

# Design for Learning

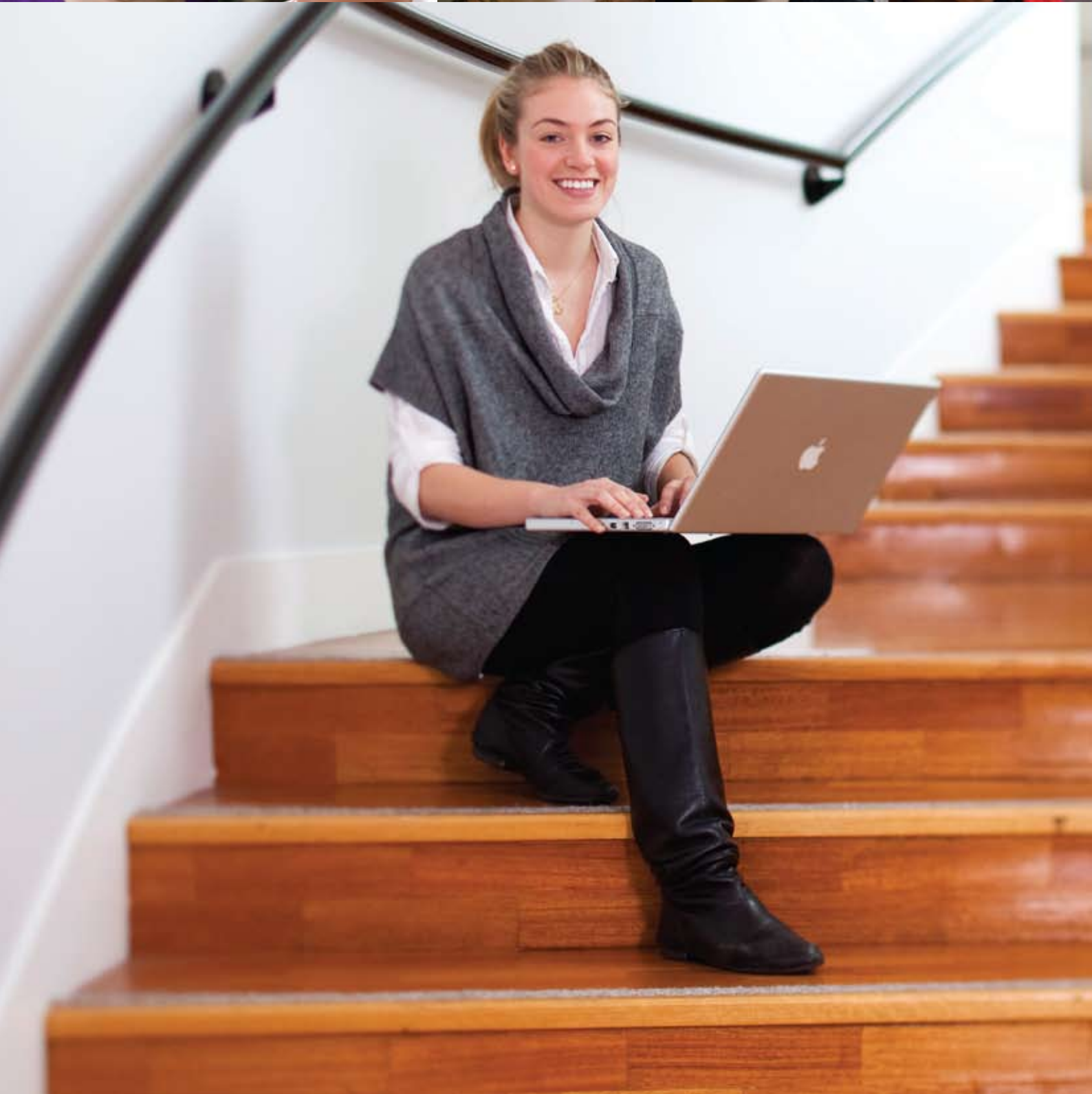
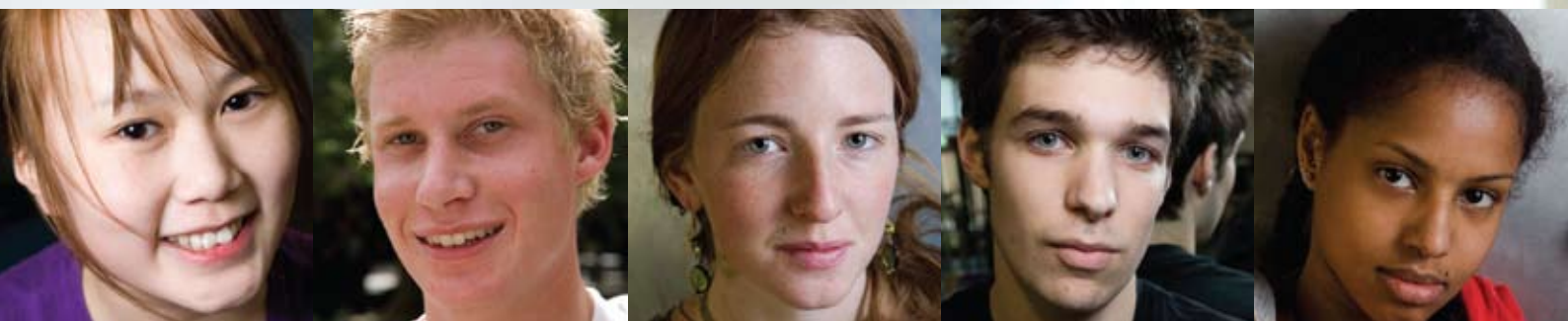
Curriculum Review and Renewal  
at La Trobe University

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# Section 1 Introduction

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Just over 40 years ago La Trobe was established as a distinctly teaching focussed and egalitarian university, employing academic staff 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’<sup>1</sup>.

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La Trobe has always welcomed such students, along with those from more privileged backgrounds who bring high ENTER scores and substantial cultural capital. Teaching students of all backgrounds well is a mission with which La Trobe staff continue to identify, but one which is increasingly difficult to realise. The landscape of higher education has been transformed in the intervening years by a major expansion in the number of universities and higher education providers; the overall growth in participation rates and the proliferation of course offerings; declining funding and increasing staff-student ratios; and an explosion of international student enrolments. This landscape is set to undergo yet further transformative change as a result of the Bradley Review of Higher Education<sup>2</sup> which proposes very substantial additional growth in participation and completion rates; a demand-driven student entitlement system; and substantial extra funding to support Indigenous, rural, regional and low SES student completions (although this funding is now threatened by the global financial crisis).

Individual staff at La Trobe have responded with commitment and creativity to the challenges of maintaining quality and equity in the face of declining resources, new campuses, increased competition and ever-increasing demands for accountability. Many examples of excellence exist at program and Faculty levels, but our overall success as a university has been increasingly uneven and unsustainable. Recent trends in demand for our courses, in course completion rates, as well as in various indicators of student satisfaction, suggest an urgent need for renewal.

In an environment where domestic students will exercise far greater choice about where they study, and where the Government wishes many more educationally and geographically disadvantaged students to complete a bachelors degree, La Trobe needs to be confident that its undergraduate programs are attractive, relevant and sustainable.

Following the Government's acceptance of key aspects of the Bradley Review of Higher Education, a process of reviewing existing demand for our programs, as well as state-wide demand for programs we do not offer, is underway as part of a wider review of the University's Strategic Plan<sup>3</sup>. But whatever programs we offer, we must adopt curriculum design principles which explicitly define the capabilities of our graduates; ensure equity of opportunity and achievement across our campuses and between all students regardless of background; improve retention rates; help us to attract the best academic staff; and to support and sustain their teaching and research.

To achieve these ambitions, our approach to curriculum design and teaching must be based on the best research and evidence about student learning and student engagement, and our own practice must be rigorously evaluated. Best practice – and there is already much of this at La Trobe – must also be adopted and supported systemically so that all students benefit. And if our ambitions are to be sustainable, our curriculum design and teaching methods must also be economically viable.

The purpose of this White Paper is to make explicit the distinctive qualities of La Trobe's undergraduate programs and the students who graduate from them, and to allow us to communicate these qualities to students, staff, tax-payers, governments, employers, families and the wider community. While all universities make ambitious claims about the graduate capabilities of their students, few are able to support these claims with actions and evidence, and most claims remain rhetorical. Our claims will be backed up by explicit and measurable indicators of academic quality, student learning and student success.

This White Paper recognises that Faculties, Schools and programs will identify Faculty or program specific graduate capabilities, and devise locally appropriate ways of implementing or embedding the key curriculum design principles proposed here. At the same time, the University needs to provide expertise and resources to ensure systematic University-wide provision of fundamentals such as staff development, tutor training, orientation for students, and structured opportunities for student social and academic engagement.

The White Paper is presented in the belief that the adoption of its recommendations will greatly increase our effectiveness and success in educating students to high standards – while helping staff contribute in ways that are fulfilling in professional and personal terms.

<sup>1</sup> John Jenkin and Judith Richards 'La Trobe as a Teaching University' in *Building La Trobe University*, ed. William J. Breen, La Trobe University Press, 1989

<sup>2</sup> *Review of Australian Higher Education*, Final Report, December 2008

<sup>3</sup> Strategic Planning Steering Committee

## Section 2 From Green Paper to White Paper

The December 2008 Green Paper, *Curriculum Review and Renewal at La Trobe University*, contained thirty-four recommendations. Since December, these recommendations and the thinking behind them, have been discussed with over 300 academic staff, from every Faculty, on every campus, and with student representatives, Library staff and staff from student services.

During the consultation over 220 staff completed a straw poll responding to each of the 34 recommendations with a vote of either 'support', 'do not support' or 'still have doubts'. Many also provided written responses and suggestions which have helped to sharpen the focus of this White Paper. In preparing the White Paper, we also took note of the wide range of industry and employer submissions to the higher education sector about the graduate capabilities they value<sup>4</sup>.

The response of the University community has been very supportive of the overall directions proposed, and of a large majority of the specific recommendations. Perhaps not surprisingly, some faculties felt that the Green Paper was too conservative, and described principles that were already widely accepted in their area, while other faculties felt it represented a very demanding program of change. There were also requests for clarification or interpretation of particular recommendations.

Staff also raised concerns about the resources that would be needed to implement many of the recommendations, and noted the inadequacy of our teaching and learning spaces, library

space and information and communication infrastructure.

As an initial response the University (Planning and Resources Committee) has agreed that the majority of the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund monies received this year (\$2.485m) will be devoted to supporting a centrally coordinated four to five year process of curriculum renewal and re-design based on the recommendations of this White Paper. This White Paper will also become the basis of capital and infrastructure budget bids and funding applications.

At most of these Green Paper consultations staff wanted to discuss the feasibility of key recommendations, how they might be implemented and the need for Faculty and program flexibility. For this reason, a White Paper Planning Group was set up in February to clarify priorities and achievable timelines<sup>5</sup>.

Where there was clear, unequivocal support for Green Paper proposals requiring central coordination, action has already been initiated. For example, with the support of Heads of School, this year saw the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Centre offer University-wide tutor training (Green Paper Recommendation 24)<sup>6</sup>. Responsibility for the overall design and coordination of student 'Orientation' from 2010 has been transferred to the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and a process of consultation is being co-ordinated by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum and Academic Planning) and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Equity and Student Services (Green Paper Recommendation 18). This will include close collaboration with the SRC to ensure that academic and social orientation are mutually supportive and designed around best practice. Similarly, the adoption of the revised Promotions Policy and Procedures presented to Academic Board in May will see the implementation of Green Paper Recommendation 28 on standards of evidence for teaching and curriculum-based applications.



<sup>4</sup> For example, Business Council of Australia (2008) Submission to the Review of Australian Higher Education, BCA Melbourne, pp 17-18 ([www.bca.com.au/Content/101490.aspx](http://www.bca.com.au/Content/101490.aspx))

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix 2 for the membership and terms of reference for the Planning Group.

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix 3 for a full list of Green Paper Recommendations.

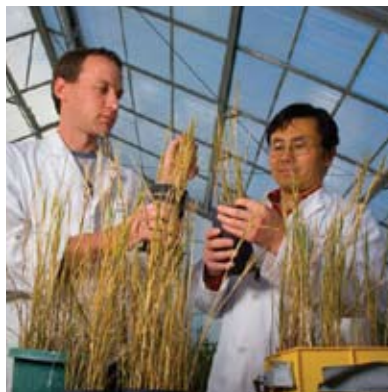
Three Green Paper recommendations about program content (Recommendations 12, 13 and 14) provoked a lot of debate and scored the highest number of 'doubts' in our straw polling. While relatively few staff actively opposed the suggestion that all programs should define discipline specific knowledge and skills to address the challenges of climate change (12), our straw polls suggest that a third of the respondents had doubts about how this might be achieved. About a fifth of our straw poll respondents also expressed doubts about the recommendation that faculties consider how "an understanding of the nature and impact of inequality" could be included in program specific ways (Recommendation 14). About the same percentage also raised doubts about the recommendation that La Trobe students should be provided with opportunities to develop knowledge and skills required to understand and work in an increasingly globalised and multicultural environment. During the consultation some staff and the SRC were concerned about the Green Paper's silence on specific Indigenous issues.

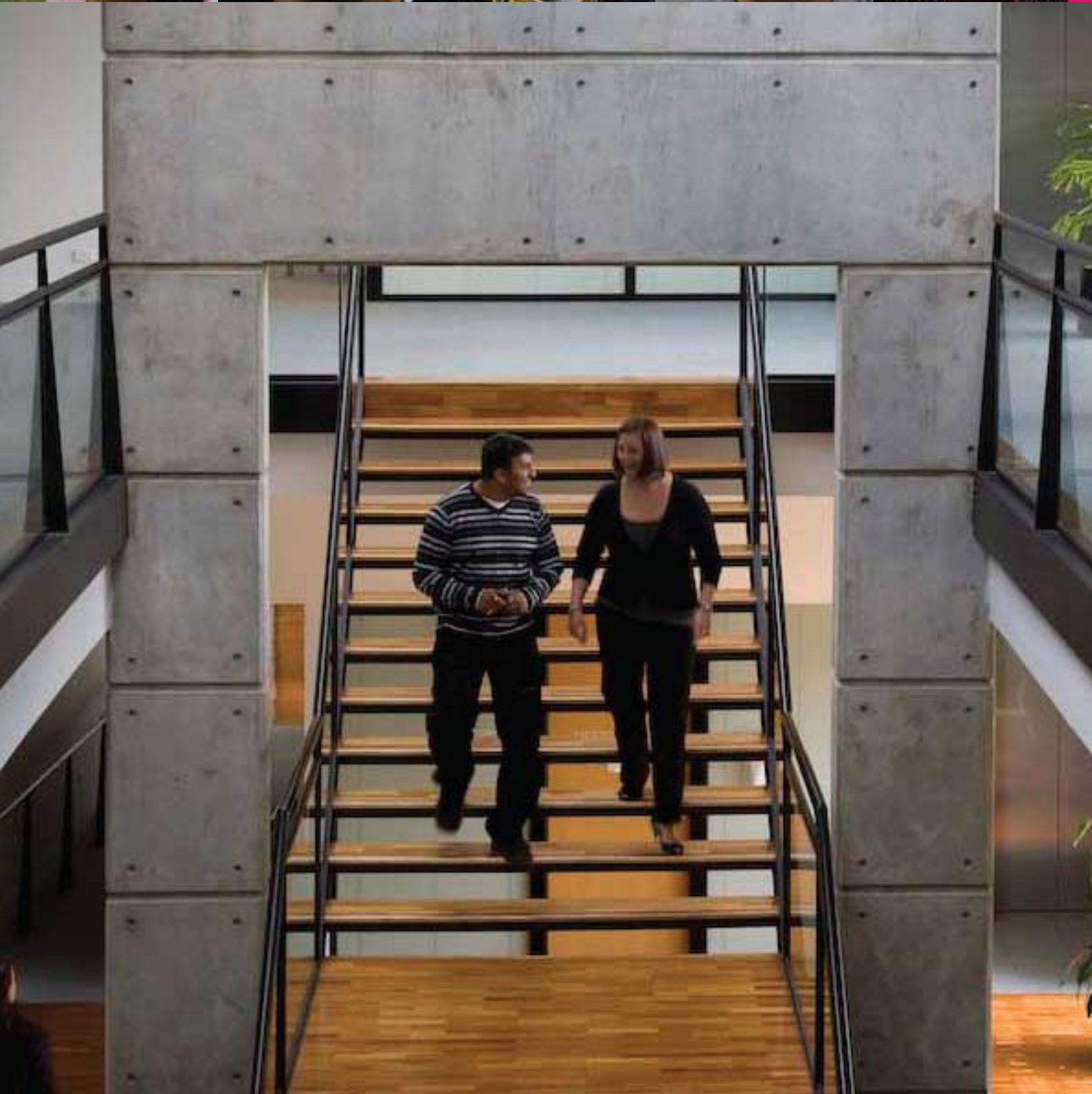
The reasons for these doubts were varied, and it is important to acknowledge that most staff polled did in fact support the recommendations, in theory at least. However, it is also true that as in most Australian universities, the concept of offering all students elements of a general education, as opposed to a vocational or professional or discipline specific training, is not generally accepted. While Harvard might spend years agonising over what it is that all its graduates should know and be able to do, this is unfamiliar territory in Australia.

During the consultation period several requests were made to include numeracy or quantitative reasoning among the shared University graduate capabilities, sparking quite passionate debate within the Curriculum Taskforce members. Here too, the suggestion that there are certain capabilities that all students should have, even if they seem quite unrelated to their program of study or future careers, was hotly debated.

In this White Paper these tensions are resolved in the following way. Recommendations 12, 13 and 14 have been integrated into one overall recommendation which is couched not in terms of any University-wide requirement, but rather in terms of university support for the development of curricula to achieve these aims (White Paper Recommendation 7). A new recommendation (White Paper 8) has also been added, in a similar vein, to encourage the development of curriculum focussed on the history and culture of Australia's Indigenous people and the nature of cultural diversity more broadly. And in the case of numeracy, it is acknowledged that faculties and programs have and will identify locally specific learning outcomes which in many cases should include numeracy (White Paper Recommendation 2). We hope that debate about these important issues will continue.

In the following sections the core Green Paper recommendations for which there was almost universal support have been extracted, edited in response to feedback, and grouped around the following themes: *Overarching Principles, Curriculum Design and Evaluation; Student Experience and Learning Support; and Staff Development and Support*. In Appendix 2 a list of all the original Green Paper recommendations is presented along with a commentary on where they are to be found in this White Paper, and/or what has already been done or is proposed to be done with each.





## Section 3 Overarching principles

Throughout the consultations on the full range of Green Paper recommendations, a number of general principles were widely and consistently supported. Although they do not constitute recommendations for specific actions, these overarching principles will inform and distinguish La Trobe's curriculum and renewal efforts.

These principles highlight breadth of choice, equity, flexibility (options), learning-centredness, research and evidence based decision making, a systems focus (rather than making individuals responsible for things they do not control), and support (resources). As such, they inform the remaining recommendations.

- La Trobe will offer three kinds of undergraduate degree (professional, generalist and specialist) as well as postgraduate coursework and research degrees. Through the development of explicit achievement standards, the University will offer the widest possible set of entry points (portals) and pathways through and between programs, providing genuinely learning-centred flexibility.
- All students who are accepted into the University, regardless of their level of preparation for tertiary study, or their campus, will be given the learning opportunities necessary for success.
- La Trobe explicitly endorses and will actively promote the historically distinctive institutional culture which has helped create a learning-centred community of staff and students which is egalitarian and informal in nature.
- La Trobe's approach to learning and the design of curriculum will be characterised by the use of evaluation, evidence and review in Faculties and Schools, and this approach will be supported centrally by the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Centre and the Management Information Unit.
- To support the highest quality of student learning we will adopt a systemic and University-wide approach to curriculum design and staff development, aligned with appropriate promotions policies and budget incentives.
- Significant investment in new teaching and learning spaces, library space, information and communication infrastructure and services, and student information systems – all of which must be aligned with these curriculum principles – needs to be made for the successful renewal and redesign of our teaching programs.



## Section 4 Key themes and recommendations

In this section the most widely supported Green Paper recommendations, edited and re-ordered in response to consultation feedback, are presented under the headings of *Curriculum Design and Evaluation; Student Experience and Learning Support, and Staff Development and Support*.

These White Paper recommendations are followed by clarification about their meaning and intent where this was requested during the consultation phase. Some Green Paper recommendations were also re-worked to eliminate overlap and redundancy, but without any alteration to the original intent or purpose. To make it easy for anyone to check the original Green Paper recommendations against those presented here, each White Paper recommendation is accompanied by a reference to the relevant Green Paper [GP#] recommendation.

### 4.1 Curriculum Design and Evaluation

To promote the highest quality of learning for all La Trobe students, this White Paper proposes a systemic, University-wide approach to the design of undergraduate programs.

#### recommendation one

That all undergraduate programs adopt the following shared La Trobe University graduate capabilities, to be defined in appropriate discipline or field-specific terms, and to be assessed against agreed standards of student achievement:

- Writing
- Speaking
- Inquiry/research
- Critical thinking
- Creative problem-solving
- Team work.

[GP #11]

The intent of this recommendation is that any student enrolling in any bachelor's level program at La Trobe will be given opportunities and the necessary feedback to develop his or her knowledge and skills in the six broad capabilities listed above. Further, each student will be expected to demonstrate a defined level of achievement in relation to each capability before graduation. Realising the aims of this recommendation would mean that by 2013, academic staff, graduates and employers could expect all La Trobe graduates to demonstrate a defined level of performance in these core capabilities.

This recommendation recognises that appropriate graduate level writing in Humanities will differ in form, function and level from that required in the Sciences, for example. And that effective team work skills in Management may differ from those required in Health Sciences. Notwithstanding these inherent differences amongst fields and disciplines, there should be a coherent La Trobe approach to these capabilities.

To that end, standards of achievement for each of the six graduate capabilities – along with the appropriate indicators, measures, and procedures for gathering and evaluating evidence of student learning – should be developed by working groups of academic staff within each Faculty, coordinated through a representative group of staff working across the Faculties. The function of the coordinating group would be to ensure parity in procedures and outcomes in relation to the graduate capabilities, not to impose meaningless standardisation.

#### recommendation two

That student learning be promoted by the explicit adoption of additional discipline or field-specific learning outcomes which are clearly defined at appropriately high standards of achievement. [GP #6]

Each Faculty already has its own list of relevant graduate capabilities, whether they are referred to by that term or not. In some cases, elements of the Faculty lists overlap with some of the proposed University-wide graduate capabilities. Other elements of these lists are necessarily and appropriately specific to the particular disciplines and professions. In many cases, programs also have lists of expected learning outcomes.

This recommendation builds on the work already done to develop Faculty and program-specific graduate capabilities and learning outcomes, and aims to link the evaluation of these Faculty and program learning outcomes to the processes designed to evaluate and measure student achievement of the shared graduate capabilities. By re-designing our program, Faculty and University-level learning evaluation processes so that they are coherent, simple, and sustainable, we can reduce redundancy and lower costs in time and effort.

#### recommendation three

That all programs map the introduction, development, assessment and evaluation of these shared graduate capabilities and discipline- or field-specific learning outcomes within and across their constituent subjects. [GP#7]

There are substantial benefits to putting in place a common mapping approach which would provide staff and students alike with graphic representations of the portals into, and pathways through our programs. Specifically, a one-page overview map in the University's handbooks would give prospective students a summary view of each program's pre-requisites, co-requisites, required and elective subjects, and recommended sequences of subjects for those interested in specific postgraduate and careers options. More specific and detailed versions of the program map would provide information on when, where and how the various graduate capabilities and program learning outcomes were being introduced, developed, assessed and evaluated. For program and course coordinators, in particular, having such a map could help avoid unproductive redundancies in teaching and assessment. This sort of mapping will be invaluable to those negotiating articulation agreements with TAFEs, as well as to secondary school advisors and staff from other institutions whose students enter La Trobe.

## recommendation four

That all programs develop and offer 'cornerstone' subjects – or provide the equivalent – in the first semester of enrolment, which will provide all students with a strong foundation for academic success and enable:

- a** the identification of students at risk in terms of general academic literacy;
- b** the identification of students at risk in terms of their specific preparation for the program of study; and
- c** the provision, as required, of early support for students identified as being at risk. [GP #8]

Cornerstone subjects are neither bridging subjects, generic academic skills development subjects, nor watered-down offerings for underprepared students.

Rather, cornerstone subjects are intended to be highly challenging and engaging subjects, designed and offered by specific programs, Schools or Faculties to serve three complementary purposes. The first purpose of a cornerstone subject, and one which is already being realised by a number of existing La Trobe subjects, is to provide novices (learners new to the discipline or field) with a firm grounding in the core threshold knowledge and skills they will require to learn successfully in more advanced subjects. In other words, the cornerstone subject either provides opportunities to learn, or ensures that students have already learned to a satisfactory level, what the remainder of the program curriculum assumes as prerequisite knowledge and skills.

## existing example

### Existing example of cornerstone-type subject

In addition to learning about the management of organisations, students enrolled in Foundations of Management undertake an information and academic literacy module which introduces students to the nature of academic research and its conventions, and the concept of academic integrity. Students at risk are identified through short literacy exercises in the third week of the semester and referred to academic support staff for assistance.

The second and somewhat less familiar purpose of a cornerstone is to ensure that all students have the opportunity to develop or demonstrate that they have already developed to a satisfactory level those often implicit but critical elements of University academic culture that we refer to as academic literacy. For example, an effective cornerstone would make certain that all incoming students demonstrated clear understanding of that Faculty's expectations regarding graduate capabilities and program learning outcomes, academic integrity, academic support services available, expected workloads, and the like.

At present, some of La Trobe's students arrive already knowing many of these conventions, and others work them out quickly. However, many other equally capable and diligent students, particularly those who are first-generation university and international students, waste precious time and effort and sometimes find themselves in serious difficulties, because program expectations and opportunities for meeting them are not made explicit from the start.

The third purpose of cornerstones is to provide an efficient, timely opportunity to gather critical baseline data on students' preparation, goals and expectations, engagement and experiences, and satisfaction. Having baseline data would allow us to identify and respond to potential problems early and effectively, as well as to track change in students' perceptions and learning through the program.

The Curriculum Taskforce saw cornerstone subjects as a particularly effective and efficient way to realise three of our distinctive principles. That is, cornerstones can help ensure that "All La Trobe students . . . will be given the learning opportunities necessary for success"; that students are initiated into La Trobe's "historically distinctive institutional culture"; and that "La Trobe's approach to learning and the design of curriculum will be characterised by the use of evaluation, evidence, and review in Faculties and Schools".

### existing example

#### Existing example of cornerstone-type equivalent – spreading essential elements across the first year curricula

The recently redesigned first-year curriculum in the Faculty of Health Sciences demonstrates how the function of the cornerstone subject can be co-ordinated across a number of subjects. The core threshold knowledge that health science students require to succeed in their specialisations is taught across the compulsory first year subjects of anatomy, physiology and so forth. The skills needed to succeed as a health professional (team work, multidisciplinary understanding, clinical reasoning) are developed through the Enquiry Based Learning methodology that has been adopted in all the subjects. A diagnostic assessment of the students' academic literacy has been built into the compulsory interdisciplinary subject to identify students who require additional support to develop their academic skills.

### recommendation five

That all programs assess student progress against agreed program outcomes and University-level graduate capabilities mid-program (at the end of first year, or at an appropriate point in second year) to provide staff and students with formative feedback needed to improve curriculum and teaching effectiveness and student learning success. [GP #9 & 16]

Receiving timely and useful feedback before the final evaluation (formative feedback) is critical to individual students for improving their learning and to individual staff members for improving their teaching effectiveness. Formative feedback is also critical to the ongoing monitoring and improvement of subjects and programs. Often, however, feedback arrives too late to promote improvement, or is meant to convey evaluative judgements. Grades, along with reports on student evaluations of subjects and teaching are examples of end-of-process summative feedback.

The Curriculum Taskforce recommended development of a mid-program 'check up' to promote student learning of the graduate capabilities and program-level outcomes, as well as to provide programs, Faculties and the University with information useful for improving teaching and curriculum design. The Curriculum Taskforce did not recommend the development of a specific subject to support mid-program evaluation.

### recommendation six

That all programs develop and offer a final year 'capstone' subject, or equivalent, to provide an effective culmination point for programs as well as to offer students orientation to opportunities for further study, employment and career development. [GP #10]

Capstone subjects are more common and widely understood amongst La Trobe staff than cornerstones, but serve similar and complementary purposes. Capstones are engaging and challenging subjects, designed and offered by programs, Schools, or Faculties to undergraduate students in the final year of their enrolment. Existing capstones, at La Trobe and elsewhere, typically challenge students to apply and extend the core skills and knowledge they have learned to solve messy, real-world problems in their chosen fields of endeavour. Some capstones involve relevant stakeholders – prospective employers, professionals, and/or community leaders – as mentors or evaluators.

Parallel to cornerstones, capstone subjects serve three core purposes. The first is to ensure that students about to finish a program of study have opportunities to review, reflect on, and reinforce the key knowledge and skills they have learned. The second is to provide all these students with an equitable orientation to postgraduate and career opportunities. And the third is to provide the program, Faculty and University with an effective and efficient opportunity to gather end-point data on students' experiences, satisfaction, learning, and future plans.

### existing example

#### Existing examples of final year capstone subjects

In the final-year subject *Agricultural Case Studies*, students work in teams to act as advisors to real clients who require information and advice on how best to manage their farm or agricultural business. Students draw on all aspects of their undergraduate learning to present a report to their clients.

Final year students in the Bachelor of Computer Science in Games Technology must undertake the compulsory subject, *Software Engineering Project*, which entails solving authentic problems for industry clients. Students integrate and apply the theoretical knowledge, practical skills and problem-solving abilities they have gained throughout their degree to generate real and workable solutions for industry.

## recommendation seven

That programs and faculties be encouraged to identify and develop, with support from the University, appropriate ways to educate students about the challenges to individuals and communities posed by climate change, globalisation and inequality, with particular attention paid to how these phenomena may affect students' chosen careers and lives as educated citizens.

## recommendation eight

That programs and faculties be encouraged to identify and develop, with support from the University, appropriate ways to educate students about the history and culture of Australia's Indigenous peoples, and the broader significance of cultural diversity. [GP #12-14]

As noted in Section 2, Green Paper recommendations 12, 13, and 14 were the subject of much discussion, both within the Curriculum Taskforce and throughout the consultations. There was, nonetheless, widespread support for the general principles expressed in these recommendations, and during the consultations, some students and staff requested an explicit focus on Indigenous culture.

From the outset, the Curriculum Taskforce agreed that the University should avoid adopting empty or largely rhetorical statements in defining our graduate attributes, and should make recommendations that were realistic and intended for implementation. For this reason these recommendations are not couched as requirements of all programs, but as encouragement. And since many questions about the original recommendations related to doubts about how such objectives might be achieved within so many different and varied programs, the White Paper recommendations suggest that University support and coordination should be provided.

## recommendation nine

That all programs employ meaningful, measurable and transparent key indicators and standards of academic quality, student learning, and student success in ongoing monitoring, annual evaluation and planning processes, program reviews, and other similar processes. [GP #15]

To make sense of the overall performance of a program, School, Faculty or the University in relation to student learning, requires the development of a few very important indicators, measures, and standards that are agreed upon by those responsible for their implementation and measurement. The Curriculum Taskforce recommends the development of a core set of University-wide curriculum quality indicators, measures, and standards that can be applied at all levels. These would include, but not be limited to the graduate capabilities. Taking such an approach should greatly lower compliance costs and dramatically increase the University's ability to provide programs and Faculties with valid, reliable, and useful data gathered, analysed and reported on centrally. The Curriculum Taskforce recognised, however, that the University would have to make significant investments in the Management Information Unit to successfully implement this recommendation.

## 4.2 The Student Experience

While the review and renewal of La Trobe's formal academic curricula is the primary focus of this White Paper, the Curriculum Taskforce and the Working Group recognise that a great deal of student learning in university takes place through the co-curriculum – those formal and informal opportunities and activities provided by student services and student organisations. Thus, in order to best promote and support undergraduate engagement, retention, learning and success<sup>8</sup>, La Trobe should also take a learning-centred approach to the co-curriculum, to student academic support services, and to the overall student experience, particularly the first-year experience. Such an approach means that all students, regardless of their programs or campus locations, must have equitable access to services.

## recommendation ten

That the University's Orientation and first-year experience programs should be designed, coordinated, and evaluated by a University-wide steering group, including student representation, reporting to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. [GP #18]

Research in Australia, the United Kingdom and North America over the past two decades has demonstrated that the first few weeks of a student's first year at university have a major impact on longer-term engagement, retention, satisfaction, learning and success. While several other comparable Australian universities have long focused institutional attention and resources on the first-year experience, La Trobe has not. The beginning of this major curriculum review and renewal effort is therefore an opportune time to create a University-

8 For example, 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

wide first-year experience steering group composed of academic staff, library staff and student representatives from each Faculty and campus, along with relevant staff from Equity and Student Services. We recommend that this First Year Experience Steering Group be given responsibility for ensuring the quality, coherence, and effectiveness of all University-wide undergraduate orientation and first-year experience programs. Given that the Deans and the Director of Equity and Student Services all report to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, we recommend that this new Steering Group report to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor or designate.

### recommendation eleven

That academic and language support resources and staff be embedded in the Faculties, as far as practicable, and allocated strategically to support and develop the capacities of those students with the greatest need. *[GP #19]*

The implementation of this recommendation has already begun through the Review of Academic Language and Learning Support<sup>9</sup> undertaken in the second half of 2008 and its resulting recommendations. Nonetheless, given that changes in the allocation and focus of academic learning and language support staff have not yet been fully planned or implemented, this recommendation remains timely.

### recommendation twelve

That the University provides student administration and services across the spectrum, including enrolment, career services, and alumni service, in a co-ordinated and learning-centred way. *[GP #21 & 22]*

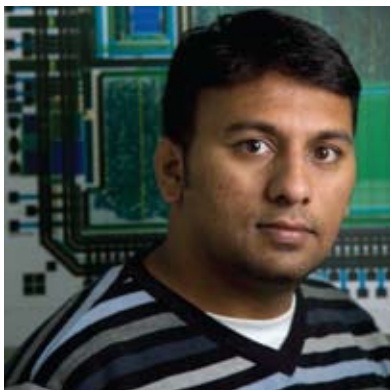
Student administration and student services policies, procedures and staff play critical roles in supporting and enhancing student engagement, retention and success at La Trobe, and in supporting the engagement of our graduates with the University.

A number of the recommendations made in this White Paper have implications for student administration and student services. To that end, we recommend that the upcoming functional review of these areas take into account these specific implications in its data gathering, analysis, and recommendations. Consideration will need to be given to establishing formal policies and procedures to better coordinate the activities of these areas to support the curriculum review and reform agenda.

### recommendation thirteen

That the University ensure that the development of teaching and learning technologies and learning spaces, both real and virtual, be undertaken in a co-ordinated and learning-centred way. *[GP #23 & 32]*

While the importance of adequate, appropriate learning technologies and learning spaces to student satisfaction and learning success is quite clear, La Trobe currently lacks formal policies and procedures to coordinate the planning and actions of the various entities involved. Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Buildings and Grounds, the Deans and the Library have different reporting lines, and structured coordination is hard to achieve. We therefore recommend that a working group be established, reporting to the Vice-Chancellor or his designate, to develop or amend the policies and procedures required to achieve more effective, efficient and learning-centred coordination of efforts.



### 4.3 Staff Development

All academic staff (including casual staff) engaged in teaching or providing academic support to students should be provided with the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills in curriculum design and teaching. To promote the highest quality of student learning we need an effective, efficient and University-wide approach to staff development in order for the White Paper principles to be given full effect.

#### recommendation fourteen

That central funding be provided to encourage Schools and Faculties to support the participation of their teaching staff in the range of staff development programs on offer. *[GP #27]*

In early 2009, the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor took the first steps in this direction, by offering to reimburse Schools for the costs of paying tutors and casual staff for participating in three-hour workshops on effective teaching and learning offered by the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Centre. In response, during February and March 2009, more than 350 tutors and casual lecturers from all Faculties and all campuses completed these first-round workshops. The interest in and success of this trial suggests continued funding should be available for this purpose, beginning in 2010.

The Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor will go on reimbursing subject fees for those continuing academic staff who successfully complete subjects in the Graduate Certificate in Curriculum, Teaching and Learning.

To promote the more substantive and ongoing involvement of continuing staff in staff development, as well as in curriculum and teaching development efforts, we recommend that the University design and implement a special incentive funding scheme. Schools and Faculties would apply, at the end of each academic year, for additional funding based on the level of engagement and achievement of their academic staff members in relation to specified, strategic activities. The percentage of eligible academic staff who complete required staff development would be one of the indicators included in such an index, as would the percentage who elect to complete additional, voluntary programs such as the Graduate Certificate in Curriculum, Teaching and Learning. We recommend a working group be established by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor to develop such an incentive scheme to be initiated and funded in 2011, based on data from 2010.

It is further proposed that a specific incentive funding scheme be developed, to provide performance based annual financial rewards to Schools and Faculties based on the level of staff involvement in staff development opportunities beyond the minimum required.

#### recommendation fifteen

That all continuing and casual academic staff and relevant library staff engaged in teaching, tutoring, and/or providing academic support be required to complete the appropriate University programs on effective, research-based teaching and learning, unless they have already successfully completed an equivalent program elsewhere.

Further, that all new academic teaching and academic support staff be required to complete the relevant program(s) during their first twelve months of full-time employment.

##### It is therefore recommended specifically that:

- All casual lecturers and tutors be required to participate in a three-hour workshop on effective teaching.
- All continuing academic staff with teaching responsibilities be required to participate in a three-day workshop on principles and practices of effective teaching and subject design at La Trobe University. *[GP #27]*

The Green Paper proposals on which this recommendation is based received only 6.5 per cent opposition from our 228 straw poll voters. Some 20 per cent expressed doubts about how it could be implemented and wanted to allow some discretion to Deans. Overall, however, the recommendations were widely supported.

The majority of Australian universities have already placed similar requirements on staff and most report positive outcomes over time in terms of student satisfaction, performance on the CEQ, and engagement of staff in further academic staff development activities, such as enrolment in graduate certificates. By instituting these minimal requirements, and providing high-quality, flexible and appropriate staff development for those who participate, La Trobe will be indirectly improving the quality of our students' academic experience and learning.

## Section 5

# Implementation

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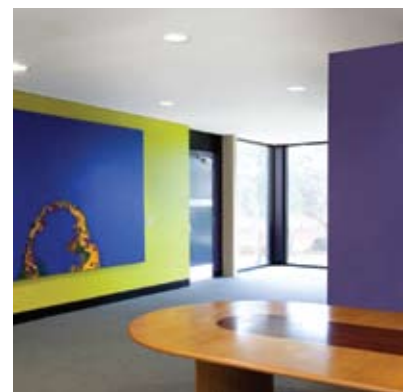
Reviewing and renewing La Trobe's undergraduate curriculum will require significant changes in the University's policies, procedures, and support infrastructure, in addition to major commitments of resources. Implementing the ambitious recommendations put forward in Section 4 will also require a high level of coordination and collaboration within programs and Faculties and across the University. Completing the entire project proposed in this White Paper will require a four- to five-year commitment.

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While this White Paper proposes a University-wide review and renewal campaign to address University-wide issues, it is also quite clear that different programs and Faculties within La Trobe have different needs and aspirations, as well as different levels of resources. There are also quite clear differences in starting points. The Faculty of Health Sciences, for example, began its own curriculum review and redesign project over two years ago and implemented its new first year curriculum in February 2009. At the same time, other La Trobe Faculties have yet to begin discussing comprehensive curriculum change. Consequently, a successful implementation plan will have to take these significant differences into account.

In response to the interest in implementation expressed by staff throughout the consultation phase, we have developed the draft implementation calendar in Appendix 5. For purposes of illustration, it includes some but by no means all of the key proposed implementation steps. In this draft implementation calendar, for example, all new and redesigned first year subjects would be introduced by 2011; all new and redesigned third year subjects, by 2013.

This calendar represents a planned, step-by-step but still flexible approach to implementation. This will encourage collaboration on common problems, allow us to benefit from economies of scale, and promote productive sharing of solutions and lessons learned across the University.



## Section 6

# Concurrent Initiatives

The Green Paper identified a number of other significant steps La Trobe could take to develop a more distinctive, effective and learning-centred approach to curriculum design and renewal. To advance these agendas, the White Paper notes the following additional recommendations, all of which are or will be implemented.

### Encouraging language learning

- The University Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Committee has established a working party, to include the Dean of Humanities or Social Sciences or nominee, to examine practical ways to make the learning of languages other than English attractive and feasible for the widest possible range of students (Green Paper Recommendation 29).

### Structure of Honours and Masters coursework programs

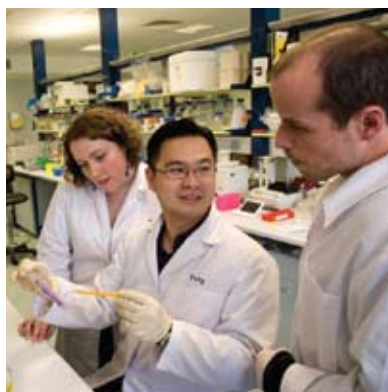
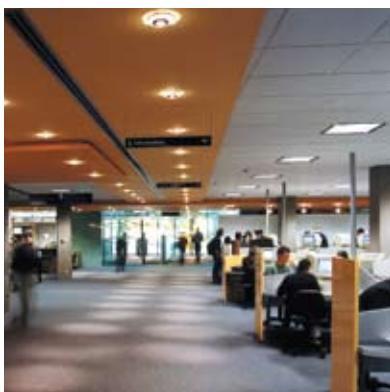
- The University's Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Committee will establish a working party to review current structures of La Trobe's Honours and Masters coursework programs and developments among our national and international competitors, and bring forward policy recommendations for consideration by the University early in 2010 (Green Paper Recommendation 30).

### Developing principles for multi-campus teaching and learning

- The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Regional) and the Associate Deans (Regional) or their equivalents, in consultation with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum and Academic Planning) and the Associate Deans (Academic) have been asked to develop a proposal for defining and ensuring the implementation of agreed principles for multi-campus teaching (Green Paper Recommendation 31).

### A new perspective on the academic year

- The Deputy Vice-Chancellor will 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 develop opportunities for learning that best respond to the needs of current and future students. The working party will 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, on each campus. This will include consideration of better and more flexible use of timetabling, unified credit point principles, asynchronous technologies, and a possible third semester. (Green Paper Recommendation 34). The working party will convene after the commencement of the new Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International and Future Students) in August and will report by the end of 2009.



## Appendix 1 Summary of White Paper Recommendations

### recommendation one

That all undergraduate programs adopt the following shared La Trobe University graduate capabilities, to be defined in appropriate discipline or field-specific terms, and to be assessed against agreed standards of student achievement:

- Writing
- Speaking
- Inquiry/research
- Critical thinking
- Creative problem-solving
- Team work.

### recommendation two

That student learning be promoted by the explicit adoption of additional discipline or field-specific learning outcomes which are clearly defined at appropriately high standards of achievement.

### recommendation three

That all programs map the introduction, development, assessment and evaluation of these shared graduate capabilities and discipline- or field-specific learning outcomes within and across their constituent subjects.

### recommendation four

That all programs develop and offer 'cornerstone' subjects – or provide the equivalent – in the first semester of enrolment, which will provide all students with a strong foundation for academic success and enable:

- a** the identification of students at risk in terms of general academic literacy;
- b** the identification of students at risk in terms of their specific preparation for the program of study; and
- c** the provision, as required, of early support for students identified as being at risk.

### recommendation five

That all programs assess student progress against agreed program outcomes and University-level graduate capabilities mid-program (at the end of first year, or at an appropriate point in second year) to provide staff and students with formative feedback needed to improve curriculum and teaching effectiveness and student learning success.

### recommendation six

That all programs develop and offer a final year 'capstone' subject, or equivalent, to provide an effective culmination point for programs as well as to offer students orientation to opportunities for further study, employment and career development.

### recommendation seven

That programs and faculties be encouraged to identify and develop, with support from the University, appropriate ways to educate students about the challenges to individuals and communities posed by climate change, globalisation and inequality, with particular attention paid to how these phenomena may affect students' chosen careers and lives as educated citizens.

### recommendation eight

That programs and faculties be encouraged to identify and develop, with support from the University, appropriate ways to educate students about the history and culture of Australia's Indigenous peoples, and the broader significance of cultural diversity.

### recommendation nine

That all programs employ meaningful, measurable and transparent key indicators and standards of academic quality, student learning, and student success in ongoing monitoring, annual evaluation and planning processes, program reviews, and other similar processes.

### recommendation **ten**

That the University's Orientation and first-year experience programs should be designed, coordinated, and evaluated by a University-wide steering group, including student representation, reporting to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

### recommendation **eleven**

That academic and language support resources and staff be embedded in the Faculties, as far as practicable, and allocated strategically to support and develop the capacities of those students with the greatest need.

### recommendation **twelve**

That the University provides student administration and services across the spectrum, including enrolment, career services, and alumni service, in a co-ordinated and learning-centred way.

### recommendation **thirteen**

That the University ensure that the development of teaching and learning technologies and learning spaces, both real and virtual, be undertaken in a co-ordinated and learning-centred way.

### recommendation **fourteen**

That central funding be provided to encourage Schools and Faculties to support the participation of their teaching staff in the range of staff development programs on offer.

### recommendation **fifteen**

That all continuing and casual academic staff and relevant library staff engaged in teaching, tutoring, and/or providing academic support be required to complete the appropriate University programs on effective, research-based teaching and learning, unless they have already successfully completed an equivalent program elsewhere.

Further, that all new academic teaching and academic support staff be required to complete the relevant program(s) during their first twelve months of full-time employment

#### **It is also recommended specifically that:**

- All casual lecturers and tutors be required to participate in a three-hour workshop on effective teaching.
- All continuing academic staff with teaching responsibilities be required to participate in a three-day workshop on principles and practices of effective teaching and subject design at La Trobe University.

## Appendix 2 Outcome of each of the Green Paper Recommendations

recommendation	status
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.	Incorporated in Overarching Principles (page 7)
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.	Incorporated in Overarching Principles (page 7)
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.	To be actioned.
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.	Incorporated in Overarching Principles (page 7)
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.	Incorporated in Overarching Principles (page 7)
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.	Incorporated in Recommendation 2 (page 9)
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.	Incorporated in Recommendation 3 (page 9)
8. That all 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 their program of study, (c) provision, as required, of early support for students identified to be at risk.	Incorporated in Recommendation 4 (page 9)
9. That all programs embed assessment of student learning at the end of the first year or at an appropriate point in second year, to gauge progress against graduate and program capabilities and outcomes.	Incorporated in Recommendation 5 (page 11)
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.	Incorporated in Recommendation 6 (page 11)
11. That all under-graduate programs adopt the following shared graduate capabilities in discipline-specific ways (to be mapped, defined in appropriate discipline or field specific terms of standards and assessed) – writing, speaking, inquiry / research, critical thinking / analysis, creating problem solving / synthesis, and team work.	Incorporated in Recommendation 1 (page 8)

recommendation	status
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.	These 3 recommendations were revised and consolidated into recommendations 7 and 8 (page 12).
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.	Incorporated in Recommendation 9 (page 13)
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.	Incorporated in Recommendation 5 (page 11)
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.	Incorporated in Recommendation 9 (page 13)
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.	Agreement reached with all relevant senior officers and responsibility has been moved to DVC.  Incorporated in Recommendation 10 (page 13)
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.	Review of Academic Language and Learning completed. New roles and organisational structure for advisors to be developed in semester 2, 2009, following appointment of a Director, Academic Language and Learning.  Incorporated in Recommendation 11 (page 14)
20. That the University's efforts to increase and enhance student engagement be explicitly linked to efforts to improve student retention, learning and success.	Incorporated in Recommendation 10 (page 13)
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.	Incorporated in Recommendation 12 (page 14)

Appendix 2 **continued**

recommendation	status
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.	Terms of reference and scope for this review currently being developed.  Incorporated in Recommendation 12 (page 14)
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.	Incorporated in Recommendation 13 (page 14)
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.	Program of tutor training introduced by the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Centre in semester 1, 2009.  Incorporated in Recommendation 14 and 15 (page 15)
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.	Incorporated in Overarching Principles (page 7)
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.	Incorporated in Recommendation 15 (page 15)
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.	Incorporated in Recommendation 14 (page 15)
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.	Policy to be approved at May meeting of Academic Board.
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.	Working Party to be established following approval of White Paper at May Academic Board meeting.
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.	Working Party established at April 29 meeting of the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Committee.

recommendation	status
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.	Working Party to be established following approval of White Paper at May Academic Board meeting.
32. That the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Committee consider the ways in which information and communication technologies (ICT) can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ enhance students' learning,</li> <li>■ address issues of multi campus and flexible delivery,</li> <li>■ be implemented in pedagogically appropriate ways and</li> <li>■ be implemented with appropriate levels of support for staff and students.</li> </ul>	Incorporated in Recommendation 12 (page 14) and Concurrent Initiatives (page 17)
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.	The Learning Technologies Committee has had its reporting lines moved from the ICT Policy Committee. It is now a sub-committee of the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Committee.
34. That the DVC establish a working party -- to include the DVC (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.	Working party to be established following the commencement of the DVC (International and Future Students) in August 2009.



## Appendix 3 Implementation Calendar

review	develop	design/redesign	implement	evaluate
2009 JANUARY TO JUNE				
Current approaches to multi-campus subject design and delivery	New student language and learning support structures New graduate certificate in curriculum, teaching and learning in higher education Revised policies for multi-campus teaching, assessment, etc. Staff development for multi-campus teaching, assessment, etc.		10 Pilot Projects funded with LTPF monies New student feedback on subjects and teaching systems and forms New staff development programs for tutors, casual lecturers and continuing academics New staff development programs for tutors, casual lecturers and continuing academics [Ongoing] Effectiveness of existing New Student Orientation	
2009 JULY TO DECEMBER				
	Curriculum Mapping protocols and processes Academic quality indicators and incentives system Graduate Capabilities evaluation system New Y1 design criteria, including cornerstones	New Student Orientation programs Trial Y1 subjects	New student language and learning (LL) support structures New graduate certificate in higher ed. Staff development for multi-campus teaching, etc.	Effectiveness of 10 Pilot Projects Effectiveness of existing Y1 curricula and programs Effectiveness of all CTLC staff development programs (ongoing)
2010				
Existing Y1 curricula against new design criteria	New Y2 design criteria, including mid-point reviews	Y1 curricula, as required, to meet new design criteria	Trial Y1 subjects Graduate Capabilities evaluation system Redesigned New Student Orientation programs Academic quality indicators and incentives system	Effectiveness of existing Y2 curricula and programs New graduate certificate New student LL support
2011				
Existing Y2 curricula against new design criteria	New Y3 design criteria, including capstones Y2 curricula, as required, to meet new design criteria	All re/designed Y1 curricula and programs	Trial Y1 subjects Effectiveness of existing Y3 curricula and programs	
2012				
Existing Y3 curricula against new design criteria	New Y3 design criteria, including capstones	Y3 curricula, as required, to meet new design criteria	All re/designed Y2 curricula and programs	Effectiveness of new Y1 and Y2 curricula
2013				
		All re/designed Y3 curricula and programs	Effectiveness of new Y1 - Y3 curricula and programs	

## Appendix 4 Curriculum Taskforce and Curriculum White Paper Planning Group

curriculum taskforce	
SPONSOR	<b>Professor Paul Johnson</b> , Vice-Chancellor
CONVENER	<b>Professor Belinda Probert</b> , Deputy Vice-Chancellor
FACILITATOR	<b>Professor Tom Angelo</b> , Pro Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum and Academic Planning)
CONSULTANT	<b>Professor Owen Hicks</b> , Higher Education Development Consultant, and Senior Consultant, Australian Learning and Teaching Council (formerly Carrick Institute)
MEMBERS	<p><i>Faculty of Education</i> <b>Dr Jennifer Masters, Professor Vaughan Prain, Dr Caroline Walta</b></p> <p><i>Faculty of Health Sciences</i> <b>Dr Kerry Fitzmaurice, Dr Mary Kennedy-Jones, Dr Amanda Kenny, Mr Lester Jones, Mr Mathew Oates, Dr Jodi Sita</b></p> <p><i>Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences</i> <b>Dr Adrian Jones, Dr Helen Lee, Dr Jim Leibold, Dr Katie Holmes, Dr Tony Jarvis, Dr Kay Souter</b></p> <p><i>Faculty of Law and Management</i> <b>Ms Lee Ann Basser, Dr Russell Hoye, Professor Sisira Jayasuriya, Dr Terri Joiner, Dr Sue O’Keefe, Professor David Spencer, Ms Cindy Taylor</b></p> <p><i>Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering</i> <b>Dr Fiona Bird, Dr Grant Cairns, Dr Peter Cartwright, Dr Liz Johnson, Dr Katherine Legge, Professor Eleanor Wertheim</b></p>
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curriculum white paper planning group	
CHAIR	<b>Professor Tom Angelo</b> , Pro Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum and Academic Planning)
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