Academic Governance: 
*Proposed Streamlining of Academic Council Decision-Making Processes*

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<td>Dr Kabilan Krishnasamy</td>
<td>Draft report for consultation and feedback</td>
<td>27.10.2015</td>
<td>Ms Sue Smurthwaite (Director, Academic Policy Services)</td>
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<td>Ms Jan Cardy (Manager, Curriculum Management)</td>
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<td>Associate Professor Cara MacNish, Chair of Academic Board</td>
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<td>Professor Alec Cameron (Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education))</td>
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<td>Professor Grady Venville (Dean of Coursework Studies)</td>
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<td>Professor Alan Dench (Dean, Graduate Research and Postdoctoral Training)</td>
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**DOCUMENT APPROVAL**

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1 Executive Summary

Academic governance is at the core of an institution’s educational business, yet it is one of the most complex and possibly misunderstood dimensions. One of its primary values lies in the ability of academic governance to deliver a quality curriculum and academic policies that enable related activities of the University. Although there are many ways in which academic governance may be evaluated, the need for such an exercise is clear.

The academic governance processes of the University are by and large actioned through the Academic Council, which is the executive arm of the Academic Board. Over the past 18 months the University has been undergoing significant functional changes through the establishment of ‘sustainable futures’ which “is an integrated program of University-wide [priority] projects”, aimed at supporting the delivery of the University’s Strategic Plan. Further, the Vice-Chancellor’s recent paper entitled ‘Securing Success’ reinforces the need for the University to rethink how it conducts and manages certain aspects of its business with a view to achieving efficiencies and growth.

It is in line with these institutional aims and objectives that Academic Policy Services initiated a review of the administrative and governance processes in related areas. Indeed, it is timely to think how one of the University’s key decision-making bodies, the Academic Council in particular, should manage its governance role and processes in line with the strategic and operational directions of the University with a view to achieving administrative efficiencies.

This paper aims to streamline the governance arrangements for managing academic matters relating to curriculum management and academic policies. To this end, the following recommendations are proposed:

**Recommendation 1:**

that the approving body of curriculum items is determined based on the level of expertise required to consider such items and the significance of such items for the University. The proposed approving arrangement for each type of curriculum item is set out in Table 5.

**Recommendation 2:**

that academic policies simplified and streamlined by way of:

1. policy refinement (methodology 1) are approved by the DVC (Education) by delegation of the Academic Council;
2. policy merging and splitting (methodology 2) and adopting a framework approach (methodology 3) are approved by the Academic Council.

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2 See Sustainable Futures
2 Introduction

Academic governance assumes a central, but wide-ranging role in the life of universities. It is stated that “an effective and robust system of academic governance is an essential component of every higher education provider’s overarching governance structure”\(^4\).

Indeed, academic governance is a term which can be interpreted in a number of ways from the narrow concept of a focus on key academic issues such as course designs and ensuing standards, to a broader notion of all aspects of the governance which involve the academic life of the university. This discussion paper focuses on the governance arrangements for managing the former, with a view to ensuring effective and efficient operation.

Over the past 18 months the University has been undergoing significant functional changes through the establishment of ‘sustainable futures’ which “is an integrated program of University-wide [priority] projects”\(^5\), aimed at supporting the delivery of the University’s Strategic Plan. In his paper entitled Securing Success the Vice Chancellor notes that the University has developed a “culture of process inertia”, whereby “once we have developed a way of doing something, we tend to continue it without constantly reviewing its efficiency and purpose”\(^6\). It is further noted that while “UWA has been a phenomenally successful university in recent years, we now have to ensure that we arrange our finances and our operations so that this success can be carried forward for future generations of students and staff”\(^7\).

It is timely therefore, to think how the University’s key academic decision-making bodies, the Academic Council in particular, should manage its governance role in line with the strategic and operational direction of the University.

This paper argues that there exists a need for the Academic Council to be more strategic in its approach to conducting its business and that this may be best operationalised by capitalising on the University’s delegations instrument. To this end, it aims to streamline the governance arrangements for managing academic matters specifically relating to curriculum management and academic policies.

3 What is ‘Good’ Governance?

The concept of “governance” is not new. Simply put “governance” refers to the framework within which decision-making occurs, and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented).

At the University of Western Australia (UWA), it occurs at both the University level (e.g. ‘Academic Governance’, ‘Corporate Governance’ and ‘Information Governance’), and at the Faculty level referred to as ‘Faculty Governance’. Indeed, a distinction exists between corporate governance which is primarily concerned with the University’s external, legal and financial standing, and academic governance which directly relates to the academic life (i.e. academic research and teaching) of the University. While the governing body of the University (the Senate) has unambiguous responsibility for all aspects of governance, the responsibility for managing matters relating to the different aspects of governance has been delegated to various bodies within the University committee system and decision-making framework.

It should be noted that governance is not management, but it is the distribution of legitimate authority to influence and enact policies and decisions\(^8\). This concept is linked to the notion of ‘collegial governance’, which is a system that depends heavily upon the participation of colleagues to establish and realise a shared purpose. It provides an opportunity for members to participate in decision-making and is the hallmark of academic decision-making.

However, as argued by Meredith, “governance today means not so much what organisations do but how they do it; governance is about how an organisation steers itself and the processes and structures used to achieve its goals. Governance is also crucially concerned with how organizations

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\(^4\) Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (2014). TEQSA Guidance Note: Academic Governance (Draft)
\(^5\) See Sustainable Futures
\(^6\) See Johnson (2015), op. cit., p. 11.
\(^7\) Ibid., pp. 14-15
relate to each other and to their key stakeholders and, where relevant, deals with how citizens are given a voice”.

‘Good’ governance is a relatively new concept and has varied meanings. In fact, there is no one generally accepted model of good governance. Shattock argues that “good” governance in universities is clearly important both as a matter of public policy and to ensure that academic self-governance works for the benefit of members of the institution and contributes to institutional objectives”. Most would agree that “good” governance seeks more participation, transparency, accountability and competition, and less regulation though it is necessary to optimize rather than maximize such qualities”.

Good governance, therefore, relies on accountability, transparency, and effectiveness (the last meaning decision-making processes which deliver on objectives). Indeed, ‘good’ governance is less about making ‘correct’ decisions, and more about the best possible and transparent process for making those decisions efficiently and effectively.

4 A case for streamlining Academic Council approval process

The academic governance processes of the University are by and large actioned through the Academic Council, which is the executive arm of the Academic Board. Its Constitution states that the Academic Council “determines all matters which by statute, regulation, or custom are the Board’s responsibility, with the exception of the following:

- the amendment of Statute No. 19 (Academic Board);
- the determination of the membership of the Council and committees of the Board or Council;
- the creation or suppression of faculties, and the suppression of schools;
- the transfer of resourcing responsibility for a school from one faculty to another;
- any policy recommendations of the committees of the Board or Council as are classified as ‘major’ by the Chair of the Board or by the originating committee;
- any matter which is declared a ‘special matter’;
- recommendations to the Senate for the conferring of the title of Emeritus Professor”.

From an institutional perspective, Academic Council therefore is a key functional body with a central governance role for managing all types of academic matters, other than those listed above. Academic Council receives agenda items from a number of sources, via its Steering Committee as follows (see Table 1 below).

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12 Ibid.
Table 1: Sources of agenda items for Academic Council and review levels

- Senate
- Academic Council
- Academic Council Steering Committee
- Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)
- Academic Year Planning Committee
- Education Committee
- Board of Graduate Research School
- Office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International)
- Curriculum Committee
- Education Futures Strategy Group
- Admissions Centre
- Faculty Board or delegate
- Faculty Governance – e.g.
  - Faculty Curriculum Committee
  - Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee
  - Faculty Research Committee
  - Faculty Governing Boards for certain Programs (e.g. MBA, JD)
  - Review Level 7
  - Review Level 6
  - Review Level 5
  - Review Level 4
  - Review Level 3
  - Review Level 2
  - Review Level 1
In reviewing the number and types of items that have been considered by the Academic Council from these sources during the period February 2014 to October 2015, the following data in Tables 2 and 3 are worth noting:

Table 2: Types of items considered by the Academic Council

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda item types</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admissions items</td>
<td>1.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English language requirements items</td>
<td>1.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreements (international and PhDs)</td>
<td>2.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy items</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum items (proposals for Cycle 1 &amp; 2 courses &amp; units)</td>
<td>2.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review/Planning items</td>
<td>6.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports</td>
<td>1.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee items</td>
<td>4.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission items</td>
<td>1.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English language requirements items</td>
<td>1.30%</td>
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<td>Reports</td>
<td>1.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee items</td>
<td>4.50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Curriculum items 79.30%

Table 3: Proportion of items considered in different parts of the Academic Council Agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 1</th>
<th>Part 2</th>
<th>Part 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Items for Communication</td>
<td>Items for Decision En Bloc</td>
<td>Items for Discussion and Decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part 1 - 6.7%</td>
<td>Part 2 - 79.8%</td>
<td>Part 3 - 13.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 1: Items for Communication; Part 2: Items for Decision En Bloc; Part 3: Items for Discussion and Decision

It is clear from Table 1 that a large proportion of Academic Council agenda items relate to curriculum items (undergraduate and postgraduate course and unit proposals). Notwithstanding the high volume of items (687 in total) that have been processed and considered by the Academic Council from February 2014 to October 2015, it is worth noting that only a small proportion of these have been discussed in Part 3 of the agenda (see Table 3).

In fact, of the 545 curriculum items considered by the Academic Council from February 2014 to October 2015, only ten items had been presented for discussion in Part 3 of the Academic Council agenda. The extent to which some of the Part 2 agenda items need to be included in an agenda for consideration by the Academic Council should be queried. Is there a case for streamlining Academic Council’s approval process? Three arguments are presented here:

4.1 Timing

A first argument relates to the issue of timing. It should be noted that approval of certain types of agenda items are time-driven. There is a certain urgency to have these items approved in time for the University to achieve maximum benefits. Despite this urgency some items go through several levels of
review process as shown in Table 1 above. A classic example that demonstrates this relates to curriculum items such as new course proposals and changes to existing courses which are processed via the University’s robust online curriculum management system - CAIDi (Curriculum Approval and Information Database online). Since most of these curriculum items are assessed to be in accordance with the relevant University Policies, they largely appear in Part 2 of the agenda for the Academic Council. Further, these Part 2 items may also be considered by way of a circular as well as in a scheduled meeting. In 2014, there were 7 circular agendas (comprising Part 1 and Part 2 agenda items) and Council met on 5 occasions, though it has been scheduled to meet 6 times a year. However, currently, all curriculum items go through five levels of review process. The benefits of meeting key critical dates for international and domestic marketing, government reporting requirements, enrolment, TISC (Tertiary Institutions Services Centre) puts an incredible amount of pressure on the University to ensure that its course offerings are of high quality and approved in a timely way.

4.2 Duplication
Secondly, the significant level of duplication in the review process for certain items across the various levels (as shown in Table 1) reinforces the need to streamline the University’s academic governance arrangements. Curriculum items may be used as an example here again. These items are processed not only at four different levels but they also involve extensive duplication with regard to the processing of these items, generation of agendas and supporting documentation.

4.3 Selectivity
A third argument relates to the need for Academic Council to exercise greater scrutiny on certain types of agenda items. An efficient and effective future approach for Academic Council would be selective debate on those issues that require closer scrutiny and higher strategic level discussion for ensuring that the University is offering quality and economically viable courses in a competitive external environment. Of the 545 curriculum items considered during the period February 2014 to October 2015, 9.2% (63 proposals) are new course proposals leading to new awards, which require approval of the Senate. Indeed, Academic Council has a responsibility to determine whether the offering of new course proposals align with the University’s strategic objectives and priorities. It is argued here that such matters undoubtedly warrant attention and require some level of discussion at the Academic Council.

5 An Updated Framework for Academic Council Approval Process

Rather than becoming a clearing house for much of the business items that are regarded to be routine in nature, Academic Council arguably should be more strategically selective in the kinds of issues that it considers. Some matters require closer scrutiny, rigorous discussion and debate while others may not necessarily need the attention of the Academic Council. As the University undergoes significant internal changes to achieve a sustainable future so that it is able to compete in a competitive external climate, it is also timely to review the way in which decisions are made in the University’s peak academic decision-making body. The key point here is that Academic Council’s approach to decision making should change to maximize operational and administrative efficiencies. This requires an updated approval process framework, which is largely underpinned by a delegation approach to decision-making.

It is not uncommon for universities to rely on delegated authority to make decisions on certain matters. Put simply, delegation means the conveyance of authority to a position or committee to act on behalf of a university, or to bind a university within the scope of authority to a legally enforceable obligation. Typically, a power or discretion is what is being delegated.

Delegations are a critical component of a university’s governance framework in order to ensure strong, effective and efficient governance and management of the university. This commitment to sound corporate and academic governance and administrative practices represents a significant responsibility for those who hold delegations of authority. Indeed, delegations are the mechanisms by which a university enables its officers to act on its behalf. Delegations of authority should not only

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13 A course is a ‘plan of study necessary to qualify for a degree, diploma, certificate or other qualification approved by the Senate. Whereas, an award ‘means a degree, diploma or Certificate of the University’. See Academic Policies: Glossary of Terms.

14 See University Delegation Schedule, University of Bristol. Also see University of Newcastle, Delegation of Authority; Australian National University, Delegations Framework. The University of Adelaide, Delegations. The University of Western Australia, Standard schedule for delegations.
provide authority to university staff, committees and bodies in accordance with the university’s rules, policies, and procedures, but also place decision-making powers as close as possible to the point of service delivery within the university, thus allowing decisions to be made more efficiently and effectively in response to stakeholder needs.

At UWA, delegations are governed by the University Policy on Delegations and operate at various levels which are captured in the ‘Standard Schedule for Delegations’. While much of these delegations primarily relate to the higher management aspects of the University, the idea of delegating academic decision-making powers is not new for the University. This in fact currently occurs at various levels. For example, the University’s Curriculum Committee has put in place the following levels of delegations for academic decision-making:

“9.(1) Where new curriculum proposals and major changes to existing curriculum comply with approved policy, the Chair, Deputy Chair or Associate Chair have delegated authority to steer such proposals direct to the Academic Council for consideration.
(2) The Committee delegates to the Chair or to the Executive Officer, as appropriate, the responsibility to consider and approve minor curriculum changes or administrative changes as part of the annual curriculum change process or the fast-track change process.
(3) The Committee delegates to the Chair the responsibility to consider and determine academic results that are not routine in nature, e.g. the award of joint-honours classifications.” 

In 2014, Academic Council delegated authority to the Chair of the Board of the Graduate Research School (BGRS) to approve co-tutelles, joint and double-badged PhD programs. In addition, the BGRS has also further delegated certain curriculum matters relating to HDR courses to its Chair, as follows:

“10(2) Where major changes to the course rules of existing RTS compliant courses (such as master’s degree courses by thesis and coursework and faculty administered doctoral degree courses) comply with approved policy, the Chair of the Board of Graduate Research School has delegated authority to endorse such changes and steer them direct to the Academic Council for consideration.
(3) The Committee delegates to the Chair, the responsibility to consider and approve minor curriculum changes or administrative changes to the course rules of RTS compliant courses (such as master’s degree courses by thesis and coursework and faculty administered doctoral degree courses) as part of the annual curriculum change process or the fast-track process.”

Further, an audit of the Faculty Governance documents indicates that two faculties (Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Science) have already implemented decision-making delegations specifically for curriculum matters (see Appendix A).

It is against the backdrop of these existing arrangements that an updated approval framework for Academic Council is being proposed specifically for matters relating to curriculum management and academic policies.

5.1 Curriculum management
A core business activity of the University is the development and delivery of exciting and economically viable undergraduate and postgraduate course offerings. The University has a robust curriculum management system through which proposals for offering new units and courses and making changes to existing curriculum are developed. The following are the types of proposals that are processed via CAIDI:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4A: New Proposals</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New unit proposal (undergraduate and postgraduate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>New undergraduate majors (Phase 1 – market analysis &amp; Phase 2 – content and structure)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Honours proposals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New postgraduate coursework course proposals (Phase 1 – market analysis &amp; Phase 2 – content and structure)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4B: Changes to approved Curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changes to units (undergraduate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes to units (postgraduate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes to undergraduate majors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes to Honours specialisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes to postgraduate coursework courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes to postgraduate research course – RTS compliant courses including coursework</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4C: Rescission</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rescission of undergraduate units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rescission of postgraduate units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rescission of undergraduate majors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rescission of Honours specialisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rescission of postgraduate coursework courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rescission of postgraduate research courses – RTS compliant course including coursework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rescission of Awards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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15 See the Constitution of the Curriculum Committee
16 See the Constitution of the Board of the Graduate Research School
The current governance arrangement requires most proposals in all the three tables above to undergo up to four levels of review (Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, Level 5 and Level 6 - refer to Table 1). One may question the necessity for such an arrangement, at least for consideration of certain types of curriculum items?

In particular, the rationale for Table 4B curriculum items to be processed for consideration in Part 2 of the Academic Council agenda (Level 6 review) may be questioned. This is being questioned for a number of reasons. Firstly, the nature of changes to existing curriculum is quite wide-ranging and this may require the appropriate level of expertise to assess such proposals. The Constitution of the Curriculum Committee requires members to “have a leadership role within the education portfolio in their respective functional area, or other leadership role related to teaching and learning, and this important role is to be taken into account when nominees are appointed”\textsuperscript{17}. This is a clear indication of the kind of expertise that is required to undertake the work of the Curriculum Committee.

Secondly, a large majority of Table 4B curriculum items are presented in Part 2 of the agenda. Only 10 out of the 545 curriculum items processed during February 2014 to October 2015 were marked as items for discussion in Part 3 of the Academic Council agenda whereby there was clear value-added. It is for these reasons that it is recommended here that approval of changes to curriculum items (Table 4B) should be delegated to the University's Curriculum Committee.

The approval process for new course proposals is slightly more intensive. A new course proposal involves two phases, as follows:

- Phase 1 – relates to the development of a concept plan which provides the business case and market analysis for a new course offering.
- Phase 2 – outlines in detail the course content and the course structure which must be aligned with the relevant University Policy.

Currently, Phase 1 proposals are approved by the Dean of Coursework Studies. However, it is suggested that the University as an institution as a whole has a fundamental responsibility in ensuring that its course offerings are economically viable and attractive. The education sector has changed significantly over the last couple of decades. Changes in funding models have resulted in a more consumer-led market and student expectations are increasing. Prospective students are now more likely to find information about courses via their mobile devices than in a printed prospectus; so education and skills providers are looking to digital technologies to help publicise and market their courses.

There exists a need therefore, for faster business intelligence, which is about evidence-based decision making and the processes that gather, present, and use that evidence base. Such matters, progressed via relevant faculty and University committees, warrant the attention of the Academic Council as it has an overall responsibility to ensure that the University's course offerings are economically viable and sound enough to be able to attract students in a competitive market environment.

New phase 2 course proposals for offering new undergraduate majors and postgraduate course proposals should be also closely scrutinized by the Academic Council. Since February 2014, a total of 63 new course proposals have been approved by the Academic Council but only one Phase 2 proposal (Master of Studies) has received significant level of attention, discussion and debate\textsuperscript{18}.

So, streamlining Academic Council’s approval process has significant benefits for the University. The key efficiencies achieved are that the streamlining reduces curriculum processing timing by about 6 to 8 weeks, minimises duplication particularly where no value is added, and enables higher level strategic discussion to remain with Academic Council, which is better use of members’ time.

**Recommendation 1:**

that the approving body of curriculum items is determined based on the level of expertise required to consider such items and the significance of such items for the University. The proposed approving body for each type of curriculum item is set out in Table 5.

\textsuperscript{17} See the Constitution of the Curriculum Committee

\textsuperscript{18} See Minutes of a meeting of the Academic Council held on 1 April 2015.
### Table 5: Proposed changes to final approving body for curriculum items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum Category</th>
<th>Curriculum type</th>
<th>Current approver</th>
<th>Proposed approver</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Proposals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>New unattached unit proposals (undergraduate)</td>
<td>Academic Council</td>
<td>Curriculum Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>New unit proposals (postgraduate)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Curriculum Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>New undergraduate major proposals (Phase 1) – market analysis</td>
<td>Dean, Coursework Studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>New undergraduate major proposals (Phase 2) - content and structure comprising associated units</td>
<td>Academic Council</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>New Honours specialisations – content and structure comprising associated units</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>New Postgraduate coursework course proposals (Phase 1) – market analysis</td>
<td>Dean, Coursework Studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>New Postgraduate coursework course proposals (Phase 2) – course content and structure comprising associated units</td>
<td>Academic Council</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes to approved curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Changes to units (undergraduate)</td>
<td>Academic Council</td>
<td>Curriculum Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Changes to units (postgraduate)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Curriculum Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Changes to undergraduate majors</td>
<td></td>
<td>Curriculum Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Changes to Honours specialisations</td>
<td></td>
<td>Curriculum Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Changes to postgraduate coursework courses</td>
<td></td>
<td>Board of the Graduate Research School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Changes to postgraduate research course – RTS compliant courses including coursework</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rescission</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Rescission of units (undergraduate and postgraduate)</td>
<td>Academic Council</td>
<td>Curriculum Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Rescission of undergraduate majors</td>
<td></td>
<td>Academic Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Rescission on Honours specialisations</td>
<td></td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>Rescission of postgraduate coursework courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Rescission of postgraduate research courses – RTS compliant courses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Rescission of Postgraduate course awards - degrees</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>Senate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.2 Academic Policies Streamlining and Simplification Project

As Boyd argues an evaluation of academic governance should span not only the scale of processes and practices relating to curriculum but also related academic policies that underpin them. Policies are statements of the principles governing decision-making. Policies are dynamic in nature. For policies to be effective they must be implemented with clear procedures and widely disseminated and understood. Organisations use policies and procedures to give clear directions, set standards and ensure consistency in various aspects of its operation. The term ‘policy’ is used in many different ways, across institutions and organisations, and sometimes within institutions and organisations as well. Although it can be hard to seek clarity in relation to the way in which policies are used across institutions and organisations, there are some central features common to all good policy, which:

- states matters of principle;
- is focused on action, stating what must be done and by whom; and
- is an authoritative statement, made by a person or body with power to do so.

Above all, a good policy is simply written, easy to understand, makes administration easier, and allows people to get on with the organisation’s core business more efficiently and effectively. In essence, a policy is an enabler not a blocker. In the early 2000’s the University formulated a single source of information for the provision of University-wide policies, namely the University Policies website. In October 2013, the University Executive reaffirmed that a single definitive University Policies site must be maintained and all official University policies posted to it with the requisite metadata, as required by

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law (State Records Act and the FOI Act). The University Policies site is located on the governance website.

Policies are statements of principles which are mandatory, govern decision-making and are binding to all staff and students of the University. Currently UWA records a total of 240 University policies, which are published alphabetically and by function/operational area. Responsibility for approving, reviewing, amending or rescinding policies lies with the relevant governing body and/or the executive portfolio holder, as follows:

Table 6: University Policies managed within the portfolios of the University Executive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Portfolio</th>
<th>Number of Policies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SDVC &amp; Registrar (103 policies)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DVC (Education) (116 policies)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DVC (Research) (7 policies)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DVC (Community Engagement) (3 policies)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Operating Officer (11 policies)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: University Policies Website – November 2015

Table 7: Policies within the portfolio of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)

Feedback received during 2014, as part of the Stage 1 Functional Review in the governance stream, indicated that University policies are too long and complex, difficult to understand and not always well disseminated or consistently applied. Within this context, Academic Policy Services, who manage and coordinate academic-related policy on behalf of the Academic Council and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) have been working towards improving the academic policy framework and initiated a
three-year project (November 2014) to simplify and streamline academic policies that fall within its remit, as marked in Table 7 above.

‘Academic policies’ is a broad term that may be defined from different perspectives. At UWA, academic policies are developed primarily for two target groups: students and staff. Some policies may be relevant across the two target groups and others may primarily relate exclusively to only one of the groups. Academic policies may also be defined in relation to their functions, which could be broadly categorised as follows:

(i) Academic administration – includes policies that primarily relate to students. Examples of such types of policies are: examination policies, teaching and learning policies, policies relating to graduation, student administration policies, admissions, etc.

(ii) Academic development – includes policies that primarily relate to staff for the purposes of designing and delivering academic courses (curriculum development for both cycle 1 and cycle 2 courses).

(iii) Academic research – includes policies that primarily relate to academia and academic research for academic staff. Policy relating to the code of conduct for the responsible practice of research is one such example.

The simplification project limits its review focus to policies relating to academic administration and academic development. Policies relating to academic research are outside of the Academic Policy Services’ remit and beyond the scope of the project. Therefore, of the 116 policies managed under the portfolio of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education) 92 policies are being closely examined and reviewed, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Categories of Academic Policies

The focus of the academic policies streamlining and simplification project is to undertake a comprehensive review of the administration of the University's academic policies and associated procedures which impact on the student life-cycle. In particular, the review and simplification process is not intended to change any of the University's policy principles, but rather to simplify and improve the way in which they are presented and therefore understood and implemented.

The deliverables of this project are:
1. Simplification, consolidation and integration of the University's existing academic policies into user-friendly and reader-focused policies made accessible electronically via the web-based policy library.
2. Policies and procedures will be presented with consistent structure and format across all categories.
3. Definitions will be consistent and appear in the University's Academic Policies Glossary of Terms as a single source of authority.
4. Formulation of a clear description of roles and responsibilities for development, communication, approval, rescission, implementation and review of policies and procedures – although this is an academic policies project, these outcomes will be generic and have relevance to all University policies.
5. Appropriate tools for formulation and review of policies and associated procedures, again more generic in nature.
6. Improved web information.
7. Development of training packages for policy writers, policy readers and quality controllers.

5.2.1 Policy Content Simplification (Project 1)
The main aims of the policy simplification process are to:

- **SIMPLIFY** – ensure that policies are expressed in clear and simple language
- **REFORMAT** – ensure that policies are presented with a consistent structure and format
- **REORGANISE** – ensure that policy statements are appropriately distinguished within a policy and across related policies that are thematically grouped
- **RENAME** – ensure that names of policies are consistent in line with appropriate naming conventions

The above aims may be achieved by adopting one of the following methodologies:

(i) **Methodology 1: Policy refinement**
This methodology aims to present policy content in a simple and lucid way. It aims to make policy statements succinct without changing their principles. For example, policy content may be tabularised with a view to eliminating dense text (see Table 9 below).

Table 9: Methodology 1: Policy refinement

(ii) **Methodology 2: Policy merging and splitting**
Methodology 2 relates to a process of grouping related policies that may have overlapping themes, focus and scope. The aim here is to:

- eliminate duplication in policy content;
- group and present policy statements within common themes;
- reduce the number of policies

The above aims could be achieved by way of merging and/or splitting policies, as demonstrated in Tables 10A and 10B, below. Table 10A shows that there are currently eight policies that relate to the development of postgraduate coursework courses. Of the eight policies, six have been established for individual postgraduate courses course type. These six policies not only have a number of common themes but they are also linked to the fundamental principles underpinning course design (University Policy on Volume of Learning and Structures for Postgraduate Coursework Courses) and changes to curriculum. Therefore, the eight policies have been merged and where relevant split to produce three key new policies as highlighted in Table 10B, below.
Table 10A: Methodology 2: Policy merging and splitting

8 Policies

Table 10B: Methodology 2: Policy merging and splitting
(iii) Methodology 3: Framework approach
Methodology 3 relates to the adoption of a framework approach to policy streamlining and simplification. The aim of this approach is to cluster common themes, simplify and present policy statements appearing in various policies under a single framework. One example relates to the newly approved University Policy on Assessment which is a result of reorganising and presenting policy content drawn from 11 policies within a single framework, as shown in Table 11 below.

Table 11: Methodology 3: Framework Approach

| Part 1: University Standards for Assessment |

It is clear from the above that methodology 1 does not have any major impact on the status of a policy other than changing its appearance. On the other hand, policies that are streamlined and simplified using methodologies 2 and 3 may result in the creation of new policies and rescission of existing policies.

Recommendation 2:
that academic policies simplified and streamlined by way of:
1. policy refinement (methodology 1) are approved by the DVC (Education) by delegation of the Academic Council;
2. policy merging and splitting (methodology 2) and adopting a framework approach (methodology 3) are approved by the Academic Council.

5.2.1 Progress to date
As at November 2015, Academic Policy Services have reviewed 40 out of the 92 academic policies and anticipates an overall reduction of academic policies to 45 by project end in 2017.

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20 Existing Policies: University Policy on 22TUAssessment (UP07/23)U22T; University Policy on 22TUAssessment Mechanism Statements (UP11/37)U22T; University Policy on 22TUGeneral Provisions relating to Examinations (UP12/8)U22T; University Policy on 22TUDefined Examinations (UP11/39)U22T; University Policy on 22TUAlternative Examinations (UP12/7)U22T; University Policy on 22TUCalculations approved for use in Examinations (UP07/11)U22T; University Policy on 22TUGrades and Marks for Undergraduate Units and Postgraduate Coursework Units (UP11/3)U22T; University Policy on 22TUSupplementary Assessment (UP11/2)U22T; University Policy on 22TUGrades and Ungraded Passes and Ungraded Fails (UP09/10)U22T; University Policy on 22TUAmmending Examination Results and other Academic Decisions Found to be in Error after Formal Notification to Students (UP07/120)U22T; University Policy on 22TUProvision of Unit Outlines (UP10/5)U22T. These policies will be proposed to be rescinded once the new single approved policy on assessment becomes effective. In addition, the 22TUUniversity Policy on Boards of Examiners and the Academic Progress Review Sub-Committee (UP13/2)U22T will need to be consequentially amended.
6 Tables

Table 1: Sources of agenda items for Academic Council and review levels
Table 2: Types of items considered by the Academic Council
Table 3: Proportion of items considered in different parts of the Academic Council Agenda
Table 4: Categories of curriculum proposals
Table 5: Proposed changes to final approving body for curriculum items
Table 6: University Policies managed within the portfolios of the University Executive
Table 7: Policies within the portfolio of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)
Table 8: Categories of Academic Policies
Table 9: Methodology 1: Policy refinement
Table 10A: Methodology 2: Policy merging and splitting
Table 10B: Methodology 2: Policy merging and splitting
Table 11: Methodology 3: Framework Approach

7 References


Osborne Denis (1998) “Governance Partnership and Development”, paper prepared for the International Institute of Administrative Scientists, working group on governance, July

Paul Johnson (2015)”Securing Success”, UWA. Accessible via LMS.

Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (2014). TEQSA Guidance Note: Academic Governance (Draft)


An audit of the Faculty Governance documents indicates that two faculties have implemented decision-making delegations specifically for curriculum management.
## Delegations of Decision-Making in Regards to Curriculum Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Curriculum Management Delegate</th>
<th>Details of Delegations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts</td>
<td></td>
<td>There is no specific delegated authority for decision-making in regards to curriculum matters as per the faculty governance document. Refer to: Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts governance and structure webpage: <a href="http://www.governance.uwa.edu.au/structure/faculty/alva">http://www.governance.uwa.edu.au/structure/faculty/alva</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Arts</td>
<td>Associate Dean (Education)</td>
<td>2.3.3 Associate Dean (Education) Delegation (3) The Associate Dean (Education) has delegated authority from the Arts Faculty Board to make decisions and/or recommendations, as appropriate, direct to the University's Curriculum Committee on the following matters of education: (a) introduction of new proposals (units, majors, cycle 2 coursework courses); (b) changes (minor and major that impact on structures of majors, cycle 2 courses); (c) rescissions of units, specialisations, majors, cycle 2 courses; Refer to Faculty of Arts governance and structure webpage: <a href="http://www.governance.uwa.edu.au/structure/faculty/arts">http://www.governance.uwa.edu.au/structure/faculty/arts</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Business (The UWA Business School)</td>
<td></td>
<td>There is no specific delegated authority for decision-making in regards to curriculum matters as per the faculty governance document. Refer to Faculty of Business (The UWA Business School) governance and structure webpage: <a href="http://www.governance.uwa.edu.au/structure/faculty/business">http://www.governance.uwa.edu.au/structure/faculty/business</a></td>
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### Appendix A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACULTY</th>
<th>CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT DELEGATE</th>
<th>DETAILS OF DELEGATIONS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Education</td>
<td></td>
<td>There is no specific delegated authority for decision-making in regards to curriculum matters as per the faculty governance document. Refer to Faculty of Education governance and structure webpage: <a href="http://www.governance.uwa.edu.au/structure/faculty/education">http://www.governance.uwa.edu.au/structure/faculty/education</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Mathematics</td>
<td></td>
<td>There is no specific delegated authority for decision-making in regards to curriculum matters as per the faculty governance document. Refer to Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Mathematics governance and structure webpage: <a href="http://www.governance.uwa.edu.au/structure/faculty/ecm">http://www.governance.uwa.edu.au/structure/faculty/ecm</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Law</td>
<td></td>
<td>There is no specific delegated authority for decision-making in regards to curriculum matters as per the faculty governance document. Refer to Faculty of Law governance and structure webpage: <a href="http://www.governance.uwa.edu.au/structure/faculty/law">http://www.governance.uwa.edu.au/structure/faculty/law</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences</td>
<td></td>
<td>There is no specific delegated authority for decision-making in regards to curriculum matters as per the faculty governance document. Refer to Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences governance and structure webpage: <a href="http://www.governance.uwa.edu.au/structure/faculty/meddent">http://www.governance.uwa.edu.au/structure/faculty/meddent</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### FACULTY | CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT DELEGATE | DETAILS OF DELEGATIONS
--- | --- | ---
Faculty of Science | Science Executive Committee | 3.1.3 Position of the Science Executive Committee within The University of Western Australia

(1) The Science Executive Committee is the main decision-making committee of the Faculty of Science and has the delegated powers of the Faculty, except the power to constitute the Executive Committee.

Science Curriculum Committee | 3.10.1 Position within the Faculty Governance
The Science Curriculum Committee is a sub-committee of, and makes recommendations to, the Science Executive Committee.

3.10.3 Delegation on education matters
The Science Curriculum Committee makes decisions on major changes to cycle 1 and cycle 2 courses where there is an impact on structure or unit sequence.

Deputy Dean | 5.2.2 Delegations
The Deputy Dean has delegated authority from the Science Executive Committee to make decisions on the following matters of education:

(a) minor changes to cycle 1 and cycle 2 courses that have no impact on structures or unit sequence;

Refer to Faculty of Science governance and structure webpage: [http://www.governance.uwa.edu.au/structure/faculty/science](http://www.governance.uwa.edu.au/structure/faculty/science)