Advanced Diploma in Aboriginal Legal Studies

Please note that this concept plan is not yet approved.

Part 1: Concept Plan

Proposed academic content:

The Advanced Diploma comprises five taught units - two Level One units offered by the School of Indigenous Studies (Introduction to Aboriginal Legal Studies and EITHER INDG1150 – Aboriginal Encounters: Strangers in Our Backyard OR INDG1140 Knowing Country: The Dreaming and Darwin) plus a sequence of three units offered by Law from the major in Law and Society (Legal Systems, Law in Action and a Level 3 elective) plus seven units achieved through a paid and supervised work placement in a legal context where students will be assessed on their ability to apply their coursework learning to the workplace and engage in work-based project work. The course offers an accelerated pathway to Level 3 study and allows an assessment to made whether the student might succeed if admitted to the Juris Doctor postgraduate degree.

Alignment with Faculty Strategic and Operational Priorities Plans:

The Faculty has a long standing commitment to 'Support and enhance the learning experience of Aboriginal students' (OPP 2006-08). The current draft of the Faculty's 2011-14 Strategic and Operational Priorities Plan, which is being revised in accordance with the recent Faculty Review, continues in this vein with an Operational Objective (ED1) to recruit and graduate a diverse student cohort of the highest quality by working ‘with the School of Indigenous Studies to increase the number of and, level of support for, indigenous students’ (ED1.3) and increasing the ‘number of special entry pathway’ students (ED1.2).

Alignment with University Strategic and Operational Priorities Plans:

The University’s Strategic Plan identifies equity and merit as the fundamental principles for the achievement of the full potential of all staff and students.

In its Equity and Diversity Management Plan (2009-11), the University adopts the following principles: the student body should reflect the diversity of the Western Australian community; access should be improved for Indigenous Australians in the workforce; measures should be undertaken to address any barriers that inhibit Western Australians from diverse backgrounds to actively participate in all facets of University life.

The University’s entry and access programs provide critical pathways to higher education for Indigenous people. UWA’s approach is based on recognising academic potential and then equipping students to participate and succeed in its highly competitive academic climate. At UWA 75% of Indigenous students enter Bachelor level degree courses through special entry and preparatory courses; this increases to 80% for Law. The Aboriginal Pre-Law Program is an intensive 5-week degree specific course that prepares Indigenous students for Law school. The program has provided a highly successful entry point for Indigenous students to
the Bachelor of Laws with 70% of UWA’s Indigenous Law graduates having completing the Pre-Law program. However, it will not be sufficient to prepare students for the postgraduate Juris Doctor program.

The Advanced Diploma is an initiative informed by the current pre-Law program. It is identified within the University’s Indigenous Education Statement for 2011 and is supported by the Dean of the Faculty of Law, the Dean of the School of Indigenous Studies, the PVC and Senior DVC.

**First year of offer:**
2013

**Expected enrolment:**
10 (based on enrolment in current Indigenous pre-Law program)

**Overlap with other majors in different degrees:**
The Advanced Diploma will include Units in Levels 1 and 2 of Law and Society.

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SIS have been partners in the development of the Advanced Diploma and will contribute core Units to the program.

**Employer Group: Law Firms**

Approaches have been made to commercial law firms, in-house law departments and the public sector to provide work placements. These negotiations will continue through the first half of 2012 but we already have public declarations of support.