

ACADEMIC BOARD – MEETING 10/02 (21 NOVEMBER 2002)

Working Group on Shared Programs

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Points required in order to qualify for the award of a degree of the University.

1. Undergraduate shared programs.

A degree of the University may be awarded to a student who has

either obtained the minimum points required to take out a degree of the faculty;

or obtained 50% of the points required to take out the degree in subjects offered by the University;

or has taken and passed subjects all of which have been approved by the faculty or faculties participating in the program and by the Academic Programs Committee and the Academic Board

A sponsoring faculty or faculties must in its proposal state the nature and extent of its involvement in the program, including involvement other than teaching and assessing subjects offered by the faculty.

2. Postgraduate shared programs.

A degree of the University may be awarded to a student who has

either obtained at least 50% of the points required to take out the degree in subjects offered by the University;

or has taken and passed subjects all of which have been approved by the faculty or faculties participating in the program and by the Academic Programs Committee and the Academic Board.

3. General

A sponsoring faculty or faculties must in its proposal to the Academic Programs Committee and to Academic Board state the nature and extent of its involvement in the program, including involvement other than teaching subjects offered by the faculty.

(a) a student enrolled in a shared program may not take out a degree at more than one university unless the program enables the student to satisfy, separately, the requirements to take out a degree of Melbourne and of the partner institution.

(b) in applying for approval for a shared program the sponsoring faculty must specify to the Academic Programs Committee and to the Academic Board the minimum points obtained in subjects taken at Melbourne which will entitle a student enrolled in the program to take out a degree of the University.

B. Procedures for Approving Shared Programs

1. Approval for a shared program must be obtained from the Academic Programs Committee and by the Academic Board.
2. Academic Programs Committee and the Academic Board must be satisfied that

- a) the program is intellectually coherent and that the proposed structure of the program is appropriate;
- b) each partner institution applies established transparent and comparable criteria for selection into the degree;
- c) each partner institution has established procedures for approving subjects taught in the program;
- d) each partner institution applies established criteria for assessment, as well as procedures for reviewing, or appealing against, assessment outcomes.
- e) appropriate provision is made by partner institutions for course advice and student support systems;
- f) library and IT facilities are available to Melbourne students taking subjects at partner institutions, as well as to students from other institutions taking subjects at Melbourne;
- g) the program is run in a safe and supportive manner taking into account the overall welfare of participating students and that joint responsibility is taken for same;
- h) an academic and administrative contact, or liaison officer, has been identified at the partner institution with authority to resolve day-to-day operational issues.

C. The division of responsibility for students enrolled in shared programs.

1. Proposals for establishing shared programs must specify
 - (a) the institution which is to be recognised as the registered provider of the program for the purposes of the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* (Cth), and
 - (b) the arrangements which have been put in place for ensuring compliance with the Act by all participating institutions.
2. Legal Services should develop protocols on the transfer of personal information relating to students enrolled in shared programs.
3. Proposals for establishing shared programs must, following consultation with Legal Services, confirm that the program complies with all relevant privacy legislation.
4. Assessment
 - (a) Assessment at Melbourne of students enrolled at partner institutions shall be governed by Melbourne regulations and practice. Regulations include, for this purpose, the statutes, regulations and procedures governing special consideration and plagiarism.
 - (b) Assessment at a partner institution of students enrolled in the University of Melbourne shall be governed by the regulations and practices of the partner institution, including the regulations and practices of the partner institution governing special consideration and plagiarism.
 - (c) Appeal or review of assessment, or of any component of assessment, shall be determined in accordance with the regulations of the institution administering the assessment.
 - (d) The progress of any student shall be reviewed by the institution at which the student initially enrolled in the shared program.

- (e) The value to be assigned to any subject taught in a shared program shall be determined by each participating institution in accordance with its own regulations. Notwithstanding this general principle:
 - (i) an individual subject shall accorded the same percentage value, in relation to the overall program, for all students enrolled in the program, regardless of whether they are Melbourne students or students of a partner institution, and
 - (ii) subjects taught at Melbourne to students enrolled in a Melbourne degree, as well as to Melbourne students enrolled in a shared program shall carry the same points value.
- (f) The University and the sponsoring faculty, or faculties, are responsible for providing course advice and academic support to all students enrolled in a subject taught at Melbourne as part of a shared program, whether or not they are students of the University. The University and faculties also remain responsible for providing course advice and, where appropriate, support to Melbourne students taking subjects at another institution as part of the program.
- (g) A faculty sponsoring a shared program must draw the attention of the Academic Programs Committee and the Academic Board to any significant disparity between the University's principles and policies in relation to assessment, course advice and academic support and the principles and policies applied in these areas by institutions with which the faculty is intending to enter into partnership.

**Academic Programs Committee
Working Group on Shared Programs
November 2002**

WORKING GROUP REPORT TO APC

1. Introduction

For the purposes of this report of the Working Group, a shared program is a course taught by two or more tertiary institutions, including the University of Melbourne, leading to the award of a degree from one of the participant institutions. The successful completion of a shared program may result in the conferral of a degree of this University. What the criteria for the award of the degree ought to be, is an important question considered in this report. But the involvement of the University in shared programs raises many other issues, including responsibility for the academic progress of students, the duty of care the University owes its students with respect to both safety and welfare, and the availability of academic support/services, which are applicable to all students enrolled in a Melbourne subject whether or not they will ultimately graduate with a Melbourne degree.

A shared program differs from exchange study, which forms part of the experience of many Melbourne students today, in that:

- (i) responsibility for the effective delivery of the program rests with all institutions participating in the program. Governance of the program is shared, although the shares may well be unequal and the precise structure of governance may vary widely from one program to another;
- (ii) students may be required to take subjects at more than one institution in order to complete the program successfully. Unlike exchange study, taking subjects at an institution other than the institution of enrolment is not an optional part of a shared degree program.

A summary of the degree structure of the Master of Biostatistics, which has already been approved by the Academic Board, is attached to this report as an example of a shared program.

In spite of these differences, experience gained from the administration of exchange programs, for example, in calculating credit for subjects completed at partner institutions, may be helpful when similar problems arise in the administration of shared programs, and vice-versa.

The Working Group's report has tried to identify the principal matters upon which the Academic Board, acting through the Academic Programs Committee, should satisfy itself when a new shared program is proposed, and has made recommendations where appropriate. The Group has, however, excluded the following issues from its terms of reference:

- (i) any consideration of an award of a degree jointly with another institution ("joint badging");
- (ii) the financial aspects of a joint program. A proposal for a shared program leading to the award of a postgraduate degree must be accompanied by the submission of a business plan. The financial aspects of a shared program, whether undergraduate or postgraduate, fall within the remit of the Planning and Budgets Committee;
- (iii) shared Ph.D programs. A proposal to introduce a 'Cotutelle' (doctoral studies supervised by French and Australian universities) is at present under review by the Research and Graduate Studies Committee. It is, accordingly, not discussed in this Report.

Submissions were invited from all faculties, and the recommendations have attempted to give effect to as many of these submissions as possible. Some successful shared programs are already in place; others have reached an advanced planning stage. While the recommendations are quite detailed on some points, it is vital

that they should not create obstacles to the continuation of existing programs or impose burdens on those engaged in the complex and challenging task of establishing new programs.

2. General Principles

It is impossible at this stage in the development of shared programs to foresee all the issues requiring resolution. But it seems to the Working Group that there is merit in formulating some general principles. These have not only informed the Group's deliberations. They may also provide guidance in the resolution of problems relating to the administration of shared programs which are bound to arise in the future.

- (1) The standards that the University applies to its own courses are equally applicable to programs and courses taught jointly with other institutions. "Standards" for this purpose connotes all matters relating to teaching and assessment, including the University's discharge of its legal and pastoral responsibilities towards its students. Broadly speaking then, "Standards" will include all the things we should do to acquit the duty of care we owe our students and will involve taking reasonable steps to provide a safe and supportive environment. Such things as safety and welfare briefings and induction programs would fall under this broad category.
- (2) The University must respect the structures and processes established by recognised partner institutions. This principle already applies to exchange and study abroad programs, and the procedures for approving shared programs must equally respect the autonomy of institutions with whom the University, or its constituent faculties, proposes to enter into partnership.
- (3) Clear lines of responsibility must be established on such matters as co-ordination of a shared program, assessment, appeals against assessment and access to resources at partner institutions. The division of legal and pastoral responsibility for students (both Melbourne University students and students from partner institutions taking subjects at Melbourne) must be clear and logical. The interests of students enrolled in such programs must not be jeopardised by gaps in responsibilities between partner institutions. Similarly, students must not be subject to inconsistent or incompatible rules imposed by different institutions.

These principles cannot, of course, be applied mechanically, and the exercise of fine judgment may be required in evaluating the relative weight of principles (1) and (2) in establishing processes for the approval of shared programs. Application of the principles is complicated by variations in the structure of many of these programs. In some programs a period of study at Melbourne either precedes or succeeds study at a partner institution. Others are constituted as consortium arrangements, students being entitled to take subjects at several universities in addition to Melbourne. Administration of the latter type of program may be devolved to a committee in which all the participating institutions are represented. Programs structured by a consortium of universities present special problems in relation to determining the "home" institution of a student taking subjects offered by all or most of the partner institutions. The lines of responsibility need to be clear and, where international students are enrolled in the program, one member of the consortium must be identified as the registered provider, based on its responsibility for the delivery of the program, for the purpose of complying with the statutory obligations imposed by the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* (Cth). Protocols for the transfer of personal information must conform to Victorian law as well as to the law of partner institutions.

Shared programs are just one organisational response to diverse pedagogical needs. These needs cannot be accommodated within a uniform (and possibly inflexible) structure. Accordingly, the Report makes no recommendations on the structure that any new program should adopt.

3. Issues

The issues which, in the opinion of the Working Group, require consideration are as follows:

1. The points required in order to qualify for the award of a degree of the University of Melbourne.

This issue generated the most controversy when shared programs were considered by the previous working group of the Academic Programs Committee in 2000. Some disquiet was then expressed at a proposal that at least 33% of the required points for a joint program must be taught by the University of Melbourne. The view of some Academic Programs Committee and Academic Board members was that the percentage was too low to justify the conferral of a degree of the University. This view was expressed by the Faculties of Arts and Economics and Commerce. In contrast, the Faculty of Medicine expressed the view that strict adherence to a 50% requirement would render unworkable some of its existing and prospective relationships with international partners. This is clearly an issue which needs to be revisited.

In determining the appropriate measure of “Melbourne experience”, both qualitative and quantitative, justifying conferral of a degree of the University one possible approach, applicable to undergraduate programs, is to adopt the “minimum points” threshold already required for taking out a degree of the university as the criterion for the award of a Melbourne degree to a student enrolled in a shared program. Some faculties prescribe the minimum number of points which qualify a student to take out a degree of the University. Students selected into the degree may be awarded credit, where appropriate, for subjects successfully completed at a previous institution, but they must nonetheless obtain a specified minimum number of points based on study at Melbourne. The requirement is not uniform across faculties (it typically varies between 100 and 150 points), but as it already determines eligibility to take out a degree based on a Melbourne program it would be logical to apply the same criterion to a shared program.

Not all faculties prescribe the minimum points required to take out a degree of the University. It is reasonable to offer students an alternative to satisfying the “minimum points” threshold, and the Working Group proposes that a student enrolled at a partner institution in a shared program may be awarded a degree of the University where at least 50% of the points required to take out the degree were obtained in subjects offered by the University.

But there will be still other cases in which faculties and departments have a significant involvement in the programs which does not take the form of teaching and assessing Melbourne subjects. For example, the University currently belongs to several consortia of universities, funded by Federal and State governments, in which its primary responsibility is to teach and assess subjects offered by partner institutions. There is no reason to withhold a Melbourne degree from students enrolled in such programs who have had the benefit of this type of “Melbourne experience”. Alternatively, a Faculty may have designed courses and subjects which are in fact delivered by teachers of partner institutions. In this case also it might be said that the student has acquired sufficient “Melbourne experience” to justify conferral of a degree of the University. The critical question for Academic Programs Committee and the Academic Board is whether a sponsoring faculty has a substantial involvement in the shared program where that involvement does not primarily take the form of teaching and assessing the faculty’s own subjects. The nature and extent of involvement in a shared program cannot easily be captured by a regulation. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to conclude that a graduate of a shared program should be entitled to take out a degree of the University (where fewer than 50% of the points were obtained in Melbourne subjects) if all the subjects taken by the student have been approved by the faculty, Academic Programs Committee and Academic Board (whether or not they are subjects offered by the sponsoring faculty as part of its own programs). Approval of all the program’s subjects by the sponsoring faculty and by Academic Board contributes evidence of a strong commitment to responsibility for the program itself. In seeking approval for a shared program, the sponsoring faculty must additionally provide the Academic Programs Committee with a written statement setting out in detail the nature and extent of its participation in the program, and its involvement, if any, in the teaching of subjects not offered by the faculty. The responsibility for advising Academic Board on whether a faculty’s involvement in a shared program is substantial will rest on the Academic Programs Committee.

Accordingly, it is **RECOMMENDED** that a degree of the University may be awarded if a student enrolled in a shared program:

either has obtained the minimum points required
to take out the degree of the relevant faculty,

- or* obtained at least 50% of the points required to take out the degree in subjects offered by the University,
- or* has taken and passed subjects in the shared program, all of which have been approved by the faculty or faculties participating in the program and by the Academic Programs Committee and Academic Board.

It is also **RECOMMENDED** that faculties sponsoring a shared program must specify to Academic Programs Committee and Academic Board the nature and extent of their involvement in the proposed shared program, including their involvement in the teaching and assessing of subjects not offered by the faculty.

Faculty minimum points requirements do not apply to postgraduate programs, which are far more diverse than undergraduate programs in their structure and duration. Moreover, as discussed above, the University participates in several shared programs in which the University teaches and assesses subjects offered by partner institutions. Again, special provision needs to be made for these arrangements. The following scheme is **RECOMMENDED**:

- a) Where a shared program consists of study at one partner institution followed (or preceded) by study at Melbourne, at least 50% of the points required to take out the degree must be obtained in subjects offered by the University.
- b) Where the University's participation in a shared program does not take the form of teaching and assessing subjects of the relevant faculty or faculties, a Melbourne degree may be awarded if the Faculty (or faculties) the Academic Programs Committee and the Academic Board have approved all the subjects passed by the student.

The sponsoring faculty (or faculties) must, again, specify to the Academic Programs Committee and Academic Board the nature and extent of its involvement in the shared program.

The following general points apply to both undergraduate and postgraduate programs:

- a) A student enrolled in a shared program may not take out a degree at more than one university, unless the program enables the student to satisfy, separately, the degree requirements of Melbourne and of the partner institution.
- b) In applying for approval of a shared program the sponsoring faculty must specify to the Academic Programs Committee and Academic Board the minimum points that must be attained in order to qualify for conferral of a Melbourne degree.

Partner institutions may operate different points systems or, as in the case of many reputable overseas institutions, no points system at all. For the purpose of applying these rules all subjects offered by partner institutions shall be assigned a points value. For this purpose faculties may wish to draw on their experience of valuing subjects taken by students on exchange programs.

4. Entries on transcripts of shared programs

The transcript of a student who has successfully completed a shared program and who has qualified for the award of a degree of the University will record the fact that the student has completed a shared program, and will include the name(s) of the partner(s) institution(s). If they have a University of Melbourne code the subjects will also be listed. This is the current practice for subjects taken by students on exchange programs. In some cases the students may want to obtain an official record of subjects passed at a partner institution, perhaps because the information may be required by a professional validating body. The Working Group makes no recommendation on this point, but it strongly advises faculties establishing shared programs which are designed to meet professional qualification standards in addition to the award of a degree to negotiate with the relevant validating authority a procedure for identifying and recognising individual subjects completed at partner institutions.

5. Procedures for approving shared programs

Approval for a proposed shared program must be obtained from Academic Programs Committee and Academic Board well before the proposed date for implementing the program. It is suggested that, where a participant in the program is an overseas institution, notice of at least a full calendar year be given before the intended commencement date, since considerable time may be needed to satisfy the validating requirements of the partner institutions in addition to meeting Melbourne's own requirements.

It is **RECOMMENDED** that the Academic Programs Committee must be satisfied as to the following matters relating to the program (as opposed to the subjects constituting the program):

- (a) That the program is intellectually coherent and that the proposed structure of the program is appropriate;
- (b) that each partner institution has established transparent and comparable criteria for selection into the degree;
- (c) that each partner institution applies established procedures for approving subjects taught in the program;
- (d) that each partner institution applies established criteria for assessment, as well as processes for reviewing, or appealing against, assessment outcomes;
- (e) that appropriate provision is made by partner institutions for course advice and student support systems;
- (f) that library and IT facilities are available to Melbourne students taking subjects at partner institutions, as well as to students from other institutions taking subjects at Melbourne;
- (g) that an academic and an administrative contact, or liaison officer, has been identified at the partner institution with authority to resolve day-to-day operational issues.

In examining these matters the University must of course respect the academic autonomy of any partner institution whose subjects it is proposing to recognise. While it must be satisfied that appropriate selection, subject approval and assessment procedures are in place at proposed partner institutions, the procedures themselves need not of course be identical to the University's own processes. It is not part of the Academic Programs Committee's functions to oversee the application of these processes or to scrutinise their outcomes.

The Working Group thinks that the idea of nominating contact academic and administrative liaison officers at a partner institution is a useful one. The identification of such a person should help to solve minor problems expeditiously, and may serve to minimize the consequences of any misunderstanding by the University's own academic and administrative officers of systems which may differ significantly from the University's own.

The University has a special interest, as a matter of resource management, in obtaining reliable information on the number of students from partner institutions who are likely to avail themselves of library and IT facilities. The documentation of approval of such courses should include an estimate by the faculty sponsoring the course of the number of students from other institutions likely to be studying on a Melbourne campus each semester in a shared program.

6. The division of responsibility for students enrolled in shared programs

The University assumes a variety of responsibilities for students enrolled in its programs, as well as for students from partner institutions who are studying at Melbourne. The responsibilities may be:

- (i) legal, requiring the university to comply with Commonwealth or State legislation, or with standards laid down by common law, for example relating to the health and safety of students;
- (ii) administrative, ensuring that the university, faculties and departments have adopted effective and consistent procedures for delivery of courses and monitoring student progress; and

(iii) welfare and advisory, ensuring that the university (including its welfare agencies such as student health and housing), faculties and departments provides the appropriate level of support for academic programs.

The responsibilities will typically overlap so that, for example, a combination of university administrative guidelines and a department's procedures for monitoring the progress of students will meet legal standards enacted to promote student welfare. But shared programs add a further layer of complexity to an already intricate system of legal and administrative responsibilities. Faculties promoting shared programs must ensure, first, that all participating institutions have in place effective procedures for discharging their own obligations and, secondly, that responsibility as between the institutions for ensuring compliance is clearly identified in the documentation submitted to Academic Programs Committee and Academic Board.

Programs which are designed to attract international student enrolments are subject to the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* (Cth) ("ESOS") and the National Code promulgated under that Act. The legislation prescribes standards relating to such matters as marketing, recruitment, student information, record keeping, facilities and refunds of fees with which all programs enrolling international students must comply. Information about ESOS, and the University's implementation of its provisions, can be obtained from the International Centre. ESOS applies to all university programs which accept enrolments from international students. Attention is drawn to two related aspects of its application to shared programs:

1. Where several institutions are involved in the delivery of a program only one institution will be registered by the State registering authority as the provider of education for that program. Registration will be based on the degree of connection with, and responsibility for, the program. In the event of failure to comply with the standards prescribed by the legislation the registered provider will be liable to penalties under the Act even if the breach was committed by a partner institution.
2. The Act has extra-territorial application. If the University of Melbourne is the registered provider of a shared program, for the purposes of the Act, it will be liable for any breach, for example relating to the marketing of the program, committed by an overseas partner.

It is **RECOMMENDED** that proposals for establishing shared programs submitted to Academic Programs Committee and Academic Board should specify the institution which, for the purposes of ESOS, will be recognised as the registered provider of the program. Additionally, if the University is the registered provider, it is **RECOMMENDED** that the sponsoring Faculty should specify the arrangements which have been made for ensuring compliance with ESOS by all participating institutions.

All programs must also comply with recently enacted privacy legislation in Victoria. To the extent that the administration of shared programs requires the transfer of personal information about students enrolling in the programs to institutions outside Victoria, there are privacy issues involved. It would be possible to deal with this by having the students consent at enrolment to transfer of their personal information so far as required for administration of their course of study in a shared program. It might also be desirable to have partner institutions in any related agreements undertake to treat personal information of students in a manner consistent with Victorian privacy principles. Melbourne must of course, in addition, undertake to comply with the privacy legislation applicable to interstate and international institutions.

It is **RECOMMENDED** that the Legal Services develop protocols on the transfer of personal information relating to students enrolled in state, interstate and international shared programs.

It is further **RECOMMENDED** that a faculty sponsoring a shared program certifies to the Academic Programs Committee and Academic Board, following consultation with Legal Services, that the program complies with applicable privacy legislation.

All other obligations are owed equally to domestic and international enrolled students. The following scheme allocating responsibilities between institutions adopts the principles that:

- (i) assessment is the responsibility of the institution conducting the assessment, and
- (ii) responsibility for student progress is a matter for the institution of enrolment.

It is accordingly **RECOMMENDED**:

- a) The assessment at Melbourne of students enrolled at partner institutions should be governed by Melbourne regulations. For this purpose Melbourne regulations include the regulations and procedures relating to special consideration and plagiarism. Similarly, the assessment of Melbourne students at partner institutions should be a matter for the regulations and practices of those institutions. While it would be unreasonable for this University to insist upon the application of its own regulations and procedures by partner institutions, a sponsoring Faculty of a shared program must confirm in its documentation to the Academic Programs Committee that no significant disparity exists between the University's principles and policies and those applied by the partner institution(s).
- b) Appeal or review of assessment, or of any component of assessment, shall be determined in accordance with the regulations of the institution administering the assessment.
- c) The progress of a student shall be reviewed by the institution which initially enrolled the student into the shared program.
- d) The value or weight to be assigned to any subject taught in a shared program shall be determined by each participating institution in accordance with its own regulations. Assessment rules and conventions vary widely between institutions, particularly between institutions in different countries. Diversity on this matter must be respected. Subject to this important point, however, -
 - (i) considerations of equity require that an individual subject must be accorded the same percentage value, in relation to the overall program, for all students enrolled in the program, regardless of whether they are Melbourne students or students of a partner institution, and
 - (ii) subjects taught at Melbourne to students enrolled in a Melbourne degree and Melbourne students enrolled in a shared program must carry the same points value. This ensures equity between Melbourne students taking the same subject while enrolled in different programs.
- (e) The University and the sponsoring faculty are responsible for providing course advice and academic support to all students enrolled in a subject taught at Melbourne as part of a shared program, whether or not they are students of the University. The administering Faculty is responsible for course advice. Academic support is the joint responsibility of the University and the Faculty. In addition, the University and Faculty remains responsible for providing course advice and, where appropriate, support for Melbourne students taking subjects at another institution as part of a shared program. Sponsors of a shared program may wish to devise their own cross-institutional procedures governing the progress of all students enrolled in the program. Such initiatives should be encouraged as they promote consistency in the resolution of academic issues affecting students. But the approval of Academic Programs Committee and Academic Board must be obtained prior to the adoption of such procedures in order to ensure conformity with university regulations and practice.