UWA NEW COURSES IMPLEMENTATION
Progress report for Academic Board, November 2011

THE HUB AND SPOKES MODEL FOR STUDENT ADVISING

1. Background

Successful implementation of the new courses will be critically dependent on new arrangements for student advising. The experience of the University of Melbourne has underlined the importance of this.

The need to construct a somewhat different way of advising undergraduate students is a logical consequence of the fact that five degree courses managed by University-wide processes will replace more than 70 managed by the faculties. All students will now take four broadening units, with many completing a second major outside the area of knowledge in which their degree-specific major is taught. It follows that the structure and practice of student advising must be simplified and standardised so that students receive equitable treatment, efficient service and accurate advice wherever they seek it.

A Student Advice Working Party was established to plan the necessary arrangements. Reporting in mid-2010, the working party recommended a Hub and Spokes approach to student advising. A project under the aegis of Student Services was then established to deliver this model, recognising that the basic structure needed for it already exists within UWA:

- The central hub comprises a range of services offered by the International Centre, Graduate Research School and Scholarships Office, and several sections within Student Services (e.g. Admissions Centre, Student Support and Student Administration);
- The spokes are the student offices based in faculties and the School of Indigenous Studies.

Development of the model has focused on:

- Strengthening and formalising relationships between central and faculty-based services;
- Adopting a common set of principles and practices to guide approaches to student advising;
- Developing a range of standard course information templates and other support material, in print and on-line forms.

Over the last six months, details have been fleshed out through a consultative process with senior advisers and others across the University to ensure that implementation of the model is appropriate. This has involved a series of workshops, staff forums and other meetings. There has been steady progress in formulating policies, procedures and guidelines to support the model. Also well advanced are training programs and a set of best practice guides for advisers, along with redesign of student websites and the handbook to provide online comprehensive course advice.
2. How the model works

Allocating students to a student office

Under the existing structure, a student’s course determines the primary source of advising. For example, a student enrolled in the current BA receives course advice from the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Student Office, as this Faculty is responsible for the entire degree. Under the new course structure, the University is responsible for the degree and several faculties offer majors within the new BA. Because of such changes, students will now be allocated to an advising office.

For students enrolled in the BSc, BA, BDes, or BCom, the faculty responsible for their degree-specific major will be the advising faculty. But students are not required to nominate their degree-specific major when enrolling for the first time. Therefore, a process has been developed to assign an appropriate advising faculty for students who have not yet nominated their degree-specific major.

Once the student nominates a degree-specific major, the allocated faculty for course advice will be checked and, if necessary, amended. The allocated faculty will be shown on the internal transcript and displayed in studentConnect, staffConnect, and askUWA. Reporting on students by allocated advising faculty will be possible using reports within staffConnect.

Respective responsibilities of the hub and the spokes

The advising framework itself has not changed with the introduction of the New Courses. In most respects, the hub and spokes model reinforces the current roles of each of the relevant offices across the University.

But the model does represent a change of approach to student advising. Some of these changes are evident in the Hub and Spokes Principles, devised to guide the model’s development. These principles include, for example:

- ‘High Engagement, Low Dependency’ – advisers will provide information and support to enable students to take ownership of their studies and make informed decisions.
- ‘Avoiding the Tennis-Ball Effect’ – advisers will try to resolve queries at the first point of contact, and when referral is necessary, the process will be simple and consistent.
- ‘Accessible and Comprehensive Resources’ – advisers and students will have ready access to accurate and complete resources for advising.

The hub will offer:

- Procedural guidance and administrative assistance (e.g., how and when to enrol; how to interpret the timetable; how to register for activities associated with a unit enrolment; how to apply for Youth Allowance, etc.).
- Front-line course advising aimed particularly at students transitioning to university (e.g., explaining course structures, components and rules; showing students how to access study plans and other resources).
• Assistance with student support arrangements (e.g. scholarships, transitioning programs and pastoral care).

The spokes will:
• Work with the central hub in providing procedural guidance and general advice.
• Provide specialist advising about particular majors and the pros and cons of various enrolment choices.
• Work in partnership with specialist services located in the hub (e.g. counselling, study abroad and student exchange).

In summary, the premise of the hub and spokes model is that everyone who deals with a student is an adviser and has an opportunity to enhance the student’s experience. Guidelines are being formulated on when to advise and when to refer.

3. Resources to support advising
The following materials have been developed are or being developed:
• NC2012 undergraduate online handbook – the authoritative source of course information.
• Course study plans – visual representations of the structure of majors, showing necessary components and popular combinations.
• Best practice guides – short ‘how to’ summaries to support staff in their advising roles.
• University-wide system for recording advice – using askUWA to register all channels of advice.
• Advising website – an online staff repository of useful information for advisers.

4. Launch seminars
In November the Hub and Spokes model will be officially launched through a series of professional development seminars for the (approx.) 200 staff members who have direct contact with students in an advising capacity.

Documentation that enlarges on the points mentioned above will be provided to participants at that time.

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