Much accomplished, much still to do

While the implementation process continues to go according to plan and we are steadily meeting our timeline targets, the Implementation Committee recognises that with just over a year to go before the new courses begin there can be no room for complacency.

The Strategic Risk Register for New Courses 2012, established early in the implementation project, is regularly reviewed on the basis of appropriate consultation. It identifies and rates specific risks, and indicates a range of mitigating actions. No unpleasant surprises have emerged to date. In general the risks seem predictable and manageable, but the monitoring process will remain important throughout the months ahead.

Previous reports to Academic Board during the last year have provided information on several aspects of implementation. These include:

- the evaluation and approval of majors and units for the new streamlined undergraduate and Honours courses,
- the structural alignment of existing postgraduate courses with the University’s changed requirements,
- the work being done by central administrative areas such as Student Services and Governance Services to underpin the academic developments, and
- the various kinds of marketing and communications through which stakeholders are being kept informed about New Courses 2012.

Against that background of progress and achievement, the following list of substantial tasks for 2011 should be noted.

2011 work priorities include:

1. Managing transitional workload issues in some faculties.
   The next year or two will be more difficult for those faculties that are undergoing extensive academic reforms at the same time as they are responding to unusual resource pressures. Human Resources will continue to provide assistance where appropriate.

2. Adjusting budgetary arrangements.
   The proportion of postgraduate students within the total load will increase significantly when professional courses in fields such as Law, Medicine, Engineering and Dentistry move up from the undergraduate level. Teaching at the higher level will incur additional costs, which the Planning and Budget process will need to take into account.

3. Ensuring a good fit between classroom capacity and teaching needs.
   A second round of modelling of the impact of NC2012 on space and timetabling requirements is being undertaken in the light of more accurate forecasting of class numbers. Enrolments in some units may be larger than at present, but it does not follow that the University will need to create more teaching spaces in the short or medium term. Other remedies are available, such as video-linked
classrooms, repeat lectures, recorded lectures, more flexible scheduling, and capped numbers for certain units.

4. Providing options and support to all students during transition.

A report from the Student Transition Working Party, based on extensive faculty consultation, has been endorsed by Academic Council. This report proposes detailed arrangements for ensuring that students who are completing courses that will be phased out should not suffer any disadvantage during the transitional period; that transition to new courses will be voluntary but encouraged where feasible; that special consideration will be given to the educational needs of students not making the transition to the New Courses; and that no student commencing in 2011 should be disadvantaged merely because of his or her year of enrolment. Faculties recognise a need to deploy adequate resources for such things as developing study plans and checking enrolments.

5. Establishing a “hub and spokes” model for student advising.

Recognizing that the new undergraduate courses will be University-wide and that the broadening component requires students to take units from more than one degree, the Student Advice Working Party has recommended a ‘hub and spokes’ approach to advising. The central hub (both physical and virtual) will provide information, frontline guidance and referral to specialist services. The spokes will comprise a series of faculty-situated advising centres. There is support for the concept but the details will need to be fleshed out through an ongoing consultative process to ensure that implementation of the model is consistent, efficient and harmonious.


As primary administrative responsibility for undergraduate courses moves from faculties to the University as a whole, it will be necessary to make a number of changes to some existing mechanisms. These are likely to include the functions of Boards of Examiners, processes for considering annual course reports that incorporate performance and quality data, and delegation arrangements for handling academic progression and course transfer applications.

7. Ensuring that community service opportunities are well regulated and recorded.

The aim of increasing students’ engagement with the wider community through service activities is being pursued through a staged process. These activities need to be professionally supported and formally regulated in accordance with national guidelines for involving volunteers in not-for-profit organisations. To this end the University is working in close partnership with the Student Guild, which has a joint venture with Volunteering WA. An important step is to develop an appropriate way of recording a student’s community service experience and recognising it on the academic transcript. Career Hub software is adaptable to this purpose and an implementation plan is currently being prepared.

8. Gaining government approval for key changes.

We still await formal government confirmation that domestic students will receive Commonwealth Supported Places (CSPs) on admission to a professional-entry postgraduate course. Further, we are seeking agreement that CSPs for various other postgraduate courses in areas of national importance (e.g. Physics and Maths) will also be HECS-based. Discussions with DEEWR were delayed by the Federal elections but have resumed and we anticipate a positive decision.

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