SUBMISSION TO SEG from CCPC
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DEVELOPING A CURRICULUM RENEWAL PROCESS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Authorisation: Professor Derrick Armstrong, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Registrar

Recommendation: CCPC recommends SEG consider and endorse the proposed framework for curriculum renewal outlined in the paper and the proposed implementation and reporting strategies.

Developing a Curriculum Renewal Process at The University of Sydney

Background

SEG CCPC has created a Working Party to progress Strategy Three in the University’s White Paper: (3) Initiate a University-wide program of curriculum renewal: Our aim is to produce flexible and creative thinkers, leaders for Australia and the wider world. An education here will equip students with essential skills in critical thinking and communication, and foster an enquiring mind. It will support students in their transition to university, offer a coherent program of courses, and distinguish pathways through degrees. (University Strategic Plan)

There are seven initiatives noted under this strategy:

3(a) Establish a Curriculum Committee of SEG to oversee a University-wide program of curriculum renewal and ensure coherence of our programs and courses

3(b) Develop University-wide principles for curriculum development.

3(c) Conduct a fundamental review of the major undergraduate generalist degree programs

3(d) Articulate the standards and outcomes of teaching and learning experiences that distinguish different degree levels and pathways through degrees

3(e) Implement the assessment principles flowing from the Academic Board review, begun in 2009.

3(f) Identify and empower scholars with expertise in curriculum development to champion curriculum renewal and best practice across the University

3(g) Recognise and reward staff contribution to curriculum renewal and innovation

In addition to these strategies, many faculties are already actively engaged in curriculum renewal and transformation of existing degrees.
The terms of reference of the CCPC Working Party are:

1. To establish underpinning principles for curriculum development at the University beginning with generalist undergraduate degrees
2. To review procedures for regular review of all undergraduate and graduate coursework degree programs
3. To audit existing undergraduate pathways and combinations
4. To make recommendations for improvement of the pathways towards undergraduate degree completion, in the light of the principles outlined in 1.

This paper is intended to contribute to the first stage of the Working Party’s activities and CCPC now recommends the proposed process to SEG for endorsement.

Vision & Challenges

The White paper outlines the vision for education at The University of Sydney. That vision builds on the University’s leading role in local national and international communities, its intellectual depth and diversity, and its research-intensive nature and embodies these in the principle of Engaged Enquiry for our staff and students. The University of Sydney has a unique opportunity to reinvent and re-imagine its student experience of the curriculum to provide something unlike that available anywhere else in Australia. In such a vision Sydney would brand its curriculum in part through the learning experience of Engaged Enquiry.

In the White Paper, The University has affirmed the importance of supporting students in their transition to University and of offering students a coherent program of degrees and a clear pathway through those degrees. The University has identified graduate attributes which describe the outcomes of Engaged Enquiry and the White Paper has identified two signature learning experiences; research-enriched learning and teaching and community-engaged learning and teaching which build on our institutional strengths to support our graduates in achieving those outcomes.

While the University has endorsed the educational vision described in the White paper, there exists no university-wide mechanism or principles for curriculum renewal or development to ensure the vision is translated into student learning experiences in curriculum. However, while no university-wide mechanism exists many faculties are actively engaged in transformative curriculum renewal. What is needed is an agreed approach that will combine the University’s strategic priorities with locally owned curriculum review processes, as a means of ensuring that the extensive curriculum review, renewal and development work that is regularly undertaken in individual faculties and courses is informed by the white paper’s vision for education and provides a basis for, and coherence to, the university’s educational claims.
Summary of the proposal

The University strategic plan commits the institution to developing a university wide curriculum review process. The proposal recognises that such review is underway in many faculties, and that faculties/divisions are responsible for curriculum review and renewal, but that the University also needs to be able to shape such curriculum renewal to address strategic priorities (engaged enquiry/pathways/rationalisation of offerings etc.) and external imperatives (AQF, funding etc.).

The proposal is to manage the process of curriculum renewal in the future by asking faculties and divisions to negotiate the Terms of Reference for their reviews with CCPC. CCPC will negotiate to include elements from the new framework that is outlined in the proposal. These 7 elements reflect current strategic priorities but it is expected they will develop and evolve in response to changes in internal and external contexts. The seven elements are:

1. Build on existing processes
2. Embed Engaged Enquiry to foster graduate attributes
3. Broaden curriculum and co-curriculum to foster graduate attributes
4. Ensure pathways and coherence
5. Ensure alignment with external imperatives
6. Develop governance structures
7. Inform resource renewal

CCPC will have oversight and receives the reports of reviews. The Curriculum Working Party of CCPC and the Education Portfolio will provide advice, expertise and data to inform the process. Faculties undertake the review. The process could support radical transformation or simple quality assurance depending on what the faculty and CCPC set as Terms of Reference. At its centre is the aim of developing Engaged Enquiry as the signature learning experience for students studying at Sydney.

Pilot: Following discussions with four Deans it has been agreed to pilot three aspects and the reporting process with four faculties this year. This is to introduce and trial the idea of including the additional elements, identify any additional data needs and support required for faculties, and importantly, to begin to shift curriculum review from a bureaucratic impost to a process that engages staff and students and builds lasting capacity for renewal of curriculum.

1. Science has agreed to pilot Element 2: Embed engaged enquiry, with a particular focus on research enriched learning and teaching to develop graduate attributes
2. Arts has agreed to pilot Element 4: Pathways and Coherence, with a particular focus on integrative learning and assessment experiences and identifying alternatives to majors to provide coherence.
3. Business has agreed to pilot Element 3: Broaden the curriculum and co-curriculum with a particular focus on embedding Work Integrated Learning as a form of Community Engaged Learning and Teaching (engaged enquiry).
4. Nursing has agreed to pilot and review the reporting process based on their recent review.

At the end of the pilot it is expected that CCPC will be able to integrate the outcomes from the faculty considerations of the three elements as a series of principles or models in relation to the three selected elements (i.e. models for pathways, embedding Engaged Enquiry and broadening the curriculum using Work Integrated Learning) as a report and resource for future curriculum renewal. These are strategic priorities for the institution and in this way the pilot process itself builds institutional capacity for future curriculum renewal.

The proposed process has been developed in consultation with the Working Party, the Deans on CCPC and through discussions with their curriculum review leaders/teams.
1. **Principles to frame the University-wide curriculum renewal process**

The University-wide curriculum renewal outlined in the University of Sydney strategic plan is not meant to replace or replicate existing faculty or division degree curriculum review processes. The mechanism must accommodate the dynamic and creative nature of the process, since curriculum is always a work in progress. There can be no finished model for the curriculum, and no end point to the process for the University. It is proposed that:

1. **The curriculum renewal process should support staff by complementing and building on existing faculty, division and university curriculum review processes in a way that encourages their engagement in curriculum renewal to achieve ‘Engaged Enquiry’. (Build on existing processes)**

The process should not be experienced as an unhelpful additional process, nor should it be experienced as meaningless administrative bureaucracy. The curriculum renewal process provides a vital and much needed implementation strategy for many of the Educational Initiatives agreed to in the White paper. The process should ensure local curriculum renewal activities address relevant University strategic priorities in their terms of reference and mechanisms. The terms of reference for future local curriculum reviews should therefore be developed in consultation with SEG CCPC to ensure relevant institutional priorities are addressed. While there are many pressing curriculum review ‘deliverables’ required by the white paper (particularly in relation to coherence and structure of degree pathways), should the faculty or division context make a comprehensive approach difficult, program teams should be able to prioritise and select key elements for curricular renewal. As a ‘process’ it needs to build participation by staff. It should not dictate or audit; rather, it should build engaged enquiry for staff in relation to the educational mission of the University. To this end the productive engagement of staff in curriculum renewal should be recognised in workloads and governance structures and rewarded by University processes and systems.

2. **The curriculum renewal process should support faculties in being confident that their degree program curricula are aligned with the University’s strategic directions. In particular it should support the embedding in disciplinary curricula of ‘Engaged Enquiry’ as a Sydney signature learning experience using research–enriched and community-engaged learning and teaching, which facilitates the development of the ‘Sydney Graduate Attributes’ by our students. (Embed Engaged Enquiry to foster graduate attributes)**

The renewal process should support the achievement of desired graduate outcomes by explicitly linking the outcomes of teaching and learning with the process of teaching and learning in a way that supports the University in delivering an undergraduate education with a clear point of difference to that of our competitors. These outcomes are articulated in the faculty statements of The University’s graduate attributes. The University has now also identified Engaged Enquiry as a hallmark of a student learning experience at Sydney, and research- enriched learning and teaching (RELT) and community-engaged learning and teaching (CELT) experiences provide new opportunities for designing engaging, effective curricula and assessments. These signature learning experiences also offer new possibilities for defining pathways and degree ‘identity’ for students. The curriculum renewal process should explicitly support faculties and divisions in identifying and developing the opportunities RELT and CELT offers in their contexts.
3. The curriculum renewal process should support the University community in identifying and providing additional ‘curricular’ and ‘co-curricular’ learning experiences which support international understanding and perspectives and which lead to the graduate attributes of Global Citizenship, Scholarship, and Lifelong Learning. (Broaden curriculum and co-curriculum to foster graduate attributes)

The potential of the University to provide a rich academic co-curriculum that supports learning is considerable and currently underutilised. This co-curriculum might include coherent academic transition support in first year; (cross) disciplinary integrative learning experiences (“stepping / corner-stones”) during their degrees and capstone community engaged experiences at the end of degrees - in addition to a more vibrant and academically connected social experience through clubs and societies.

4. The curriculum renewal process should support current and prospective students in more clearly identifying pathways into, through, between and beyond degrees and support staff in ensuring degree program coherence, and the University in articulating a clear and rational structure to its degree offerings. (Ensure pathways and coherence)

The current degree structure at Sydney varies considerably across the institution, is sometimes complex and confusing for students and staff and does not always support students in making choices about their study or facilitate transitions between phases of study based on those choices. Different strategies to provide coherence and structure (for example majors, credit points, pre-requisite co-requisite sequence requirements and learning themes) suit different degree contexts, and no single strategy is envisaged. Increasingly students enter the University through a variety of pathways and the University’s curriculum renewal process should acknowledge these pathways and attend to the transition of students into, between and out of, their degrees.

5. The curriculum renewal process should support faculties in being confident that their degree program curricula are coherent, contemporary and cost-effective and aligned with government frameworks. (Align with external imperatives)

The process should support the University in meeting any foreshadowed external government quality assurance such as TEQSA and AQF and other relevant legislation for example the Disability Standards for Education. It should also support the University in ensuring it meets standards and targets negotiated in the University’s compact for instance Low SES participation targets. TEQSA requirements mean that we will also need to develop systems to demonstrate the quality of standards at degree level. While there are many different assessment tasks which can be used in discipline communities, the curriculum renewal process should support the development of processes to assure the standards of degree program outcomes consistent with TEQSA’s requirements. The process should build on The University’s commitment to the triad of the QVS and the Academic Board’s endorsement of standards based Assessment Principles. The curriculum renewal process should encourage evidence-based decision making and planning as well as ‘outwards-facing’ benchmarking of curricula and identify additional sources of data and information that can support faculty curriculum renewal work. The process should support Faculties and Divisions in ensuring their degree offerings are cost effective and financially sustainable.

6. The curriculum renewal process should support faculties and the University in developing or refining appropriate and sustainable curriculum governance and leadership structures for degree programs. (Develop governance structures)

A more coherent and accountable approach to curriculum renewal, (as well as several of the University’s other White Paper priorities (e.g. assessment, the first year transition, internationalizing the curriculum etc) and external drivers (eg AQF, TEQSA standards etc) will further highlight the need for program / degree level curriculum oversight and planning. While different faculties will no doubt
have different arrangements in place, and there is no need for a single model of how degree program curricula are coordinated, the proposed curriculum renewal process should provide an opportunity and support for these mechanisms to be further developed.

7. **The curriculum renewal process should support faculties, divisions and the University in ensuring that curriculum renewal is accompanied by appropriate renewal and planning of University learning environments and staff resources.** (Continual resource renewal)

Education renewal must be accompanied by a renewal of the University learning environments. These should be designed or adapted to stimulate engaged inquiry. Students and teachers need to be at the heart of our concepts of physical and technology infrastructure planning so that its provision enables research-enriched experiences. It is important that services and programs are effectively and evenly delivered and accessible across all sites including the remote campuses, and other facilities where the university conducts teaching and research. The process of engaging in curriculum renewal must address the question of what infrastructure is required to engage in effective enquiry so that the University develops environments that meet these needs. The most important curriculum resource is the University’s staff. The curriculum renewal process should support and inform the development of staff capacities to deliver an engaged enquiry curriculum.

**The seven elements of the framework are:**

1. Build on existing processes
2. Embed Engaged Enquiry to foster graduate attributes
3. Broaden curriculum and co-curriculum to foster graduate attributes
4. Ensure pathways and coherence
5. Ensure alignment with external imperatives
6. Develop governance structures
7. Inform resource renewal
2. **How might the curriculum renewal process move forwards?**

The University community has publicly committed to engaging in this review in its strategic plan and proposed that the renewal process will initially focus on generalist degrees but it should support university-wide curriculum renewal for engaged-enquiry.

Many faculties are currently engaged in curriculum renewal. In some cases these are minor reviews and in others these represent major transformations of degree offerings. The implementation of University wide principles for curriculum renewal should recognise that reviews are already underway and be planned accordingly.

**Stage 1: The first iteration,** (semester 2 2011, semester 1 2012), will trial embedding a subset of the principles in existing reviews in Science, Arts and Business and pilot the reporting process in the context of the recently competed curriculum review in Nursing. SEG CCPC will oversee and coordinate the process. The Deans and curriculum review teams will identify which principles are relevant and useful to incorporate. The Working Party of CCPC and the Education Portfolio will provide expert advice and data to the Review Teams to support the planning and consideration of these additional elements as a component of the ongoing reviews. SEG CCPC would receive a report on this aspect of the review from the participating faculties.

If the timing of the current reviews in the pilot faculties does not accommodate the inclusion of additional elements, as a first iteration of the Curriculum Renewal process, staff from the generalist degrees in the three pilot faculties might be engaged in supported local discussions, as course teams, on selected aspects of the renewal framework. The group discussions might pose, and support faculties in responding to, a series of questions. The framing questions for these discussions would be developed in consultation with the Deans or Curriculum leaders but examples of the questions that might form the basis for these discussions are included below. The outputs of these discussions would form the basis for the reports to CCPC.

The faculty / division discussions and review process could utilise the support of existing and newly formed networks such as the ITL Engaged Enquiry Scholars, the Widening Participation Scholars, the First Year Experience network. The discussion could draw on the work of other SEG Working Parties including the Assessment Working Party and the Sydney Signature Learning Experiences working party.

The pilot will assist in refining the seven principles and support faculties and the University in identifying strategies to meaningfully engage staff, students and other relevant stakeholders in curriculum renewal. It will develop resources and expert advice to support curriculum renewal in relation to the Principles. It will establish practical and manageable planning, reporting and accountability procedures through SEG CCPC.

**Stage 2: Full implementation** will be phased in from January 2012. All new curriculum reviews proposed by Faculties / Divisions from 2012 will consult with SEG CCPC in developing their Terms of Reference and CCPC will negotiate the inclusion of relevant principles. The process will not impose unhelpful bureaucratic processes or impinge on ownership of curriculum by faculties and divisions. The introduction of the principles in all new reviews will recognise the resource constraints in faculties and centrally of supporting such a process. It will also recognise that support (e.g. from sources such as STEP grant funding), expertise (e.g. from professional development of the Scholars networks) and capacity (e.g. academic workloads) is required to enable and build capacity of faculties to act on the outcomes of the curriculum review and renewal process.

Faculties/divisions will continue to be responsible for the process of curriculum review and supported by the CCPC in designing the process. CCPC will work with Faculties to identify aspects of
the University’s curriculum renewal framework which might usefully be incorporated in planned curriculum reviews. Faculties would be supported in gathering and interpreting data to inform their own consideration of these questions. It is envisaged that the curriculum review process, once fully developed:

a) Should be led locally and supported by Divisions and the University and adequately resourced by both;

b) Should be designed to explicitly build ongoing engagement in curriculum renewal; ie. The curriculum design process should have renewal inbuilt;

c) Should draw on data from staff and student experience of the curriculum, utilising existing sources of institutional data, supplemented by strategic additional data sources such as the QVS (strategic in that their inclusion builds engagement by stakeholders inside and outside the University);

d) Should identify and develop capacity of program level teaching and learning staff;

e) Should ensure that outcomes and recommendations are potentially capable of being implemented;

f) Should be transparently reported via the Annual Reports (See Evaluating Outcomes) through the CCPC to SEG and to the University community and to Academic Board.

**Framing the Faculty Discussions**

The discussions with course teams might develop and address such questions as:

a) What are the signature RELT & CELT “engaged enquiry’ learning experiences of the degree? (How does engaged enquiry integrate the curriculum; what range of RELT and CELT experiences are identified in each degree program; what is unique about the disciplinary knowledge and skills)

b) How does the student experience of the degree program provide a coherent, staged, ‘engaged enquiry’ learning experience that sequences learning to foster the development of the discipline’s stated outcomes for graduates? (Are there appropriate sequences of engaged enquiry? Are they intentionally linked to outcomes? Is there a pathway through the degree based on these? How)

c) How are students supported in their transition to the curriculum? (How are students selected and recruited for the degree? What broader participation strategies are in place and how are the orientation and transition programs catering for the variety of needs and preparedness for learning?)

d) How does assessment support students in engaged enquiry learning and demonstrate the standard of their learning achievements in their degree? (Does assessment foster active engaged enquiry learning? Is it referenced to appropriate standards? Is there a program level assessment strategy, say, through the capstone experience?)

e) What additional opportunities exist within the curriculum and co-curriculum to support students in developing these graduate outcomes?
f) How is the degree structured to ensure efficiencies in course offerings, to reduce unit duplication, and to build a sense of identity and belonging for students? (What are the pathways through the degree for students? How are these communicated to students and how is they supported in choosing these pathways? How is integration between component units of study in a degree achieved?)

g) What are the faculty arrangements for governance of curricula? (Are there Degree or Program coordinators? What are the role descriptions for these positions? What are the internal decision making and reporting processes in relation to curricula? How is the articulation between 'unit of study' and 'degree or program' curricula maintained? How is the cost effectiveness of units of study and courses considered?)

h) What strategies are in place to ensure that the curriculum including the co-curriculum supports the development of the University’s Graduate Attributes? (What do staff and students mean by global citizenship? How do staff embed indigenous understandings? How is internationalisation of the curriculum achieved and how can this be articulated? Do staff have the necessary skills to support the successful implementation of social inclusion and indigenous education initiatives?)

3. Reporting: Evaluating the Outcomes

Once established, the outcomes of the curriculum renewal will be periodically monitored and evaluated in relation to the University’s Curriculum renewal framework. Faculties will begin at different stages of maturity in the renewal process and the evaluation of outcomes will need to take account of this variability.

Outcomes from curriculum renewal will be evaluated using annual reports from faculties or divisions to the SEG CCPC. These reports should explicitly focus on:

1. Description of the sustainable curriculum renewal process in Faculties / Divisions (#1 #6 #7)
2. How Engaged Enquiry is embedded in the curriculum and co-curriculum to foster the development of graduate attributes (#2, #3)
3. The Course / Faculty / Division’s design of and the students’ experience of pathways and coherence (#4)
4. Assurance that all programs are AQF compliant from 2015, and that program teaching and learning standards are articulated and student achievement outcomes is assured (#5)
5. Other issues relevant to Faculty / Division

Annual Reports should be supported by the following data:

1. Peer Review by Staff and External sources: e.g. QVS reports
2. External bodies: e.g. professional bodies, or any other discipline-specific standards benchmarking
3. The Experience of the Students: e.g. Reports on the student experience of Engaged Enquiry, including: USE, SCEQ and CEQ, focus groups, SSLE feedback, student reports on co-curricular activities, any other strategies used to gather student experience data.

Annual Reports will also form the basis of the Academic Board reviews.