9. SELECTION FOR THE BACHELOR OF PHILOSOPHY (HONOURS) - Ref: 28852

At its meeting on 7 April 2010, Academic Council resolved by R16/10 to approve that the cohort for the Bachelor of Philosophy (Hons) degree course be made up of diverse and academically outstanding students.

The means of achieving the objective set out in R16/10 has been the subject of considerable discussion since, involving the Bachelor of Philosophy (Hons) Interim Board of Studies, a Bachelor of Philosophy Selection Working Party, the Board of Coursework Studies and the Admissions Committee of Academic Council.

Members had before them:
- Report of the Bachelor of Philosophy (Hons) Selection Process Working Party
- Extract from the minutes of a meeting of the Admissions Committee held on 16 November 2010
- Data on the academic achievement and demographic characteristics of the 98+ and 99+ cohorts of students in 2009.
- An extract from the minutes of Academic Council meeting held on 4 August 2010

Essentially, discussion focused on whether the ATAR in conjunction with the sub-quotas agreed in Academic Council R89/10, was an appropriate instrument for selecting “diverse and academically outstanding students” for the Bachelor of Philosophy (Hons). There were different views expressed in regard to this.

Two members expressed concern that the ATAR, even when used in conjunction with sub-quotas, would not provide a sufficiently diverse and academically outstanding Bachelor of Philosophy (Hons) intake in 2012. They argued that there was an expectation, implicit in Academic Council R16/10, that the University would be considering the use of additional selection mechanisms, other than the use of an ATAR, to distinguish top students competing for admission to the Bachelor of Philosophy (Hons) course.

On the other hand, based on the data on the academic achievement and demographic characteristics of the 98+ and 99+ cohorts of students in 2009, it was argued that there was clear evidence of a significant level of differentiation at the upper end of students’ ATARs to ensure that selection would deliver academically outstanding students; that the demographics of the 98+ group were as diverse as the University’s overall 80+ catchment; and in the 98+ range, the ATAR was a very strong predictor of performance in first year.

It was also noted that the ATAR was a well-accepted and well-understood selection system, administered and overseen independently of the universities by the Curriculum Council of WA, which reflected a considerable amount of assessment experience over a sustained period and was subject to public scrutiny and processes (such as moderation and scaling) to ensure public confidence and fairness.

It was acknowledged that diversity in the Bachelor of Philosophy (Hons) cohort would be protected through the sub-quotas that had already been approved by Academic Council (AC R89/10):
- up to 3 additional places above the 30 intake for Indigenous students;
- up to 3 additional places for students from rural and low socio-economic backgrounds;
- 4 places for international students; and
- 10 places for students completing level 1 study.

Given the imperative of an early resolution of the selection process for the 2012 intake to the Bachelor of Philosophy (Hons), it was agreed that selection to the Bachelor of Philosophy (Hons)
in 2012 be based on the ATAR score in conjunction with the agreed sub-quotas and that there should be further investigation of the selection options for the next cohort.

RESOLVED – 37

that selection to the Bachelor of Philosophy (Hons) in 2012 be based on the ATAR score in conjunction with the agreed sub-quotas, and that a review of the admission and selection process for the next cohort be undertaken.

It was noted that the matter of admission and selection processes for future cohorts of the Bachelor of Philosophy (Hons) would be addressed by the Bachelor of Philosophy (Hons) Interim Board of Studies and the Admissions Committee before coming back to Academic Council.