

A framework for assessing unit proposals seeking recognition of broadening 'Category A' status

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DOCUMENT APPROVAL

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1. Background

The University requires all undergraduate students to undertake study that not only provides for the disciplinary depth in their chosen field but also one that delivers “a broader understanding that prepares them resourcefully for the challenges of a dynamic environment”¹. Therefore, as per current University rules, a student is required to complete at least four broadening units in their degree, with at least one unit from ‘Category A’ and the remainder chosen from ‘Category A’ or ‘Category B’. ‘Category B’ broadening units comprise potentially all units that faculties are willing to offer to students from across the University, subject to prerequisites being met, and provided they are taken outside the knowledge area of the student’s degree-specific major.

In relation to ‘Category A’ broadening Units, the Academic Council recently resolved by R47/16 to approve that units with mathematics and/or statistical theory as their core teaching content be regarded as a another group of ‘Category A’ broadening units. This basically means that the University will have five groups of ‘Category A’ broadening units, as follows:

- (a) units with their main focus on some aspects of the globalised and culturally diverse environment;
- (b) Language Other Than English (LOTE) units;
- (c) Indigenous Studies units;
- (d) units undertaken as part of an approved study abroad or student exchange program; and
- (e) units with mathematics and/or statistical theory as their core teaching content.

While a unit may be proposed with a view to seeking recognition of broadening ‘Category A’ status in one of the above grouping, there is little information with regard to how such proposals should be assessed to meet the specific requirements of any of the above groupings. What are the unit design requirements that must be satisfied to assume the status as a broadening ‘Category A’ unit in one of the above groupings? The purpose of this paper therefore, is twofold. First, it proposes a framework for assessing new and existing units that are proposed to seek recognition of broadening ‘Category A’ status in one of the above five groupings. Second, it proposes that an assessment team, comprising members drawn from the Curriculum Committee, be established to undertake appropriate assessment of such unit proposals and making appropriate recommendations to the Curriculum Committee.

2. Framework for determining broadening ‘Category A’ status

This framework should guide assessors within the University’s Curriculum Committee in determining whether a new or an existing unit has met the specifications to be branded as a ‘Category A’ broadening unit. The following sets out the requirements that must be met when designing units to acquire broadening ‘Category A’ status in one of the five groupings, as set out above.

2.1 Requirements for proposing a ‘Category A’ broadening unit that addresses aspects relating to a globalised and culturally diverse environment in which the student operates:

Unit design requirement 1	<p>The main focus of the academic content of the unit must be focused on enabling the student to understand aspects of globalised and culturally diverse environments.</p> <p>This requirement may be met through <u>one or more</u> of the following methods:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">(a) where the unit content explicitly focuses on cultural and global diversity;(b) where learning occurs by applying the disciplinary focus of the unit to global and culturally diverse contexts;(c) where learning occurs through comparative study of global-cultural diversities and contexts;(d) where learning occurs through case study approaches, including field study and trips, to understanding global-cultural diversities. <p>[N.B: where a unit is designed as an ‘<i>Indigenous-embedded</i>’ unit (i.e. Indigenous content account for 20 per cent or more of unit content), the proposal should demonstrate that it has been developed in consultation with the School of Indigenous Studies.]</p>
Unit design requirement 2	<p>Learning outcomes of the unit must be designed to enable students to develop personal, social and ethical awareness in a global context.</p>
Unit design requirement 3	<p>Assessment must adequately demonstrate that the student will meet requirements 1 and 2.</p>

¹ UWA, Education for Tomorrow’s World: courses of Action, September 2008.

2.2 Requirements for proposing a 'Category A' broadening unit as a LOTE unit:

Unit design requirement 1	The main focus of the academic content of the unit must be focused on enabling the student to develop cultural, fluency and literacy skills for the mastery of a foreign language.
Unit design requirement 2	Learning outcomes of the unit must be designed to enable students to communicate clearly, effectively and appropriately in a foreign language by way of developing a range of competencies. These competencies, which could vary depending on level of literacy training, may include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Reading comprehension, pronunciation and oral skills; (b) Written expression and interpersonal communication skills; (c) Reading and analysing texts in different contexts; (d) Demonstrate metalinguistic understanding of the foreign language and English; and (e) Application of the fluency and literacy skills in different contexts.
Unit design requirement 3	Assessment must adequately demonstrate that the student will meet requirements 1 and 2.

2.3 Requirements for proposing a 'Category A' broadening unit as an Indigenous Studies unit:

Unit design requirement 1	The main focus of the academic content of the unit must be focused on enabling the student to understand aspects of Indigenous people, history, language, culture, knowledge and society. This requirement may be met through <u>one or more</u> of the following methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) where the unit content explicitly focuses on Indigenous people, history, language, culture, knowledge and society; (b) where learning occurs by applying the disciplinary focus of the unit on Indigenous people and Indigenous contexts. <p>[N.B: The unit should demonstrate that it has been developed in consultation with the School of Indigenous Studies or by Aboriginal Academic staff in the school/discipline proposing the unit.]</p>
Unit design requirement 2	Learning outcomes of the unit must be designed to enable students to develop personal, social, ethical and cultural competence in an Indigenous context.
Unit design requirement 3	Assessment must adequately demonstrate that the student will meet requirements 1 and 2.

2.4 Requirements for proposing a 'Category A' broadening unit as a study abroad unit:

Unit design requirement 1	Faculty/student advisors must ensure that the study abroad unit must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) be wholly taught by and undertaken at the host institution; (b) be for credit (equivalent to six credit points); (c) comprise 150 hours (or equivalent) of student workload to be undertaken wholly abroad at the host institution; and (d) enable the student to immerse and interface with the culture of a foreign country. <p>[N.B: an overseas field trip or other in-country short-term activity designed as a component of a unit does not satisfy the requirements under this category.]</p>
Unit design requirement 2	Academic content of the study abroad unit must be assessed to be comparable to that of the unit offered by the University.
Unit design requirement 3	If the study abroad unit is undertaken as part of the unit sequence within a major, advisors must ensure that the learning outcomes of the study abroad unit are mapped to deliver the outcomes of the major.
Unit design requirement 4	Advisors must ensure that the assessment standards of the study abroad unit are equivalent to that of the University.

2.5 Requirements for proposing a 'Category A' broadening unit with mathematics and /or statistics as core teaching content:

Unit design requirement 1	The main focus of the academic content of the unit must enable the student to develop competency in mathematics and/or statistics. This requirement may be met through <u>one or more</u> of the following methods: (a) where the unit content explicitly focuses on developing an understanding of mathematical theory and functions and their applications; and/or (b) where the unit content explicitly focuses on developing an understanding of statistical theory and methods and their applications.
Unit design requirement 2	Learning outcomes of the unit must be designed to enable students to develop understanding and competency in numeracy.
Unit design requirement 3	Assessment must adequately demonstrate that the student will meet requirements 1 and 2.

To this end, the following recommendation should be considered:

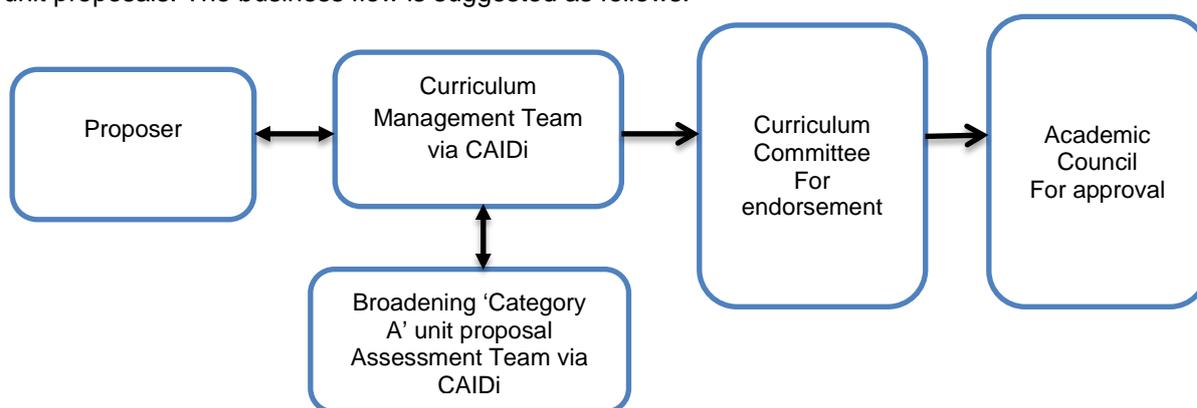
Recommendation 1:

That the proposed framework for assessing new and existing units designed to seek recognition of broadening 'Category A' status in one of the following five groupings be approved:
(a) units with their main focus on some aspects of the globalised and culturally diverse environment;
(b) Language Other Than English (LOTE) units;
(c) Indigenous Studies units;
(d) units undertaken as part of an approved study abroad or student exchange program; and
(e) units with mathematics and/or statistical theory as their core teaching content.

3. The need for an Assessment Team

While the Curriculum Committee has the overall responsibility in ensuring that proposals seeking recognition of broadening 'Category A' status align with relevant policy requirements, there exists a need to establish a robust process for assessing such proposals.

It is therefore, suggested that a small team be established by the Dean of Coursework Studies to undertake this task under closer scrutiny and in alignment with the proposed framework as set out in section 2. In so doing, it enables the University to maintain high academic standards and to ensure consistency and quality assurance in the assessment and feedback process of broadening 'Category A' unit proposals. The business flow is suggested as follows:



Recommendation 2:

That an assessment team be established to undertake appropriate assessment of 'Category A' broadening unit proposals and to make appropriate recommendations to the Curriculum Committee.