School Administration Review 2010
Summary of Final Report

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1. Purpose

The ultimate objective of this review is a recommendation for the most appropriate model/s of seamless student service delivery at UWS, service delivery to academic activities and identification of the resources required to implement the recommended model/s.

2. Support to Students

This review recommends both a School-student interface and a Student Central-student interface, it identifies that clarity around roles and responsibilities is essential and that referrals must be correct.

This review received around 15 positive responses to the 2009 SLG proposed model of Student Central as the initial point of contact for students. These positive responses indicated that theoretically the model of students being able to have one point of contact would be an optimum student experience. It was noted that such a model would require further investment in human and financial resources, which has not been quantified, and ongoing training of staff, as well as an in-depth knowledge of what is happening in Schools.

There were at least four times as many comments received that reflected that the model proposed by the 2009 SLG Report was not the right solution for UWS. The key themes of the feedback were:

- Students have a relationship with Schools/Colleges/Research Centres/Groups, which is an important part of the overall student experience and helps to give students a sense of belonging and identity.
- One-stop-shop with case management appears to be a piecemeal project, similar to a process line, it appears to be adding layers and putting up barriers.
• Level of local knowledge required to be maintained at a central point in the SLG proposed model is significant to the point that it is not achievable.
• Academics have a relationship with administration staff at the local level, therefore opportunity for access to an academic is through School administration, not from a central unit. Placing central administration between the academic and the student limits the opportunities for student and academic interaction to the class room.
• Reception counters provide a professional face to the School.

It was established throughout the review that a successful model requires:
• Commitment to student-focused service.
• Expectations and deliverables should be consistent and accurate no matter where the service is provided.
• Clear and accurate communication with our students so they know where to get information.
• Clearly defined roles and responsibilities between Units within the Registrar’s Office and Schools, Colleges, Research Centres and Groups.
• An agreed framework for operating between Units within the Registrar’s Office and Schools, Colleges, Research Centres and Groups.
• Greater communication and understanding between Schools, Colleges, Research Centres and Groups and Units within the Registrar’s Office.
• Relationships need to be strengthened between Units within the Registrar’s Office and Schools, Colleges, Research Centres and Groups.
• A referral point within Schools is established for Units within the Registrar’s Office.

Recommendation 1: The current services provided by Student Central are continued to be supported from Student Central, and that a comprehensive and detailed list of these services be developed and circulated to Schools.

Recommendation 2: The Student Support and Administration Forum (SSAF) meet more frequently than the current quarterly arrangement (it is recommended they meet on a bi-monthly basis) and that the SSAF be proactively utilised and endorsed as the communication link between Divisional Units, the Registrar’s Office, Colleges, Schools, Research Centres and Groups. The SSAF be utilised for the purpose of knowledge transfer and clarification and development of processes related to student administration matters. It is further recommended that these forums be co-facilitated by the Registrar’s Office and Schools or be externally facilitated.

Further devolution of transactional tasks should be a possibility over time from Schools to Student Central. However, building the relationship to facilitate these discussions is critical in the first instance. Any devolution of tasks should be on a negotiated basis and in a consistent and agreed transition framework, from time-to-time working groups may need to be established across the Registrar’s Office and Schools, Colleges, Research Centres and Groups to progress such discussions. Working Groups should report back to the SSAF.

Recommendation 3: As suggested by the Registrar’s Office and supported by feedback throughout the review process, the following functions currently carried out by Schools, remain the responsibility of administration staff in Schools, Colleges, Research Centres and Groups as appropriate:
• HDR student support.
• Honours student support.
• Student placements.
• **Assignment handling.**

**Recommendation 4: Each School establishes a School Enquiry Unit/Counter* at least at its main teaching campus and, provides students with access to administration staff at other campuses that the School teaches on.**

*The School Enquiry Unit/Counter would provide:

- A point of contact via reception, phone and email.
- Advertised program advice and more complex program advice that has been documented and approved by a Head of Program, Head of School or Associate Dean, e.g. for transitional arrangements in teach-out of programs.
- Support to assignment handling processes as agreed at the School level and, as a minimum, in line with Recommendations 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17.
- A link for enquiries from Divisional units.
- A liaison link to academic staff.

In some cases, where minimal teaching takes place by a School on a campus, i.e. where teaching into a program for another School occurs, and it is unrealistic to have a full-time administration presence, access to administration support through another School on that campus should be negotiated to the level required.

**Recommendation 5: Each School establishes a central email and phone number, which is to be the main link for Units within the Registrar’s Office back to the School, and should ideally be used for all School-related enquiries and promoted to students and the external community.**

However, where large unit or program-based emails exist, these should continue to be utilised for student contact purposes, with Units within the Registrar’s Office using the central email and the enquiries filtered appropriately to the various internal email lists by administration staff.

In establishing the Student Enquiry Unit/Counter within each School consideration should be given to the actual level of tasks required to support academic activities. Wherever possible lower level tasks should be pooled and allocated to staff at appropriate HEW levels.

Schools should ensure that for each critical task there is more than one knowledgeable and trained staff member, to ensure a system of back-up support is available within the School as a risk mitigation strategy.

**Recommendation 6: An audit of School administration structures takes place to ensure they are configured to support the recommendations within this review, including establishing a School Enquiry Unit/Counter and meeting the recommended baseline of support to academic activities.**

It is essential that this be done on a School-by-School basis to consider support for those activities that may be unique to a School, such as clinical, practicum and technical requirements. It is noted that some Schools already provide the baseline of administration support to academic activities and some already have an established position of Web eLearning Officer.

This audit and reconfiguration of administration staff should be undertaken in consultation with the Head of School, School Manager and considering the specific needs of each School, with recommendations submitted to the Executive Dean.
School administration staff availability to students at main teaching campuses varies from start times of 8:00am, 8:30am or 9:00am to closing times of 4:00pm, 4:30pm, 5:00pm and, in the case of SGSM, they are open until 6:00pm to cater for the incoming evening students. The primary issue in relation to end of day availability is the ability of students to submit assignments.

A discussion with the Manager of Timetabling Services confirms that the majority of classes commence at 9:00am, with earlier starts only used as a last resource, based on space constraints. Timetabling Services advise that academics have stated that classes starting before 9:00am have a high level of non-attendance.

**Recommendation 7:** During autumn and spring teaching sessions, School Enquiry Units/Counters initially to open to students from 8:30am to cater for students making enquiries before first classes at 9:00am and close at 5:30pm. Reduced support may be available during breaks; however the Unit/Counter should not close for breaks. Hours should be reviewed by Schools on an ongoing basis for relevance in relation to demand.

**Recommendation 8:** Each School assess the need for an after-hours assignment box.

### 3. Administration Support to Academic Activities

As an outcome of the 2009 SLG Report, the principles for administration support to academics were endorsed by the DVC Corporate Strategy and Services and Executive Deans as:

- Academic staff-centred approach that enables academics to focus on their core work.
- Focus on support to administration and academic functions and processes (not to academics per se).
- The need for a defined scope of administration support to academics, within which Schools operate.

In the current review, a matrix comparing administration support provided to a range of activities by School was developed. As anticipated by the information provided from a meeting of Unit Coordinators with the PVC Learning and Teaching in August 2009, a huge disparity in support to academic activities was evident.

The outcomes of this review recommend a consistent minimum level of administration support to academic activities. It is acknowledged that the full suite of recommendations are a baseline and may require significant cultural change in some Schools. It is not proposed to reduce the level of administration support to academic activities in any School. Where support levels are above the baseline recommended, these should continue.

**Recommendation 9:** Administration staff in Schools continue to be the point of contact for the Units within the Registrar’s Office in relation to:

- Applications to graduate
- Change of grades
- Completion letters
- Outstanding grades
- Results processing
- Review of grades
- Rule waivers
- Special considerations
- Student academic misconduct
- Unit offering options

This recommendation does not impact delegations; it purely assists in facilitating the process.

It is noted by administration staff throughout Schools, Research Centres and Groups that they provide basic support to:
- Act as the contact for coordination of events and marketing activities, such as Open Day, Graduations, UWS Day, Decision Day, Information evenings, Orientation, etc.
- Arranging various accesses to buildings, equipment and systems for new staff.
- Equipment maintenance.
- Establishing TRIM files and managing records disposal.
- Logging maintenance requests.
- Ordering leased and purchased computer equipment.
- Maintaining asset databases.
- Ordering stationery.
- Running Callista and Discoverer reports for academic colleagues.
- Support to meetings, including booking meetings, booking catering, preparing agendas, taking minutes and following-up on actions.
- Recruitment, including managing the eRecruit system and casual staff eligibility lists.

**Recommendation 10:** The above functions continue to be undertaken by administration staff in Schools, Research Centres and Groups.

**Recommendation 11:** Finance functions, including corporate card acquittals, processing invoices, monitoring expenditure against budgets and developing budgets* continue to be undertaken by administration staff in Schools, Research Centres and Groups, including monitoring expenditure against budget on individual research projects.

*Budget development usually sits at School Manager level.

**Recommendation 12:** Travel bookings on eRes and eTan be formalised as the responsibility of administration staff in Schools, Research Centres and Groups. Travellers must be available to provide advice at the time the booking is made by administration staff.

Feedback from the Unit Coordinators’ meeting chaired by the PVC Learning and Teaching in August 2009 reflects that some academic staff identified a need to have administration support with sorting assignments alphabetically and handing back to students. Various practices in place across Schools in relation to assignment handling were considered by the reviewer.

**Recommendation 13:** Assignments continue to be handed in via class, assignment boxes or electronically, including to unit email addresses, as determined by academic staff.

**Recommendation 14:** Assignments be returned via class where practical.

**Recommendation 15:** Administration staff provide assistance sorting assignments alphabetically and marking off submission for large units, where required.

**Recommendation 16:** Assignment disposal in accordance with UWS policy be the responsibility of administration staff.
Recommendation 17: Individual Schools look at the practicality of administration staff receiving and assessing requests for extension to submit an assessment item.

Recommendation 18: Tutorial registration remains an administration function and that moving students between classes shift to administration responsibility in those Schools that don’t already offer this support.

The reviewer notes that the timetable data collection and checking timetables was not raised as a specific issue throughout this Review. The data collected shows that about 50% of Schools have academics enter data and check timetables, this is mostly the case in the College of Health and Science whereas about 50% of Schools have these tasks undertaken by administration staff; primarily this is the case in the College of Business with a mix in the College of Arts. The only comments in relation to the timetable made at the Unit Coordinators’ meeting with the PVC Learning and Teaching in August 2009 related to the timetable not being ‘green friendly’ in regard to the number of days each student attends a campus, questioning whether Timetabling Services have sufficient staff in peak periods and why the timetable does not roll over from year to year.

Recommendation 19: Data entry of timetabling requirements is carried out by administration staff.

Recommendation 20: Executive establish, through the Executive Projects Office, a full review of the University’s timetabling processes, excluding systems, noting that any comments from the 2010 AUQA panel trial audit should be considered in any review. Terms of reference for the review should be developed in consultation with the Registrar’s Office.

Recommendation 21: The distribution of SFUs be undertaken by administration staff (casual or permanent) and that a request for a coordinated, cost effective approach to the distribution process is considered in consultation with the PVCs - Quality and Learning and Teaching.

The feedback received from the Unit Coordinators meeting held in August 2009 with the PVC Learning and Teaching indicated that some Schools required their academic staff to draw up Casual Employment Authorities (CEAs). The reviewer has found that in all Schools CEAs are drawn up by administration staff. However, at least six Schools have developed an in-house form that academic staff must complete, which provides much of the data required to complete a CEA, hence academics may perceive that they are completing a CEA and these in-house forms may be the source of angst raised by the academic staff at the meeting with the PVC Learning and Teaching in August 2009.

The School of Engineering has not shifted to electronic online timesheets.

Recommendation 22: Administration staff be responsible to prepare CEAs and monitor online timesheets.

Recommendation 23: In-house forms for the development of CEAs be critiqued to assess the necessity for these forms and to minimise the information that an academic is asked to provide, especially where that information has been provided previously.

Recommendation 24: The School of Engineering work with Human Resources to shift to utilising the online timesheet processes.
The Registrar’s Office has indicated that once the Curriculum Approval and Publications System (CAPS) is rolled out, unit outlines will be automatically populated from the approved unit documentation. This initiative, when it is rolled out, will be welcomed by Schools. In the interim, a consistent approach to unit outlines and learning guides is recommended.

**Recommendation 25:** Developing unit outlines and learning guides remain an academic responsibility in terms of academic content and quality assurance. However, as far as practicable, School administration staff assist by providing base data for new unit outlines and for repeating units. Unit outlines and learning guides are updated with new calendar information by administration staff.

**Recommendation 26:** Uploading unit outlines and learning guides to UWS repositories be an administration responsibility.

The mapping on support to academic activities reflects that just over 60% of Schools have professional staff (either administration or technical) establish their individual unit sites on vUWS through the eLearning Team and, in the majority of Schools, professional staff will provide training and support in regard to the School’s vUWS sites. Academics in all but two Schools are responsible for the development of their own vUWS unit sites.

Some of the issues in relation to use of vUWS raised throughout the review were the need for clarification in relation to responsibilities for vUWS and the need for clarification on HEW levels to support eLearning, as varying HEW levels of staff are asked to undertake vUWS support, ranging from HEW 4 to HEW 6. In one School, the Web eLearning support is provided by a casual academic staff member.

**Recommendation 27:** Each School appoint a Web/eLearning Officer to support web and vUWS sites. This recommendation includes:
- a) An audit of current PDs of Web/eLearning Officers.
- b) Development of a PD for those Schools that do not currently have such a position appointed, in consultation with the Head of School and School Manager.
- c) The Web/eLearning Officer establishes vUWS sites for each unit in liaison with the eLearning Team and unit coordinator.
- d) A primary responsibility of the Web/eLearning Officer is to provide support and training to academic staff in regard to enhancing their unit vUWS sites and using interactive technologies.
- e) Academic staff will continue to be responsible to manage their own vUWS sites.

**Recommendation 28:** Administration staff in Schools be the contact for all examination matters, and will be responsible to:
- a) Edit and format exam manuscripts in relation to overall presentation. Academics maintain responsibility for academic content of exam manuscripts and quality assurance.
- b) Coordinate and arrange the collection of examination papers on behalf of academic staff.

**Recommendation 29:** Look at the logistics for collection and distribution of completed exams, including risk assessment and cost effectiveness.
Recommendation 30: An individual researcher will receive support with budgets, casual employment authorities and travel to the extent support to these activities is outlined above, irrespective of whether they are located in a School, College, Research Centre or Group.

While this review recommends support with budget development and monitoring for individual research projects; it should be noted that academic staff will maintain responsibility for their own grants and research project budgets.

Recommendation 31: Academic Career Development Planning and Review and Workload documents remain the responsibility of academic staff. However, administration staff should assist with collation and formatting of these documents to ensure consistency and be responsible for record-keeping in line with the current Academic Staff Agreement 2009-2012 and relevant policies.

Some Schools provide targeted support to large first year units and/or programs. A prime example is that provided by the School of Accounting to its large first year unit, which includes:
- Point of contact for students; face-to-face, email and phone.
- Administration handle all enquiries responding to those they can and only forwarding to academics those requiring academic decision.
- Support sessional staff appointed to unit
- Assist with preparation of teaching materials.
- Coach invigilators.
- Organise markers.
- Print class lists.
- Store final exam papers and dispose of in due course.
- Enter and maintain spreadsheet of marks for assessment items.
- Update and maintain attendance lists.

Several Schools, including all Schools from the College of Health and Science, have introduced a First Year Student Contact Officer (FYSCO). This position supports the Head of Program and first year students.

Recommendation 32: Recommendations on administration support models to first year programs and large first year units be developed following an audit across all Schools with results published across Schools and Colleges and lead (exemplar) practices implemented.

Recommendation 33: Administration staff be the contact point for sessional staff, providing support with IT, building and other accesses required to undertake their role, as well as a first point of contact for HR-related matters. The School of Accounting model be adopted as lead practice and emulated across all Schools, wherever possible.

4. Lead Practices

Managers form a critical link within their own School, College, Research Centre or Group in regard to supporting academic activities and also in regard to positioning the School, College, Research Centre or Group in the wider UWS community.

Recommendation 34: It is recommended that Managers utilise the SCRUM forum to discuss processes and practices with the primary objective to expand lead practices across Schools,
Colleges, Research Centres and Groups as well as explore future opportunities to improve administration support to academic activities as well as further improvements to student servicing in a consistent and effective way across Schools, Colleges, Research Centres and Groups.

5. Relationships

The reviewer will consolidate feedback on each business unit received throughout the review and provide to the Unit Head, Director or Manager, as appropriate, for consideration and possible action. A full copy of the data will be provided to the University’s Executive before the end of November 2010.

6. Next Steps

- Blueprinting of administration processes.
- Audit of current staffing levels for each School.
- Audit of administration support models to first year programs and large first year units with results published across Schools and Colleges and lead (examplar) practices implemented.
- Audit of School administration structures and HEW levels to ensure they are configured and positioned to support the recommendations within this review, including establishing a School Enquiry Unit/Counter and meeting the baseline of support to academic activities, focusing first on those Schools with change proposals pending approval.
- Confirm SCRUM meeting schedule for 2011, with a focus on exploring and expanding lead practices.
- Confirm SSAF meeting schedule for 2011.

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