence of many

new units – e.g. Physics for beginners and Physics for those with a certain science/maths background; Law for those with a general interest in civic rights, social justice etc. and Law for professional practitioners.

- Those students who intend from the outset to steer towards a professional qualification will undertake specified prerequisite units within the first-cycle degree, but completion of such units can hardly guarantee admission to the postgraduate program – except perhaps for certain special (e.g. Indigenous) groups, who may be granted “pre-Med” or “pre-Law” (etc.) status. However, as with Option 6, arguments for deferring professional entry until 2nd cycle (e.g. equity, maturity) are undermined if part of the work has to be done earlier, and strong disaffection is likely among students who complete prerequisites yet are eventually unable to gain a place.
- Although guarantees cannot be given to many students, criteria for admission to second-cycle UWA degrees (especially in high-status professional fields such as Medicine) may need to favour this University's graduates in order to maintain the prestige of its undergraduate degrees – and this could work against the aim of recruiting high-quality postgraduate students from elsewhere: a difficult juggling act.

#### Other administrative issues

- Substantial reshaping of course administration (with a new central body, e.g. a Board of Coursework Studies, taking over various arrangements from faculties while the latter become in effect mainly Graduate Schools) may not in itself bring much change to the status quo as far as teaching and learning are concerned. For example Option 7 provides no inherent structural assurance that the teaching/research nexus will become stronger, except through embedding of relevant graduate attributes as per Option 1, which is not dependent specifically on Option 7.
- The terms of reference, composition and operating scope of the Board of Coursework Studies (or similar) will need to be determined, but presumably its primary function will be to coordinate all undergraduate course administration. The faculties then become, in relation to undergraduate courses, providers of teaching services and academic advice; but they have fuller control over honours and postgraduate coursework programs. At the undergraduate level there will probably be significant consequent changes in support structure arrangements and the role of discipline chairs, course coordinators, and some general staff.
- A “free market” system will complicate some aspects of planning and budgeting. There is concern that it may also mean a decline in academic standards within units, levels of assessment, and the complexity of the material studied, because of the greater diversity of backgrounds among students enrolled in many units.
- Various other administrative tasks will be significant – e.g. accommodating majors in any discipline may prove to be as onerous as administering combined courses; ensuring that students complete all requisite “general” units may delay graduation for many; determining entry for the BPhil may not be a straightforward

procedure (hard to compare apples with oranges, to handle appeals etc.).

- The elaborate restructuring may well eventually produce something very close to present arrangements. For instance separate streams will be necessary in the first-cycle courses, and these could tend to revert to separate degrees.

#### Accreditation issues

- Under the arrangements for undergraduate courses envisaged in Option 7, professional accreditation is likely to involve a series of difficult three-cornered negotiations between central administrative areas of the University, the respective faculties, and external bodies. This would be more cumbersome than the present direct relationship between faculties and accrediting authorities.

#### Resource issues

- All options carry resource implications. However, Option 7 raises some specific practical issues because of its emphasis on an enhanced research focus throughout the undergraduate program in all disciplinary areas. (Note: If – as many people argue – a stronger research component should be introduced regardless of which other course changes are adopted, then these practical issues are not option-specific but need careful consideration in any case.) The large number of undergraduate students will produce logistical considerations that complicate the objective of embedding research in all courses, and may make it very difficult to achieve in particular fields – e.g. lab-based Biomedical Science is extremely resource-intensive and therefore may be considered hardly feasible on a significantly increased scale, whereas Bioinformatics would be less problematic.

#### BPhil issues

- Using the TER as the sole basis for entry to an elite stream would not only run counter to social equity principles but also tend pre-emptively to confine premium educational experiences (strong teaching/research nexus, etc.) to a group of students whose capacity to benefit from this has not yet been tested within the relevant discipline at the tertiary level.
- Segregating the BPhil cohort from the outset would also mean that there are no side-benefits for the majority of UWA students, some of whom may be resentful that the perceived inferiority of their status had been determined by pre-tertiary performance.
- As Option 7 envisages that a significantly enhanced teaching/research relationship will permeate all courses in all fields, the notion that the BPhil program will have a “more intensive research focus” must be clarified: otherwise the differentiation between a BPhil and another undergraduate degree will be unclear.
- As the BPhil has (in the original form of Option 7) something of the quality of a concurrent Honours program, there may be little incentive for BPhil students to undertake a fourth Honours-specific year if this special kind of 3-year program (as conceived in *Courses for Tomorrow's World*) is already yielding an Honours-like research-intensive experience and comparable prestige. The “fast-food” mentality will not disappear. Thus, ironically, the BPhil may lead to a

reduction in the number of high-performing students who undertake an Honours degree. (Note: The revised BPhil proposal put forward later meets this objection by making it a four-year Honours degree, and can also make some other aspects of the original BPhil concept more workable and attractive.)

*Equity, Honours, Learning environment and Mobility*

- Remarks made on these issues above in relation to Option 6 are equally applicable to Option 7.

*Evaluation in summary*

*Developing strengths*

UWA values highly the nexus between teaching and research, and is keen to strengthen it in ways that develop students' research skills. The idea of emphasising inquiry-based learning in all majors through appropriate engagement with the research culture of the relevant discipline emerged particularly in the formulation of Option 7, but it need not be tied to that option.

Similarly the BPhil can enhance the University's reputation for providing education at the highest international standards of excellence.

*Solving problems*

Like Option 6, Option 7 attempts to provide a solution to most of the problems identified earlier, but not all; and it may aggravate some of them.

Earlier remarks evaluating the capacity of Option 6 to alleviate identified problems are broadly applicable to Option 7 as well.

*Pursuing opportunities*

Option 7 has the aim of extending more systematically across this University some exemplary innovative practices already developed in particular parts of it, for instance the apprenticeship in research methods that is an integral element of undergraduate studies in such disciplines as Psychology and Anthropology. This option also identifies opportunities for adapting certain structures that have exemplified high standards of educational excellence elsewhere, notably the BPhil program, which draws on initiatives at the Australian National University, the National University of Singapore, and elsewhere to provide special academic challenges for outstanding students.

*Mitigating risks*

The points made above in relation to Option 6 about mitigating risks are applicable also to Option 7.

There is also a risk that the BPhil concept may have very limited appeal. To the extent that its presumed appeal is linked to its promise of an increased emphasis on research experience, this may not actually be what many high-performing students think they want. Prospective undergraduates, even those who have excellent TER results, often lack much understanding of (or respect for) the nature, purpose and value of "research." At the very least, a carefully planned marketing effort will be necessary to clarify the concept and make it appealing.

Further, if combined courses are removed, the BPhil may not be a sufficiently compelling alternative means of capturing that high-achiever market entirely, for two reasons: (1) it will not be open to so many students; (2) unless carefully publicised it will not be initially attractive to so many students, as it has only a generic label (BPhil seems at first sight less marketable for employment than BCom, BE etc.).

Accordingly the Steering Group believes that Option 7 as a whole is not viable, though some of its features – notably the hallmark emphasis on developing research skills and the concept of the BPhil to cater for outstanding students – should be pursued in a modified form.

### ***Evaluation of alternative to Option 5***

#### *Alternative in summary*

The Steering Group considered an alternative model that would modify Option 5 so that it simply becomes a four-year course as the preferred Bachelor degree option – i.e. a recommended rather than mandated structure. The intention of this alternative proposal is that movement towards a four-year undergraduate degree would then be more evolutionary than revolutionary, giving time for various supply and demand factors to be assessed more systematically. While still aiming to differentiate this particular first degree as distinctive and superior to three-year first degrees offered here and elsewhere, and more coherent than most five-year double degree courses, the scheme would also leave flexibility for different faculties to structure their four-year programs as Honours or not (as now), depending on their particular needs and circumstances.

#### *Implications in summary*

The fundamental arguments in support of a four-year option remain those set out in *Courses for Tomorrow's World* and indicated above. Similarly many of the implications noted there are still relevant here. To overcome some difficulties identified in relation to Option 5 as originally formulated, this alternative version envisages providing significant financial support to offset the cost to students of a fourth year, and marketing the four-year structure vigorously to prospective students as a prestige product.

However, the main feature of this proposal is that the four-year degree would be a highly recommended opportunity rather than a required standard first degree.

#### *Evaluation in summary*

This modified version of Option 5, according to which the four-year degree sits alongside the existing three-year degrees, cannot alleviate the problems of administrative inefficiency underlined by the terms of reference for this Review. Indeed it will probably aggravate them. If students are only encouraged, not required, to undertake a four-year program – i.e. instead of becoming UWA's distinctive standard first-cycle degree it is just an additional offering – it will presumably increase rather than reduce the complexity of course administration arrangements, frameworks and definitions.

Moreover it is not clear what incentive this alternative proposal could provide for moving towards a wider adoption of four-year degrees, in view of the previously mentioned evidence of strong market resistance to the concept.

While the original Option 5 proposal to make the four-year structure a standard UWA undergraduate structure would certainly be distinctive (albeit probably unpopular) in the Australian marketplace, its distinctiveness will disappear if it is merely one option among others.

Accordingly the Steering Group does not see this alternative version of Option 5 as having sufficient merit to warrant endorsement.

## **Evaluation of alternatives to Option 6**

### *Alternatives in summary*

The Steering Group considered two similar proposals for putting part of Option 6 into practice. Each model proposed, in effect, elements of a first-phase implementation involving a radical rationalisation of degree nomenclature.

One model proposed that an interim measure would be to reduce significantly the large existing range of undergraduate degree titles, offering instead just five three-year Bachelor degrees that lead on to a variety of professional or research development Master degrees, the four-year BPhil degree, and three double-degree Bachelor/Master programs that lead to graduate-level qualifications in Law, Engineering and Medicine.

Another model suggested a slightly different set of named degrees and argued that two current groupings of UWA undergraduate courses – graduate entry degrees and combined courses leading to double degrees – can lend themselves readily to reclassification in keeping with a 3+2 structure. It envisages converting the present combined course structure, which produces two Bachelor-level degrees through concurrent enrolment over a five-year period, into a sequential 3+2 pathway, which would produce a Bachelor degree and a Master degree.

Graduate-entry undergraduate courses take various forms at present.

- Some seem easily convertible into a 3+2 combination degree – e.g. the Bachelor of Letters (96 credit points, two years full-time duration), which requires prior completion of a BA (144 credit points, three years full-time duration), could yield a BA plus M.Litt.
- Others would not fit so neatly – e.g. the Bachelor of Exercise Rehabilitation Science requires prior completion of a BSc (Exercise and Health Science) with certain specific stipulations, but comprises only 48 credit points and the standard full-time duration is only one year, making the award of a Master-level degree more problematic. A graduate diploma may be the more appropriate designation in such cases.
- With graduate-entry enrolments into Law, complications arise. A graduate-entry two-year LLM would create confusion with the existing LLM (a 1-year degree). Non-law graduates elsewhere seeking the qualifications to practise law are required to undertake a Juris Doctor program (JD), which comprises three years and cannot incorporate any undergraduate work if it is to be acceptable to the accrediting authorities.
- The situation in Medicine is different again. The MBBS (in effect a combined course) is currently a six-year double degree, but includes some graduate entry enrolments (over 100 in 2007). The MD may be a more appropriate award for the graduate entry students. Some submissions have suggested a move to rationalise the MBBS offering into a five-year course. In that case, consideration could be given to subsuming some of its current components into a BHLth and the eventual awarding of a BHLth followed by an MD.

Combined courses leading to double degrees can at present be undertaken within some faculties, most commonly in Business and in Engineering, but enrolments in cross-faculty combinations are much more numerous. Currently there are over 50 pairs of combined undergraduate courses that lead to double degrees. They account for 38% of the undergraduate enrolments in Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, 50% in Business, 100% in Education, 41% in Engineering, Computing and

Mathematics, 76% in Law, 23% of Life and Physical Sciences, 8% in Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences and 17% in Natural and Agricultural Sciences. The suggestion in the latter model is that combined courses, instead of leading to double Bachelor degrees, be converted into the “3 plus” (normally 3+2) configuration.

#### *Implications in summary*

Before a proposal to convert double Bachelor degrees to a 3+2 (or more) structure could be implemented, several difficult issues would have to be resolved:

- making sure that one qualification provides a graduate-entry basis for the other degree;
- determining which of the combined degrees constitutes the Bachelor qualification, and which the Master;
- ensuring that the study and assessment requirements for the Master qualification are appropriate to that graduate level;
- offering parallel courses at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, with consequent workload increases for staff;
- harmonising the proposed arrangements with the existing configuration of undergraduate and postgraduate offerings.

#### *Evaluation in summary*

Partial implementation of Option 6, along the lines indicated in one or both of these alternative models, may well be a prudent step to take at this stage.

#### ***Evaluation of alternative (A) to Option 7***

Instead of the Option 7 idea of having a comprehensive Bachelor of Arts and Sciences degree, one submission proposed that students enrol in just one non-specific undesignated undergraduate degree, which on completion carries the name of the major(s) completed, e.g. Bachelor in French and Linguistics or Bachelor with honours in Physics. In addition to majors, there would be professional programs, more extensive than a major, in fields of study where an external accrediting body is involved. Each of these disciplines would negotiate with its accrediting body and specify a set of units that satisfied the requirements. That set of units would be the named professional program in that field of study. Professional programs would appear in the name of the degree in the same way that a major does.

The Bachelor degree would be a minimum of three years (144 points), but it could be any number of points above that, up to a maximum of five years (240 points) normally, and six years in some approved circumstances. UWA currently has Bachelor degrees across this same range of durations in years. All of those would be abolished and there would be one degree, with the student having the choice about its duration, depending on the content selected along the way.

#### *Evaluation in summary*

The main advantage claimed for this proposal lies in its flexibility. It allows students to choose the duration and content of their undergraduate studies, and gives faculties room to experiment with different course components (e.g. a practicum or Study Abroad arrangement) unconstrained by any fixed course length.

The structure that it envisages would certainly be distinctive – but unlikely (in the Steering Group’s view) to attract as much esteem as other models. It gives undue

prominence to the major, resulting in a proliferation of over-specific degree titles that would not be favourably recognised by other universities.

Despite its goal of simplification and its boldly lateral thinking, this alternative seems likely to exacerbate some identified problems, most obviously in relation to unduly complicated course structures and excessive workload pressures on staff. Because the flow of enrolments would be less predictable than at present, there would be considerable difficulty in managing the impact on human resources, providing staff development, and planning practical arrangements for teaching,

The proposal does not appear to offer the University significant assistance in developing strengths, engaging with opportunities, or mitigating risks.

### ***Evaluation of alternative (B) to Option 7***

#### *Alternative in summary*

The Steering Group also considered a proposal to separate the BPhil from Option 7 and make several modifications. This alternative envisages that the University discontinue the BSc (Advanced Science), currently offered through the Faculty of Life and Physical Sciences, and replace it with a degree of similar structure and intent, but open to other disciplines that are research-intensive and offer a three-year major. This would be the BPhil. Students enrolling in the BPhil would have access to additional resources and experiences, such as scholarships to cover a study-abroad period and intensive high-level communication training.

Features of this revised BPhil concept are:

- A four-year BPhil degree, with Honours, may be offered in any research-intensive discipline that currently offers a three-year major plus Honours.
- Entry requires a TER of 98.00 or above and may require specific discipline pre-requisites depending upon the desired major.
- Level 1 of the program is a standard Level 1, plus a multi-disciplinary group project undertaken by all BPhil students, regardless of their intended major.
- Students may apply to articulate into the BPhil upon achieving a Level 1 weighted average mark (WAM) of 80 or above.
- To remain in the BPhil, students must achieve a Level 1 and Level 2 WAM of 80 or above, and a Level 3 WAM of 75 or above.
- All Level 1 BPhil students will be offered a residential program (e.g. 4 weeks before commencement of semester 1, or for a semester, or for the whole year).
- At Levels 2 and 3, students must complete a research project and undertake studies in research methods and project management.
- In each of Levels 2, 3 and 4, students must undertake some form of oral assessment and demonstrate outstanding skills in both spoken and written communication.
- All BPhil students must take at least one 6-point unit in a foreign language.
- During Levels 2 or 3, students undertake a semester of Study Abroad (which may include a research placement) and will be offered a scholarship to assist with the costs.

- The BPhil degree regulations should be uniform across all participating faculties.
- A major is defined as comprising two Level 1 units, two Level 2 units, and four Level 3 units within a discipline.
- The Level 4 research thesis should be valued at 24 credit points and be approximately 15,000 words in length.

#### *Implications in summary*

It is vital that this program, intended to be the premium showcase version of a UWA research experience for undergraduate students, will meet fully the expectations it generates among brilliant students. Critical success factors in making the BPhil concept highly successful in delivering satisfaction at a consistent level of excellence will need to include the following.

- The “especially intensive research focus” envisaged as its defining aspect of the BPhil must be given particular substance.
- The “Study Abroad opportunity” needs not only scholarship assistance and academic affiliation arrangements but also appropriate educational preparation.
- Group identity needs to be created, and linked to mentoring and practical support arrangements.

#### *Evaluation in summary*

##### Developing strengths

As previously noted, the BPhil can enhance the University's reputation for providing education at the highest international standards of excellence. It can also underline the high quality of the student body, and symbolise the UWA commitment to reinforcing the nexus between teaching and research.

##### Solving problems

This proposal does not purport to deal with any of the identified problems that face the University. Its aim is to enhance the University's attractiveness to students of exceptional brilliance.

##### Pursuing opportunities

By building on what UWA's own Advanced Science program has established, the BPhil can exemplify opportunities to extend more systematically across this University some exemplary innovative practices already developed in particular parts of it. By incorporating elements of certain initiatives at the Australian National University, Pennsylvania State University, University of Pittsburgh, Northwestern University and the National University of Singapore to provide special academic challenges for outstanding students, this BPhil program would also be an exemplary way of adapting structures that have exemplified high standards of educational excellence elsewhere.

##### Mitigating risks

As noted earlier, there may be a risk that the BPhil concept will have only limited appeal unless a carefully planned marketing effort can clarify the concept, explain its benefits, and make it attractive.

The Steering Group believes that the BPhil as modified here should be a prominent feature of the recommended changes to course structures.



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**Appendix 7**  
**Recommendations of the Report of the Working Party**  
**on Postgraduate Coursework as adopted by Academic Council**

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Recommendations of the Report of the Working Party on Postgraduate Coursework (as adopted by Academic Council 13 February 2008 by resolution 6/08)

**Recommendation 1**

That UWA's Strategic Plan explicitly acknowledge the role of postgraduate coursework programs in adding to the university's diversity, reach and mission.

**Recommendation 2**

That UWA's OPP establish stretch targets for postgraduate coursework enrolments.

**Recommendation 3**

- (a) That, other than in circumstances where there are social benefits in offering a particular course, postgraduate courses should become financially viable over the medium term.
- (b) That, to assist new courses to become financially viable:
  - i. faculties continue to provide details of expected enrolments;
  - ii. the Terms of Reference for the review of fee paying courses explicitly include the evaluation of the financial viability of such courses;
  - iii. [deleted]
  - iv. UWA funding models provide positive encouragement for such courses.

**Recommendation 4**

That faculties make provision for part-time graduate coursework students through consideration of (a) evening and week-end classes, (b) intensive and block modes of teaching, and (c) mixed modes of teaching.

**Recommendation 5**

That Student Services and faculties/schools provide effective services for postgraduate students who are predominantly either international students or part-time students.

**Recommendation 6**

That faculties and schools ensure that appropriate teaching and learning methods are employed in professional graduate courses.

**Recommendation 7**

That faculties explore with professional and industry bodies any opportunities that might be provided by the Australian Government's move to extend Youth Allowance and Austudy to students enrolled in Masters by coursework programs.

**Recommendation 8**

That faculties actively seek industry sponsorship of professional graduate programs.

**Recommendation 9**

That faculties consider the needs of postgraduate teaching when recruiting staff. This may include appointees with relevant professional experience in addition to academic qualities.

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**Recommendation 10**

That faculties explore the use of adjunct/clinical personnel in postgraduate teaching.

**Recommendation 11**

That Schools benchmark their professional graduate courses against those of appropriate institutions on a regular basis.

**Recommendation 12**

That the best practice principles cited in Section 4 of the Report of the Working Party on Postgraduate Coursework Programs be used regularly as a checklist when reviewing existing postgraduate courses or considering the establishment of new courses.

**Recommendation 13**

That the admissions requirements for all courses be transparent and easily understood by applicants and administrators.

**Recommendation 14**

That, where there is a sequence of (upward) course articulation:

- (a) the higher award acknowledge such articulation as one of the grounds for admission;
- (b) the criteria for articulation be clearly enunciated and applied; and
- (c) faculties consider using the lower qualification as an enabling course to help applicants meet the admission criteria of the higher course(s).

**Recommendation 15**

- (a) That Masters degrees of this university require the equivalent of at least two years of full-time study post the three year Bachelors degree or the equivalent of one year of full-time study post the Bachelor Honours of four years (or longer) degree.
- (b) That graduate diploma courses of this university require the equivalent of one year of full-time study post the three year Bachelors degree.
- (c) That graduate certificates of this university require the equivalent of one half year of full-time study post the three year Bachelors degree.

**Recommendation 16**

[Note: Consideration of this recommendation was deferred at the request of the Framework and Definition of Degrees Working Group]

**Recommendation 17**

That postgraduate students should not normally be required to enrol in undergraduate units, other than at Level 4.

**Recommendation 18**

That existing postgraduate courses consisting entirely or predominantly of undergraduate units not be designated as postgraduate courses.

**Recommendation 19**

- (a) That faculties give consideration to providing conversion programs in areas of perceived demand.
- (b) That, where provision is made for a number of related conversion programs, faculties give consideration to generic structures as the vehicle for these programs.

**Recommendation 20**

- (a) That the Review of Course Structures Working Party on Framework and Definition of Degrees consider the awarding of coursework masters degrees with distinction and high distinction.
- (b) That any decision resulting from (a) be prescribed by University General Rules.

**Recommendation 21**

That UWA continue to ensure that the same standards and rules are applied to both onshore and offshore courses.

**Recommendation 22**

That, in their deliberations with professional associations concerning the content and requirements of courses, faculties ensure that UWA norms are maintained.

**Recommendation 23**

That faculties consult with appropriate professional associations and industry representatives regarding their postgraduate courses.

**Recommendation 24**

That faculties continue to recognize prior learning in postgraduate coursework programs.

**Recommendation 25**

That, though work experience may constitute grounds for admission to courses in part or in whole, such experience should not provide grounds for credit.

**Recommendation 26**

That credit should not be provided on a unit-for-unit basis in postgraduate courses for studies undertaken in previously completed undergraduate courses (other than at fourth year level).

**Recommendation 27**

That, in the case of articulated courses, the relevant rules

- (a) indicate what must be achieved for upward articulation; and
- (b) provide for downward articulation: that is explicitly provide for the award of the lower qualification in the event that a student is unable to complete the higher qualification but meets the requirements of the lower qualification.

**Recommendation 28**

That, where students enroll directly into a masters degree that provides for the award of a graduate diploma for those students not able to complete the degree, the rules specify

- (a) that the graduate diploma articulates with the masters degree;
- (b) the requirements for the award of the graduate diploma; and
- (c) that the diploma is not a direct entry program.

**Recommendation 29**

That Student Services consider mechanisms for meeting the needs of postgraduate coursework students.

**Recommendation 30**

- (a) That, in any jointly badged courses involving UWA, the students must be enrolled by UWA in accordance with its admissions requirements.
- (b) That, in any jointly badged courses, students must normally undertake at least 50% of the work through UWA in order to be awarded a UWA degree.
- (c) That, in any joint courses, those students undertaking less than 50% of the work through UWA be awarded a degree 'in association' with, rather than by, UWA.
- (d) That, in any joint courses, students must undertake a part of the course through UWA in order for any UWA recognition to be afforded the award in terms of (b) or (c).

**Recommendation 31**

That the Research Committee of this University consider a distinct designation for research masters degrees.

## Appendix 8 Report of the Working Party on Honours

*Report: Working party on Honours at UWA*

### REPORT OF THE WORKING PARTY ON HONOURS AT UWA

To the Steering Committee, Course Structures Review

9 August, 2007

#### Members of the Working Party

Professor Philippa Maddern [Chair]  
Dr. Chantal Bourgault (Communication Studies, FAHSS)  
Ms Bronwyn Crowe (PSA President)  
Professor Andrew Deeks (Civil and Resource Engineering, FECM)  
Professor Cheryl Praeger, (Mathematics and Statistics, FECM)  
Professor Geoff Soutar (Marketing, UWA Business School)  
Professor Ian Reid (Senior Academic Reviewer)

Ms Joanne Smith (Administrative Assistant)\*

#### 1. Background

The Working Party's brief was, in broad terms, to survey the structures, workings and objectives of Honours programmes throughout the University, and to report back to the Steering Committee of the Course Structures Review on:

- how the Honours programmes work
- how well they prepare students either for Higher Degrees by Research or for the workplace
- whether the University should contemplate changing the structure of its Honours programme, and what might be the effects on Honours programmes of changes in undergraduate course structure (for example, the introduction of a generalist year, or of generalist units into the undergraduate degree; or the adoption of the Bologna model)

#### 2. Procedure

The Working Party set up a Focus Group meeting with each Faculty at UWA. Each focus group was asked to address a series of questions/issues (ATT A), and open-ended discussion also took place. We asked that each focus group include some students either currently undertaking Honours or having recently finished Honours; we found the student input enthusiastic, eloquent, and very valuable. This report is based on the minutes of the focus group discussions (ATTS B-J).

#### 3. The Report

##### 3.1 Overall Nature and Quality of the Honours Experience at UWA.

In our view, Honours at UWA is, and should continue to be, characterised by two outstanding features. Firstly, in all Faculties an Honours degree introduces students to the invaluable experience of undertaking a substantive piece of research, independently managed by the student, but carried out in the context of intensive one-to-one supervision. Secondly, the process is flexible: different Faculties have different ways of structuring this programme.

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\* the Working Party, and particularly the Chair, would like to record heartfelt thanks to Joanne for all her good organization and hard work on our behalf.

In short we found that at UWA, across all Faculties, Honours programmes display:

- parity in intensity of student research experience, and value of the outcomes of the programmes
- flexibility in the delivery of those outcomes.

We believe that the research-intensive Honours experience is one of the hallmarks of a UWA degree. In some fields (eg Fine Arts, Law) it is unique in Western Australia. In almost all Faculties, anecdotal evidence suggests that our Honours degrees are highly valued not only by premier academic institutions, but also in the workplace.

Our first recommendation, therefore is:

**Recommendation 1:** Whatever the degree structure(s) established at UWA in the future, Honours as an intensively supervised, yet independent, research experience for our best students must be maintained, nurtured, and if possible enhanced.

### 3.2 Current aims and outcomes of Honours programmes at UWA

The aims of Honours programmes are remarkably similar across the University. They can be described as:

3.2.1 Encouraging and training students to undertake critical research. In this process, the dissertation (integral to the programme in almost all Faculties) is a vital element. From their Honours programme, and especially their dissertation, students gain a range of academic skills, including how to:

- Construct good research questions and formulate good research topics
- carry out independent research
- take a critical stance on existing knowledge/theories
- report research results effectively,

plus a range of generic skills, including how to:

- solve problems
- manage projects
- write clearly and cogently
- manage time and resources effectively, keeping to strict deadlines
- work well with colleagues/supervisors.

3.2.2 Providing students with a more specialised, advanced, and profound knowledge of their discipline than can be attained in a pass degree.

3.2.3 Producing students who are more skilled, more confident, better-informed, and more capable of actually creating, rather than just absorbing, knowledge.

The general view, among both students and staff, is that our Honours programmes work excellently to achieve these aims. It is felt that they equip students well both:

- to undertake postgraduate research (Business, FECM and Law, for instance, noted that Honours students from UWA do very well in HDRs at top-class international universities, such as Stanford or MIT)
- for employment (FNAS and Business, for example, report that employers value most highly the extra knowledge, research and project management skills of UWA Honours graduates, as does FECM in relation to the BCM degree; Education points out that students with Honours in their teaching discipline/s are highly valued in their profession).

*Report: Working party on Honours at UWA*

### 3.3 Current structures of Honours programmes at UWA.

As noted above, we consider there is a good degree of flexibility in Honours offerings at UWA, catering to the varying needs of different students in different disciplines.

There are three main ways of offering Honours at UWA:

3.3.1 Concurrent with a fourth-year undergraduate programme, as part of which all students undertake a research project (Engineering, FNAS). In this model, all students undertake a 4-year undergraduate programme; all students complete a research dissertation; but only those students who perform well in all parts of the programme, and attain a high mark for their dissertation, are awarded Honours. Some programmes also include research training units.

3.3.2 Concurrent with a fourth-year undergraduate programme, in which only some students undertake a research project. In this structure, the fourth year comprises one stream of students taking only coursework, and another stream—Honours students—who replace some coursework units with a research dissertation (Law). A variant of this programme occurs in Architecture, where students in the equivalent of fourth-year Architecture or Landscape Architecture may choose to carry out either a design project or a research dissertation.

3.3.3 A dedicated fourth year at the end of a 3-year undergraduate degree, typically comprising a dissertation, plus advanced level/research training units (Fine Arts, Arts, Life and Physical Sciences, Business and Economics).

Some variants/ outliers are:

- Medicine and Dentistry, where there is a dedicated Honours year (the B. Med Sci) which can be taken after the third year of the undergraduate degree, and produces students with a range of Honours grades. This system resembles 3.3.3 above; but students complete their degree after undertaking the Honours programme.
- The system in Medicine and Dentistry whereby students with consistently high grades are held to have graduated with Honours.
- Education, in which the Honours programme is part of their graduate training, consisting of a 20,000-word dissertation, plus two research training units.
- Music and Social Work (FAHSS), which provide for students to enter some preparatory Honours units in the third year of the undergraduate degree.

There is a good agreement on the entry level requirements for Honours; the variation seems to be between 65-71% on undergraduate units.

There is some variation in the required length of dissertations, though the requirements seem to cluster around the 12-15,000 word mark (FAHSS, Fine Arts, Law). Required lengths can be as low as 8,000 words (Architecture, Landscape Architecture) or as high as 20,000 words (Education). In FNAS there has been a move towards encouraging students to produce as the result of the Honours research component in the format of a rigorously concise and publishable journal article, rather than in dissertation format; though it would be fair to say that only a minority of students take this option.

There is some variation in the weighting of dissertations in the final result; from about 25% to 50%.

The Working Party discussed whether, in view of the variety of programmes, there was a case for arguing for greater uniformity across campus. We came to the conclusion, however, that in almost all facets of the programmes, diversity is a strength rather than a weakness; that uniformity is not so desirable simply for its own sake as to warrant disturbing highly successful programmes in order to achieve it; and that in some cases, it would not be financially feasible.

For example, the question was raised:

Since Agriculture and Engineering successfully run programmes in which all students complete a fourth year with a research component, why should not all UWA students have the same experience? However, it was pointed out that:

- much of the value of the Honours programme resides in the intensity of its training; students work with one-to-one supervision, and in small groups. In some Faculties, (notably Economics and Commerce, with its very high ratio of undergraduate enrolments to Honours enrolments—see ATT K) the Honours year is the **only** one in which students can work in small groups. If all students undertook Honours, in Faculties like Economics and Commerce, Life and Physical Sciences, Arts, and probably Law, that experience would be lost.
- because Honours teaching is intensive, it is also expensive in terms of staff time and costs. Already, Agriculture complains that they are not adequately compensated for the Honours teaching they carry out. To make all Arts, Fine Arts, and Economics and Commerce students complete an Honours degree would require the hiring of so many extra staff as to be impractical.
- Honours may not be appropriate for all students. It suits our best students very well, engaging their enthusiasm and harnessing and upgrading their skills. It could, however, be counter-productive to force all students to undertake the same kind of work.

The experience of Engineering and Law is instructive here. In Engineering, in the past, though all students took a 4-year course, not all completed a major research project; some students had the option of completing a shorter and less advanced research assignment. When the Dickson plan introduced the common 6-point unit across the University, Engineering was forced to standardise its Honours research component. Nevertheless, it remains part of the culture in the Faculty that some students do not put as much into their research project as others; and these are the students who neither expect, nor achieve, an Honours grade. Unofficially, therefore, they take a less strenuous programme than the 'real' Honours students.

Similarly, Law requires a stringent entry mark to their Honours programme; but they have found that students on the borderline of entry level often prefer not to undertake the research dissertation, but to proceed with an ordinary 4th-year coursework programme. If they do sufficiently well in that, they may graduate with 'Distinction'; which they see, probably rightly, as more valuable to them than fighting through a research project to achieve what might be only a 2B Honours result.

It would still be possible for the University to recommend a system something like the one originally run in Engineering. All students would take a four-year degree; but only those students motivated, and bright enough, to attempt an Honours degree would take a full Honours programme including a substantial research project. Other students would take a fourth year with a minor research project (say, 5-6000 words), thus providing them with some foundation of research experience. However, this option has not been canvassed among the Faculties; we would need to know their responses before recommending such a course of action. The cost of providing adequate intensive teaching and supervision for this latter group of students would still probably be prohibitively high, and it is not clear that students who have hitherto been able to graduate in three years would willingly sustain the extra time and costs of a fourth year.

*Report: Working party on Honours at UWA*

Nevertheless, there are clearly some constant, or frequent, features across the Faculties which could be better articulated or more widely followed. The research component is integral to Honours in almost all cases, and should remain so. Some Faculties (Engineering, Medicine and Dentistry) produce a booklet each year for prospective Honours students, laying out the range of projects and topics staff in the Faculty can supervise. The lists are explicitly not exhaustive; but they do help to inform students about their options, and may be useful in identifying different types of projects available (eg., some suited to the brightest and most diligent students, others more suited to less able students; some where the student can contribute to a larger collegial research project, others of a more individual nature). Such a practice might well be useful in all Faculties.

The University might establish some guiding principles about Honours programmes, such as:

**Recommendation 2:** An Honours graduate from UWA will have undertaken an intensive research project or its equivalent (eg. an intensive design project in Architecture). Degrees which include such a component should be marked with the title 'Honours'. Degrees in which students have achieved at a high standard, but without undertaking an intensive research (or equivalent), should be marked with the title 'Distinction'.

[So, for instance, the B. Med Sci would become 'B. Med Sci (Honours)'; but students from Medicine and Dentistry graduating without a B. Med Sci, but with sufficiently high marks, would gain their degree 'With Distinction'.]

**Recommendation 3:** An Honours programme from UWA represents advanced and profound study in a particular discipline. Students from one discipline cannot, therefore, undertake Honours in another discipline without sufficient preliminary undergraduate training in the Honours discipline.

**Recommendation 4:** In order to inform potential Honours students of the range of possible research topics, each Faculty should produce, annually, a booklet outlining topics and areas in which the Faculty can offer Honours supervision.

#### 4. Integrating the Honours programme into potentially varying undergraduate programmes: issues and possibilities.

##### 4.1 Honours and combined degrees

Some, though not all, Faculties expressed the strong view that combined degrees can have a deleterious effect on Honours programmes. Students may perceive a combined degree as giving the same employment advantages as an Honours degree, and hence may decide against lengthening their degree time even further by undertaking a combined degree with Honours. Many bright students take combined degrees (eg. in Law/Arts); but don't take Honours in either discipline.

On the other hand, the Working Party took note of the suggestion that this concern is based largely on anecdotal evidence, and would be hard to substantiate statistically. Faculties which complain of losing Honours students to combined degree programmes might find that if there were no combined degrees, some bright students would simply not enrol in their Faculty's programmes at all.

## 4.2 Honours and the generalist degree

Most Faculties thought that the introduction of a generalist degree would be prejudicial to Honours, either:

- by reducing the levels of disciplinary expertise gained by students during the undergraduate degree, hence making it difficult or impossible for students to attempt Honours, or
- by increasing the length (and consequent expense) of the degree to an extent that would discourage students from undertaking a further year of Honours study, or encourage them to go to other universities.

Two 'generalist degree' models were discussed:

- a common generalist first year
- the 'spike' model, in which students are encouraged or made to take a certain number of units outside their home degree. (Note: such units could be either newly constructed generalist units, or existing units from outside the student's School/Faculty).

Of these, the second was more favoured than the first, largely because many Faculties already either encourage students to take combined degrees (Law, Engineering) or allow them to take optional units outside the degree, or both (Engineering, Life and Physical Sciences, Medicine). In that case, however, Faculties were at a loss to see why we should change our procedures.

A point strongly argued by staff from many Faculties was that the University should provide students with options, rather than mandates; compulsory units tend to render students disengaged and resentful, and hence discourage, rather than encourage, broad-minded learning. This process in itself could have bad effects on Honours enrolments.

On the whole issue of generalist degrees, Law and Arts, exceptionally, expressed some positive interest. Arts would be prepared to regard either kind of generalist undergraduate degree as fair training for a major/Honours in Arts; though if it were longer than the current undergraduate degree, students might be discouraged from taking another extra year for Honours.

Law would find the Melbourne generalist degree model, in which Law effectively becomes a graduate degree, very acceptable.

## 4.3 Honours and the Bologna model

Some Faculties, (and some Schools within Faculties) found the Bologna model more acceptable than the generalist degree model(s), noting that it could allow more extensive and productive preparation for HDR work, and hence improve on current Honours programs. However:

4.3.1 All Faculties even vaguely in favour of the Bologna model were adamant that it must have an exit point at the mid-point in the 2-year Masters programme.

4.3.2 Some Faculties (notably Agriculture) thought that the Bologna model could work well if it were rendered fully flexible; so that it could operate as a 3-2-3 or 3-1-1-3 or 4-1-3 structure, according to the needs of different students and disciplines. In this way it might make more sense of the current rather complex suite of Honours, Grad. Dip., Grad. Cert., M.A., and HDR prelim programmes currently on our books.

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4.3.3 All Faculties noted that the Bologna model would have to replace the Honours model in some way; many doubted whether either employers or those managing entry in HDR programmes would understand, or accept, its qualifications. This point would be particularly crucial for Faculties/Schools producing professionally accredited programmes (eg, Psychology, Social Work, Engineering, Law).

4.2.4 Several Faculties expressed a concern that replacing a one-year Honours programme with a 2-year Masters would mean a loss of intensity in the Honours experience, and a loosening of its strict time-lines. Since producing a good research project in a limited time is seen to be an essential part of the training, the Bologna model could represent a serious downgrading of our Honours programme.

4.2.5 The Bologna model would be possible, but difficult, for Education to live with, since they depend on the honours programme in other disciplines to provide them with students with the required excellent disciplinary strengths to complement their pedagogical training. They could accommodate it only by developing a range of combined 2-year (or 1+1 year) MA programmes in Education and other disciplines.

## 5. The reputation of a UWA Honours Degree; understanding and acceptance within and outside of the University.

Discussion of the merits of the Bologna model triggered consideration of the question of how well Honours degrees at UWA are understood and valued in the outside world; either by academic institutions in Australia and worldwide, or by non-academic employers. One of the arguments in favour of the Bologna model is that the concepts and structures of the Australian Honours degree are not well-understood overseas. Australia Honours programmes have no obvious comparison in the North American tertiary system; they are not like many UK Honours degrees, nor like the variants of the Bologna model adopted in Continental Europe. They may not be well-understood in Asian tertiary education and business circles. The argument, therefore, is that the Bologna-model Masters might be better understood and accepted both by international universities, and global employers.

However, strong anecdotal evidence from the Faculties suggests that whatever the level of understanding of its particular structure, the outcomes of an Honours degree from UWA are well-recognised and highly valued both by prestigious overseas universities, and by national and international employers. Business and Commerce, Arts, and Engineering, all reported that their Honours graduates are well-received and highly-thought of at international universities, and generally do well in HDRs at good overseas institutions. Agriculture, Engineering, and Business and Commerce note that employer groups are eager to gain staff with the particular research and generic skills our Honours students display. In Economics an Honours degree is practically a necessity for employment at the top levels of the profession. In Education, Singaporean students who gain an Honours qualification are paid more highly; the same does not apply to students with an M.A. The question was therefore raised:

**Do we at UWA want to be merely a good provider of something everyone else does; or a provider of distinctive, and outstanding, programmes?**

The consensus of opinion appears to be that the main value of the Honours degree—its intensive research training, and its capacity to produce well-motivated and efficient students—is well-accepted by the markets, both academic and otherwise, that come into contact with our students; hence rather than adopting a new model, we might do better to work at enhancing recognition and understanding of the highlights of our existing model.

In turn, this leads to two reflections:

Firstly, any attempt to change the nature of the Honours programme, whether by standardising it or by incorporating it into a Bologna-type model (or indeed any other model) **must** be preceded by substantial and high-quality market research and market information, directed at both potential students and potential employers and student destinations, to ensure that it would be as acceptable as, or even more acceptable than, the current Honours programme.

Secondly, the Working Party considers that the excellent outcomes and high value of the current Honours programme deserve more publicity. Any lack of understanding of its merits among the international academic community or employer groups should be addressed by a more concerted campaign to 'spread the word' about the quality of our Honours programmes and the excellent research training embodied in them, to the tertiary sector and its stakeholders. The whole-hearted endorsement of Honours by the students in the focus groups, and their enthusiastic appreciation of the value it added to their education, also inclines us to think that potential students at UWA could be better informed about the possibilities of undertaking Honours, and the value of doing so. We therefore recommend that:

**Recommendation 5:** The University identify ways of publicising and marketing our Honours programmes, and in particular the value of their research-intensive component, to:

- employer groups
- international tertiary institutions
- undergraduate students (from first year onwards) at UWA.

**Recommendation 6:** The University identify ways of better conveying to undergraduate students at UWA (and possibly other tertiary institutions) the value and intellectual excitement of taking an Honours programme at UWA.

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## Appendix 9 Report of the Working Party on Teaching-Research Nexus

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Working Party on Teaching-Research Nexus

July 2007

### UWA Course Structures Review Working Party on Teaching-Research Nexus

#### Members of the Working Party

Chair: Professor Lyn Abbott  
Ms Robyn Carroll  
Professor Alan Harvey  
Professor Jane Long  
Professor Bill Loudon  
Professor Robyn Owens  
Professor Ian Reid

Two meetings were held for this Working Party and the points raised have been incorporated into this document. In addition, the Working Party considered the following:

Ann Zubrick, Ian Reid and Paul Rossiter  
*Strengthening the Nexus between Teaching and Research*  
[http://www.dest.gov.au/archive/highered/eippubs/eip01\\_2/default.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/archive/highered/eippubs/eip01_2/default.htm)

Excerpts from *Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America's Research Universities* (Boyer Commission, 1998)

Robyn Owens (June 11, 2007)  
*Research as a Hallmark of the UWA Courses*

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#### OVERVIEW

UWA is projected as a research-focused teaching organization. It is widely considered that teaching at UWA is strongly linked to research but it is less clear how this is systematically implemented within our teaching programs. Experiences vary across disciplines.

In some disciplines, students are embedded in a research culture from first year, but in other disciplines, research is introduced in later years. A lack of focus on research may be due to the nature of the discipline or professional qualification.

The teaching-research nexus comprises a network of activities within the student learning environment at UWA. Specific research activities are based within units, but there may also be research objectives at program / degree / major level.

Research is fundamental to the methodology in any discipline and therefore it needs to be embedded in teaching programs.

The Working Party did not discuss teaching in relation to postgraduate research.

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## **UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING PROGRAMS**

Building the teaching-research nexus requires discussion at the level of the degree, major or program as well as individual unit. It was generally agreed that it is necessary to structure the learning experience to include a research methodology.

It was also agreed that it was important to introduce research as an open-ended space and that providing glimpses of where knowledge ends is important.

### **1. Research-Teaching Nexus 'Within Units'**

Research methodology should be obligatory in undergraduate courses, but it needs to be managed so that it is introduced systematically and without unnecessary duplication.

In some disciplines, starting at 1<sup>st</sup> year, assignments are set in a research mode and students are shown how to write research papers with appropriate referencing. Other disciplines introduce students to research at later stages of their degree (3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> year). Some disciplines develop skills in systemic thinking within units and this may be addressed from a research perspective. Other options include 'apprenticeships' in research where students write research essays with a focus on presentation skills. The extent to which research is included in these examples can vary considerably.

Writing skills are essential for research and links to courses or other forms of instruction on writing are encouraged because these skills can be deficient. Embedded research training also needs to be supported by development of library skills.

Where research methodology is included as a component of teaching it is not always linked to assessment. As a result, explicit learning outcomes related to research may not always be addressed. Active researchers can convey new knowledge and understanding to students but traditional lectures may not be the most effective format for doing this. Research-intensive activities within a course/unit need to be assessment-driven to capture a 'research' rather than 'content' emphasis. Students need to be challenged to ask questions and have the skills to engage in systematic research exploring their own questions. Critical (rather than descriptive) literature reviews are important (using journal articles and original sources) and research projects (individual and group) are widely used in some disciplines.

There are significant differences between areas such as law and science-based teaching. Many law-related subjects focus more on scholarship than on research (they are not data driven). However, where research skills are important to teaching in law, teaching staff with research methodology experience may not be readily available (e.g. crime researchers are not involved in teaching mainstream law units).

The teaching-research nexus may be difficult to develop where teaching in core units does not overlap with the research interests of staff. The research areas may only be included in optional units. Alternatively, some units with a research focus might be

taught by staff who lack the relevant research background. This could also apply where subjects are taught by 'non-experts'.

Research is explicitly introduced in units with projects in 3 and 4 year degree programs and some include explicit support for developing research skills related to proposal development, sourcing information, use of technology, presentations (oral and written) etc. Many undergraduate units include opportunities for students to work on projects either individually or as a team. There are opportunities for students to focus on research through honours programs as well as in non-honours programs. For example, the 4 year degrees (e.g. in FNAS) give a major research project experience to all students, which contrasts to the specific entry requirement for entry into honours research programs.

Another issue for some disciplines is the large class size, especially at 3<sup>rd</sup> year level and above. Resourcing intensive research-focused teaching is expensive and may be made difficult by class size. Some disciplines have terminated electives with projects because they are too expensive and can be very time consuming, affecting the ability of staff to carry out their own research programs. Limitations may also include availability of tutors to supervise research activities. However, this does not seem to be a problem in other disciplines, even with large class sizes, so there are discipline-specific factors involved.

Involvement of postgraduate research students as tutors, demonstrators and other teaching roles (including co-supervision of research projects) enhances the opportunity for exposure of undergraduate students to an active research environment.

Overall, the aim is to

- (i) Develop an awareness of how knowledge is generated, and the current state of knowledge in a discipline
- (ii) Develop an undergraduate culture in which students see themselves as inquirers rather than simply as receivers
- (iii) Develop research expertise – e.g. through critical analysis of publications
- (iv) Provide practical research experience – methodology and technical aspects
- (v) Provide connections to a researcher / mentor
- (vi) Develop awareness of the social aspects of research and the costs.

## **2. Research-Teaching Nexus 'Across Programs'**

Enquiry-based learning (including 'research') delivers a different value of learning compared with learning which is not research-focused. The development of a research culture within a teaching program enables the discipline to be viewed from a research perspective but the relative importance of this is discipline-specific.

Research methodology is embedded in the teaching and assessment of some disciplines (e.g. psychology) from the beginning of first year and it is central to the structure of the major. Psychology could be used as a discipline-specific case study for comparison with other teaching areas.

Assignments could be reviewed to determine whether research expertise is assessed. This is applicable to all disciplines.

Resources are necessary to fully exploit the teaching-research nexus but some research activities are too expensive to permit undergraduate engagement. Research staff are often used in teaching programs at the expense of externally funded research projects. Without this support it would be impossible to resource student projects in some disciplines. A financial analysis of the costs of supporting the teaching-research nexus is necessary. What do we require and are we prepared to pay the full cost?

Undergraduate journal clubs or discussion groups led by researchers enhance the research culture for undergraduate students. Discussion to raise awareness of animal ethics or other specific research-related issues also needs to be included in research-based teaching programs to ensure the full range of relevant issues is addressed. Awareness of where these are delivered within the teaching program is necessary to avoid over-emphasis or duplication.

It is not possible to be fully aware of the dimensions of the teaching-research nexus at UWA without a detailed analysis of what occurs already within teaching programs (degrees, majors etc). The extent to which the research perspective of a discipline is embedded at various levels of teaching programs is not usually specified and assumptions about the depth value of research to teaching at UWA could be over estimated. Perhaps specific staff development is required to support establishment of a more clearly defined teaching-research nexus at UWA.

In order to establish an appropriate research culture for students according to their discipline, the concept would need to be dealt with at the level of degree, major or program, and not left to chance at unit level. It may not be necessary to establish similar depths of research cultures in all disciplines at undergraduate level.

In Education, students do research projects outside their own discipline with the aim of expanding their knowledge base. The process can also support understanding of the research process itself more explicitly.

Postgraduate coursework studies may include a research component through study of the literature, but the depth of the research experience would vary in the same way as occurs in undergraduate units, depending on discipline.

An additional aspect of research at degree, major or program level is the extent to which the research experience includes interactions outside the classroom (or laboratory or field site etc) as covered below.

## **RESEARCH EXPERIENCE OUTSIDE THE ‘CLASSROOM’**

Fourth year level students (Honours students and 4 year degree students (e.g. FNAS and Engineering)) all have their own research project which may include supervision or other support from industry or other organizations, such as government departments. International research links are also possible in a small number of instances or opportunities may be available to study abroad students. Some students are able to participate in short-term research visits to international research organizations which collaborate with UWA researchers.

Research centres have considerable resources and capability but if they are not directly connected to teaching units, their potential to influence undergraduate students is limited. There may be instances where there is unintentional separation of research from teaching.

It is important to specify the practical issues of research, not just theoretical aspects. In science-based subjects, researchers provide students with access to laboratory or field experience. However, it is possible to understand research methodologies without direct research experience. This may be appropriate in some disciplines.

Supervision is expensive and may not be universally available. Use of adjuncts and others in the community enables students to experience a lively research community with potential benefits to students and the research community.

## **CONCLUDING COMMENTS RELATED TO QUESTIONS RAISED BY THE REVIEW OF COURSE STRUCTURES AND ADDITIONAL ISSUES RAISED BY THIS WORKING PARTY**

1. *Should research activities by students be embedded in all UWA teaching and learning, including undergraduate students, and how should this be done?*

Research should be embedded in UWA teaching programs. It needs to be considered at program (degree/major) level as well as unit level, and there may be issues that are discipline specific.

2. *How do we align what we teach with what we research?*

Disciplines should take advantage of the research environment available to them to maximise students' exposure to the 'edge of knowledge'. Situations where there is currently a lack of alignment between teaching staff and research expertise could be reviewed, but this might be difficult for large classes or components of some disciplines. Teaching funds could be made available to problem-solve in this area.

3. *Should all degree courses offer capstone experiences?*

The experience of the 4 year degree in FNAS has shown benefits of allowing all students to participate in their own (24 point) research project. In this situation, discussion continues as to whether research projects should be compulsory for all students, almost all students conclude at the end of their project that it was worthwhile. However, the cost of enabling all students to conduct an independent (supervised) research project almost

certainly requires additional support from funded research and/or more access to willing supervisors external to UWA.

4. *How can our courses appropriately reflect the research expertise of our staff?*

Decisions need to be made at program (degree/major) level about what aspects of existing research expertise should be included in courses. Experience of research can be included in teaching programs without covering all areas of expertise.

5. *How do we allocate credit to students who achieve a research publication in an undergraduate degree?*

Research publications which may arise at the end of an honours/research project or in special circumstances at earlier stages of the degree greatly strengthen a student's ability to apply for scholarships or other awards, and do not necessarily need to be used in allocating credit. Furthermore, the timetable for publishing differs greatly between disciplines so publishing in journals (or other media) which process manuscripts slowly could disadvantage a student compared with organizations with rapid publishing procedures. Nevertheless, should a student publish work during the course of an undergraduate degree program, this could be acknowledged on the academic transcript, in the same way that prizes and awards currently are included.

6. *If the link between research and teaching were strengthened, what would this do to the 'perception of UWA'?*

If students had more exposure to research during their undergraduate programs, a greater number might be encouraged to enrol in honours, thereby extending their capacity to experience more opportunities for independent learning. However, the implications for funding a higher exposure to research in teaching need to be investigated. It is important that we articulate "research" as the essential survival skill of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, enabling graduates to access, interpret and use new knowledge throughout their lives, rather than conceiving research as an elitist engagement in essentially very esoteric knowledge.

7. *What is the best option for high achieving students?*

There is a possibility that some disciplines do not maximise the exposure of high achieving students to research methodology and/or practical research experience. A review of the dimensions of the research culture within undergraduate programs could include evaluation of special research opportunities for high achieving students.

8. *Is the current arrangement appropriate for double degree students (e.g. do we currently deliver a suitable research focus for these students?)*

Students who enrol in double degrees may be disadvantaged by a lack of depth of exposure to research in one or more of their majors. An investigation of the depth of research offered in each area for students in double degrees could determine whether the combined program (which involves removal of some units) reduces the depth of the research component.

9. *How are employers included in the discussion of the teaching-research nexus?*

The view of employers could be sought in some disciplines for their comments on the depth of the research exposure in teaching programs.

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## **Appendix 10**

### **UWA Educational Principles**

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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.



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## Appendix 11

### Guidelines for developing the Bachelor of Philosophy (Hons) course

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The BPhil (Hons) is designed to enhance the University's attractiveness to students of exceptional brilliance, and its reputation for providing education at the highest international standards of excellence.

The rules recommended in this report with regard to all other undergraduate degrees, such as the structure of majors and the requirement for broadening units, will apply also to the BPhil (Hons). Within that framework it is intended that BPhil (Hons) students may have greater flexibility than usual to negotiate individually some aspects of their study program (e.g. through affiliation with major research groups), and this will make it all the more important for the University to provide careful quality assurance in relation to course approval and teaching arrangements.

The "especially intensive research focus" envisaged as its defining aspect of the BPhil (Hons) must be given particular substance, clearly specified. It could involve special seminars (e.g. on specific examples of industry/innovation linkages), small-group tutorial support, and semi-independent project/assignment work. However, as entry to the program on the basis of TER is only provisional, with confirmed enrolment at the beginning of second year, the first year's activities should not be of a kind that would disadvantage anyone admitted after that year.

In developing the BPhil (Hons) course and formulating the regulations for it, it is envisaged that the University will ensure:

- That the BPhil (Hons) degree regulations are uniform across all participating faculties.
- That the BSc (Advanced Science), currently offered through the Faculties of Life and Physical Sciences, will be rescinded and replaced with a BPhil (Hons).
- That students enrolling in the BPhil (Hons) will have access to research-intensive experiences, a multi-disciplinary group project, scholarships to cover a study-abroad period, and intensive high-level communication training.
- That any studies completed specifically for a BPhil (Hons) course in addition to unit requirements will be duly recognised on a student's academic transcript.
- That the TER required for entry will be 98 or above, but with the possibility of specific additional pre-requisites depending upon the desired major.
- That students will be permitted to apply to transfer into the BPhil (Hons) upon achieving a Level 1 weighted average mark (WAM) of 80 or above.
- That, to remain in the BPhil (Hons), students will be required to achieve a Level 1 and Level 2 WAM of 80 or above, and a Level 3 WAM of 75 or above.
- That at Level 1, all BPhil (Hons) students will undertake a residential program (e.g. four weeks before commencement of semester 1, or for a semester, or for the whole year).
- That BPhil (Hons) students will be offered ongoing affiliation with a University college (involving certain support privileges), plus an offer of a scholarship-subsidised residential place.

- That at Levels 2 and 3, BPhil (Hons) students will complete a research project and undertake studies in research methods and project management.
- That at Levels 2, 3 and 4, students will undertake some form of oral assessment and demonstrate outstanding skills in both spoken and written communication.
- That all BPhil (Hons) students will take at least one unit in a language other than English.
- That at Level 2 or 3, students will undertake a semester of study abroad (including a research placement) and be offered a scholarship to assist with the costs.
- That the study abroad arrangement will include not only scholarship assistance and academic affiliation but also appropriate educational preparation – e.g., where appropriate, special intensive LOTE tutoring at Levels 1-2 as a basis for a study abroad semester in Level 3.
- That the Level 4 research thesis will be valued at the equivalent of four units and be approximately 15,000 words in length.
- That BPhil (Hons) students who attain consistently outstanding results be offered special incentives (e.g. scholarship support, advanced standing and fast-track project approval) to encourage them to proceed to postgraduate studies.
- That the University conduct a carefully planned marketing effort to clarify the BPhil (Hons) concept, explain its benefits, and make it attractive, emphasising that the kind of research experience it includes will have not only great academic prestige but also great practical value in the workplace.

## **Appendix 12**

### **Draft Constitution for the Board of Coursework Studies**

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This Board operates in accordance with the Principles and Rules for the Operation of Committees available at

<http://www.secretariat.uwa.edu.au/home/policies/commconst>.

Members must act in accordance with the University Committee Members' Code of Conduct available at <http://www.secretariat.uwa.edu.au/home/policies/commconst>.

#### **Position of the Board within the University of Western Australia**

1. The Board of Coursework Studies is a standing committee of the Academic Council.

#### **Role**

2. The role of the Board is to –
  - (1) consider and make recommendations to Academic Council on policy matters relating to the structure and content of undergraduate and postgraduate coursework;
  - (2) receive and consider proposals from faculties for the introduction of, and major changes to, coursework units, majors and courses, and make recommendations to Academic Council on these and associated policy matters.

#### **Membership**

3.
  - (1) The Board comprises:
    - a. the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) (as Chair);
    - b. the Chair of the Academic Board;
    - c. the Deputy Chair of the Academic Board;
    - d. the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning);
    - e. the Executive Director (Academic Services) and Registrar;
    - f. the Academic Secretary;
    - g. the President of the Guild of Undergraduates;
    - h. five members appointed by Academic Council from within the University and being staff from each of the five areas of knowledge represented by the undergraduate degrees offered by the University; and
    - i. two members appointed by Academic Council from within the University and being staff with expertise in relation to postgraduate studies.
  - (2) The Academic Secretary is also the Executive Officer to the Board.
  - (3) The Board may invite persons to attend meetings to provide advice on specific areas or agenda items.

#### **Member's absence and nominee**

- 4
  - (1) In the event that a member is unable to attend a meeting that member may nominate a person (nominee) to attend that meeting in their stead.
  - (2) Nominations must be in writing and received by the Executive Officer prior to the relevant meeting.

#### **Terms of Office**

- 5 The term of office of members appointed under 3(1)(h) or (i) is two years.
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**Eligibility for a Second or Subsequent Term of Office**

6. At the end of a term of office, members appointed under 3(1)(h) or (i) are eligible to be appointed again but must not serve for more than two consecutive terms.

**Quorum**

7. The quorum for the Board is half the current membership plus one.

**Decisions**

8.

(1) All questions that come before the Board are decided by a majority of the members present and voting.

(2) The chair of the meeting has an ordinary vote and a casting vote.

**Frequency of meetings**

9. The Board normally meets once each month in the months of February to November.