The University of Western Australia
Report to Academic Board, September 2010
New Courses: Progress with Implementation

New undergraduate majors and units approved

- The development and approval process for the new undergraduate courses is continuing on schedule. It began in August 2009 with Expressions of Interest (Phase 1) for majors in the three-year degrees: Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Commerce, Bachelor of Design and Bachelor of Science. This called for draft concept plans of each major, guided by the structural requirements of the new framework, so that proponents could receive feedback from the relevant Interim Board of Studies before developing the submissions in detail (Phase 2) on the new Callista Approval and Publishing System (CAPS).

- At Phase 2, the University received a total of 1033 fully developed proposals across the four degrees. These comprised 67 proposals for majors, 63 for end-on Honours courses, and 903 for units. Of the unit proposals, 103 were not components of the proposed majors but were unattached electives, including many proposed Category A broadening units.

- Of the 67 proposed majors, 56 have so far been accepted, either without any change or subject to relatively small revision. Of those needing to be resubmitted, most have deviated from the structure previously approved at Phase 1.

- Approval of new Honours course structures is less urgent than for the three-year courses but that process is also well under way.

- As majors and units are progressively accepted by the respective Boards, they are moving on through the University’s formal system of approval. Academic Council approved a large number of majors and units at its August meeting, and most of the rest are expected to reach that culminating stage over the next two months.

- Academic and professional staff members across the University have expended a great deal of effort in preparing the Phase 2 submissions. The justification for this effort will be evident in the benefits that the new structure brings not only to students (making choices simpler, providing flexibility, striking a balance between breadth and depth, opening more equitable pathways, enhancing research and communication skills) but also to staff (achieving greater efficiency and effectiveness in course delivery, economising on unit provision, following clear and consistent course rules, drawing students from wider catchments, strengthening the nexus between teaching and research).

- The orderly submission and evaluation of so many detailed proposals would have been impossible without an extraordinary amount of administrative support from Student Services and Governance Services, including the complex tasks of developing CAPS functionality and establishing Sharepoint mechanisms for the reviewing of proposals.
Alignment of existing postgraduate courses with new framework

- In 2009 there was an audit of the rules for all existing postgraduate courses, to gauge the extent to which these aligned with recommendations approved by Academic Council. Various discrepancies were identified in such matters as admission criteria, articulation arrangements, unit values and course size. Faculties were asked to align course rules with the new structural principles, or else put forward a case for allowing the non-alignment to continue.

- Faculties responded in detail to the questions raised by the audit, and the Board of Coursework Studies recently considered these responses. The Chair of the Board of Coursework Studies has since written to Deans indicating a few matters that require further attention. When the process of alignment and supplementary reporting is completed, the Board of Coursework Studies will advise Academic Council on the particulars of any recommended exceptions.

- It is pleasing to see that most faculties have used the alignment exercise as a stimulus to restructure their postgraduate offerings, resulting in much greater consistency and efficiency.

Marketing and communications in progress

- Since its launch in May, the New Courses website has averaged nearly 300 visitors a day. Most visits (73%) originate from within Australia, and the next largest groups are (in order) from Singapore, Malaysia, China and the UK.

- The "Knowledge for a Changing World" folder, enclosing various leaflets, has gone to about 1500 stakeholders within WA including secondary schools, members of parliament, and our top 100 business and industry contacts. A further 4000 copies have been distributed internationally.

- 15,000 copies of the "mini-guide", with details on majors and prerequisites, were initially disseminated to prospective students, schools, and career expos. A further 10,000 copies of a slightly revised edition were printed for Open Day and other occasions; more than half of these have already been used. An international version of this booklet is currently being prepared for distribution to 3200 overseas agents and at international education expos.

- Leaflets have been produced for target groups: for example 11,000 copies of one with an industry focus were enclosed with WA Business News in July.

- Printed for Open Day were 2,000 copies of a Pocket Guide for staff and 10,000 copies of a leaflet primarily intended for current Year 12 students and anyone commencing or deferring UG study at UWA in 2011.

- Promotion of the new courses to domestic stakeholders is also continuing through many meetings with career advisers, school principals, and parent groups; in newsletters and websites; and at faculty-based events for industry and partners. There has been an overwhelmingly positive response.

- Promotion of the new courses to international stakeholders includes meetings with IDP and other agents, regular mail-outs, and a series of launch events.

- Internal communication to staff and students is continuing through several channels. A communication strategy has been developed for current students in association with the Student Transition Working Party.

Winthrop Professor Ian Reid, Senior Academic Reviewer