UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG
FACULTY OF INFORMATICS EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of Meeting 1/03 held at 1.30pm on Thursday 27 March 2003 in Building 36 Room 303.

Present: Dr A Porter (Acting Chair), Professor J Cooper, Professor P Croll, Associate Professor N Gray, Ms B James, Dr YX Lin, Mr J Lukasiak, Dr C McPhail, Ms A Meldrum, Dr I Piper, Dr G Trott, Dr A Worthy and Associate Professor T Wysocki.

In Attendance: Ms K Sheridan (secretary).

1. PRELIMINARY BUSINESS

*1.1 Apologies/Leave of Absence

Apologies were received from: Mr R Caladine.
The following members are currently on leave: Associate Professor F Naghdy.

*1.2 Arrangement of Agenda

1.2.1 Items 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 5.2, 6.3, 6.4 and 7 were starred (*) for discussion.

1.2.2 A motion to adopt the draft resolutions for the unstared items was carried.

*1.3 Confirmation of the Minutes of the Meeting of 28 November 2002

The Committee confirmed the minutes of Meeting 6/02 held on 28 November 2002.

*1.4 Business Arising from the Previous Minutes

1.4.1 Master of Digital Multimedia

The Master of Digital Multimedia was finally approved by the Vice Chancellor before session commenced. The delay in approval was due to University-level concerns about the degree title.

1.4.2 Bachelor of Science (Physics) – Bachelor of Mathematics

The Faculty of Engineering has submitted the new double degree to Senate Standing Committee for approval at the next meeting on April 2.

1.4.3 2003 Educational Strategies Development Fund (ESDF) Grants

Six individual/small team applications and three Faculty and University wide applications were successful in the 2003 round of ESDF Grants. Special note should be taken of the following successful applications, which involve the Faculty of Informatics:
**Individual/small team**
Faculty of Arts, Academic Services Division, Faculty of Informatics - "Education and employment: Arts degrees, internships and graduate attributes", Glenn Mitchell and Robbie Collins, Joint Principal Coordinators - $4,500.

**Faculty and University wide**
CEDIR, Faculty of Informatics - "CUPID 2 (Collaborative, User-Produced, Internet Documents 2)", Richard Caladine, Principal Coordinator - $20,000.

Faculties of Education, Commerce, Informatics and Engineering - "Illuminating the attributes of a Wollongong graduate with effective online and face to face teaching and learning strategies", Garry Hoban, Principal Coordinator - $27,000.

Academic Services Division/Faculties of Science, Informatics, Commerce and Engineering - "Development and evaluation of Faculty specific peer assisted study programs", Sally Rogan, Principal Coordinator - $27,000.

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**1.4.4 Pass Rates**
The Chair noted that there was no conclusion to, or follow up from, the discussion at the last meeting regarding pass rates. The Chair suggested the formation of a subcommittee/working party to look at the issue in an effort to target and resolve the problem. It was decided that Dr Geoff Trott and Dr Anne Porter would gather information regarding pass rates and report back to the next FEC meeting.

**ACTION: Dr Trott, Dr Porter and Faculty Officer.**

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*2. REPORT FROM THE CHAIR – VERBAL REPORT*

The Chair spoke briefly about issues related to teaching and learning in the Faculty, and the need for the FEC to play a more pro-active role in dealing with these issues.

**2.1 University Planning Conference, February 2003**

The planning conference focused on three primary issues:
- Research
- Internationalisation
- Faculty Planning Process and QA

The third point is most relevant to FEC. The impending Quality Audit has raised issues of ‘closing the loop’: we set our objectives but we need to be able to provide evidence of how we achieve our objectives. To assist with this process, a new Faculty Planning process has been introduced, and the Faculty of Education submitted a trial report to the planning conference.

**2.2 University Education Committee (UEC)**

A COGNOS cube was demonstrated at the last UEC meeting. The cube provides the ability to pull out pass and fail rates for subjects, cross classify on a host of features, year, sex etc. The Chair suggested that this could be a useful resource for looking at pass and fail rates, as agreed to at 1.4.4.
2.3 Learning and Teaching Strategic Plan

The Chair met with a Subcommittee of UEC chaired by Damian Considine on Monday to discuss the draft Learning and Teaching Strategic Plan 2003-2006 (see Item 6.4 of agenda). It appears that FECs are not required to do anything at this stage in relation to the draft plan, however, there is some concern about how FEC is integrated into the university structure in the plan.

However, faculties are expected to formulate teaching and learning objectives as part of the planning process. The Dean spoke to the issue, noting that the Faculty Planning and Resource Report includes teaching and learning objectives, however it does not drill down to the implementation level. The Dean noted that FEC should formulate/provide input into the objectives and then produce a faculty teaching and learning plan for the implementation of these objectives.

The Committee agreed that a working group should be formed to look at teaching and learning objectives and an implementation plan. The following members agreed to form such a working group:

- Ms Bronwyn James (Learning Development)
- Dr Ian Piper (SITACS)
- Dr Anne Porter (SMAAS, Acting Chair)
- Dr Geoff Trott (SECTE, Sub Dean)

It was agreed that this larger group should also consider the action from 1.4.4.

**ACTION: Working Group to meet with Dean and Executive Officer to obtain detail on Planning and Resource Report requirements.**

2.4 RAPP Report

The Chair noted that the RAPP Revision Schedule (item 5.1) may require action from the Faculty. It was agreed that the working group, formed under 2.3, should also review the report and revision schedule and determine what input is required from the Faculty and how to proceed.

The Sub-Dean noted that there had already been a request for information regarding which subjects include mid-session examinations.

**ACTION: Working Group to also review RAPP report and determine input required by Faculty.**

3. REPORT FROM CEDIR/LEARNING DEVELOPMENT UNIT

No reports received.
4. SCHOOL ITEMS

SCHOOL OF ELECTRICAL, COMPUTER & TELECOMMUNICATIONS ENGINEERING

*4.1 New Course Proposal: Graduate Diploma in Internet Technology

The structure of the proposed degree was discussed, and the following changes were suggested on the recommendation of SECTE representatives:

- The inclusion of a sentence that indicates students must complete a recommended program of study approved by the Head of School. This was deemed necessary to ensure that students lacking in a particular background (eg programming, mathematics or technology) can be directed towards appropriate subjects.
- Inclusion of MATH141, MATH142, STAT131, MATH187 and MATH188

After some discussion, the committee determined that the following subjects should also be added to the list of subjects:

- MATH121, MATH162, STAT231 and a choice of STAT252 or STAT131 or STAT151.

Resolved (FEC03/01)

That FEC recommend that the proposal for the Graduate Diploma in Internet Technology, with amendments as listed in the minutes, be forwarded to the Secretariat for approval by fast-tracking.

SCHOOL OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY & COMPUTER SCIENCE

*4.2 Revised Course Proposal: Master of Computer Studies

Dr Piper spoke to the proposal and noted that that major change is a variation in length from a 48 to a 72 credit point program and a restructure to ensure that students undertake a core of basic programming skills. It was also noted that the restructure has been contemplated for some time, however the recent change in ACS accreditation guidelines, and the subsequent dramatic decrease in enrolment numbers, has increased the need for a fast-tracked proposal.

It was agreed that it should be clearly stated in the course structure that any student who demonstrates competencies in one or more core subjects will be required to replace that subject with a subject of equal value chosen from Elective lists A or B.

It was agreed that it should clearly state that completion of a Master of Computer Studies, with a 65 (Credit) average, is sufficient for entry to the MCompSc, MElecComm, MInfoTech, MDigMMedia and MITM degrees, subject to meeting any additional entry requirements. Entry to other Masters degrees may be considered.

It was noted that no extra subjects should be added to the program, to eliminate the proliferation of several subject codes for what is effectively the same subject.
Resolved (FEC03/02)
That FEC recommend that the proposal for the Master of Computer Studies, with amendments as listed in the minutes, be forwarded to the Secretariat for approval by fast-tracking.

4.3 Minor Course Proposal: Master of Electronic Commerce

Resolved (FEC03/03)
That FEC recommend that the proposal for a minor change to the Master of Electronic Commerce degree be forwarded to Academic Senate Standing Committee for approval.

*4.4 Minor Course Proposal: E-Commerce Major in BCompSc & BInfoTech

After some confusion regarding the origins of this proposed change, SITACS representatives requested that the item be deferred until the next FEC meeting.

4.5 BCompSc: Addition of Rule

Resolved (FEC03/04)
That FEC recommend the addition of the following rule to the Bachelor of Computer Science course requirements, from 2004:

8. BUSS110 will not count towards the 144 credit points required for the award of this degree.

4.6 Ross Nealon & Richard Miller Prizes

Resolved (FEC03/05)
That FEC recommend that the value of the Ross Nealon and Richard Miller prizes be changed to $1 000 for each prize.

5. REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT PRACTICES AND PROCESSES (RAPP)

5.1 RAPP Revision Schedule – Action Plan & Updates

For Information

*5.2 Determining Honours Grades

Members briefly discussed the RAPP recommendations regarding simplification of the process of determining honours grades, and agreed, in principle, to a two-tier process (i.e. end-on Honours and a single model for 4-year prescribed courses). It was noted that there are advantages and disadvantages for each model, and that the nature of the particular degree also needs to be taken into account. For example, the current model used for the Bachelor of Information and Communication Technology degree is used to account for the multi-disciplinary nature of the program.
The Committee noted that the Faculty has not yet been asked formally for input into the discussions at University level, however, when asked for input, the Dean and FEC Chair would like to provide a well-thought out Faculty-wide response/solution which covers all 4-year prescribed courses in the Faculty.

With this in mind, FEC recommended that each School review the methods used to calculate honours for 4-year prescribed degrees in their own School, and report back to FEC on the following:

- The method for determining honours grades most suited to the particular degree, keeping in mind the current attempt to rationalise the current complex system.
- Other acceptable methods, which may be agreed to for the purpose of simplifying the current complex system.

**Action:** Issue to be referred to Schools, for feedback to next FEC.

6. **GENERAL BUSINESS**

6.1 **OCTAL Awards**

*For Information:* nominations Close Monday 14 April. Please note that the Awards have been changed for 2003, with an award now available for each Faculty.

Nomination forms are available at:

6.2 **Grievance Resolution Procedures for Students**

**Resolved (FEC03/06)**

That FEC recommend that the attached grievance procedures for students are placed on the Faculty website, subject to endorsement by the EEO Unit and the Dean of Students.

6.3 **Peer Review of Teaching**

The Committee first discussed any alternative peer review processes already in place within each of the Schools:

- The Chair tabled a document from SMAAS outlining the appointment of an assessor for each subject and the duties of the assessor. It was noted that, although this process is primarily for the purpose of reviewing assessment and examinations, the process does include scope for an informal review of teaching.
- SITACS representatives noted that there is an informal process in place in their School. This involves the allocation of teaching mentors who attend some classes and provide notes directly to the lecturer. There are no records kept of who has been mentored in this way, as it is considered essential that the process be informal rather than directed towards career development or promotion.
- SECTE representatives noted that all new staff members are allocated a mentor.
Members raised the following concerns about the proposed scheme:

- It states it is for individuals wanting to learn more about their teaching, but it is really the University that wants individuals to learn more about their own teaching.
- Peer review is more effective at an informal level.
- Although the document states that the process is voluntary, formalisation of the process in such a manner may lead to it becoming mandatory for promotion and tenure reasons.
- Many issues listed for review on the checklist are theoretical and difficult to assess.
- The process appears time-consuming for both Reviewer and Reviewee, whereas a more informal process would provide the same outcomes, without being so time-consuming (less administration involved).
- The number of Reviewers available may be limited, as they must have the time to undertake the appropriate training.
- The value of the feedback received could be diminished if the Reviewee chooses an inappropriate Reviewer.
- Some discipline areas are very specific, and require particular teaching methods. Not many Reviewers would have the appropriate knowledge to review such specific subjects.

However, it was also noted that a review by peers:

- Would supplement feedback provided by student teaching surveys, which are not always a true indication of teaching practice.
- Is a useful tool for receiving feedback for the purpose of improving teaching methods.

Bronwyn James noted that, regardless of fears of mandatory implementation in the future, the proposed scheme provides staff with the opportunity to undertake a more formalised peer review which can be used for own teaching improvement purposes or for career development or promotion purposes, if they choose. Staff will have the choice to continue with current informal methods, or choose to undertake a more formalised review. However, the formalisation of the process, by documenting the process, is essential for quality assurance purposes in relation to demonstrating teaching and learning excellence and improved teaching performance. Informal processes may not assist in this process.

In response the Committee noted that:

- The Faculty could demonstrate that various methods of informal peer review and mentoring are already in place.
- As part of these informal processes, each School may need to document that a review has taken place, without documenting the outcome of such a review.
- However, not documenting outcomes does make it difficult to ascertain if any improvement has occurred over time (for the purpose of quality assurance).

The Committee agreed that there is value in the peer review process, but did not agree that the proposed formalised scheme is an appropriate method of implementing peer review, primarily for the following reasons:

- There are suitable methods of informal peer review and mentoring already in place within each School.
- The scheme may, in the future, become mandatory for promotional and tenure purposes.
- The process would be time-consuming for both Reviewer and Reviewee, without resulting in a better outcome than that achieved by an informal process.
Although the Committee did not agree that the proposed scheme is an appropriate process for peer review, it was agreed that, if a scheme were to be implemented, the Committee would support a dual-system whereby Faculties/Units could continue to use and promote current informal methods and individual staff could choose to use the formalised process.

*6.4 Learning and Teaching Strategic Plan

As noted in the Chair’s report, the Draft Learning and Teaching Strategic Plan is for information only at this stage, as further changes are to be made. Members should keep in mind that the plan is under review and that FECs will be asked to provide input at some stage of the process.

Dr McPhail noted that there is a misguided emphasis in the plan on ‘new and innovative approaches’ to teaching, and suggested that the emphasis should be on effective approaches to teaching, as often ‘old’ well-established methods are more effective in certain scenarios than ‘innovative’ methods. For example, on p4 of the draft document, the first strategy under objective 3 could read something similar to “Encourage effective approaches to teaching, including new and innovative approaches where appropriate.”

*7. OTHER BUSINESS

7.1 Off-Campus Teaching

Dr Worthy requested members to remind their respective Schools that the following subjects need to be ready for off-campus delivery in Spring session:
- CSCI111 at Loftus, and
- ECTE196, CSCI121 and CSCI102 at South Coast locations and Moss Vale.

Dr Worthy also noted that subject coordinators on campus have a duty of care, which requires regular communication with part-time staff and students at off-campus sites. Coordinators must also make themselves aware of the limitations of each site, especially technical limitations which may limit the method of delivery of material. Ideally, staff should visit each site at least once to become familiar with the resources available to students.

Dr Piper noted that lectures for CSCI111 are currently distributed to off-campus locations on CD and contains a PowerPoint presentation on a computer screen with lecturer voiceover. This has been achieved by use of a reasonably priced software program, however, there are specific high-end hardware requirements to run the program.