UWA FUTURE FRAMEWORK IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

Respective roles of the Board of Coursework Studies and proposed Interim Boards of Studies for new undergraduate degrees

Purposes of this paper

- To clarify the role of the Board of Coursework Studies in relation to faculty responsibilities
- To propose an additional process and structure for course development and decision-making through Boards of Studies at the inter-faculty level

Background: Board of Coursework Studies

The Review of Course Structures report *Education for Tomorrow’s World* recommended (Rec. 8) that “a Board of Coursework Studies be established with responsibility to receive and consider proposals from faculties for the introduction of (or significant changes to) first-cycle and second-cycle coursework units, majors and courses, and make recommendations to Academic Council on these and associated policy matters” – and that its constitution be as indicated in an Appendix to the report (reproduced in an Appendix to the present paper).

The following points summarise the rationale for establishing this new body:

- A Board of Coursework Studies (BCS) is necessary because the University must ensure that future courses have educational integrity within the new framework, meet quality assurance standards, and align with the University’s strategic directions.
- The University will require high-level policy advice, based on comprehensive data analysis and reports, relating to the design, operation and evaluation of undergraduate and postgraduate courses within the new framework.
- Specific proposals for many units, majors and courses will need close scrutiny at the policy and strategic level prior to submission to Academic Council in final form for legislative approval.
- The paperwork associated with this deliberative process is inevitably lengthy and detailed. It would be unrealistic to expect all members of Academic Council to have sufficient time to consider properly all aspects of all detailed proposals between receiving the agenda and attending the meeting.
- Advice to Council from a group that has already considered the proposals from a University-wide perspective can add substantial value to the process.

Some people have asked how BCS will be able to “ensure the educational integrity” of courses when it cannot possess enough disciplinary expertise to assess faculty claims regarding proposed majors and other curriculum matters, especially when faculties disagree. The answer is that BCS does not need specific discipline-based expertise within its membership in order to evaluate the cogency of reports and
submissions. It will comprise a range of experienced academics, able to gather good information and assess arguments judiciously. Faculty representatives may attend when relevant items are being considered.

However, it is vital that the responsibility of faculties for devising and delivering courses be fully recognised. Although the role envisaged for BCS will facilitate high-quality curriculum development, it cannot include generating proposals, undertaking preliminary negotiation between schools and faculties on the majors to be offered within the new undergraduate courses, or deciding on related course development matters such as prerequisites, complementary units, and broadening units. These responsibilities require a different process and structure, as described below.

Proposed Interim Boards of Studies for undergraduate degrees

The recommendations of the Review of Course Structures see undergraduate degrees as belonging to the University rather than being the preserve of faculties. The recommended membership and constitution of the Board of Coursework Studies reflects this changed emphasis on course ownership. Nevertheless, faculties will continue to serve an important role, not only in the teaching of courses but also in proposing majors and other aspects of the new structures, and in carrying out duties associated with boards of examiners. Therefore it is important that faculties are given voice in the development, implementation and quality assurance of new courses. To this end, it is proposed:

- that an Interim Board of Studies be constituted for each of the five undergraduate degrees (those that correspond to the four “areas of knowledge” plus the B.Phil);
- that Deans (or their nominees) of those faculties that are contributing degree-specific majors to the respective degree courses, or that are recognised as having relevant expertise, be members of relevant Interim Boards of Studies;
- that other members of the Interim Boards of Studies be nominees of the Chair of Academic Board, the Registrar, the Guild President and the Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor;
- that the Interim Boards of Studies assist in implementing the relevant recommendations of the Review of Course Structures, particularly by recommending to the Board of Coursework Studies
  a. degree-specific majors for the relevant degree;
  b. embedding the UWA Educational Principles in degree-specific majors;
  c. pre-requisites, co-requisites and related matters;
  d. broadening units from within the relevant ‘area of knowledge’;
  e. articulation arrangements;
  f. annual course reports, incorporating performance and quality data;
  g. other matters as referred to the Interim Boards of Studies by the Board of Coursework Studies;
- that the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor proceed as soon as possible to establish the Interim Boards of Studies in consultation with the Deans, the Chair of Academic Board, the Registrar, and the Guild President.

The Interim Boards of Studies will provide an avenue for faculty input and
scrutiny in relation to undergraduate courses. Faculties will have more direct control over postgraduate (Cycle 2) courses, and will make submissions in respect of these courses to the Board of Coursework Studies. This proposal means that faculties will have input into BCS deliberations in relation to both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2.

Benefits of the proposed structure

This separation of processes, with distinctive but complementary roles for the Board of Coursework Studies at the University level and Interim Boards of Studies at the inter-faculty level, has significant practical benefits:

- It gives Deans an opportunity to work together (and with others who have relevant responsibilities) in a way that acknowledges their right to negotiate directly with one another as academic leaders on curriculum matters that carry significant resource implications for their respective faculties.

- It allows BCS to serve as a 'house of review' for proposals from the Interim Boards of Studies, preserving its independence on any matters that may require interpretation or adjudication outside the framework of faculty interests.
• It provides an opportunity to test this prototype Board of Studies arrangement on an interim basis with a view to developing and refining it for later incorporation into the administrative structure of the University.

Appendix

NOTE: The draft constitution is reproduced from Appendix 12 (Vol. 2) of the Review of Course Structures report, *Education for Tomorrow’s World*, and has tracked change amendments to reflect -

(a) proposed changes to BCS membership recommended by the Implementation Committee and flowing from the excision of the B.Health from the new group of undergraduate degrees, namely 3.(1) (h) now refers to four rather than five members representing the areas of knowledge, and 3.(1) (i) now refers to three rather than two members representing expertise in postgraduate studies; and

(b) the proposed introduction of the Interim Boards of Studies to make recommendations to the Board of Coursework Studies on the introduction of, and major changes to, coursework units, majors and courses (for first-cycle degrees).

The Chair’s designation has also been changed to reflect the University’s decision not to fill the DVC(E) position for the foreseeable future.

Draft Constitution for the Board of Coursework Studies

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 –

(a) consider and make recommendations to Academic Council on policy matters relating to the structure and content of undergraduate and postgraduate coursework;

(b) receive and consider proposals from faculties and the Interim Boards of Studies 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 Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (as Chair);
(b) the Chair of the Academic Board;
(c) the Deputy Chair of the Academic Board;
(d) the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching & Learning);
(e) the Executive Director (Academic Services) and Registrar;
(f) the Academic Secretary;
(g) the President of the Guild of Undergraduates;
(h) five-four members appointed by Academic Council from within the University and being staff from each of the five-four areas of knowledge represented by the undergraduate degrees offered by the University drawn respectively from the Interim Boards of Studies; and
(i) two-three 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.

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.