

COMMITTEE OF CHAIRS OF ACADEMIC BOARDS/SENATES OF UNIVERSITIES IN NSW AND THE ACT

Minutes of meeting (05/1) of the Committee of Chairs held at 9.30 am
on Thursday 7 April 2005 at the Australian National University.

PRESENT: Tony Baker (UTS) (Chair), Roger Bronks (SCU), Peter Camilleri (ACU), John Carter (Sydney), Anne Cusick (UWS), Tony Dooley (UNSW), Ruth Foxwell (Canberra), Majella Franzmann (UNE), Malcolm Gillies (ANU), David Griffiths (Wollongong) and Bruce Kercher (Macquarie). Gordon Stanley (Board of Studies) and Andrew Goodyer (Board of Studies) attended for item 5.

IN ATTENDANCE: Des Petersen and Sita Chopra (UTS).

1. APOLOGIES/WELCOMES/FAREWELLS

Apologies were received from George Cooney (Macquarie) and David Green (CSU).

The Chair welcomed Majella Franzmann and Ruth Foxwell to their first meeting of the Committee.

The Chair thanked Malcolm Gillies and Janet Bruce from ANU for providing all the necessary local support for the meeting. He also thanked David Patterson, who was retiring, for his contribution to the work of the Committee of Chairs over many years.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 4 NOVEMBER 2004

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed.

3. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Foundation Studies Programs

The Committee discussed the Report, *Summary of Workshop Outcomes, Foundation Studies Programs Workshop, 15 September 2004, Canberra*. Although the Committee of Chairs had established a working group to investigate the question of Foundation Programs, it was agreed that the best way forward would be to monitor the national project.

It was agreed in discussion that the issue of Foundation Programs could be included in the program for the October conference at UNSW.

The Committee supported the core characteristics of Foundation Programs, as set out in Appendix 2 of the documents.

RESOLVED CoC 05/1

that the Chair be authorised to inform the DEST Foundation Programs project leader that the Committee of Chairs of Academic Boards/Senates of Universities in NSW and the ACT:

- a) believes that Foundation Programs might best be considered in the context of the Australian Qualifications Framework, which would provide a ready framework for discussion of such matters as pathways, and entry into academic programs in particular;
- b) would like, as an interested party and on behalf of the NSW Board of Studies, to be represented on the project working group;
- c) supports the agreed core characteristics of Foundation Programs, as set out in Appendix 2 of its report;
- d) supports national accreditation of Foundation Programs.

4. HSC CATEGORY A COURSES

4.1 Category A Reviews

The following documents were received for consideration:

- a listing of all Category A subjects developed by the working group established at the previous meeting;
- a letter dated 26 November 2004 from Engineers Australia to the Chair regarding the review outcome of Industrial Technology, to be taken into account in the current Category A review process.

RESOLVED CoC 05/2

- .1 that the Category A reviews be allocated to institutions as per the attached action sheet;
- .2 that the review template be amended to a ‘tick the box’ format, to eliminate the need for explanations of obvious material or material that can be confirmed readily.

5. PRESENTATIONS

5.1 UAI

Professor George Cooney will brief the Committee at its next meeting about how the IB is treated in calculating the UAI.

5.2 AUSTRALIAN CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION

Professor Gordon Stanley attended the meeting to brief the Committee about the implications of the Australian Certificate of Education. He focussed on the options that DEST seems to be considering, as follows:

- a national certificate as an alternative to the existing state-based final year certificates
- a national certificate which evolves from the existing state-based final year certificates
- a national certificate which is a general aptitude test similar to that used in the USA
- a national certificate modelled on the International baccalaureate.

He explained that potentially there are a number of purposes which need to be accommodated in the design specification for the certificate:

- Is it to provide a common format for the presentation of secondary school outcomes in different curriculum areas?
- Is it to provide a basis for common scaling of outcomes to enable university selection to be based on aggregate ranks?
- Is it designed to be a marketing tool for Australian secondary education?

The DEST project requires an analysis of the existing senior secondary certificate arrangements and assessment of their ‘standard and appropriateness in an age of increasing population mobility and globalisation’.

It is assumed that ‘the requirements and standards of each certificate differ considerably’. These assumptions need to be assessed.

- How different are requirements across the States?
- Do standards of each certificate differ considerably?

cont’d/-

5.2 AUSTRALIAN CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION (cont'd)

As an alternative to current State-based certificates, this option would need to accommodate the following design specifications:

1. Assess skills and content developed in common across the education systems. This would need agreement on common curriculum.
2. Develop a national examination. There are several options for this, namely:
 - (a) Examinations set nationally in each skill/content area.
 - (b) A core skills test to scale/moderate school assessments.
 - (c) A mix of (a) and (b) to allow for equal weighting of external examination and school assessment.
3. Enable both general education subjects and VET to be assessed in a common framework. Not to achieve this would devalue VET.
4. Allow for reporting with respect to common standards. Need to agree on a process for setting and reporting standards.
5. Allow for recognition of different levels of achievement (ranked performance) to provide for selection processes for tertiary entrance.
6. An agreement on the range of curriculum offerings. If there are too many offerings available then it would not resolve the problem of inter-state (or intra-state) transfer unless the student could be assured of continuity of subject choice.

The option of a National Certificate which evolves from existing certificates could presumably build upon current knowledge and practice across ACACA agencies. There would need to be an agreed process for moving towards common standards. In the short term this option could involve the same process for scaling subject assessments to a common scale. At present the equivalent tertiary entrance rank is derived from different algorithms across the states. A common core skills test could be used for this purpose.

Over time, the certificate could accommodate the specifications outlined in Option 1. The downside in this incremental option is that it could lead to devaluing of the achievements of those certificates that have already moved to standards-referenced reporting.

The option of a National Certificate based on a general aptitude test is asserted as the US model. For college entry in the US typically an aptitude test is used alongside the grade point average as reported by the school. Selection is typically based on judgements involving both elements.

An aptitude test typically assesses problem-solving and knowledge skills assumed to be achievable by students who have common knowledge and cultural experience. Test items draw on the common knowledge or provide the information elements needed for problem solution.

Research evidence suggests that core skills tests, aptitude tests or capability tests are less valuable predictors of future learning than content-based achievement tests. Presumably the certificate would also allow for school assessment of subject content to be reported.

Re a National Certificate based on the International Baccalaureate, the IB has a more limited range of curriculum offerings than currently applies in most Australian secondary certificates. It has an assessment system based on standards and excellent quality assurance processes, very similar to those used by Australian authorities. An Australian Baccalaureate would need to accommodate VET alongside the academic emphasis of a baccalaureate model.

cont'd/-

5.2 AUSTRALIAN CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION (cont'd)

The International Baccalaureate does not report outcomes in terms of marks, but only in terms of grades, which are standards-referenced. Failure to allow for differentiation within bands of performance can lead to grade inflation or failure to discriminate differences among higher-level candidates, which may disadvantage them in some selection situations.

Adoption of a baccalaureate model would need major investment in professional development to get a common curriculum and common understanding of the assessment model working in practice. If the IB grade approach were adopted, then there would need to be an additional test to allow for university selection ranking. The IB grade model like the UK A-level does not work well for ranking purposes.

In response to a question on another matter, Professor Stanley commented that budget cuts in the Board of Studies would not have a large impact on examination panels.

6. FINANCIAL STATEMENT

It was noted that a current financial statement would be presented to the next meeting.

7. CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS

The Committee of Chairs Academic Board/Senates Conference will be held at the Coogee Sands Hotel on Thursday 13 and Friday 14 October 2005.

Tony Dooley outlined the conference program, and welcomed suggestions for topics. In general discussion, the following were among the topics canvassed:

- Graduate Skills Assessment Test

- Research Quality Framework

- Implications of the various Nelson initiatives included in *Building Diversity* and *Building Better Foundations*

- Voluntary Student Unionism and the aftermath

- Foundation programs

- Quality assurance for offshore programs

- The role of Academic Boards in ensuring equivalent standards (after a Gavin Moodie article)

- The working relationship between Academic Boards and Senior Executives (e.g. Pro-Vice-Chancellors)

- Measuring the impact of research

- The leadership role of Academic Boards in initiating the development of institutional policies and plans and later in assessing their performance.

It was noted that Professor Sir Gareth Roberts, who is currently the Chair of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) Boards Research, had offered to meet with members while in Australia. Members agreed to allocate the evening of 27 September for this meeting.

8. DUTIES OF CHAIRS/PRESIDENTS

Members were requested to furnish their completed survey of Chairs/Presidents.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

Board of Studies – Decisions of the Meetings held 14 December 2004 and 8 February 2005

The reports of Board of Studies decisions were noted.

9. OTHER BUSINESS (cont'd)

Credit Transfer with TAFE

The Chair reported on the TAFE forum on credit transfer. It appeared that only one university (Newcastle) provides extensive packaging of credit transfer for TAFE students wishing to articulate a TAFE qualification to a university qualification. The TAFE preference is for detailed (i.e. subject by subject) packaging. One of the difficulties with this model is mapping essentially skill-based subjects to essentially content-based subjects. While it was agreed that the Minister wants to achieve automatic achievement across systems, weighing performance in one system for another is problematical. It was noted that this might work better in some subjects, such as in the human services areas.

AUQA

The Chair informed the Committee that he would continue the work begun by Ray Cooksey, tabulating references to Academic Boards/Senates in AUQA reports.

UDBECs

The Chair undertook to circulate information about a vacancy (replacing Gail Huon).

Agenda Item for Next Meeting

It was agreed to list Aegrotat Awards on the agenda for the next meeting. Anne Cusick agreed to provide documentation in relation to this matter. Members were encouraged to provide details of institutional policies and practices.

CLOSURE

The meeting closed at 12:55 pm.

HSC CATEGORY A COURSES

The following are Board Developed Courses available for students commencing their Higher School Certificate program of study in 2005. All courses are of 2 unit value except for Studies of Religion I, some VET courses, and Extension courses that are usually of 1 unit value. (Sourced from *Studying for the NSW Higher School Certificate, An Information Booklet for Year 10 Students, 2004*)

COURSE	INSTITUTION RESPONSIBLE FOR REVIEW
1. ARTS AND PERFORMANCE Dance Drama Music 1 Music 2 Visual Arts <i>HSC Music Extension</i>	UWS WOLLONGONG
2. ENGLISH English (Advanced) English (Standard) English as a Second Language (ESL) <i>HSC English Extension 1</i> <i>HSC English Extension 2</i>	SYDNEY UNE
3. MATHEMATICS General Mathematics Mathematics <i>HSC Mathematics Extension 1</i> <i>HSC Mathematics Extension 2</i>	UNSW UTS
4. SCIENCE Agriculture	UNE
4. SCIENCE Biology Chemistry Earth and Environmental Science Physics Engineering Studies	SYDNEY WOLLONGONG
4. SCIENCE Food Technology	UNSW
4. SCIENCE Senior Science	UTS
5. SEPARATE CATEGORY Personal Development, Health and Physical Education Community and Family Studies	ACU SCU

COURSE	INSTITUTION RESPONSIBLE FOR REVIEW
6. SOCIAL SCIENCES Ancient History Business Studies Economics Geography Legal Studies Modern History Society and Culture <i>HSC History Extension</i> <i>HSC History Extension</i>	ACU MACQUARIE NEWCASTLE
6. SOCIAL SCIENCES Aboriginal Studies	UTS
6. SOCIAL SCIENCES Studies of Religion I Studies of Religion II	ACU + UNE
7. TECHNOLOGY Design and Technology Information Processes and Technology Software Design and Development Textiles and Design	UNSW
7. TECHNOLOGY Industrial Technology	CANBERRA

COURSE	INSTITUTION RESPONSIBLE FOR REVIEW
LANGUAGES Arabic Beginners and Arabic Continuers <i>HSC Arabic Extension</i> Armenian Continuers Chinese Beginners and Chinese Continuers <i>HSC Chinese Extension</i> Chinese Background Speakers Classical Greek Continuers <i>HSC Classical Greek Extension</i> Classical Hebrew Continuers <i>HSC Classical Hebrew Extension</i> Croatian Continuers Dutch Continuers Filipino Continuers French Beginners and French Continuers <i>HSC French Extension</i> German Beginners and German Continuers <i>HSC German Extension</i> Hindi Continuers Hungarian Continuers Indonesian Beginners and Indonesian Continuers <i>HSC Indonesian Extension</i> Indonesian Background Speakers Italian Beginners and Italian Continuers <i>HSC Italian Extension</i> Japanese Beginners and Japanese Continuers <i>HSC Japanese Extension</i> Japanese Background Speakers Khmer Continuers Korean Beginners and Korean Continuers Korean Background Speakers Latin Continuers HSC Latin Extension Macedonian Continuers Malay Background Speakers Maltese Continuers Modern Greek Beginners and Modern Greek Continuers <i>HSC Modern Greek Extension</i> Modern Hebrew Continuers Persian Background Speakers Polish Continuers Portuguese Continuers Russian Background Speakers Serbian Continuers Spanish Beginners and Spanish Continuers <i>HSC Spanish Extension</i> Swedish Continuers Tamil Continuers Turkish Continuers Ukrainian Continuers Vietnamese Continuers	SYDNEY UWS