



Curriculum Review and Renewal at La Trobe University

Green Paper

Report and Recommendations of
the Curriculum Taskforce

Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor
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Contents

Section 1	Introduction	4
1.1	Introduction	4
1.2	The historical context.....	4
1.3	Pressures for change in higher education and at La Trobe	6
1.4	Challenges and goals for La Trobe	7
1.5	Recommendations.....	8
Section 2	Curriculum – Why it matters and how it is best designed	9
2.1	The La Trobe model of curriculum	9
2.1.1	Curriculum defined	9
2.1.2	Learning-centred curriculum.....	10
2.1.3	Placing learning in the research-teaching nexus.....	10
2.2	Curriculum design principles.....	10
2.2.1	The critical first weeks of first year	10
2.2.2	First-year cornerstone subjects.....	11
2.2.3	Mid-course check points	11
2.2.4	Final year capstone subjects	11
2.2.5	Other design principles.....	12
2.3	Recommendations.....	12
Section 3	Graduate capabilities.....	13
3.1	University-wide graduate capabilities	13
3.2	Making the graduate capabilities discipline-specific.....	14
3.3	Different kinds of graduate capabilities	14
3.4	Existing faculty or program specific graduate capabilities.....	15
3.5	Recommendations.....	15
Section 4	Evidence and evaluation	16
4.1	Recommendations.....	18
Section 5	Support for student learning and success	19
5.1	Recommendations.....	20
Section 6	Support for academic staff	22
6.1	Recommendations.....	22

Section 7	Additional curriculum issues to be addressed in 2009.....	24
7.1	Language learning	24
7.2	Honours and coursework Masters	24
7.3	Multi-campus teaching and learning	24
7.4	ICT for teaching and learning	25
7.5	The academic year in a new perspective	26
Section 8	Summary of recommendations.....	27
Appendix 1	Curriculum Taskforce membership and terms of reference	31
Appendix 2	Curriculum Taskforce schedule, agendas and guest presenters	33
Appendix 3	Proposed curriculum pilot projects for 2009	36
Appendix 4	Resources on curriculum and related topics	39

Section 1 Introduction

La Trobe was founded by men and women who knew, or thought they knew what a university existed for, the promotion of learning, which would involve research and teaching. J.Davis McCaughey, Governor of Victoria¹

1.1 Introduction

This Green Paper is the result of four months work by the Curriculum Taskforce, which was set up to develop principles for the review, renewal and design of La Trobe's academic programs. The need for a systematic review of our programs was agreed in the most recent University Strategic Plan 2008-2012.

The recommendations presented here are the outcome of a series of fortnightly workshops held over the last four months in which some of the University's most respected teachers met to discuss the principles of curriculum design that we should adopt². They were joined by eminent academic experts in areas such as the first-year experience and the design and management of sequences of study such as majors.³

This Green Paper is the beginning of a period of extensive consultation with staff, students, employers and alumni to test the ideas that are presented here, to encourage debate, criticism and the development of further proposals. In the first few months of 2009 there will be meetings with Schools, Faculties, Campuses, student groups and employer organisations to test, refine and extend these recommendations. From this a White Paper will be developed to take to Academic Board in May 2009. By June we propose to have a clearly understood and widely supported set of principles for curriculum design and renewal at La Trobe, together with a clear, feasible and well supported implementation plan.

The implementation of the principles agreed in the White Paper will be completed over the lifetime of the current Strategic Plan. This can only be achieved if at the same time a number of other changes are implemented which will provide incentives and support for curriculum renewal.

1.2 The historical context

When La Trobe opened its doors in 1967 it became Australia's fourteenth university. At that time only 22 per cent of school students completed Year 12, and a total of 95,380 university students were enrolled across the country, including 552 at La Trobe. La Trobe offered three degrees in its first year, namely a Bachelor of Arts, a Bachelor of Economics, and a Bachelor of Science, adding Agriculture a year later, and Education in 1970. The establishment of Schools rather than Departments was intended to encourage broader first-year curriculum (including a common first-year subject in one School), and some integrated interdisciplinary studies. However, the first degrees were closer in structure to those at Melbourne or Monash than they were to the more radical approaches of other 'gumtree universities' such as Macquarie, which opened in the same

¹ Preface, *Building La Trobe University: Reflections on the First 25 Years*, ed William J. Breen, La Trobe University Press

² For details of the Curriculum Taskforce terms of reference, membership and modus operandi, see Appendix 1.

³ For details on the outside experts who presented to the Curriculum Taskforce, see Appendix 2.

year with a single first degree, and a professoriate which believed that ‘traditional compartments of knowledge’ were breaking down.⁴

La Trobe’s first curriculum was structured around the requirement to undertake a major and sometimes a minor, made up of sequential subjects described as Mathematics/Philosophy I, II, III. In this it was not markedly different from that offered at Melbourne or Monash, and it was explicitly expected that standards would be equivalent. ‘In a basic sense La Trobe, as much as Monash, was among the last of the old universities in Australia’⁵.

Despite the similarities in the degrees initially offered at La Trobe and those on offer at Monash or the University of Melbourne, La Trobe was distinctly teaching focussed and egalitarian in other ways. La Trobe was the first Victorian university not to be a socially elite institution, with a student body that reflected the wider community, and state school enrolments in particular. In 1972 the first group of students was accepted through the ‘early leavers’ scheme (for those who had not completed Year 12) and over the years thousands of Arts students were admitted via this route. At the same time, the academic structure reduced the conventional power of professors, and explicitly opted for democratisation over tradition⁶. Many students and staff note a distinctly egalitarian and informal culture which extends to relations between staff and students at La Trobe, and which contributes to a shared perception that this is a real learning community. From the outset the University wanted to create closer contact between staff and students, and worked on innovative ways of ensuring small tutorials (six or seven students). Even the physical planning of the campus around the Agora was designed to create a ‘clustered Bohemia...where all members of the University would meet and mingle.’⁷

Contributing to this culture has been the University’s history of emphasising the importance of academic teaching, and explicit recognition that it wanted teachers who ‘included among their qualifications a capacity to teach students who, although clever, were likely to be culturally deprived and ill at ease in the University milieu’. And back in 1983, Academic Board decided that for promotion to senior lecturer ‘equal weight should be given to teaching and research’.⁸

Whatever their origins, forty years later the curriculum offered by Murdoch, Griffith, Macquarie and La Trobe and indeed Melbourne and Monash looked increasingly similar. Each university had begun to worry about the proliferation of degree programs offered (142 undergraduate degrees at Macquarie, 96 at Melbourne, and 162 at La Trobe – inflated by the existence of ‘separate’ degrees on each campus). University websites promised that programs could be ‘tailored to meet your interests’. Everywhere student numbers had grown dramatically, and at La Trobe the growth was concentrated in programs preparing students for professional practice (accounting, health sciences and education for example). Small tutorials had long since been undermined by the lack of funding and rapidly increasing student/staff ratios, and little was left of the interdisciplinary ambitions of the late 1960s.

⁴ *Liberality of Opportunity, A History of Macquarie University 1964-1989*, Bruce Mansfield and Mark Hutchinson, Macquarie University/Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1992

⁵ John S. Gregory ‘Qui Cherche, Trouve’ in *Building La Trobe University*.

⁶ John A. Salmond, ‘The Academic Structure’ in *Building La Trobe University*.

⁷ Roy Simpson, ‘The Master Plan’ in *Building La Trobe University*

⁸ John Jenkin and Judith Richards, ‘La Trobe as a Teaching University’, in *Building La Trobe University*

1.3 Pressures for change in higher education and at La Trobe

There are several strong pressures at work which require us to review the courses we offer, as well as the way they are structured, and the way they are taught. Some are general pressures caused by systemic change in higher education, which include:

- the transformation of higher education from a system designed to educate a relatively small elite to one that is intended to ensure that over a third of the population attend university, with the result that students enter higher education with very varied levels of preparation, and equally varied ambitions.
- growing pressure for universities to prepare students for employment in an economy where knowledge and intellectual skills are the key to prosperity, and to provide professionally prepared graduates for occupations facing major labour shortages.
- an increasingly competitive environment in which students have a very wide range of post-secondary institutions to choose from, including a growing number of private providers.
- a serious reduction over the last decade in funding per student which makes earlier forms of teaching impossible, and has compromised the traditional role of the tutorial and led to increased reliance on casual staffing.
- growth in the number of international fee-paying students accepted largely to ensure an alternative source of funding with which to subsidise the basic operations of all our universities.

Despite a funding and regulatory system which has created powerful pressures for conformity, it is clear that a new wave of change is occurring among Australian universities as they seek to prosper in this increasingly competitive environment. Central to this wave of change is the focus on curriculum in defining what will be different about particular universities. At the same time, universities have quite recently been called sharply to account for the quality of the teaching and learning, leading to a much greater emphasis on student feedback, student success, and indirectly, to attempts to professionalize university teaching.

In this changing and competitive environment some universities have fared better than others in remaining or becoming attractive to particular groups of students, including international students. Similarly, it has become possible to see variations in the quality of the student experience at different institutions through the increasing amount of data gathered to evaluate teaching and learning, and significant government funds have been awarded on this basis.

At La Trobe there are a number of indicators which suggest that the University is becoming increasingly uncompetitive in terms of student demand, both national and international. Market research suggests that we are not very visible outside our immediate catchment areas, apart from a small number of distinctive and well regarded areas such as Health Sciences. Nor can La Trobe claim that our students feel particularly well taught⁹. We have a very large and disparate number of courses, many with small enrolments, and many of which accept students with relatively low ENTER scores, which makes it hard to market the University effectively and also hard to ensure all our students succeed. The vast majority of our teaching continues to occur Monday to Thursday, between 9 and 5, despite the diversity of our student body. Apart from one or two

⁹ Learning and Teaching Performance Fund data

notable exceptions demand for what we have to offer has been in decline, while demand for our major competitors (Deakin and Monash) has been growing¹⁰.

1.4 Challenges and goals for La Trobe

In the current environment La Trobe faces several different kinds of challenge. We have agreed that we see a need to increase the numbers of students who nominate La Trobe as their first preference. This will have several desirable results including ensuring that we are able to fill our Commonwealth allocated places in the full range of programs and disciplines that we wish to maintain, and increasing the numbers of fee-paying postgraduate coursework students. It will also allow us to raise the ENTER scores we require to levels which will increase the retention and success rate, and probably further increase demand.

As well as increasing demand for our programs, and adopting principles of curriculum design that are known to maximise student learning and success, we need to define ways in which this improved learning can be achieved with fewer resources. As funding per student has declined over the last decade, Australian universities have adopted cost cutting strategies which are now beginning to have a negative effect on student learning. Staff-student ratios have declined sharply, leading to the disappearance of traditional tutorials. Contact hours have been reduced and very large-scale first-year subjects have been designed to cross-subsidise later year, smaller subjects. While some staff have adapted their teaching to promote student autonomy and self-directed learning, many feel that these changes have compromised the quality of their teaching and what students learn.

In order to achieve the goal of increasing the numbers of students who nominate La Trobe as their first preference, we will need to do several things. First we need to ask unflinching questions about whether the programs we offer are what students want, and whether they are made available in ways that suit students' lives. Second, we need to make explicit what La Trobe promises to all students who enrol – the graduate capabilities or outcomes for each program, and how our approach to student learning can assure them of success. Third, we need to make sure that a much wider group of students are aware of what we offer and how we offer it, and why we are distinctive in this¹¹.

This Green Paper sets out a number of strategies to help La Trobe achieve the second of these objectives. The implementation of the recommended strategies would in turn allow us to make a distinctive set of claims about La Trobe's qualities as a teaching university, and would raise our position in any competitive teaching and learning rankings. These recommended strategies do not call into question the kinds of undergraduate degrees which we currently offer. Unlike the University of Melbourne or the University of Western Australia, La Trobe will continue to offer programs leading to professional practice at the undergraduate level, such as law, nursing, pharmacy, business and teaching. It will continue to offer a broad generalist education for some through the Bachelor of Science and the Bachelor of Arts. And it will continue to offer smaller specialist degrees in areas of particular strength such as International Politics or Biomedical Science.

¹⁰ There are also many aspects of student life at La Trobe which are very well regarded, and on which we can and should build.

¹¹ Market research undertaken for the University in June 2008 among Year 12 students, and domestic and international undergraduates and postgraduates suggests that we suffer from relative invisibility, as well as perceptions of outdated course content, and inflexible timetabling, for example.

Since La Trobe's students come from a very wide range of backgrounds, and via different entry points, it would seem important to acknowledge that their aspirations may change as they become familiar with higher education and what it has to offer. As a University offering courses of study at all levels and in a wide range of fields, we should be encouraging students to take maximum advantage in terms of depth and/or breadth, and emphasising the increasing importance of postgraduate study in the 21st century.

Identifying exactly how many and which programs should be offered, can only be decided through an externally focussed process of evaluation and market research, combined with proper costings. The Bradley Review will also play a major role in defining new opportunities and clarifying risks. This will be a major focus of activity in 2009, running in parallel with the development and implementation of agreed principles of curriculum design. The Taskforce also discussed a number of radical approaches to reducing the cost of teaching while improving student learning, and these will also be researched and developed for consideration in 2009.

In this increasingly competitive environment the claims made by many Australian universities to be world class, and to produce graduates with astonishing virtues and skills, are often without foundation. The acceptance of the recommendations presented in this Green Paper would, nonetheless, radically transform the nature of the student experience and allow us to make persuasive and attractive claims, supported by evidence, about the quality of learning at La Trobe.

1.5 Recommendations:

1. *That La Trobe explicitly promote itself as a University that offers three kinds of undergraduate degrees (professional, generalist and specialist) as well as postgraduate coursework and research degrees.*
2. *That policy actively promote the provision of varied points of entry into the University (portals), and the maximisation of opportunities for movement to more advanced programs of study (pathways), including nested qualifications.*
3. *That Faculties be asked to investigate the extent to which students are currently able to move between different undergraduate programs, on the basis of individual choice and development, and that any blockages to these pathways be identified and, where appropriate, removed.*
4. *That the University continue to endorse explicitly and promote the recognised strengths and particular institutional culture which has helped to create a learning-centred community of staff and students which is egalitarian and informal in nature.*
5. *That physical planning for the University's campuses promote this egalitarian, learning-focussed culture and the sense of La Trobe as a learning community.*

Section 2 Curriculum – why it matters and how it is best designed

“You can’t fix by analysis what you bungle by design.”¹²

2.1 The La Trobe model of curriculum

The increasing prominence that has been given to the word ‘curriculum’ at La Trobe, alongside teaching and learning, reflects our view that well designed curriculum is key to student learning. Research on student learning and success in universities makes clear the critical importance of intentional, well-designed, and coherent curriculum.

2.1.1 Curriculum defined

The concept of curriculum (meaning ‘a course’, originally for chariot racing) is an ancient one, but for some academics its meaning has been reduced to ‘content’ – the “what” that is to be learned. In this Green Paper, the term curriculum is used in a much wider sense, closer to the definition used by the UK Higher Education Academy’s Imaginative Curriculum Project. In their view, curriculum includes:

- **what** is to be learnt – content
- **why** it is to be learnt – rationale and underlying philosophy
- **how** it is to be learnt – process
- **when** it is to be learnt – structure of the learning process
- and includes consideration of how the learning will be demonstrated and achievement assessed¹³.

We aspire to be curriculum focussed at La Trobe because the kind of graduate capabilities - the knowledge, the skills and abilities that we want our students to achieve - require years to develop and master. No one subject is enough. It takes the curriculum. In focussing on curriculum in this way, La Trobe will be doing something very different to some other Australian universities, where the focus has been confined largely to reviewing course content and teaching methods.

At La Trobe, we propose that curriculum be defined as a comprehensive academic plan – designed and implemented by academic staff of a specific program, school or faculty – to promote the learning, development and success of their particular students in their discipline or field. A La Trobe curriculum will be oriented, and its content determined by a mix of shared graduate capabilities, discipline or field-specific capabilities, and other relevant learning objectives.

The curriculum should connect all related teaching, assessment, learning and academic support plans and activities, and these should, in turn, align with the intended capabilities and objectives. It should have a clear beginning and end, along with clear portals (entry points), pathways, and checkpoints. The curriculum should also specify any recommended or required sequencing of its elements.

¹² Light, R., Singer, J. & Willett, J. (1990). *By Design: Planning Research on Higher Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

¹³ <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/853.htm>

Higher education research has long demonstrated that a great deal of learning and development typically occurs outside and around the formal curriculum as well as inside the classroom. While the Taskforce is keenly aware of the importance of the co-curriculum and extra-curricular activities, these fall largely outside the scope of this Green Paper. We do, however, make recommendations later in this Paper regarding aspects of the co-curriculum that we consider of paramount importance, particularly concerning orientation of first-year students, student engagement, and the role of learning and academic support programs (see Section 5).

2.1.2 Learning-centred curriculum

Alongside this focus on curriculum, a further defining feature of our approach is that it is distinctively 'learning-centred'. Over the past two decades, there has been much discussion about a fundamental shift in university teaching from a teacher-centred paradigm to a student-centred paradigm. Indeed almost all universities now promote themselves as being student-centred. Members of the Taskforce see the potential for student-centred approaches to reinforce the already widespread view of 'students as consumers'. We reject the notion that students, in their roles as learners, are consumers of the curriculum, and the related idea that a university education is a commercial transaction. While the term 'learner-centred' is better than student-centred, it is as problematic as the now unfashionable notion of being 'teacher-centred'.

Consequently the Curriculum Taskforce strongly recommends that La Trobe understand, describe, and design our curriculum to be **learning centred** rather than student centred or learner centred. We see the promotion and pursuit of deep, meaningful, lasting learning as the core purpose that unites teachers, researchers and students.

2.1.3 Placing learning in the research-teaching nexus

For the same reasons, we also recommend that La Trobe promote the concept of a **research-teaching-learning nexus** in response to the much discussed notion of a teaching-research nexus. Given that we see learning as the fundamental aim of research and teaching, it makes sense to insert learning explicitly into the nexus.

2.2 Curriculum design principles

The Curriculum Taskforce has adopted an evidence and research-based approach to its recommendations, and has included a recommendation that the University rigorously evaluate any future curriculum changes that may result from this initiative. There are no simple recipes we can apply to design/redesign our curriculum to better meet our students' needs, our academic staff's responsibilities, our financial and organisational constraints, and our strategic goals. No one-size-fits-all, generic curriculum will meet the learning aspirations and needs of La Trobe's diverse undergraduates. Broad, research-based curriculum design principles do exist, however, that can provide us with direction and coherence as we tackle these challenges.

2.2.1 The critical first weeks of first year

In the first year – and particularly in the first few weeks of the first term – retention and success can be positively or negatively influenced. Students' expectations regarding the intellectual challenge level of university and their patterns of study are typically set during that initial period. If they are not set appropriately high, those expectations and the amount of time devoted to study are very difficult to raise later. New first-year students tend to decide almost immediately whether they "fit in" to the university environment.

We know that students who do not make positive connections, interpersonal and emotional, during those early weeks are less likely to persist and succeed, as are students who do not get off to a successful academic start. The issues of social integration and isolation are often most salient for international students and indigenous students.

Overall however, the picture painted by research on the first year is clear and reassuring. There are a number of quite practical, and relatively simple and inexpensive steps we can take which, applied together, can make relatively large differences. A well-designed and well-delivered first-year curriculum, particularly one which is well-integrated with appropriate co-curricular academic supports and experiences, can have significant positive influences on students' retention, satisfaction, learning and academic success.

2.2.2 First-year cornerstone subjects

We know that not all students arrive at university equally well prepared and not all students learn at the same rate. For these reasons, we recommend embedding diagnostic and formative assessments of student learning early in the first term, followed up by appropriate and effective feedback, academic advising, and academic support. If we can identify students early who are at risk due to inadequate preparation, we can intervene more successfully at lower cost.

For all the above reasons, the Taskforce recommends that every degree program develop a **cornerstone** first-year subject. We are persuaded that this structural solution – creating a designated subject(s) designed and 'purpose built' to maximise first-year student success – is likely to be most effective and efficient over time. Where that is not possible, we recommend embedding the critical elements of the cornerstone in existing first-year subjects to achieve the same ends. There are many well-researched and documented examples of first-year cornerstones (often known as first-year seminars in North America) and of the broader first-year experience in the Australian, UK and North American literature on which we can draw¹⁴.

2.2.3 Mid-course check points

In general, the complex skills and conceptual knowledge that our graduate capabilities and learning outcomes represent cannot be developed in one subject, or even in the first year, but rather require a well-integrated sequence of subjects distributed over a longer period of time. To capitalise and build upon the first-year cornerstone experience, the Taskforce recommends that every program develop at least one **mid-course check point** – at the end of the first year or early in the second year – when students' progress toward key learning goals and curricular milestones is assessed, helpful feedback is provided and, if need be, further steps are taken to help students get on track or back on track.

2.2.4 Final year capstone subjects

The Taskforce is also mindful that, while good beginnings are critical to success *during* university, good endings are very important to success *after* university. The final year of study is a time when the curriculum can help students reflect on, integrate and apply their learning from diverse subjects in ways that will strengthen and further their intellectual development and benefit them post-university. Well-designed final year subjects can also serve as springboards and bridges to postgraduate study. For these reasons, we believe most, if not all programs would benefit from designing or designating a final year subject as a **capstone**. These capstone subjects would generally involve

¹⁴Eg Krause, K., R.Hartley, R.James, and C.McInnis *The First Year experience in Australian universities: findings from a decade of national studies* Canberra, AGPS 2005.

students in challenging and authentic culminating projects which require them to review, consolidate and extend the key knowledge and skills they have learned. Capstone projects can often also serve as “take aways” which students can use in seeking employment.

2.2.5 Other design principles

As well as discussing these particular structural aspects of good curriculum design, the Taskforce discussed several other principles which should be used to guide the review, redesign and design of La Trobe’s undergraduate programs. These include:

- setting high, highly motivating learning expectations
- having coherent, clearly structured and sequenced courses of study
- being efficient and sustainable in terms of staffing and other resources

2.3 Recommendations

6. *That all programs develop and approve statements of specific learning outcomes and expected standards of achievement, including shared faculty-level and university-wide graduate capabilities.*
7. *That all programs map the introduction, development, assessment and evaluation of their approved learning outcomes and graduate capabilities within and across their constituent subjects.*
8. *That all programs (or subsets of generalist programs) develop and offer ‘cornerstone’ subjects – or provide the equivalent – in first semester of enrolment which will enable the:*
 - a. *identification of students at risk in terms of general academic literacy;*
 - b. *identification of students at risk in terms of their specific preparation for the program of study;*
 - c. *provision, as required, of early support for students identified to be at risk.*
9. *That all programs embed assessment of student learning at the end of first year or at an appropriate point in second year, to gauge progress against graduate and program capabilities and outcomes.*
10. *That all programs develop a final year ‘capstone’ subject, or equivalent, to provide an effective culmination point as well to offer students orientation to opportunities for further study, employment or career development.*

Section 3 Graduate Capabilities

The notion that all students who successfully complete an undergraduate degree should be capable of demonstrating a high level of skills and knowledge has been commonly accepted since the first universities were founded nearly a thousand years ago.

That is, however, where the consensus ends. For centuries, academics in different universities have debated exactly which skills and knowledge are most critical, how high the levels should be, and how those skills and that knowledge can best be demonstrated and evaluated. Some have even questioned whether certain core skills and knowledge can or should be defined, demonstrated, or evaluated at all. On a more trivial level, scholars have disagreed about what to call this collection of core skills and knowledge. Nonetheless, in order to design, teach, and evaluate La Trobe's curricula effectively, we require some working definitions and answers.

The Curriculum Taskforce has wrestled with these questions in regard to La Trobe's undergraduate curriculum. We propose the following responses as a starting point for wider discussion.

3.1 University-wide graduate capabilities

First, the Taskforce agreed that La Trobe's curriculum should be characterised by a core set of skills and knowledge which every undergraduate student will have opportunities to learn, develop, and demonstrate before graduating. Second, we further agreed to call this set of core skills and knowledge the **La Trobe University graduate capabilities**. Most Australian universities use the term graduate attributes to refer to this core set. We considered, debated and rejected that term, and several others, before settling on graduate capabilities.

To propose a core set of university-wide graduate capabilities is not to propose standardising the rich diversity of La Trobe's existing or future curricula. Rather, it is an attempt to communicate what we value collectively as an academic community, notwithstanding our diversity. It is also an attempt to communicate clearly what we promise to those students prepared to engage fully and give their best effort to learning. We believe that a clear set of graduate capabilities – provided we deliver on them – will benefit the entire University by helping each program attract the right students for the right reasons.

The third task, defining which skills and knowledge are most critical, was much more challenging. Nevertheless, after much deliberation and discussion, the Taskforce agreed on the following proposed list of skills as integral to La Trobe's university-wide graduate capabilities.

- **Writing**
- **Speaking**
- **Inquiry/research**
- **Critical thinking/analysis**
- **Creative problem-solving/synthesis**
- **Team work**

3.2 Making graduate capabilities discipline-specific

The six core skills listed above, if adopted university wide, must next be defined by the various Faculties and Schools in ways that make sense within the relevant disciplines and fields. Then, standards of how and how well undergraduates will be expected to demonstrate these capabilities must be developed. For example, while we would likely all agree that every La Trobe graduate should write well, writing well in politics is quite different from writing well in physics, or philosophy, or physiotherapy. Similarly, critical thinking is not exactly the same thing in law as in management, despite their being in the same Faculty. Nor is the kind of team work required in the natural sciences precisely that needed in the social sciences or the health sciences.

Some programs, particularly those in disciplines closely related to accredited professions, already have access to examples of definitions and standards for most, if not all, of the graduate capabilities listed above. In other disciplines, there are relatively fewer models and examples to draw on. Should these capabilities be endorsed and adopted, central support and assistance will be provided to programs and staff to develop the definitions, standards, and embedded assessments required to make these abstractions manifest and useful.

3.3 Different kinds of graduate capabilities

The Curriculum Taskforce also discussed at length other potential university-wide graduate capabilities which are claimed by some universities as graduate attributes. These included environmental awareness, a readiness to work in a global and multi-cultural world, and an understanding of the impact of inequality. The Taskforce agreed that claims about university-wide graduate capabilities should not be made without evidence of relevant curriculum. At the same time, however, the Taskforce agreed that the University might nonetheless promote and encourage certain kinds of student experiences or curriculum elements without claiming that they should or would lead to shared graduate capabilities.

The Taskforce was almost unanimous in its view that La Trobe should require **all** its undergraduate students to engage with the challenges posed by global climate change. Such was the level of support that this is presented as a recommendation that all programs should identify and/or develop meaningful, discipline-specific ways to prepare students to live and work in a world facing significant climate-change challenges - environmental, economic, political, public health and other kinds.

There was also very strong support for the idea that students should engage with two other challenges – namely globalisation and cultural diversity (including the significance of Indigenous history and cultures), and inequality. There was less clarity, however, about how these objectives could be met in all Faculties, or be assessed and evaluated. There was also concern that such claims could remain merely rhetorical. In these two areas, therefore, the recommendations refer to creating opportunities and encouraging such learning, rather than to requirements. The Taskforce looks forward to hearing the views of the wider university community on these issues. We see these broad topics as fertile ground for inter and multi-disciplinary initiatives, as well as for innovation in curriculum, teaching, and learning. That said, the Taskforce recognises and affirms that the programs themselves must determine how best to address these issues. Once again, central support would be provided to programs and to cross-program teams of academic staff to assist in the design and development of subjects to address these core topics.

The discussion about how we might ensure a greater awareness of globalisation and cultural diversity led to an important set of exchanges within the Taskforce about two related issues. First, La Trobe must make sure that our international students have as strong a voice in these discussions as our regional and metropolitan students. And second, the University needs to provide opportunities for La Trobe staff, as well as students, to learn other languages, spend time in those countries from which so many of our students come, and build collaborative international relationships around teaching and learning as well as research.

3.4 Existing faculty or program specific graduate capabilities

The Curriculum Taskforce recognises that every La Trobe academic program has already developed and made public its own lists of program-specific graduate capabilities, by whatever names. We understand that many of those program-specific capability statements will overlap with – or be virtually identical to – the proposed graduate capabilities. We are not proposing that programs, schools and Faculties start over or re-do work already done. In many cases, the task will be one of harmonising and linking relevant work across different levels.

At the same time, all La Trobe academic programs will no doubt have one or more graduate capabilities that are program specific, defining, and distinctive. Through the ongoing process of centrally supported curriculum review and redesign, these valuable program-specific capabilities can be strengthened and highlighted.

3.5 Recommendations

11. *That all undergraduate programs adopt the following shared La Trobe University graduate capabilities in discipline-specific ways (to be mapped, defined in appropriate discipline or field-specific terms of standards and assessed):*
 - a. *Writing*
 - b. *Speaking*
 - c. *Inquiry/research*
 - d. *Critical thinking/analysis*
 - e. *Creative problem-solving/synthesis*
 - f. *Team work*
12. *That all programs also identify program-specific knowledge and skills to address the challenges of climate change, particularly as this phenomenon affects or may affect students' chosen vocations or disciplines.*
13. *That the University clearly define, develop and promote opportunities for students to develop knowledge and skills required to address challenge posed by the increasingly global and multicultural environment in which graduates will work and live.*
14. *That Faculties and Schools consider how knowledge and analysis of the nature, scope, and effects of various forms of inequality on local, national and/or global scales, could be included in the curriculum in program-specific, appropriate and relevant ways.*

Section 4 Evidence and evaluation

Defining graduate capabilities and developing curricula to teach them are not ends in themselves. Nor will the proposed list of six graduate capabilities and a requirement to address challenges posed by climate change, in and of themselves, distinguish La Trobe's undergraduate curriculum from that of other universities. Even a very cursory web search reveals many post-secondary institutions which claim the same, or very similar, graduate attributes, abilities or learning outcomes.

Over time, if we are diligent and successful, what will distinguish La Trobe's undergraduate curriculum will be how and how well the academic staff, students, and graduates demonstrate the value and usefulness of these capabilities. How we might convincingly, effectively and efficiently demonstrate this to ourselves, our students, and our communities is the subject of this section.

In this context, we will use the term 'assess' in relation to examining evidence of students' learning, and 'evaluate' in relation to the outcomes of programs. For example, while we may assess the team work skills of individual students and groups of students, we may also evaluate the overall success of a program in teaching and enhancing team work skills. Both of those processes would ideally make use of the same data.

It needs to be acknowledged that staff will have hopes for their students' learning which are not captured by explicit graduate capabilities. Teachers may legitimately hope that students will graduate with an appreciation of the history of their discipline, and even an increased affection for the discipline. Our focus on explicit graduate capabilities and learning outcomes does not preclude other aspirations. Nor do we suggest that all the types of learning that programs value should be formally evaluated.

Nonetheless, if the graduate capabilities that the Curriculum Taskforce proposes are to be meaningful, then we shall have to provide evidence that students have achieved some agreed-upon level of performance at agreed points in their progress toward an undergraduate degree at La Trobe. This will require us to decide **what kinds** of evidence are valid, **how much** of each kind we need, and **what standards** of proof we will require, and **who will** make decisions. As an example, in relation to the graduate capability of writing, we will need to decide what kinds of writing constitute evidence of writing capability, how many and how extensive the writing samples required will be, what standards we will use to determine their quality, and who will do the evaluating. We shall also have to decide at what points in the curriculum to elicit evidence of achievement.

The evidence of learning used for evaluative purposes, and the related criteria, processes, and standards must be appropriate to the particular graduate capability, the discipline/field, and the specific course, program, School and Faculty. In short, it needs to be fit both for purpose and for context.

From the assertion above it follows that there can be no one way to assess or evaluate student learning in relation to important capabilities and outcomes. Nor can there be a single scale to weigh them on or a single ruler to measure them against. Evidence of achievement in relation to graduate capabilities may appropriately be quantitative or qualitative in nature, or both. The most persuasive evidence often combines both numbers and narrative. Whatever specific decisions programs make regarding evidence, and how to assess and evaluate it, these decisions depend in the end on the collective expert judgement of communities of academic staff.

It may be the case that, with time and work, we can agree across the University, or at least within individual faculties, on common “rules of evidence” and standards for assessing and evaluating student progress against some or all of the La Trobe graduate capabilities. There could be significant advantages and efficiencies gained, for example, if all programs could usefully assess, evaluate, and report student achievement in speaking or teamwork in the same or similar ways. While such options need to be explored, the authority and autonomy of the Faculties, Schools, and programs must be respected in these matters.

As with the definition of graduate capabilities, many programs at La Trobe have already developed very effective and efficient ways of assessing and evaluating student learning against their stated outcomes and/or capabilities. During the curriculum review and renewal process, we intend to identify, share, learn from, and build upon existing good practice in assessment and evaluation.

In this aspect, as in all others, we will make every effort to avoid creating re-work and extra work. However, in the cases where new or more work is required to develop assessment and evaluation processes, it will be much easier to ‘design in’ good practice from the start than to ‘bolt it on’ afterward.

To that end, the Taskforce believes that the most effective and efficient way to elicit and collect evidence for the assessment and evaluation of graduate capabilities is to extract that evidence from existing, embedded processes. We should tap into the assessment processes already used for grading and marking – wherever existing grade descriptors are valid, reliable, criterion-referenced, and aligned to the graduate capabilities. Whenever we can avoid asking new questions and gathering additional data, we should.

In addition to assessing and evaluating student learning in relation to graduate capabilities at various levels, La Trobe will also need to make more strategic use of the large volume of existing data currently collected on student preparation, attitudes and satisfaction, retention, progression and completion, and engagement. Specific and selected extracts from this ocean of data could be very useful in reviewing and redesigning the curriculum, and in the ongoing work of evaluating and improving our programs.

While drawing on good practice within La Trobe is critical, we can also benefit from excellent work done at universities around the world. For example, all of the graduate capabilities proposed above have been and are being assessed and evaluated in other universities comparable to La Trobe, and in many disciplines and fields. Much work has been done on analysing and using data from surveys and internal academic processes and records. As a result, a great many instructive and useful generic and discipline-specific examples, models, guidelines and frameworks exist. Much of the work involved in locating and providing this information can be done through University’s central curriculum, teaching and learning resources.

4.1 Recommendations

15. *That all programs identify and make use of program-specific, measurable key indicators of academic quality, student learning, and student success in annual evaluation and planning processes, program reviews, and other similar processes.*
16. *That student progress against agreed program outcomes and against program and university-level graduate capabilities will be assessed not only at the point of completion, but also at earlier points in order to provide staff and students with timely, useful data for improving student retention, learning, satisfaction, and success.*
17. *That the University's to-be-developed policy on monitoring and reviewing progress against strategic plans include provision for annual review of academic program-level data on progression, retention, and student feedback on subjects and programs, using data from the University's own internal systems, as well as from external instruments.*

Section 5 Support for student learning and success

To provide all students with fair opportunities to reach their academic potential, and to maximise retention and completion rates, universities need to provide more than well-designed academic programs and skilled teachers. In recent years, Australian debate about these issues has focussed on the impact of the first-year student experience and the importance of student 'engagement', as well as the ways in which particular kinds of support services (such as language and academic literacy skills) can be most effectively provided.

La Trobe has a long history of accepting students with varied levels of academic preparation. From its earliest days nearly all students were the first generation in their families to go to university, and in the mid 1980s almost a third expected to have to support themselves from full or part-time work or from their own savings. At the same point in time, half of all students came from migrant backgrounds, with more than a quarter speaking a language other than English at home.¹⁵ Back in 1974, La Trobe's Academic Board was worried about standards of academic English, despite the existence of a Language Centre and support from the Counselling Service, and the provision of school-based, discipline specific services followed rapidly.

Since then the diversity of the student body has been substantially increased by the growth in numbers of international students. In addition, La Trobe's growing role as a regional provider of higher education has also seen the ENTER scores of students in some programs decline to levels that many feel are inadequate to ensure success.

The student panel¹⁶ which addressed the Curriculum Taskforce informed us that their first-year experiences did not, overall, provide them with the skills they needed to succeed. Indeed, the panel were enthusiastic about the idea of a compulsory subject in first year that would provide students with the skills necessary to succeed in academic study, including library skills, use of referencing systems, presentation and research skills. They felt that existing orientation programs for domestic students are inadequate, suggesting that such programs should focus more heavily on academic issues and continue beyond the start of first semester. The student who had undertaken the orientation program for international students, by contrast, felt much better prepared academically.

Research into the conditions for student retention and success suggests that the very earliest university experiences can play a major role, leaving a lasting impression. It has been argued that universities need to adopt a strategic, whole-of-institution approach to the first-year experience which should include 'a comprehensive system of induction to university life for incoming first-year students'¹⁷. While this should include a learning-focussed campus-based orientation program, we also need to accept that our current students can be engaged in virtual ways as well. It is unhelpful to bemoan the fact that students spend relatively little time on campus¹⁸, or that they fail to take advantage of all campus life has to offer. Rather we need to provide both real *and* virtual opportunities for students to feel engaged, including student portals, learning management systems and online support.

¹⁵ Margaret James, 'The Student Population' in *Building La Trobe University*

¹⁶ Refer to Appendix 2. This group of students were nonetheless passionate about La Trobe's potential.

¹⁷ Kerri-Lee Krause 'On being strategic about the first year', presentation to the Curriculum Taskforce 29 August 2008.

¹⁸ It is interesting to note that 2008 AUSSE data found that the time La Trobe students spend on campus is higher than the national average.

Even if we successfully engage and support our new students through appropriate, learning-focussed orientation programs, and through classroom practices which create an environment in which students feel that they are known and belong, many of our students will still find the transition to university study challenging – academically, socially, or both. Recent research suggests that international students from non-English speaking countries may even find that their English competency deteriorates over their course of study if they live, socialise, and find employment within their own communities.

La Trobe has dedicated and skilled staff who offer extra support in English language and academic skills of various kinds. However, there is no mechanism by which we can be confident that these resources are systematically deployed to assist those in greatest need, or at the points of maximum value. Acknowledgement of these problems has led other universities to develop more strategic approaches to induction or orientation, as well as to the provision of support for students lacking appropriate literacy or language skills. Macquarie University, for example, is recommending that all international students in Sciences or Business (where most are concentrated) who have completed their schooling at institutions where English is not the language of instruction, and Australian-based students who have completed HSC/VCE ESL with particularly low scores should be required to take a for-credit subject, English for Academic/Scientific Purposes, in parallel with a disciplinary unit on which it is based¹⁹. Similarly, Griffith University has just announced that it will test all students shortly after enrolment and require any student who does not meet IELTS 7 (higher than the minimum entry requirement of 6.5) to undertake a specific English language subject as part of their program.

An analysis of the data²⁰ on what our first-year students say indicates that the most important aspect of their first-year experience is ‘support’, and within this category it is ‘social affinity’ that matters most. Under this heading, our students referred to the importance of making friends, friendly relations with staff, and meeting new people. In other words, social support is as likely to be as important as academic support in ensuring that new students are successfully engaged in learning, and plays a major role in combating disengagement. Learning-focussed social engagement can be encouraged through a range of strategies, including the use of team-based assessment early on in the first-year program and peer mentoring.

As Kerri-Lee Krause writes, ‘first and foremost, first-year students need to be integrated into the university learning community. A sense of belonging is conducive to enhanced engagement, satisfaction with learning and commitment to study’²¹.

5.1 Recommendations

18. *That overall responsibility for defining the objectives and outcomes of the University’s orientation and first-year experience programs be assigned to an appropriate senior academic position.*
19. *That student academic and language support resources and staffing be embedded in the curriculum, as far as practicable, and allocated strategically to support and develop the capacities of those students with the greatest need.*

¹⁹ Review of Academic Programs; White Paper August 2008, Macquarie University; http://www.mq.edu.au/provost/reports/curriculum_review.html

²⁰ First Year Experience Survey 2007, Report prepared by Chris Peterson, School of Social Sciences, La Trobe University.

²¹ Kerri-Lee Krause, op.cit.

20. *That the University's efforts to increase and enhance student engagement be explicitly linked to efforts to improve student retention, learning and success.*
21. *That the University acknowledge students' need and desire to work while studying, and examine ways in which it can assist them to do so productively.*
22. *That the forthcoming review of student administration and student services adopt a learning-centred framework for evaluating and redesigning the full life cycle of services, from responding to the student's initial approach to the promotion of our alumni organisation.*
23. *That the University review the current and potential contributions of information and communications technologies (including SMS and Web 2.0 developments) to student engagement, retention, learning and success.*

Section 6 Support for Academic Staff

The Taskforce has taken it as a given that the process of curriculum review and revision must be owned and led by the same academic staff responsible for teaching the curriculum. From the first meeting in late August 2008, Taskforce members identified the need for significant and ongoing support for academic staff participating in a university-wide approach to curriculum review and renewal at La Trobe. Without adequate professional preparation, recognition, resourcing, time, and other relevant support, the recommendations contained in this report cannot be implemented and its objectives cannot be achieved.

Financial investment in these initiatives, while necessary, will not be sufficient to achieve success. What is needed is an integrated, systemic university-wide approach that will create changes to the University's professional development and promotions policies, as well as to academic budget priorities and processes.

The Taskforce has also emphasised the importance of recognising, documenting and building upon the excellent and innovative curriculum, teaching and learning work that has been and is being done by La Trobe staff. A key element of the curriculum review and renewal initiative must be to identify, spotlight, and share more widely these home grown examples of good practice and scholarship.

Recognising both the necessity and value of taking a scholarly, research-based approach to the process of curriculum review and renewal, the Taskforce recommends that the University provide staff with relevant, practical, high-quality and flexibly delivered professional development focusing on curriculum (re)design and evaluation – and closely related teaching, assessment, and learning issues. Participation in professional development and engagement in the curriculum review and renewal process requires a significant personal contribution from staff. To that end, we support the current proposals to change the University's promotions policies, and changes to the University's budget principles which might recognise, support and reward participation and contribution in curriculum development.

There is widespread agreement within the Taskforce for the proposal that all academic staff be required to complete a short course (perhaps equivalent to the current three-day program) of professional development in curriculum, teaching and learning, either at La Trobe or another university. There is also widespread support for the proposal that many more staff be encouraged to undertake higher level professional development, such as a Graduate Certificate in university teaching. However, there is equal agreement that the University must first offer high quality professional development programs before requiring any staff to undertake them.

6.1 Recommendations

24. *That all academic staff engaged in teaching or providing academic support to students, including casual staff, be provided with appropriate opportunities and support to develop the knowledge and skills required to implement University policies and guidelines on effective curriculum design and teaching.*
25. *That the process of curriculum renewal and design be adequately resourced, both in terms of financial support and the allocation of expertise and assistance from the new Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Centre and other relevant University services.*

26. *That the University adopt a policy requiring all full-time continuing academic staff engaged in teaching or providing academic support to complete the University's short course on effective, research-based teaching and learning if they have not already successfully completed an equivalent program elsewhere. We further recommend that all academic staff new to La Trobe (including academic staff in the Library and in the academic support areas) complete this program during their first year of full-time employment.*
27. *That the University adopt a budget model that provides financial incentives for Schools and Faculties to encourage their academic staff to enrol in and complete both the initial short course on effective teaching and learning, and subsequent more advanced offerings, including the redesigned Graduate Certificate in Curriculum, Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.*
28. *That the revised promotions policy clearly identify the types and standards of evidence required at each level where teaching and/or curriculum development is a major focus of the application.*

Section 7 Additional curriculum issues to be addressed in 2009

In working towards the recommendations that are presented in the Green Paper, the Curriculum Taskforce identified a number of particular teaching and learning matters we felt needed to be reviewed during 2009. It is proposed that, early in 2009, specific working parties be established to review existing policy or develop new proposals as appropriate in the following areas.

7.1 Language learning

The Taskforce strongly endorsed the desirability of providing students with opportunities to develop language and intercultural skills as two of the most meaningful ways in which they could demonstrate the capacities needed to live and work in an increasingly global and multicultural environment. Some Taskforce members would have preferred to see a recommendation *requiring* that our programs develop this particular graduate capability. However, the difficulties involved in, for example, making language acquisition possible for all students are substantial, raising questions of timetabling, staffing and the structure of the academic year. It is also the case that it would be desirable to provide incentives for language learning because of the difficulties and expense it creates for students. We therefore recommend:

29. *That the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Committee establish a working party – to include the Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences or nominee – to examine ways to make language learning attractive and feasible for the widest possible range of students.*

7.2 Honours and coursework Masters

It has become increasingly obvious that La Trobe has allowed a wide range of Honours and Masters programs to be approved in such a way that there is considerable inconsistency among them. Across the sector, in Australia and internationally, there is a great deal of discussion occurring about the future of Honours and the likely growth of various kinds of Masters programs. We therefore recommend:

30. *That the University Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Committee establish a working party to review current structures of La Trobe's Honours and Masters courses, and developments among our national and international competitors, and to bring forward appropriate policy recommendations for consideration by the relevant committees in 2009.*

7.3 Multi-campus teaching and learning

The recommendations proposed in the Green Paper are meant to apply wherever La Trobe students are enrolled. During the Curriculum Taskforce's deliberations there was discussion of the ways in which the multi-campus nature of the University should be acknowledged. Members of the Taskforce, especially those from the non-metropolitan campuses, were of the view that the University should emphasise the shared characteristics of a La Trobe curriculum, wherever and however it was taught. It was argued that the use of the term 'regional' in this context was unhelpful, and that La Trobe should describe itself as a multi-campus university, rather than a 'regional' university.

It was also acknowledged, however, that the way in which teaching is undertaken across campuses is very uneven, and that there are too many examples of unacceptable practices – particularly in the use of distance technologies. Work has been done to

establish some guidelines around this, but there is, as yet, no mechanism for ensuring adherence to any guidelines. We therefore recommend:

31. *That the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Regional), and the Associate Deans (Regional) or their equivalents, in consultation with the Associate Deans (Academic) and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum and Academic Planning) be requested to develop a proposal for defining and ensuring the implementation of agreed principles for multi-campus teaching.*

7.4 ICT for teaching and learning

There is a general view in the Taskforce and wider academic community that La Trobe is not a leader in its approach to using new teaching technologies, either in terms of infrastructure, staff development in the use of new technologies, or in policy relating to their use. It has also been suggested that La Trobe does not make best advantage of our current information and communication technologies (ICT) infrastructure to provide a learning-centred approach to student administration and student services. For a multi-campus university, these are particular challenges that must be addressed

One reason for these weaknesses has been an organisational and committee structure which has effectively compartmentalised student administration from teaching and learning. It also compartmentalised the development of policy around learning technologies from both the ICT division and from the development of teaching and learning policy more broadly. This has created a situation which inhibits the development and sharing of innovative, best practice approaches to computer-enhanced learning.

Changes recently made will help to break down the barriers and compartments which have been identified. First, the ICT Policy Committee has agreed that all proposals relating to teaching and learning technologies must be passed to the Learning Technologies Committee for discussion and approval in the first instance.

Second, the Learning Technologies Committee has been made a sub-committee of the new Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Committee, ensuring that the discussion of learning technologies will be better connected to the University's wider policy making on curriculum, teaching and learning.

At the operational level, however, there is still much work to be done to ensure that all academic staff are aware of existing policy, and know where to turn for advice and assistance. A great deal of aggravation is caused and time wasted by misdirected requests and complaints. This lack of staff awareness and, in some cases, of training is a matter which needs to be taken up with Deans and Heads of School on an ongoing basis. We therefore recommend:

32. *That the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Committee consider the ways in which information and communication technologies (ICT) can:*
 - *enhance students' learning,*
 - *address issues of multi campus and flexible delivery,*
 - *be implemented in pedagogically appropriate ways and*
 - *be implemented with appropriate levels of support for staff and students.*

33. *That the authority for decisions about implementation of University-supported teaching and learning technologies reside with the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Committee, which will seek proposals and advice from the Learning Technologies Sub-Committee and the ICT Policy Committee.*

7.5 The academic year in a new perspective

Despite the enormous diversity of our student body and their lives, we continue to timetable the vast majority of our teaching between Mondays and Thursdays, from 9am to 5pm, and within two 13-week semesters. Yet over a third of our students are part-time, and almost a third are aged 25 or over, suggesting that they may be interested in studying to a different kind of time-table. It is also the case that La Trobe has a very high proportion of students from low socio-economic backgrounds, which together with other data suggests that financial difficulties are a major obstacle to learning. More and more, our students are forced to fit their education around their work. Given all the above, it is curious that our approach to the timetable should be more conservative than almost every other university in the state, and to have changed relatively little since the University was established. We therefore recommend:

34. *That the Deputy Vice-Chancellor establish a working party – to include the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International and Future Students) – to investigate and report on ways in which the University can best respond to the needs of current and future students. The working party will be asked to consider how more flexible programs and subjects can be provided to all students - part time and full time, undergraduate and postgraduate, school-leavers and mature-age. Alternatives to investigate might include increased use of: block mode teaching, evening and weekend classes, asynchronous technologies, and a potential third semester.*

Recommendations

1. That La Trobe explicitly promote itself as a University that offers three kinds of undergraduate degrees (professional, generalist and specialist) as well as postgraduate coursework and research degrees.
2. That policy actively promote the provision of varied points of entry into the University (portals), and the maximisation of opportunities for movement to more advanced programs of study (pathways), including nested qualifications.
3. That Faculties be asked to investigate the extent to which students are currently able to move between different undergraduate programs, on the basis of individual choice and development, and that any blockages to these pathways be identified and, where appropriate, removed.
4. That the University continue to endorse explicitly and promote the recognised strengths and particular institutional culture which has helped to create a learning-centred community of staff and students which is egalitarian and informal in nature.
5. That physical planning for the University's campuses promote this egalitarian, learning-focussed culture and the sense of La Trobe as a learning community.
6. That all programs develop and approve statements of specific learning outcomes and expected standards of achievement, including shared faculty-level and university-wide graduate capabilities.
7. That all programs map the introduction, development, assessment and evaluation of their approved learning outcomes and graduate capabilities within and across their constituent subjects.
8. That all programs (or subsets of generalist programs) develop and offer 'cornerstone' subjects – or provide the equivalent – in first semester of enrolment which will enable the:
 - a. identification of students at risk in terms of general academic literacy;
 - b. identification of students at risk in terms of their specific preparation for the program of study;
 - c. provision, as required, of early support for students identified to be at risk.
9. That all programs embed assessment of student learning at the end of first year or at an appropriate point in second year, to gauge progress against graduate and program capabilities and outcomes.
10. That all programs develop a final year 'capstone' subject, or equivalent, to provide an effective culmination point, as well as to offer students orientation to opportunities for further study, employment or career development.

11. That all undergraduate programs adopt the following shared La Trobe University graduate capabilities in discipline-specific ways (to be mapped, defined in appropriate discipline- or field-specific terms of standards and assessed):
 - a. Writing
 - b. Speaking
 - c. Inquiry/research
 - d. Critical thinking/analysis
 - e. Creative problem-solving/synthesis
 - f. Team work
12. That all programs also identify program-specific knowledge and skills to address the challenges of climate change, particularly as this phenomenon affects or may affect students' chosen vocations or disciplines.
13. That the University clearly define, develop and promote opportunities for students to develop knowledge and skills required to address challenge posed by the increasingly global and multicultural environment in which graduates will work and live.
14. That Faculties and Schools consider how knowledge and analysis of the nature, scope, and effects of various forms of inequality, on local, national and/or global scales, could be included in the curriculum in program-specific, appropriate and relevant ways.
15. That all programs identify and make use of program-specific, measurable key indicators of academic quality, student learning, and student success in annual evaluation and planning processes, program reviews, and other similar processes.
16. That student progress against agreed program outcomes and against program and university-level graduate capabilities will be assessed not only at the point of completion, but also at earlier points in order to provide staff and students with timely, useful data for improving student retention, learning, satisfaction, and success.
17. That the University's to-be-developed policy on monitoring and reviewing progress against strategic plans include provision for annual review of academic program-level data on progression, retention, and student feedback on subjects and programs, using data from the University's own internal systems, as well as from external instruments.
18. That overall responsibility for defining the objectives and outcomes of the University's orientation and first-year experience programs be assigned to an appropriate senior academic position.
19. That student academic and language support resources and staffing be embedded in the curriculum, as far as practicable, and allocated strategically to support and develop the capacities of those students with the greatest need.

20. That the University's efforts to increase and enhance student engagement be explicitly linked to efforts to improve student retention, learning and success.
21. That the University acknowledge students' need and desire to work while studying, and examine ways in which it can assist them to do so productively.
22. That the forthcoming review of student administration and student services adopt a learning-centred framework for evaluating and redesigning the full life-cycle of services, from responding to the student's initial approach to the promotion of our alumni organisation.
23. That the University review the current and potential contributions of information and communications technologies (including SMS and Web 2.0 developments) to student engagement, retention, learning and success.
24. That all academic staff engaged in teaching or providing academic support to students—including casual staff—be provided with appropriate opportunities and support to develop the knowledge and skills required to implement University policies and guidelines on effective curriculum design and teaching.
25. That the process of curriculum renewal and design be adequately resourced, both in terms of financial support and the allocation of expertise and assistance from the new Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Centre and other relevant University services.
26. That the University adopt a policy requiring all full-time continuing academic staff engaged in teaching or providing academic support to complete the University's short course on effective, research-based teaching and learning if they have not already successfully completed an equivalent program elsewhere. We further recommend that all academic staff new to La Trobe (including academic staff in the Library and in the academic support areas) complete this program during their first year of full-time employment.
27. That the University adopt a budget model that provides financial incentives for Schools and Faculties to encourage their academic staff to enrol in and complete both the initial short course on effective teaching and learning, and subsequent more advanced offerings, including the redesigned Graduate Certificate in Curriculum, Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.
28. That the revised promotions policy clearly identify the types and standards of evidence required at each level where teaching and/or curriculum development is a major focus of the application.
29. That the University Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Committee establish a working party – to include the Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences or nominee – to examine ways to make language learning attractive and feasible for the widest possible range of students.
30. That the University Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Committee establish a working party to review current structures of La Trobe's Honours and Masters courses and developments among our national and international competitors, and to bring forward appropriate policy recommendations for consideration by the relevant committees in 2009.

31. That the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Regional), and the Associate Deans (Regional) or their equivalents, in consultation with the Associate Deans (Academic) and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum and Academic Planning) be requested to develop a proposal for defining and ensuring the implementation of agreed principles for multi-campus teaching.
32. That the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Committee consider the ways in which information and communication technologies (ICT) can:
 - enhance students' learning,
 - address issues of multi campus and flexible delivery,
 - be implemented in pedagogically appropriate ways and
 - be implemented with appropriate levels of support for staff and students.
33. That the authority for decisions about implementation of University-supported teaching and learning technologies reside with the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Committee, which will seek proposals and advice from the Learning Technologies Sub-Committee and the ICT Policy Committee.
34. That the Deputy Vice-Chancellor establish a working party – to include the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International and Future Students) – to investigate and report on ways in which the University can best respond to the needs of current and future students. The working party will be asked to consider how more flexible programs and subjects can be provided to all students - part time and full time, undergraduate and postgraduate, school-leavers and mature-age. Alternatives to investigate might include increased use of: block mode teaching, evening and weekend classes, asynchronous technologies, and a potential third semester.

Appendix 1 Curriculum Taskforce terms of reference and membership

- 1 To elaborate a shared understanding of what would make La Trobe’s curricula distinctive, relevant, attractive, effective, efficient and sustainable, as espoused in the University’s *Strategic Plan 2008-2012*.
- 2 To examine and critique existing structures, goals, and outcomes of the University’s curricula in relation to current and foreseeable regional, state, national and international trends and developments.
- 3 To identify key performance outcomes, indicators, criteria, measures, and standards in relation to the distinctiveness, relevance, attractiveness, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of La Trobe’s curricula.
4. To identify research-based design and implementation principles which can inform the review and redesign of existing units, programs, and courses of study and the design of new curricula.
- 5 To recommend curricular, teaching, and learning policies, processes, and practices to:
 - establish clear pathways into, within and between degrees;
 - facilitate definition and achievement of unit and course-level learning outcomes; and
 - facilitate definition and achievement of generic and/or University-wide graduate learning outcomes – if there are to be any such.
- 6 To develop and implement a coherent information and communication strategy to keep the University’s relevant communities informed of the Taskforce’s work, and to allow systematic input and feedback from key groups.
- 7 To recommend broad strategies and implementation guidelines to enable the review, revision, and (re)design of all University curricula within and across faculties by 2012.

Taskforce Composition

Sponsor	Professor Paul Johnson, Vice-Chancellor
Convener	Professor Belinda Probert, Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Facilitator	Professor Tom Angelo, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum and Academic Planning)
Consultant	Professor Owen Hicks, Higher Education Development Consultant, and Senior Consultant, Australian Learning and Teaching Council (formerly Carrick Institute)
Project Officers	Mr Jason Brown, Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Centre Ms Sally Went, Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor

Members

Education

Dr Jennifer Masters
Professor Vaughan Prain
Dr Caroline Walta

Education
Deputy Dean (Academic and International)
Educational Studies

Health Sciences

Dr Kerry Fitzmaurice
Dr Mary Kennedy-Jones
Dr Amanda Kenny
Mr Lester Jones
Mr Mathew Oates
Dr Jodi Sita

Associate Dean (Academic)
Occupational Therapy
Health Sciences
Physiotherapy
Health Studies
Human Physiology and Anatomy

Humanities and Social Sciences

Dr Adrian Jones
Dr Helen Lee
Dr Jim Leibold
Dr Katie Holmes
Dr Tony Jarvis
Dr Kay Souter

History
Sociology and Anthropology
Asian Studies
History
Politics
Associate Dean (Academic)

Law and Management

Ms Lee Ann Basser
Dr Russell Hoye
Professor Sisira Jayasuriya
Dr Terri Joiner
Dr Sue O'Keefe
Professor David Spencer
Ms Cindy Taylor

Law
Sport, Tourism and Hospitality
Economics
Management and Marketing
Business
Associate Dean (Academic)
Business

Science, Technology and Engineering

Dr Fiona Bird
Dr Grant Cairns
Dr Peter Cartwright
Dr Liz Johnson
Dr Katherine Legge
Professor Eleanor Wertheim

Zoology
Mathematics
Biochemistry
Associate Dean (Academic)
Civil Engineering and Physical Sciences
Psychological Science

Appendix 2 Curriculum Taskforce schedule, agendas and guest presenters

Meeting date	Main agenda items
Meeting 1 15 August 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strategic rationale and motivation for a RADICAL curriculum review and reform project <i>Professor Paul Johnson, Vice-Chancellor</i> ▪ The Promise of La Trobe – What is it? ▪ The Promise of La Trobe – What should it be?
Meeting 2 29 August 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research on the First-Year Experience: Implications for Curriculum Review and (Re)Design. <i>Professor Kerri-Lee Krause, Griffith University</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Being strategic in our approach to first year ▪ 5 principles of good practice in engaging students in first year – curriculum, classroom, colleagues, campus and community
Meeting 3 12 September 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Curriculum Renewal: Issues & Strategies <i>Professor Fred D'Agostino, University of Queensland</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strategic context for curriculum design ▪ The importance of a sequence of study ▪ Developing curriculum principles ▪ Program-level assessment ▪ Knowing your entering cohort
Meeting 4 26 September 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student panel discussion on La Trobe's Curriculum ▪ What do they understand by curriculum; what has your experience of this at LTU; how well integrated is the curriculum in your course? ▪ How clear are the connections between the expected outcomes and the assessment in your course? ▪ What were the most helpful/effective aspects of the first-year curriculum; what would you change about the curriculum? What do you know now that would have helped you in first year? ▪ What is unique about LTU; where are the gaps?
Meeting 5 10 October 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discussion of UWA's review of course structures ▪ Locating Faculties' key areas of concern/needs in relation to curriculum review/renewal/redesign ▪ Hearing first-draft pilot project proposals for 2009
Meeting 6 24 October 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Groups report on their proposals around the topics of research/teaching nexus, flexibility, ict, regional, practical, radical, internationalisation, cultural diversity, climate change and radical uncertainty. ▪ Discussion of first draft of recommendations
Meeting 7 7 November 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions around the topic of a learning-centred curriculum • Groups report on mode of delivery, managing staff buy-in, resources for implementation, at risk students, literacy, evaluation, learning spaces and constructive alignment.
Meeting 8 21 November 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review, discuss and revise draft list of recommendations ▪ Review, discuss, and revise other elements of the draft

Expert Consultants and Guest Presenters

Professor Owen Hicks, Consultant to the Curriculum Taskforce

Professor Owen Hicks is a senior consultant with the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (formerly the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education) where he provides support to a wide range of projects (including the initial Carrick discipline-based pilot projects in science, law and IT) and has been working on the development and application of the concept of curriculum in higher education in Australian universities chairing a Carrick national roundtable on the subject in September last year.

Prior to that Professor Hicks spent ten years at the University of Western Australia as Director of Organisational and Staff Development Services (incorporating the Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, the Evaluation of Teaching Unit and the Centre for Staff Development), responsible for broad range of program and policy developments relating to teaching and learning and academic leadership. He is also a past president of HERDSA and council member of the International Consortium for Educational Development.

Professor Kerri-Lee Krause, Griffith University

Kerri-Lee Krause is Chair in Higher Education and Director of the Griffith Institute for Higher Education. Her research expertise and experience spans broadly across higher education policy areas. Her particular research focus is the student experience in higher education and implications for policy and practice.

She has recently been an advisor to the Scottish Quality Assurance Agency on the first-year experience. Currently, Professor Krause is leading a Queensland government study on strategies for enhancing participation rates of students from low socio-economic backgrounds in higher education.

She also leads the Australian arm of an international project, in collaboration with the US-based IMS Global Learning Consortium, investigating best practices for online learning in the first year of university and is also a member of an ALTC project examining the implications of emerging technologies for learning and teaching among the first-year digital generation.

Professor Fred D'Agostino, University of Queensland

Fred D'Agostino was Research Fellow in Philosophy at the Australian National University from 1978 to 1984, and worked at the University of New England from 1984 to 2004, where he was Associate Professor of Philosophy, Associate Dean of Arts, Head of the School of Social Science, and Member of the University Council.

Fred is now Professor of Humanities and Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning) in the Faculty of Arts and Director of Arts, Ipswich. He has edited the *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, is currently editing *Politics, Philosophy and Economics* and has published three books. He holds an ARC Discovery Grant for work in social epistemology, a Carrick Institute grant for educational leadership development, and is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

Student Panel (26 September)

Facilitated by Ms Ngaere Blair, Manager, Student Engagement

Leigh Hetherton, Arts

Stephanie Kokkinakis, Arts/Economics

David Lucantonio, Computer science

Lauren Chilvers, Education

Katherine Nix, Arts and Bendigo Students Association representative

Appendix 3

Proposed 2009 pilot projects in curriculum review and (re)design

The University's Faculties and Campuses were offered funding from La Trobe's 2008 Learning and Teaching Performance Fund (LTPF) award, and staff support from the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Centre (CTL) to support pilot projects in curriculum review, redesign, design and renewal in 2009. The aim of these proposed pilot projects is to develop local expertise and capacity to carry forward larger-scale curriculum review and renewal projects successfully from 2010-2012. To date, the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor has offered support for the following pilot project proposals.

Faculty of Education

Project Coordinator:

Dr Jennifer Masters, Undergraduate Course Coordinator, Faculty of Education, Bendigo

Connecting with Education: Enhancing the First-year Experience

In 2008, the Faculty of Education, Bendigo successfully implemented a common, cornerstone year for undergraduate courses. This project seeks to further plan, implement and evaluate quality teaching, learning and assessment over the next two years to enrich first year and beyond. It is anticipated that this project will inform and transform teaching and learning across the Faculty. The themes of this project include: embedding essential skills throughout curriculum, integrated assessment design; online teaching and learning; and the inclusion of Physical, Personal and Social Learning, based on the Victorian Education Learning Standards (VELS) strand. Through this project, we intend to:

1. Identify clear strategies for effective design, implementation and evaluation of the first-year program
2. Increase student satisfaction, engagement and retention in our first-year program
3. Support academics to enact established principles of sound tertiary pedagogy
4. Increase the reputation of our Undergraduate Pre-service Teaching courses

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Overall Coordinator: Dr. Kay Souter, Associate Dean (Academic)

FHUSS are currently proposing three CTF subject design/redesign pilot projects. Two of the pilots focus on first-year core subjects, *Journalism MST1AAC: The Interview*, and *History 1 MLH: Myths, Legends and History*. The third project will be in a second- and third-year core subject, *Sociology 2/3 MSR: Introduction to Social Research Methods*. All three subjects will be available to all HUSS students across campuses, although MST1AAC will be piloted in Bundoora only in 2009.

Faculty of Health Sciences

Project Co-ordinators:

**Dr Kerry Fitzmaurice, Associate Dean (Academic),
Mr Matthew Oates, Common First-year Co-ordinator**

Developing and trialling methods of evaluating first-year curriculum

In 2009, the Faculty of Health Sciences will launch a completely redesigned and restructured first-year curriculum. Having already completed the redesign and renewal, the Faculty proposes to focus this pilot project on developing and trialling appropriate, effective, and efficient methods of formative and summative evaluation. In other words, this pilot will assist the Faculty in determining how and how well the new first-year curriculum is working – both in terms of student, staff, and stakeholder perceptions, and in terms of student learning outcomes.

Faculty of Law and Management

Project Coordinator: Professor David Spencer, Associate Dean (Academic)

Mapping and Evaluating Graduate Attributes and Learning Outcomes

The Faculty of Law & Management's proposed pilot project is to gather information on existing graduate attributes/student learning outcomes from the various discipline areas within the Faculty, and then to map those attributes/outcomes across the current curriculum. We need to determine that existing attributes/outcomes are evaluated before students depart La Trobe and, where they do not exist, we need to develop a strategy to embed them in cornerstone/keystone/capstone subjects. These subjects may already exist, for example, in the form of introductory and final-year subjects, or they may need to be created as new cornerstone first-year and new capstone final-year subjects. Finally, we need to develop a strategy to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum to deliver the stated graduate attributes/student outcomes.

Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering

Project Coordinator: Dr Liz Johnson, Associate Dean (Academic)

Firm Foundations in Science

This pilot project will trial academic support interventions in foundation (cornerstone) subjects for degrees in the Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering. The Faculty-wide project will develop a common framework for managing further curriculum development and academic support for academic skills across these subjects. Pilot subjects will be selected to include as many first-year science students as possible, with the eventual aim of ensuring that all first-year students have access to this form of academic support. This pilot will focus, in particular, on the requirements of students underprepared for university study in science.

Multi-Faculty and Multi-Campus

Project Co-ordinators:

Dr Suzanne O’Keefe, Law & Management, Albury-Wodonga

Dr Katherine Legge, Science, Technology & Engineering, Bendigo

Dr Gerry Gill, Humanities and Social Sciences, Bendigo

Mr Tony Gleeson, Science, Technology & Engineering, Bundoora

From the Ground Up: Development, delivery and evaluation of a unique first-year cross-disciplinary subject: Climate, Sustainability and Society (ENV1CSS)

This pilot project encompasses the development, delivery and evaluation of an innovative, new, cross-disciplinary subject, “Climate, Sustainability and Society (ENV1CSS)” to be offered across multiple campuses in Semester 2, 2009. The project includes an audit and mapping of the University’s current offerings that have a ‘sustainability’ or ‘environmental’ focus. The project will embed the curriculum principles established by the Curriculum Taskforce and result in the development of a framework for the effective delivery of like subjects in the future. Importantly, the project includes both formative and summative evaluation, and draws on the expertise and interest of industry experts in the area of sustainability.

Appendix 4 Resources on Curriculum and Related Topics

Barnett, R and Coate, K, (2005), *Engaging the curriculum in higher education* Maidenhead, Open University Press.

Barr, R and Tagg, J, *From Teaching to Learning - A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education* <http://critical.tamucc.edu/~blalock/readings/tch2learn.htm>

Biggs, J and Tang, C, (2007), *Teaching for Quality Learning at University* (3rd Ed), Maidenhead, Open University Press [LTU Library holdings: Bendigo, 378.125 BIGG]

Jackson, N, *Pressures for Curriculum Change* http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/resources/resourcedatabase/id48_Pressures_for_Curriculum_Change.rtf

Kennedy, G, Judd, T, Churchward, A, Gray K, Krause, K, (2007), *First-year students' experiences with technology: Are they really digital natives?* Australasian Journal of Educational Technology, 24(1), 108-122

Kift, S. (2008), *The next, great first-year challenge: Sustaining, coordinating and embedding coherent institution-wide approaches to enact the first-year experience as everybody's business*, Proceedings from the 11th international Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education Conference, Hobart, available from QUT Digital Repository at <http://eprints.qut.edu.au>

Krause, K and Coates, H (2008), *Students' engagement in first-year university*, Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, 1-13

Norris, G, (2004), *Informing Curriculum Development through Research*, Fourth Asia Pacific Interdisciplinary Research in Accounting Conference, 4 to 6 July 2004, Singapore. http://www.commerce.adelaide.edu.au/research/aaaj/apira_2004/Final%20Papers/1265-norris.pdf

Smith, D and Lovat, T, (1995), *Curriculum : action on reflection revisited* (3rd Ed) Wentworth Falls, N.S.W, Social Science Press
[LTU Library holdings: Bundoora, 375.001 L896c 1995; Albury-Wodonga, 375.001 SMI; Bendigo, 375.001 LOVA]

Twigg, C, (2005) *Improving Learning and Cutting Costs*, Inside Higher Education,
a. <http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2005/11/02/twigg>
b. <http://www.thencat.org/howtodoit.htm>
c. http://www.highereducation.org/reports/pa_core/core.pdf
d. <http://www.center.rpi.edu/Monographs/IncSuccess.htm>

White, S and Carr L, (2005), *Brave new world: Can we engineer a better start for freshers?*, Paper from 35th ASEE/IEEE Frontiers in Education Conference
<http://eprints.ecs.soton.ac.uk/11631/> <<http://eprints.ecs.soton.ac.uk/11631/>>

Yorke, M, (2007), *Assessment, especially in the first year of higher education: old principles in new wrapping*, Paper from Online Conference - Assessment Design for Learner Responsibility, May 2007,
http://www.reap.ac.uk/reap07/Portals/2/CSL/keynotes/mantz%20yorke/Assessment_old_principles_new_wrapping.pdf